

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

### **Aquifer Open Bible Dictionary**

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## Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

### M

*Ma'Anah, Maacah, Maachah (Person), Maacah, Maachah (Place), Maacathite, Maachathi, Maachathite, Maadai, Maadiah, Maai, Maaleh-Acrabbim, Maarath, Maasai, Maaseiah, Maasai, Maath, Maaz, Maaziah, Macbannai, Macbenah, Maccabaeus, Judas, Maccabean Period, Maccabees, 1 and 2, Maccabees, 3 and 4, Macedonia, Machaerus, Machbanai, Machbannai, Machbenah, Machi, Machir, Machirite, Machnadebai, Machpelah, Macnadebai, Madai, Madian, Madmannah (Person), Madmannah (Place), Madmen, Madmenah, Madon, Magadan, Magbish, Magdala, Magdalene, Mary, Magdiel, Maggot, Magi, Magic, Magistrate, Magnificat, Magog, Magor-Missabib, Magpiash, Mahalab, Mahalah, Mahalalel, Mahalath (Music), Mahalath (Person), Mahalath Leannoeth, Mahali, Mahanaim, Mahaneh-Dan, Maherai, Mahath, Mahavah, Mahavite, Mahazioth, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, Mahlah, Mahli, Mahlite, Mahlon, Mahseiah, Maid, Maiden, Mail, Coat of, Makaz, Makheloth, Maki, Makir, Makirite, Makkedah, Maktesh, Malachi (Person), Malachi, Book of, Malcam, Malcham, Malchiah, Malchiel, Malchielite, Malchijah, Malchiram, Malchishua, Malchi-shua, Malchus, Maleleel, Malkiel, Malkielite, Malkijah, Malkiram, Malkishua, Mallothi, Mallow, Saltwort, Malluch, Malluchi, Malta, Mammon, Mamre (Person), Mamre (Place), Man, Man of Lawlessness, Man of Sin, Man, Natural, Man, Old and New, Man, Son of, Manaen, Manahath (Person), Manahath (Place), Manahathite, Manasseh (Person), Manasseh, Tribe of, Manasses, Manassite, Mandrake, Maneh, Manger, Manius, Titus, Manna, Manoah, Manual of Discipline, Maoch, Maon (Person), Maonite, Maon (Place), Mara, Marah, Maralah, Maranatha, Marble, Marcion, Gospel of, Marcus, Marduk, Mareal, Maresah (Person), Maresah (Place), Mari, Mariner, Marjoram, Mark of God, Mark of the Beast, Mark, Gospel of, Market, Marketplace, Maroth, Marriage, Levirate, Marriage, Marriage Customs, Mars' Hill, Marsena, Marsh Hen, Martha, Martyrdom of Matthew, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Masada, Maschil, Mash, Mashal, Maskil, Mason, Masonry, Masora, Masorettes, Masoretic 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Mephaath, Mephibosheth, Merab, Meraiah, Meraioth, Merari, Merarite, Merathaim, Merchant, Mercurius, Mercury, Mercy, Mercy Seat, Mered, Meremoth, Meres, Meribah, Meribah-Kadesh, Meribath-Kadesh, Meribbaal, Merodach, Merodach-Balandan, Merom, Waters of, Meronoth, Meroz, Mesech, Mesha (Person), Meshach, Meshech, Meshelemiah, Meshezabeel, Meshezabel, Meshillemeth, Meshillemeth, Meshobab, Meshullam, Meshullemeth, Mesobaite, Mesopotamia, Messenger, Messiah, Metallurgy, Metheg-ammah, Methusael, Methuselah, Methushael, Meunim, Meunites, Mezahab, Mezobaite, Mezuzah, Miamin, Mibhar, Mibsam, Mibzar, Mica, Micah (Person), Micah, Book of, Micaiah, Micha, Michael, Michah, Michaiah, Michal, Michmash, Michmethath, Michri, Michtam, Micmash, Micmethath, Micri, Middin, Midian, Midianite, Midrash, Migdal-El, Migdal-Gad, Migdol, Migron, Mijamin, Mikloth, Mikneiah, Miktam, Milalai, Milcah, Milcom, Mildew, Mile, Miletus, Miletum, Milk, Mill, Millennium, Millet, Millo, Mina, Mind, Minerals and Metals, Miniamin, Minister, Ministry, Minni, Minnith, Minstrel, Mint, Miphkad, Gate of, Miracle, Miriam, Mirma, Mirmah, Mirror, Miscarriage, Misgab, Mishael, Mishal, Misham, Misheal, Mishma, Mishmannah, Mishnah, Mishraite, Mispar, Mispereth, Misrephoth-Maim, Mite, Mithcah, Mithkah, Mithna, Mithredath, Mitre, Mitylene, Mixed Marriage, Mizar, Mizpah, Mizpar, Mizpeh, Mizraim, Mizzah, Mnason, Moab, Moabites, Moabite Stone, Moadiah, Modius, Moladah, Mole, Molech, Molid, Moloch, Molten Sea, Money, Money Changer, Monotheism, Monster, Month, Moon, Moon, New, Morasthite, Mordecai, Moreh, Hill of, Moreh, Oak of, Moresheth, Moresheth-Gath, Moriah, Morning Sacrifice, Morning Star, Mortar, the, Moserah, Mosereth, Moses, Moses, Books of, Moses' Seat, Most High, Most Holy Place, Mote, Moth, Mount Ebal, Mount Gaash, Mount Gerizim, Mount Gilboa, Mount Hermon, Mount Hor, Mount Horeb, Mount Nebo, Mount Nebo, Mount of Assembly, Mount of Corruption, Mount of Olives, Mount of the Amalekites, Mount of the Amorites, Mount of the Beatitudes, Mount of*

*the Congregation, Mount Perazim, Mount Pisgah, Mount Shepher, Mount Sinai, Mount Tabor, Mount, Mountain, Mourning, Mouse, Moza, Mozah, Mulberry, Mule, Muppim, Murder, Murderer, Mushi, Mushite, Music, Musical Instruments, Musician, Mustard, Muster Gate, Muteness, Myra, Myrrh, Myrtle, Mysia, Mystery, Mystery of Lawlessness*

## Ma'Anah

Unit of measure equivalent to the length of a furrow (20–30 yards, or 18.3–27.4 meters). See Weights and Measures.

## Maacah, Maachah (Person)

Maacah (also spelled Maachah in the King James Version) was a common Hebrew name in the Old Testament. Several people had this name.

1. The last of four children born to Nahor, Abraham's brother, and Reumah, his concubine ([Genesis 22:24](#)).
2. A daughter of King Talmai of Geshur. She was a wife of King David, and mother of Absalom ([2 Samuel 3:3](#); [1 Chronicles 3:2](#)).
3. The father of Achish. King Achish of Gath housed two of the slaves of Shimei during the rule of King Solomon ([1 Kings 2:39](#)). He is probably the same person called Moach in [1 Samuel 27:2](#). *See* Maoch.
4. A daughter of Absalom (also called Abishalom) ([1 Kings 15:2, 10](#)). She was the wife of King Rehoboam of Judah, who ruled from 930 to 913 BC. She was the mother of King Abijah, who ruled from 913 to 910 BC. She was the grandmother of King Asa of Judah, who ruled from 910 to 869 BC ([1 Kings 15:10](#); [2 Chronicles 11:20–22](#)). Later, Asa removed her from her role as queen mother because she made an idol for Asherah ([1 Kings 15:10–13](#); [2 Chronicles 15:16](#)). Her name is spelled Micaiah (or Michaiah) in [2 Chronicles 13:2](#).

5. A concubine of Caleb and the mother of four sons ([1 Chronicles 2:48](#)).
6. A sister of Huppim and Shuppim, the wife of Makir the Manassite and mother of Peresh and Sheresh ([1 Chronicles 7:15–16](#)).
7. A woman from the tribe of Benjamin. She was the wife of Jeiel. She was an ancestor of King Saul ([1 Chronicles 8:29](#); [9:35](#)).
8. A father of Hanan, one of David's mighty warriors ([1 Chronicles 11:43](#)).
9. The father of Shephatiah. Shephatiah was the leader of the tribe of Simeon during the reign of King David ([1 Chronicles 27:16](#)).

## Maacah, Maachah (Place)

Small kingdom in northern Transjordan alternately named Aram-Maacah in [1 Chronicles 19:6](#) (kjv "Syria-maachah"). According to [Joshua 13:11](#), the states of Geshur and Maacah were between Gilead and Mt Hermon and they bordered the kingdom of Og, ruler of Bashan ([Jos 12:4–5](#)). Its people were reckoned as descendants of Nahor ([Gn 22:24](#)) and were the southernmost of the Nahorite tribes.

*See also* Aram (Person) #2; Aram (Place).

## Maacathite, Maachathi, Maachathite

A Maacathite was a person from the land of Maacah. This land was near Geshur and close to the border of the land given to the half-tribe of Manasseh ([Deuteronomy 3:14](#); [Joshua 12:5](#); [13:11](#)). Jair took control of this land, but he and his people could not remove the Maacathites and Geshurites who still lived there ([Joshua 13:13](#)).

One Maacathite named Eliphelet joined David's army. He was one of David's "mighty men" ([2 Samuel 23:34](#)). In another list, he is called a

Mekerathite ([1 Chronicles 11:36](#)). This may be a different name for the same place or person.

The Maacathites were not friendly toward Israel. Many years later, after Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, a man named Jaazaniah (whose father was a Maacathite) joined Ishmael the Ammonite to fight against Gedaliah. Gedaliah had been chosen by King Nebuchadnezzar to govern the city ([2 Kings 25:23](#); [Jeremiah 40:8](#)).

*See also* Maacah, Maachah (Place).

## Maadai

Bani's son, who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile ([Ezr 10:34](#)).

## Maadiah

Head of a priestly family who returned to Jerusalem after the exile ([Neh 12:5](#), nlt mg) and whose house was headed by Piltai in the next generation during the days of Joiakim the high priest. He is called Moadiah in v [17](#). He is perhaps identifiable with the priest Maaziah, who set his seal on Ezra's covenant ([10:8](#)).

## Maai

Priestly musician who participated in the dedication of the rebuilt Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:36](#)).

## Maaleh-Akrabbim

KJV rendering of "ascent of Akrabbim," a site on Canaan's southern border, in [Joshua 15:3](#). *See* Akrabbim.

## Maarath

One of Judah's cities of inheritance located in the hill country ([Jos 15:59](#)), perhaps modern Biet Ummar, seven miles (11.3 kilometers) north of Hebron. It may be the same as Maroth, mentioned in [Micah 1:12](#).

## Maasai

Priest who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile ([1 Chr 9:12](#)).

## Maaseiah

1. One of the singers appointed by the Levites to accompany David when he brought the ark from Obed-edom's house to Jerusalem ([1 Chr 15:18-20](#)).
2. Commander who agreed to assist Jehoiada the priest in crowning Joash king ([2 Chr 23:1](#)).
3. Officer who served King Uzziah by assisting in the organization of the king's army ([2 Chr 26:11](#)).
4. Son of Judah's royal house who was slain when Pekah the king of Israel invaded Judah ([2 Chr 28:7](#)).
5. Ruler in Jerusalem whom Josiah appointed to assist in repairing the temple ([2 Chr 34:8](#)).
- 6-8. Three priests who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce their foreign wives during the postexilic era ([Ezr 10:18-22](#)).
9. Pahath-moab's son ([Ezr 10:30](#)).
10. Father of Azariah, a repairman of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 3:23](#)).
11. Ezra's attendant when he read the law to the people ([Neh 8:4](#)).
12. Levite who, with others, helped the people to understand the law Ezra read ([Neh 8:7](#)).
13. Leader who set his seal on Ezra's covenant under Nehemiah's leadership ([Neh 10:25](#)).
14. Judahite leader and the son of Baruch, who lived in Jerusalem with those chosen by lot to inherit the rebuilt city ([Neh 11:5](#)). He is sometimes identified with the Asaiah mentioned in [1 Chronicles 9:5](#).
15. Ithiel's son from Benjamin's tribe who was chosen to live in Jerusalem ([Neh 11:7](#)).
16. Priestly trumpeter at the dedication of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:41](#)).
17. Priestly singer at the dedication of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:42](#)).
18. Father of Zephaniah the priest. Zephaniah, with Pashhur, was sent to Jeremiah by King Zedekiah to inquire of the Lord concerning the future of Nebuchadnezzar's war against Jerusalem ([Jer](#)

[21:1-2; 29:25](#)) and to request that Jeremiah pray for Jerusalem ([37:3](#)).

19. Father of Zedekiah the false prophet, an opponent of Jeremiah's prophecy about Jerusalem's fall under Nebuchadnezzar's siege ([Jer 29:21](#)).

20. KJV form of Mahseiah, Baruch's forefather, in [Jeremiah 32:12](#) and [51:59](#). See Mahseiah.

21. Keeper of the threshold during Jehoiakim's reign ([Jer 35:4](#)).

## Maasai

KJV spelling of Maasai, a postexilic priest, in [1 Chronicles 9:12](#). See Maasai.

## Maath

An ancestor of Jesus mentioned in [Luke 3:26](#).

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## Maaz

Ram's son from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 2:27](#)).

## Maaziah

1. Levite who served in the temple during David's reign ([1 Chr 24:18](#)).

2. Levite who set his seal on Ezra's covenant ([Neh 10:8](#)); sometimes identified with Maadiah, a postexilic priest ([Neh 12:5](#)).

See also Maadiah.

## Macbannai

See Machbanai, Machbannai.

## Macbenah

Another spelling of Machbenah, a place mentioned in the family records of Caleb and Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:49](#)).

See Machbenah.

## Maccabaeus, Judas

See Maccabeus, Judas.

## Maccabean Period

The period of Israel's history when the Maccabees fought for Israel's freedom and governed the country. This period lasted from 167 BC to approximately 40 BC.

### *Who Were the Maccabees?*

A priest named Mattathias and his sons led the Maccabees. Mattathias's most famous son was Judas, who people called "Maccabeus." The name "Maccabees" comes from this title.

The Maccabees fought against people who wanted to change Jewish life and religious practices. At this time, many rulers wanted the Jewish people to follow Greek customs and worship Greek gods. The Maccabees strongly opposed these changes because they wanted to:

- Protect traditional Jewish ways of life
- Keep their religious practices pure
- Stop foreign rulers from controlling their religion
- Maintain their independence

### *Who Ruled Over the Jewish People Before the Maccabees?*

In 332 BC, a Greek ruler named Alexander the Great conquered Judea. After his death, three different groups fought for control of this land: the Egyptians (led by the family of Ptolemy), the Syrians, and later the Romans.

## Greek Control and Cultural Conflict

The Egyptian rulers were actually Greeks themselves, just like the Syrian kings. Both groups were related to the generals who had served under Alexander the Great. The Egyptian rulers, though they governed from Egypt rather than Greece, strongly believed that Greek culture was the best. They wanted to spread Greek learning and ideas. To do this, they built a large library in the city of Alexandria, hoping to make it an important center of Greek culture like Athens.

The people who supported Greek culture (called Hellenists) wanted to spread their culture to other lands in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. They had three main goals:

1. To introduce Greek ways of life to these areas
2. To build new cities that looked and worked like Greek cities
3. To encourage Greek people to marry local people

They hoped these actions would make local people forget their own traditions and adopt Greek ways instead. They wanted people to stop following their local religious beliefs and start worshipping the Greek gods, who had many interesting stories and symbols.

Judah (the Jewish homeland) was a small nation facing this Greek takeover. It seemed unlikely that the Jewish people could keep their religion, culture, and freedom. However, the Jewish people had strong faith that God would protect them. They believed that if they obeyed God's laws, they would survive as a people. Even though they might suffer and be forced to leave their homeland, they trusted that God would preserve at least some of their people. They found hope in their belief that God would soon send the Messiah (their promised savior and leader).

### Syria Takes Control of Judea

Before 200 BC, neither Egypt nor Syria seemed able to gain long-term control over Judea. Eventually, an agreement was reached giving control to Syria. Judea supported this. Thankful for this support, Antiochus the Great of Syria canceled Judean taxes for three years. He promised to give money to the cities destroyed in the preceding battles. Priests, scribes, and temple singers did not have to pay certain taxes. Fees on the sale of building supplies were removed for a short period to help the Jews rebuild Jerusalem. Money was made available for sacrifices. Many Jewish prisoners were freed.

By 175 BC, the situation changed. Antiochus IV Epiphanes became king of Syria by killing both his brother and the person who was supposed to be the next king. Before this, Antiochus IV lived in Athens. He had also been held hostage in Rome for 14 years.

Antiochus understood and respected the political power of Rome. To prevent a takeover of western

Asia, he decided to expand his position by conquering Egypt and bringing the entire area under Syrian control. Impressed by Greek philosophy and traditions, he tried to use the spread of Greek culture as a tool to unite the diverse peoples under his control. He was a dangerous man. He would stop at nothing to achieve his political goals.

### The High Priest's Power in Politics and Religion

The most powerful person in Jerusalem at the time was the high priest. It was both a political and a religious job. Traditionally the high priest was a descendant of Aaron. During this period of fighting, it was essential for the high priest to be a strong and inspiring leader. The high priest needed to be firm in his own faith. He also needed to be an example and able to get others to fight against the spread of Greek culture.

The one who held military control over the area gained the ability to select the high priest. When Syrian power was strong, the king attempted to install his own chosen person as high priest. When Syria was involved in internal political conflicts, in battles against other nations, or was being defeated by the followers of Judas Maccabeus, the Jewish people were permitted temporarily to choose their own high priest. During these times, they had some political independence and relief from paying taxes.

It is clear why the Jews were upset when Antiochus first attempted to install his own nominee, Menelaus, as high priest. Since he was not a descendant of Aaron, he had no claim to the position. The Old Testament states that the high priest should be a descendant of Aaron. Menelaus became high priest by paying Antiochus a large amount of money. This persuaded Antiochus, who needed money.

While King Antiochus was busy fighting in Egypt, the people of Jerusalem acted. They forced Menelaus to stop being high priest and gave the position back to the person who had been high priest before him. In revenge, Antiochus ordered that the city be destroyed. Many of the people living in Jerusalem were killed. The temple was desecrated. Its treasure was removed.

### King Antiochus Attacks Jewish Traditions

After this, the city was placed under the authority of a Syrian military commander ([1 Maccabees](#)

[1:20-29](#); [2 Maccabees 5:14-22](#); Josephus's *Antiquities* 12.5.3). Antiochus still wanted to control Egypt, so he attacked it again. But when the Roman leaders (the Senate) ordered him to leave, he quickly ordered his army to withdraw. He was afraid of Rome's great power. To protect himself from Rome, he had a new plan. He would force the Jewish people to accept Greek ways of life. He thought this would make them loyal to him and create a protective area between his kingdom and Rome.

Antiochus stopped the observance of the Sabbath, religious festivals, sacrifices, and the circumcision of male children. These are Jewish practices taught in the first five books of the Bible. He also had copies of the Torah destroyed. He built altars dedicated to Greek gods. He ordered Jews to eat the flesh of pigs. The Bible made this practice illegal for Jews ([2 Maccabees 6:18](#); see [Leviticus 11:7](#)). The temple in Jerusalem became a shrine dedicated to Zeus. A pig was offered in sacrifice on the altar ([1 Maccabees 1:41-64](#); [2 Maccabees 6:1-11](#); see [Daniel 11:31-32](#)).

The Syrian rulers forced each Jewish village to build an altar for worshipping foreign gods. They placed Syrian officials in each village to make sure the people followed this new rule.

### *The Maccabean Revolt*

#### **Matthias Starts the Rebellion**

In 166 BC, an elderly Jewish priest named Mattathias faced a difficult choice. He and his five sons were ordered to make a religious offering that went against Jewish law. They were told to sacrifice meat that Jewish people were not allowed to eat and to offer it to a foreign god. Mattathias refused to do this.

In his anger, Mattathias killed two people: a Syrian official who was forcing people to follow the new law and a Jewish person who had given up his beliefs and made the forbidden offering.

Before this happened, some Jewish people had been refusing to follow these new rules, but their resistance was not organized. While some people accepted the Syrian laws, many others refused. These people were willing to die rather than go against their religious beliefs ([1 Maccabees 1:60](#); [2:29-37](#); [2 Maccabees 6:18-31](#)).

Mattathias called for all people who were loyal to Jewish religious laws to join him ([1 Maccabees 2:15-27](#)). Then, he and his sons escaped to the hills

to hide. A group called the Hasidim joined Mattathias. These were people who were very strict about following Jewish religious laws. Together with other supporters, they hid in the hills of Judea. From there, they made surprise attacks against their enemies and won many battles.

The Jewish fighters attacked small villages that were controlled by their enemies. They destroyed the altars that were used to worship foreign gods. They also performed circumcision (an important Jewish religious ceremony) on Jewish boys who had not received it.

#### **Judas Maccabeus Leads the Maccabean Revolt**

In 166 BC, Mattathias died. His son Judas Maccabeus became the new leader, and under his command, the fighting became more intense. Judas became an important symbol of how the Jewish people stood up against their enemies.

Judas was a strong leader who believed he was fighting for what was right. He helped bring his people together, and he won many battles even though his army was much smaller than his enemies. His clever battle plans and many victories caused serious problems for King Antiochus. Judas's supporters admired him, and his enemies feared him.

The success of Judas gave him control of most of the country. He immediately restored the temple. The altar that had been used for sacrifice to Zeus was destroyed. Obedient priests rededicated the temple, so daily worship could be resumed ([1 Maccabees 4:36-59](#); [2 Maccabees 10:1-8](#); Josephus's *Antiquities* 12.7.6-7).

The Jewish people could now practice their faith openly again. To celebrate this victory, they created a new festival called the Feast of Dedication or Lights (now known as Hanukkah).

After restoring the temple and religious practices, Judas began another important project: rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. Strong walls would help protect the city when the Syrians attacked again.

Then Judas and his brothers decided to expand their goals. They wanted to free all of Palestine not only Judea. They began attacking different regions:

- The Idumeans who lived east of the Jordan River ([1 Maccabees 5:1-8](#))
- The area of Philistia ([5:9-68](#); Josephus's *Antiquities* 12.8.1-6).

Then Judas worked to gain political freedom for Judea. He opposed a new high priest who had been chosen. This priest came from the proper family line of Aaron, but he followed Greek ways instead of traditional Jewish customs ([1 Maccabees 7:14; 2 Maccabees 14:3-7](#); Josephus's *Antiquities* 12.9.7).

The Hasidim disagreed with Judas and accepted the new high priest. However, promises made to them were broken, and 60 of their members were killed. After this, the remaining Hasidim realized their mistake and returned to support Judas ([1 Maccabees 7:15-20](#); Josephus's *Antiquities* 12.10.2).

The Syrians sent an army to Jerusalem to protect the new high priest's position. However, Judas's forces defeated this army. Both the Syrian soldiers and their chosen priest ran away in defeat.

During this time, Rome was becoming very powerful in the region. Judas thought he could use Rome's power to help him in his ongoing fight against Syria. He made an agreement with Rome for protection.

Rome sent a warning message to the Syrian king Demetrius, telling him that Judas was now under Roman protection. However, the message arrived too late. A large Syrian army had already left to attack Judas and his forces.

When Judas's soldiers saw the size of the Syrian army, some of them ran away. In the battle that followed, Judas was killed.

### **Jonathan Leads the Maccabees**

After Judas died, his younger brother Jonathan became the new leader of the Maccabean fighters. During this time, the Syrians and their supporters (Jews who followed Greek ways) controlled Jerusalem. They rebuilt the city walls and made other cities stronger to protect against possible attacks from Jonathan's forces.

Over the next few years, the Syrians lost some battles and became weaker. This meant they could not give as much support to their Jewish followers in Judea. The Syrians did not choose a new high priest during this time. This made Jonathan happy because he did not want anyone else to have power over religious matters.

When the Maccabees became powerful again, they punished the Jews who had supported the Syrian ways ([1 Maccabees 9:23-73](#); Josephus's *Antiquities* 13.1.1-6). For the next five years, there was peace.

In 152 BC, Syria had problems within its own country. Two different groups of Syrians were fighting each other for power. Both groups wanted Jonathan to support them, and they made him many promises:

- They offered to make him high priest
- They said they would not make him pay taxes
- They offered to give him more land to control

In the end, Jonathan became the high priest. He was the first person from the Maccabee family to receive this important position.

Years earlier, his brother Judas would have wanted to be high priest as a reward for his victories. However, Judas's family was not from the family line of Aaron. At that time, the people would not have accepted someone as high priest unless they came from Aaron's family.

### **Simon and the Hasmonean Family Line**

The leadership of Syria kept changing during this time. Some Syrian kings died in battle, while others were killed by their enemies. Jonathan tried to stay in power by supporting different Syrian groups at different times.

Jonathan also sent representatives to Rome to make sure Rome would continue to help him. However, the Syrians eventually captured Jonathan and killed him. In 143 BC, Simon, the last living son of Mattathias, became the new leader of the Jewish people.

Simon made a treaty with the young Syrian king Demetrius II for Judea to become more independent and gain a larger territory. Simon was even given the right to make his own money ([1 Maccabees 15:6](#)). This was a clear sign of independence. As soon as Antiochus came to power in 139 BC, the right to make money was taken away.

During the peaceful time that followed, many Jewish people thought an important moment in their history was coming soon. They believed the Messiah (God's chosen leader who would save his people) would appear soon. Some people thought

the Messiah might come from Simon's family. They believed this even though some of the Maccabean leaders, including Simon's brothers, had done things that many people thought were wrong.

Simon continued to serve as high priest (the most important religious leader). He arranged for this important position to be passed down to his children and grandchildren after him.

Not everyone agreed that Simon should be the high priest. Even some groups who had supported the Maccabeans before now disagreed with this choice:

- The Hasidim
- People who opposed Greek customs
- Jews who believed only Aaron's family should serve as priests

Despite these disagreements, the Jewish people experienced a time of peace and success. This lasted until about 135 BC when Simon's son-in-law killed him.

### **John Hyrcanus Becomes High Priest**

Simon was the first of the Hasmonean family line. He was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus. He was a strong ruler, but there was a troubled period that happened at the beginning of his reign. Antiochus VII, who had ruled Syria a few years previously, attacked Jerusalem. The city held out for a year before it finally succumbed. Syria once again ruled Judea. Judea did not regain its freedom until the death of Antiochus in about 128 BC.

During this time, John Hyrcanus made enemies of the Pharisees (who were formerly called the Hasidim). This was surprising because he had once been their student. The Pharisees probably became angry because John Hyrcanus wanted to become king. They believed only someone from King David's family line had the right to be king. The Pharisees held this belief even though there was no one from David's family who was ready to take the throne at that time.

As high priest, John Hyrcanus worked closely with a group called the Sadducees. The Sadducees were both a religious and political group. Most of their supporters were wealthy and powerful people. Later, during the time of Jesus, the children of these supporters became leaders in the Jewish council called the Sanhedrin.

The Pharisees followed the Jewish religious laws (called the Torah) very strictly. This made it

difficult for any leader to rule because the Pharisees had many strict rules that they wanted everyone to follow.

During the earlier fights in Judea, the Hasidim, or "the pious ones," had sometimes supported the Maccabeans. At other times, they accepted Syrian control as long as they were allowed to practice their religion freely.

Things changed when John Hyrcanus became leader. Under his rule, the Hasidim began to help make important decisions for their nation. They enjoyed having this new power and did not want to give it up. We can understand why they became very upset when their enemies, the Sadducees, gained political control instead.

The Pharisees became more and more unhappy with their leaders. During this time, an important religious teacher appeared in Judea. We know him from ancient writings found at Qumran as the "Teacher of Righteousness." This teacher had two main messages:

1. People should follow God's law very carefully.
2. The current time was the final period of history, and everyone should get ready because God's chosen leader (the Messiah) would come very soon.

### **Alexander Janneus's Rules with Violence**

Later, when Alexander Janneus became ruler, he treated people harshly if they followed religious laws strictly. Because of this persecution, the Teacher of Righteousness and his followers left Jerusalem. They went to live in Qumran, which was in the desert wilderness of Judea.

These people believed that Alexander Janneus was an evil ruler. They thought that God had left the main group of Jewish people and would now live only with their small group of faithful followers at Qumran.

The Qumran group completely separated themselves from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in two important ways:

1. They stopped offering sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem.
2. They used a different, older calendar like the one used in Samaria.

Because they used a different calendar, they celebrated important religious festivals on different days than other Jewish people. As more people joined this group, it weakened the power of both the temple in Jerusalem and the other Pharisees.

After the death of John Hyrcanus, his younger son Aristobulus became high priest and king. Aristobulus reigned for one year only. Then in 103 BC, the oldest son, Alexander Janneus, became king.

At this time, the Jewish people were very hopeful about their future. The Syrians were too busy dealing with their own problems to attack the Jews. Alexander Janneus began winning battles and taking over new territories.

Alexander Janneus seemed happiest when he was fighting wars and causing pain and death to others. From what we know about the kind of person he was, we can understand why his younger brother had been chosen to be king before him.

Alexander Janneus was very successful in extending the boundaries of the Jewish nation from the Mediterranean coast to the frontiers of Egypt. His success came at a great cost. He frequently lost almost as many troops as his enemy. Most of his army was made up of warriors for hire. The Jewish people were heavily taxed in order to pay them.

For six years, Alexander Janneus fought a violent war against his own people. They feared him and did not like him. He showed little real interest in religion, and many people were angry that someone who loved violence so much was serving as high priest.

Another problem was his marriage. After his brother died, Alexander married his brother's widow, Alexandra (also called Salome). Jewish law allowed a man to marry his dead brother's wife in some cases ([Deuteronomy 25:5-10](#)). But it was not allowed for high priests ([Leviticus 21:13-14](#); compare [Ezekiel 44:22](#)).

The people's anger toward Alexander became very clear in 90 BC. During an important religious festival called the Feast of Tabernacles, he was trying to perform his duties as high priest. The people who had come for the festival threw lemons at him. Alexander responded with violence: he ordered his guards to attack the crowd, and they killed 6,000 people ([Josephus's Antiquities 13.13.5](#)).

Since the king was supported by the Sadducees, the people began supporting the Pharisees. As more

and more people opposed Alexander Janneus, the Pharisees asked for help from Demetrius III, a Syrian king. This led to terrible fighting. About 50,000 Jewish people died in these battles.

Alexander Janneus lost a battle at Shechem. However, Demetrius and his army then left the area. This meant the Pharisees were left alone to face punishment from their angry king. Alexander Janneus killed many of them, and about 8,000 Pharisees had to leave their homeland to escape him ([Josephus's Antiquities 14.14.2](#)).

The Pharisees believed Alexander Janneus had made the Jewish kingdom less religious and more focused on politics. They disliked that he had grown up in Galilee learning Greek ways and customs.

The Pharisees were also worried about two things:

1. His efforts to take over new territories
2. His attempts to force other people to follow Jewish religion

### Queen Alexandra and Her Two Sons

When Alexander Janneus was dying, he gave the throne to his wife, Alexandra Salome. He told her to make peace with the Pharisees by sharing power with them. Alexandra may have been the daughter of an important Pharisee leader. She followed her husband's advice and gave the Pharisees almost complete control over the kingdom ([Josephus's Antiquities 13.16.2](#)).

The Pharisees were happy to finally have power, and they removed many of the old rules that the Sadducees had made. The queen had two sons, which made things more complicated. The older son, Hyrcanus, supported the Pharisees. He was the high priest and was supposed to become the next king. However, he was quiet and showed no interest in ruling. The younger son, Aristobulus, supported the Sadducees. He was more like his father Alexander Janneus in personality, so his mother put him in charge of the army.

The Sadducees told Queen Alexandra that the country was in danger. Because of this, she allowed them to take control of several fortified buildings throughout the country. Queen Alexandra ruled for nine years. During this time, the Pharisees managed the religious laws well. But when she died in 67 BC, her two sons began fighting each other for power.

As Aristobulus gathered an army and attacked his brother, many of the troops left Hyrcanus. He gave his positions as both king and high priest to Aristobulus. Instead of being able to retire quietly to his country estate as he had hoped, the Pharisees still saw Hyrcanus as their leader.

A man named Antipater from Idumea made plans to help Hyrcanus become king again, even though Hyrcanus did not want to rule. Antipater was the father of Herod the Great, who would later become king. Antipater's real goal was to control the kingdom himself while making it look like Hyrcanus was in charge.

Antipater and Hyrcanus got help from other rulers and defeated Aristobulus. They then surrounded Jerusalem, where Aristobulus was hiding. During this time, many religious Jews were tired of all the fighting and hatred. They decided to leave their homeland and start a new life in Egypt.

### *Rome Takes Control*

### **Pompey Captures Jerusalem**

The fighting over Jerusalem caught the attention of the nearby Roman army. Both sides tried to get the Romans to help them by offering them large amounts of money. At first, the Roman commander chose to help Aristobulus. But two years later, in 63 BC, a powerful Roman leader named Pompey decided to get involved himself.

The Romans had begun to distrust Aristobulus, but he still tried to fight against their approaching army. The people who supported Hyrcanus helped the Romans by opening the city gates for them.

Aristobulus's supporters defended the temple for three months. They even fought on the Sabbath (the Jewish holy day of rest). Finally, the Romans captured the temple. Pompey went into the most sacred room of the temple, called the Holy of Holies, carrying his sword. This was shocking to the Jewish people because this room was so holy that only the high priest was allowed to enter it. However, Pompey did not take any of the temple's treasures.

Pompey let Aristobulus live, but he ordered many of Aristobulus's main supporters to be killed. After this, Judea lost control over many nearby areas that it had ruled before. The Jewish people now had to pay money to Rome and follow Roman orders.

### **New Rules Under Roman Power**

The Jewish people now had to pay large taxes to Rome. However, these taxes seemed smaller than what they had paid before. In the previous hundred years, they had needed to pay for constant fighting and wars. Judea then experienced a period of relative calm.

The Romans did not think Judea was very important anymore because:

1. The main trading routes now went through Rome instead.
2. Traders could no longer use the paths to eastern countries because of problems between different nations.
3. Fewer merchants were using the trading path between Egypt and the northern countries.

This meant that Judea, which had once made money from traders passing through its lands, became less important for trade.

In 57 BC, Aristobulus started a small rebellion against Rome. The only result was that his brother Hyrcanus lost even more of his remaining power. Over the next several years, Aristobulus and his supporters tried to fight against Roman rule multiple times, but they never succeeded.

### **Antipater Gains Power**

Antipater continued to support Hyrcanus and Rome. In 49 BC, a civil war began in Rome. At first, Antipater supported the Roman leader Pompey. Then he switched his support to another Roman leader named Caesar. He made this change while claiming to represent Hyrcanus. When Caesar won the war, he rewarded the Jewish people by reducing the taxes they had to pay to Rome.

Rome officially allowed the Jewish people to practice their religion freely. In Jewish matters, they were allowed to be tried in their own courts. They were also exempt from Roman military service. Rome increased the Judea's territory and permitted the Jews to raise their own taxes. Antipater was personally rewarded by the Romans. As his authority increased, the hatred and distrust of him by the Sadducees also increased. Antipater appointed his son Herod as governor of Galilee.

## Herod Becomes King

Herod decided to attack a group of fighters near the border with Syria. These fighters were led by a man named Hezekiah. Some people called them criminals, while others saw them as heroes fighting for Jewish freedom. Many local people supported this group.

Herod's forces captured many of the fighters, including Hezekiah, and killed them all. This created a problem because Jewish law said that no one could be put to death without permission from the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish court and council). Because Herod had broken this law, the leaders of the Sanhedrin ordered him to come and explain his actions.

These were troubled times with much fighting. During this period, Antigonus had Hyrcanus killed. Herod then traveled to Rome, where the Roman Senate made him the king of the Jewish people. Antigonus was the last ruler from the Hasmonean family line. The Romans captured him and killed him in the city of Antioch.

This prepared the way for the arrival of a new, powerful leader for the Jewish people—the long-awaited Messiah.

## Maccabees, 1 and 2

Two deuterocanonical books that cover the period of Israel's history from 167 BC to 100 BC. "Deuterocanonical" means these books are included in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, but not in Protestant or Jewish Bibles.

The books are named after Judas Maccabeus, who started the Jewish revolt against Rome in 166 BC. The importance of these books is that they provide historical accounts of Israel's struggles during the time between Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament) and the time of Christ (6/5 BC–AD 30).

### 1 Maccabees

Like 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles, this work was written to record a "spiritual" history of the nation. The difference is that 1 Maccabees exclusively describes the Maccabean period up to 100 BC. The unknown author used some genuine literary sources, although parts of the work may not be historical.

## 2 Maccabees

This book is written around 100 BC. It focuses more on theology than 1 Maccabees. 1 Maccabees seeks to present a reasonably objective account of the Hasmoneans while 2 Maccabees is a rhetorical summary of a considerably larger work on the subject of the Maccabean era. See Maccabean Period.

## Maccabees, 3 and 4

*See Apocrypha (Introduction).*

## Macedonia

Roman province in NT times, beginning as a kingdom in the seventh century BC. Little is known about the first several centuries of its history, but with the coming to power of the Greek king Philip II (359–336 BC), and especially of his son Alexander III (the Great, 336–323 BC), Macedonia became a world power. After Alexander's death, the empire was divided among his successors into several regions, one of them the original Macedonian kingdom. Instability held sway for the next 150 years, and in 167 BC Macedonia came under Roman rule. Initially divided into four districts by the Romans ([Acts 16:12](#) is a possible reference to this division), this territory was made into a Roman province in 14 BC with Thessalonica as its capital. Briefly, from AD 15–44, Macedonia was combined with Achaia and Moesia (other parts of Greece) into one large province; however, in AD 44, the three were again separated. Macedonia's importance continued through the Roman era, and it remained a separate entity down to modern times, though it was part of Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1991.

The Roman province of Macedonia included the northern region of Greece and southern sections of present-day Albania, Bulgaria, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Noted for its gold, silver, timber, and farmlands, the region also served as a land route for trade between Asia and the West. Shortly after the Romans incorporated Macedonia as a province, they built the Via Egnatia, a paved road over 500 miles (804.5 kilometers) long, running from the Adriatic coast to the Aegean, no doubt traveled by the apostle Paul as he moved through the Macedonian cities of Neapolis, Philippi,

Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessalonica ([Acts 16:11-12; 17:1](#)).

The gospel was introduced to Europe by way of Macedonia when Paul responded to a vision while on his second missionary journey ([Acts 16:9-12](#)). Details of that work, centering in Philippi and Thessalonica, are described in [Acts 16:11-17:15](#). On his third journey, though delayed initially ([19:21-22](#)), Paul later returned to Macedonia, and again after a stay in Corinth ([20:1-3](#); see [1 Cor 16:5](#); [2 Cor 1:16](#) and [2:13](#) for other references to Macedonia visits).

Macedonian believers played an important part in the collection Paul gathered for the poor in Jerusalem ([Rom 15:26](#); [2 Cor 9:2-4](#)); Paul commended them for their liberality ([2 Cor 8:1-2](#)). He also praised them for their example of faith, even in times of adversity ([2 Cor 7:5](#); [1 Thes 1:7](#)), and for their love of others ([1 Thes 4:10](#)). Some of the Macedonians worked directly with Paul in carrying out the gospel commission ([Acts 19:29](#); [20:4](#); [27:2](#)), and he addressed letters to churches in two Macedonian cities, Philippi and Thessalonica.

*See also* Greece, Greek.

## Machaerus

A strong fortress where John the Baptist was held in prison. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, this is where Herod Antipas ordered John's execution (Josephus's *Antiquities* 18.5.2).

While Machaerus is not mentioned in the Bible or the religious texts written between the Old and New Testaments, it was one of the strongest fortresses in ancient Palestine. Alexander Janneus first built it (Josephus's *War* 7.6.1-4). Later, during Pompey's wars, a general named Gabinius destroyed it (*War* 1.8.5). After that, Herod the Great rebuilt and expanded it, adding a grand palace inside its walls.

The fortress stood on a high cliff overlooking the Dead Sea. It was located east of the Dead Sea, in the southern part of a region called Perea. Today, this place is known as M'Khaur.

[Matthew 14:1-12](#) and [Mark 6:17-29](#) tell us about Herod's reaction when he heard about Jesus. When Herod heard about Jesus's miracles, he thought Jesus must be John the Baptist brought back to life.

While John was in prison at Machaerus, he was still allowed to have visitors. His friends could come to see him ([Matthew 11:2-3](#); [Luke 7:18-20](#)).

This fortress was also where an important political event happened. Herod had divorced his first wife, who was from Arabia, so he could marry a woman named Herodias. His first wife fled from Machaerus to her father, King Aretas of Arabia. According to Josephus, this led to a war between Herod and King Aretas (Josephus's *Antiquities* 18.5.1). Herod lost this war.

## Machbanai, Machbannai

Warrior from Gad's tribe who joined David at Ziklag in his struggle against King Saul ([1 Chr 12:13](#)).

## Machbenah

A place mentioned in the family records of Caleb and Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:49](#)). The name Machbenah appears in a list with other geographical locations. It is listed before Gibeon, which is probably the same town mentioned in [Joshua 15:57](#). This suggests that Machbenah was likely located in the eastern part of the hill country south of Hebron. This area was known to be inhabited by the descendants of Caleb.

## Machi

The father of Geuel from the tribe of Gad. Geuel was one of the 12 spies sent to search out the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:15](#)).

## Machir

1. A grandson of the patriarch Joseph. He was the firstborn son of Manasseh through his Aramean concubine ([Genesis 50:23](#); [1 Chronicles 7:14](#)). Machir was the father of Gilead and the founder of the Machirite clan ([Numbers 26:29](#)). His descendants defeated the Amorites who lived in the land of Gilead east of the Jordan River during the time of Moses ([Numbers 32:39](#)). Later, Joshua assigned them this land along with Bashan for an inheritance ([Deuteronomy 3:15](#); [Joshua 17:1-3](#)). In [Judges 5:14](#), the whole tribe of Manasseh is called by this name.
2. A son of Ammiel who lived in Lo-debar. Lo-debar was a town east of the Jordan River. Machir provided shelter for Mephibosheth ([2 Samuel 9:4-5](#)). Later, Machir, together with Shobi and Barzillai, brought supplies for David and his people when David was running away from his son Absalom ([2 Samuel 17:27](#)).

## Machirite

Any descendant of Machir. He was a grandson of the patriarch Joseph from the tribe of Manasseh ([Numbers 26:29](#)).

*See* Machir #1.

## Machnadebai

A son of Bani (also called Binnui). Machnadebai followed Ezra's instruction to divorce his foreign wife during the time after the exile to Babylon ([Ezra 10:40](#)).

## Machpelah

Small field of trees and a cave with two chambers near Mamre in the district of Hebron, which was purchased by Abraham as a burial place for Sarah. The seller was Ephron, a Hittite, and the price was

400 shekels of silver ([Gn 23:8-19](#)). Later, Abraham ([25:9](#)), Isaac and Rebekah ([49:30-31](#)), and Jacob ([50:13](#)) were buried here.

The details of Abraham's purchase of Machpelah, if compared with Hittite laws, support the trustworthiness of the story in [Genesis 23](#). Attention is drawn to the number of the trees, the weighing of silver at the current buyer and seller valuation, and the witnesses at the city gate where the transaction was officially made known. All these details are in accordance with Hittite laws, which would have been forgotten after the time of the patriarchs. Coin was not a circulating medium before 700 BC. The implication that the shekel was a weight and not a coin in the time of Abraham also indicates an early date for the story of the purchase.

## Macnadebai

Another spelling of Mahnadebai, son of Bani ([Ezra 10:40](#)).

*See* Machnadebai.

## Madai

Third of Japheth's seven sons ([Gn 10:2](#); [1 Chr 1:5](#)).

## Madian

The King James Version spelling of Midian. This was a geographical region in northwest Arabia ([Acts 7:29](#)).

*See* Midian, Midianite.

## Madmannah (Person)

Shaaph's son and a grandson of Caleb ([1 Chr 2:49](#)).

## Madmannah (Place)

Alternate name for Beth-marcaboth, a city in southern Judah, in [Joshua 15:31](#). *See* Beth-marcaboth.

## Madmen

Town in Moab, according to Jeremiah's oracle ([Jer 48:2](#)). It may be a form created by dittography from an original Dimon, as in the oracle against Moab by Isaiah ([Is 15:9](#)). If so, Khirbet Dimneh, seven and a half miles (12.1 kilometers) northwest of Kerak at the head of Wadi Beni Hammad, would be a possible site. In any case, there is a word play in the Jeremiah passage between the place-name and the Hebrew word "be silent."

## Madmenah

Benjamite town positioned north of Jerusalem along the route taken by the Assyrian army during Sennacherib's military incursion into Judah (c. 701 BC) against King Hezekiah (715–686 BC) and the Holy City ([Is 10:31](#)).

## Madon

One of the many Canaanite cities allied against Joshua in a vain attempt to stop the progress of the Israelites into Palestine. A disastrous battle fought at Meron brought these cities under Israelite control ([Jos 11:1; 12:19](#)). Madon is probably the modern Qarn Hattin, about five miles (8 kilometers) from the Sea of Galilee.

## Magadan

A location that Jesus visited after he crossed the Sea of Galilee ([Matthew 15:39](#)). The correct spelling was most likely Magdala. The only New Testament reference to this town is in the name of Mary *Magdalene*. Magadan had several names:

- Greek sources call it Taricheae, "factories for salting fish" (Strabo 16.2.45; Pliny 5.71)
- Rabbinic sources call it Migdal Nunnayah or Migdal Sab'ayyah, "Tower of the Fishes/ Dyers"
- It was also called el-Mejdel

It was about 4.8 kilometers (three miles) northwest of Tiberias, on the southern end of the great plain of Gennesaret. It was famous for its fertile soil and constant enjoyable climate.

*See also* Dalmanutha.

## Magbish

Town reoccupied after the exile by 156 descendants of its former residents ([Ezr 2:30](#)).

## Magdala

A King James Version name used in [Matthew 15:39](#). Recent versions and translations use the name Magadan. Sources dating from New Testament times locate the town of Magdala a short distance north of the city of Tiberias on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

*See also* Magadan.

## Magdalene, Mary

Name of one of several Marys who followed Jesus. This Mary was the first to see the risen Christ ([In 20:11-18](#)). *See Mary #3*.

## Magdiel

One of the chiefs of Edom ([Gn 36:43](#); [1 Chr 1:54](#)).

## Maggot

Fly larvae ([Jb 25:6](#); [Is 14:11](#)). *See Animals (Fly)*.

## Magi

The wise men mentioned in [Matthew 2:1-12](#) who followed a star to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem to honor the newborn "king of the Jews." This part of Matthew's Gospel is important because it highlights Jesus' true identity as a King and hints at how people from outside Israel (Gentiles) would come to honor Him throughout the Gospel.

### *The Magi in the Ancient World*

Historical records from outside the Bible provide clues about where the magi in [Matthew 2](#) might have come from and what roles they played. The ancient historian Herodotus described magi as a

group of priests from Media or Persia. At that time, Persia's main religion was Zoroastrianism, so Herodotus likely referred to Zoroastrian priests. According to Herodotus, along with other historians like Plutarch and Strabo, these magi were involved in religious ceremonies (such as overseeing sacrifices and prayers) and served as advisers to eastern rulers.

These rulers believed that the movements of the stars and other celestial events reflected what would happen in history. Therefore, they often relied on the magi's knowledge of star charts and dream interpretation to make decisions. The magi's interest in the movement of the stars might explain why they noticed the star in Matthew's account and why they, along with King Herod, believed it signified the birth of an important new ruler ([Matthew 2:2](#)). Centuries before Christ, people also connected a star with the birth of Alexander the Great.

### *Identity in Matthew's Gospel*

Matthew's account does not give much information about who the magi were. He only mentions that they came "from the east" ([Matthew 2:1-2](#)), which means we do not know where they came from. Some early Christian leaders thought the magi might have come from Arabia because the gifts they brought—gold, frankincense, and myrrh ([Matthew 2:11](#))—were likely from that region. Others believed the magi were from Chaldea or Media/Persia, where there was a class of priests called magi that fit Matthew's description.

### *Significance in Matthew's Gospel*

The visit of the magi is important for introducing Matthew's Gospel:

1. It reveals the true identity of the infant Jesus as the long-awaited royal Messiah of Israel. This is shown by the appearance of the "star," which had clear messianic meanings: "A star will come forth from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel" ([Numbers 24:17](#); see also [Isaiah 60:3](#)).
2. The interaction between the magi, Herod, and the chief priests and scribes ([Matthew 2:2-6](#)) shows that Jesus fulfills the prophecy of [Micah 5:2](#), which foretold that Israel's ruler would come from Bethlehem.

3. The gifts the magi offered ([Matthew 2:11](#)) might reflect promises in [Psalms 68:29](#) and [72:10](#), which were also seen as hints about the Messiah.

Besides confirming that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the magi's visit introduces several important themes that continue in Matthew's Gospel.

1. Jesus' role as Messiah affects not only the Jews but also the Gentiles (represented by the "wise men from the East").
2. The surprising faith of Gentiles, a faith that is sometimes lacking among Jesus' own people. While the foreign magi honor the infant Messiah, King Herod and possibly the Jewish religious leaders plot to kill Him ([Matthew 2:3-6, 16](#)). This theme appears again in the Gospel, where Gentiles often show faith in Jesus, contrasting with the lack of faith among many Jews (see [Matthew 8:5-13; 15:21-28; 27:19, 54](#)).

## Magic

Magic is an attempt to influence or control people or events through supernatural forces. People try to use these forces by performing ceremonies, saying special words (spells), using charms, and performing rituals.

Several terms in the Bible might be considered forms of magic. Several of these terms are mentioned in [Deuteronomy 18:9-14](#). God does not allow the people of Israel to practice magic or occult activities. God's people should avoid magical practices because God communicates with them directly through his prophets. Human magical practices can create false hope or false fear and lead people away from God's truth. Although magical practices cannot match the accuracy of God's prophets, the Bible suggests there might be some supernatural reality behind certain magical practices.

### *Magic in the Old Testament*

Magicians appear in the Old Testament book of Exodus, where the magicians of Egypt compete

against Moses. The Bible does not dismiss the magicians' initial success as mere tricks, since they were partly successful at first ([Exodus 7-8](#)). But their failures begin to become clear in [Exodus 8-9](#). The Bible does not completely deny that evil supernatural power might work through a magician. What the Bible makes clear is that this power does not agree with God's will and cannot defeat it.

### *Magic in the New Testament*

In the New Testament, magic is addressed in the book of Acts. When Philip went to Samaria, he met Simon the magician. Simon had gained much attention by amazing people with his magic ([Acts 8:11](#)). After hearing Philip's message, many believed in God and began following him. Simon saw the wonderful things Philip could do and thought these powers came through the ritual of laying on hands. Philip explained that these wonders could not be purchased but came as a gracious gift from God to those who are sorry for their sins.

Another important passage is [Acts 19:11-20](#). Here, some Jewish exorcists tried to use Jesus's name in their work. Instead, the man the evil spirit lived in attacked them. He overpowered them and they ran out of that house naked and hurt. This shows that the power behind the apostles' miracles was based on their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. After this incident, the people of Ephesus had to choose between the word of the Lord and their magical practices. Some brought their books together and burned them in front of everyone. This display of God's power and the need for loyalty to him helped spread the good news about Jesus further.

The Bible's position against magic is stated strongly in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Sorcerers are condemned to the lake of fire ([Revelation 21:8](#)). The Bible consistently opposes magic. It does not rule out the possibility that Satan can use magic for evil purposes. Magical practices are condemned because they may lead to false hope or false fear and draw people away from loyalty to God's Word.

*See also Amulet; Canaanite Deities and Religion; Frontlet; Omen; Soothsayer; Sorcery; Psychics.*

### **Magistrate**

The title of a public official who acted as judge and administrator of a given district. King Artaxerxes ordered Ezra to select magistrates along with judges to govern the people when they returned to Palestine ([Ezra 7:25](#)). This official was one of the officers of Nebuchadnezzar's court invited to the dedication feast ([Daniel 3:2-3](#)). [Luke 12:58](#) portrayed the magistrate as a ruling authority whose verdict was final.

During the Roman era, each colony had two magistrates (called *duumviri*). They judged crimes against the state. So, Paul and Silas were brought before the magistrates at Philippi. They were accused of advocating customs unacceptable to the Romans ([Acts 16:20-38](#)). Before this *duumvir*, they were ordered to be stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison. A chief magistrate was sometimes called a "praetor" (*strategos* in the Greek). It was a special title for a lead *duumvir*.

### **Magnificat**

The song of Mary, the mother of Jesus, found in [Luke 1:46-55](#). The name "Magnificat" comes from the first word of the song in Latin, which means "magnifies" or "praises greatly."

This poem is in the style of the Old Testament psalms and is very similar to the prayer of Hannah in [1 Samuel 2:1-10](#). Christians began using the Magnificat in their worship services very early in church history. The Roman Catholic Church made it part of their evening prayer services. Later, Lutheran and Anglican churches also began using it in their services.

Over many centuries, many composers have created music for this beautiful song of praise. They have written versions in Latin and many other Western languages.

### **Magog**

Term found only five times in the Bible but significant because of its use in the well-known prophetic passages of [Ezekiel 38-39](#) and [Revelation 20](#). In the register of nations in [Genesis 10:2](#) (see also [1 Chr 1:5](#)), Magog was listed among the sons of Japheth, identifying both an individual and the nation that came forth from him. In Ezekiel

and Revelation, Magog came to refer either to a land, a people, or both.

Magog is not mentioned in the contemporary literature of biblical times. Therefore, a definition must come primarily from the witness of Scripture, though writers from later times have given additional clues for the identification of the word. Magog was first identified biblically as a son of Japheth ([Gn 10:2; 1 Chr 1:5](#)), along with Tubal and Meshech (cf. [Ez 38:2](#)). [Ezekiel 38:2](#) associates Magog with the person Gog, indicating that Magog was the land (along with Tubal and Meshech) over which Gog ruled. [Ezekiel 39:6](#) uses the term Magog to speak of the people from the land of Magog. Together, [Ezekiel 38](#) and [39](#) present an invasion of Israel in the latter days (cf. [Ez 38:8–16](#)) by Gog and his people from the land of Magog, along with peoples from every corner of the known world (cf. vv [5–6](#)).

[Revelation 20:8](#) depicts Gog and Magog as invading the land of Israel with a great company of nations from every part of the world. It certainly appears that Ezekiel and Revelation had the same event of the latter days in mind. [Revelation 20:8](#) can be understood to identify Gog as Satan and to see Magog as invading peoples who come with Satan. Some see “Gog and Magog” in [Revelation 20:8](#) as a symbol of a future great battle at the end of the millennium that is similar to the invasion in [Ezekiel 38–39](#), but the terms themselves are not identified specifically. Some see Magog in [Revelation 20](#) as another person along with Gog.

Extrabiblical writings give additional clues. Josephus’s *Antiquities* 1.6.1 equates Magog with the Scythians of the north who lived in the area of present-day Turkey and south-central Russia. *Jubilees* 7:19 and 9:8 refer to Magog as the “northern barbarians.” In the OT, Magog is associated with Tubal and Meshech, geographical areas normally believed to lie in the mountainous region between, and south of, the Caspian and Black Seas.

The available data argue for the identification of Magog in Ezekiel and Revelation with the northern barbarian hordes (perhaps the area of the Scythians) from the modern geographical region of Turkey and south-central Russia who will invade Israel under the leadership of Gog in the latter days. However, there is no warrant in the Scripture or elsewhere to conjecture that these modern nations are *the* identification of these terms.

## Magor-Missabib

Name given by Jeremiah to Pashhur, the chief officer in the house of the Lord. Jeremiah did this because Pashhur put him in stocks for prophesying judgment upon Judah ([Jer 19:14–20:2](#)). The name Pashhur means “prosperity round about” and was changed to “terror on every side” ([20:3](#)) because Pashhur was to see the horrors of the Babylonian invasion.

## Magpiash

Political leader who signed Ezra’s covenant during the postexilic period ([Neh 10:20](#)).

## Mahalab

Reconstructed name of a town in Asher’s tribe ([Jos 19:29](#), nlt “Mehebel”); the Hebrew text has a transposition of the last two consonants, but the town is probably the same as Ahlab and Helbah of [Judges 1:31](#). The correct name is preserved in the Assyrian annals of Sennacherib as Mahalliba; another text has Mahalab. The town is sometimes identified with Khirbet el-Malahib, northeast of Tyre.

*See also* Ahlab.

## Mahalah

KJV rendering of Mahlah, Hammoleketh’s son, in [1 Chronicles 7:18](#). See Mahlah #2.

## Mahalaleel, Mahalalel

1. Kenan’s son and the father of Jared in Seth’s line ([Genesis 5:12–17](#); [1 Chronicles 1:2](#)). He is also mentioned in [Luke 3:37](#).  
*See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.*
2. A son of Perez and member of the tribe of Judah who lived after the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 11:4](#)).

## **Mahalath (Music)**

Musical cue, perhaps meaning “sadness,” listed in the title of [Psalm 53](#) (see rsv), which would designate the way in which and/or the melody to which the psalm should be sung. *See Music.*

## **Mahalath (Person)**

1. Daughter of Ishmael, Nebaioth’s sister, Esau’s third wife, and Reuel’s mother ([Gn 28:9](#)); alternately called Basemath (kjv “Basemath”) in [Genesis 36:3-17](#).
2. Jerimoth’s daughter and King Rehoboam’s first wife ([2 Chr 11:18](#)).

## **Mahalath Leannoth**

Hebrew phrase in the title of [Psalm 88](#), translated “The Suffering of Affliction”; perhaps a familiar ancient melody to which the psalm was performed. *See Music.*

## **Mahali**

The King James Version spelling of Mahli, Merari’s son, in [Exodus 6:19](#).

*See Mahli #1.*

## **Mahanaim**

Mahanam was a settlement east of the Jordan in Gilead.

Jacob met angels there and named the place “the camp of God.” He divided his household and possessions into two camps. This was to keep from losing everything when he confronted Esau ([Genesis 32:1-11](#)). Mahanaim means “two camps” in Hebrew.

The city was along the border between Manasseh and the tribes of Gad ([Joshua 13:26, 30](#)). Joshua gave it to the Levites for an inheritance ([Joshua 21:38; 1 Chronicles 6:80](#)). After the defeat of Saul at Mount Gilboa, Ishbosheth, his son, fled to Mahanaim to set up a capital in exile. He managed to control much of Israel from there until Recab and Baanah assassinated him ([2 Samuel 2:8, 12, 29; 4:5-7](#)).

David fled to this city when Absalom rebelled against him. Here he received supplies from Barzillai and some Gileadites ([17:24-27](#)). At this city gate, he wept as he received the news of the death of Absalom. Solomon chose the city for the capital of his seventh district and established Ahinadab as its governor ([1 Kings 4:14](#)).

The Bible places Mahanaim somewhere near the Jabbok River in central Gilead. In the past, some people thought it was located at Khirbet al-Makhna, about 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) north of Ajalon. Most recently, however, scholars think it may be at the twin hills of Tulul al-Dhabab along the Jabbok River. One expert, Yohanan Aharoni, suggested that the western hill was Mahanaim and the eastern hill was Penuel.

## **Mahaneh-Dan**

Place west of Kiriath-jearim between Zorab and Eshtaol, where the Spirit of the Lord began to stir in Samson ([Jgs 13:25](#)) and where Dan’s tribe encamped on the way to the hill country of Ephraim ([18:12](#)).

## **Maharai**

One of the mighty men of King David. He was a Zerahite from Netophah in the hill country of Judah. David chose Maharai to be a commander in charge of 24,000 soldiers during the tenth month of each year ([2 Samuel 23:28; 1 Chronicles 11:30; 27:13](#)).

## **Mahath**

1. Levite, son of Amasai, and ancestor of Heman the temple singer in David’s time ([1 Chr 6:35](#)).
2. Levite who assisted in the cleansing of the temple during Hezekiah’s time ([2 Chr 29:12](#)). He was appointed an overseer of the contributions, the tithes, and the things dedicated to God ([31:13](#)).

## **Mahavah, Mahavite**

Term used in [1 Chronicles 11:46](#) to designate Eliel, one of David’s mighty men. The word was probably added to indicate where he came from so as to distinguish him from the Eliel in verse [47](#).

## Mahazioth

One of the 14 sons of Heman the Kohathite, and head of the 23d course of tabernacle musicians who ministered with cymbals, harps, and lyres ([1 Chr 25:4, 30](#)).

## Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz

Name of Isaiah's son, meaning "swift to plunder and quick to spoil" (nlt mg), which prophetically described the imminent destruction to befall Damascus and Samaria by the hand of the Assyrians ([Is 8:1, 3](#)).

## Mahlah

1. A Manassite. She was one of the five daughters of Zelophehad. Mahlah and her sisters appealed to Moses and asked him to work out an arrangement that would allow them to keep their inheritance. This was because they had no brothers ([Numbers 26:33; 27:1; 36:11; Joshua 17:3](#)).
2. A son of Hammoleketh from the tribe of Manasseh ([1 Chronicles 7:18](#)).

## Mahli

1. Merari's son and Levi's grandson ([Exodus 6:19](#); [Numbers 3:20](#); [1 Chronicles 6:19, 29](#); [23:21](#); [24:26-28](#); [Ezra 8:18](#)). The founder of the Mahlite family ([Numbers 3:33](#); [26:58](#)). The Mahlites, along with the other families of Merari, were chosen to carry the frames of the tabernacle and the pillars of the court ([Numbers 4:29-33](#)).
2. Mushi's son and the nephew of #1 above ([1 Chronicles 6:47](#); [23:23](#); [24:30](#)).

## Mahlite

Any descendant of Mahli, a son of Merari from the tribe of Levi ([Numbers 3:33; 26:58](#)).

*See* Mahli #1.

## Mahlon

Son of Elimelech and Naomi, and Chilion's brother. While with his family in Moab, he married Ruth, the Moabitess. He died in Moab, however, and Ruth later married Boaz ([Ru 1:2, 5; 4:9-10](#)).

## Mahol

Father of three famous wise men (Heman, Calcol, and Darda) during the Solomonic era (970–930 BC; [1 Kgs 4:31](#)).

## Mahseiah

Forefather of Baruch ([Jer 32:12](#)) and Seraiah ([51:59](#)), spelled Maaseiah in the kJV.

## Maid, Maiden

A young unmarried woman, often from the servant class.

### *Hebrew Words Translated as "Maiden"*

In the Old Testament, five Hebrew words are translated as "maiden":

1. *'amah*. Possible English translations of this word are "bondmaid," "bondwoman," "handmaid(en)," "maid(en)," "maidservant," "female servant," "female slave," "slave girl," and "girl."

2. *shiphchah*. This word means something similar to *'amah*. It can be translated as "handmaid," "maid(en)," "female slave," and "slave girl." Both *shiphchah* and *'amah* refer to female slaves. *Shiphchah* implies a closer relationship between the slave and her owner. In the stories of the patriarchs, this term is used to refer to female slaves in general and concubines who were slaves to the wives of their husbands ([Genesis 16, 29–30](#)).
3. *bethulah*. This term refers to a virgin, or a young woman of marriageable age ([Genesis 24:16](#); [Exodus 22:16](#)). The Old Testament prophets used this term symbolically to refer to a city or country as a "virgin" ([Jeremiah 31:21](#); [Amos 5:2](#)).
4. *na'arah*. This term often refers to an unmarried girl ([Esther 2:4](#)). It can also be used for a servant ([Esther 4:4](#); [Ruth 2:23](#)). This word is also the name of a woman (Naarah, the wife of Ashhur, in [1 Chronicles 4:5–6](#)) and a city in Ephraim near Jericho ([Joshua 16:7](#)).
5. *'almah*. There is much controversy around this word used in [Isaiah 7:14](#). It can mean "girl," "young woman," or "young woman of marriageable age, presumably a virgin." Only context can accurately determine the meaning of *'almah* in any given instance. Looking at [Isaiah 7:14](#) from a New Testament perspective, *'almah* is a reference to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus (see [Matthew 1:23](#)).

#### *Greek Words Translated as "Maiden"*

Several Greek words are translated as "maiden" in the English New Testament:

1. *korasion*. This word means "girl," "little girl," or "maiden" ([Matthew 9:24–25](#)).

2. *paidiske*. This word originally referred to a "young woman" but later came to mean "a female slave," "a servant-maid," or "a servant girl" ([Mark 14:66](#); [Luke 12:45](#)). It comes from *pais* ("a young girl," "maiden," or "child") ([Luke 8:51, 54](#)).
3. *numphe*. This word means "young wife," "bride," and "daughter-in-law" ([Luke 12:53](#); [Revelation 21:2](#)).
4. *parthenos*. This is the usual Greek word for "virgin" and occurs 14 times in the New Testament.

*See also Slave, Slavery.*

#### **Mail, Coat of**

Body armor consisting of small interlaced metal plates sewn onto a leather jacket. *See Armor and Weapons.*

#### **Makaz**

One of the 12 cities that provided food one month out of the year for King Solomon and his household ([1 Kgs 4:9](#)). Situated in northwest Judah, it may be identified with Khirbet el-Mukheizin, south of Ekron.

#### **Makheloth**

A place where the Israelites camped during their journey from Egypt to Canaan. They stopped here after leaving Haradah and before going to Tahath ([Numbers 33:25–26](#)).

*See Wilderness Wanderings.*

#### **Maki**

Another spelling of Machi, the father of Geuel from the tribe of Gad

*See Machi.*

## Makir

Another spelling of the name Machir.

*See* Machir.

## Makirite

Another spelling of Machirite. Makirite refers to a descendant of Machir, who was the firstborn son of Manasseh and the grandson of Joseph.

*See* Machirite.

## Makkedah

One of the Shephelah towns conquered during the southern campaign led by Joshua ([Jos 10:10-29; 12:16](#)). It belonged to the same district as Lachish ([15:41](#)). Eusebius placed it eight Roman miles east of Eleutheropolis (Beth-guvrin), which would lead to Beit-Maqдум, a Roman-Byzantine ruin beside the Roman road from Eleutheropolis to Hebron. The biblical site may have been at Khirbet el-Qom about one-half mile (.8 kilometer) to the southwest.

## Maktesh

Locality within the topography of Jerusalem ([Zep 1:11](#)). Since the word means "mortar," the expression here should refer to some basinlike depression. It is probably the Tyropeon Valley opposite the temple mount, though the Targum equates it with the Kidron.

## Malachi (Person)

Author of the last book of the OT ([Mal 1:1](#)). The prophet Malachi lived about 500–460 BC. His name means "my angel" or "my messenger" and is so translated in [Malachi 3:1](#) and elsewhere. Apart from the book that bears his name, nothing else is known about him from the Bible. In the apocryphal book of [2 Esdras 1:40](#) he is identified as "Malachi, who is also called a messenger of the Lord." Rabbinic tradition suggests that Malachi may be another name for Ezra the scribe, although there is no supporting evidence for this identification.

*See also* Malachi, Book of; Prophet, Prophetess.

## Malachi, Book of

The last book written by a prophet in the Old Testament. It is also the last book of the Old Testament.

### Preview

- Who Wrote the Book of Malachi?
- What Is the Story of the Book of Malachi?
- When Was the Book of Malachi Written?
- Why Was the Book of Malachi Written? What Does It Teach Us About God?
- What Is the Book of Malachi About?

### *Who Wrote the Book of Malachi?*

The name Malachi means "my messenger" or "messenger of the Lord." Since the word appears in [Malachi 3:1](#), some scholars believe it might not be a proper name and does not identify the book's author. According to one ancient tradition, the "messenger" was Ezra, the priest responsible for the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, it would be unusual for the Jews to keep a prophetic book without clearly naming the author. All other major and minor prophets, including Obadiah, are named after specific prophets. Additionally, "messengers of God" would be a fitting name for a prophet (see [2 Chronicles 36:15-16](#); [Haggai 1:13](#)).

### *What Is the Story of the Book of Malachi?*

In the fifth century BC, the Jewish community in Judah received significant help from Ezra and Nehemiah. In 458 BC, King Artaxerxes of Persia encouraged Ezra to lead exiles back to Jerusalem and start religious reforms. Thirteen years later, in 445 BC, Nehemiah, a high-ranking official, went to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls, completing the task in 52 days ([Nehemiah 6:15](#)).

As governor, Nehemiah led financial reforms to help the poor and encouraged tithing to support priests and Levites ([Nehemiah 5:2-13; 10:35-39](#)). Like Ezra, Nehemiah urged the people to observe the Sabbath and avoid marrying pagan neighbors. After 12 years, Nehemiah returned to Persia, and Judah's spiritual state worsened. Without political power, tithing became irregular, the Sabbath was ignored, intermarriage was common, and even

priests were unreliable. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem later, he took strong actions to fix the situation ([Nehemiah 13:6-31](#)).

### *When Was the Book of Malachi Written?*

Malachi addressed the same sins mentioned in [Nehemiah 13](#) (see [Malachi 1:6-14; 2:14-16; 3:8-11](#)). This suggests he served either during Nehemiah's second term as governor or shortly before Nehemiah returned. The mention of "your governor" in [Malachi 1:8](#) suggests someone other than Nehemiah was in office. Therefore, it is likely Malachi served just after 433 BC when Nehemiah returned to Persia.

### *Why Was the Book of Malachi Written? What Does It Teach Us About God?*

Malachi was written to warn the people of Judah that they needed to change their ways. They had stopped taking their relationship with God seriously. If they did not repent (turn back) to following God's ways, God would bring judgment.

The people doubted God's love ([Malachi 1:2](#)). They also doubted God's justice ([Malachi 2:17](#)). The people did not take his commands seriously ([Malachi 1:6; 3:14-18](#)). Yet God was a "great King" ([Malachi 1:14](#)) with a great name that was to be feared even beyond Israel's borders ([Malachi 1:5, 11](#)). Malachi repeatedly urged both the priests and the people to respect God and give him the honor he deserved. God was Israel's Father and Creator ([Malachi 2:10](#)), but the nation showed disrespect for his name ([Malachi 1:6; 3:5](#)).

In response to this disrespect, God would send his messenger to announce the Day of the Lord ([Malachi 3:1](#)). John the Baptist called the nation to repentance. Jesus came to cleanse the temple ([John 2:14-15](#)) and to establish the covenant ([Malachi 3:1-2](#)). Most of the refining and purifying work will happen at the second coming when Jesus returns to purify his people ([Malachi 3:2-4](#)). He will judge the wicked ([Malachi 4:1](#)).

### *What Is the Book of Malachi About?*

#### **God's Great Love for Israel ([1:1-5](#))**

Malachi begins the book by contrasting God's love for Israel with his dislike for Edom. When God claims to love Israel, the people ask, "How have You loved us?" God showed his love by making a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, right after freeing them from Egypt. He chose them as his

special people (see [Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6](#)). But Esau's descendants were not chosen (see [Romans 9:10-13](#)).

Both Israel and Edom experienced invasion and destruction, but only Israel was restored and rebuilt after the exile. The Nabateans drove the people of Edom from their homeland between 550 and 400 BC, and they never regained it. Through Edom's judgment, God showed he is the great Ruler over nations ([Malachi 1:5](#)) and that he will not forget Israel.

#### **The Unacceptable Sacrifices of the Priests ([1:6-14](#))**

God deserved honor and respect from the Israelites, yet both the people and priests ignored his laws. Surprisingly, the priests led this disobedience. Sacrifices and offerings were meant to atone for sin, but the priests' animals only polluted the altar ([Malachi 1:7, 12](#)). According to Leviticus, animals with defects were unacceptable as sacrifices. However, Malachi notes that priests offered stolen, mutilated, crippled, and sick animals to the Lord ([Malachi 1:13](#); compare to verse 8).

To highlight their disrespect, the Lord challenged the priests to give similar gifts to the governor. Would they dare insult him and face rejection? Instead of continuing with unfit sacrifices, the Lord asked them to close the temple doors ([Malachi 1:10](#)). Simply going through the motions never pleased God, in ancient times (compare [Isaiah 1:12-13](#)) or today. By calling the altar and its sacrifices "contemptible" ([Malachi 1:7, 12](#)), the priests were as bad as Eli's wicked sons, whose disregard for sacrifice rules led to their early deaths (compare [1 Samuel 2:15-17](#)).

Unlike the priests' attitude, [Malachi 1:11](#) and [14](#) highlight God's greatness. God is more powerful than other nations' gods. Even if Israel's priests and people disrespect God, believing Gentiles will eventually bring pure offerings to Him. These offerings might mean prayer and praise (see [Psalm 19:14; Hebrews 13:15; Revelation 5:8](#)), but some interpret them literally (see [Isaiah 56:7; 60:7](#)). Peter might refer to this verse when discussing Cornelius's conversion ([Acts 10:35](#)).

#### **The Punishment of the Priests ([2:1-9](#))**

The priests were supposed to bless the people in God's name, but their bad behavior turned blessings into curses ([Malachi 2:2](#)). Because of the

priests' sins and the poor condition of the animals, their sacrifices became worthless. God would spread the animals' entrails on their faces as a sign of contempt. This disgrace contrasts with the honor Aaron and his descendants enjoyed. Malachi mentions a covenant of life and peace ([Malachi 2:5](#)) made with Levi, especially with Aaron's grandson Phinehas. Phinehas bravely acted against Jews involved in idolatry and immorality ([Numbers 25:10–13](#)). In those days, the priests respected the Lord and turned many away from sin ([Malachi 2:6](#)).

The priests also had to teach the nation the law given by Moses (see [Leviticus 10:11](#)). Like prophets, they were messengers of the Lord ([Malachi 2:7](#)) and were supposed to stay close to Him. However, the priests ignored the law and were dishonest in making judicial decisions ([Malachi 2:9](#); see [Leviticus 19:15](#)).

### **The Unfaithfulness of the People ([2:10–16](#))**

Given the priests' attitude, it is not surprising that the people were unfaithful to the Lord. God chose Israel as his special people, but they broke their promise to him. A major reason for their unfaithfulness was marrying foreigners, a sin mentioned in [Ezra 9:1–2](#) and [Nehemiah 13:23–29](#). By marrying pagan women, the men of Israel began to worship pagan gods and turned away from the Lord. This intermarriage sometimes followed the divorce of an Israelite wife. In [Malachi 2:14–15](#), God emphasizes the sacred commitment he witnesses when two people marry. If divorce breaks that marriage covenant, God is deeply displeased. It is even more tragic if divorce becomes an excuse to marry a more attractive or appealing foreigner.

### **The Coming of the Messenger of the Covenant ([2:17–3:5](#))**

The priests and the people sinned, and God noticed, even though the nation doubted He would act ([Malachi 2:17](#)). The third chapter begins by announcing that the messenger of the covenant will come to his temple. Another messenger will prepare his way, referring to John the Baptist, who prepared for Christ's ministry (see [Matthew 11:10](#); [Mark 1:2–3](#)).

When Christ arrived, he showed his anger by cleansing the temple (see [John 2:13–17](#)). He also criticized the scribes and Pharisees (see [John 9:39](#)). However, most of his purifying work will happen at the second coming. In the future, priests and Levites will offer acceptable sacrifices, as they did

during Moses and Phinehas's time (see [Malachi 3:3–4](#) and [2:4–5](#)). [Malachi 3:5](#) expands the judgment to the entire nation, condemning sorcerers, adulterers, and those who oppress the poor.

### **The Benefits of Faithful Tithing ([3:6–12](#))**

One weakness of Judah after the exile was the people's failure to bring their tithes to the Lord. Nehemiah encouraged the nation to promise to tithe faithfully (see [Nehemiah 10:37–39](#)). But their good intentions did not last long (see [Malachi 13:10–11](#)).

According to [Malachi 3:8–9](#), the nation's tithes were so poor that they were essentially robbing God and were under a curse. In [Malachi 3:10–12](#), Malachi challenges the nation to bring their tithes, promising that God would then bless them. Just as the opening of the "windows in heaven" ended a famine in [2 Kings 7:2, 19](#), God promises their crops will be so plentiful that they will run out of storage space. The hope of "blessing" in [Malachi 3:10](#) and [12](#) offers relief from the curses mentioned in [Malachi 1:14](#), [2:2](#), [3:9](#), and [4:6](#).

### **The Day of the Lord ([3:13–4:6](#))**

Faced with the challenge of [Malachi 3:10–12](#), the people of Israel reacted in two ways. One group denied any benefit from serving God ([Malachi 3:13–15](#)), while another showed deep respect and reverence ([Malachi 3:16–18](#)). The unbelievers claimed that obeying the Lord was without purpose and that arrogant and evil people thrived. Malachi responded by saying God would remember the righteous on the Day of Judgment.

Although all of Israel was part of Abraham's promise, only true believers would be God's "treasured possession" ([Malachi 3:17](#); see also [Exodus 19:5](#)). Their names would be in the Book of Life (see [Malachi 3:16](#)). The Day of the Lord will destroy the arrogant and evildoers, leaving no survivors ([Malachi 4:1](#)). Those who honor the Lord will enjoy spiritual and physical health under God's blessing and protection, who is called the "sun of righteousness" ([Malachi 4:2](#)). Like calves freed from confinement, the righteous will trample the wicked and triumph over them ([Malachi 4:3](#)).

Because of the judgment linked to the Day of the Lord, Malachi urged the people to repent. They needed to follow the law of Moses and take seriously the decrees and commands given at Mount Sinai ([Malachi 4:4](#); see also [3:7](#)). Just as

Elijah called Israel to return to God, a new "Elijah" will preach repentance to a rebellious nation.

When John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, he worked "in the spirit and power of Elijah" and urged the Jews to turn from their sins and humble themselves before God ([Luke 1:17](#); see also [Malachi 3:1](#)). If they refused to listen, the nation would experience total destruction, similar to the curse on the people of Canaan (see also [Joshua 6:17–19](#)) and the nation of Edom, whose fall is described in [Malachi 1:2–5](#).

*See also* Israel, History of; Postexilic Period; Prophecy; Prophet, Prophetess.

## Malcam

Shaharaim's son from Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chr 8:9](#)).

## Malcham

1. KJV form of Malcam in [1 Chronicles 8:9](#). See Malcam.
2. KJV form of Milcom, an Ammonite god, in [Zephaniah 1:5](#). See Milcom.

## Malchiah

1. KJV spelling of Malchijah, Gershon's descendant, in [1 Chronicles 6:40](#). See Malchijah #1.
2. KJV spelling of Malchijah, Parosh's son, in [Ezra 10:25](#). See Malchijah #4.
3. KJV spelling of Malchijah, Harim's son, in [Ezra 10:31](#). See Malchijah #6.
4. KJV spelling of Malchijah, Recab's son, in [Nehemiah 3:14](#). See Malchijah #7.
5. KJV spelling of Malchijah the goldsmith in [Nehemiah 3:31](#). See Malchijah #8.
6. KJV spelling of Malchijah, Ezra's assistant, in [Nehemiah 8:4](#). See Malchijah #9.
7. KJV spelling of Malchijah, Adaiah's forefather, in [Nehemiah 11:12](#). See Malchijah #2.
8. KJV spelling of Malchijah, the royal prince in whose cistern Jeremiah was imprisoned ([Jer 38:6](#)). Malchijah is also spelled Melchijah ([21:1](#)). See Malchijah #12.

## Malchiel, Malchielite

Beriah's son, a grandson of Asher ([Gn 46:17](#); [1 Chr 7:31](#)), and the founder of the Malchielite family ([Nm 26:45](#)).

## Malchijah

1. Gershon's descendant, appointed by David, along with the rest of his family, to serve as a temple musician ([1 Chr 6:40](#), kjv "Malchiah").
2. Priest who served in the time of David ([1 Chr 9:12](#)). His descendants were among those who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel ([Neh 11:12](#)).
3. Priest in David's reign ([1 Chr 24:9](#)); perhaps the same as #2 above.
4. Parosh's son, who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile ([Ezr 10:25](#), kjv "Malchiah").
5. KJV rendering of Hashabiah, another of Parosh's sons, in [Ezra 10:25](#). See Hashabiah #9.
6. Harim's son, who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile ([Ezr 10:31](#), kjv "Malchiah"). He repaired part of the Jerusalem wall under Nehemiah ([Neh 3:11](#)).
7. Recab's son and the ruler of Beth-hakkerem. Under Nehemiah's direction, he repaired the Dung Gate of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 3:14](#)).
8. Goldsmith who worked under Nehemiah's direction to help repair the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 3:31](#)).
9. One who stood to Ezra's left during the public reading of the law ([Neh 8:4](#)).
10. Priest who signed Ezra's covenant of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile ([Neh 10:3](#)).
11. Participant in the dedication of the rebuilt Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:42](#)).
12. Royal prince who owned a cistern in which the prophet Jeremiah was imprisoned ([Jer 38:6](#)). Malchijah's son Pashhur ([21:1](#); [38:1](#)) was one of those who, after hearing the harsh prophecies of Jeremiah, appealed to King Zedekiah to put Jeremiah to death. The princes attempted to do so by throwing him into Malchijah's cistern.

## Malchiram

The son of Jeconiah (also spelled Jehoiachin), and a descendant of David ([1 Chronicles 3:18](#)).

## Malchishua, Malchi-shua

Malchishua was the third son of King Saul ([1 Samuel 14:49](#); [1 Chronicles 8:33](#); [9:39](#)). He was killed by the Philistines at the battle of Gilboa ([1 Samuel 31:2](#); [1 Chronicles 10:2](#)).

## Malchus

The name of a slave of the high priest in [John 18:10](#). At the time of Jesus's arrest, Peter cut Malchus with a sword and removed his ear. In [Matthew 26:51](#), [Mark 14:47](#), and [Luke 22:50–51](#), no name is given for this person. According to Luke, Jesus immediately healed the wound.

## Maleleel

The King James Version spelling of Mahalaleel, an ancestor of Jesus in [Luke 3:37](#).

*See* Mahalaleel, Mahalalel #1.

## Malkiel, Malkielite

*See* Malchiel, Malchielite.

## Malkijah

Malkijah is another spelling of the name Malchijah.

*See* Malchijah.

## Malkiram

Malkiram is another spelling of the name Malchiram.

*See* Malchiram.

## Malkishua

Malkishua is another spelling of the name Malchishua (or Malchi-shua).

*See* Malchishua, Malchi-shua.

## Mallothi

One of Heman's 17 children ([1 Chr 25:4–5](#)), who became leader of the 19th of 24 divisions of singers for service in the sanctuary during David's reign (v [26](#)).

## Mallow, Saltwort

A shrubby plant mentioned in [30:4](#). The Hebrew word used in this verse suggests saltiness. Because of this, plant experts believe it refers to one of the species of saltwort or orach.

Twenty-one species of saltwort grow in Israel and the surrounding areas. Almost all of these are common plants that could match what the Bible describes. *Atriplex halimus* is the species most commonly suggested. It is a strong-growing bushy shrub related to spinach.

## Malluch

1. Merarite Levite and ancestor of Ethan the singer in Solomon's temple ([1 Chr 6:44](#)).
2. Bani's son, whom Ezra required to divorce his foreign wife ([Ezr 10:29](#)).
3. Harim's son, whom Ezra required to divorce his foreign wife ([Ezr 10:32](#)).
4. Priest who set his seal on Ezra's covenant ([Neh 10:4](#)).
5. Another priest who set his seal on Ezra's covenant ([Neh 10:27](#)).
6. Priest who returned from the exile with Zerubbabel ([Neh 12:2](#)).

## Malluchi

Father of a house headed by Jonathan during the days of the high priest Joiakim in the postexilic

period ([Neh 12:14](#), nlt mg). Possibly the same person as Malluch #6.

## Malta

Island in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily. The name Malta occurs only once in the Bible ([Acts 28:1](#) kJV "Melita"), in connection with the shipwreck that occurred on Paul's voyage to Rome ([25:11-12](#)). This voyage was undertaken during the winter, the season in which storms are most likely to be encountered on the Mediterranean. The ship proceeded cautiously, for contrary winds were blowing ([27:4](#)). With difficulty they reached the harbor of Fair Havens on Crete (vv [7-8](#)). In spite of a warning by Paul, the decision was made to try to reach the Cretan port of Phoenix, which was more suitable for wintering (vv [9-12](#)).

Caught by a severe storm and driven helplessly by the wind for 14 days, the ship finally neared land during the night. In the morning, the ship tried for the beach but ran aground and was pounded to pieces by the surf. Everyone managed to reach the shore safely. While putting wood on a fire, Paul was bitten by a viper. The natives of the island supposed that he was a criminal whose life was being taken by the bite of a snake. When he did not fall down dead, they radically changed their opinion of him and regarded him as a god ([Acts 28:6](#)).

The island of Malta is about 60 miles (96.5 kilometers) from Sicily and has an area of 95 square miles (246.1 square kilometers). St. Paul's Bay marks the traditional site of the shipwreck of Acts. The island is essentially agricultural, but production is poor because of the thin calcareous soil. Terracing is practiced in order to utilize the soil to the fullest extent. The island has no rivers and is dependent on rainfall and springs for its water. The climate in general is mild, but in the summer the island is subject to the hot, dust-laden sirocco from the deserts of Libya.

## Mammon

An Aramaic word meaning wealth or property. The Gospel writers wrote it in Greek letters.

Some English translations preserve the Greek form of the word in English (King James Version, Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible). Meanwhile, others translate it with the words

"wealth" or "money" (New English Bible, Today's English Version, New International Version, New Living Translation). In [Matthew 6:24](#) and [Luke 16:13](#), "mammon" is rivalled against God for his disciple's loyalty: Which master will they be obedient to? In [Luke 16:9-11](#) the term designates material wealth or property. Mammon has no negative value. Luke 16:11 makes this clear. It says: "If you have not been faithful with worldly wealth, who will entrust you with true riches?"

## Mamre (Person)

Owner of a parcel of land called "the plain of Mamre." He was an Amorite and is recorded as having two brothers: Aner and Eshcol ([Gn 14:13](#)). These became confederates of Abraham when he fought to save his nephew Lot.

## Mamre (Place)

Important oak grove near which Abraham lived, and named for an Amorite who helped him defeat Chedorlaomer and rescue Lot ([Gn 14:13, 24](#)). Abraham erected an altar under the oak of Mamre ([13:18](#)). Abraham was sitting by the sacred tree when he welcomed three mysterious guests (ch [18](#)). Mamre is also a possible site for the scene of Abrahamic covenant ceremonies (ch [15](#)). Isaac and Jacob also lived there ([35:27](#)).

## Man

Human being, whether male or female.

The biblical teaching on man begins with a right notion concerning God. The biblical perspective of anthropology (i.e., the study of man) is centrally displayed in the context of an elevated theology (i.e., the study of God). A high and reverent view of God leads to a noble and dignified view of man, whereas a poorly developed concept of God often produces a distorted perspective on man. Hence, man may be viewed more importantly than he ought, or man may be seen less important than is biblical. Either view is subbiblical. The place to begin a study of man (which in this article is used as a generic term for both male and female human beings) is with a view of God, his Creator.

### *Man's Origin*

Against the naturalistic, materialistic theories of origins, the biblical view starts with the assertion that the eternal God has created man, the most significant of all his created works. It is not necessary for one to subscribe to a particular chronological scenario for God's work in the creation of man. Some Christians believe the Bible teaches a closed chronology in [Genesis 1](#) made of six literal 24-hour days (cf. [Gn 1:5, 8, 13](#), etc.), with the stunning, sudden appearance of man coming perhaps just some 6,000 years ago (cf. the chronologies associated with but not limited to Archbishop James Ussher, *Annales*, 1650–58). Some who hold this general viewpoint (sometimes called creation science) extend the creation of man to about 10,000 years ago, based on a view of some elasticity in the chronologies of [Genesis 5](#) and [11](#).

Others believe the texts of [Genesis 1](#) and [2](#) may be interpreted far more broadly to speak of a most remote antiquity for the creation of man (extending to millions of years). They argue that process (under God's control and direction) may have played a significant role in God's creative work. This viewpoint is best termed progressive creationism, and is to be contrasted with theistic evolution, in which God is usually viewed as initiating the process but having little involvement once the processes are in motion. In the former approach, the Hebrew term "day" (*yom*) in [Genesis 1](#) may refer to an extended period of time (e.g., the "day-age" theory); thus, the phrasing "an evening and a morning, the *xth* day" may be a literary device to present successive scenes in the creative works of God through the processes of time.

Many Christians find themselves somewhere between a conservative and a broad chronology for man's origin. Yet in spite of individual preferences, one must give assent to God's creative work in producing man in order to think biblically about man. The essence of faith begins in the words "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."

Man is not only God's creation but also the pinnacle of his creative effort. Long before modern precision in such things, the ancients were aware of man's anatomical similarities with members of the animal kingdom. Yet despite these similarities, the biblical viewpoint never places man on the same level as animals—man is distinct, the high point of God's creative work, the apex of his handicraft. The progression of the created things in [Genesis 1](#) is

climactic; all of God's created work culminated in his fashioning of man.

The distinct behavioral characteristics of man include language, toolmaking, and culture. Distinct experiential characteristics include reflective awareness, ethical concern, aesthetic urges, historical awareness, and metaphysical concern. These factors individually and collectively separate man from other forms of animal life. Man is far more than the "naked ape" of some modern evolutionary theories. But sociology alone does not suffice to explain the full nature of man. That is the subject of divine revelation.

While man bears a continuity with God's creation (assumed in the words of [Gn 2:7](#), being fashioned from the dust of the earth), man is also distinct from all that precedes him because God breathed into him the breath of life so that he became a living soul ([2:7](#)). Man was created by God as male and female ([1:27](#)), meaning that what is said generally of man must be said of both the male and the female, and that the truest picture of what it means to be human will be found in the context of man and woman together. The commands to multiply and exercise sovereignty over the earth were given to both sexes as shared responsibility. Similarly, it is man as male and female that rebelled against God and bears the consequences of that primeval sin in the postfall world, and it is man as male and female that Christ came to redeem (cf. [Gal 3:28](#)). At the same time, the words "male" and "female" denote true distinctions. Many perceived gender differences may be culturally conditioned, yet the prime sexual distinctions between male (Hebrew, *zakar*, "the piercer") and female (Hebrew, *neqeba*, "the pierced") are divinely intended. It takes both male and female to exhibit the full image of God (see [Gn 1:27](#)).

Indeed, the most stunning biblical assertion respecting man is that God made man *in his image*. Of no other creature, not even the angels, is such a statement found. The words "in God's image" in [Genesis 1:26–28](#) are the basis for the psalmist's paraphrase in [Psalm 8:5](#), "for you have made him to lack but little of God" (literal translation; "lower than the angels," Septuagint translation). The meaning of the phrase "the image of God" (Latin, *imago Dei*) has been the subject of much debate. Some have thought the phrase to refer to a physical representation of God, but this is doubtful in that God is spirit (cf. [Jn 4:24](#)). Others think the phrase refers to man's personhood, which corresponds to the personality of God (having intellect,

sensibilities, and will). Such qualities of man may be found in God's image; however, these varied aspects of personality are also shared by other members of the animal kingdom and are not unique to the human species.

The basic meaning of the word "image" (Hebrew, *tselem*) is "shadow," "representation," or "likeness." The image of God in man reveals God's perspective of man's worth and dignity as a representation or a shadow of himself in the created world. Ancient kings of Assyria were known to have physical images of themselves placed in outlying districts as a reminder to those who might be prone to forget that these areas were a part of the empire. So God has placed in man a shadow of himself, a representation of his presence, in the world that he has made.

This view of God's image in man seems to be confirmed by the immediate context in [Genesis 1](#). Man, created in God's image, is to have dominion over all of God's other works ([Gn 1:26](#); see also [Ps 8:5](#)). Further, as a representative of the Creator, man is to respond to him. Jesus' assertion of the spirituality of God results in a response of worship in spirit and in truth ([Jn 4:21-24](#)).

### *Man's Nature*

One may tend to think of man in parts, but the biblical emphasis is on man as a whole. Debates continue on the tripartite (threefold) nature of man (cf. [1 Thes 5:23](#))—spirit, soul, and body—as against a bipartite (twofold) nature of man, material and immaterial. Though the Bible does seem to support both positions, the most important issue respecting the nature of man is his unity rather than the number of his parts. Hence, a biblical view of man begins in the assertion that one is a person made up of physical and nonphysical properties. In the words of Karl Barth, the human person is "bodily soul, as he is also besouled body." There is no person in body only, nor can one easily think of a bodiless spirit as a person, except in a temporary, transitional state. The Hebrew term *nephesh*, often translated "soul," is best rendered "person" in most contexts. The Hebrew word *ruach* ("breath," "wind," "spirit") and the Greek words *pneuma* ("spirit") and *psuche* ("soul") often speak of the immaterial part of man. This is no less real than the physical. A purely material, physical view of man is frightfully deficient. At the same time, an overemphasis on the spirit and a deemphasis on the physical is neither realistic nor balanced. One may say, "I am a person

whose existence is presently very dependent upon my physical body. But I am more than body, more than flesh. When my body dies, I still live. When my flesh decays, I exist. But one day I shall live in a body again. For the notion of a disembodied spirit is not the full measure of my humanity. God's ideal for me is to live my life in my [new] body. So in hope of the eternal state, I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

One cannot go far in thinking of the nature of man from the biblical vantage point without first facing the problem of the fall. [Genesis 3](#) suggests that unfallen man was immortal, that his powers of sexual reproduction were not originally bound in the pain in childbearing, and that his work was not troubled by reversals in nature. After the fall, however, all was changed: within man himself, between the male and the female, in his interaction with nature, and in his relationship with the Creator.

As a result of the fall, man has become profoundly fallen, a fallenness extending to every part of his person. The phrase "total depravity" need not mean that one is as evil as he or she might be, but rather that the results of sin affect one's whole being. At the time, the image of God in man continues in some way after the fall, providing the divine rationale for salvation (cf. [Rom 5](#)). It is essentially because of God's estimation of the intrinsic worth of man that the divine justification of salvation may be maintained.

The old debate between the essential goodness and the evil disposition of man finds its quandary and resolution in the Genesis account: God made man to consciously reflect the dignity and nobility of the Creator, yet man, by his own deliberate rebellion, turned against his Creator and continues, except by God's grace, in the ensuing sin that marks his life. This resultant sin is both a quality of being in the fallen person, as well as numerous, continuing acts of pride and selfishness. Though the image of God in man was marred by the fall, it may be stimulated anew by the effective work of the Spirit of God as one comes to newness of life in Christ. This gracious work of God brings personal renewal, restoration of relationships with others, and fellowship with God.

Man, then, who was created good by God, has become evil by his own devices, yet in God's power he may recapture the good again. The rediscovery of what it means to be fully human is found in the life of Jesus, whose human life is the new beginning for man. Hence, Jesus is the new Adam; in his model

there is a new beginning that replaces the former pattern.

### *Man's Destiny*

A biblical view of man must include a balanced statement respecting his divine origin, his rebellion against the grace of God, his judgment, and his prospect for redemption in the person of the Savior Jesus with the promise of eternal life. Man has a beginning and will live forever. This assertion is in stark contrast to naturalistic theories of origins and destinies. One of the most deceptive tendencies of modern thought is the concept "coming to terms with death." People with no thought of God and no hope for eternity are encouraging each other to accept the inevitable decline and demise of their bodies as the natural end to human life. The biblical notion is that death in man is not natural at all.

Death is an acquired trait, not the natural destiny of man. Death may be said of the body but not of the spirit. The biblical teaching is that while the body dies and decays, the person lives on in hope of a renewed body. Those who have come to know Christ go to be with him when their bodies die ([Phil 1:23](#)) and anticipate the resurrection of the body for eternal life to come ([1 Cor 15:35-49](#)). Those who die apart from Christ do not cease to exist but rather are assigned an eternal existence of conscious knowledge that they are separated from God and have fallen short of their destiny to enjoy his presence forever. The biblical teaching on the destiny of the lost is quite unpalatable for modern man. Even Christians who have generally high views of biblical inspiration may find themselves blanching at the thought of eternal punishment of the wicked. Yet the biblical doctrine of the final judgment of the wicked is as well established as most teachings in the Bible.

One of the most dramatic truths in Scripture respecting the nature of man is to realize that it was for man that God initiated the salvation work that led to the incarnation of the eternal son of God. After his resurrection and ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ returned to his eternal position of glory and majesty in heaven, where he forever remains the God-man. As God, he shares all the attributes of the Father and the Holy Spirit, and as man, identifies with man. He reveals himself in a physical body, albeit the resurrection body, the firstfruits of the resurrection of all who are his. The incarnation, then, brought about an eternal change in deity. Only a very high view of the worth of man could have brought God to such a fundamental change in

himself. As the writer to the Hebrews states, "Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form" ([Heb 2:14](#), nlt).

The final measure of our humanity is that man was made to worship God and to enjoy him forever. Such thoughts are not attributed to any other created being. Even the angels, who have maintained their perfect state and who worship the Father in conscious bliss, do not have quite the same relationship with God as do redeemed men ([Heb 2:16](#)).

What is man? In Christ, man is all God means him to be, in majesty and dignity, and in joy before his throne forever.

*See also* Image of God; Man, Natural; Man, Old and New.

### **Man of Lawlessness, Man of Sin**

Expression used by the apostle Paul of the Antichrist in [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#). See Antichrist; Mystery of Lawlessness.

### **Man, Natural**

"Natural man" is an expression that occurs in [1 Corinthians 2:14](#) in certain Bible translations. The word translated as "natural" is also found in [1 Corinthians 15:44, 46](#); [James 3:15](#); and [Jude 1:19](#).

#### *What Does "Natural Man" Mean?*

The word is related to the Greek noun usually translated as "soul." The meaning of the word is determined by context. In 1 Corinthians, all four uses are contrasted with "spiritual," a word common in Paul's writings. In almost every instance, "spiritual" refers to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Applied to things, "spiritual" means coming from, or produced by, the Holy Spirit. The New Testament authors describe several things as "spiritual":

- The law is "spiritual" in [Romans 7:14](#).
- Gifts are "spiritual" in [1 Corinthians 12:1](#).
- Blessings are "spiritual" in [Ephesians 1:3](#).
- Sacrifices are "spiritual" in [1 Peter 2:5](#).

When the word is applied to persons, it means motivated and directed by the Holy Spirit ([1 Corinthians 2:15; 14:37; Galatians 6:1](#)). "Natural" is contrasted with "spiritual," so it generally describes what is empty of or opposed to the Holy Spirit and his work.

### *Differences Between Natural and Spiritual in the Bible*

In [1 Corinthians 2:14–15](#) "natural man" is set in contrast to "spiritual man." In this context, the natural man is one who does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)). Rather, these things are "foolishness" to him. He cannot understand them because they are "spiritually discerned." This foolishness is the foolishness of unbelief ([1:21](#)), and what is lacking is insight that can be produced only by the Holy Spirit. Plainly, Paul has in mind someone without, or even opposed to, the Holy Spirit and God's revealed truth.

In [1 Corinthians 15:44–46](#), the contrast between spiritual and natural occurs in a different context. The "body" in death is compared to the "body" in resurrection. The body of the believer laid in the grave ("sown") is a natural body (verse [44a](#)). The body of the believer raised from the dead will be a spiritual body. The body raised will be renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:11](#)).

In [1 Corinthians 15:44b](#) and [45a](#), however, Paul connects the "natural body" to Adam before the fall when God created him ([Genesis 2:7](#)). This shows that what is natural refers to the creation. As created originally by God, the "natural" was "very good" ([Genesis 1:31](#)). Human sin corrupted the natural to the condemnation of death. Therefore, the sinful rebellion of the natural man, measured by the original creation, is now unnatural and abnormal. The work of the Holy Spirit now, in Christ, is to remove this abnormality and fulfill the original purposes of creation ([Romans 8:19–22](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

*See also* Man; Man, Old and New.

### **Man, Old and New**

Biblical terms used to describe the state of man in relation to Christ. Human beings are created in the image of God and are made to have fellowship with him ([Gn 1:26–27](#)). God made known to Adam and Eve his will in a specific situation ([2:15–17](#)), yet they used the freedom of their will to disobey God's command ([3:1–7](#)). So the human race is dead in sin ([Rom 5:12–21](#); [Eph 2:1–3](#)). The sin of Adam and Eve has been passed on to all humanity (original sin). Born with the tendency toward sin ([Ps 51:5](#)), as soon as the age of moral responsibility is reached, individuals begin to commit their own sins. Paul uses the term "old man" to refer to this condition. The old man can keep certain parts of the law and do various good things. But no old man can ever do enough good things to earn his own salvation. The old man must be made into a new man or he will suffer the consequences of his sin. Only God can bring about that radical change. Human beings can only accept by faith God's gracious gift.

David, in [Psalm 51](#), cries out for God to take away the guilt of his sins. In verse [10](#) he pleads, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (rsv). God promises in [Ezekiel 11:19](#), [18:31](#), and [36:26](#) to give repentant sinners a new heart and a new spirit. In [Romans 6:5–11](#) Paul shows how the old nature has been crucified with Christ, so he can conclude, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" ([6:11](#)). In [Ephesians 4:22–24](#) and [Colossians 3:9–10](#) he shows the believer that he has put off the old man and put on the new man. Jesus speaks of this radical transformation as being born anew—not a second physical birth, as Nicodemus thought, but a spiritual birth ([Jn 3:6](#)). Only the grace of God can change the old man into the new man. The old man accepts God's gracious gift by faith, but even that faith is a gift of God ([Eph 2:8](#)). The new man becomes a child of God. He does not immediately become perfect. He must fight against sin throughout this life as he strives to come closer and closer to the ideal of perfect holiness. He will attain that perfection only in the resurrection to come ([1 Cor 15:42–45](#)), when all things are made new ([Rv 21:5](#)).

*See also* Adam (Person); Man; Man, Natural; Regeneration.

**Man, Son of**

*See Son of Man.*

**Manaen**

One of the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch ([Acts 13:1](#)). The Bible identifies him as a close companion of Herod the tetrarch. (A tetrarch was a ruler who governed one of four parts of a region.) The name Manaen is a Greek form of the Hebrew name Menahem.

**Manahath (Person)**

One of Shobal's five sons ([Gn 36:23](#); [1 Chr 1:40](#)).

**Manahath (Place), Manahathite**

Evidently a place in the Judean hills near the Benjaminite border ([1 Chr 8:6](#)). The Manahathites ([1 Chr 2:54](#)), the people of Manahath, had connections with the Judean and Calebite clans in northern Judea. Its site is apparently that of Malha, three miles (4.8 kilometers) southwest of Jerusalem on the northern slope of the valley of Rephaim.

**Manasseh (Person)**

1. The firstborn son of Joseph and his Egyptian wife, Asenath ([Genesis 41:50–51](#)). Manasseh and his brother Ephraim visited their grandfather Jacob as he was dying. Jacob said that Manasseh and Ephraim were to be considered his own, not Joseph's sons ([Genesis 48:5–6](#)). He said that the descendants of the firstborn Manasseh would not be as great as Ephraim's descendants ([Genesis 48:13–20](#)). This explains why Ephraim and Manasseh are listed as two of the 12 tribes of Israel and not Joseph, at least in most cases (see [Revelation 7:6](#)). Manasseh also founded the Manassite family ([Deuteronomy 4:43](#); [2 Kings 10:33](#)). *See also* Manasseh, Tribe of.

2. The King James Version translation for Moses in [Judges 18:30](#). In Hebrew, the two names differ by only one letter. An early scribe was probably offended that this verse connected Moses' grandson with idolatry, so he changed the name to Manasseh to maintain Moses' reputation. *See Moses.*

3. The thirteenth king of Judah who reigned from 697 to 642 BC and Jesus' ancestor ([Matthew 1:10](#)). He is famous for his long and wicked reign, described in [2 Kings 21:1–26](#) and [2 Chronicles 33:1–20](#). His father was the godly king Hezekiah, and his mother was Hephzibah ([2 Kings 21:1](#)). At the age of 12 he became co-ruler with his father. In 686 BC, his father died and he became the only king at only 23. His 55-year reign ([2 Kings 21:1](#)) is dated from the beginning of his time ruling with his father, so he ruled 11 years as co-ruler and 44 years as the only king—longer than any other king in Judah or in Israel. Unfortunately, he was the most evil Judean king. He even committed a series of murders to stay in power ([2 Kings 21:16; 24:4](#)). His sins are listed in [2 Kings 21:2–9](#) and include:

- Rebuilding the high places for pagan worship
- Encouraging Baal, sun, moon, and star worship
- Burning his son as a child sacrifice ([2 Kings 21:6](#); compare [23:10](#); [Jeremiah 7:31](#))

[Second Chronicles 33:11–16](#) indicates that when he was taken as a prisoner of war to Babylon, he genuinely repented there, and God made him the king again. He then tried to end the former non-Jewish practices and to restore proper worship of God alone. Although this story is not mentioned in Second Kings, there is no reason to doubt its truth. Assyrian records mention Manasseh twice, noting that he faithfully provided men to transport timber

from Lebanon to Nineveh for the Assyrian king Esarhaddon. The records also say that Manasseh paid tribute to King Ashurbanipal after the Assyrians conducted a military campaign in Egypt in 667 BC. Although Pharaoh Neco's similar captivity and release is recorded, Manasseh's captivity and release are not mentioned in those records.

When Manasseh died in 642 BC, at the age of 67, he was buried in his own garden ([2 Kings 21:18](#)), rather than in the royal burial places with highly respected kings like Jehoiada and Hezekiah ([2 Chronicles 24:16; 32:33](#)). Manasseh's son, Amon, returned to his father's wicked practices but ruled for only two years from 642 to 640 BC before he was assassinated. It was Manasseh's godly grandson, Josiah, who reigned from 640 to 609 BC, who led the people back to the true worship of Yahweh ([2 Kings 23:4-14](#)). However, even Josiah's reforms could not prevent the judgment that had been foretold because of Manasseh's sins ([2 Kings 23:26-27](#)).

*See also* Prayer of Manasseh.

1. Pahath-moab's son, who obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 10:30](#)).
2. Hashum's son, who obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 10:33](#)).

## **Manasseh, Tribe of**

Geographically, the largest of the 12 tribes of Israel, and unique in having two territories, a half-tribe in each. Isolated from each other by the Jordan River valley, they developed separately. The half-tribe west of the Jordan was more important, both in OT and NT times, because it was the main tribe of the northern kingdom of Israel (931-722 BC) and one of the main ancestral stocks of the Samaritans.

### *Early History*

#### **Its Roots**

Its families traced their origins back to Joseph's elder son Manasseh, to Manasseh's son Makir or grandson Gilead, or to later descendants such as Zelophehad and Jair. A fair harmony can be

constructed from the biblical genealogical data in [Gn 48:5-6; Nm 26:28-34; Jos 17:1-3; 1 Chr 2:21-23](#); and [7:14-19](#), a text corrupted by several copyists' errors. The mention of Asriel in [1 Chronicles 7:14](#) seems to be a copyist's mistake; otherwise, the accounts are capable of being reconciled, even if each list preserved different data and none is complete in itself.

#### **Its Size**

One year after the exodus, Manasseh had the smallest army, according to Moses' first census ([Nm 1:34-35](#)). On the eve of the conquest of Canaan, after wandering 38 years in the Sinai wilderness and then conquering Transjordan, it had the sixth largest fighting force, according to a second census ([Nm 26:28-34](#))—52,700 men.

#### **Its First Settlements**

The soldiers of the eastern half-tribe of Manasseh settled their families in Gilead, which they captured under Moses' leadership from the Amorite king Og ([Nm 21:32-35; 32:39-42; Dt 3:1-15](#)). Then, under Joshua, they crossed the Jordan to help the other tribes conquer Canaan ([Nm 32:1-32; Jos 1:12-18](#)). Subsequently, the western half-tribe received its allotment and began to settle in the central hill country ([Jos 16:1-9; ch 17](#)). After the remaining tribes received their shares of land, the army from the eastern half-tribe returned home ([22:1-9](#)). En route to their families in Gilead, they helped to build an altar by the Jordan River. This act was intended to preserve national unity, but it nearly started a civil war (vv [10-34](#)).

#### *The Eastern Half-Tribe*

#### **Its Territory**

Moses allotted the eastern half-tribe nearly 3,000 square miles (7,770 square kilometers) of territory in three geographical regions (northern Gilead, Bashan, and Mt Hermon), but it succeeded in controlling only about 800 square miles (2,072 square kilometers)—the half of Gilead north of the Jabbok River (and south of the Yarmuk River)—despite successful initial conquests ([Nm 32:39-42; Dt 3:12-15; Jos 13:8-13](#)) and gradual northern expansion much later ([1 Chr 5:23](#)).

The territory occupied was mostly a high plateau with a mountainous center. It was watered well by rains in winter and by a heavy dew in summer. Olive trees, grapevines, and wheat thrived, and goats and sheep could find adequate pasture on the

eastern slopes, which merged gradually into the desert to the east.

### People and Places

Prominent citizens of the eastern half-tribe included the “judges” Jair and Jephthah ([Jgs 10:3–5; 11:6–12](#)) and David’s benefactor Barzillai ([2 Sm 19:31–39](#)). Principal cities were Jabeth-gilead and Ramoth-gilead, a city of refuge and a Levitical city, respectively (originally in Gad—[Jos 20:8; 21:38](#)).

The eastern territory was usually called simply “the half-tribe of Manasseh,” until David (c. 1000–961 BC) made it an administrative district ([1 Chr 27:21](#)). Solomon (970–930 BC) divided and incorporated it into two new districts ([1 Kgs 4:13–14](#)). Under Jeroboam I (930–909 BC), it joined, on equal terms, with eight other tribes and with the western half-tribe, to form a confederacy of ten tribes—the northern kingdom of Israel—in 930 BC. Syria and Assyria both held eastern Manasseh temporarily, in the ninth and eighth centuries BC (cf. [2 Kgs 10:32–33; 13:7](#) with [14:25](#); and [2 Kgs 15:29](#) with [2 Chr 34:6–7](#)). King Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC) of Assyria invaded the area, conquered it, deported its people, and scattered them throughout his empire ([1 Chr 5:26](#); cf. [2 Kgs 15:29](#)) about ten years before the rest of the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. Most of the western Manassites who were left behind intermarried with the foreigners, began to worship pagan gods, and became ancestors of the Samaritans ([2 Kgs 17:24–41](#)). Subsequently, the region was known as Gilead. By NT times the region was partly in the Decapolis and partly in Perea.

### Manasses

1. The King James Version form of Manasseh, king of Judah, in [Matthew 1:10](#).  
*See* Manasseh (Person) #3.
2. The King James Version form of Manasseh, one of Israel’s 12 tribes, in [Revelation 7:6](#).  
*See* Manasseh (Person) #1; Manasseh, Tribe of.

### Manassite

Descendant of Manasseh, Joseph’s firstborn son ([Dt 4:43; 2 Kgs 10:33](#)). *See* Manasseh (Person) #1; Manasseh, Tribe of.

### Mandrake

A plant that grows in lands around the Mediterranean Sea. In ancient times, people believed this plant could increase sexual desire ([Genesis 30](#)). It was known for its pleasant smell ([Song of Solomon 7:13](#)).

The mandrake or love apple is a stemless plant that lives for many years. It belongs to the same plant family as nightshade, potato, and tomato. It has a large, thick, often forked root that grows like a beet. From the top of the root grow many dark leaves about 30.5 centimeters (1 foot) long and 10.2 centimeters (4 inches) wide.

The plant is slightly poisonous. Its thick roots sometimes look similar to the lower parts of the human body. Because of this shape, people believed it had special powers to increase sexual desire or fertility ([Genesis 30:14–16](#)).

The love apple was a common plant in empty fields throughout Israel and the surrounding areas. It naturally grows in the entire Mediterranean region, southern Europe, and western Asia (Asia Minor).

The mandrake is mentioned in [Song of Solomon 7:13](#). Some scholars think the writer might have been referring to a different plant, such as the citron fruit or the common edible field mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*).

### Maneh

The King James Version translation of mina, a weight in [Ezekiel 45:12](#).

*See* Weights and Measures.

### Manger

A manger is a trough or container where food is placed for farm animals.

### *What Does "Manger" Mean in the Bible?*

The Greek term for "manger" appears only four times in the New Testament. Three of these instances are in the story of Jesus's birth in Luke's Gospel and are translated with the English word "manger" ([Luke 2:7, 12, 16](#)). The fourth time the word appears is also in Luke's Gospel ([13:15](#)). In this verse, some Bible translations use the word "manger" while others use the word "stall."

In the Old Testament, several Hebrew words are used to describe places where animals eat and live. We find similar words in [Job 39:9](#), [Proverbs 14:4](#), and [Isaiah 1:3](#), where they are translated as "crib" or "stall." When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (a translation called the "Septuagint"), these words were translated using the same Greek word that means "manger." The Greek translators also used this word to translate three other Hebrew terms:

- "a stall (an enclosed area for animals) in [2 Chronicles 32:28](#)
- "fodder" or "mash" (a place where animals eat) in [Job 6:5](#)
- "stalls" or "pens" in [Habakkuk 3:17](#)

### *Where Was The Manger Located?*

A study of modern Middle Eastern customs and biblical archaeology found two possible locations for the stable and manger:

1. Inside the house: Poor families often had a room for their animals next to their living space. This animal room was usually a few steps lower than where the family lived. In this type of stable, the manger was made of stone. It was either:
  - built against one of the wooden walls, or
  - carved out of natural rock.
1. In a cave: The stable could also have been in a cave. These caves were either:

- near the house, or
- under the family's living space.

Researchers have found examples of these types of stables. In an ancient city called Megiddo, they found a stable room attached to a house. In another ancient city called Lachish, they found a cave under a building that was used as a stable around 1200 BC.

According to tradition, Jesus was born in a cave that was used as a stable. Today, there is a church called the "Church of the Nativity" that was built over a cave in Bethlehem where some believe Jesus was born. However, when we read Luke's Gospel, the description could also mean Jesus was born in a stable next to a house, like the ones we described earlier.

*See Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of.*

### **Manius, Titus**

Roman legate who wrote to the Jews concerning political concessions ([2 Macc 11:34](#)). See Titus (Person) #1.

### **Manna**

Manna was the special food that God provided for the Israelites when they were traveling in the desert. It first appeared as thin flakes, like frost on the ground, around the Israelite camp ([Exodus 16:14-15](#)). Other parts of the Bible describe manna as looking like coriander seed and bdellium, or resin ([Numbers 11:7](#)). Its taste was like honey or fresh oil ([Exodus 16:31](#); [Numbers 11:8](#)). These different descriptions of taste and appearance can all be true since people experience taste and color in different ways. The word "manna" comes from the Hebrew word "man," which means "what?" When the Israelites first saw manna, they asked, "What is it?" ([Exodus 16:15](#)).

Some researchers have tried to connect manna with natural substances found by modern travelers in Sinai and Arabia. For example, in early summer (June–July), the tamarisk tree in these areas produces a sweet liquid because of tiny insects. This liquid falls to the ground and forms small grains that disappear when the sun gets hot. Another suggestion is that manna might have been

an edible lichen (a plant-like organism) that people in southwest Asia use instead of grain during times of hunger. However, the regular appearance, timing, and large amount of manna cannot be explained by natural causes. It was miraculous.

God gave special instructions about the manna. The Israelites were told to gather only enough for one day at a time. Any extra manna they collected would spoil ([Exodus 16:20](#)). The only exception was the Sabbath day, when they could collect extra for two days. God stopped providing manna after Israel entered Canaan ([Joshua 5:12](#)). When the Israelites complained and wanted food other than manna, God punished them by sending too many quail ([Numbers 11:4-6, 18-20](#)).

In poetic parts of the Bible, manna was called "the grain of heaven" ([Psalm 78:24](#); compare [105:40](#)). It was also called "the bread of angels" ([78:25](#)). Jesus later referred to himself as the true manna. He is the bread from heaven which gives eternal life to those who receive him (compare [John 6:25-59](#)).

*See also* Wilderness Wanderings.

## Manoah

Danite from Zorah whose wife was barren. Through encounters with the Angel of the Lord, the couple learned that God was about to give them a son who would judge the Philistines and deliver Israel from its oppression. Manoah later fathered Samson, who fulfilled these promises ([Jgs 13:16-31](#)).

## Manual of Discipline

A book of community rules of conduct belonging to the Essenes who lived at Qumran. The Essenes were a special group of Jews who lived apart from others and followed strict rules. *See* Dead Sea Scrolls; Essenes.

## Maoch

Father of Achish, the Philistine king of Gath. David sought refuge with this king in order to escape Saul's plots to kill him ([1 Sm 27:2](#)). *See* Maacah, Maachah (Person) #3.

## Maon (Person), Maonite

Son of Shammai, and Bethzur's father ([1 Chr 2:45](#)). He was either the founding father of the people of Bethzur and/or the founder of the city. His descendants are perhaps the Maonites of [Judges 10:12](#).

## Maon (Place)

Chief town in the hill country of Judah ([Jos 15:55](#)), about nine miles (14.5 kilometers) south of Hebron. David and his men hid in this area while fleeing from Saul ([1 Sm 23:24-25](#)), and David's wife Abigail was from this town ([25:2-3](#)). It has been identified with modern Tell Ma'in, where pottery was found dating from the time of David.

*See also* Meunim, Meunites.

## Mara

A name that means "bitter." Naomi gave herself this name when she returned as a widow to Judah from Moab ([Ruth 1:20](#)).

*See* Naomi.

## Marah

A spring (a natural source of water coming up from the ground) where the water was too bitter to drink. Marah was the first place where the Israelites camped after they crossed the Red Sea ([Exodus 15:23](#); [Numbers 33:8-9](#)). Today, many scholars believe Marah was located at a place now called 'Ain Hawarah. It is a pool of bitter water on the eastern coastal plain of the Gulf of Suez. It is about 70.8 kilometers (44 miles) southeast of Suez, and eight kilometers (five miles) northwest of 'Ain Gharandel. It is south of Wadi Amarah, a dry riverbed whose name might come from the ancient name Marah.

*See also* Wilderness Wanderings.

## Maralah

KJV and nlt rendering of Mareal, a site on Zebulun's western border, in [Joshua 19:11](#). *See* Mareal.

## Maranatha

"Maranatha" is an Aramaic phrase used by Paul in [1 Corinthians 16:22](#). It can mean either "Come, O Lord!" or "Our Lord has come."

The expression likely came from the worship services of early Jewish Christians who spoke Aramaic as their first language. Since Paul wrote in Greek, he had to use Greek letters to write the Aramaic phrase, which sometimes caused confusion. In ancient texts, words were often written together without spaces. Because *maranatha* is made up of two words, it can be understood in different ways.

Most scholars agree that the first word is *maran* or *marana*, which means "Lord" or "our Lord." The second word is an Aramaic verb meaning "to come." This verb can be read as either a prayer (as a command: *tha* or *etha*, meaning "come!") or as a statement (as a past tense, *atha*, meaning "has come"). This results in five possible interpretations:

1. As a prayer, Paul could be asking for Jesus's spiritual presence, possibly referring to the Lord's Supper.
2. It could also be a prayer for Jesus's second coming.
3. As a statement, it could refer to the Incarnation, meaning "Our Lord is present," possibly in the context of the Lord's Supper.
4. It could also refer to Jesus's promise from [Matthew 18:20](#).
5. Another interpretation could be "Our Lord is coming," though some Aramaic scholars argue that this is not a likely meaning.

The Syriac version (a form of Aramaic) supports the translation as a statement ("our Lord has come"). It translates the verb into a statement. Early church fathers often interpreted it this way as well. However, most scholars think this interpretation does not fit well with the context of the verse. If seen as a prayer, it connects to other Bible passages ([Philippians 4:5b](#); [1 Peter 4:7](#); compare [Revelation 22:20b](#), which may be a translation of *maranatha*).

*Maranatha* appears right after Paul pronounces a curse in [1 Corinthians 16:22](#). Some believe that the

Aramaic expression is part of the curse itself. The King James Version translates the phrase as "let him be Anathema Maran-atha," making it seem like the two words belong together. However, *anathema* is a Greek word meaning "curse" and probably ends the sentence. Some modern scholars think *maranatha* is linked to the curse. It was a prayer for Jesus to come in judgment. This would add weight to Paul's curse. A church council in the seventh century used "anathema maranatha" to condemn those who disagreed with the church. It meant, "let him be condemned at the Lord's coming."

## Marble

*See Minerals and Metals; Stones, Precious.*

## Marcion, Gospel of

A gospel written around AD 150 that the early Christian church considered heretical (false teaching).

### *Who Was Marcion and What Did He Believe?*

Marcion was a person who lived in the second century AD. He came from Pontus (a region in ancient Rome near the Black Sea). Around AD 138, he traveled to Rome and started a religious group called the Marcionites. At first, Marcion was part of the church in Rome. Later, he began teaching ideas that went against traditional Christian beliefs. The church leaders said these teachings were incorrect (called "heresy").

Marcion taught that there was a complete difference between:

- The Old Testament and the New Testament
- The laws in the Old Testament and the love and grace in the New Testament
- The God who created the world in the Old Testament and the God of Jesus in the New Testament

Marcion believed that the God of the Old Testament created evil things. He thought evil was connected to physical things and the world itself. However, he taught that the God of the New Testament was our Father who gives only good things.

## What Was Marcion's Gospel?

Marcion created his own list of sacred writings (called a "canon") to support his beliefs. He only accepted one gospel, a changed version of Luke's Gospel. He removed many parts from Luke's Gospel, including:

- Everything connected to the Old Testament
- References to the Jewish people
- Stories about God creating the world
- Any parts that showed Jesus as truly human

## How Did the Early Church Respond to Marcion?

An early Christian leader named Irenaeus wrote about Marcion's changes to the Bible in his book "Against Heresies." Irenaeus said, "Besides this, he [Marcion] mutilates the Gospel which is according to Luke, removing all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord, and setting aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as most clearly confessing that the Maker of this universe is His Father" (*Against Heresies* 1.17.2). According to Irenaeus, Marcion damaged Luke's Gospel by removing many important parts.

Irenaeus goes on to say, "In like manner, too, he dismembered the Epistles of Paul, removing all that is said by the apostle respecting that God who made the world, to the effect that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also those passages from the prophetic writings which the apostle quotes, in order to teach us that they announced beforehand the coming of the Lord."

In summary, Marcion's canon included his gospel, which was an edited copy of Luke, and 10 of Paul's letters (but not the letters to Timothy and Titus).

## Marcus

KJV alternate spelling of Mark ([Col 4:10](#); [Phlm 1:24](#); [1 Pt 5:13](#)). See Mark, John.

## Marduk

Supreme Babylonian deity, worshiped as the god of creation and destiny. Marduk (also called Bel) was originally the local city god of Babylon. However, as Babylon increased in power, Marduk achieved preeminence over the whole Mesopotamian pantheon of deities. His rise to supremacy is told in the creation epic *Enuma Elish*, where Marduk is credited with defeating Tiamat, primeval chaos; he then created the heavens and the earth. Zarpanit (Sarpanit) was Marduk's consort, and the temple Esagila at Babylon was erected for them. Jeremiah foretold that Marduk would be put to shame for his inability to keep Babylon from destruction ([Jer 50:2](#); Merodach—the Hebrew pronunciation of Marduk).

## Mareal

Town defining part of the western border of the land allotted to Zebulun's tribe for an inheritance. It was positioned between Sarid and Dabbesheth ([Jos 19:11](#), nlt "Maralah").

## Mareshah (Person)

1. Caleb's firstborn son and the father of Hebron ([1 Chr 2:42](#); rsv, based on the Greek text). He is alternately called Mesha in the Hebrew text (rsv mg). See Mesha (Person) #2.
2. Perhaps a Judahite son of Laadah ([1 Chr 4:21](#)).

## Mareshah (Place)

City (Greek Marisa; Josephus, "Marissa") on the road from the coastal plain of Judah toward Hebron and Jerusalem. Remains of Jewish pottery indicate occupation from at least 800 BC. The site is now called Tel Mareshah.

At Israel's occupation of Canaan, Mareshah was allotted by Joshua to Judah ([Jos 15:44](#)). Later, at the division of the kingdom, Rehoboam fortified it as a protective outpost covering Jerusalem from the southwest, from which many invaders were to approach ([2 Chr 11:8](#)). Zerah the Ethiopian, with a million men and three hundred chariots, penetrated as far as Mareshah and was defeated there by Asa ([14:9](#)). In the following reign, that of Jehoshaphat, the prophet Eliezer, born at

Mareshah, foretold the destruction of the proud fleet the king had built ([20:37](#)).

The prophet Micah, who was born at Moresheth-gath (a few miles to the north), uttered a moving elegy upon the fate of the regions he knew from boyhood, as the Assyrians approached (whether under Sennacherib, 701 BC, or Sargon, 711 BC). Punning upon each familiar place-name, he warned Mareshah of a coming “possessor” ([Mi 1:15](#)).

## Mari

An influential city-state in eastern Syria that became powerful around 2000 BC. It was settled by Semitic nomads (wandering people) who adopted city life and adapted cuneiform (an ancient writing system) to their own language, Akkadian.

Mari was an outpost of the Sumerian civilization. It was significant because it was the capital of an empire extending over a great part of northern Mesopotamia, about 22 miles (35.4 kilometers) along the Euphrates River.

Archaeologists have found over 20,000 documents at Mari. These records help us rewrite the history of Western Asia. They also found a well-preserved palace with intact wall paintings and kitchen and bath installations. These items tell us a lot about life from 1810 to 1760 BC.

Mari was surrounded by a great defensive wall, protecting it from invading forces. One prominent building, a ziggurat (temple tower), rose high above the town, about 150 feet (45.6 meters) high. It was a tall pyramid with outside stairs leading to a shrine at the top and smaller temples at the base.

The royal palace was on about six acres (2.4 hectares) of land. The palace was built with extremely thick walls made of brick covered with clay and was 16 feet (4.9 meters) tall. A complex drainage system carried rainwater through its clay pipes 30 feet (9.1 meters) underground. The palace at Mari contained nearly 300 rooms. It was not only the royal residence but also the center of:

- Business
- Diplomacy
- Military leadership
- Storage for merchants' goods and military equipment

The royal court ate and drank:

- Fish
- Meat
- Four varieties of bread
- Cucumbers
- Peas
- Beans
- Garlic
- Dates
- Grapes
- Figs
- Beer
- Wine

The religious practices involved sacrifices and temple prostitution.

The clay tablets from the archives of Mari reveal a lot about the daily life in the ancient kingdom. The records are written in two languages and cover various aspects of society during the reigns of Jahdun-Lim, the founder of Mari, and his son Zimri-Lim:

- The king held daily court sessions to handle state affairs, listen to officials, and address legal disputes.
- His role extended into the religious sphere, where he participated in temple visits, officiated rituals, performed animal sacrifices, communicated with the gods, and attended religious feasts.
- The king's involvement in religion was so significant that he was sometimes regarded as divine.
- He also managed the calendar, which included adding an extra month every three years to align with seasonal changes.

The economic records show a diverse range of professions:

- Metalworkers
- Weavers
- Fullers
- Gem cutters
- Jewelers
- Painters
- Perfume makers
- Boatmen
- Carpenters
- Leatherworkers
- Fishermen
- Potters
- Masons.

Payment for services was made through goods such as corn, wool, clothing, wine, or oil, with occasional payments in gold or silver.

*See also* Inscriptions.

## Mariner

A mariner is a person who works on a ship. The word means the same thing as sailor.

*See* Sailors.

## Marjoram

Small mint growing as high as three feet (.9 meter) tall. It was perhaps the "hyssop" of the OT. *See* Plants (Hyssop).

## Mark of God, Mark of the Beast

Ensignia placed on people either by God or by the Antichrist. Though the phrase is limited to the book of Revelation, a mark was used in [Ezekiel 9:4–6](#). In his vision Ezekiel saw the inhabitants of Jerusalem slain for their wickedness, except those upon whose foreheads God had put a mark. The mark was one of identification for the purpose of protection.

The usage in the book of Revelation is quite similar. The idea begins in [Revelation 7:3](#) (though the word does not occur here), where the 144,000 servants of God are sealed on their foreheads to protect them from the coming wrath of God. This sealing is referred to again in [Revelation 9:4](#), where it is noted that the demonic locusts of the fifth trumpet are not to harm those with the seal of God.

In [Revelation 13](#) the specific phrase "the mark of the beast" is used. The context is John's vision of the two beasts. The one from the sea ([13:1–10](#)) symbolizes the Antichrist with political power over the inhabitants of the earth. The beast from the earth ([vv 11–18](#)) symbolizes the Antichrist's assistant, which is the religious leadership dedicated to securing universal worship of the Antichrist. This false religious leader causes all to receive upon their right hand or their forehead the mark (of the Antichrist), or the name (cf. v [12](#)), or the number of the name of the antichrist ([vv 16–17](#)). This mark of the beast is necessary for a person to engage in business or economic transactions involved in physical survival. Perhaps it also serves to identify such people for martyrdom ([vv 7–10](#)). It stands in sharp contrast to the seal of God marking out the servants of God in chapter [7:1–8](#) (cf. [14:1](#)). Thus mankind as depicted in this vision is divided into two classes—those belonging to Christ and those belonging to the Antichrist.

[Revelation 13:18](#) contains a challenge to the church to have wisdom and to recognize what that mark or number of the beast is. Two things are stated. First, it is of a man or refers to a man. Second, his number is 666 (or 616, according to some manuscripts).

The interpretation of this number has been discussed at length by biblical scholars without reaching a general consensus. Many think that it was a first-century cryptic (Hebrew) reference to Nero. In that context of preliminary fulfillment, it would have simply been an appeal for Christians to recognize the true nature of the godless Nero as having the character of Antichrist and to refuse to give him their allegiance. Perhaps this identity indicates that the number or mark of the beast is an expression of one's allegiance to the Antichrist as expressed in the cult of emperor worship. Thus it would be this activity of worship and not a literal number on one's body that is intended.

When the prophecy is completely fulfilled by the Antichrist, believers must be wise and refuse to give their loyalty to him through whatever form or test of allegiance this takes.

The importance of believers' steadfastness is shown in [Revelation 14](#), where the faithful 144,000, with the name of Christ and God on their foreheads, are seen standing victoriously with the Lamb on Mt Zion. This steadfastness is spoken of as keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus ([14:12](#)). A similar vision of those who overcome the beast is given in [15:2–4](#). Here they are pictured as standing before God singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

There are four further references in Revelation to the mark of the beast. The angel warns that those who receive the mark of the beast and worship him will drink the cup of God's wrath ([14:9–11](#)). When the first angel pours out the first bowl of wrath, this falls on those who have the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image ([16:2](#)). At the destruction of the beast and the false prophet, the latter is described as deceiving those who received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image ([19:20](#)). Finally, those who reign with Christ during the millennium are those who did not worship the beast or receive his mark ([20:4](#)).

In summary, the phrase "mark of the beast," or the number 666, is a way of referring to the identity of the followers of the Antichrist in the book of Revelation. Believers are warned not to become a part of those who are deceived but rather to remain steadfast and faithful to the Lamb and to own his name upon their foreheads.

*See also* Antichrist; Beast #4.

## Mark, Gospel of

Second book of the NT, probably written by John Mark of Jerusalem sometime between AD 60 and 68.

Preview

- Author, Date, Provenance
- Distinctives
- Structure
- Occasion, Purpose, Theology
- Content

### *Author, Date, Provenance*

Our most ancient testimony about who wrote the second Gospel comes from Papias (c. 60–130), author of several expositions of Jesus' teachings, in

which he reports various traditions from "the Elder John" (possibly to be identified with the apostle John, although this is by no means certain). At one point Papias states, "The Elder used to say this also: Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote down accurately, though not in order, all that [Peter] remembered concerning the things both said and done by the Lord." (This quotation was preserved by the fourth-century writer Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15.) One need not doubt the basic reliability of this statement. Mark—almost surely to be identified with the John Mark of [Acts 12:12](#) (see also [1 Pt 5:13](#))—was a disciple of Peter, and the second Gospel owes its existence, at least in part, to the apostle's reminiscences. It does not follow, however, that one has adequately characterized Mark's work if that is all one says. For instance, Papias's qualification, "though not in order," indicates that Mark did not intend to write a chronological biography. Furthermore, Papias goes on to comment (according to one interpretation of his ambiguous words) that Mark (or Peter?) adapted the material to the teaching situation and that therefore Mark is absolved from any (implied) charges of inaccuracy. It appears that from the earliest times Christians appealed to the purposes and circumstances of Mark's writing in order to account for difficulties in harmonizing the material found in the various Gospels.

Other statements from Christian writers in the second, third, and fourth centuries seem dependent on Papias's testimony, but some additional data they provide may possess independent value. For example, a fairly early document (date uncertain) known as the Anti-Marcionite Prologue asserts that Mark wrote his Gospel somewhere in Italy after Peter's death (in the mid-60s), and this testimony is considered reliable by many scholars. Still, the possibility that Mark composed his work before Peter's martyrdom cannot be ruled out completely.

Papias says nothing specific about *when* the Gospel was written. A small minority of scholars date Mark shortly after AD 70. Another minority suggest a date in the 40s or 50s on the basis of a papyrus fragment discovered in Qumran called 7Q5. (According to José O'Callaghan, the fragment, which has been dated about AD 50–68, should be identified as [Mark 6:52–53](#).) This fragment contains only 20 letters on one side, making the Markan reconstruction very uncertain. Few scholars are convinced that the text is Mark; some think it is part of 1 Enoch or Zechariah. An impressive majority of scholars date Mark in the

60s, with conservatives usually preferring the early years of the decade. Why this preference? If the theory of Markan priority is accepted, then clearly Mark was written before Luke; and since Luke is normally dated by conservatives about AD 62, Mark can be no later than AD 60 or 61. This line of argument, though strong, is not decisive. In the first place, Luke cannot be dated with complete certainty. Second, the view that Matthew and Luke used Mark (the working assumption of most scholars) is only a hypothesis, and one that is vigorously opposed by some writers. Third, a tradition going back to the second century (see above) asserts that Mark wrote his Gospel *after* Peter's death, no earlier than AD 64. Fourth, one persuasive view regarding the occasion of this Gospel assumes that the Neronian persecution (AD 64) had begun. (According to a different view of the occasion, Mark was written after the beginning of the Jewish revolt in AD 66.) Therefore, while a date in the early 60s remains possible, it does not require committal.

With regard to the authorship of the second Gospel, there seems to be no compelling reason to deny Papias's report that Mark (no doubt the John Mark of [Acts 12:12](#)) took down Peter's reminiscences and that these became the basis of his work. Some scholars argue that the Gospel contains geographical inaccuracies (e.g., we have no evidence of a region called Dalmanutha, [Mk 8:10](#)) and that a native of Jerusalem such as Mark would have been more reliable in his information. However, the topographical problems in Mark, though real, need not be interpreted as inaccuracies (present ignorance of a place named Dalmanutha is hardly conclusive proof that it did not exist). Furthermore, in other respects (e.g., [14:54, 66](#)) the Gospel reveals an impressive knowledge of local details. Many writers also point out bits of information that support a Petrine background, such as the healing of Peter's mother-in-law ([1:30-31](#)). In short, the internal evidence, while falling short of proof, does not at all undermine the tradition preserved by Papias. A generation ago, the trustworthiness of Papias's testimony was almost universally accepted. This situation has changed somewhat, but even those scholars who adopt a skeptical attitude toward this tradition concede that it *may* be true.

As attention turns to the provenance of the Gospel, the task becomes more difficult. Tradition going back to the second century asserts what may be already implied by Papias—namely, that Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome. Although some scholars

have suggested other possibilities, such as Galilee and Antioch, these have not proved satisfactory. Mark did spend some time in Rome, and some characteristics in the Gospel (such as Latinisms in the Greek and the explanation of Jewish customs, as in [7:3-4](#)), while proving nothing, are certainly consonant with a Roman origin. Furthermore, one persuasive view of the occasion that gave rise to the Gospel assumes a background of persecution in Rome.

### *Distinctives*

A number of characteristics of Mark set it apart from the other Gospels. For example, a word usually translated "immediately" occurs more than 40 times in Mark and only a dozen times in the rest of the NT. While this feature could be interpreted as a simple "mannerism," consonant with Mark's unpretentious, colloquial style, it certainly adds to the rapid flow of his narrative, which, dwelling more on Jesus' activity than on his discourses (in contrast to Matthew and Luke), shifts from scene to scene with hardly a pause. Since the Gospel is also quite brief (Luke is nearly twice as long), one may wonder whether the author intended for it to be read at a sitting; even if read aloud, this would take only about one and a half hours. At any rate, there can be little doubt that the work conveys a sense of urgency.

Other characteristics, however, prove more significant. Someone unfamiliar with the story of Jesus who happened to read Mark for the first time would no doubt be taken aback by its rather abrupt beginning. After a brief clause that stands as a sort of title ([1:1](#)), Mark moves on to describe in brief the ministry of John the Baptist. Then he introduces Jesus as coming from Nazareth without telling us anything whatever of his earlier life. Furthermore, over one-third of the book (including the so-called Passion narrative) is devoted to Jesus' last week. These and other factors lend to the work a note of mystery, accentuated by the fact that at various points Mark calls attention to the fear or amazement gripping those who came in contact with Jesus ([2:12; 4:41; 5:15, 33, 42; 6:51; 9:6](#); and several other passages, especially the strange words of [10:32](#)). In addition, if one assumes that the Gospel originally ended with [16:8](#), Mark wished to leave his readers with the same sense of awe that the disciples experienced at Jesus' resurrection.

But how does one account for this fear and amazement? Mark's clear answer is that Jesus, though truly a man, is also divine. While Mark's

Gospel exhibits the humanity of Jesus Christ ([1:41; 3:5; 8:12; 10:14](#)), his chief emphasis is on the Lord's deity. Indeed, Mark introduces his book by referring to Jesus as "the Son of God" (a phrase omitted in some manuscripts, however), a position that is recognized both by the demons ([3:11; 5:7](#)) and by God himself ([9:7](#)). What may well be the true climax of the Gospel occurs at [15:39](#), where Mark writes that a Gentile, a Roman centurion, upon hearing Jesus' death cry, exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

### *Structure*

The author organized his Gospel according to a simple plan. The first eight chapters summarize the nature of Christ's public ministry by alternating stories that show his growing popularity with stories that stress the disapproval of the Jewish leaders. This first half of the book, while indicating some of the tensions created by Jesus' coming, gives the basic impression of success and general optimism. A significant shift then strikes the reader toward the end of chapter [8](#), particularly beginning with verse [31](#). At Caesarea Philippi, Peter has just confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, and now for the first time Jesus reveals that as Messiah he must die. The disciples become perplexed and discouraged and their pessimism mounts as this thought is brought home to them repeatedly ([9:9, 31; 10:32-34; 14:17-25](#)). In the end they desert their master ([14:50](#)).

Interestingly, this pessimistic note is anticipated in the earlier part of the Gospel at three points: [3:6](#) (Jesus' enemies plot his death); [6:6](#) (faithlessness in Nazareth); and [8:21](#) (lack of understanding in the disciples). Some scholars suggest that Mark used these three verses to indicate the first three divisions of his book. In addition, other scholars note that two healings of blind men ([8:22-26; 10:46-52](#)) seem to provide the opening and the conclusion of a section that emphasizes the spiritual blindness of the disciples. One more structural clue is [14:1](#), which clearly marks out the final section of the Gospel.

### *Occasion, Purpose, Theology*

A few scholars think that Mark may have been combating a heretical sect that stressed the miracles of Jesus and viewed him purely as a divine wonder-worker. Although this view has not gained acceptance as originally formulated, a number of writers do see the Gospel as a theological corrective. Ralph Martin, who links Mark very

closely with Paul, suggests that the evangelist is opposing some heretical groups who have distorted Paul's message by placing exclusive stress on Christ as a *heavenly* figure (cf. the views that Paul himself opposes in Colossians). Mark responds to these aberrations by emphasizing, in Martin's words, "the paradox of Jesus' earthly life in which suffering and vindication form a two-beat rhythm." Even if one decides that this reconstruction, too, is rather speculative, one may nevertheless retain certain elements in it as valid.

Other scholars, such as H. Kee, place emphasis on the apocalyptic background of Mark. Kee and others tie this element to the Jewish revolt of AD 66, but commitment to this particular historical connection is unnecessary to appreciate the great significance of [Mark 13](#) (Jesus' apocalyptic discourse) for those original readers of the Gospel who may have been undergoing persecution.

Perhaps the most satisfactory reconstruction links this Gospel to the Neronian persecution in the mid-60s. Mark, for example, is the only Gospel that records that Jesus, after being driven to the wilderness, found himself in the company of wild animals ([1:13](#)). This detail, according to William Lane, "was filled with special significance for those called to enter the arena where they stood helpless in the presence of wild beasts." This interpretation, while not without difficulties, has the advantage of accounting for most of the available data. First, it is compatible with the strong tradition that assigns the origin of Mark's work to Rome. Second, Mark speaks distinctly to those suffering persecution by introducing them quickly to John's imprisonment and several other details. Third, related to this is Mark's emphasis on discipleship. Christians facing persecution must have been tempted to relax the standards ([4:17-19](#)). Fourth, given this general situation, one can hardly doubt the significance of our Lord's apocalyptic message in chapter [13](#), intended to encourage the disciples in the midst of their trials by reminding them of the glory to follow. Finally, Mark's clear concern for the Gentile mission fits in with the needs of pagan Rome. The suffering Christians cannot afford to forget the unbelieving society in which they live. In the light of this particular responsibility, Mark assures his readers of what even the Roman centurion began to recognize—surely Jesus *is* the Son of God ([15:39](#)).

## Content

The development of Mark's narrative can be presented in six major divisions within a twofold structure:

### Introduction ([1:1-13](#))

### Part I: Popularity and Opposition ([1:14-8:21](#))

1. Jesus' authority and the Pharisees' enmity ([1:14-3:6](#))

2. The people's response ([3:7-6:6a](#))

3. The disciples' misunderstanding ([6:6b-8:21](#))

### Part II: Darkness and Death ([8:22-15:47](#))

4. The Messiah's mission and the disciples' blindness ([8:22-10:52](#))

5. Final ministry ([11:1-13:37](#))

6. The Passion narrative ([14:1-15:47](#))

### Conclusion ([16:1-8](#))

Although one can hardly claim that this outline corresponds exactly to the author's original plan (Mark may not have consciously worked out a detailed outline), the sixfold division provides a useful starting point for an interpretive summary of the contents.

## **Jesus' Authority and the Pharisees' Enmity ([1:14-3:6](#))**

Immediately after the introductory portion ([1:1-13](#)), which describes John the Baptist's ministry as well as Jesus' baptism and temptation, Mark opens the body of the work with a summary statement ([vv 14-15](#)). In these two verses he seems to suggest that Jesus' public ministry, characterized by the proclamation that God's kingdom is about to be inaugurated, was occasioned by John's imprisonment. This is followed by the call of the first disciples ([vv 16-20](#)) and then by a complex of stories ([vv 21-38](#)), all of which report incidents that took place in Capernaum, apparently within a 24-hour period: synagogue instruction followed by the healing of a demoniac; the healing of Peter's mother-in-law; numerous other healings in the evening; prayer in a lonely place. The statement that Jesus proceeded to expand his ministry throughout the province of Galilee ([v 39](#)) is followed by the story of a leper's cure ([vv 40-45](#)). Next are found a very important group of incidents ([2:1-3:6](#)), all of them focusing on Jesus' conflicts with Jewish leaders: the healing and forgiveness of a paralytic; the call of Levi, whose dinner (attended

by Jesus as well as by the hated tax gatherers) occasioned some disputes, particularly on the issue of fasting; and two significant stories regarding proper behavior on the Sabbath.

## **The People's Response ([3:7-6:6a](#))**

Mark opens this second section as he opened the first: a summary statement (Jesus' healings by the lake—[3:7-12](#)) followed by the official appointment of 12 apostles (vv [13-19](#)). Then follows a section that focuses on the kinds of charges brought against Jesus by his own family and by the scribes (vv [20-22](#)), leading to a response touching on Satan, on blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and on what constitutes true membership in his family (vv [23-35](#)). Most of chapter [4](#) is devoted to Jesus' parables of the kingdom—the sower, the seed growing secretly, the mustard seed—and includes statements on the nature and purpose of his teachings ([4:10-12, 21-25, 33-34](#)). In the evening Jesus and his disciples set out to cross the Sea of Galilee, leading to the stilling of the storm (vv [35-41](#)), the healing of the Gerasene demoniac on the other side of the lake ([5:1-20](#)), and, on their return to Capernaum, the healing of a hemorrhaging woman and the raising of Jairus's daughter (vv [21-43](#)). The section concludes with Jesus' visit to his hometown, Nazareth, and the rejection he suffered there ([6:1-6a](#)).

## **The Disciples' Misunderstanding ([6:6b-8:21](#))**

The third section begins with two introductory passages: the sending out of the 12 ([6:6b-13](#)) and the story of John the Baptist's death (vv [14-29](#)). When the disciples return, Jesus determines to seek some rest, but the crowds follow them; Jesus then teaches and feeds the 5,000 (vv [30-44](#)) and, after crossing the lake (vv [45-52](#), which includes Jesus' walk over the water), he performs numerous cures in and around Gennesaret (vv [53-56](#)). Then follows a controversy with the Pharisees regarding the hand-washing ritual ([7:1-8](#)), and this incident leads to Christ's assertion of the authority of God's word over human tradition (vv [9-13](#)) and to some general instructions on true purity (vv [14-23](#)). The next several stories describe Jesus' withdrawal from Galilee, first to Tyre, where a gentile woman's daughter is healed (vv [24-30](#)), then to the Decapolis, where he cures a deaf-mute (vv [31-37](#)) and feeds a crowd of four thousand ([8:1-10](#)). The demand of the Pharisees for a sign (vv [11-12](#)) leads to Jesus' warning against the "leaven" of the Pharisees, a statement misunderstood by the disciples (vv [13-21](#)).

### The Messiah's Mission and the Disciples' Blindness ([8:22-10:52](#))

Still away from Galilee, but now in the nearby town of Bethsaida, Jesus heals a blind man ([8:22-26](#)). He then leads his disciples north toward Caesarea Philippi, which sets the stage for Peter's confession (vv [27-30](#)). This recognition on the part of the disciples (of whom Peter is in effect a representative) leads Jesus to prophesy his death, but Peter's refusal to accept the prophecy calls forth a rebuke and instruction on discipleship (vv [31-38](#)). The failure of the disciples to understand the necessity of Christ's death provides the background for the Transfiguration ([9:1-8](#)), which assures Peter, John, and James that God's kingdom will indeed come (note v [1](#)); further, the Father himself enjoins them to believe Jesus' prophecy (v [7](#)). After some words about the resurrection and about the coming of Elijah (vv [9-13](#)), Mark relates the healing of a demoniac boy (vv [14-29](#)). Back in Galilee, a second prophecy of Jesus' death (vv [30-32](#)) is followed, sadly, by a trivial discussion among the disciples as to who is the greatest (vv [33-37](#)). Appropriately, one finds some further instructions concerning discipleship (vv [38-50](#)). Mark next writes that Jesus left Galilee for the last time and began his journey toward the south. During this journey, Jesus delivered teachings on divorce and on the spiritual privileges of children ([10:1-16](#)), then met the rich young ruler (vv [17-22](#)), an incident that leads to further words on discipleship (vv [23-31](#)). A third prophecy of Jesus' death (vv [32-34](#)) is again followed by selfish behavior on the part of the disciples, in this case an ambitious request from James and John (vv [35-40](#)). The incident produces indignation among the rest of the disciples, thus necessitating another rebuke from their master, who himself came to serve and to die (vv [41-45](#)). The section ends as it began—by reporting the cure of a blind man, Bartimaeus of Jericho in this story (vv [46-52](#)).

### Final Ministry ([11:1-13:37](#))

This section seems naturally to divide into three balanced subsections. The first one ([11:1-26](#)) includes three events: the Triumphal Entry, the withering of the fig tree, and the cleansing of the temple. The second subsection ([11:27-12:44](#)) is particularly important, for here is found Jesus' final series of controversies with the Jewish leaders. The topics covered are the source of Jesus' authority ([11:27-33](#)), the parable of the wicked husbandmen ([12:1-12](#)), the legitimacy of Caesar's tax (vv [13-17](#)), the Sadducees' denial of resurrection (vv [18-](#)

[27](#)), the chief commandment (vv [28-34](#)), and the question regarding David's son (vv [35-37](#)). This subsection ends with a warning against the scribes and with the story of the widow's mite (vv [38-44](#)). The third subsection (ch [13](#)) is devoted completely to the Olivet discourse, with its prophecies of destruction, calamities, persecutions, deceivers, and final vindication. The discourse ends with various admonitions to keep alert.

### The Passion Narrative ([14:1-15:47](#))

This final section, which is introduced by a report of the priests' plot ([14:1-2](#)), may be divided into two subsections. The first one relates the events leading up to Jesus' trial (vv [3-52](#)). They include the anointing of Jesus (vv [3-9](#)), Judas's betrayal (vv [10-11](#)), the incidents connected with the Last Supper (vv [12-31](#)), the scene at Gethsemane (vv [32-42](#)), and the arrest (vv [43-52](#)). The second subsection relates Jesus' trial before the Jews (vv [53-65](#)), Peter's denials (vv [66-72](#)), the trial before Pilate ([15:1-15](#)), the crucifixion (vv [16-41](#)), and the burial (vv [42-47](#)).

The Gospel concludes somewhat mysteriously, but no less triumphantly, with the news that Jesus has risen from the dead ([16:1-8](#)). The earliest surviving Greek manuscripts, usually regarded as the most reliable, end at verse [8](#); the majority of manuscripts, however, include an additional 12 verses that report Jesus' appearances to his disciples.

*See also* Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of; Mark, John; Matthew, Gospel of; Luke, Gospel of; Synoptic Gospels.

### Market, Marketplace

A marketplace is an area where people buy and sell goods. In ancient times, marketplaces were usually outdoor areas where merchants would display their items for sale. Today, you can still find similar outdoor markets in many cities across the Middle East and Mediterranean region.

In New Testament times, the Greek marketplace (called an "agora") served many different purposes:

- People bought and sold goods there ([Mark 7:4](#)).
- Children used it as a place to play ([Matthew 11:16](#); [Luke 7:32](#)).
- Some people would spend time there with nothing to do, while others came looking for work ([Matthew 20:3](#)).
- Important community events happened there, including healings ([Mark 6:56](#)).
- People gathered there for discussions about community matters ([Acts 17:17](#)).
- Sometimes legal trials took place there ([16:19](#)).

## Maroth

City in Palestine, mentioned only by Micah ([Mi 1:12](#)). It may be the same as the Maarah in [Joshua 15:59](#); if so, it would be an ancient Canaanite city, part of the inheritance of Judah's tribe.

## Marriage, Levirate

*See Marriage, Marriage Customs.*

## Marriage, Marriage Customs

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman in marriage, as practiced by various cultures. Different cultures have practiced marriage in various ways throughout history.

God created the idea of marriage. God told Adam that a man should leave his father and mother. The man and his wife should become one flesh ([Genesis 2:24](#)). This means they should be united as one family unit.

### Marriage in the Old Testament

The Old Testament mentions several forms of marriage. The earliest form seems to be based on a matrilineal principle. This means that family connections and inheritance were traced through the mother's side of the family rather than the father's side.

There appears to be some evidence for this type of marriage during two time periods. The first was the middle Bronze Age (around 2000–1550 BC). The second was during the early years when Israel had kings (around 1050–900 BC). However, it is difficult to be certain about this matter.

This uncertainty exists despite the important role of mothers in Egypt and perhaps other places. In these cultures, the mother helped determine a person's family line and inheritance. This means children would belong to their mother's family group rather than their father's family group.

Generally, the bride left her parents when she married. She went to live with her husband's family group. This is what Rebekah did when she married Isaac ([Genesis 24:58–59](#)). The Hebrew phrase "to marry a wife" comes from a root word meaning "to become master" ([Deuteronomy 21:13](#)). The wife often treated her husband as a master and referred to him this way.

Hebrew family records show that family lines were traced through the male line ([Genesis 5:10; 36:9–43](#); [Numbers 1:1–15](#); [Ruth 4:18–22](#); [1 Chronicles 1:1–9](#)). This means children belonged to their father's family group, not their mother's.

Both fathers and mothers had the important right to name their children. Naming a child showed power and authority over that child (see [Genesis 4:1, 25–26; 5:29; 35:18](#); [1 Samuel 1:20; 4:21](#); [Isaiah 8:3](#); [Hosea 1:4–9](#)). Sons were often named after their fathers and were closely connected to them.

### *The Role and Authority of the Father*

The father was the head of the household in this patriarchal society. A patriarchal society is one where men hold the main power and authority. His wife and children were considered his possessions, similar to how he owned his fields and animals ([Exodus 20:17](#); [Deuteronomy 5:21](#)). The father had the right to sell his daughters as servants ([Exodus 21:7](#); [Nehemiah 5:5](#)). He even had the power of life and death over his children.

A man could easily end his marriage by divorcing his wife. This also shows how much authority the husband had in the family ([Deuteronomy 24:1–4](#); compare [22:13–21](#)). The wife did not have the same power to divorce her husband.

### *Levirate Marriage in Israel*

A levirate marriage was a custom in ancient Israel meant to preserve a man's family line and property.

If a man died without children, his brother (or closest male relative) was expected to marry the widow. The rules for this responsibility are explained in [Deuteronomy 25:5-10](#).

If the widow had no children, the first son born from the new marriage was considered the child of the dead husband. This meant the child would carry the dead husband's name and inherit his property. This system made sure the dead man's family line continued and his property stayed in the family.

Levirate marriage was not only practiced by the Israelites. The Canaanites, Assyrians, and Hittites also had similar customs.

The most well-known example of levirate marriage in the Old Testament is found in the book of Ruth. Although Ruth's situation did not follow the exact law in [Deuteronomy 25](#), it shows how the system worked.

Ruth needed to find a close male relative to marry her. This would preserve her dead husband's family name and property. The closest male relative said no to this responsibility. He felt it was too much of a burden for two reasons. First, he would have to buy the land and support Ruth. Second, he knew that their first son would be considered Ruth's dead husband's child. This son would bear the dead husband's name and inherit the land. Boaz agreed to take on this responsibility and married Ruth ([Ruth 2:20-4:10](#)).

### ***Monogamy and Polygamy in the Bible***

The Old Testament mentions many examples of polygamy (having more than one wife). However, most Israelites were monogamous (married to only one person). There are no examples of common people having large polygamous marriages. Only wealthy and powerful men, especially kings, had multiple wives.

God's original instruction to Adam was that a "man will... be united to his wife" ([Genesis 2:24](#)). Hebrew laws generally show that marriage with one wife was the most acceptable form of marriage ([Exodus 20:17; 21:5](#); [Leviticus 18:8, 16-20](#); [20:10](#); [Numbers 5:12](#); [Deuteronomy 5:21](#)).

By the time Israel had kings, monogamy seems to have become the normal practice. However, some kings like Solomon did not follow Hebrew traditions in this matter. Solomon had many wives from other nations. After the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon, marriages were mostly

monogamous. However, divorce was becoming more common during this time.

In the New Testament period, monogamy was the rule for most people. However, some powerful people like Herod the Great still practiced polygamy. Jesus taught that marriage should last for the lifetime of both partners. He said that if a man divorced his wife and married another woman while his first wife was still alive, he committed adultery ([Matthew 5:31-32](#)).

### ***Marriage Between Relatives***

People in biblical times generally married someone from their close family circle. This meant they often married relatives like cousins. However, there needed to be limits on how closely related marriage partners could be. The term for being closely related by blood is consanguinity.

In early patriarchal times (the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), a man could marry his half-sister if they shared the same father ([Genesis 20:12](#)). This practice continued even during King David's time ([2 Samuel 13:13](#)). However, this type of marriage was later specifically forbidden in [Leviticus 20:17](#).

The marriage laws in Deuteronomy and the Law of Holiness (found in Leviticus) sometimes contradict each other ([Deuteronomy 25:5](#); [Leviticus 18:16](#)). This suggests that the stricter rules in Leviticus may have been changed or modified over time.

Marriages between cousins were very common. Isaac married his cousin Rebekah. Jacob married his cousins Rachel and Leah. When a close relative wanted to marry someone in the family, it was almost impossible to refuse ([Tobit 6:13; 7:11-12](#)).

Some biblical marriages would have been forbidden under later laws. Moses was the child of a marriage between a nephew and his aunt ([Exodus 6:20](#); [Numbers 26:59](#)). This type of marriage was later forbidden in [Leviticus 18:12-13](#) and [20:19](#). Jacob's marriage to two sisters at the same time would also have been forbidden under later laws ([Genesis 29:30](#)). This shows how marriage customs changed over the centuries as God gave his people more specific guidance about family relationships.

### ***Marriage Between Israelites and Foreigners***

When the Israelites settled in Canaan, many of them married Canaanite women. This greatly worried those who wanted to maintain the purity of the Hebrew religion ([1 Kings 11:4](#)). They were

concerned that foreign wives would lead Hebrew men away from worshiping the true God.

Mosaic law (the laws God gave through Moses) prohibited marriage with foreign women ([Exodus 34:15–16](#); [Deuteronomy 7:3–4](#)). These laws were meant to protect the Israelites from adopting the religious practices of other nations. However, many Israelites ignored these rules and continued to marry foreign women.

An exception was allowed if an Israelite captured a woman in war ([Deuteronomy 21:10–14](#)). In contrast, Samson married a Philistine woman who stayed with her own people. He would visit her periodically rather than bringing her to live with him permanently ([Judges 14:8–15:2](#)).

The danger of intermarriage affecting the purity of Hebrew religion was considered so great that drastic action was taken. After the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylon, they discovered that many Jewish men had married foreign wives. The religious leaders ordered them to divorce these foreign wives ([Ezra 9:2; 10:3, 16–17](#)). The goal was to keep the national religion pure, even though this decision destroyed homes and separated families.

Even in New Testament times, Paul warned against marriage with non-Christians. He told believers not to be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers ([2 Corinthians 6:14–15](#)). Paul used the image of two different animals trying to pull a plow together. Just as this would not work well, he taught that a Christian and a non-Christian would have fundamental differences that would make marriage difficult.

### *How Old Were People When They Married?*

It is difficult to know exactly at what age young people married in biblical times. A boy was considered to be a man by his early teens. Later in Jewish tradition, this transition was celebrated by the bar mitzvah ceremony, which generally occurred when the boy was 13 years old.

The discussion about the marriage took place between the groom's parents and the bride's parents. Often, neither of the young people was asked for their opinion about the marriage.

It was necessary for the oldest family member to marry first ([Genesis 29:26](#)). When Abraham decided Isaac should marry, he sent a servant to choose a bride from Abraham's relatives in Mesopotamia. The servant made contact with the

bride's brother and mother ([Genesis 24:33–53](#)). Only afterward was Rebekah asked to give her consent (verses [57–58](#)). Her father was possibly unable to make decisions due to illness or disability. Otherwise, it would have been very unlikely that Rebekah's consent would have been asked at all.

### *Paying the Bride-Price*

Young men often could not afford more than one wife because they had to pay a bride-price to the bride's father. In some cases, a man could offer years of service instead of money ([Genesis 29:15–30](#)). Or, they could complete a specific task required by the bride's father ([1 Samuel 18:25–27](#)). If a man raped a virgin, he was required to pay her father 50 shekels of silver and marry her, if the father permitted ([Deuteronomy 22:28–29](#)). This payment was a form of punishment and compensation, not a typical bride-price.

During the time of the Second Temple, people valued a virgin bride at 50 shekels. They valued a widow or divorced woman at about half that amount. A virgin bride usually married in the middle of the week. This allowed her husband to go to court the next day if he found she was not a virgin. This was important because it was before the Sabbath. A widow or divorced woman usually married on what is now Thursday. This gave her a full day with her husband before the Sabbath.

### *Marriage as a Family Covenant or Alliance*

Marriage was more than just uniting two people together. It was a covenant or alliance between two families. Marriage united these families and extended the kinship network. This made the overall family group larger and stronger. This was very important in a society where people accepted responsibility for their relatives without question.

The covenant concept of marriage could also have political meanings. Marriages between important families could create political alliances. For example, Solomon married an Egyptian princess ([1 Kings 11:1](#)). This marriage created an alliance between Israel and Egypt. Similarly, Ahab of Israel married Jezebel of Tyre ([16:31](#)). This marriage created an alliance between Israel and the city of Tyre.

The sealing of the marriage covenant included giving gifts. These gifts showed the wealth and status of both the giver and the bride ([Genesis 34:12](#)). In the ancient Near East, people believed

that giving a gift included a part of the giver. This meant that the giver was offering a portion of himself or herself. The gift that sealed the marriage covenant also established the giver's authority over the bride.

### *The Betrothal Period*

The next stage in the marriage process was the betrothal. This is first mentioned in [Exodus 22:16](#) and is used several times in Deuteronomy ([Deuteronomy 20:7; 22:23-24](#)). The betrothal had the same legal status as marriage ([Deuteronomy 28:30; 2 Samuel 3:14](#)). According to the law in Deuteronomy, anyone who violated a betrothed virgin would be stoned to death. The law called this violating his neighbor's "wife" ([Deuteronomy 22:23-24](#)), even though the actual wedding had not yet taken place.

The meaning of betrothal involved taking possession of the woman. This was similar to receiving tribute or payment. However, there was still a difference between betrothing a woman and actually taking her as a wife ([Deuteronomy 20:7](#)). During the period of betrothal, the prospective groom received certain benefits. He was exempt from military service so he could prepare for his marriage and spend time with his betrothed.

It was understood that betrothal was a formal part of a permanent relationship. This was not something that could be easily broken ([Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:27; 2:5](#)). A man who was going to marry another man's daughter was already considered a son-in-law at the time of betrothal ([Genesis 19:14](#)). Mary, as Joseph's betrothed, was actually considered his wife in the legal sense. However, Joseph did not have sexual relations with her until after the birth of Jesus.

### *Wedding Feasts and Celebrations*

The first biblical record of a wedding being celebrated with a feast is found in the story of Jacob ([Genesis 29:22](#)). There was no actual written marriage contract recorded in the Bible until it is mentioned in the book of Tobit ([Tobit 7:12](#)). The marriage contract was not considered completely valid until the couple had lived together for a full week ([Genesis 29:27; Judges 14:12, 18](#)). When Samson left his bride before the end of the seven-day period, the bride's parents considered the marriage void. They gave her to another man instead ([Judges 14:20](#)).

The wedding was a joyful family event. Families would celebrate with feasting, music, and dancing. The entire community would often participate in the celebration.

The bride and groom wore special clothing for their wedding ([Isaiah 61:10; Ezekiel 16:9-13](#)). The bride wore a fine dress that was often decorated with jewels and other ornaments ([Psalm 45:14-15; Isaiah 61:10](#)). The bridegroom also had fine clothing and wore a special crown or diadem ([Song of Solomon 3:11; Isaiah 61:10](#)). The bride wore a veil ([Genesis 24:65; Song of Solomon 4:3](#)). This veil was removed only in the bridal chamber after the wedding ceremony. This explains why Rebekah needed to veil herself when she first saw Isaac, her future husband ([Genesis 24:65](#)). The veil also explains how Laban was able to trick Jacob on his wedding night. Laban was able to replace Rachel with Leah because Jacob could not see the bride's face under the veil ([Genesis 29:23-25](#)).

Some weddings included symbolic ceremonies as part of the betrothal or wedding. For example, Ruth asked Boaz to spread his cloak over her to show that he was taking her as his wife ([Ruth 3:9](#)). Another ritual may have been the ceremonial removal of the bride's belt by the groom in the bridal chamber. The bridal chamber was a special room or tent that was prepared specifically for the newly married couple. The marriage was usually consummated on the first night ([Genesis 29:23; Tobit 8:1](#)). This meant that the couple had sexual relations to complete their marriage union. The stained bed linen would be kept as evidence of the bride's virginity.

### *Divorce in Biblical Times*

In contrast to the elaborate celebrations of marriage, divorce was simple. A man could divorce his wife if he found fault with her in any particular matter. This right was not taken away until the 11th century AD. However, divorce was discouraged, and gradually the process became more complex. Various deterrents were put in place to make divorce more difficult.

As divorce laws became more complex, the process became more expensive. At a later time, a lawyer or sometimes a rabbi would give advice. They especially helped with matters such as returning property that rightfully belonged to the bride or her family.

A husband was considered entitled to divorce his wife for several reasons:

If a bride was found to have committed adultery, or if he even suspected her of unfaithfulness, he could divorce her. He could also divorce his wife if he felt that she had violated normal morality, had abandoned their faith, or had been inefficient in managing the household.

If a woman refused to have sexual relations with her husband for at least one year, she could be divorced. Other grounds for divorce included insulting behavior toward the husband or his relatives, contracting an incurable disease, or refusing to move when the husband relocated to a new area.

In general, the status of wives was low in ancient times. Despite the fact that women gave advice, managed the household, educated young children, and worked alongside their husbands when necessary, the husband was still considered her master. Her role was to obey him. A wife was little more than a servant, although she was better off than a slave. She could not be sold, even though she could be divorced.

The Old Testament frequently uses marriage as a symbol to describe the relationship between God and God's people. The Hebrew people and God are referred to as bride and bridegroom ([Isaiah 62:4-5](#); [Jeremiah 2:2](#)). The prophet Jeremiah contrasts the coming desolation of Judah with the joy of a wedding feast ([Jeremiah 7:34; 16:9; 25:10](#)). The book of Hosea uses marriage imagery extensively. God rejects the relationship with his wife, Israel ([Hosea 2:2](#)), because of her unfaithfulness. However, God is prepared to accept her again if she returns to faithful practices (verses [19-20](#)).

In the New Testament, John the Baptist compares his joy to a groom's friend at a wedding ([John 3:29](#)). Jesus refers to wedding preparations in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins ([Matthew 25:1-12](#)). In the story of the marriage feast ([Matthew 22:1-14](#)), Jesus mentioned that wedding robes were provided for guests at such ceremonies. This was a common practice that his listeners would have understood.

The theme of the Christian church as the bride of Christ appears in several New Testament books, including 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Revelation. This imagery shows the intimate, loving relationship between Christ and his followers. Just as a bride and groom are united in marriage, Christ and the church are united in a spiritual relationship of love and commitment.

### *Jesus's Teachings on Marriage, Divorce, and Adultery*

In matters of civil law, Jesus' teaching often reorients or intensifies the emphasis found in the Old Testament. For instance, adultery in Old Testament law seems to have been understood mainly as a man violating another man's marriage, rather than as a breach of mutual marital faithfulness. However, when questioned by the Pharisees, Jesus pointed back to God's original design in creation: one man and one woman united in a permanent bond ([Mark 10:2-9](#)).

Jesus also taught that if a man divorces his wife and marries another woman, he "commits adultery against her" ([Mark 10:11](#)). This was a revolutionary teaching because it made men and women equal regarding adultery. An unfaithful husband was just as guilty of adultery as an unfaithful wife. The disciples thought this teaching was very severe (see [Matthew 19:10](#)). They were shocked because Jesus was making marriage standards much stricter than what they were used to. However, this illustrates what Jesus meant when he said their righteousness must be greater than that of the Jewish religious leaders ([5:20](#)).

There is a slight difference in Matthew's account of Jesus's teaching. Some scholars argue that Jesus was not quite as strict as the summary above suggests. According to [Matthew 19:9](#), a wife's "sexual immorality" allows a husband to divorce her and marry again. However, when we look at the full context, it is more likely that Jesus allowed innocent spouses to separate from unfaithful wives but not to remarry.

This interpretation explains several things:

First, it explains why the disciples were so shocked by Jesus's teaching. Second, it explains why Jesus went on to speak about some people who choose not to marry for the sake of the kingdom of heaven ([Matthew 19:12](#)). This stricter interpretation was also how the early church understood Jesus's teaching for the first five centuries. They allowed Christians to separate from unfaithful spouses but not to remarry (see [1 Corinthians 7:11](#)).

*See also* Adultery; Civil Law and Justice; Concubinage, Concubines; Divorce; Family Life and Relations; Sex, Sexuality; Virgin.

## Mars' Hill

An alternate King James Version translation for Areopagus. This was the name of a small hill located northwest of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. It was also the name of the council that met there. Mars' Hill was the site where Paul gave his famous speech to the Athenian philosophers ([Acts 17:16-34](#)).

*See Areopagus.*

## Marsena

One of the seven princes of Persia and Media who served King Ahasuerus. These officials were the most powerful people in the kingdom after the king ([Esther 1:14](#)).

## Marsh Hen

Alternate name for water hen in [Leviticus 11:18](#) and [Deuteronomy 14:16](#). *See Birds (Water Hen).*

## Martha

The sister of Mary and Lazarus and a friend of Jesus. Martha's family lived in Bethany, a small town on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

Luke tells about a time when Martha was busy preparing and serving food while her sister Mary sat listening to Jesus teach. Martha came to Jesus and complained that Mary was not helping her. Jesus responded gently: "You are worried and upset about many things. But only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her" ([Luke 10:41-42](#)). In saying this, Jesus challenged Martha's worry, showing her that spending time with him is the most important and rewarding priority.

John tells the story of when Lazarus died. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Martha went out to meet him while Mary stayed at home ([John 11:20](#)). Once again, Martha complained to Jesus, saying, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" ([John 11:21](#)). Martha thought Jesus meant Lazarus would come back to life at the final resurrection (when all people will rise from death at the end of time). But Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies" ([John 11:23-26](#)).

Martha then said she believed Jesus was God's chosen one (the Christ, [John 11:27](#)). Later, Jesus asked people to open Lazarus's tomb. Martha worried about this because Lazarus had been dead for four days. Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ([John 11:40](#)). Then Jesus brought Lazarus back to life.

[John 12:1-11](#) tells about another meal where Martha served Jesus and Lazarus. This time, Martha continued serving while Mary showed her love for Jesus, and Martha did not complain.

*See also Mary (#4), Lazarus.*

## Martyrdom of Matthew

This story about the death of the apostle Matthew is loosely organized and takes many ideas from the Acts of Andrew and Matthias. It assumes Matthias was actually Matthew. The author mistakenly thought that Matthias and Matthew were the same person. The writing shows the simple style and limited understanding of theology that are common in later apocryphal books.

The story begins when Jesus sends Matthew to the city of Myrna, where people are described as "man-eaters." Jesus asks Matthew to plant a staff there. Matthew obeys and also drives out the demon Asmodeus from the king's wife and family. When he plants the staff, it grows into a tree overnight. After this miracle, Matthew preaches to the people, and they "become humanized" (that is, they stop their violent behavior and begin to live more peacefully).

Asmodeus seeks revenge and convinces the king to burn Matthew alive. When the fire starts, it destroys the golden idols and kills many soldiers. The flames then turn into a dragon that chases the king. Terrified, the king asks Matthew for help, but Matthew dies before he can respond.

The king, feeling partly sorry but not yet fully changed, places Matthew's body in an iron casket and secretly throws it into the sea. The next day, the king sees a vision: Matthew appears on the water with two shining men and a beautiful child. The king finally believes in Christ, receives baptism, and joins the church. In a final vision, Matthew blesses the king, giving him his own name and appointing the king as a priest, with his family serving as deacons and deaconesses. Afterward, Matthew goes up to heaven with two angels.

*See also* Apocrypha; Matthew.

## Mary

A popular name among Jewish women in the first century. The New Testament mentions six or seven different women named Mary.

1. Mary, the mother of Jesus. According to the stories of Jesus's birth in Matthew and Luke, Mary was a young Jewish virgin. She was likely from the tribe of Judah. While she was engaged to Joseph (of Davidic descent from the tribe of Judah) she was discovered to be pregnant. This is because she submitted to the Holy Spirit ([Matthew 1:18–25](#); [Luke 1:26–38](#)). The couple married and lived first in Nazareth of Galilee. Then they traveled to Bethlehem (Joseph's hometown) for a census. Jesus was born in Bethlehem ([Matthew 2:1](#); [Luke 1:5](#); [2:4–5](#)). Matthew informs us that shortly after the birth the family had to go to Egypt to escape Herod ([Matthew 2:13–14](#)). Later, the family resided again in Nazareth ([Matthew 2:23](#); [Luke 2:39](#)). We have little other information about Mary. She was certainly a concerned mother. This was seen in her strong words to Jesus in [Luke 2:48](#). She later had a high view of Jesus's ability at the wedding in Cana ([John 2:1–4](#)). She had several other sons and daughters to care for. She appeared at the foot of the cross. Jesus asked "the beloved disciple" to care for her in her grief ([John 19:25–27](#)). After the resurrection she and Jesus's brothers were among the disciples who received the the Spirit on Pentecost ([Acts 1:14](#)). No further mention is made of her. Mary's song of praise in [Luke 1:46–55](#) (called "The Magnificat") shows her humility and trust in God's will. She is truly "blessed among women" ([Luke 1:42](#)).

2. Mary, the mother of James and Joseph. This woman goes by several names. In each account, she appears among Jesus's faithful female disciples. She stood at the cross and witnessed the empty tomb. Matthew calls her "Mary the mother of James and Joseph" or just "the other Mary" ([Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1](#)). Mark uses a few names for her. First, he calls her "Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses." Second, he calls her "Mary the mother of Joses." Third, Mark calls her "Mary the mother of James" ([Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1](#)). In John's Gospel, she is "Mary wife of Clopas" ([John 19:25](#)). She may be a separate Mary. Tradition has it that this Mary was Jesus's aunt. Clopas was Joseph's brother (Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* 3.11).
3. Mary Magdalene. We know little about this woman. Her name indicates that she was from Magdala in Galilee. Somewhere in Galilee, she met Jesus. He cast seven demons out of her. She then joined the band of disciples and followed Jesus wherever he went ([Luke 8:2](#)). She followed him to Jerusalem at the foot of the cross when all the male disciples had fled ([Mark 15:40; John 19:25](#)). She observed Jesus's burial ([Mark 15:47](#)). She witnessed the events surrounding the resurrection. [Matthew 28:1](#), [Mark 16:1](#), and [Luke 24:10](#) group her with the other women who went to the tomb. John says that she was the first among these women to discover the empty tomb, the first to report to the disciples, and the first to see the risen Christ as she lingered by the tomb after all the others had left ([John 20:1-2, 11-18](#)). This faithful disciple, however, was not allowed to touch her Lord ([John 20:17](#)).
4. Mary of Bethany. This Judean Mary was the sister of Martha and Lazarus. We know three facts about her. First, she was such a devoted follower of Jesus that she neglected her household duties to listen to him ([Luke 10:38-42](#)). Jesus approved this. Second, she was apparently upset with Jesus when he did not come to heal her brother before he died ([John 11:20, 28-33](#)). Finally, before Jesus died, she anointed him with an expensive ointment while he feasted at her home in Bethany ([Matthew 26:6-13](#); [Mark 14:3-9](#); [John 12:1-8](#)).
5. Mary, mother of John Mark. This woman appears only once in Scripture ([Acts 12:12](#)). Her house was the meeting place of the church. Since it was apparently large and she had servants, she was a wealthy woman. She was probably a widow since no husband is mentioned. In her house, the church prayed for Peter, and Peter came there after being released from prison. Her son John Mark traveled with Paul and probably Peter as well.
6. Mary of Rome. In [Romans 16:6](#) Paul greets a woman in Rome named simply "Mary, who has worked hard among you." At some time she had been in Greece or Asia Minor, perhaps being forced out of Rome with Aquila and Priscilla ([Acts 18:2](#); around AD 49). While there she had met Paul. It is possible she became a Christian through him. She worked hard with him in his work of evangelism or caring for the church. A probable date for the book of Romans is AD 56. By this date, she had returned to Rome. She was honored by the praise Paul heaped upon her and his others who worked with them living in Rome.

## Mary Magdalene

*See Mary #3.*

## Masada

Masada is an ancient fortress built on top of a large rock. It stands near the Dead Sea in modern-day Israel. The fortress is about 10 miles south of a place called En-gedi. This is where a group called the Zealots made their final stand against the Roman army in AD 73. Today, the site has two names: Qasr es-Sebbe in Arabic and Metsada in Hebrew.

Masada stands on a very high rock formation. It rises around 426.7 meters (1,400 feet) above the Dead Sea. It is about 609.6 meters (2,000 feet) from north to south. It is about 298.7 meters (980 feet) from east to west, with steep cliffs on all sides. The top is almost flat and slopes gently toward the south and west. The top is about 8.1 hectares (20 acres) in area. This is the equivalent of about two large city blocks. It is around 3.2 kilometers (two miles) west of the shore of the Dead Sea.

### *Herod's Fortress at Masada*

The ancient Jewish historian Josephus wrote about the early history of Masada. In *Jewish War* 7.8–9, Josephus said that this rock was almost impossible to attack. It was first fortified by Jonathan the high priest. Jonathan named it Masada, which means “mountain stronghold.” The “Jonathan” mentioned by Josephus has been the subject of scholarly debate. Many old coins found at Masada suggest that this Jonathan was probably Alexander Janneus, who ruled from 103 to 76 BC.

Later, King Herod the Great made Masada much stronger and built many new structures there. Herod had two main reasons for developing Masada. First, he worried that the Jewish people might try to remove him from power and bring back their former rulers. Second, he was afraid that Queen Cleopatra of Egypt would convince her ally Mark Antony to take away Herod’s kingdom and give it to her instead.

What we know about Masada during King Herod’s time comes from two sources. One is the writings of Josephus. The other is the work of archaeologist Yigael Yadin, who studied the site between 1963 and 1965. The things Yadin found at Masada proved that many of Josephus’s descriptions were accurate.

Around 40 BC, Herod left his family at Masada while he traveled to Rome to become king. After he

returned, he made Masada into a strong and luxurious fortress. He built palaces, a Roman bath, storerooms, an elaborate water supply system, and a wall.

The wall surrounded the top of the rock. It was 1,295.4 meters (4,250 feet) long. This wall had 30 towers and 8 gates. It was built with two layers, with about 110 rooms between the outer and inner walls. This design made the wall very strong. The space between the walls was 4.1 (13.5 feet) meters.

Herod also created a clever system to collect and store water. During the rainy season, water would flow down from nearby valleys into large cisterns. It had 12 cisterns in two rows on the northwest side of the fortress. The water supply had a capacity of 39.7 million liters (10.5 million gallons), enough water for thousands of people.

A three-tiered palace villa was built in a spectacular location on the northern end of the rock. Other palaces, administrative buildings, and storerooms were located on the top of the rock. These were found at the northern end, at the western side, and in the central region toward the southern end.

Archaeologists found a layer of soil at the southern end of Masada. This suggests Josephus was right when he wrote that people grew food there. The royal buildings were very beautiful, with decorated floors made from tiny colored tiles (called mosaics) and walls painted with colorful designs.

The bath was a typical Roman bath with a caldarium (a hot or steam room), tepidarium (a warm room), and a frigidarium (a cold room). The entire bath complex was 10.1 by 11.0 meters (33 feet by 36 feet) with walls 1.8 meters (six feet) thick.

### *Zealots Capture Masada During the First Jewish Revolt*

In AD 66, the Jewish people began fighting against Roman rule. A group called the Zealots, led by a man named Menahem, captured Masada from the small group of Roman soldiers who were guarding it.

The Zealots changed several things at Masada:

- They built a Jewish place of worship (called a synagogue).
- They added two special pools for Jewish religious ceremonies.
- They changed the palaces and government buildings into homes.

Archaeologists found coins at Masada that were made during each year of the Jewish revolt, from AD 66 to 70. These coins prove exactly when the Zealots lived there.

Archaeologists also found pieces of ancient sacred texts at Masada. These included parts of several Jewish religious books, including portions of Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (also called Ecclesiasticus), and the book of Jubilees.

They also found a scroll that mentioned "the song of the sixth sabbath sacrifice." This scroll used the same type of calendar as scrolls found at another important place called Qumran. Qumran was home to a religious group called the Essenes. Based on these scrolls, archaeologist Yadin believed that some Essenes had left Qumran and joined the Zealots at Masada during their fight against Rome. The Essenes likely brought their sacred texts with them.

The Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. After that, they defeated Jewish fighters throughout the region. Finally, only the fortress of Masada was left. The new Roman governor, Flavius Silva, made plans to capture Masada and end the Jewish resistance once and for all.

About 960 Jewish Zealots were inside Masada, led by a man named Eleazar. The Roman commander Flavius Silva knew he needed a large army to capture the fortress. He brought about 15,000 men, including many Jewish prisoners who were forced to help the Romans.

Silva built a ring of eight military camps around Masada. He connected these camps with a thick wall that went all the way around the fortress. The wall was 1.8 meters (six feet) thick and 3,474.7 meters (11,400 feet) long. It had 12 towers spaced along it every 73.2 to 91.4 meters (240 to 300 feet). Each camp could hold about 9,000 soldiers. It is estimated that Silva had about 15,000 men, including a large number of Jewish prisoners.

Silva built such strong defenses around Masada for an important reason. He wanted to make sure that

not even one Zealot could escape and encourage other Jews to keep fighting against Rome.

### *The Final Battle at Masada*

There were two ways to climb up to Masada. The "snake path" was located on the eastern side of the rock. Another path was on the western side. The snake path is difficult and narrow. It requires about 50 minutes of dangerous climbing.

The Zealots had gathered many large rocks near the top of the eastern path. They were ready to roll these rocks down on any Romans who tried to climb up that way.

Silva decided not to use this dangerous path. Instead, he chose to attack from the western side. He ordered his soldiers to build a huge ramp using packed earth and stone. The ramp was about 54.9 meters (180 feet) in height, about as high as 30 tall palm trees stacked on top of each other. It was about 196.6 meters (645 feet) in length and would take someone about five minutes to walk from the bottom to the end. The base of the ramp was very wide to make it stable. Even though the ramp was huge, it still did not reach all the way to the top of Masada. It stopped about 60 feet below the fortress wall.

The Zealots had amassed a supply of large boulders near the top, apparently expecting an attack at this point. Silva selected the western approach. He ordered his soldiers to build a ramp of earth. The ramp was about 54.9 meters (180 feet) in height, about 196.6 meters (645 feet) in length, and about the same width at the base as the length. It did not quite reach the top of the fortress. It ended about 18.3 meters (60 feet) below the casemate wall.

By means of a battering ram and missile catapult, Silva breached the wall, but the Zealots repaired it overnight with timbers and earth. Silva then burned the timbered repair. When Eleazar ben-Yair saw that the Romans would soon capture Masada. He gathered his people together and gave a powerful speech. The historian Josephus wrote down this speech, though he probably added many of his own words to it.

Here are some of the important words from Eleazar's speech:

"It is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom... Let our wives die before they are abused, and our children before they have tasted of slavery; and after we have slain them, let us bestow that glorious benefit upon one another mutually,

and preserve ourselves in freedom, as an excellent funeral monument for us. But first let us destroy our money and the fortress by fire... and let us spare nothing but our provisions, for they will be a testimonial when we are dead that we were not subdued for want of necessaries; but that, according to our original resolution, we have preferred death before slavery."

At first, the people were not willing to follow Eleazar's plan to die together. So Eleazar gave another speech to his people. This time, his words made them feel both ashamed and brave.

Before he could finish speaking, the people stopped him. They had made their decision. Josephus describes the sad scene that followed. "The husbands tenderly embraced their wives and took their children into their arms, and gave the longest parting kisses to them, with tears in their eyes." Then the men killed their wives and children and laid all their possessions in a heap and set fire to them.

Then, the group needed to choose ten men for their final task. They did this by casting lots. The other men went to lie down next to their families who had already died. The ten chosen men then killed them. These ten men then needed to make one final choice. They again cast lots to pick one person who would kill the other nine, and then end his own life.

Years later, archaeologist Yadin found something important at Masada: eleven broken pieces of pottery. Each piece had a name written on it. One of these pieces had the name of their leader, Eleazar. Yadin believed these pottery pieces were probably used to make that final random choice.

The Zealots carried out their plan, but not everyone died. Two women and five children hid in a cave and survived. The next day, when the Romans entered Masada, they expected the Jews to fight back. Instead, they found only silence, the remains of a large fire, and plenty of food in the storage rooms. The two women who had hidden in the cave came out and told the Romans what had happened.

*See also* First Jewish Revolt; Herod, Herodian Family; Judaism; Zealot.

## **Maschil**

KJV rendering of maskil, a musical cue in the titles of numerous psalms. *See Maskil.*

## **Mash**

Aram's fourth son ([Gn 10:23](#)), a descendant of Shem. He is called Meshech in [1 Chronicles 1:17](#). *See* Meshech #2.

## **Mashal**

Alternate spelling of Mishal, a Levitical town in Asher, in [1 Chronicles 6:74](#). *See* Mishal.

## **Maskil**

A Hebrew term in the titles of 13 psalms. It could be a musical cue describing how musicians should perform these psalms.

*See* Music.

## **Mason, Masonry**

A worker in the craft of brick and stonework. The mason prepared stone from the quarry for use in building. In the early days of Israel, they hired masons from Phoenicia ([2 Samuel 5:11](#); [1 Kings 5:17-18](#); [1 Chronicles 14:1](#)). But later, Israelite masons did their own work ([2 Kings 12:12](#); [22:6](#); [2 Chronicles 24:12](#); [Ezra 3:7](#)).

## **Masora, Masoretes**

The Masora is the oral tradition about how to pronounce and maintain the accuracy of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The Masoretes were the scholars who wrote down these traditions.

### *Early History*

From about 400 BC to AD 200, a group of scholars called the Sopherim (scribes who copied religious texts) worked to keep the Old Testament text accurate. They counted every verse, word, and letter in each book of the Bible. This counting helped future copyists check if their copies were correct.

The traditional Hebrew text, called the Masoretic Text, became fixed in its standard form in the early second century AD. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which are much older, showed that this text matched well with earlier versions. However, this early text only

had consonants (letters that are not vowels). It did not have vowels or marks showing how to pronounce the words (called accent marks).

### *The Masoretes and Their Work*

The Masoretes continued the work of preserving the Bible text. Their name comes from their work with the Masora. They lived mainly in Tiberias, a city near the Sea of Galilee, from AD 500 to 950. Moses ben Asher and his son Aaron were two of the most important Masoretes. Today's Hebrew Bible comes from a text by ben Asher.

The Masoretes wanted to preserve the exact text they had received and pass it on without changes. To prevent copying mistakes, they wrote notes in the margins. These notes told how many times certain words and phrases appeared in the Bible and where to find them.

### *Adding Vowels and Accent Marks*

The Masoretes made an important change to help people read the text correctly. They added dots and small marks to show the vowels (called vowel pointing) and how to pronounce the words (called accent marks). They did not create new ways to pronounce words. Instead, they wrote down the traditional pronunciations that people already knew. This was important because changing even one vowel sound could change what a word meant.

### *Preserving the Text*

While preserving the text, the Masoretes also practiced textual criticism (a process used to determine the original wording of a text). They respected the text so much that they would not change it directly. Instead, they created a system of notes. If they thought a copyist had made an error, they left the error in the text (called *kethib* or "that which is written"). But they added vowel markings for the preferred wording (called *qere* or "that which is to be read") and placed the correct consonants in the margin. They also marked words that should probably be left out.

### *God's Name*

One notable *qere* reading involved God's name. By the fifth century BC, Jews were uncomfortable pronouncing God's covenant name, Yahweh. They began to use the vowel markings for Adonai (meaning "Lord") instead. This showed readers to say "Lord" instead of "Yahweh." This practice led to

the modern word "Jehovah," which combines the consonants of Yahweh with the vowels of Adonai.

### *The Lasting Impact of the Masoretes*

The Sopherim and Masoretes did their work with great care. Because of this, we have a very accurate copy of the Old Testament text today. People copied their version of the text by hand until they could use printing presses. No other ancient Near Eastern writing has been preserved as accurately as the Old Testament.

*See also* Bible, Manuscripts and Text of the (Old Testament).

## **Masoretic Text**

The Masoretic Text is the traditional Hebrew text of the Old Testament that Jewish scholars preserved between the 6th and 10th centuries AD. These scholars were called Masoretes. The Masoretes added vowel markings and accents to the text to ensure its accurate pronunciation and interpretation. This text became the standard version of the Hebrew Bible.

Most modern translations of the Old Testament use it as their main source, often alongside other ancient texts for comparison, such as the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament) and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

*See* Masora, Masoretes.

## **Masrekah**

Home of an Edomite king named Samlah ([Gn 36:36](#); [1 Chr 1:47](#)).

## **Massa**

Ishmael's seventh son and Abraham's grandson ([Gn 25:14](#); [1 Chr 1:30](#)). His descendants inhabited northwestern Arabia. Tiglath-pileser III mentions these people, along with the inhabitants of Tema (cf. [Gn 25:15](#)) and others who were ruled by him and paid tribute to him. The people of Tema probably were descendants of Massa's brother Tema.

Massa forms part of the titles of [Proverbs 30:1](#) and [31:1](#). The definite article precedes it in [30:1](#) and can

be translated "the burden" or "the oracle." It is frequently used in prophetic passages in the ominous sense of God's impending judgment ([Is 13:1](#); [Na 1:1](#); [Hb 1:1](#)).

## Massah and Meribah

Massah and Meribah were two places where the Israelites complained about not having water during their journey through the desert. In Hebrew, *massah* means "to put to the test" and *meribah* means "to find fault, quarrel" ([Exodus 17:7](#)). At Rephidim, the Israelites had no water to drink. God told Moses to strike a rock, and water came out of it. Moses gave this place two names (Massah and Meribah) because the people tested God by doubting he would provide for them.

The Bible mentions Massah four times when talking about how the Israelites rebelled against God ([Deuteronomy 6:16](#); [9:22](#); [33:8](#); [Psalm 95:8](#)).

In contrast, [Numbers 20:13](#), [24](#); [27:14](#), and [Deuteronomy 32:51](#) place Meribah near Kadesh in the Zin wilderness. There, Moses struck the rock twice to produce water. [Psalm 81:7](#) and [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) suggest that God was testing the Israelites during these events.

*See also* Meribah.

## Master

Someone who has control, authority, or ownership over something or someone. The term "master" is used to indicate someone of high rank. "Mistress" is the female equivalent of "master." A master can be:

- someone who owns an animal or property ([Isaiah 1:3](#))
- someone in charge of a household ([Mark 13:35](#))
- someone who owns servants or slaves ([Genesis 16:9](#); [39:3](#); [Ephesians 6:5](#))
- an employer ([Luke 16:3](#))
- a teacher ([Luke 9:49](#); compare [Mark 9:38](#), which uses "teacher" instead of "master")
- the Lord God ([Ephesians 6:9](#))

The word "master" is often used to describe Jesus. When the Greek word *kurios* (usually translated as "Lord") refers to Jesus, it emphasizes both the authority God gave him and his role in the lives of believers.

## Mastic

Small Mediterranean tree that exudes a gum used to make numerous products. *See Plants (Balm)*.

## Mathusala

The King James Version spelling of Methuselah, Enoch's son, in [Luke 3:37](#).

*See* Methuselah.

## Matred

Mother of Mehetabel, the wife of King Hadad (Hadar) of Edom ([Gn 36:39](#); [1 Chr 1:50](#)).

## Matri, Matrites

Family of Benjamin's tribe. Saul, the first king of Israel, came from this family ([1 Sm 10:21](#)).

## Mattan

1. Priest of Baal killed at the time when Jehoiada the priest had Queen Athaliah killed and Joash placed on the throne of Judah ([2 Kgs 11:18](#); [2 Chr 23:17](#)).

2. Father of Shephatiah, a prince under King Zedekiah and among those who persecuted Jeremiah ([Jer 38:1-6](#)).

## **Mattanah**

A place where the Israelites camped after God led them out of Egypt. They came here as they traveled north along the east side of the Dead Sea, moving from the Arnon River toward the land ruled by Sihon, the king of the Amorites ([Numbers 21:18-19](#)). Today, we do not know exactly where Mattanah was, but it is likely at a place now called Khirbet el-Medeiyineh, near a valley called Wadi eth-Themed.

## **Mattaniah**

1. Last king of Judah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon enthroned in place of his nephew Jehoiachin; his name subsequently was changed to Zedekiah ([2 Kgs 24:17](#)), and as such he was known in the other references to him in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Jeremiah. *See Zedekiah.*
2. Asaph's descendant, named among the Levites living in postexilic Jerusalem ([1 Chr 9:15](#); [Neh 11:17, 22](#); [12:8, 35](#)).
3. Heman's son, who helped lead music in the sanctuary during David's reign ([1 Chr 25:4, 16](#)).
4. Levite of the sons of Asaph, who was an ancestor of Jahaziel, a messenger of God in the days of King Jehoshaphat ([2 Chr 20:14](#)).
5. Another Levite of the sons of Asaph who helped cleanse the temple during King Hezekiah's reign ([2 Chr 29:13](#)).
- 6-9. Four men of Israel who were exhorted by Ezra to divorce their foreign wives during the postexilic era ([Ezr 10:26-27, 30, 37](#)).
10. One of the gatekeepers at the time of the dedication of the reconstructed wall of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day ([Neh 12:25](#)).
11. Grandfather of Hanan, a treasurer of the temple storehouse in Nehemiah's day ([Neh 13:13](#)).

## **Mattatha**

An ancestor of Jesus according to [Luke 3:31](#).

*See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.*

## **Mattathah**

KJV spelling of Mattattah, Hashum's son, in [Ezra 10:33](#). *See Mattattah.*

**Mattathias**

1. A Jewish priest from the family of Joarib (his family history can be traced in [1 Maccabees 2:1](#) and in Josephus's *Antiquities* 12.6.3). Though he was born in Jerusalem, he later moved to a town called Modein. He became known as the father of the Maccabeans, a group of leaders who fought for Jewish independence against Syrian rule in 167 BC.  
At this time, the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes tried to destroy the Jewish religion and force the Jewish people to follow Greek ways instead. He made Jewish religious practices illegal, including their sacrifices to God. He built altars for non-Jewish gods, including one to the Greek god Zeus in the Jewish temple. He also ordered the death of anyone who kept the Torah ([1 Maccabees 2:1-49](#)).  
The conflict began when Greek officers built an altar to their gods in Modein. They ordered people to make sacrifices to these gods, but Mattathias refused. When another Jewish person stepped forward to make the sacrifice, Mattathias killed both that person and the Greek officer. He then destroyed the altar and ran to the hills with people who supported him.  
From there, Mattathias led surprise attacks against the Syrians. He continued to perform Jewish religious ceremonies, including circumcision (the religious ritual of removing the foreskin from baby boys). He worked hard to protect Jewish religious laws and traditions. He told his followers, "Let everyone who is zealous for the law come after me."  
Mattathias led the fight against the Syrians for about one year before he died, likely in 167 BC. His final words to his sons were, "Obey the ordinance of the law." After his death, his son Judas became the new military leader. Mattathias's family line, known as the Hasmonean family, continued to serve

as Jewish priests for many generations.

Today, Jewish people remember Mattathias during Hanukkah (an eight-day Jewish holiday that celebrates the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem after the Maccabean victory). They honor him in special prayers because of his strong dedication to protecting Jewish religious practices.

2. Amos's son and an ancestor of Jesus according to [Luke 3:25](#).  
*See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.*
3. Semein's son and an ancestor of Jesus according to [Luke 3:26](#).  
*See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.*

## **Mattattah**

Hashum's son, who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile ([Ezr 10:33](#)).

## **Mattenai**

1. Hashum's son, who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile ([Ezr 10:33](#)).
2. Bani's son, who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile ([Ezr 10:37](#)).
3. Head of Joiarib's priestly house during the days of Joiakim the high priest in postexilic Jerusalem ([Neh 12:19](#)).

## **Matthan**

An ancestor of Jesus ([Matthew 1:15](#)). He may be the same as Matthat in [Luke 3:24](#).

*See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.*

## **Matthat**

1. An ancestor of Jesus ([Luke 3:24](#)), perhaps the same as Matthan ([Matthew 1:15](#)).
2. An ancestor of Jesus ([Luke 3:29](#)).

*See also Genealogy of Jesus Christ.*

## **Matthew (Person)**

Matthew was a tax collector who became one of Jesus's twelve closest followers (called apostles). Many believe that Matthew wrote the book about Jesus's life that is called the Gospel of Matthew.

### *Who Was Matthew?*

Matthew was the son of Alphaeus. Before following Jesus, Matthew worked as a tax collector and was also known by the name Levi ([Mark 2:14](#); [Luke 5:27](#); compare [Matthew 9:9](#)). He is called Matthew in all four lists of Jesus's twelve apostles ([Matthew 10:3](#); [Mark 3:18](#); [Luke 6:15](#); [Acts 1:13](#)). Outside of these lists, Matthew's name is used only in the story where Jesus calls him to be his disciple ([Matthew 9:9](#); [Mark 2:13-14](#); [Luke 5:27](#)).

Some people think Matthew might have been the brother of James the Less, who also had a father named Alphaeus ([Matthew 10:3](#)). However, this is probably not true because the Bible would have mentioned this connection. It does so with brothers Peter and Andrew, and with James and John (the sons of Zebedee).

### *Matthew's Work and Background*

Matthew worked as a tax collector in the city of Capernaum, which was ruled by King Herod Antipas. His job was to collect money from people who carried goods on the road between Damascus and the Mediterranean Sea. To do this job well, Matthew needed to be educated. He knew how to speak Greek and Aramaic (the local language). These language skills would later help him write the book about Jesus that we call the Gospel of Matthew.

As a tax collector, Matthew was probably wealthy. However, many Jewish people strongly disliked tax collectors because they worked for the Roman government. The Pharisees (an important Jewish religious group) often grouped tax collectors together with people they called sinners ([Matthew 11:19](#); [Mark 2:16](#); [Luke 7:34](#); [15:1](#)).

### *Jesus Calls Matthew to Follow Him*

Jesus called Matthew to be his disciple while Matthew was collecting taxes. Jesus passed by on the road and said to him, "Follow me" ([Mark 2:14](#)). Matthew left everything to follow Jesus ([Luke](#)

[5:28](#)). Matthew gave Jesus a great party at his house. A large crowd of his fellow tax collectors and others were there to enjoy it. It was at this party that the Pharisees and their scribes complained. They asked, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” ([Luke 5:30](#)).

It is not clear when Jesus called Matthew to follow him. His first six disciples were likely there on that day. The Pharisees complained to Christ’s disciples during Matthew’s feast. Unlike Jesus’s first disciples, Matthew was not originally a follower of John the Baptist.

## Matthias

Matthias was a disciple of Jesus who is mentioned by name only in [Acts 1:23–26](#). The Lord chose him to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve apostles.

Shortly after Jesus went up to heaven (his ascension), Peter said they needed another apostle. There were two requirements for the new apostle:

1. The person must have followed Jesus from the time of his baptism until his ascension.
2. The person must have seen Jesus after his resurrection.

The group of believers suggested two men who met these requirements: Joseph called Barsabbas (whose family name was Justus), and Matthias.

They then cast lots (some scholars think they may have voted instead). By whatever method they used, Matthias became the next apostle.

Later, the group of apostles grew to include others such as Paul, Andronicus, and Junias. The Bible never mentions Matthias again after his selection. However, tradition says that he preached in Judea and was eventually killed by stoning by the Jewish authorities.

*See also* Apostle, Apostleship.

## Mattithiah

1. Levite and Shallum’s firstborn son, who was in charge of making the baked cakes that accompanied the offerings in the temple ([1 Chr 9:31](#)).

2. Musician appointed by the Levites to play the lyre, along with five others, when the ark was brought to Jerusalem in David’s time ([1 Chr 15:18, 21; 16:5](#)).

3. One of Jeduthun’s six sons, who was a musician in David’s time ([1 Chr 25:3, 21](#)); perhaps identifiable with #2 above.

4. Nebo’s son, who divorced his foreign wife as commanded by Ezra ([Ezr 10:43](#)).

5. One who stood to Ezra’s right when Ezra read the law to the people after the exile ([Neh 8:4](#)).

## Mattock

A farming tool used for digging or breaking up the soil ([1 Samuel 13:20–21](#), translated “pick” in the New Living Translation).

*See* Agriculture.

## Maul

KJV translation for “war club” (nlt “ax”) in [Proverbs 25:18](#). *See* Armor and Weapons; Warfare.

## Mayor

*See* Town Clerk.

## Mazzaroth

A word appearing in [Job 38:32](#) that may refer to a constellation. The Hebrew form is feminine in [Job 38:32](#) and masculine in [Job 9:9](#). Some scholars think it refers to the Hyades (a group of stars within the bull-shaped pattern of stars called Taurus). Others think it might mean:

- The Great Bear (a pattern of stars that looks like a bear; also called Ursa Major)
- The 12 signs of the zodiac (patterns of stars that mark the sun's path through the sky)
- The Northern Crown (a group of stars that form a crown shape; also called Corona Borealis)

*See also* Astronomy.

## Me-Jarkon

Topographical designation in the description of Dan's inheritance ([Jos 19:46](#)). It is probably not a settlement; Jarkon seems to be the name of the river (el-'Awjah) flowing across the coastal plain from the springs at Aphek to the coast four miles (6.4 kilometers) north of Joppa. It was a formidable obstacle to north-south travel, but the numerous ancient sites along its banks testify to its importance as an entryway from the sea to the interior of the country.

## Meah, Tower of

KJV translation for "Tower of the Hundred" in [Nehemiah 3:1](#) and [12:39](#). See Hundred, Tower of the.

## Meal Offering

An offering of grain or fine flour. It has also been translated "grain offering" (nlt, niv), "cereal offering" (rsv) and "meat offering" (kjv). See Offerings and Sacrifices.

## Meaning of Meals in the Bible

The meal was important in family, social, and religious life. The evening meal was when all family members gathered together, so it was important for bonding. Providing food for travelers was a social and religious duty. Friends would visit to eat with the family and discuss their daily problems. Meals are still important in both Judaism with the

Passover meal and in Christianity with the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

### Types of Meals

In the ancient Near East, people ate two meals a day. The first was at noon, eaten in the field by workers. It consisted of small cakes, flat loaves, figs, olives, and possibly goats' cheese or curds. This was a small meal, eaten to take a break from the heat and work ([Ruth 2:14](#)). People in Bible times did not usually eat breakfast. The Bible only mentions morning meals a few times ([Judges 19:5](#); [John 21:12](#)).

In Israel, the evening meal was the most important social event of the day. Workers would return home to relax and enjoy the meal with their family. This meal happened at sunset when it was too dark to work.

### What Did People Eat?

An average meal included bread or cakes made from hand-ground grain, goats' cheese or curds, and vegetables like beans, lentils, leeks, peas, figs, olives, raisins, and dates. Meat was available but a luxury for most people. Food was cooked in olive oil and sweetened with honey.

### How Did People Eat Their Meals?

Families ate together, usually seated on the floor with a mat for a table ([Genesis 37:25](#)). Later, they adopted Canaanite customs and used chairs and small tables ([1 Kings 13:20](#); [Psalm 23:5](#); [Ezekiel 23:41](#)). The Egyptian custom of eating in a reclined position became popular until the Roman period. On special occasions, music, dancing, and riddles were provided for family and guests.

By New Testament times, dining rooms would sometimes be in a separate room upstairs. Guests reclined on their left elbow to eat and talk easily. At important meals, people sat in a set order, from the most important person to the least important (compare [Genesis 43:33](#); [1 Samuel 9:22](#); [Matthew 23:6](#); [Mark 12:39](#); [Luke 14:8](#)). The place of honor was to the right of the servant as they entered the room. The least important place was on the servant's left.

Guests washed their hands before and after meals. They ate stew from a common bowl. The stew could have meat, vegetables, or both. Pieces of bread would scoop the stew from the bowl. Usually, there was only one main dish, so the cook could eat with the guests in a communal meal.

## Meals in the New Testament

Jesus often shared meals with his disciples and friends. He and his followers were guests at the wedding feast held in Cana of Galilee ([John 2:1–10](#)), and also at a dinner given by Matthew ([Matthew 9:10](#)). They were also guests at another dinner given by Simon the Pharisee ([Luke 7:36–50](#)). Jesus was entertained at dinner somewhat unexpectedly by Zacchaeus ([19:6–7](#)). On several occasions Jesus was a guest at a family gathering held at the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus in Bethany ([Luke 10:38–42](#); [John 12:2](#)). Following the customs of smaller towns and villages, people who passed by the house may well have called in to greet Jesus and perhaps talk with other guests.

## Important Religious Meals

There are two important meals described in Scripture. One involves the old covenant and the other the new covenant (covenants are promises between God and his people). Both meals had a redemptive meaning for the people of God. The first was the institution of the Passover at the time of Israel's departure from Egypt under Moses ([Exodus 12](#)). The second was the institution of the Lord's Supper. Both are discussed in detail in separate articles.

There were other meals that were important in the Bible. For example, the Israelites often ate meals to celebrate God when they brought their sacrifices ([Deuteronomy 14:24–26](#)). The Bible also speaks of a day when there will be a great feast in the kingdom of God ([Isaiah 25:6](#); [Luke 14:25](#); [Revelation 19:9](#)).

*See also* Food and Food Preparation; Feasts and Festivals of Israel; Lord's Supper, The; Passover.

## Meaning of Names in the Bible

### MEANING OF NAMES IN THE BIBLE

In Bible times, people gave names to show something about a person. A name could also express something through that person. Names were not just convenient labels.

People chose names for at least seven main reasons:

#### 1. To record something about a person's birth

Sometimes a name told about how a person was born. For example, Moses's adoptive mother named him because she drew him out of the water. The sound of his name was like a Hebrew word that means "to draw out" ([Exodus 2:10](#)).

Jacob ([Genesis 25:26](#)) and Samuel ([1 Samuel 1:20](#)) also got their names from the events at their births. Samuel's name means "heard by God." It does not point to the prayer itself but to God hearing and answering it. These names sometimes showed more than birth events. They could also point to the person's future. Jacob later became known for taking advantage of others ([Genesis 27:36](#)). Samuel became known as a man of prayer ([1 Samuel 7:5–9](#); [8:6, 21](#); [12:19–23](#)).

#### 2. To show a parent's feelings at the birth

Sometimes parents chose a name to show how they felt when the child was born. Isaac's name means "laughter" (compare [Genesis 17:17](#); [18:12](#); [21:3–6](#)). Nabal's name means "fool" ([1 Samuel 25:25](#)). His mother may have hoped he would not be foolish, but sadly he was.

Abimelech's name means "my father is king" ([Judges 8:31](#)). This might have shown a hidden desire of his father Gideon, even though Gideon said publicly he would not be king ([Judges 8:22–23](#)).

#### 3. To keep family unity

Sometimes a name was chosen to keep the family closely connected. This may be why people wanted to name the baby Zechariah in [Luke 1:59](#).

**4. To show the person's nature, role, or something important about them**

A name could tell what a person would do or what they were like. The best example is Jesus, whose name was given because he would save his people ([Matthew 1:21](#)).

The prophet Isaiah's name means "the Lord saves." Isaiah seems to have seen this as part of his message ([Isaiah 8:18](#)).

**5. To share God's message**

Sometimes God told a prophet to give a child a special name to show His message. For example, Isaiah named his first son Shear-jashub, which means "a remnant shall return" ([Isaiah 7:3](#)). This name had two parts to the message: because the people were unfaithful, only a small group would come back; but because God is faithful, that group would survive. Isaiah named his second son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which means "speed-prey-haste-spoil" ([Isaiah 8:3](#)). This showed that an enemy would soon attack and win quickly.

**6. To show religious belief**

Some names in the Bible include endings like *-iah* (or *-jah*) or *-el*. These endings mean "the Lord" (*-yah*) or "God" (*-el*). For example, Adonijah means "the Lord is sovereign" ([2 Samuel 3:4](#)). Nathanael means "God gave" ([John 1:47](#)).

Parents often chose these kinds of names during times when many people turned away from God. The names showed the parents' faith.

**7. To show authority over someone**

In the ancient Near East, giving a name showed power or authority over the person or thing ([Genesis 2:19-20](#)). If a person did not know another's name, they could not do harm or good to them ([Exodus 33:12, 17](#)).

In ancient times, a name often described the person or their work. If the person or situation changed, the name could change too. For example, Abram became Abraham, and Jacob became Israel.

A ruler could also change someone's name to show control. Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to Zaphenath-paneah when Joseph became a leader in Egypt ([Genesis 41:45](#)). Pharaoh Neco changed King Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim when he ruled Judah ([2 Kings 23:34](#)). In Babylon, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were given new names (Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) by order of the king's official ([Daniel 1:6-7](#)).

In the New Testament, an angel sent by God told what John the Baptist's name would be. In the same way, an angel told the name of Jesus. These names showed God's authority over John and His special relationship as Father to Jesus.

### New Names

In the Bible, a name could show a person's nature or position. This is clear in the practice of giving someone a new name. For example, God changed Sarai's name to Sarah ([Genesis 17:15](#)). Three motivations are possible:

**1. To show the gift of new power or role**

A new name could replace the old one to show that the person received new power or ability. This could be like a new beginning. For example, the childless Abram became Abraham, which means “father of a multitude of nations” ([Genesis 17:5](#)).

**2. To show a new character and standing with God**

A new name could show that a person’s character or position with God had changed. For example, Jacob the trickster became Israel the man of power with God ([Genesis 32:27](#); [Hosea 12:3-4](#)). In the New Testament, Simon became Peter ([John 1:42](#)).

**3. To fix a new loyalty in place of the old**

A new name could be given to make someone loyal to a new ruler or religion. For example, Daniel, who was taken captive to Babylon, was given the name Belteshazzar. This name included the name Bel, a Babylonian god. It was likely meant to turn Daniel’s loyalty from the God of his ancestors to the gods of his captors ([Daniel 1:7](#)).

*See also* God, Names of.

## Mearah

Region of Palestine that the Israelites had not possessed ([Jos 13:4](#), niv “Arah”). Its location is uncertain. Suggestions include the district of caves (Mearah means “cave”) near Sidon called Mughar Jezzin, and the towns Khirbet ‘Arab and Mogheiriyyeh.

## Measure

*See* Weights and Measures.

## Meat

*See* Food and Food Preparation; Meals, Significance of.

## Meat Offering

KJV form of “meal” or “grain” offering. *See* Offerings and Sacrifices.

## Mebunnai

A name that appears in [2 Samuel 23:27](#) as one of King David’s mighty men. This name is probably a copying error in the text. Mebunnai is likely another name for Sibbecai.

*See* Sibbecai, Sibbechai.

## Mecherathite

A title given to Hepher in [1 Chronicles 11:36](#). In the parallel passage in [2 Samuel 23:34](#), Hepher is called “the son of the Maachathite” (in the King James Version) or “from Maacah” (in the New Living Translation).

*See* Maacah, Maachah (Place); Maacathite, Maachathi, Maachathite.

## Meconah

Settlement mentioned beside Ziklag ([Neh 11:28](#)) and presumably in the western Negev.

## Medad

An elder of Israel who prophesied during the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness. God gave him and another leader named Eldad special messages to share with the people. Joshua was worried when he saw them speaking God’s messages, but Moses told Joshua this was good and that they had the right to share what God told them ([Numbers 11:26-27](#)).

## **Medan**

Third son of Abraham by his second wife, Keturah ([Gn 25:2; 1 Chr 1:32](#)).

## **Medeba**

Medeba was a Moabite town in the fertile plain northeast of the Dead Sea. It was about 40.2 kilometers (25 miles) south of Philadelphia (which is now modern Amman). It was 9.7 kilometers (6 miles) south of Heshbon on the Roman road that led to Kerak.

In this location, the Amorites defeated Moab ([Numbers 21:30](#)). Later, Israel defeated Sihon, King of the Amorites, at Medeba. The Israelites gave this town to the tribe of Reuben ([Joshua 13:9, 16](#)). King David defeated an Aramean army at this place. The Arameans had been hired by the Ammonites to fight against David's forces ([1 Chronicles 19:7](#)).

According to the Moabite Stone (an ancient stone inscription), the town was once controlled by the Israelite kings Omri and Ahab. However, when King Mesha brought Moab back to power in the eighth century BC, he rebuilt Medeba and other Moabite cities. Medeba is mentioned in Isaiah's prophecies against Moab ([Isaiah 15:2](#)). Later, the kings Joram and Jehoshaphat tried but failed to capture this city.

## **Medes, Media, Median**

An Indo-European-speaking people lived in the highlands of an ancient country called Media, now part of Iran. They were closely related to the Persians. Ancient writers often confused the two, calling them "Medes."

The Medes had a specific homeland in the Zagros Mountains, at 914 to 1,524 meters (3,000 to 5,000 feet). Their capital was Ecbatana (modern-day Hamadan). It sat on a major trade route from Mesopotamia. Ecbatana's cool summer weather made it a retreat for Persian kings.

### *What Do We Know About the Medes?*

We have no written records from the Medes themselves about their history and culture. Instead, we learn about them from what other ancient peoples wrote. The Greeks, Neo-Babylonians, and Assyrians all wrote about the

Medes. The Neo-Babylonian writings especially mention the Medes because both the Medes and the Chaldeans helped destroy the Assyrian Empire. We can also learn more about them from a Greek historian named Herodotus. There may be more information in ancient clay tablets with wedge-shaped writing (called cuneiform).

### *Assyrian Raids and Conquests*

An Assyrian ruler named King Shalmaneser III wrote about the Medes living near a place called Ecbatana in the 9th century BC. However, historians do not know exactly when the Medes first moved into this area.

Shalmaneser led a raid into the lands of the Medes to capture their prized horses. These horses were famous for being some of the best in the ancient world. For many years, Assyrian kings continued these raids. They had two main reasons: to get more of these excellent horses and to keep trade routes safe for merchants.

During the 8th century BC, several Assyrian kings, including Adad-nirari, Tiglath-pileser III, and Sargon II, all said they had conquered the Median lands. The Old Testament mentions that during Sargon's military campaigns, he moved groups of people, including some Israelites, to these regions ([2 Kings 17:6; 18:11](#)).

### *The Medes and the Fall of Assyria*

When Esar-haddon ruled Assyria from 681 to 669 BC, he expected the Medians to pay him tribute as agreed in their treaty. However, the Medians saw that Assyria was getting weaker. In 631 BC, they decided to take action. They joined forces with the Scythians and Cimmerians to challenge Assyrian power.

The Assyrian Empire continued to grow weaker under repeated attacks. Phraortes led a series of successful battles that eventually led to major victories. In 612 BC, the Medians captured the important city of Nineveh. Two years later, in 610 BC, they also took the city of Haran.

### *Cyaxares Strengthens the Medes*

Cyaxares, the leader of the Median forces, built a strong and well-organized army. With their allies, they captured key cities and spread their influence across northern Assyria. In 585 BC, they even made peace with Lydia, showing their growing power in the region.

### *Cyrus Unites the Medes and Persians*

The Elamites played an important role in the changing power dynamics of the ancient Middle East. In 550 BC, Cyrus of Anshan defeated Astyages and took control of the region. Cyrus was unique, with both Persian and Median family backgrounds. He captured Ecbatana, the capital of Media, and took the title "king of the Medes."

Cyrus brought the Medes and Persians closer together ([Daniel 6:8, 15](#)). He combined their laws and traditions and gave Medes important jobs in the government. In fact, people often used the words "Medes" and "Persians" almost interchangeably ([Esther 1:19](#); [Daniel 8:20](#)). Together, they played a key role in capturing the city of Babylon ([Isaiah 13:17](#); [Jeremiah 51:11, 28](#); [Daniel 5:28](#)).

### *Medes in the Bible*

Darius was from a Median family ([Daniel 9:1](#)). When he became the ruler of Babylon, people often called him "the Mede" because of his Median ancestry ([Daniel 11:1](#)) from the time he took over as ruler of Babylon. During his rule, and later during the reign of Darius II (409 BC), there were many rebellions and periods of unrest.

[Esther 1:3-7](#) describes the grand feasts and fancy palace rooms that belonged to Median royalty. After the Medes lost their power, they were ruled by the Syrians (Seleucids) and then the Parthians. In one part of the New Testament, Parthians, Medes, and Elamites are mentioned together ([Acts 2:9](#)). After that, "Media" became only a geographical term. The people no longer appeared in history as a separate group of people.

## **Mediate, Mediator**

A mediator is someone who helps two parties connect or communicate with each other. In the Bible, mediators helped people approach God and understand God's messages. They did not try to negotiate compromises but instead acted with God's authority to help people know God better.

### *In the Old Testament*

Job wanted someone to be a mediator between him and God. He said: "God is not subject to death like me, so I cannot argue with him or take him to trial. If only there were a mediator who could bring us together. There is none. The mediator could make

God stop beating me. I would no longer live in fear of his punishment. Then I could speak to him without fear. I cannot do that in my own strength" ([Job 9:32-35](#); translated here from the Septuagint).

More familiar is the mediation of teaching about God's character and will. God gave his covenant (agreement with his people) through angels and through Moses ([Exodus 20:18-21](#); [Deuteronomy 33:2](#); [Acts 7:53](#); [Galatians 3:19](#)) In [Hebrews 6:13-17](#), God acted alone when making his promise to Abraham. The terms of the covenant law were described by prophets who received messages directly from God (or "stood in God's council"). The priests also spoke God's messages by prophecy, casting lots, and speaking blessings ([Deuteronomy 10:8](#); [33:8-10](#); [2 Chronicles 15:3](#); [Jeremiah 23:10-11, 18-22, 31-34](#); [Micah 3:11](#); [Malachi 2:7](#)). It is not clear what casting lots was, but it was a way to identify God's will by using sticks of different length or flat rocks.

Priests had a special role as mediators in worship. This started with Moses ([Exodus 24:4-8](#)). It continued with other trained priests ([28:1](#)). Because of Israel's emphasis on the holiness of God, sacrifices for sin or the "covering" of sin were important for priestly mediation. The priest represented people before God. They brought the people's repentance, confession, and prayers for forgiveness to God. The priests had the names of the tribes written on his shoulders and on a plate he wore on his chest. The priest also represented God, offering his favor, forgiveness, and protection to the people (see [Hebrews 5:1-4](#); [7:27-10:11](#)).

### *In the New Testament*

Jesus was described as a mediator in several ways. First, he was seen as a prophet who spoke for God and made God known to people ([Mark 6:15](#); [8:28](#)). The title "mediator" is used specifically for Jesus when talking about the new covenant he established between God and people ([Hebrews 8:6](#); [9:15](#); [12:24](#)). The one other use is [1 Timothy 2:5](#). Here Paul says the unity of God requires a single mediator with no equal. This is Christ.

Jesus "gave Himself as a ransom for all" ([1 Timothy 2:6](#)). This essentially priestly function is the theme of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews explains that Jesus is uniquely qualified to be the High Priest for his people because he:

- Is God's Son
- Was appointed by God
- Never sinned
- Suffered and was tempted like humans
- Understands and cares for people
- Always obeyed God

As a priest, Jesus offers a perfect sacrifice. He lives forever to work on behalf of those who draw near to God through him. This role as mediator places Jesus at "the right hand of God." His mediation (or intercession) for people is also mentioned in [Romans 8:34](#). According to ancient Greek commentators, the New English Bible, and other important sources, "advocate" (from the Greek *paraklētos*) in [1 John 2:1](#) is also likely a reference to Jesus's mediating work. His sacrifice as a mediator is mentioned in [Matthew 26:28](#), [John 1:29](#), [Romans 3:25](#), and [1 John 1:7, 2:2](#), and [4:10](#).

The New Testament repeatedly teaches that Jesus is essential for everything we receive from God. Jesus became poor to help us, died for us, and rose from death "for us." Jesus is our peace and access to God. He restores us to a good relationship with God. He is the payment for our sins. Because of him, we have grace and truth and can pray. "All spiritual blessings" are "through him," "in him," "through his blood," and "in his name."

The purpose of God focuses on Jesus. Jesus mediated at creation and at redemption ([Colossians 1:15, 22](#)). Jesus perfectly shows what God is like. Only Jesus and the people Jesus teaches can know God the Father. The only way to come to God is through Jesus, and Jesus is the only one who can save people.

Jesus's mediation is the completion and end of all mediators between God and humankind. The book of Hebrews explains that Jesus is greater than all other mediators, including angels, Moses, and priests in the family line of Aaron (the Levites). Jesus's priesthood is an eternal priesthood, like Melchizedek's. His sacrifice cannot be repeated. It was "once for all time." By his sacrifice, we have been set apart to God "for all time."

The covenant Jesus established between God and people offers better promises, sacrifice, safety, and hope ([Hebrews 7:19; 8:6; 9:1, 11-15](#)). Jesus's role as a mediator is better than all others. It can never

be replaced. He is a priest forever and with no one to equal him (compare [1 Timothy 2:5](#)).

Without using the priestly comparison, John argues the same truth. The gap between God and humans has been crossed. Jesus crossed this gap in a final and complete way by becoming human. Instead of acting as a messenger between God and people, Jesus unites them by becoming human himself.

Jesus was the mediator at the beginning at creation. Jesus is himself the Word. He teaches us God's thoughts, fully represents God's message, and shows God's power. No one has seen God at any time. As God's unique, divine Son, Jesus makes God known ([John 1:18](#)). From the human side, Jesus prays for the disciples (chapter [17](#)). Jesus obeys God perfectly. He gives his life for his people. He offers the perfect sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world.

*See also* Reconciliation.

## Medicine and Medical Practice

Medicine is the area of study that deals with finding out what makes people sick, helping them get better, and keeping them from getting sick. It also includes the things used to do these tasks.

### Ancient Near Eastern Medical Practices

In the period of the Old Testament, the Israelites did not focus much on medicine. However, medical knowledge was important in the nearby cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt. The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal had 800 tablets about medicine in his library. These writings show that medicine then mixed religion, fortune-telling, and belief in demons. Their medical texts were long and used tools like dog dung and human urine. Some physicians did surgeries. A way of diagnosing someone in Babylon was to compare the liver of a fresh animal with a clay model of a healthy liver. The differences between the two would diagnose the condition of the patient. [Ezekiel 21:21](#) mentions this practice, along with divination.

Egyptian medicine was more like modern medicine and used logic and observation. The Edwin-Smith papyrus, the oldest surgical document, describes treatments for the following issues:

- fractures
- dislocations
- wounds
- tumors
- ulcers

They also used certain tools to treat patients, like:

- adhesive plaster (sticky bandages used to cover wounds)
- surgical stitching (using stitches to hold the edges of a wound together)
- cauterization (burning part of the body to close a wound)

Egyptians knew that the heart was the center of the circulatory system, and they would measure a patient's pulse.

The Ebers papyrus discusses how to treat internal problems and possible medicines, such as enemas. They used many substances in medicine, like:

- castor oil
- animal fat
- hot sand

Other papyri (ancient Egyptian documents written on material made from the papyrus plant) discuss reproductive issues and contain a mixture of medicine and magical incantations to treat them. Egyptians were skilled at mummification. Special chemicals were used to treat dead bodies (known as *embalming*), and then the bodies were wrapped tightly with cloth. Even Joseph had his father Jacob embalmed ([Genesis 50:2](#)).

### *Medical Practices in Israel*

The Israelites in Old Testament times understood disease differently from their neighbors. They did share their superstitions so they did not develop medical knowledge like the Egyptians and Babylonians. The Israelites believed sickness was a judgment from God ([Exodus 15:26](#); [Deuteronomy 28:22, 35, 60–61](#); [John 9:2](#)). As a result, recovery was also a work of God ([Exodus 15:26](#); [Psalms 103:3](#)). Because of this, King Asa was judged for relying on physicians instead of on God ([2 Chronicles 16:12](#)). So, their medical knowledge was less developed than their neighbors.

However, their largest contribution was the hygienic measures in the Law, particularly [Leviticus 11–15](#). These rules are primarily religious, but they improved the health and physical well-being of the people. The priest was not a physician-priest, as in other cultures. However, the Israelite priest did identify the physical conditions that made a person ceremonially unclean. However, there is no evidence that priests treated diseases.

### *Surgical Procedures in Scripture*

The only surgery in Scripture is circumcision, a procedure where the foreskin of the male reproductive organ is removed. Once again, this was religious rather than medical. Circumcision was not done by a physician but by the head of the house ([Exodus 4:25](#)). [Ezekiel 30:21](#) mentions treating a broken arm with a splint.

Midwives offered care in childbirth ([Genesis 35:17](#)). In [Genesis 38:27–30](#), a midwife delivers a set of twins through a complicated birth. Even the most skilled doctor would have trouble with this birth, so the midwife was highly capable, and the mother and both babies survived. [Exodus 1:15–21](#) mentions the use of birth stools. This was a tool to help deliver a baby.

### *Greek Influence on Medicine in the New Testament Era*

In New Testament times, Greek medicine was influential in the Mediterranean world. Hippocrates and other Greek physicians created the foundation of modern medicine by offering a rational basis for medical treatment. [Mark 5:26](#) shows that doctors were available in Israel. Rabbis ordered that every town must have a physician, and some rabbis were doctors.

### *Specific Biblical Remedies and Treatments*

The Bible sometimes mentions specific medical remedies.

- People used mandrakes to increase sexual desire or arousal ([Genesis 30:14](#); [Song of Solomon 7:13](#)).
- People used ashes to help with boils by drying the skin ([Job 2:7-8](#)).
- People used balm, though it is unclear how they used it ([Jeremiah 8:22](#); [46:11](#)).

There are some less effective treatments listed:

- Isaiah instructs Hezekiah to put a lump of figs on his boils ([2 Kings 20:7](#)).
- Naaman cures his leprosy by dipping seven times in the Jordan.
- Jesus heals blindness by applying mud to the eyes.

### *Spiritual and Physical Health*

[Proverbs 17:22](#) shows the positive effect of cheerfulness on mental health.

Wine was used as medicine several times in Scripture:

- [Proverbs 31:6](#) speaks positively of its ability to lift the mood
- Sour wine was offered to Jesus on the cross to soothe his pain ([John 19:29](#))
- Paul suggests to Timothy that he drink wine to ease his stomach pain ([1 Timothy 5:23](#)). Medical experts today agree that wine in moderation can help with digestion and blood circulation. However, too much is unhealthy in many ways.
- The good Samaritan used oil and wine to treat the wounds of the injured man ([Luke 10:34](#)). The alcohol in the wine would have cleansed the wound. But, it would also allow bacteria to spread under the surface of the wound. The oil would limit this spread and ease the pain. A dressing was put on the wound, and the patient was taken to rest.

In [Revelation 3:18](#), the Laodicean church is told to use eye salve. Laodicea was famous for its local remedy for weak eyes. So, this was an appropriate metaphor to use to warn the church of its weakening spiritual vision.

*See also* Disease; Physician; Plague.

## Mediterranean Sea

A large body of water that borders the western edge of Palestine, also known as the Great Sea ([Numbers 34:7](#); [Joshua 9:1](#); [Ezekiel 47:10, 15](#)).

### *The Size of the Mediterranean Sea*

The sea is approximately 3,533.4 kilometers (2,196 miles) long, from Gibraltar to Lebanon. It varies in width from 965.4 to 1,609 kilometers (600 miles to 1,000 miles). It has a maximum depth of 4.3 kilometers (2.7 miles). The sea includes five smaller seas: the Adriatic, Aegean, Ionian, Ligurian, and Tyrrhenian.

### *The Coastline of the Mediterranean Sea*

The eastern coastline is mostly straight. From the Bay of Iskenderun in the north to el-Arish in the south, it is about 724.1 kilometers (450 miles). It

has a few deep bays or headlands. Along Syria's coast up to Beirut, there are rocky cliffs that rise straight up from the water. At Acco, the land slopes back gently toward the plain of Esraelon. Mount Carmel sticks out into the water like a point. South of Mount Carmel, the land becomes flat in an area called the vale of Sharon. This flat area continues south into the plains of Philistia. From there, the coast curves smoothly until it reaches the Nile Delta.

The Syrophenician coast had several good harbors in ancient times. The sea played an important role in the development of that region. Byblos was strong at sea before 1000 BC. Tyre and Sidon were known for their strength at sea after 1000 BC. When the Romans took control of Palestine in 63 BC, they used the sea so much they called it "Our Sea."

### *Israel and the Mediterranean Sea*

Even though Israel was next to the Mediterranean Sea, they did not use it much for trade or military purposes. There were several reasons for this:

1. The Israelites were farmers and shepherds who focused on the land rather than the sea.
2. They spent most of their time taking and protecting their land, leaving little time for sea activities.
3. The sea was controlled by Phoenicia and, to a lesser degree, by Philistia. From the time of the exodus, The Phoenicians controlled the northern coast from the Orontes in the north to Joppa in the south. The Philistines controlled the southern coast for much of Israel's history. At one time, Solomon had a fleet of ships at Eziongeber on the Red Sea ([1 Kings 9:26-27](#)). Jehoshaphat also had a fleet in that area ([22:48](#)).

4. There were few natural harbors on Israel's coast. Some ports existed at Ashkelon, Dor, Joppa, and Acco. During the time of the kings, Israel could only use the port of Joppa. When King Solomon built the temple, workers brought wood from Lebanon to Joppa by ship and then carried it to Jerusalem by land.

### *The Mediterranean Sea in the New Testament*

Jesus visited the coastal area once. He went to "the district of Tyre and Sidon" where he healed a Syrophenician woman's daughter who had an evil spirit ([Matthew 15:21](#)). The apostle Paul often traveled on the Mediterranean Sea during his missionary journeys, from Caesarea on the Palestinian coast to Puteoli on Italy's coast.

Under Roman rule, many people used the sea for travel. Merchants, government workers, soldiers, and teachers often traveled by sea. Paul and other early Christians used both Roman roads and sea routes to share the good news about Jesus throughout the Mediterranean world.

## **Medium**

Person who acts as a channel of communication between human beings and the spirit world. See Magic; Necromancer, Necromancy; Psychics.

## **Megiddo, Megiddon**

City standing at the southwest edge of the plain of Esraelon on the main route between Mesopotamia and Egypt. It overlooks the historic route where a pass through the Mt Carmel range led from the plain of Sharon into the plain of Jezreel. This strategic position made Megiddo one of the most important commercial and military centers of Palestine in the second millennium and the early first millennium BC. From earliest times, the environs have been the scene of major battles. Great military men, such as Thutmose III of 15th-century BC Egypt, Napoleon in 1799, and General Allenby during World War I, have fought for mastery there.

At the time of the conquest, Joshua defeated the king of Megiddo but did not take the city ([Jos 12:21](#)). In the subsequent allotments to the tribes

of Israel, Megiddo was assigned to Manasseh, but they could not conquer it from the Canaanites ([Jos 17:11-12; Jgs 1:27](#)). During the days of the judges, Deborah and Barak defeated the forces of Hazor under the command of Sisera near Megiddo ([Jgs 4:15; 5:19](#)) but did not take the city either. Perhaps David conquered it as part of his program for establishing the kingdom. At any rate, by the time of Solomon, Megiddo served as the headquarters of one of his 12 administrative regions ([1 Kgs 4:12](#)). Solomon rebuilt it to serve as one of his chariot and garrison cities ([9:15-19](#)).

King Ahaziah of Judah died there (841 BC) after being wounded by Jehu while on a visit to the northern kingdom ([2 Kgs 9:27](#)). King Josiah of Judah met and intercepted Pharaoh Neco of Egypt (609 BC) at Megiddo in a vain effort to prevent him from going north to aid the Assyrians; he was mortally wounded in the battle ([23:29-30](#)). The plain of Megiddo (kjv “valley of Megiddon”) is referred to in Zechariah’s prophecies of restoration for Israel and Jerusalem ([Zec 12:11](#)). Revelation predicts a great future war that will take place at Armageddon (Har Megiddon, the “mount of Megiddo,” [Rv 16:16](#)).

## Megiddo, Waters of

Scene of the battle between Sisera and Barak, mentioned in the victory song of Deborah ([Jgs 5:19](#), nlt “Megiddo’s springs”). It refers to a perennial stream near Megiddo, probably the Wadi el-Lejjun, which drained the basin behind Megiddo.

*See also* Megiddo, Megiddon; Armageddon.

## Megilloth

Plural form of the Hebrew word for scroll. The word occurs several times in [Jeremiah 36](#), where King Jehoiakim, rejecting the word from God, burned the scroll that the prophet sent to him.

Megilloth is also used collectively of the OT books of Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. These are the “five rolls,” which are read by the Jews during the major festivals of the Jewish year: the Song of Songs at Passover, Ruth at Pentecost (Firstfruits), Lamentations on the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, Ecclesiastes at the Feast of Tabernacles, and Esther at Purim.

## Mehetabel

1. A daughter of Matred and the wife of King Hadar of Edom in pre-Israelite times ([Genesis 36:39; 1 Chronicles 1:50](#)).
2. The grandfather of Shemaiah. Tobiah and Sanballat hired Shemaiah to discredit Nehemiah by frightening him into fleeing into the temple ([Nehemiah 6:10](#)).

## Mehida

Head of a family of temple servants in Ezra’s time ([Ezr 2:52; Neh 7:54](#)).

## Mehir

Kelub’s son from Judah’s tribe ([1 Chr 4:11](#)).

## Meholah, Meholahite

A place name used to describe Adriel, the son of Barzillai. Adriel was the husband of Merab, who was King Saul’s oldest daughter ([1 Samuel 18:19; 2 Samuel 21:8](#)). He probably came from Abel-meholah, an important city in the region of Gilead. The marriage between Adriel and Merab was likely a political arrangement made by Saul and accepted by David. This arrangement happened even though David was originally supposed to marry Merab himself ([1 Samuel 18:17-19](#)).

## Mehujael

A son of Irad and the father of Methushael, in the family line of Cain ([Genesis 4:18](#)).

## Mehuman

One of the seven officials King Ahasuerus sent to bring Queen Vashti to the royal banquet ([Esther 1:10](#)).

## Mehunim, Mehunims

KJV forms of Meunim and Meunites in [Ezra 2:50](#) and [2 Chronicles 26:7](#), respectively. See Meunim, Meunites.

## Mekerah, Mekerathite

See Mecherathite.

## Mekonah

KJV spelling of Meconah, a Judean city, in [Nehemiah 11:28](#).

## Melatiah

Descendant of Gideon who helped repair the Jerusalem wall next to the Old Gate during Nehemiah's time ([Neh 3:7](#)).

## Melchi

Melchi is a name found in the genealogy (family line) of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Luke.

1. Melchi was the son of Jannai according to [Luke 3:24](#).
2. Melchi was the son of Addi according to [Luke 3:28](#).

See also Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## Melchi-Shua

KJV alternate form of Malchi-shua, King Saul's third son, in [1 Samuel 14:49](#). See Malchi-shua.

## Melchiah

KJV spelling of Malchiah, Pashhur's father, in [Jeremiah 21:1](#). See Malchiah #8.

## Melchisedec

KJV rendering of Melchizedek, the priest and king of Salem who blessed Abraham, in [Hebrews 5-7](#). See Melchizedek.

## Melchizedek

A mysterious biblical figure whose name means "king of righteousness." Melchizedek was both a priest and a king. We first learn about him in [Genesis 14:18-20](#). He is also mentioned in [Psalm 110:4](#) and [Hebrews 5:10; 6:20; 7:1-17](#).

### Melchizedek in [Genesis 14:18-20](#)

King Kedorlaomer and three other kings from Mesopotamia attacked five cities near the Dead Sea. During this battle, they captured Abraham's nephew Lot, along with his family and everything they owned ([Genesis 14:1-12](#)). Abraham gathered his men and went after the attackers. He defeated them and rescued Lot and his family, bringing back everything that had been taken ([Genesis 14:13-16](#)).

When Abraham returned from the battle, the kings from the Dead Sea region came to thank him. Melchizedek, the king of Salem (which was an early name for Jerusalem), also came to meet Abraham (compare [Psalm 76:2](#)). Melchizedek brought bread and wine and blessed Abraham. He did this because he was a priest of "God Most High" ([Genesis 14:18](#)).

The name "God Most High" ('El 'Elyon in Hebrew) refers to the one true God who created heaven and earth. This was different from the false gods that the Canaanite people worshiped (compare [Genesis 14:22](#); [Psalms 7:17; 47:2; 57:2; 78:56](#)). Melchizedek knew that Abraham worshiped this same true God ([Genesis 14:22](#)).

Melchizedek praised God for helping Abraham win the battle. Abraham showed that he accepted Melchizedek's role as God's priest in two ways: he accepted the gifts and blessing from Melchizedek, and he gave Melchizedek one-tenth of everything he had recovered. In contrast, Abraham refused to accept gifts from the king of Sodom because he did not want to be associated with those who worshiped false gods.

We do not know exactly how Melchizedek came to know the true God. He might have learned about God through stories passed down from the time of Noah's flood. Or, like Abraham, God might have

spoken to him directly and turned him away from worshiping false gods. What we do know from [Hebrews 7:3](#) is that Melchizedek was different from other priests. He did not become a priest because his father was a priest, but in some special way that the Bible does not fully explain.

#### *Melchizedek in [Psalm 110:4](#)*

In this psalm, King David wrote about someone greater than himself, someone he called "Lord" ([Psalm 11:1](#); compare [Mark 12:35–37](#)). David was not writing about himself or any other king of his time. He was writing about the promised Messiah who would come in the future. This Messiah would be both God's Son and a descendant of David.

In [Psalm 110:4](#), David says to the Messiah: "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek." The full meaning of this promise is explained later in the book of Hebrews.

#### *Melchizedek in [Hebrews 5:6–11; 6:20–7:28](#)*

The book of Hebrews explains why Jesus's role as priest is greater than the priests who came from Aaron's family. It compares Jesus to Melchizedek to show this. Here are three ways they are similar:

1. Both Jesus and Melchizedek are "kings of righteousness" and "kings of peace" ([Hebrews 7:1–2](#)).
2. Both became priests in a special way, not because they were born into a priestly family ([Hebrews 7:3](#)).
3. Both serve as priests forever ([Hebrews 7:3](#)).

Melchizedek was greater than Abraham (the father of Levi) because Melchizedek gave gifts to and blessed Abraham, and received tithes from him ([Hebrews 7:4–10](#)). King David wrote that a new kind of priest like Melchizedek would come, showing that the priests who came from Levi's family could not do everything God's people needed ([Hebrews 7:11–19](#)). God made a special promise about Jesus being this kind of priest, which God had not done for the Levitical priests ([Hebrews 7:20–22](#)). Unlike the Levitical priests who died and had to be replaced, this new priesthood would last forever ([Hebrews 7:23–25](#)).

Some Bible scholars have suggested that Melchizedek might have been Jesus appearing in the Old Testament before he was born as a human (this is called a "Christophany"). They think this

because [Hebrews 7:3](#) says there is no record of Melchizedek's parents, ancestors, birth, or death.

However, this verse is better understood to mean that Melchizedek became a priest in a special way. God chose him directly, unlike the Levites who became priests because they were born into certain families. Melchizedek was like a picture or example of what Jesus would be as a priest later.

The book of Hebrews says that Melchizedek was "like the Son of God" ([Hebrews 7:3](#)). This shows that Melchizedek was similar to Jesus but was not actually Jesus himself.

*See also* Hebrews, Letter to the; Priests and Levites.

## **Melea**

An ancestor of Jesus, according to [Luke 3:31](#).

*See* Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## **Melech**

Micah's son from Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chr 8:35; 9:41](#)).

## **Melicu**

KJV form of Malluchi the priest in [Nehemiah 12:14](#).  
*See* Malluchi.

## **Melita**

The King James Version form of Malta, an island south of Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea ([Acts 28:1](#)). This is where Paul's ship was wrecked during a storm while he was being transported to Rome as a prisoner.

*See* Malta.

## **Melki**

Melki is another spelling of the name Melchi.

*See* Melchi.

## Melkon

The name that has been traditionally given to one of the wise men (who is also called Melchior) who brought gifts to Jesus ([Matthew 2:1-2](#)).

*See Magi.*

## Melon

A melon is a fruit with many seeds that belongs to the gourd family. Several types of these related vine plants have a hard outer skin and juicy flesh inside.

The melons mentioned in [Numbers 11:5](#) could be either the muskmelon (*Cucumis melo*) or the watermelon (*Citrullus vulgaris*). It is possible this verse refers to both of these fruits.

*See Food and Food Preparation.*

## Melzar

The steward responsible for the food given to Daniel ([Daniel 1:11, 16](#)). The Berean Standard Bible translates the word as a title, but the King James Version translates the word as a proper name. Most likely, Melzar is a Hebrew translation of a Babylonian title.

## Memorial

A memorial is something that helps us remember certain people or events. In both everyday and biblical language, "remember," "remembrance," and "memorial" are closely connected. The Hebrew and Greek words for "memorial" in the Old and New Testaments come from verbs that mean "to remember." To understand "memorial," we must first know the biblical meaning of "to remember."

### *Biblical Meaning of "To Remember"*

In everyday use, "remember" means recalling the past. "Memorial" refers to something that keeps a memory alive. However, in the Bible, "to remember" often has a deeper meaning. It does not just mean thinking about the past. It means remembering in a way that changes how someone feels, thinks, or acts now. For example, [Genesis 8:1](#) says God "remembered Noah." It means he took action on Noah's behalf, not just that he thought of him. It includes this idea, to be sure, but more than

this, it means that God is acting on Noah's behalf. In a similar way, when [Genesis 30:22](#) says God "remembered Rachel," it means he was about to answer her prayer for a child after a long time of waiting.

### *Memorial in the Old Testament*

The Old Testament often tells the Israelites to remember the great things God had done for them ([Psalms 77:11; 78:7; 105:5](#)). It was not just about recalling the past. It meant living in the present with faith, knowing what God had done before. Forgetting God's past deeds often led to Israel turning away from him ([Psalm 78:11, 42; 106:7, 13, 21-22](#)).

Looking at how the word "memorial" is often used to mean active remembering. One clear example is how it is used in connection with the Passover. In [Exodus 12:14](#), the Passover is called a "memorial." So, it was not just about remembering the exodus from Egypt as a historical event. It was a time for the Israelites to live in the present. They should remember God's deliverance from sin and slavery.

Similarly, [Joshua 4:7](#) describes the setting up of twelve stones in the Jordan River as a "memorial." This memorial helped the Israelites remember how God helped them cross into Canaan. His memorial is to be "for the people of Israel forever." They reminded the people of how God had saved them in the past. This memory was meant to give them courage when they faced hard times in the future.

Another example is the "memorial stones" on the high priest's special garment called an "ephod" ([Exodus 28:12, 29; 39:7](#)). These stones were to bring the names of the sons of Israel before the Lord. They were not just to remind God of the Israelites. They symbolized his ongoing concern for their well-being.

The term "memorial" is used differently in regards to the grain offering in [Leviticus 2:2, 16](#). Here, "memorial" means the part of the grain offering burned on the altar. The rest was to feed the priests. The memorial represents the whole offering. This memorial is not just a reminder to God but is seen as a part of the offering itself.

### *Memorial in the New Testament*

The New Testament uses "memorial" and "remembrance" less often. But, they have a special meaning in one instance. When Jesus established the Lord's Supper, the New Testament Passover, he said, "This is My body, given for you; do this in

remembrance of Me" ([Luke 22:19](#)). The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's suffering and death. It is not just about recalling a historical event. It is about remembering in a way that makes believers thankful and affects them today.

## Memphis

City located about 15 miles (24.1 kilometers) southwest of Cairo, once the sprawling capital of Egypt; now, for all practical purposes, it does not exist.

When the city was founded about 3000 BC, it was known as "White Wall" and was later called Men-nefru-Mine or Menfe in Egyptian. From the latter the Greeks got the name Memphis. Though one Hebrew reference follows the Greek ([Hos 9:6](#)), Memphis is commonly called Noph in the OT ([Is 19:13](#); [Jer 2:16](#); [44:1](#); [46:14, 19](#); [Ez 30:13, 16](#)); presumably this is a corruption of the middle part of the Egyptian name.

### *History of Memphis*

According to the fifth-century BC Greek historian Herodotus, King Menes founded the city of Memphis and built the temple of Ptah there shortly after unifying the country. Whether or not Menes was a historical person, it is commonly concluded today that shortly after the unification of Egypt (c. 3100 BC) a new capital was built on the border between Upper and Lower Egypt. Although the rulers of the first two dynasties after Egypt's unification had come from Thinis, north of Thebes, the fact that they were buried at Saqqara west of Memphis seems to indicate that they made Memphis their capital.

Memphis continued as the capital of Egypt during the Old Kingdom period (c. 2700–2200 BC). And Memphis, or the nearby city of It-Towy, continued as capital during much of the Middle Kingdom (c. 2050–1775).

During the New Kingdom or Empire period (c. 1580–1100), the capital was moved to Thebes. But Memphis was Egypt's second capital during most of that period, and some rulers lived there because of its central geographical location. Ramses II moved his residence to Tanis in the Delta during the 13th century BC, but he built a number of structures at Memphis and engaged in large-scale renovation and restoration there. As early as the 16th or 15th century BC, Memphis began to take on a

cosmopolitan character. Syrians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Jews eventually established separate residential quarters there.

Though some decline set in at Memphis during the invasions and uncertainties of the first millennium BC, the city remained virtually intact. Even after the founding of Alexandria in the fourth century BC, the city maintained its greatness; some of the Ptolemies were crowned there instead of at the primary capital of Alexandria.

Memphis lost its importance as a religious center after the Christian emperor Theodosius closed its temples and ordered them torn down in the fourth century AD.

### *Prophecy against Memphis*

As noted above, the only places Memphis is referred to in the OT are in the Prophets. Of course, Memphis shared in the general condemnation of Egypt, but it was signaled out for special attention. Ezekiel declared that God would destroy the idols of the city ([Ez 30:13](#)) and bring great distress upon it (v [16](#)). Jeremiah went further, prophesying that Memphis would be utterly destroyed and without inhabitants ([Jer 46:19](#)).

Evidently, there are several reasons for this judgment. First, the punishment will come on all nations for their sinfulness and idolatry. Second, they will be punished for their animosity and cruelty to the Jews. In the generations before the exodus the Egyptians made their name hated by the Hebrews. After the death of Solomon and the division of the Hebrew kingdom, Shishak of Egypt invaded Palestine in the fifth year of King Rehoboam and wrought considerable destruction there (926 BC; [1 Kgs 14:25](#)). Then in 609–608 BC Pharaoh Neco held Israel under tribute.

Fulfillment of prophecies against Memphis occurred especially in connection with two major events. The Christian Roman emperor Theodosius (AD 379–395), in his campaign against paganism, ordered destruction of the temples of Memphis and desecration of its statues. Then in the seventh century Muslim monotheists conquered Egypt and likewise tried to obliterate evidences of ancient polytheism. After the Arabs began to build Cairo in 642, Memphis became a quarry for the new city. Gradually the ruins have been carted away until virtually nothing is left. A fallen 40-foot statue of Ramses II, one of his sphinxes, a few column bases, and other minor ruins lie among the palm trees and cornfields at the site. The largest remaining portion

sits in a lake because the breaching of the ancient dikes has permitted the place to be inundated.

*See also* Egypt, Egyptian.

## Memucan

One of the seven princes of Persia and Media under King Ahasuerus ([Esther 1:14–21](#)). He brought charges against Vashti, the Persian queen, for refusing to appear as the king commanded ([Esther 1:16](#)). Memucan proposed to remove her and make someone else queen. The king listened to what Memucan said and issued a decree to find a new queen ([Esther 1:21](#)). Esther was chosen as queen over Media and Persia.

## Menahem

King of Israel who ruled from 752–742 BC. He was the son of Gadi, a name not attested in the OT except in [2 Kings 15:14–22](#).

Virtually everything that the OT records about the career of Menahem is contained in a few brief verses in [2 Kings 15](#). Three important points may be noted from these verses.

First, [2 Kings 15:14](#) records the assassination of Shallum, which enabled Menahem to seize the throne. Verse [16](#) then recounts the actions of Menahem against the town of Tappuah (Tiphsah). The entire verse is troublesome but may be translated as follows (nlt): “At that time Menahem destroyed the town of Tappuah and all the surrounding countryside as far as Tirzah, because its citizens refused to surrender the town. He killed the entire population and ripped open the pregnant women.” Two things are unusual. First, the actions of Menahem are quite without precedent in Israelite history. Second, the location and identity of the town that Menahem attacked are uncertain. The Hebrew text reads “Tiphsah” (see nlt mg), using the spelling of a town normally identified as Thapsacus on the Euphrates. Menahem’s reasons for attacking a town this far away from his own territory and interests would be difficult to determine. Accordingly, some scholars have followed the Lucianic version of the Greek Bible that reads the Hebrew letters as if they were “Tappuah,” a town 14 miles (22.5 kilometers) southwest of Menahem’s hometown of Tirzah. If this reading is correct, and the textual evidence for it is limited to the one version, the meaning of [2](#)

[Kings 15:16](#) is that Menahem began just outside the boundaries of his hometown (Tirzah) and put to the sword the entire population of a neighboring town (including its citizens who lived outside the city proper) that failed to support his bid to become king.

Second, [2 Kings 15:19–20](#) provides the biblical view of the way in which Menahem dealt with the Assyrian crisis posed by the campaign of Tiglath-pileser III into the Syro-Palestinian region (c. 744). Evidently hoping to persuade the Assyrians to support his claims to the throne in Israel, Menahem levied a stiff tax upon the wealthy citizens of his nation to be used to pay tribute to Tiglath-pileser (called by his Babylonian name “Pul” in v [19](#)). Evidently Menahem hoped this payment would convince the Assyrian king “to gain his support in tightening his grip on royal power” (v [19](#)). Politically at least, Menahem appears to have guessed correctly, because the Assyrians withdrew (v [20](#)) and Menahem was left in power.

Finally, the reign of Menahem is introduced ([2 Kgs 15:17](#)) and concluded by the standard literary forms employed throughout the books of Kings. Despite the fact that Menahem was judged to be just as sinful as the original apostate (Jeroboam I) had been, [2 Kings 15:22](#) appears to attest an unusual fact about his death. Of the last six kings of Israel, only he died a peaceful death.

*See also* Chronology of the Bible (Old Testament); Israel, History of.

## Menan

The King James Version form of Menna, an ancestor of Jesus according to [Luke 3:31](#).

## Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin

These are mysterious words that appeared written on a wall during a feast in ancient Babylon. The words announced God’s judgment against Babylon and its king ([Daniel 5:25](#)).

### King Belshazzar’s Feast

About ten years after the death of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 562 BC, Belshazzar became ruler of the empire. The fifth chapter of Daniel tells us about a large feast that Belshazzar

held. He invited 1,000 important officials and their wives to this feast.

During the feast, Belshazzar became drunk and made a serious mistake. He ordered his servants to bring out special gold and silver containers that had belonged to God's temple in Jerusalem. These were holy objects that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem years before. No one had used these containers since then because they were meant only for worship in God's temple. But Belshazzar gave these holy containers to his guests, who used them to praise their false gods instead of the true God ([Daniel 5:4](#)).

### *The Writing on the Wall*

While they were disrespecting the holy objects, the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote upon the plaster of the banquet room wall. The king was terrified by this, and he cried out for someone to interpret the writing. None of his wise men knew the meaning of the words. Finally, the queen proposed a solution to the problem. Daniel the prophet was a gifted man in matters such as these. He could be summoned to interpret the writing.

Daniel was brought in before the king. He immediately rebuked the king for his pride and disrespect toward God. Daniel gave a powerful speech about how God judges people who are too proud ([Daniel 5:17–23](#)). This was an important message that God revealed through the mysterious words, which Daniel then explained.

The words were originally written with Aramaic letters. They can be written in English letters as "*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin*." (In the King James Version of the Bible, the last word appears as "*Upharsin*".) The mystery of the words was not only in understanding the language, but in the importance attached to each of the words. The basic meaning of these words is a series of weights or monetary values. But their true deeper meaning was the immediate judgment of God against Babylon and its king.

### *Daniel Explains the Message*

Daniel's explanation of the writing on the wall is recorded in [Daniel 5:26–27](#):

- *Mene* means "numbered." It occurs twice, which indicates God had numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom and had also planned its end.
- *Tekel* means "weighed." Applied to Belshazzar, it signified his moral and spiritual inadequacy. He was insufficient to balance out on the scales of God's standard of righteousness.
- The final word, *parsin*, means "broken" or "divided." Daniel gives the singular form (*peres*) in his interpretation. This division meant that Belshazzar's kingdom was about to be divided between the Medes and the Persians. There is a bit of wordplay here because the noun for Persians (*paras*) is almost the same as the root word used here. [Daniel 5:30–31](#) notes that the words of this prophecy were fulfilled later that evening.

*See also* Daniel, Book of.

## Menelaus

It is thought that this conscienceless, conniving high priest was the leader of the Jewish supporters of the Seleucid kings during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. [Second Maccabees 4:23–50](#) relates the story of how Menelaus outbid Jason for the priesthood by paying Antiochus 300 talents of silver above Jason's price.

*See also* Maccabees, 1 and 2.

## Meni

Pagan god of destiny or luck worshiped by apostate Jews ([Is 65:11](#)). The name is rendered "destiny" in nasb, niv, nlt; "fortune" in neb; and "unto that number" in kJV, reflecting the meaning of the Hebrew word "to count, apportion," as it were, by fate. Meni has been identified with the Arabic god Maniyat, Babylonian Manu, and Edomite Manat. The reference in Isaiah has to do with preparing meals for pagan deities.

## Menna

An ancestor of Jesus, according to [Luke 3:31](#).

*See* Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## Menorah

A lamp or lampstand that was used in the tabernacle (the holy tent where God was worshiped). It was a special seven-branched lamp that provided light in the tabernacle. These seven lamps lit up the area in front of the lampstand ([Numbers 8:2](#)). King Solomon's temple had ten of these lampstands, with five on each side of the inner sanctuary ([1 Kings 7:49](#)).

Bezalel designed the original menorah. He was the son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe of Judah. God filled him with his Spirit and gave him excellent crafting skills ([Exodus 31:1–4](#)). Bezalel also designed other items used in the tabernacle.

The Bible gives details about how the menorah looked in [Exodus 25:31–40](#) and [37:17–24](#). It was made from a single piece of pure gold. The menorah had a central shaft with three branches extending from each side. Each branch was decorated with almond flowers and apple-shaped knobs. At the top of each branch was a cup narrowed at the lip to hold the wick and special olive oil.

Archaeologists have found clay bowls with seven spouts from the Middle Bronze Age (around 2000 to 1550 BC). The Jewish historian Josephus said the central shaft was attached to a base. From this shaft came slender branches that looked like the prongs of a trident, with each end shaped into a lamp. This description matches what Zechariah saw in his vision of the restored temple after the exile ([Zechariah 4:2–3](#)).

Several copies of the menorah have been found by archaeologists. One famous image of the menorah appears on the Arch of Titus in Rome. This sculpture shows the menorah and other temple items. However, the menorah on the Arch of Titus looks different from Josephus's description. It is very large with thick arms. It is carried by five men on each side.

According to [Exodus 37:24](#), the menorah weighed one kikar of pure gold. This equals about 34 kilograms (or 75 pounds). But [Exodus 25:39](#)

suggests this weight included accessories like snuffers and trays (compare [2 Chronicles 4:22](#)).

There is disagreement about what the base of the menorah looked like. On the Arch of Titus, the base is rectangular with two levels. But archaeologists found ancient designs of the lamp that end in a tripod (a three-legged stand). Scholars are unsure which design is more original, and they have different theories to explain these differences.

In Jewish mystical teachings, the menorah symbolizes the tree of life, the seven planets, and the seven days of creation.

In the New Testament, the lampstand in Revelation continues the temple tradition, with special reference to [Zechariah 4:2, 11](#). It represents the witness of the seven churches, Christ who is the Light of the World, and God who is the source of all light ([Revelation 1:12–13, 20; 2:1; 11:4](#)).

## Menuhoth

People descended from Judah through Shobal, mentioned only in [1 Chronicles 2:52](#) (rendered Manahethites in neb, kjv; Manahathites in niv, nasb, nlt). The rsv transliterates the Hebrew word Menuhoth, which derives from the same root as "half of the Manahathites" in verse [54](#).

*See also* Manahath (Place), Manahathite.

## Meonenim, Plain of

KJV mistranslation for the diviners' oak, a place near Shechem, in [Judges 9:37](#). See Diviners' Oak.

## Meonothai

Othniel's son from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 4:13–14](#)).

## Mephaath

One of the cities of Reuben's tribe on the plain near Heshbon, which was allotted to the Merari family of Levites ([Jos 13:18; 21:37; 1 Chr 6:79](#)). Later, it was numbered among Moabite towns during Jeremiah's ministry ([Jer 48:21](#)). It has been identified with modern Jawah, six miles (9.7 kilometers) south of Ammon.

*See also* Levitical Cities.

**Mephibosheth**

1. The son of Jonathan. Jonathan was King Saul's son and David's close friend. Mephibosheth's name was first written as Merib-baal ([1 Chronicles 8:34; 9:40](#)). The word *baal* was later changed to *bosheth* (which means "shame") because *baal* became associated with the name of the chief god of the Canaanite fertility cult. Mephibosheth was born into a royal family. But his life changed when the Philistines fought against Israel. In the battle at Mount Gilboa, Saul, Jonathan, and two other sons of Saul were killed ([1 Samuel 31:1-6](#)).

When the news reached the palace in Jezreel, Mephibosheth was only five years old. His nurse picked him up and ran away to protect him. But she fell and dropped him. His legs were badly hurt, and there was no doctor to help him. After that, he could not walk ([2 Samuel 4:4](#)). Later, Mephibosheth found safety in Lo-debar, a town in Transjordan. He stayed with a man named Makir. This same man also helped David later ([9:4; 17:27](#)).

At this time, Saul's only living son, Ishbosheth, became king over Israel ([2 Samuel 2:8-10](#)). But he did not rule for long. Two of his own men murdered him (chapter 4). Even though Mephibosheth was part of the royal family, no one tried to make him king.

After David became king of all Israel, he wanted to show kindness to Jonathan's family. He asked if anyone from Jonathan's family was still alive. A man named Ziba, who had worked in Saul's house, told him about Mephibosheth ([9:1-13](#)).

David sent for Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was afraid, because kings often killed members of the old royal family (see [19:28](#)). But David showed mercy. He gave Mephibosheth all of Saul's land. He also told Ziba and his sons to take care of the land. Most of all, David

gave Mephibosheth a place at the king's table, as one of the king's own sons.

When David's son Absalom started a rebellion, David had to leave Jerusalem in a hurry. Ziba, who worked for Mephibosheth, met David on the road. He brought donkeys and food to help David and his men. This made David very thankful. But Ziba also told David that Mephibosheth had stayed behind. Ziba claimed that Mephibosheth hoped to become king again because he was part of Saul's family ([2 Samuel 16:1-4](#)). David believed Ziba's story and gave him all of Mephibosheth's land.

After the war ended and David returned to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth came to see him. Mephibosheth looked dirty and unkempt. He had not washed his clothes or shaved his beard the whole time David was gone. This showed he had been grieving. Mephibosheth told David that he had wanted to go with him, but Ziba left without him. Because Mephibosheth could not walk, he was unable to follow on his own. He said Ziba had lied to make David angry at him ([19:24-30](#)).

David was unsure who was telling the truth. He decided to divide the land between Ziba and Mephibosheth. But Mephibosheth said he did not care about the land. He was just happy that David had returned safely.

Later, when seven of Saul's descendants were killed to make peace with the Gibeonites, David remembered his promise to Jonathan. Because of that promise, he did not allow Mephibosheth to be harmed ([21:7](#)). Mephibosheth had a son named Mica ([9:12](#)). Mica's family grew to be large ([1 Chronicles 8:35; 9:41](#)).

2. The son of Rizpah, who was the concubine of King Saul. He was one of the seven descendants of Saul who David hung in order to appease the Gibeonites. Saul had broken the ancient treaty with them. Long before, the people of Israel had promised not to harm the Gibeonites ([2 Samuel 21:8](#)). But Saul attacked them anyway. Because of this, God sent a famine that lasted three years ([Joshua 9:3-27](#)). To make peace, David allowed the Gibeonites to choose seven men from Saul's family to be killed. Mephibosheth, son of Rizpah, was one of them. After they were killed, Rizpah stayed by their bodies for many months. She kept animals and birds away, day and night. Her act of love and grief moved David. So he gave these men a proper burial. He also gathered the bones of Saul and Jonathan and buried them with honor in their family tomb ([2 Samuel 21:10-14](#)).

## Merab

Eldest of Saul's two daughters ([1 Sm 14:49](#)), who was promised as a wife to David ([18:17-18](#)). Saul unexplainedly did not keep the agreement, instead giving him Michal.

## Meraiah

Head of Seraiah's priestly family during the priesthood of Joiakim in postexilic Jerusalem ([Neh 12:12](#)).

## Meraioth

1. Levite, six to seven generations removed from Aaron ([1 Chr 6:6-7; Ezr 7:3](#)).
2. Ahitub's son and the father of Zadok ([1 Chr 9:11; Neh 11:11](#)); perhaps identifiable with #1 above, despite differences in genealogy.
3. Priestly house whose head was Helkai during the days of Joiakim in postexilic Jerusalem ([Neh 12:15](#)).

Its forebear is given as Meremoth (v 3). Some regard [Nehemiah 12:15](#) as a scribal error and identify the names in verses 3 and 15 as the same person.

## Merari, Merarite

In Hebrew, Arabic, and Akkadian languages, the word *Merari* means “bitter,” “bitter drink,” or “to be bitter.” In Ugaritic, it means “to strengthen, to bless.” Most people have understood the name to mean “gall” or “bitterness” based on its Hebrew meaning. But the Ugaritic meaning “to strengthen, to bless” also fits with Hebrew thinking. When used as a person’s name, it probably means “strength” or “blessing.” This meaning makes more sense in many Bible references.

For Merari, the third son of Levi, the meaning “strength” or “blessing” seems better because of his importance and his family’s role. It would be strange for the youngest son to have a name meaning “gall” or “bitterness” when he had the greatest responsibility and received the greatest reward for his service.

The Bible mentions Merari, the son of Levi, many times. He was the youngest of Levi’s three sons ([Genesis 46:11](#); [Exodus 6:16–19](#); [Numbers 3:17–20, 33](#); [1 Chronicles 6:1](#)). He was the father of two sons, Mahli and Mushi ([Exodus 6:19](#); [Numbers 3:20](#)). Merari’s sons had the important job of carrying the frames, bars, pillars, bases, vessels, and accessories of the tabernacle ([Numbers 3:36–37](#); [4:31–33](#); [7:8](#); [10:17](#); [Joshua 21:7, 34, 40](#)). His descendants are known as Merarites. Chronicles mentions Merari’s family many times, showing how important they were ([1 Chronicles 6:9, 15; 23:26](#); [2 Chronicles 29:34](#)).

*See also* Priests and Levites; Levi, Tribe of.

## Merathaim

Name that Jeremiah uses in reference to God’s judgment upon Babylon ([Jer 50:21](#)). Though it means “double rebellion” or “twofold rebel,” it is a wordplay on the name for southern Babylonia, Marratu. Thus, God says, “Go up against the land, Two-fold rebel . . . and utterly destroy it!”

## Merchant

A person who buys and sells commodities for profit. The barter system of trade gave way in time to a system where professional merchants facilitated the exchange of goods. At first, it was for payment in silver pieces ([Gn 23:16](#)) and then in coinage or some other medium of exchange. Merchants operated locally and internationally with Arameans ([1 Kgs 20:34](#); [Ez 27:16–18](#)), Canaanites and Phoenicians ([Is 23:2, 8](#)), Assyrians ([Na 3:16](#)), Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Some merchants traveled afar ([Neh 13:16–20](#)). Desert peoples with caravans traded their wares in many lands ([Ez 27:15, 20–23](#); [38:13](#)). They operated in bazaars and set up shops for trade ([1 Kgs 20:34](#); [Neh 3:31](#); [13:19–20](#)). Commodities were held in storehouses ([Gn 41:49](#); [1 Kgs 9:19](#)). The sons of Jacob traded in Egypt ([Gn 43:11](#)). In Solomon’s day, trade greatly expanded ([1 Kgs 9:26–27](#); [10:28](#)). During the exile, Jews became involved in merchant activity in Babylonia, and many never returned to Palestine. In Jerusalem the merchants helped Nehemiah to rebuild the wall ([Neh 3:31–32](#)).

## Mercurius, Mercury

Roman god. *See* Hermes #1.

## Mercy

Mercy is a special quality of God that shows his faithful love. Through mercy, God keeps his promises to his people even when they fail or disobey him ([Deuteronomy 30:1–6](#); [Isaiah 14:1](#); [Ezekiel 39:25–29](#); [Romans 9:15–16, 23](#); [11:32](#); [Ephesians 2:4](#)).

### Understanding Mercy

In the Bible, mercy has many different meanings because both Hebrew and Greek (the original languages of the Bible) used several words to describe it. When these words are translated into English, they can mean different things like:

- Kindness
- Faithful love (or loving devotion)
- Goodness
- Grace (God's undeserved kindness)
- Favor
- Pity
- Compassion (feeling concern for others)
- Unchanging love

An essential part of mercy is the desire to forgive people who have done wrong and to help them when they are in trouble.

### *How God Shows Mercy*

Mercy comes from God's love for people. This love is shown freely in his actions to save those he has promised through his special covenant relationship. In the Old Testament, he chose the people of Israel to be his own and showed them mercy ([Exodus 33:19](#); [Isaiah 54:10](#); [63:9](#)). God continues to accept his disobedient people and always tries to bring them back to himself.

The psalmist describes God as a father who cares for his children who respect and trust him ([Psalm 103:13](#)). Hosea shows God as a loving father who looks down from heaven with great care for his rebellious people ([Hosea 11](#); compare [Jeremiah 31:20](#)). He also describes Israel as an unfaithful wife. God loves Israel as a faithful husband despite Israel's apostasy (turning away from God) and sin ([Hosea 1-3](#); compare [Isaiah 54:4-8](#)). Isaiah describes God as a mother who cares for her child ([Isaiah 49:15](#)).

These pictures show God's mercy in different ways. Other aspects of God's mercy include God accepting people back when they return to him ([2 Kings 13:23](#); [Isaiah 54:8](#); [Joel 2:18-32](#); [Micah 7:18-20](#)). He also saves people from difficult situations and dangers ([Nehemiah 9:19-21](#); [Psalms 40:11-17](#); [69:16-36](#); [79:8-9](#); [Isaiah 49:10](#)).

Because of what Israel learned about God's steady love and loyalty, devoted Jews naturally asked for God's mercy and forgiveness when in need. This is beautifully expressed in the psalms of sorrow ([Psalms 6](#); [32](#); [38](#); [51](#); [102](#); [130](#); [143](#)), as well as other Old Testament passages ([Exodus 34:6](#); [Nehemiah 9:17](#); [Psalms 57](#); [79](#); [86](#); [123](#); [Isaiah](#)

[33:1-6](#); [Daniel 9:3-19](#); [Joel 2:13](#)). Remembering God's mercy gives those who are sorry hope that God will accept them again.

### *Mercy in the New Testament*

In the New Testament, a very descriptive Greek word is used for Jesus's mercy towards people in need ([Matthew 9:36](#); [14:14](#); [20:34](#)). It shows his pity and care with a strong word that means "to be moved in one's bowels." The Hebrews thought the bowels or stomach were the center of feelings, especially kindness. Jesus was described as feeling deeply kind towards those in need and acting quickly to help their suffering. He healed ([Matthew 20:34](#); [Mark 1:41](#)), brought the dead back to life ([Luke 7:13](#)), and fed the hungry ([Matthew 15:32](#)).

The Old Testament idea of God's mercy shown in his chosen people is also found in the New Testament ([Luke 1:50, 54, 72, 78](#); [Ephesians 2:4](#); [1 Timothy 1:2](#); [1 Peter 1:3](#); [2:10](#)). The most common use of mercy in the New Testament is God's plan to save people through Jesus Christ ([Romans 11:30-32](#); [Ephesians 2:4](#)). God is "the Father of mercies" ([2 Corinthians 1:3](#)). He gives to those who believe in his Son. It is because he is "rich in mercy" that he saved those who are spiritually dead and doomed by their sins ([Ephesians 2:4-6](#)). It is because of God's mercy that one is forgiven and given eternal life ([1 Timothy 1:13-16](#)).

### *People's Responsibility to Show Mercy to Others*

Because God has given his kindness freely to all, whether they are good or not, people should be kind to others too. Even if they do not deserve it. In fact, people are told to be kind, especially to those who are poor, need help, or have lost family members ([Proverbs 14:31](#); [19:17](#); [Micah 6:8](#); [Zechariah 7:9-10](#); [Colossians 3:12](#)). God thinks being kind is more important than following rules or offering sacrifices ([Matthew 9:13](#)). God's kindness through Jesus means people should treat others the way God has treated them.

Jesus made kindness and forgiveness a key part of his teaching ([Matthew 5:7](#); [9:13](#); [12:7](#); [23:23](#); [Luke 6:36](#); [10:37](#); [James 3:17](#)). Before he came, people talked about how kind he would be and how forgiveness would be the center of his mission ([Luke 1:50, 54, 72, 78](#)).

Christians should care for each other and help each other, just as Jesus helped them. They should give help, love, and comfort to one another. James, one

of Jesus's followers, says that doing good things is a very important part of real faith ([James 2:14–26](#)). Jesus praised the good Samaritan who showed mercy. The good Samaritan helped a man who was hurt and robbed ([Luke 10:36–37](#)). Being full of mercy is a special quality of people who belong to God's kingdom ([Matthew 5:7](#)).

*See also* God, Being and Attributes of; Grace; Love.

## Mercy Seat

The mercy seat was a gold cover placed on top of the ark of the covenant. It had two gold cherubim attached at both ends. Many English Bible versions call this item the "mercy seat" (compare [Exodus 25:17–22](#)). The Hebrew word translated "mercy seat" means something like "place of atonement." It refers to the removal of God's wrath through the offering of a gift or sacrifice.

The importance of this term comes from a ceremony on the Day of Atonement. Blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat to atone for Israel's sins ([Leviticus 16](#)). Because of this, the Most Holy Place, where the ark was kept in the temple, is called the "room for the mercy seat" in [1 Chronicles 28:11](#). The term "mercy seat" became common in English because of Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible. Modern translations sometimes use different terms like "atonement cover" (New International Version) or "Ark's cover" (New Living Translation).

The mercy seat was 114.3 centimeters (45 inches) long and 68.6 centimeters (27 inches) wide. The cherubim were made of gold. They faced each other with their wings spread over the ark. The space above the ark between the cherubim was where God's presence with his people was especially focused. From this place, God spoke his commands to Moses ([Exodus 25:22](#); compare also [Leviticus 16:2](#)). Because of this connection, God is described as being "enthroned between the cherubim" ([1 Samuel 4:4](#); [2 Samuel 6:2](#)).

The ark itself contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. These commandments summarized the covenant obligations (requirements) that the Israelites had to follow for their divine King. When the Israelites sinned against God and broke his commands, the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat made atonement for their sin and restored their relationship with God.

In the New Testament, Paul writes that Jesus is the "atoning sacrifice" through faith in his blood for all who have sinned ([Romans 3:25](#)). Here in [Romans 3:25](#) the Greek term translated "atoning" is the same Greek word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint). It is also used in [Hebrews 9:5](#) to translate the Hebrew word for mercy seat in the Old Testament.

*See also* Ark of the Covenant; Propitiation; Tabernacle; Temple.

## Mered

Ezrah's son from Judah's tribe, who had two wives. One wife, Bithiah, was the daughter of Pharaoh, and one was a Jewess ([1 Chr 4:17–18](#)).

## Meremoth

1. Priest, son of Uriah, grandson of Hakkoz ([Ezr 8:33](#); [Neh 3:4, 21](#)). The family of Hakkoz was unable to prove its descent; therefore, they were excluded from the priesthood. Meremoth appears to be an exception. He weighed silver and gold (a priestly function [[Ezr 8:24–30](#)]), repaired part of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 3:4, 21](#)), and sealed the covenant ([10:5](#)).

2. Priest and Bani's son, who severed ties with his foreign wife and children at Ezra's request ([Ezr 10:36](#)).

3. Priest who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel ([Neh 12:3](#)) and established the house of priests called Meraioth in [Nehemiah 12:15](#) (though some identify the two references as the same person).

## Meres

One of the seven princes of Persia and Media who acted as personal adviser to King Ahasuerus ([Esther 1:14](#)).

## Meribah

1. A place name meaning "strife" or "conflict." It is named for a place at Horeb, near Rephidim (Wadi Feiran). There, Israel contended with Moses for water at the start of the wilderness wanderings ([Exodus 17:7](#)). This is the place probably referred to in [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) and [Psalm 95:8](#) and is also called Massah.
  2. Another place where Israel fought with Moses for water. It is near Kadesh-barnea in the wilderness of Zin. God again provided water from a rock ([Numbers 20:13, 24](#); [27:14](#)); also called Meribath-kadesh in [Deuteronomy 32:51](#). This event happened toward the end of the Israelites' time in the desert. The waters of Meribah were called "waters of conflict" because God became angry with Moses and Aaron there. They did not follow God's exact instructions to speak to the rock. Instead, Moses—who was frustrated by the people's stubbornness—struck the rock twice with his staff. The psalm writer tells us that God tested Israel at this place ([Psalm 81:7](#)), and Israel's rebellion led Moses to sin ([Psalm 106:32](#)). Meribah-kadesh is mentioned as being on Israel's southern border ([Ezekiel 47:19](#); [48:28](#)).
- See also* Massah and Meribah.

## Meribah-Kadesh, Meribath-Kadesh

Alternate names for Kadesh-barnea ([Dt 32:51](#); [Ez 47:19](#); [48:28](#)), a place for lengthy encampment by the Israelites during the wilderness wanderings. *See* Kadesh, Kadesh-barnea.

## Meribbaal

Meribbaal was the original name for Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan who could not walk ([1 Chronicles 8:34](#); [9:40](#)). The name

Meribbaal means "Baal contends." In [2 Samuel 4:4](#) and [9:6](#), he is called by the later name Mephibosheth, which means "idol breaker." This change in name happened because the word "baal" (which means "lord") later became associated with idol worship. When this happened, the Israelites often replaced "baal" in names with "bosheth," which means "shame." This was a common practice (compare [2 Samuel 11:21](#)).

*See* Mephibosheth #1.

## Merodach

Hebrew pronunciation of Marduk, the chief Babylonian deity. *See* Marduk.

## Merodach-Baladan

Name meaning "Marduk has given a son!" [Second Kings 20:12–19](#) and [Isaiah 39](#) present a parallel account of Merodach-baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sending envoys to King Hezekiah of Judah.

Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria, captured Samaria in 722 BC and threatened King Hezekiah in Jerusalem but then died within a year's time. Sargon II succeeded him in 722 BC. At that time Merodach-baladan, living south of Babylon in the land called Bit-Yakin, formed an alliance with the Elamites and seized the throne of Babylon, referred to as the second jewel of the Assyrian crown. Sargon II immediately made efforts to regain Babylon as a province in the Assyrian Empire. He must not have been successful initially, for Merodach-baladan reigned over Babylon for 10 years. In 710 BC Sargon succeeded in defeating him and captured the Babylonian fortresses. Merodach-baladan escaped. After Sargon died in 705 BC, Merodach-baladan, in 703 BC, was able to recapture and hold the throne of Babylon for a short period. It is considered most plausible that during this short reign Merodach-baladan sent envoys to Hezekiah in Jerusalem, as he also is thought to have sent them to Edom, Moab, Ammon, and others, seeking to form an alliance against Assyria. The Arabian desert between Babylon and Palestine made such an alliance ineffective, and the new king of Assyria, Sennacherib, thoroughly destroyed Merodach-baladan and then turned to the nations on Palestinian soil.

Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah for receiving the envoys from Babylon, the province that had broken away from the Assyrian Empire and that in a very short time was again forced into the Assyrian Empire. In Isaiah's rebuke lies the prediction that Babylon would become the invading and despoiling nation in the future. Hezekiah, knowing Assyria's power and Babylon's inability to cope with it at that time, felt quite safe as far as Babylon was concerned ([2 Kgs 20:19](#)).

## Merom, Waters of

Site of Joshua's victory over Jabin, king of Hazor, and his allies, mentioned only twice in the Bible ([Jos 11:5–7](#)). Jabin's allies included Jobab, the king of Madon, and the kings of Shimron, Achshaph, and the northern hill country, as well as those of the lowland south of the Sea of Galilee. The site of the battle is not clear but a likely place for "the waters of Merom" is near the foot of Har Merom (on modern Israeli maps), or on older maps, Jabel Marun—the highest mountain in Israel (3,962 feet, or 1,207.1 meters). Near the base of the mountain is the town of Merom, where several roads leading into northern Galilee converge. It is on the road between Hazor and Acco on the coast; hence, it was a convenient place for Joshua's enemies to rendezvous. Merom is about eight miles (12.9 kilometers) southwest of Hazor. The "waters of Merom," therefore, would be the springs that emerge from the mountain to flow down Wadi Leimun into the Sea of Galilee. Merom is mentioned in Egyptian texts of the second millennium BC associated with the campaigns of Thutmose III. The Assyrian monarch Tiglath-pileser III also reported his expedition into this region in 733–732 BC, at the time when he conquered Damascus. The allied forces defeated by Joshua fled northwest, in the direction of Sidon, suggesting an attack by Joshua from the southeast, from the area west of the Sea of Galilee, the natural approach from the south.

## Meronoth

The hometown of Jehdeiah ([1 Chr 27:30](#)) and Jadon ([Neh 3:7](#)).

## Meroz

Town in northern Palestine whose inhabitants were cursed for not assisting Deborah and Barak in their war against Sisera and the Canaanites ([Jgs 5:23](#)).

## Mesech

KJV spelling of Meshech, Noah's grandson, in [Psalm 120:5](#). See Meshech #1.

## Meshah (Person)

1. King of Moab in the ninth century BC whose name is derived from a root meaning "to save or deliver." According to [2 Kings 3:4–5](#), Mesha was a sheep breeder who paid heavy tribute to Israel during the time of Ahab but rebelled after Ahab's death ([2 Kgs 1:1](#)). Later, Jehoram the son of Ahab joined with Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom in an attempt to reestablish hegemony over Moab. When the battle went against the Moabites, Mesha took his eldest son and offered him as a human sacrifice upon the wall of the city to the Moabite god Chemosh ([3:27](#)).

2. Caleb's son and the father of Ziph ([1 Chr 2:42](#)). In the Greek text the latter part of this verse appears to say that Mesha was the father of Hebron, though the Hebrew text here substitutes the name Mareshah for Mesha. The rsv (following the Septuagint) reads Mareshah in both places. See Mareshah (Person) #1.

3. Benjaminite and one of the sons of Shaharaim born by Hodesh in the land of Moab ([1 Chr 8:9](#)).

## Meshah (Place)

Place in southern Arabia defining the western boundary of the territory in which the descendants of Joktan settled ([Gn 10:30](#)). Its location is unknown. Some suggest that Meshah was a seaport town situated along the eastern shores of the Red Sea in the vicinity of what is modern Yemen; others place it along the Persian Gulf's northwestern banks near the region of Mesene.

## Meshach

One of the three friends of the prophet Daniel. Meshach was thrown into the fiery furnace along with Shadrach and Abednego ([Daniel 1:7; 2:49; 3:12-30](#)). See Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

## Meshech

1. Son of Japheth and Noah's grandson ([Gn 10:2](#)). His descendants are usually mentioned in connection with Tubal, Gog, or Magog ([Ps 120:5; Ez 27:13; 32:26; 38:2-3; 39:1](#)). They are called Muski in Assyrian records and inhabited the mountains north of Assyria during the reigns of Tiglath-pileser I (1115–1102 BC), Shalmaneser III (859–824 BC), and Sargon (722–705 BC). The people of Meshech are characterized as aggressive and pagan, traders in bronze and slaves with Tyre.
2. Shem's son according to [1 Chronicles 1:17](#), but rendered Mash in the parallel passage in [Genesis 10:23](#). The latter is generally accepted.

## Meshelemiah

Korahite Levite, Kore's son from the house of Asaph, and a gatekeeper of the sanctuary with his sons in the time of David ([1 Chr 9:21; 26:1-2, 9](#)); alternately called Shelemiah in [1 Chronicles 26:14](#).

## Meshezabeel, Meshezabel

1. Ancestor of Meshullam who helped repair the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 3:4](#)).
2. Political leader who signed Ezra's covenant of faithfulness to God during the postexilic period ([Neh 10:21](#)).
3. Father of Pethahiah, an adviser to King Artaxerxes regarding the people in Judah ([Neh 11:24](#)).

## Meshillemith

Alternate spelling of Meshillemoth in [1 Chronicles 9:12](#). See Meshillemoth #2.

## Meshillemoth

1. Father of Berekiah, a chief of Ephraim ([2 Chr 28:12](#)).
2. Ancestor of the postexilic priest Amashsai ([Neh 11:13](#)); alternately spelled Meshillemith in [1 Chronicles 9:12](#).

## Meshobab

Prince of Simeon's tribe in the days of Hezekiah, who, with 12 other princes, moved to Gedor, dispossessed its pagan people (the Meunim), and settled his family there ([1 Chr 4:34](#)).

## Meshullam

1. Forefather of Shaphan, the royal secretary to King Josiah of Judah ([2 Kgs 22:3](#)).
2. Zerubbabel's son and a descendant of David ([1 Chr 3:19](#)).
3. Gadite leader registered during the reigns of Jotham, king of Judah (950–932 BC), and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (993–953 BC; [1 Chr 5:13](#)).
4. Benjamite and a descendant of Elpaal ([1 Chr 8:17](#)).
5. Benjamite and the father of Sallu, a resident in Jerusalem during the postexilic period ([1 Chr 9:7; Neh 11:7](#)).
6. Benjamite and the son of Shephatiah, who resided in Jerusalem during the postexilic period ([1 Chr 9:8](#)).
7. Priest, the son of Zadok and the father of Hilkiah, whose descendants served in Jerusalem's sanctuary during the postexilic era ([1 Chr 9:11; Neh 11:11](#)). He is probably identical with Shallum in [1 Chronicles 6:12–13](#).
8. Priest, the son of Meshillemith and a forefather of Adaiah. Adaiah served in Jerusalem's sanctuary during the postexilic era ([1 Chr 9:12](#)).
9. Kohathite Levite who was appointed to oversee the repair of the temple during King Josiah's reign ([2 Chr 34:12](#)).
10. One of the Jewish leaders whom Ezra sent to Iddo at Casiphia to gather Levites and temple servants for the caravan of Jews returning to Palestine from Babylonia ([Ezr 8:16](#)).

11. One who opposed Ezra's suggestion that the sons of Israel should divorce the foreign women they had married since returning to Palestine from exile ([Ezr 10:15](#)).

12. Bani's son, who was encouraged by Ezra to divorce his foreign wife during the postexilic era ([Ezr 10:29](#)).

13. Berekiah's son, who rebuilt a section of the Jerusalem wall during the days of Nehemiah ([Neh 3:4, 30](#)). His daughter married Jehohanan, the son of Tobiah the Ammonite ([6:18](#)).

14. Besodeiah's son, who with Joiada repaired the Old Gate in the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 3:6](#)).

15. One of the men who stood to Ezra's left when Ezra read the law to the people ([Neh 8:4](#)).

16. One of the priests who set his seal on the covenant of Ezra ([Neh 10:7](#)).

17. One of the leaders of Israel who set his seal on the covenant of Ezra ([Neh 10:20](#)).

18. Head of Ezra's priestly family during the days of Joiakim, the high priest, in postexilic Jerusalem ([Neh 12:13](#)).

19. Head of Ginnethon's priestly family during the days of Joiakim ([Neh 12:16](#)).

20. One of the gatekeepers during the days of the high priest Joiakim ([Neh 12:25](#)); perhaps identifiable with Shallum in [1 Chronicles 9:17](#).

21. One of the princes of Judah who participated in the dedication of the Jerusalem wall during the postexilic era ([Neh 12:33](#)).

## Meshullemeth

Mother of Amon, king of Judah (642–640 BC) and the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah ([2 Kgs 21:19](#)).

## Mesobaite

KJV spelling of Mezobaite, a title given to Jaasiel, in [1 Chronicles 11:47](#). See Mezobaite.

## Mesopotamia

The Greek name for the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Today, the area is called al-Jazira, "the island," by the Arabs.

Mesopotamia, which means "between the rivers," is applied to the land near the Tigris and Euphrates down to the Persian Gulf. Most of it is in Iraq, but some parts are in Syria and Turkey.

Mesopotamia was important to Old Testament history. Many of the stories in [Genesis 1–11](#) were set here. The garden of Eden was in Mesopotamia because [Genesis 2:10–14](#) names two rivers near Eden: the Euphrates and the Tigris.

### *Who Lived in Mesopotamia?*

We do not know much about the prehistoric cultures of Mesopotamia. Historical periods are named by the most important cities (such as Ur and Isin-Larsa) or by the ruling dynasties (such as Ur III).

The south of Mesopotamia is known as Sumer. The Sumerians had a unique culture and spoke a language very different from the rest of Mesopotamia. Sumerian was written in a series of wedge-style signs (called cuneiform), much like the other languages of Mesopotamia.

Farther north was the district called Akkad (also known as Agade). The Akkadians were also Semitic. Further north along the Tigris was the land of Assyria. To the far west was Syria (also known as Aram). Between Assyria and Syria was Mitanni.

Different parts of Mesopotamia would gain power at different times. Mesopotamia would become part of different empires, such as:

- Hittite
- Assyrian
- Babylonian
- Persian
- Greek (also known as Hellenistic)
- Roman

### *Mesopotamia in the Bible*

The Old Testament calls Mesopotamia "Aram-naharaim," meaning "Aram of the two rivers." Abraham sent his servant to Aram-naharaim to find a wife for Isaac ([Genesis 24:10](#)). Some suggest that the "two rivers" were the Euphrates and a branch of the Euphrates called Khabur. The stories about Jacob do not use the term Aram-naharaim but call the region "Paddan-aram," "the field [or garden] of Aram" ([Genesis 28:2](#)).

Balaam, the son of Beor, was from Pethor in Mesopotamia ([Deuteronomy 23:4](#)). During the period of the judges, Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia, oppressed Israel for eight years until God saved them through Othniel ([Judges 3:8–10](#)).

When the Ammonites thought David would invade their land because they had insulted his ambassadors, they hired chariots from Mesopotamia to strengthen their forces ([1 Chronicles 19:6](#)).

In the New Testament, Mesopotamia is only mentioned twice. People from Mesopotamia were present on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:9](#)). Stephen, in his defense before the Sanhedrin, states that Abraham lived in Mesopotamia before he moved to Haran ([Acts 7:2](#); see [Genesis 11:31](#)).

## Messenger

A messenger is someone who brings messages or news from one person to another. The Bible uses the word “messenger” in four ways:

1. People who bring messages between others. The messengers might bring news ([2 Samuel 11:22](#)), requests or instructions ([1 Samuel 11:3; 16:19](#)), or speak for one country to another ([Isaiah 37:9](#)). In the New Testament, we read of messengers of the churches ([2 Corinthians 8:23](#); [Philippians 2:25](#)). [Proverbs 25:13](#) talks about how valuable a good messenger is. It compares a trustworthy messenger to cool snow during harvest time. Such a messenger brings refreshment to the people who sent them.

2. People who bring messages from God. Israel was meant to be God’s messenger but often did not listen or see well ([Isaiah 42:19](#)). Prophets ([Haggai 1:13](#)) and priests ([Malachi 2:7](#)) were God’s messengers. God sent many messengers to his people, even when they were often ignored ([2 Chronicles 36:15–16](#)). [Malachi 3:1](#) talks about a special messenger, “Behold, I will send My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple—the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight—see, He is coming.” This verse is quoted in the New Testament in [Matthew 11:10](#), [Mark 1:2](#), and [Luke 7:27](#). These books say that this quote refers to John the Baptist.

3. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, the most common word for “messenger” is also the word for “angel.” God’s angels are his special messengers. See Angel.
4. The word “messenger” is sometimes used to explain ideas by comparing them to something else. [Proverbs 16:14](#) says, “The wrath of a king is as messengers of death.” In [2 Corinthians 12:7](#), Paul’s ongoing health problem is called “a messenger of Satan, to torment” him.

## Messiah

Title derived from the Hebrew, mashiach, a verbal adjective meaning “anointed one.” Along with its NT equivalent, christos (Christ), it refers to an act of consecration whereby an individual is set apart to serve God and then anointed with oil. The verbal root (mashach) conveys this idea as well.

Israel’s practice of ceremonially anointing with oil is present in several contexts. Priests were regularly anointed prior to their divinely given service at the altar of sacrifice ([Lv 4:3](#)). While there is evidence for a literal anointing of prophets ([1 Kgs 19:16](#)), this does not appear to have been a

standard practice. The anointing of Saul and David by Samuel established the act as a significant prerequisite for Hebrew kings before they assumed their positions of royal leadership. The king was especially considered to be the Lord's anointed and as such was viewed to hold a secure position before men ([1 Sm 12:14](#); [2 Sm 19:21](#)) and God ([Pss 2:2](#); [20:6](#)). Along with numerous messianic prophecies, these proceedings helped inform the Jews of the Anointed One, par excellence, who would eventually come to bring salvation to Israel.

Concluding the 13 articles of Hebraic faith attributed to Moses Maimonides (13th century AD) is the statement still found in many Hebrew prayer books: "I believe with a perfect heart that the Messiah will come; and although his coming be delayed, I will still wait patiently for his speedy appearance."

### *Messiah in the Old Testament*

Jewish hope for the advent of the Messiah developed dynamically from the period of David's reign, when it was prophesied that his kingdom would endure to the end of time ([2 Sm 7:16](#)). Israel was told that, through David's descendants, his throne would exert a never-ending dominion over all the earth ([2 Sm 22:48-51](#); [Jer 33](#)). It is with this aspect of messianic salvation that Jewish minds have traditionally been preoccupied (cf. [Acts 1:6](#)).

Among Orthodox rabbis there has never been a lack of conjecture respecting the details of the Messiah's ministry. At one time the rabbis applied no less than 456 passages of Scripture to his person and salvation. Preoccupation with the Messiah is evident in the tractate *Sanhedrin* (Babylonian Talmud), where passages state that the world was created for him and that all the prophets prophesied of his days (*Sanhedrin* 98b, 99a). By and large, Orthodoxy still retains its time-worn belief in the Messiah's reign in Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple, and the reestablishment of both priesthood and sacrifice.

While later Judaism looked for the Messiah as an eschatological figure who will reign at the end of time, modern Jewish thought has largely jettisoned the traditional notion of a personal Messiah in favor of belief in a messianic age. Prevalent liberal Judaism envisions the world ultimately perfected through the influence of the twin Judaic ideals of justice and compassion. Such conviction, ignoring the plight of fallen humans and the teaching of

Scripture, substitutes humanistic thinking for miraculous heavenly intervention.

While the Messiah's origin is linked firmly to the house of David ([2 Sm 7:14](#); [Hos 3:5](#)), the promise for a Messiah was given long before David lived. In fact, the hope for the Messiah is implicit in the first promise of the establishment of the kingdom of God. Addressed to Satan, [Genesis 3:15](#) declares that God will place hostility between the serpent and the woman until, in the fullness of time, the "seed" of the woman inflicts a fatal blow to the head of the serpent.

The nature of messianic prophecy is progressive; each prophecy casts more light on the subject. This occurs, for example, respecting the concept of the "seed": Messiah is to be born of a woman ([Gn 3:15](#)), through the line of Shem ([9:26](#)) and specifically through Abraham ([22:18](#)). Yet even as late as [Genesis 22:18](#), the "seed" is not clearly presented as a person, since *zerah* (seed) may indicate a singular or plural object. Still less apparent in these early stages of messianic prophecy is the nature of the "bruising" that is to occur. Yet the idea of the Messiah being crushed for sin is implicit in the Genesis pronouncement, as is the violence associated with that act. Chief among the messianic prophets, Isaiah gives full range to the axiom that the Anointed One must endure extensive suffering ([Is 53:1](#)). Under the figure "the Servant of the Lord," four "servant songs" delineate the mission of the future deliverer ([Is 42:1-7](#); [49:1-9](#); [50:4-11](#); [52:13-53:12](#)). While it is true that Isaiah does not explicitly link the title Messiah with the Servant of the Lord, identifying both figures as one and the same person is justifiable. Both figures are uniquely anointed ([61:1](#)); each brings light to the Gentiles ([55:4](#); cf. [49:6](#)); neither is pretentious in his first appearance ([7:14-15](#); [11:1](#); cf. [42:3](#); [53:1](#)); and the title of Davidic "branch" rests upon them both ([11:1-4](#)). Equally significant are the dual facts of their humiliation and exaltation ([49:7](#); [52:13-15](#)). Jewish scholars of the early Christian era in the Aramaic Targum on the prophets paraphrase [Isaiah 42:1](#), "Behold my Servant Messiah" and begin [Isaiah 53](#), "Behold my Servant Messiah will prosper." While Cyrus may be spoken of as "anointed," no final salvific work is attributed to him ([45:1-5](#)). Israel, although elect and loved by God ([41:8](#)), is ill-equipped as God's servant to bring his redeeming work to mankind ([42:18](#)). The collapse of David's dynasty points eloquently to Israel's need for an anointed monarch who will heal the apostasy and disobedience ([Ex 33:5](#); [Hos 4:1](#)). More and more, OT history presents Israel's

comprehensive moral failure. Her problem, which she shares with mankind, can only be solved by the making of a covenant whose surety and focal point is both a personal Savior and sovereign Lord ([Jer 31:31-34](#)). The advent of such a champion lives in the recorded promise of a shoot from the stump of Jesse's fallen tree, who will bring the light of life to God's benighted people ([Is 9:2; 11:1](#)).

It is difficult to get away from the idea that the concept of servanthood and lowness belongs within the sphere of royalty ([Zec 9:9](#)). The concept of the Messiah filling the complementary offices of priest and king is incontrovertible ([Ps 110:1-4](#)); a suffering priest-king is far less obvious. Some among the Talmudic writers apparently recognized the likelihood that the Messiah would have to suffer. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Sanhedrin* 98b, the Messiah is said to bear sicknesses and pain. Among the prayers for the Day of Atonement may be found the words of Eleazar ben Qalir (perhaps as late as AD 1000): "Our righteous Messiah has departed from us; we are horror-stricken, and there is none to justify us. Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions he carries, and is wounded for our transgressions. He bears on his shoulders our sins to find pardon for our iniquities. May we be healed by his stripes." In a similar vein Rabbi Eliyya de Vidas writes, "The meaning of 'He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,' is that since the Messiah bears our iniquities, which produce the effect of His being bruised, it follows that whosoever will not admit that the Messiah thus suffers for our iniquities must endure and suffer for them himself." For all this, it is highly doubtful that anyone imagined the Messiah would accomplish his salvational work by means of his own death (cf. [Is 53:12](#)). When rabbinic speculation failed to satisfactorily harmonize the paradoxical facts of humiliation and exaltation, some hypothesized that God would send a Messiah to suffer as well as a Messiah to reign. Biblically, it is evident that the Anointed One's terrible ordeal of suffering is but the necessary prelude to infinite glory. He is pictured not only as a great king ([52:13; 53:12](#)) but also as humble ([53:2](#)), humiliated ([52:14](#)), rejected ([53:3](#)), and bearing the consequences of mankind's rebellion (vv [5-6](#)). Yet he is raised up to intercede for, and richly bless, his people (v [12](#)). The Messiah, having accomplished that full obedience that Adam and Israel failed to achieve, will bring Israel and the nations back to God ([42:18-19; 49:3, 6](#)).

The writings of Daniel contain important messianic data. Daniel is unique in that he boldly speaks of "Messiah the Prince" ([Dn 9:25](#)), identifies him as the "Son of Man" ([7:13](#)), and says he suffers ("cut off," [9:26](#)). This statement of the cutting off (i.e., death) of the Messiah makes possible his work of atonement ([9:24](#)). The doctrine of a vicarious substitutionary atonement is the only doctrine of atonement found in the Bible (cf. [Lv 17:11](#)). Israel understood that to bear sin meant enduring the consequences, or penalty, for sin (cf. [Nm 14:33](#)). The same penal substitution is evident in the working principle of the Messiah's atoning sacrifice. He is the victim's substitute to whom is transferred the suffering due the sinner. The penalty having been thus borne vicariously, the suppliant is fully pardoned.

[Psalm 22:1](#) records the plaintive cry of the Messiah bearing man's penalty for sin (cf. [Mt 27:46](#)) as he becomes sin on behalf of his people ([2 Cor 5:21](#)). Yet his cry, "My God," indicates an intimate relationship that cannot be radically severed. Once again the motif of messianic humiliation prior to great exaltation is in view ([Ps 22:27](#)). In the so-called "royal psalms" (e.g., 2; 72; 110) it is the priestly intercessor who is also ordained to function as monarch and judge.

Jeremiah brings the portrait a step further. The one who will enable humans to enter into a salvational covenant with God conveys God's imputed righteousness: the Messiah, God's righteous branch, becomes "the Lord our Righteousness." Paradoxically, under the law no one could be crucified who was not guilty of sin ([Dt 21:22](#)). But it is Christ the righteous one who was crucified, thereby forever undermining any supposed legalistic confidence ([Dt 21:23; Gal 3:13](#)). More than forgiven, believers are deemed righteous in him ([Jer 23:5-6](#)).

While the birthplace of the Messiah was well established ([Mi 5:2](#)), his deity was a hotly contested matter. Although few in ancient Israel disputed the belief in a superhuman Messiah, it is doubtful that anyone imagined him to be "God with us" in the fullest sense of the expression (cf. [Heb 1:3](#)).

### *Messiah in the New Testament*

The NT writers present the picture that he who was the child of supernatural origins ([Is 7:14; Mi 5:2](#)) carried the full weight of divinity ([Is 9:6; Phil 2:6; Col 1:19](#)). He is the Son of God, worthy to receive the worship of all people ([Ps 45:6-7](#); cf. [Heb 1:8-9](#)).

The Jews of first-century Palestine knew that the messianic promise would be fulfilled in the coming of one like Moses ([Dt 18:18](#)). Parallels between Jesus and Moses are abundant. As mediators, innovators, and propagators of new phases of spiritual life for the people, they are unexcelled. Specifically, both are miraculously spared in infancy ([Ex 2](#); [Mt 2:13-23](#)); both renounce a royal court for the sake of serving the people of God ([Phil 2:5-8](#); [Heb 11:24-28](#)); both exhibit intense compassion for others ([Nm 27:17](#); [Mt 9:36](#)); both commune “face to face” with God ([Ex 34:29-30](#); [2 Cor 3:7](#)); and each mediates a covenant of redemption ([Dt 29:1](#); [Heb 8:6-7](#)). But, as Luther observes, “Christ is no Moses.” In the final analysis Moses is but a household servant; the Messiah is the maker and master of all things ([Heb 3:3-6](#); cf. [In 1:1-2, 18](#)).

Family genealogies are important in Scripture. Rabbis agreed upon the absolute necessity of the Messiah’s Davidic lineage based on [Hosea 3:5](#) and [Jeremiah 30:9](#). The angelic announcement immediately establishes the correct lineage for Jesus ([Lk 1:32-33](#); cf. [2:4](#)), as does Matthew’s ([Mt 1:1-17](#)). The Lukan list, like that of Matthew, sets forth the exclusive kingly descent verifying Jesus as Messiah ([Lk 3:23-38](#)). Although variations occur between the two genealogies, there is a firm solidarity emphasizing an ancestry within the unique messianic stock. Fully aware of the messianic focus of Scripture ([In 5:46](#); [8:56](#)), Jesus acknowledged himself to be the Christ on numerous occasions. He accepted the title from blind Bartimaeus ([Mk 10:46-48](#)); from the crowds when he entered Jerusalem ([Mt 21:9](#)); from the children at the temple (v [15](#)); and in other contexts as well ([Mt 16:16-18](#); [Mk 14:61-62](#); [Lk 4:21](#); [In 4:25-26](#)). Nonetheless, he warned his disciples not to broadcast his mighty acts as Messiah prior to his resurrection ([Mt 17:9](#); cf. [Lk 9:20-21](#)). Owing to the commonly held (but false) notion that the Messiah’s role was primarily that of a political liberator, Jesus actually avoided use of that term and preferred to identify himself as “the Son of Man.” It was by no means assumed that both designations referred to the same person (cf. [Mk 14:61-62](#)). Borrowing essentially from Daniel’s vision of a heavenly conqueror ([Dn 7:13-14](#)), Jesus consistently employed this less-known title and filled it with the true character and scope of messianic salvation. Jesus’ teaching in this regard enabled his disciples to correct their erroneous views concerning his mission ([Mt 16:21-23](#)). In the fullness of time they would come to see him not

only as Messiah but also as the theme of the entire OT ([Mt 5:17](#); [Lk 24:27, 44](#); [In 5:39](#); cf. [Heb 10:7](#)). When Jesus expounded the Scriptures beginning with the Torah ([Lk 24:27](#)), he did so as the living exegesis of God, the Word made flesh ([In 1:14, 18](#)). Legitimate messianic exposition is found in a host of texts, such as [Psalms 2](#); [16](#); [22](#); [40](#); [110](#); [Isaiah 7:14](#); [9:6](#); [11:1](#); [40:10-11](#); [50:6](#); [52:13-53:12](#); [61:1](#); [63:1-6](#); [Jeremiah 23:5-6](#); [33:14-16](#); [Ezekiel 34:23](#); [37:25](#); [Daniel 9:24-27](#); [Hosea 11:1](#); [Micah 5:2](#); [Zechariah 9:9](#); [11:13](#); [12:10](#); [13:7](#); [Malachi 3:1](#); [4:2](#).

The messiahship of Jesus is firmly proclaimed by all four evangelists ([Mt 1:1](#); [Mk 1:1](#); [Lk 24:26](#); [In 20:31](#)). Peter on Pentecost, Philip before the Ethiopian eunuch, and Apollos in open debate all argue convincingly that Jesus is the Messiah ([Acts 2:36](#); [8:35](#); [28:28](#)). Peter says he was “made” both Lord and Christ ([2:36](#)), signifying that the resurrection rightfully confirms him as such. Similarly, the apostle Paul speaks of Jesus’ resurrection as a patent declaration of his inalienable right to the title ([Rom 1:4](#)). For the ex-Pharisee and former persecutor of the church, “Jesus the Christ” is the very heart and soul of Paul’s preaching. Nothing is worthy to be compared to the glory of the Messiah; everything pales by comparison ([Phil 3:5-10](#)). The apostle’s all-consuming passion is for others to know the fullness of God in the person of his only Son ([Eph 3:14-19](#)).

The Holy Spirit in Scripture speaks of Jesus with wide-ranging appellatives—Holy One, Judge, Righteous One, King, Son of God, and Lord—but these are not exhaustive. In him all the lines of messianic prediction converge; he is the touchstone whereby their validity is firmly established. The Lord Jesus Christ is himself the heart and substance of that covenant through which sinful people may be reconciled to a holy God ([Is 42:6](#); [In 14:6](#)). That Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, God incarnate, exhaustively fulfills prophecy, type, and symbol—all shadows of his coming. Therefore, all should trust in him, the source of all grace, the only abiding treasure ([Mt 12:21](#); [In 1:16-17](#); [Col 2:3](#)). Anointed as prophet, he leads us into all truth ([In 6:14](#); [7:16](#)); as priest he intercedes for us ([Heb 7:21](#)); and as king he reigns over us ([Phil 2:9-10](#)).

*See also* Atonement; Branch; Christology; Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of; Redeemer, Redemption; Son of God; Son of Man.

## Metallurgy

A field of study about how to find, process, and work with metals. Throughout history, people have developed different ways to get metals from the earth and shape them into tools, weapons, and decorative items.

The most common metals mentioned in the Bible are:

- Gold (used for valuable items and temple decorations)
- Silver (used for money and jewelry)
- Copper (used for everyday tools and large containers)
- Iron (used for strong tools and weapons)

*See Coppersmith; Goldsmith; Ironsmith; Minerals and Metals; Silversmith.*

## Metheg-ammah

A place was a place conquered by King David ([2 Samuel 8:1](#)). The name means "Bridle of the Mother City." This place was most likely the Philistine capital city called Gath ([1 Chronicles 18:1](#)). In ancient times, people often called a capital city a "mother" city and the smaller surrounding cities were called "daughters." The word "bridle" in the name shows control or authority, meaning that whoever controlled this city had power over the whole region.

## Methusael

KJV spelling of Methushael, Mehujael's son, in [Genesis 4:18](#). *See* Methushael.

## Methuselah

The son of Enoch, Lamech's father, and the grandfather of Noah through Seth's line ([Genesis 5:21-27](#); [1 Chronicles 1:3](#)). Methuselah lived 969 years. He is the oldest recorded person in the Bible. His ancestry is included in Luke's record of Jesus's ancestors ([Luke 3:37](#)).

*See also* Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## Methushael

Mehujael's son and the father of Lamech in Cain's line ([Gn 4:18](#)).

## Meunim, Meunites

People living in Edom (Mt Seir, [1 Chr 4:41-42](#)) who were dispossessed of their rich pasturelands by the Simeonites. Later, Meunites from Edom attacked Judah's King Jehoshaphat ([2 Chr 20:1](#)); later still, King Uzziah of Judah defeated them ([26:7](#)). Their original land possession, association with Arabs and Ammonites, and prolonged hostility recall [Judges 10:11-12](#), where "Maonites" are named oppressors of Israel. This word, by Hebrew rules of vocalization, could well become "Meunites," suggesting Maon (Ma'in, Maan) in the Edomite area south of the Dead Sea as their home.

The Meunim are listed among the families of temple servants returning to Jerusalem following the exile ([Ezr 2:50](#); [Neh 7:52](#)). However, because ancient enemies seem unlikely temple servants, some suggest that these Meunim were descendants of the Caleb clan within Judah to whom another town named Maon, west of the Dead Sea and south of Hebron, was allotted ([Jos 15:20, 55](#)). This Maon gave David refuge and another wife ([1 Sm 23:24-28; 25](#)).

This reconstruction involving two groups, two Maons, and temple servants with very foreign names, is tentative. An alternate view holds that hostile foreigners, formerly captured to become temple slaves (cf. [Jos 9:7](#); [Ez 44:6-8](#)), attained freedom during the exile and temple-guild status on returning.

*See also* Maon (Place).

## Mezahab

Matred's father and the grandfather of Mehetabel, the wife of the Edomite king Hadar (or Hadad) ([Gn 36:39](#); [1 Chr 1:50](#)).

## Mezobaite

Designation for Jaasiel, one of David's "mighty men" ([1 Chr 11:47](#)). The meaning is unknown, though some suggest "from Zobah" (nlt).

## Mezuzah

A Hebrew word that means the upright framework of a door or gate. The Bible mentions this word about 20 times in the Old Testament. During the first Passover, the Israelites put the blood of the lamb on the *mezuzah* of their houses ([Exodus 12:7, 22-23](#)).

In [Deuteronomy 6:9](#) and [11:20](#), God told the Hebrew people to write his commandments on the doors of their houses and on the city gates. Jewish people still follow this practice today. Every Jewish home has a small container made of metal or wood attached to the doorpost at about shoulder height. This container, which became known as a *mezuzah*, holds a small piece of parchment. On one side of the parchment are written the words from [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) and [11:13-21](#). On the other side is written the word Shaddai, which is the Hebrew name for God Almighty.

On the outside of the *mezuzah* container is the Hebrew letter *shin*, which is the first letter of the name Shaddai. When a devoted Jewish person enters or leaves the house, they touch the *mezuzah* and then kiss their fingers. At the same time, they repeat the words from [Psalm 121:8](#): "The LORD will watch over your coming and going, both now and forevermore."

## Miamin

1. KJV rendering of Mijamin, Parosh's son, in [Ezra 10:25](#). See Mijamin #2.
2. KJV rendering of Mijamin, a postexilic priest, in [Nehemiah 12:5](#). See Mijamin #4.

## Mibhar

Warrior among David's mighty men, who were known as "the thirty" ([1 Chr 11:38](#)).

## Mibsam

1. One of Ishmael's sons and the founder of a tribe named after him ([Gn 25:13](#); [1 Chr 1:29](#)).
2. Shallum's son and the father of Mishma ([1 Chr 4:25](#)).

## Mibzar

Chief of Edom ([Gn 36:42](#); [1 Chr 1:53](#)). The name means "fortress." Eusebius connects Mibzar with Mibsara, a large town in Edom.

## Mica

A common name that is interchangeable with Micah. It is probably a shortened form of Micaiah.

1. A son of Mephibosheth. He received benefits from King David's kindness to his father. He was also affected when Ziba betrayed his father ([2 Samuel 9:12](#)).
2. A Levite who was the son of Zicri from the clan of Asaph ([1 Chronicles 9:15](#)). He seems to have been one of the priests who was sent away from his homeland. His son Mattaniah was among the first group of people who returned from exile. [Nehemiah 11:17](#) and [22](#) call him, "the son of Zabdi." [Nehemiah 12:35](#) calls him "Micaiah, the son of Zaccur."
3. A man who set his seal on the covenant of Ezra during the time after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:11](#)).

## Micah (Person)

1. An Ephraimite who had idols made and then hired a Levite to become his priest ([Judges 17-18](#)).
2. A descendant of Shimei from the tribe of Reuben ([1 Chronicles 5:5](#)).

3. Another spelling of Mica, a son of Mephibosheth and the great-grandson of King Saul ([1 Chronicles 8:34–35; 9:40–41](#)).  
*See Mica #1.*
4. The King James Version spelling of Mica, a son of Zicri ([1 Chronicles 9:15](#)).  
*See Mica #2.*
5. A Levite and a son of Uzziel from the clan of Kohath. His temple responsibilities included care of the furniture and equipment ([1 Chronicles 23:20; 24:24–25](#)).
6. Another spelling of Micaiah, the father of Acbor ([2 Chronicles 34:20](#)).  
*See Micaiah #2.*
7. A prophet and author of the Old Testament book named for him ([Micah 1:1](#)). He was from Moresheth, a town about 33.8 kilometers (21 miles) southwest of Jerusalem. Micah spoke God's message to both the northern and southern kingdoms during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (750–686 BC).

According to [Micah 1:9](#), he was still prophesying in 701 BC when the Assyrian armies under Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem (compare [Isaiah 36–37](#)). About 100 years later, [Jeremiah 26:16–19](#) mentions Micah as an example of an early prophet who predicted the destruction of Jerusalem.  
*See also* Micah, Book of; Prophet, Prophetess.

## Micah, Book of

The sixth book among the 12 minor prophets.

### Preview

- Author
- Date
- Audience

- Background
- Purpose and Message
- Content

### Author

[Micah 1:1](#) states that the word of the Lord came to Micah of Moresheth. Micah served as God's spokesman to the people of his time. Although Micah is not called a prophet in his book, he claims to be God's witness ([Micah 1:2](#)). The book uses the phrase "this is what the LORD says" five times ([Micah 2:3; 3:5; 4:6; 6:1, 9](#)), showing that the message is from God. Like a true prophet, Micah states, "As for me, however, I am filled with power by the Spirit of the LORD, with justice and courage, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" ([Micah 3:8](#)).

Micah was a common name in ancient Israel. At least seven different people in the Old Testament are called Micah or Michaiah. The prophet is named only in [Micah 1:1](#) and [Jeremiah 26:18](#) in the Old Testament.

The introduction of Micah ([Micah 1:1](#)) states his hometown is Moresheth. This place may be the modern village of Tell el Judeideh, about 40.2 kilometers (25 miles) southwest of Jerusalem, on the road from Azekah to Lachish. In Micah's time, Moresheth was a frontier village near the Philistine border city of Gath. As a border town, Moresheth often faced enemy attacks on Judah from the south and west ([Micah 1:15](#)). Such an attack might be described in [Micah 1:10–16](#), where 12 towns in southwest Judah are listed as being in an invader's path. Moresheth-gath is ninth on that list. Because Micah lived in this border town, he seems to have developed a concern for international issues involving "the nations" ([Micah 1:2; 4:1–5, 11; 5:7–15; 7:16–17](#)). As a resident of a small town, Micah could relate to peasants and small landowners who were often victims of foreign invaders and the politicians and greedy land grabbers in Jerusalem ([Micah 2:1–4](#)). Although Micah may have moved to Jerusalem to live and preach, he criticized cities harshly ([Micah 1:5–6; 3:12; 4:10; 5:11, 14; 6:9](#)).

### Date

Micah's ministry likely occurred during the reigns of three Judah kings:

1. Jotham – around 750 to 735 BC
2. Ahaz – around 735 to 715 BC

### 3. Hezekiah – around 715 to 686 BC

Although these reigns span over 60 years, from 750 to 686 BC, Micah probably was not active the entire time. Jeremiah places Micah's ministry during Hezekiah's reign ([Jeremiah 26:18](#)). Some of Micah's messages seem to be from before Samaria's fall ([Micah 1:2-7; 6:16](#)), which happened in 722 BC. The Assyrians were likely Israel's main enemy during Micah's time ([Micah 5:5-6](#)), a situation that existed during these kings' reigns. Similar passages between Micah and Isaiah ([Micah 4:1-4; Isaiah 2:2-4](#)) and between Micah and Amos ([Micah 6:10-11; Amos 8:5-6](#)) suggest Micah's ministry was in the late eighth century BC.

#### Audience

Micah's message was for everyone. It first addressed "O peoples, all of you" ([Micah 1:2](#)), but then focused on the capital cities of Jerusalem and Samaria ([Micah 1:1](#)). One oracle targeted other cities in Judah ([Micah 1:10-16](#)). Other messages targeted:

- Wealthy land grabbers ([Micah 2:1](#))
- False prophets ([Micah 2:6-11; 3:5-7](#))
- Judges
- Prophets
- Priests
- Dishonest merchants ([Micah 3:1, 11; 6:10-12](#))

#### Background

To understand the book of Micah, you need to know about the Assyrian crisis in ancient Israel's history. In the early eighth century BC, Israel and Judah enjoyed peace and prosperity. This was during the long reigns of:

- Jeroboam II – 793 to 753 BC
- Uzziah – 792 to 740 BC

During this time, Israel and Judah saw major economic changes. Cities grew, and a new wealthy class emerged. Commerce expanded greatly. The rich became richer and misused their power over the poor, priests, and judges. A class system developed, challenging the core of Old Testament covenant religion.

During the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, Israel and Judah faced little outside interference. However, in 745 BC, Tiglath-pileser III became king of Assyria and aimed to build an empire. He captured Damascus in 732 BC and made Israel, Judah, and Philistia his vassals. Tiglath-pileser III died in 727 BC, and Shalmaneser V succeeded him. In 724 BC, Hoshea, the last king of Israel, stopped paying tribute to Assyria, angering the Assyrians. Shalmaneser V began a siege of Samaria in 724 BC, but the city fell only in 722 BC, by which time Sargon II was king of Assyria. Many wealthy and influential Samaritans were taken captive to Assyria ([2 Kings 15:29-30; 17:1-41](#)). Judah also faced a crisis. Although the Assyrians left a partial Judean government in Jerusalem, they stripped away nearly all liberties ([2 Kings 16:10](#)). Judah never fully recovered politically or religiously from the Assyrian crisis.

#### Purpose and Message

The book of Micah contains about 20 different sections or messages. It covers various topics, possibly from different times. With such variety, it is hard to define a single message. However, some themes stand out, especially judgment. Judgment is coming to Samaria ([Micah 1:2-6](#)) and Jerusalem ([3:9-12](#)). It targets:

- Guilty land grabbers ([Micah 2:3-5](#))
- False prophets
- Corrupt judges
- Priests who work for money ([Micah 3:5-12](#))

Judgment will also come to:

- Cheaters
- Violent people
- Liars
- Deceivers ([Micah 6:9-12](#))

Nations will face judgment too ([Micah 4:11-13; 5:5-9, 15; 7:16-17](#)). This judgment is because of sin ([Micah 1:5](#)). In Micah, sin includes:

- Idolatry ([Micah 1:7; 5:13](#))
- Practicing the occult ([Micah 5:12](#))
- Theft ([Micah 6:11](#))
- Lying ([Micah 6:12](#))
- Disrespecting parents ([Micah 7:6](#))
- Murder ([Micah 7:2](#))

What is Micah's solution for sin? For the nations, it is knowing and following God's ways ([Micah 4:2](#)). For Israel, it is "to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" ([Micah 6:8](#)). This is possible because God forgives wrongdoing and is not always angry. He is compassionate, crushes sins, throws them into the sea, and keeps his promise to Abraham ([Micah 7:18-20](#)). Micah foresaw God's future kingdom when he realized a future ruler of Israel would be born in Bethlehem. This ruler will lead with the Lord's strength and provide security because he will be great across the earth ([Micah 5:2-4](#)).

### *Content*

Some scholars divide the book into two parts:

1. The first part ([Micah 1-5](#)) is mainly for the nations
2. The second ([Micah 6-7](#)) is mainly for Israel

The first part ends with a warning of judgment on the nations ([Micah 5:15](#)), and the second ends with a hymn about God's compassion. However, this outline is too simple and does not cover the varied content in both parts.

Other scholars divide the book into three parts:

1. [Micah 1-3](#) (judgment)
2. [Micah 4-5](#) (hope)
3. [Micah 6-7](#) (judgment and hope)

Again, this outline is too simple because all three sections include both judgment and hope.

It might be better to divide the book into three parts starting with [Micah 1, 3](#), and [6](#). Each section starts with words of judgment ([Micah 1:2-2:11; 3:1-12; 6:1-7:6](#)) and ends with hope ([2:12-13; 4:1-5:15; 7:7-20](#)). This outline helps to see the book as a whole, but a closer look at each oracle or unit is needed for proper interpretation. This discussion marks each of the 20 units by chapter

and verse, identifies its literary form, and determines its main theme.

1. The first unit, "The LORD Comes," covers [Micah 1:2-7](#). It is like a lawsuit and a divine appearance. The people of the world must listen to what the Lord will say against them. He leaves his heavenly temple to come to earth, walking on mountains that melt beneath him ([Micah 1:2-4](#)). God comes because of the people's sins. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, will be destroyed mainly due to idolatry ([Micah 1:5-7](#)).
2. The second passage is "The Prophet's Lament" ([Micah 1:8-16](#)). The prophet sees an enemy army coming from the southwest. Twelve cities are in its path. The result is destruction, refugees, and hostages. There is a wordplay on the name of each city except Gath, showing each city's fate. Some cities are well known, like Lachish, Jerusalem, Moresheth-gath, and Adullam. Others are unknown. This passage shows that even though the first oracle was directed at the nations and specifically announced Samaria's fall, Micah was mainly concerned about Judah.
3. The third passage is "Woe to the Wealthy Wicked" ([Micah 2:1-5](#)). It is a woe oracle, which means it is a message of judgment. This time, the judgment is on a group of wealthy men who create evil plans at night to take houses and lands from unsuspecting farmers. Micah says their plans will backfire. Their own lands will be taken from them.

4. The theme of the fourth section ([Micah 2:6-11](#)) is "Micah and the Wealthy Wicked." This passage describes a conflict between Micah and those who took houses and fields from unsuspecting people. Micah's corrupt listeners rejected his message of judgment. They found it offensive and told him to stop preaching. They did not believe evil would catch up with them, thinking God would not act that way ([Micah 2:6-7](#)). However, Micah lists several crimes committed by these wicked men, such as stealing travelers' robes and forcing women and children from their homes ([Micah 2:8-9](#)). These wicked men follow false prophets ([Micah 2:11](#)).
5. The fifth passage is "A Remnant to Be Restored" ([Micah 2:12-13](#)). The Lord will gather a remnant of his people like sheep in a pen ([Micah 2:12](#)). Then, as their king, the Lord will lead them out through the gate ahead of them ([Micah 2:13](#)). This section can be interpreted in different ways. The passage does not specify where the Lord will gather the remnant. Some think it refers to Babylon and see it as a reference to the exile. Others believe it refers to Jerusalem and connect it to refugees fleeing to Jerusalem before Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BC.
6. The sixth passage discusses "Guilty Rulers" ([Micah 3:1-4](#)). Micah accuses the leaders of his people of acting like cannibals. They should understand justice, but they hate good and love evil. They will call out to the Lord, but he will not listen to them.
7. "Peace Prophets and Micah" is another argument passage ([Micah 3:5-8](#)). Micah accuses the false prophets of preaching for money. He asserts that they have no vision or message from God. In contrast, Micah claims to speak with the power and Spirit of God.
8. The subject of the eighth passage ([Micah 3:9-12](#)) is "Corrupt Leaders and Zion's Fall." This oracle summarizes what Micah has been telling the leaders in Jerusalem. Due to their sins and crimes, Jerusalem and the temple will face destruction.
9. The ninth section, "Zion's Future Exaltation," reveals the unexpected news of Zion's fall and the temple's destruction ([Micah 4:1-5](#)). This message of salvation likely follows the earlier message of judgment to show that even if the temple is destroyed, it will be rebuilt more magnificently as a worship center for all nations. A similar passage is in [Isaiah 2:1-4](#).
10. The subject of the tenth section ([Micah 4:6-8](#)) is "Restoration of a Remnant and Zion." The phrase "on that day" shows this is a prophecy about the end times. It describes the Lord ruling over his restored people in Zion.
11. The next three passages ([Micah 4:9-10; 4:11-13; 5:1-4](#)) all have the word "now" in Hebrew and end by stating that the current bad situation will improve. The first passage is "From Distress to Deliverance" ([4:9-10](#)).
12. The second is "From Siege to Victory" ([4:11-13](#)).
13. The third is "From Helpless Judge to Ideal King" ([Micah 5:1-4](#)). This last passage is one of the most well-known in Micah. It promises the birth of a new king in Bethlehem who will be great across the earth.
14. The fourteenth section, "Peace and the Overthrow of Assyria" ([Micah 5:5-6](#))

15. It is followed by "The Remnant among the Peoples" ([Micah 5:7–9](#)). The remnant is shown as dew on plants and as a lion among sheep. Dew on plants usually means a blessing, but in [2 Samuel 17:12](#), it is a metaphor for judgment, just like a lion among sheep.
16. The sixteenth passage is "Purge of the Military and False Religions" ([Micah 5:10–15](#)). The phrases "remove," "tear down," "cut," "cut off," and "root out" suggest drastic action. It is a prophecy about things that might replace God in people's minds.
17. "God's Lawsuit" ([Micah 6:1–8](#)) is likely the best-known part of Micah. It summarizes true religion well.
18. The next passage presents "More Charges and the Sentence" ([Micah 6:9–16](#)). The additional charges include:
  - Dishonest business practices
  - Lying
  - Acts of violence

The sentence is a life filled with futility, frustration, scorn, and destruction.

1. The nineteenth section in Micah is a "Lament over a Decadent Society" ([Micah 7:1–6](#)). The prophet starts with a woe because he feels like the only godly or righteous person left ([Micah 7:1–2](#)). He cannot trust anyone. Everyone might be setting traps for others. People do evil with both hands. Even family members turn against each other. Jesus used the words of [Micah 7:6](#) to describe his own times ([Matthew 10:21, 35–36](#)).
2. The last section of Micah ([Micah 7:7–20](#)) is a prophetic liturgy. It includes:

- A psalm expressing trust ([Micah 7:7–10](#))
- A prophetic promise of restoration ([Micah 7:11–13](#))
- A prayer asking God to bless Israel and judge their enemies ([Micah 7:14–17](#))
- A hymn or doxology praising God as unmatched in "grace and truth," showing faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham ([Micah 7:20](#)).

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

## Micaiah

1. Prophet and Imlah's son, called by Ahab to forecast the result of projected battles against the Syrians. At first Micaiah mocks him with glad news, then tells the cruel truth. Ahab casts the prophet into prison as a kind of ransom, but the wicked ruler dies in battle, just as Micaiah predicted ([1 Kgs 22:8; 2 Chr 18:7–25](#)).
2. Father of Acbor, one of the court officials whom King Josiah sent to the prophetess Huldah to get an opinion on the Book of the Law that Hilkiah the high priest had found in the temple ([2 Kgs 22:12; 2 Chr 34:20](#), "Abdon, son of Micah").
3. Alternate rendering of Maacah, mother of Judah's King Abijah, in [2 Chronicles 13:2](#). See Maacah, Maachah (Person) #4.
4. Teacher commissioned by King Jehoshaphat to teach the law of the Lord throughout Judah ([2 Chr 17:7](#)).
5. Alternate spelling of Mica, Zicri's son, in [Nehemiah 12:35](#). See Mica #2.
6. Priest who blew a trumpet at the dedication of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:41](#)).
7. Gemariah's son, who reported the words of the Lord to Jewish princes during the reign of King Jehoiakim ([Jer 36:11–13](#)).

## Micha

1. The King James Version spelling of Mica. This Mica was a son of Mephibosheth ([2 Samuel 9:12](#)). *See Mica #1.*
2. The King James Version spelling of Micah. This Micah was a son of Uzziel ([1 Chronicles 23:20](#)). *See Micah (Person) #5.*
3. The King James Version spelling of Mica. This Mica was a Levite ([Nehemiah 10:11](#)). *See Mica #3.*
4. The King James Version spelling of Mica. This Mica was the father of Mattaniah ([Nehemiah 11:17, 22](#)). *See Mica #2.*

## Michael

The name Michael means "Who is like God?" Ten different men named Michael appear in the Bible, and also one who is described as an archangel.

1. The father of one of the spies sent by Moses into Canaan ([Numbers 13:13](#)).
2. A Gadite named in the lists of those who settled in the land of Bashan ([1 Chronicles 5:13-14](#)).
3. A second Gadite named Michael is also named in the list ([1 Chronicles 5:13-14](#)).
4. A forefather of Asaph, a temple singer in the days of David ([1 Chronicles 6:40](#)).
5. The chief man of Issachar in the temple lists ([1 Chronicles 7:3](#)).
6. A Benjamite named in the temple lists ([1 Chronicles 8:16](#)).
7. A man from Manasseh who joined David in Ziklag when he was fleeing from Saul ([1 Chronicles 12:20](#)).
8. The father of Omri, a top political officer in the days of King David ([1 Chronicles 27:18](#)).

9. The son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah ([2 Chronicles 21:2](#)).

10. The father of Zebadiah, a man who returned with Ezra to Jerusalem after the exile to Babylon ([Ezra 8:8](#)).

11. An angel who appears in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and in Jewish writings from the time between these two parts of the Bible. [Daniel 10:13](#) says that "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" sought to oppose the purpose of God. Michael, "one of the chief princes," fought against this evil spirit at the Lord's side ([Daniel 10:21](#)). His conflict on behalf of Israel is referred to further in [Daniel 12:1](#).

The book of Enoch describes Michael as one of four or of seven special angels called "archangels" (Enoch 9:1 and 40:9 list four; 20:1-7 list seven). In the book of Enoch, the War Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other intertestamental literature, Michael is described as a warrior who fights for the cause of the righteous or as the protector of Israel.

The book of Jude tells us about a time when Michael argued with the devil about what would happen to Moses's body after Moses died ([Jude 1:9](#); compare [2 Peter 2:10-11](#); see also the reference to "the archangel" in [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#)). This story comes from "The Assumption of Moses" (a writing that told stories about what happened to Moses after he died).

The only other reference to Michael in the New Testament is [Revelation 12:7-8](#): "Then a war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But the dragon was not strong enough, and no longer was any place found in heaven for him and his angels."

*See also Angel.*

## Michah

KJV spelling of Micah, Uzziel's son, in [1 Chronicles 24:24-25](#). See Micah (Person) #5.

## Michaiah

1. KJV spelling of Micaiah, Acbor's father, in [2 Kings 22:12](#). See Micaiah #2.
2. KJV spelling of Micaiah, the mother of Judah's king Abijah, in [2 Chronicles 13:2](#). See Maacah, Maachah (Person) #4.
3. KJV spelling of Micaiah, one of King Jehoshaphat's officials, in [2 Chronicles 17:7](#). See Micaiah #4.
4. KJV spelling of Micaiah, an alternate name for Mica, Zicri's son, in [Nehemiah 12:35](#). See Mica #2.
5. KJV spelling of Micaiah, a postexilic priest, in [Nehemiah 12:41](#). See Micaiah #6.
6. KJV spelling of Micaiah, Gemariah's son, in [Jeremiah 36:11-13](#). See Micaiah #7.

## Michal

Michal was the younger daughter of King ([1 Samuel 14:49](#)). She fell in love with David after he defeated Goliath ([18:20](#)). Saul, who was jealous of David, first offered his older daughter, Merab, to David. But David turned down the offer. When Saul found out that Michal loved David, he offered her instead. Saul told David he could marry Michal if he killed 100 Philistines and brought back proof. Saul hoped David would die trying to meet this demand.

David met Saul's demand and killed 200 Philistines. Then he married Michal. But this made Saul even more jealous. He planned to have David killed. When Michal heard about the plan, she helped David escape ([1 Samuel 19:8-17](#)). While David was away, Saul gave Michal to another man named Palti as a wife ([25:44](#)).

After Saul died, Abner made a peace agreement with David. One part of the agreement was that Michal would return to David's household. This happened even though Palti was very sad to lose her ([2 Samuel 3:12-16](#)). But the relationship between Michal and David had changed. When David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, he danced with joy. Michal saw him and spoke sharply against his actions. David answered

her with a strong reply. After this, Michal had no children. Some people believe this happened because of her harsh words to David ([2 Samuel 6:16-23](#)).

The King James Version, following the Masoretic Text, says that Michal had five sons ([2 Samuel 21:8](#)). However, according to [1 Samuel 18:19](#) says that Adriel was married to Merab, not Michal. Most modern versions correct this likely scribal error by identifying Merab as the mother instead. This reading fits better with the rest of the Bible.

Michal showed great courage and deep love. She told David she loved him, even though women usually did not speak first in courtship. She saved David's life, even though it put her own life in danger. She was forced to marry another man and later taken from him. This caused her deep emotional pain. She also spoke out when she believed David acted wrongly, even though it was unpopular. David became more famous, but we should not forget Michal's strength.

## Michmash

Michmash was a town in the mountains of Ephraim. It was near the wilderness that slopes down toward the Jordan Valley. The town was in the land of the tribe of Benjamin, but it is not listed with other Benjamite towns in [Joshua 18:21-28](#).

Today, the old name survives in the Arab village of Mukhmas. This village sits on a narrow ridge east of the Wadi Suweinit (also called the Valley of Zeboim). This valley is deep and has steep sides. Michmash is about 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) northeast of Geba (modern Jaba'), which lies on the other side of the valley.

Two roads went near Michmash. One went east to Jericho. The other followed the top of the ridge north and south. This second road was not the main road, but it could still be used as another route to travel through the area. The main road was the highway west of Bethel.

### Michmash in Saul's Time

Michmash was important in the time of King Saul. When Saul prepared for war, he kept some of his soldiers with him in Michmash. His son Jonathan took the rest to Gibeah ([1 Samuel 13:2](#)). Jonathan attacked a Philistine commander in nearby Geba. The Philistines then sent a large army and camped

at Michmash ([1 Samuel 13:5](#)). Saul had moved to Gilgal to gather more troops. Later, he returned to Geba, across the valley from the Philistines. From Michmash, the Philistines sent out raiding groups in several directions—north to Ophrah, west to Beth-horon, and southeast along the edge of the valley of Zeboim ([1 Samuel 13:11, 16, 17–18](#)). This shows how important Michmash was for travel and control of the land.

The Philistines also set up a guard post south of Michmash, across from the Israelites ([1 Samuel 13:23](#)). Jonathan and his armor bearer crossed the canyon between two cliffs called Bozez(near Michmash) and Seneh (near Geba). They surprised the Philistines, who ran back to Michmash ([1 Samuel 14:1–23](#)). The Israelites then attacked, and the Philistines ran away through the Aijalon Valley road. The Israelites followed them and kept up the attack ([1 Samuel 14:31](#)).

## **Michmethath**

A location that describes part of the border between the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh ([Joshua 16:6; 17:7](#)). It was in the mountains west of the Jordan, midway between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee.

*See* Michmethath.

## **Michri**

An ancestor of a family who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon ([1 Chronicles 9:8](#)). This name is also spelled Micri.

## **Michtam**

KJV rendering of miktam, a musical cue, in the titles of [Psalms 16, 56, 57, 58, 59](#), and [60](#). *See* Miktam.

## **Micmash**

Micmash is another way to spell Michmash. Michmash was a town in the southern part of the hill country of Ephraim. It was near the edge of the wilderness that slopes down to the Jordan Valley in the east.

*See* Michmash.

## **Micmethath**

Micmethath is another way to spell Michmash. *See* Michmethath.

## **Micri**

Micri is another way to spell Michri.

*See* Michri.

## **Middin**

One of the six cities in the wilderness west of the Dead Sea allotted to Judah's tribe for an inheritance, located between Beth-arabah and Secacah ([Jos 15:61](#)).

## **Midian, Midianite**

A person, place, or people. The Midianite people lived on the eastern edge of Gilead, Moab, and Edom south into northwest Arabia. They had few, if any, permanent settlements.

Midian and his descendants are important in Israel's early history. They are mentioned in connection to:

- Abraham ([Genesis 25:1–6](#)),
- Joseph ([Genesis 37:25–36](#)),
- Moses ([Exodus 2:15–3:1](#)),
- Balaam ([Numbers 22:1–6; 25; 31:1–20](#)), and
- Gideon ([Judges 6:1–8:28](#)).

### *Who Was Midian?*

Midian was the younger half-brother of Isaac. He was the fourth of six sons born to Keturah, whom Abraham married when he was old ([Genesis 25:1–2](#); compare [23:1–2; 24:67](#); [1 Chronicles 1:32](#)). The Bible calls Midian and his full brothers "the sons of Keturah" ([Genesis 25:4](#); [1 Chronicles 1:32–33](#)). This distinguishes them from Isaac, the son of Sarah, through whom God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled ([Genesis 12:1–3; 17:15–21](#)). Abraham and the Israelites viewed these other

sons as having no more inheritance rights than the sons of a concubine ([Genesis 25:5–6](#); [1 Chronicles 1:31](#)).

These sons were sent away from Abraham's family, for Isaac's sake. They became semi-nomadic peoples (people who moved from place to place) living in the deserts east and south of Palestine ([Genesis 25:5–6](#)).

### *The Land of Midian*

The exact location of Midian is uncertain. It was probably south of Edom on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba. Ptolemy, a geographer from Alexandria who lived in the second century AD, mentions a city named Modiana on the coast. He also mentions a Madiana 41.8 kilometers (26 miles) inland (modern el-Bed') in this region. This location is supported by Josephus (a Jewish historian from the first century AD) and Eusebius (a Christian church historian from the early fourth century).

In early Old Testament times, Midian likely referred to the area bordering Gilead, Moab, and Edom, extending into eastern Sinai.

In Joseph's time, some Midianite clans lived in the northern Transjordan desert near Gilead or Bashan. This is because they were part of an Ishmaelite caravan traveling the trade route from Damascus across Gilead past Dothan to Egypt ([Genesis 37:17, 25–28, 36](#)).

After Moses fled from Pharaoh, he settled in Midian. There, he married Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest ([Exodus 2:15–22](#)). Later, Moses asked his Midianite relative Hobab to guide the Israelites through the wilderness ([Deuteronomy 1:19](#)). Hobab knew the area well, even though he lived elsewhere ([Numbers 10:11–12, 29–31](#)).

In the Balaam story, a large group of Midianites appears to have been living on the eastern border of Moab ([Numbers 22:31](#)). The Moabite king Balak was under the rule of the Amorite king named Sihon ([Numbers 21:26–30](#); [Jeremiah 48:45](#)). He talked about the Israelite threat with the elders of Midian. They sent representatives to Balaam ([Numbers 22:2–7](#)).

At Acacia in the plains of Moab, an Israelite met and married a Midianite princess ([\(Numbers 22:1; 25:1; 6–18; 31:8\)](#). The Midianite kings were not independent rulers but were controlled by King Sihon ([Jos 13:21](#)). All the evidence suggests that

Midianite clans lived nearby, on the borders of Moab. Since Moab is north of Edom, the mention of an Edomite victory over Midian might indicate that the Midianites had moved northward into Edomite territory ([Genesis 36:35](#)).

The Midianite invasion that Gideon repelled came from the east. This suggests that "the land of Midian" may refer to an area south of Edom. But the Midianites lived across a much larger region. This included the deserts east of Moab and Edom, and south into east Sinai and northwest Arabia.

### **Midrash**

Transliteration into English of a Hebrew word that occurs twice in 2 Chronicles. [Second Chronicles 13:22](#) refers to the literary source used for recording the reign of King Abijah of Judah (913–910 BC) as the "midrash" of the prophet Iddo. [Second Chronicles 24:27](#) mentions, in connection with the reign of King Joash of Judah (835–796 BC), the "midrash" of the book of the kings.

Although these are the only times that midrash is mentioned in Chronicles, they do fall into a pattern of appeals to literary sources. For instance, Chronicles often cites *The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah* or the like (e.g., [2 Chr 16:11; 20:34; 27:7; 33:18](#)). It is probable that the title in [2 Chronicles 24:27](#) incorporating the term "midrash" is just a variant title of a main source. Again, Chronicles often alludes to various prophetic sources; the otherwise unknown prophet Iddo features also in a work called *The Visions of Iddo the Seer* in connection with the reign of Jeroboam I of Israel (930–909 BC; [2 Chr 9:29](#)), and also *The Record of Shemaiah the Prophet*, with reference to King Rehoboam of Judah (930–913 BC; [2 Chr 12:15](#)). Here, too, it is probable that a single prophetic work is labeled with different names.

But what did the term "midrash" mean, precisely, to the author of Chronicles? The ancient Greek version translated it simply as "book, writing," and it is likely that it meant nothing more than that. The underlying Hebrew verb means to inquire or study, and accordingly the noun could signify "a result of research, a study." Alternatively, it may mean "commentary" in the sense of a presentation of history from a certain perspective.

Apart from these instances in Chronicles, the other usage of importance for the OT is its meaning as a procedure or product of interpretation of the

biblical text, which was eventually incorporated into the Jewish commentaries called Midrashim. In the literature of Qumran, midrash appears in the general sense of “interpretation of the law.” But in later rabbinic literature it became a technical term for a collection of traditional teachings of the rabbis arranged in order of chapter and verse of biblical books. The overall aim of these studies was to apply the ancient text to contemporary circumstances in a variety of ways.

*See also* Talmud.

## Migdal-El

One of the fortified cities belonging to Naphtali's tribe ([Jos 19:38](#)).

## Migdal-Gad

Village in Judah located in the Shephelah district of Lachish ([Jos 15:37](#)). It is perhaps identifiable with Khirbet el-Mejdeleh, southeast of Tell el-Nuweir.

## Migdol

A town in the eastern delta of Lower Egypt. Migdol appears in the story of the exodus between two places called Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon ([Exodus 14:2](#); [Numbers 33:7](#)). The exodus is the story of how the ancient Israelites left Egypt, where they had been slaves for many years.

Scholars have different opinions about where Migdol was located. Some who believe the exodus route went south into the Sinai Mountains think these three sites were somewhere near Suez. Others who think the Reed Sea was the Serbonitic Lake believe this Migdol is the same place mentioned by Jeremiah. Jeremiah wrote about Jews living in Migdol when they were forced to leave their homeland in the sixth century BC ([Jeremiah 44:1](#); [46:14](#)).

This Migdol must be the same place mentioned in Ezekiel, where it marks the northern end of Egypt, opposite Syene in the far south ([Ezekiel 29:10](#); [30:6](#)). Scholars do not all agree on whether Migdol refers to one location or two separate places.

Sources outside of the Bible also mention Migdol. For example, Papyrus Anastasi 5.19 (an Egyptian text for training scribes) mentions Migdol

alongside Succoth in a message about runaway slaves. The wall relief of Seti I shows Migdol as a fortress between Sillo (Sele) and other northern Sinai forts. The Antonine Itinerary (a Roman road guide) places Magdolo between Pelusium and Sele. This information suggests Migdol was likely Tell el-Heir, 19.3 kilometers (12 miles) north.

## Migron

Site where Saul rested under a pomegranate tree, near Gibeath ([1 Sm 14:2](#)); also mentioned as part of the line of march of the Assyrians ([Is 10:28](#)). The first reference is to a site south of Michmash, the second is probably north of Michmash. Some scholars, however, try to identify both with the site south of Michmash, though this is doubtful.

## Mijamin

- Priest who ministered during the time of David ([1 Chr 24:9](#)).
- Parosh's son, who was encouraged by Ezra to divorce his foreign wife during the postexilic period ([Ezr 10:25](#)).
- One of the priests who signed Ezra's covenant during the postexilic period ([Neh 10:7](#)).
- Priest who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile ([Neh 12:5](#), nlt “Miniamin”).

## Mikloth

- Resident of Gibeon, son of the Benjamite Jeiel, and father of Shimeah ([1 Chr 8:32; 9:37–38](#)).
- Officer in David's army who served under Dodai ([1 Chr 27:4](#)), according to some manuscripts.

## Mikneiah

Levite of the second order who was a gatekeeper and musician during David's reign ([1 Chr 15:18](#), [21](#)).

## Miktam

Title in [Psalms 16](#) and [56–60](#) (see niv), possibly also of Hezekiah's recovery psalm, [Isaiah 38:9](#). The precise meaning of the term is uncertain. Its similarity to the Akkadian word "to cover, expiate" suggests the title may mean a psalm of expiation or sin covered. Other suggestions include a psalm of problems or mysteries.

*See also* Music.

## Milalai

Participant in the dedication of the rebuilt Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:36](#)).

## Milcah

1. Daughter of Haran and half sister of Nahor who became Nahor's wife ([Gn 11:29](#)). She bore Nahor eight sons ([22:20–23](#)). Through her son Bethuel she was the grandmother of Rebekah ([24:15–47](#)).
2. One of the five daughters of Zelophehad. Because Zelophehad had no sons, his daughters petitioned Moses to allow them to receive their father's inheritance in west Manasseh after their father's death ([Nm 26:33; 27:1–11; 36:5–13; Jos 17:3–4](#)).

## Milcom

The national god of the Ammonites. He is better known as Molech or Moloch. The worship of this false god included the terrible practice of sacrificing children in fire. This type of worship was strictly forbidden to the Israelites ([Leviticus 18:21](#); [Jeremiah 32:35](#)).

King Solomon built a place to worship Milcom ([1 Kings 11:5, 33](#)). Later, King Josiah destroyed this site ([2 Kings 23:13](#)). Milcom is translated as "king" in [2 Samuel 12:30](#) and [1 Chronicles 20:2](#).

*See also* Ammon, Ammonites.

## Mildew

Superficial growth produced on organic matter or living plants by fungi. Mildew was caused by a common fungus in Palestine, *Puccinia graminis*, and was regarded as divine punishment for

disobedience. The root meaning of the Hebrew word is "pale greenish yellow."

## Mile

Measurement of distance. A Roman mile was somewhat shorter than the English mile. See Weights and Measures.

## Miletus, Miletum

A major ancient Greek city located where the Meander River meets the sea (in southwestern Asia Minor).

### Early History

People from Crete first built this city between 1339 and 1288 BC. The city became part of the Hittite Empire. Archaeological discoveries show that after being destroyed by fire, the people built a protective wall around Miletus in the 13th century BC.

Around 650 BC, the kingdom of Lydia attacked Miletus. A military leader named King Gyges then took control of the city. Even while under his rule, the people of Miletus built new cities in other places. One of these new cities was Abydos, which they built near a narrow part of the sea called the Dardanelles. The people of Miletus built over 70 new settlements along the Black Sea. The most important of these new cities was called Sinope. Through all these connections, Miletus became a major trading center. Its traders traveled to many foreign ports, selling furniture and cloth made from wool.

### Culture

Like many other Greek centers, the city had its own poet who was famous in his own time. Only a few verses of his poetry remain today. Phocylides wrote: "A little city on a rock, with order, is better than madness in Nineveh." He also said, "all virtue is summed up in justice."

Miletus was also the birthplace of philosophy and scientific investigation. The philosopher Thales predicted an eclipse in 585 BC. His disciple, Anaximander, suggested that human beings evolved from sea creatures. However, the city faced many problems because two groups of people (the wealthy and the workers) often fought with each

other. Around 495 BC, the Persian Empire captured and destroyed much of the city. Even after Alexander the Great later took control of Miletus, the city never became as important as it once was.

### *Miletus In the Bible*

In New Testament times, Miletus was known but not a major center for early Christians. The apostle Paul stopped there during his last missionary journey ([Acts 20:15–17](#)). While in Miletus, Paul asked the church leaders from Ephesus to meet him there. He encouraged them to take good care of the believers in their churches (verses [28–35](#)). After this, Paul sailed to Tyre. Later, Paul left his sick friend Trophimus in Miletus ([2 Timothy 4:20](#); "Miletum" King James Version).

## Milk

*See Food and Food Preparation.*

## Mill

A mill is made up of two circular stones (called millstones) used to grind grain into flour. Ancient art and Middle Eastern sites show millstone grain grinding. These date to the Neolithic period (around 8300–4500 BC). The earliest mills were handmills. The technology improved over time. But, the basic principle remained the same. A lower stone held the grain. An upper stone, moved across the lower stone, ground the grain into flour. In Hebrew, the word for "mill" refers to these two essential parts.

### Types of Mills

1. The earliest type of mill was the **saddle quern**. It consisted of a rough base stone, which was slightly concave, and a convex rubbing stone. The base stone ranged from 45.7 to 76.2 centimeters (18 to 30 inches) across, with one end thicker than the other. In Hebrew, it was called the "underneath portion" or "lower millstone" ([Job 41:24](#)). The upper stone, known as the "rider portion" or "upper millstone" ([Judges 9:53](#); [2 Samuel 11:21](#)), was between 15.2 to 38.1 centimeters (6 and 15 inches) long. It was flat on one side and slightly rounded on the other, making it easy to hold in the hand. To grind the grain, people would push the upper stone back and forth over the grain on the lower stone. Only a small amount of grain could be ground at one time using this method ([Genesis 18:6](#)).
2. A later type of handmill used two round stones. The lower stone could be rounded either inwards or outwards on top, while the upper stone was shaped to fit over it. Some of these mills had a funnel-shaped hole in the center of the top stone for pouring in grain. A wooden peg on the edge of the upper stone allowed it to be turned, crushing the grain, which then escaped along the edges. Black basalt was often used because its rough, gritty surface provided good cutting edges. This type of mill could be operated by one person, though sometimes two people were needed ([Matthew 24:41](#)).

The handmill was so essential for daily life that it was forbidden by law to take a person's millstone as a pledge for a debt. This law protected families from losing their means of making flour for bread ([Deuteronomy 24:6](#)). The stones were heavy enough to kill a person if thrown on their head, as happened to Abimelech ([Judges 9:53](#); compare [2 Samuel 11:21](#)).

## Grinding Grain

Grinding grain was usually the job of servants ([Exodus 11:5](#)) or women ([Isaiah 47:2](#)). The noise of grinding could be heard daily in every village in Palestine. If that sound stopped, it meant the village was deserted ([Jeremiah 25:10](#)).

## Community Mills

Animals also powered larger community mills. A large, heavy stone, possibly 1.2 to 1.5 meters (four to five feet) in diameter, was rolled on its edge using a pole through its center. The pole rotated around a vertical post, similar to how some mills in Eastern lands still operate today. Samson was likely forced to use a mill of this type to grind grain for the Philistines ([Judges 16:21](#)).

*See also* Food and Food Preparation; Bread; Agriculture.

## Millennium

A biblical term meaning "a thousand years." It comes from an old Latin word. In the Bible, the millennium refers to a time when Christ will rule for 1,000 years.

The main teaching about the millennium appears in [Revelation 20:1-6](#). In this passage, the Greek word for thousand is used five times. The idea of a thousand-year reign may also be supported by passages such as [Acts 3:19-21](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:23-26](#). These passages speak of a future time when Christ will rule and restore all things. This doctrine is directly taught only in the book of Revelation. People have different ideas about what this means and how important it is. There are three main interpretations: amillennial, postmillennial, and premillennial.

### Amillennial

The first way of understanding the millennium is the amillennial view. The prefix 'a-' means 'no,' so amillennial means there is no literal thousand-year period when Christ will rule on earth. Instead, this view sees the millennium as symbolic. People who hold this view believe:

- The millennium is happening now, in our present time
- Satan's power is already limited (this is what 'bound' means in Revelation)
- The church is experiencing the millennium right now in a spiritual way

However, there are some problems with this view. One major issue is how it explains the two resurrections mentioned in [Revelation 20](#). The same Greek word is used for "resurrection" in twice:

- The first in [verse 4](#) is interpreted as a spiritual resurrection
- The second in [verse 5](#) as a physical resurrection

The passage itself does not indicate that the writer intended a difference of meaning. Hence, the amillennial position is often accused of improperly spiritualizing the meaning of the Bible.

Another perspective on the amillennial position is that the thousand-year reign of Christ is a symbolic expression of Christ's unlimited rule. This is opposed to an actual reign of 1,000 years.

### Postmillennial

The second view is postmillennial. The prefix 'post-' means 'after,' so postmillennial means Christ will return after the thousand-year period. People who hold this view believe:

- The spread of Christianity will create the millennium
- As more people become Christians, the world will gradually become more peaceful
- This peaceful time could be:
  - Something that will happen in the future, or
  - Something that began when Jesus first came and is still continuing

The key idea is that most people in the world will become Christians before Christ returns. All versions of this view agree on one main point: Christ does not come back until *after* the thousand

years are finished. It is not the second coming of Christ and his visible presence that brings about the millennium. Instead, the spread of Christianity creates this peaceful time.

### Premillennial

The third way of understanding the millennium is called the premillennial view. The prefix 'pre-' means 'before,' so premillennial means Christ will return before the thousand-year period begins. People who hold this view believe:

- Christ will come back to earth first
- Then he will start his thousand-year rule
- People will be able to see him and his power
- He will bring peace to the earth during this time

The premillennialist interprets visions of the book of Revelation in order, one after another. First is the return of Christ in chapter [19](#). This is followed by the binding of Satan for a thousand years and the first resurrection of the saints to reign with Christ for a thousand years ([20:1-6](#)). This is followed by a release of Satan and the battle of those deceived against Christ and his people and the final destruction of the devil (verses [7-10](#)). The deceived are referred to as "Gog and Magog." Next is the account of the final judgment and the last resurrection (verses [11-15](#)). This is followed by the new heaven and new earth (chapter [21](#)).

The premillennialist strongly affirms that this order of events means the millennium reign of Christ is a real, future event following Christ's return. Premillennialists do not believe in any of the variations of amillennialism or postmillennialism that see the millennium in the present church age before Christ returns or even in the future before Christ comes again. Premillennialists claim these views do not properly explain the order of events in Revelation.

In addition to the literary argument, there is the theological point that the premillennial position places the real triumph of Christ within history. That is, the victory that the church believes was accomplished through Christ's death on the cross will be made visible to the world and the forces of evil at Christ's return and reign on earth. This is not faith in a merely spiritual or heavenly triumph, but

faith that God will genuinely intervene in the course of the world to bring justice and peace.

However, the premillennial view has one big problem. the Bible does not answer some important questions, such as:

- How will Christ and his followers who have been raised from death rule the earth?
- How will they interact with regular people who are still living normal human lives?
- How can this happen before God creates the new heaven and new earth?

Because these questions remain unanswered, many Bible scholars prefer to understand [Revelation 20](#) using either the amillennial or postmillennial view.

*See also* Eschatology; Judgment; Resurrection; Revelation, Book of; Second Coming of Christ.

### Millet

A small-seeded grass that people grow for food and for its leaves ([Ezekiel 4:9](#)). People originally grew millet (*Panicum miliaceum*) in Europe and Asia for its edible seeds.

Millet seeds are the smallest of all grass seeds that people grow for food, but the plants produce many seeds. Millet is a grass that lives for one year and usually grows no taller than 0.6 meter (2 feet).

The small seeds of millet are used on cakes. In some cases, people eat the seeds uncooked.

### Millo

1. An wall of earth or fortification mentioned in [Judges 9:6, 20](#). It was located in or near Shechem.

*See* Beth-millo.

2. A fortress or defensive wall that was part of the city of David in Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 5:9](#); [1 Chronicles 11:8](#)). King Solomon later rebuilt or made this fortification bigger ([1 Kings 9:15](#); [11:27](#)).

Two kings of Judah had important connections to the Millo:

- Some of Joash's servants killed him in "the house of Millo" ([2 Kings 12:20](#)).
- King Hezekiah made the Millo stronger when King Sennacherib of Assyria threatened to invade Jerusalem ([2 Chronicles 32:5](#)).

## Mina

A twenty-ounce weight used in the measure of precious metals as well as other substances. See Weights and Measures.

## Mind

The mind is what helps us think, remember, and make decisions. It also includes our feelings and beliefs. Different cultures throughout history have understood the mind in different ways.

In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, there is no single word that means exactly what we mean by "mind." Ancient Greek thinkers, however, wrote a lot about the mind and saw it as a crucial part of what makes us human.

### *Mind in the Old Testament*

Since the Old Testament had no separate word for the human mind, English translators used other words depending on context. They use words like "soul," "spirit," or "heart." So, the exact differences between these terms are hard to define.

A person is a soul, with a spirit and a heart. Any of these terms can mean the mind. This means that the common idea of the mind for thinking and the heart for feeling is not found in the Old Testament.

While the "mind" means a person's thoughts, the main idea of "mind" in the Old Testament is that it

means the heart ([1 Samuel 2:35](#); [Ezekiel 11:5](#); [20:32](#)). The heart often includes the whole inner person and often relates to the mind. In these cases, it mainly relates to will and memory ([Isaiah 46:8](#); [65:17](#); [Jeremiah 3:16](#)).

### *Mind in the New Testament*

The basic Hebrew way of thinking continues in the Gospel stories. The idea of mind appears rarely. When used, it is mostly with the heart—for example, the thoughts of the heart ([Luke 1:51](#)). The only other uses of "mind" come in the great commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (cf. [Matthew 22:37](#); [Mark 12:30](#); [Luke 10:27](#)).

The Gospel writers all agree that Jesus added "with all your mind" to [Deuteronomy 6:5](#). In Mark, however, the person asking repeats Jesus's command but uses a word for "understanding" instead of "mind" ([Mark 12:33](#)).

With Paul's writings, one enters the Greek world. Paul saw the mind as different from the spirit of man. It can understand and reason ([1 Corinthians 14:14–19](#)). It is the center of intelligence. In other places, "mind" is used more widely to include all of a person's mental and moral state ([Romans 12:2](#); [Ephesians 4:23](#)). A person's actions come from the tendencies of their mind. Whether a person is good or evil depends on the state of the mind.

The state of a person depends upon what or who controls the mind. [Romans 8:6–7](#) talks about a person's mind being controlled either by the flesh or the Spirit. The person whose mind is controlled by the flesh is evil. The mind controlled by the Spirit leads to good.

Other parts talk about the tendency of a person's mind to be controlled by the god of this world ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)). People whose minds are controlled by the "god of this world" will have dark minds. They will not be able to understand the world as it really is ([3:14](#)). It is like a cover over one's understanding. But the Lord can open people's minds. For example, Jesus opened the minds of the disciples who walked the Emmaus road with him so that they could understand the Scriptures ([Luke 24:45](#)).

For Paul, the act of conversion is seen as "renewing of the mind" ([Romans 12:2](#); [Ephesians 4:23](#)). In both cases, the process is one whereby God takes control of a person's mind through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides that person's thoughts the right

way. So, the renewed person is given the power to make correct value judgments. Such people have new minds to make spiritual judgments ([1 Corinthians 2:15-16](#)).

*See also Man; Heart; Soul.*

## Minerals and Metals

A “mineral” is a naturally occurring substance, normally an ore that must be mined and treated before the metal can be extracted. A “metal” is a chemical element such as iron or copper, which is free from contamination by other materials. Metals in a pure form generally do not occur in nature, though there are exceptions.

In Palestine, mining and smelting are ancient arts, practiced long before the Israelites arrived. The quarrying of suitable stones, such as flint, for toolmaking goes back to the Stone Age; the quarrying of stone for building is also an ancient craft. In particular, metals, native gold, copper, and meteoric iron were known and used in the Middle East before 4000 BC. From 4000 to 3000 BC, native silver became known as well as copper and lead ores. The art of smelting was discovered probably almost by accident, resulting in the production of alloys like bronze. Then the reduction of oxidized iron was discovered. From 3000 to 2000 BC, important advances were made. Copper sulfides and tin oxides were reduced to metal, and metallic tin and copper became important items of trade.

In the years 2000 to 1000 BC, bellows came into use for furnaces, and iron was reduced from its ores and forged. The art of making brass from copper and zinc was discovered about 1500 BC but did not become significant till somewhat later. Bronze, known for many centuries, was made sometimes with a high tin content to form speculum for mirrors. By this time the Israelites were settled in the land and the kingdom was established. From 1000 BC to the start of the Christian era, the production of metals, especially iron, greatly expanded. A form of steel was made and used for weapons and tools.

By the time of David and Solomon, the Israelites had learned many skills in the preparation and working of metals. Under David, Edom, with its rich copper and iron deposits, was conquered ([2 Sm 8:13-14](#)) and there was a lot of activity in the casting of metals in the Jordan Valley ([1 Kgs 7:13-14, 45-46](#)). In this activity Solomon had the

assistance of Hiram, a Phoenician artisan. Israelite tradition associated the origins of metallurgy with Tubal-cain ([Gn 4:22](#)), who is said to have forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. [Deuteronomy 8:9](#) refers to the presence of iron and copper in the land to which Israel was going.

While the Israelites eventually undertook their own metalworking processes, it is evident from [1 Samuel 13:19-22](#) that on at least one occasion, in the days of Philistine domination, they were obliged to have their agricultural tools made by their enemies. Similarly, the manufacture of cult vessels for Solomon’s temple was supervised by Phoenician artisans ([1 Kgs 7:13-50](#)).

Minerals, metals, and precious stones were also important items of trade. Israel was never a land rich in these commodities and was obliged to import a wide variety of them. The visit of the queen of Sheba was partly diplomatic and partly for trade ([1 Kgs 10:2, 10-11](#)).

Metals and precious stones featured also among the booty carried off by invaders, notably—but not only—by the Egyptians and Assyrians. These items were in constant demand as they were needed for agriculture and making weapons of war, and for the manufacture of jewelry and items of personal adornment.

### Minerals

A mineral is an inorganic substance with a definite chemical composition and structure, sometimes occurring alone or sometimes combined with others. “Ore” refers to any mineral or mineral aggregate containing chemical compounds of metals in sufficient quantity and grade to make the extraction of the metal commercially profitable. The essential element, the metal, occurs in nature as a chemical compound, such as a sulfide, an oxide, a carbonate, or some other compound, though the sulfides and oxides are the most common. Minerals exhibit a variety of properties, such as color, luster, crystal form, cleavage, fracture, hardness, and density, which help in their identification and exercise control on the commercial and industrial uses of the particular mineral.

### Metals

A metal in its pure form is a chemically pure element with its own fixed physical properties, such as density, tensile strength, crystalline structure, melting point, ductility, conductivity, and the like. Metals form alloys with other metals,

but this process destroys their purity. In both the ancient world and the modern world the alloy is extremely important.

In order to obtain a pure metal, the ore in which the metal is contained must be smelted—a process known as metallurgy. In ancient Israel pure metals were widely used—among them were gold, silver, iron, and lead. Yet alloys such as bronze and brass were even more widely used.

### **Metallurgy and Metal Extraction**

The method of producing hard wrought iron was discovered by the Hittites of Asia Minor about 1300 BC, and was taken up by the Philistines ([1 Sm 13:19–20](#)). At first, the iron obtained from simple furnaces was drawn off and hammered to drive out slag ([Dt 4:20](#); [1 Kgs 8:51](#); [Jer 11:4](#)). Later, the addition of carbon produced an early form of steel.

The lead sulfide ore is heated with lime in a flow of air. A slag with rock particles forms. The air is then cut off and the temperature is raised. Finally, the lead flows free.

The OT refers to the mining of silver ([Jb 28:1](#)), the refining of the metal ([Zec 13:9](#); [Mal 3:3](#)), the melting of scrap metals or jeweler's remnants ([Ez 22:20–22](#)), and of multiple refinings in a crucible ([Prv 17:3; 27:21](#)) to produce refined silver ([1 Chr 29:4](#); [Ps 12:6](#); [Prv 10:20](#)).

### **Specific Metals**

Although several OT passages suggest that the science of metallurgy was known in biblical times, comparatively little archaeological evidence is available. The processing plants were small and were used for the treatment of copper and iron. The archaeological record is far from complete, but the general impression is that metallic ores were comparatively rare in Palestine; imports must have been considerable. However, numerous molds for casting agricultural and military tools have come to light in excavations. Evidently, some refined metal was available locally, but perhaps most of it was imported. The metal was then heated and poured into the appropriate earthenware or pottery mold.

There are many references to metals in the Bible, but especially to gold, silver, iron, and lead. While copper was widely used, it was normally in the form of its alloys, bronze and brass. There are comparatively few references to tin as such, though it was used in manufacturing bronze. Similarly zinc, though used in the manufacture of brass, is not mentioned in the Bible.

Gold is referred to hundreds of times in the OT and NT, more frequently than any other metal. It is often mentioned together with silver, and in the majority of cases silver is mentioned first, reflecting a time when gold was less valued.

Gold was used in the manufacture of ornaments for personal use ([Gn 24:53; 41:42](#); [Ex 3:22; 11:2; 12:35](#)). Gold was important in worship both in Israel and among the non-Israelites. References to pagan gods occur in several passages ([Ex 20:23; 32:2–4](#); [Ps 115:4](#); [Is 2:20; 30:22; 31:7; 40:19; 46:6](#); [Hos 8:4](#)). It seems that the gold was melted down and later engraved so that the replicas could be called both molten images ([Ex 32:24](#)) and graven images. The tabernacle and the temple used a great deal of gold. The wooden ark was covered inside and outside with gold ([25:11](#)). Other timber pieces were overlaid with gold ([25:11; 1 Kgs 6:20–22, 30](#)).

The vessels and utensils used in the tabernacle and temple were made of “pure gold”: the cherubim ([Ex 25:18; 37:7](#)), the mercy seat ([25:17; 37:6](#)), the candlestick ([Ex 25:31; Zec 4:2](#)), various vessels ([Ex 25:38; 2 Kgs 24:13](#)), chains to carry the ephod ([Ex 28:14](#)), and the bells on the high priest's robe. The high priest's crown, ephod, and breastplate were also of gold ([39:2–30](#)). The offerings collected for the manufacture of such articles in the wilderness include golden dishes weighing 120 shekels ([Nm 7:86](#)). The more lavishly adorned temple apparently used more gold than the tabernacle ([1 Kgs 6:20–28](#); [1 Chr 29:2–7](#); [2 Chr 3:4–4:22](#)). The number of specific references to gold in the tabernacle and temple is far too great to mention all of them here. The large amount of gold used in the temple was attractive to invaders, who would strip the temple of its gold and carry it off as booty ([1 Kgs 14:26](#); [2 Kgs 16:8; 18:14; 24:13; 25:15](#); [2 Chr 12:9](#)).

Gold had commercial value. It was imported in Solomon's day, and up to 666 talents were brought to Israel annually ([1 Kgs 10:14](#)). Hiram of Tyre gave Solomon 120 talents of gold ([9:14](#)), possibly as a loan. Certainly Solomon used a lot of gold in the temple ([10:16–17](#)). Gold was useful, too, for buying off an enemy ([2 Kgs 16:8](#)) or simply as tribute ([18:14](#)). Evidence of this comes also from the Assyrian annals, where the tribute taken from various lands often included gold.

The possession of gold was not in itself an evil thing, but preoccupation with its accumulation was condemned ([Jb 28:15–17](#); [Prv 3:14; 8:10, 19; 16:16](#)). The possession of wisdom and the knowledge of God was of greater value than the

possession of much gold ([Pss 19:10; 119:72, 127](#); [Prv 20:15](#)). Job rejected trust in gold ([Jb 31:24](#)). Gold would not save a man in the day of judgment ([Zep 1:18](#)).

In the NT gold was regarded as perishable ([Jas 5:3; 1 Pt 1:18](#)) and as an unnecessary burden to carry ([Mt 10:9; Acts 3:6](#)). The wearing of a gold ring was certainly no measure of a man's worth ([Jas 2:2](#)); indeed, both Paul and Peter forbade it ([1 Tm 2:9; 1 Pt 3:3](#)).

The use of gold in itself was no measure of piety. The elders of [Revelation 4:4](#) wore golden crowns, but the great harlot was "bedecked with gold" ([Rv 17:4](#)), as was the harlot city Babylon ([18:16](#)). By contrast, there are some positive statements in the NT about the value of gold ([3:18](#)). The wise men brought gold to the infant Jesus as a symbol of his kingly character ([Mt 2:11](#)), and the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, was a city of gold, clear as glass ([Rv 21:18](#)).

In the OT, silver is mentioned in several connections. Being a precious metal, once considered more precious than gold, it was regularly used in commerce for the payments of debts. Small pieces of silver were weighed into a balance against a standard weight. Abraham bought the cave at Machpelah as a burial place for Sarah for 400 shekels of silver and weighed out the "money" according to the weight's current value with the merchant ([Gn 23:15-16](#)). Joseph's brothers received 20 pieces of silver in payment for Joseph ([37:28](#)), and Benjamin was given a money gift by Joseph in pieces of silver ([45:22](#)).

There are other examples of payment in silver for commodities or services ([Gn 20:16; Ex 21:32; Lv 27:16; Jos 24:32; Jgs 17:10; 2 Sm 24:24; Neh 7:72; Jb 28:15; Is 7:23; 46:6; Am 2:6; 8:6](#)). Silver was a measure of a man's wealth ([Gn 13:2; 24:35; Ex 25:3; Nm 22:18; Dt 7:25; Zep 1:18; Hg 2:8; Zec 6:11](#)). An unusual comment in [1 Kings 10:21](#) notes that in Solomon's day "it was not considered as anything," apparently because it was so plentiful. It was regularly taken as booty ([Jos 6:19; 7:21; 1 Kgs 15:18](#)). Sometimes the drinking cup of an important man was made of silver ([Gn 44:2](#)). Sometimes, too, a royal crown was made of gold and silver ([Zec 6:11](#)). It was important in the manufacture of personal ornaments ([Gn 24:53; Ex 3:22; 12:35](#)), and one example is given of ornaments of gold studded with silver ([Sg 1:11](#)).

The process of refining silver was used as a metaphor for the trying of people's hearts ([Ps](#)

[66:10; Is 48:10](#)), and the tarnishing and deterioration of silver was a picture of the disintegration of one's character ([Is 1:22; Jer 6:30](#)). God's Word is pictured as "pure" silver refined and purified in a furnace. Despite silver's great value, wisdom excels it ([Job 28:15; Prv 3:14; 8:19; 10:20; 16:16; 22:1; 25:11](#)).

Native copper is mentioned in [Deuteronomy 8:9](#), though the reference may be to one of its ores. More commonly, biblical references are to brass, the alloy of copper and zinc. However, the chemical analysis of copper-based tools and implements during the middle and late Bronze Ages (c. 2000–1200 BC) shows that the material was bronze. References to brass in the kjv are therefore to bronze.

By NT times, copper in the form of alloys (bronze and brass) was widely used. Bronze coinage was well known and this may be the sense of [Matthew 10:9](#). The widow's mite was a tiny bronze coin, the lepton. Bronze utensils and vessels were well known ([Rv 9:20; 18:12](#)). The reference to "sounding brass" (kjv) in [1 Corinthians 13:1](#) may actually be to brass, which was a bright, shining alloy, and was used in musical instruments. In the vision of John in Revelation ([Rv 1:15; 2:18](#)), the Son of Man had feet of fine brass (nlt "bronze").

The Iron Age began in Palestine about 1200 BC, that is, in the days of the judges, though native iron had been known in Egypt in the predynastic period. Archaeological evidence suggests that the smelting of iron ore was discovered by the Hittites about 1400 BC. The Philistines seem to have introduced iron to Palestine about 1300 BC. In the days of Moses an encounter with the Midianites produced much tribute, among which iron is mentioned ([Nm 31:22](#)). When Israel captured Jericho, the spoils included iron ([Jos 6:24](#)). Manasseh's half-tribe also took booty including iron ([22:8](#)). In the days of the judges the Canaanites were equipped with chariots of iron ([Jos 17:16-18; Jgs 1:19; 4:3](#)).

These early references point to the arrival of iron at the start of the Iron Age. The Philistines enjoyed a local monopoly in its use ([1 Sm 13:19-21](#)), and their mighty warrior Goliath was armed with an iron spear ([17:7](#)). It was not long, however, before Israel learned the use of iron ([2 Sm 12:31; 23:7](#)). Evidently, by Solomon's time, iron was widely used, because builders of the temple were forbidden to use iron tools ([1 Kgs 6:7](#)). The false prophet Zedekiah in Ahab's day used the horns of iron to thrust toward Syria as he spoke of their defeat ([22:11](#)).

The prophet Isaiah in the eighth century BC referred to iron ([Is 10:34](#)), and Jeremiah later spoke of the metal in several places ([Jer 1:18; 6:28; 11:4; 15:12; 17:1; 28:13–14](#)). Ezekiel made use of an iron plate in one of his symbolic actions ([Ez 4:3](#)), referred to iron in his description of smelting ([22:18, 20](#)), and listed it as a commodity for trade ([27:12, 19](#)). The prophet Amos spoke of threshing instruments of iron ([Am 1:3](#)). Micah used iron as a symbol for military might ([Mi 4:13](#)). The book of Daniel makes several references to it ([Dn 2:33–35, 40–45; 4:15, 23; 7:7, 19](#)).

By Roman times, iron weapons were the regular implements of war. Gates of iron were used to close prisons ([Acts 12:10](#)), and in a symbolic usage powerful rulers were said to rule with a rod of iron ([Rv 2:27; 9:9; 12:5; 19:15](#)). The term “iron” was used also in some metaphorical expressions. The smelting of iron was a symbol of testing and suffering ([Dt 4:20; 1 Kgs 8:51; Jer 11:4; Ez 22:18](#)), a pillar of iron was symbolic of strength ([Jer 1:18](#)), and an iron rod of harsh rule ([Ps 2:9; Rv 2:27; 12:5; 19:15](#)).

*See also* Coppersmith; Goldsmith; Ironsmith; Mason, Masonry; Silversmith; Stones, Precious.

## Miniamin

1. Levite who assisted Kore, the son of Imnah, with the distribution of the “contribution reserved for the Lord” among the priests in the cities of Judah ([2 Chr 31:14–15](#)).
2. Head of a priestly house during the postexilic era ([Neh 12:17](#)). He was also called “Mijamin” ([12:5](#)).
3. Participant in the dedication of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:41](#)).

## Minister, Ministry

A minister is a person who serves others, especially in religious work, such as preaching, teaching, or providing spiritual care. Ministry is the act of serving or the work that a minister does, which can include leadership, teaching, helping others, and other forms of service within a religious community. The term “ministry” can also refer more broadly to the work of the church as a whole.

*See* Bishop; Body of Christ; Church; Deacon, Deaconess; Elder; Ordain, Ordination; Presbyter; Priesthood; Spiritual Gifts.

## Minni

People mentioned in [Jeremiah 51:27](#), along with Ararat and Ashkenaz, as aggressors against Babylon. The Minni first appear in Assyrian inscriptions during the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC), who pillaged and subdued the people. They lived between Lake Urmia and Lake Van, north of Babylon, and are identified with the Mannean people, regularly associated with Urartians (Ararat) in Assyrian manuscripts. The Minni were restless subjects. They revolted against Assyria in 716 and 715 BC. Further agitation occurred in the reign of Ashurbanipal (669–627 BC). After Nineveh’s fall to the Babylonians in 612 BC, the Minni disappear from the extrabiblical record.

## Minnith

One of the 10 cities conquered by Jephthah in his defeat of the Ammonites ([Jgs 11:33](#)). The city was a center for the wheat trade ([Ez 27:17](#)).

## Minstrel

An old term for a musician ([2 Kings 3:15; Psalm 68:25; Matthew 9:23; Revelation 18:22](#)).

## Mint

Mint refers to various plants with fragrant leaves that people use for flavoring food. Many types of mint grow in Israel and the surrounding areas, but the horse mint (*Mentha longifolia*) is likely the one mentioned in [Matthew 23:23](#) and [Luke 11:42](#).

The ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans used mints for several purposes. They added it as flavoring to foods, used it in medicine to relieve gas and stomach discomfort, and included it as a seasoning in cooking.

## Miphkad, Gate of

KJV translation for Muster Gate (“Inspection Gate,” nlt), a city gate in northeast Jerusalem, in [Nehemiah 3:31](#). See Muster Gate.

## Miracle

A divine act by which God reveals himself to people. The classical definition of miracle assumes that it is contrary to natural law, but this is a misnomer for two reasons. First, many of the miracles of the Bible used nature rather than bypassed it (e.g., the wind that parted the Red Sea, [Ex 14:21](#)). Second, there no longer is a concept of “absolute natural laws”; rather, a phenomenon that is not readily explainable may reflect laws that scientists do not yet fully understand. In Scripture the element of faith is crucial; a natural approach cannot prove or disprove the presence of “miracle.” The timing and content of the process can be miraculous, even though the event may seem natural. The revelatory significance is also important. In every case God performed the miracle not merely as a “wonder” to inspire awe but as a “sign” to draw people to himself.

### *The Vocabulary of Miracles*

In the OT the two main terms are “sign” and “wonder,” which often occur together (e.g., nine times in Dt alone, [4:34](#); [13:1](#); etc.). More than one Hebrew term is used for “wonder”—one referring to it as an act of supernatural power and another as being beyond man’s understanding. On the whole, they are used synonymously for God’s providential acts within history. The “sign” refers to an act that occurs as a token or pledge of God’s control over events and as a revelation of God’s presence with his people.

The NT uses the same basic idiom, “signs and wonders,” with the same general thrust (cf. [Mt 24:24](#); [Mk 13:22](#); [In 4:48](#); [Acts 2:43](#)). A third term is that for “power” or miracle, and this becomes the predominant term in the synoptic Gospels. It signifies the mighty act itself by which God is revealed in Christ. A fourth term is “work,” which along with “sign” is preferred in the Gospel of John. This term is used in John to show that in Jesus the work of the Father is revealed. While the terms are often synonymous (the first three occur together in [Rom 15:19–20](#); [2 Thes 2:9](#); [Heb 2:4](#)), they designate three different aspects of miracles. “Signs” point to the theological meaning of miracle as a revelation of God; “power,” to the force behind the act; “work,” to the person behind it; and “wonder,” to its awesome effect on the observer.

### *Miracles in the Old Testament*

To the Hebrew, a miracle was nothing more nor less than an act of God. Therefore, nature herself was a miracle ([Jb 5:9–10](#); [Pss 89:6](#); [106:2](#)), and an act of kindness or victory over one’s enemies is so described ([Gn 24:12–27](#); [1 Sm 14:23](#)). The natural order is totally under Yahweh’s control, so a miracle was observable not because of its supernatural nature but because of its character as part of the divine revelation. This connection with salvation history is crucial, for Israel at all times tried to guard against a desire for the spectacular. [Deuteronomy 13:1–4](#) warns against accepting a wonder as authenticating a prophet; rather, the authentication must come from the fact that he worships Yahweh.

Miracles in the OT are restricted to critical periods of redemptive history. Many have discussed the act of Creation as the first miracle, but in actuality it is not presented as such in the Genesis account. A miracle is signified by its revelatory significance and/or its connection with crucial points in the history of God’s people—the exodus, the conquest of Jordan, the battle against the insidious Baal worship of the prophetic period. Creation is characterized by one major theme: a chronicle of the beginnings. The miracles of Genesis—striking blind the inhabitants of Sodom, the Flood, Babel—all signify the wrath of God upon those who have turned against him. This is the other side of redemptive history, the judgment of God upon those who are not his people.

The miracles of the exodus account have two foci: The plagues represent the absolute power of Yahweh over the gods of Egypt, and the miracles of the wilderness show God’s absolute care and protection of his people. The plagues are particularly interesting because each one is directed at one of the gods of Egypt and reveals Yahweh as the only potentate. The basic theme is found in [Exodus 7:5](#) and is repeated throughout the account (cf. [7:17](#); [8:6, 18](#); [9:14–16, 29](#); [12:12](#)): “When I show the Egyptians my power and force them to let the Israelites go, they will realize that I am the Lord” (nlt). In this regard they were directed not only at the Egyptians but also to the Israelites, who needed to know that their God would vindicate them against the Egyptians. This is borne out in the major miracle, the crossing of the Red Sea. The plagues themselves show a gradual increase in severity.

The wilderness miracles are intimately connected to the basic theme of the wandering narratives, the

trial of Israel in times of desperate need and God's providential protection of his people when they turn to him. The basic organization of the stories concerns the need itself, which leads to Israel's complaint; this is followed by Moses' intercession and then by God's sovereign intervention. The miracles are interspersed with other stories that tell of God's punishment when the people's murmuring tries him too far. The miracle is God's self-revelation regarding his involvement in the needs of his own; Israel must then respond, and her response determines her blessing or punishment at the hands of Yahweh.

Miracles are conspicuously absent in the period of the united monarchy. This was a time of self-sufficiency, when God worked through the monarchy and did not intervene directly in the life of the nation. The reason is that Israel's eschatological hopes had been realized and made concrete in the presence of the Holy City and the temple.

It was different during the prophetic period. In the lives of Elijah and Elisha, miracles were predominant. This was a time of apostasy, and under the reign of Ahab and Jezebel the nation turned to paganism and the worship of Baal. The very existence of the Hebraic religion seemed to be threatened, and so the times called for extraordinary measures. Here the wondrous nature of the miracles is more evident than anywhere else in the OT. There are conscious allusions to the exodus miracles, perhaps looking to Elijah as a new Moses reconstituting the true worship of Yahweh. Parallels are seen in the challenge to the priests of Baal ([1 Kgs 18](#); cf. [Ex 7](#)); the revelation of God on Mt Horeb with the wind, earthquake, and fire ([1 Kgs 19](#); cf. [Ex 19](#)); and the parting of the Jordan ([2 Kgs 2:10-14](#); cf. [Ex 14](#)). Many of the miracles were intended to demonstrate the impotence of Baal, such as the drought, the contest on Mt Carmel, and the miraculous sustenance supplied by God. Again, God's actions within history were part of his self-revelation, the vindication of his messengers, and the punishment of his enemies.

Miracles are infrequent in the writing prophets, perhaps due to the proclamation form of the writings (i.e., they dealt with message rather than deeds). The two major exceptions (apart from the recovery of Hezekiah chronicled in [Is 38](#)) are Jonah and Daniel. In Jonah, the miracle is addressed not to the Ninevites but to the Israelites, who are called back to their covenant obligations as the

spokesmen for Yahweh. In Daniel the direction is reversed, and the situation is the same as that in Exodus or Kings. The miracles are directed to the Babylonians and Persians and have the same foci as the earlier events of the exodus and Elijah-Elisha chronicles, that is, the supremacy of Yahweh over the foreign gods and the vindication of his messengers. This is the third and final time of crisis and illustrates the major theological use of miracles in the OT.

### *Miracles in the New Testament*

The presence of the miraculous has a similar purpose in the NT; it occurred at a crisis point in salvation history to authenticate the presence of God in historical acts. It differs, however, in that it is transcended by the presence of the very Son of God, who himself is the greatest miracle of all. God now has not only acted in history; he has entered history and has turned it to himself. The parallels with the exodus events are obvious and show that the miracles of Jesus paved the way for the entrance of the new covenant in the same way that the exodus miracles prepared for the old.

### **Jesus' Understanding**

Jesus stressed the connection between his miraculous ministry, especially the casting out of demons (exorcism), and the coming of the kingdom of God. As in the OT, the miracles signify the presence of God, but here it is more direct and also signals the inauguration of his kingdom ([Mt 12:28](#)). As such, then, the exorcism miracles mean the binding of Satan and the institution of the reign of God ([Mk 3:23-27](#)). At the same time all the miracles signify the dawning of the age of salvation, as expressed in Jesus' inaugural address at Nazareth ([Lk 4:18-21](#), from [Is 61:1-2](#)).

Yet these miracles are not automatic signposts to the act of God; they must be interpreted by faith. Jesus was well aware of the presence of other miracles in his day ([Mt 12:27](#)) and so stressed the presence of faith in the healing miracles ([Mk 5:32; 10:52](#)). This faith must be directed to the presence of God in the event and in Jesus himself. The necessity of faith also helps to understand Jesus' refusal to provide his contemporaries with a "sign" ([Mk 8:11-12](#)); miracles could never "prove" the presence of God. For a better understanding of the connection between faith and miracles, it is best to note each Evangelist's individual portrait of the theological use of miracles.

## Miracles in Mark

Mark, the first of the four Gospels to be written, has often been called the “action Gospel” because of its emphasis on Jesus’ deeds rather than his teaching. This is also true regarding Jesus’ miracles, for Mark contains more proportionately than any of the others. There are five groups or five kinds of miracles in Mark. The first group centers on Jesus’ authority over demons ([Mk 1:21–39](#)). The second concerns Jesus’ authority over the law and conflict with his opponents ([1:40–3:6](#)). They result in fame but occasion his refusal to allow his true identity as Son of God to be known. The third group ([3:7–30](#)) contains exorcisms and the Beelzebul controversy, centering on his power over Satan. The fourth group ([4:35–6:43](#)) contains especially powerful miracles (stilling the storm, the Gaderene demoniac, the raising of Jairus’s daughter) and probably centers on the disciples, as Jesus thereby reveals to them the meaning of the kingdom and seeks to overcome their own spiritual dullness. The fifth and final group ([6:30–8:26](#)) continues the theme of the disciples’ misunderstanding and prepares the way for the Passion, with the message regarding the bread, blindness, and the judgment of God.

The miracles in Mark center on conflict, first with Jesus’ opponents and then with his own disciples. While the miracles are harbingers of God’s kingdom, their purpose is to force an encounter with Jesus’ true significance. They do not show Jesus as a Hellenistic wonder worker; in fact, they lead only to amazement and then disbelief in those who do not have faith. Jesus’ personhood has been hidden and can only be understood in light of the cross. The miracles are not proofs but powers; God does not authenticate himself through them but shows himself to those with eyes to see.

## Miracles in Matthew

Matthew’s is the teaching Gospel, where dialogue takes precedence over action. Matthew compresses Mark’s narrative in order to make room for didactic material. Therefore, his stress is on the theological implications of faith rather than on the results they contain. Matthew’s groups of miracles are isometric to teaching passages, in keeping with his general practice of combining narrative portions and organizing them around didactic sections. The first group (chs [8–9](#)) combines miracles from Mark’s first, second, and fourth groups and stresses Jesus’ significance as the servant of Yahweh who exercises sovereign

power and forgives sins. The secondary theme teaches discipleship and shows the awakening faith of the disciples and their involvement in Jesus’ ministry. The second group (ch [12](#)) centers on his authority over the law (the man with the withered hand) and over Satan (the Beelzebul controversy). The third group (chs [14–15](#)) parallels Mark’s fifth group but has a different purpose. Rather than arousing conflict, the disciples are seen in positive guise, actively involved in the Master’s work. So the disciples become the means by which Jesus’ ministry is continued. Therefore, the disciples are involved as “learners” (the meaning of “disciple”) in his miraculous ministry.

## Miracles in Luke

Luke-Acts is remarkable and extremely important because it establishes beyond dispute the early church’s belief that it was in absolute continuity with Jesus and was continuing the work of God in the world. Luke’s major stress is on salvation history, and so one of his major stylistic methods for showing this direct connection is miraculous deeds. Especially enlightening here is [Acts 9:32–42](#), where in two healing miracles Peter duplicated the Lord’s miracles (the paralytic Aeneas, [Lk 5:18–26](#); the raising of Dorcas, [Lk 8:49–56](#)).

From this respect also Luke returns to Mark’s interest in the deed more than the teaching. However, Luke goes even further than Mark, for the miracles validate Jesus more directly. The first group follows the inaugural address ([4:18–22](#)), which itself presents the miraculous deeds as authenticating signposts to Jesus’ personhood. They center on Jesus’ power and authority (vv [31–41](#)) and validate God’s power in Jesus ([5:17; 8:39](#)) as well as faith in Jesus (seen in the “praise” motif, [5:25; 7:16](#); etc., but especially in [Acts 9:35; 13:12; 19:17](#)). The presence of “fear” at the miracles is a human response to having witnessed God’s power ([Lk 5:26; 7:16; 8:35–37; 24:5](#)). The call to the disciples occurs in the presence of miracles ([5:1–11](#) at the miraculous catch of fish; vv [27–28](#), after the healing of the bedridden paralytic).

Therefore, Luke views miracles as having redemptive significance. However, this is not contrary to Mark’s picture. Luke still avoids picturing Jesus as a mere wonder worker; Jesus still refuses to satisfy people’s curiosity for an external sign ([Lk 11:29–32](#); cf. also [9:9](#)), and in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ([16:19–31](#)) he teaches that the unbelieving heart can never be convinced

by such events. Nevertheless, they can lead to repentance ([10:13–16](#)).

### Miracles in John

John is the most directly theological of the Evangelists, and miracles are characteristically given a distinctive Johannine coloring. In the Synoptics, miracles are “acts of power” signifying the entrance of God’s reign into this world via Jesus; thereby, Jesus establishes Satan’s defeat and God’s sovereign control of history. John, however, contains no exorcisms, and the miracles are seen as “signs.” At the same time miracles are part of the larger category of “works” (the other term for miracles used in John), by which Jesus shows the Father’s presence in himself ([Jn 10:32, 37–39; 14:10](#)) and they give witness to Jesus as the sent one ([5:36; 10:25, 38](#)).

John selects only seven “sign miracles” from many others ([20:30](#)) and uses them as part of the thematic development in the respective section of each. For instance, changing the water into wine is a messianic act, signifying the outpouring of the kingdom blessing in the ministry of Jesus, the Messiah (ch [2](#)); the multiplication of the loaves builds upon the “bread of life” and points to the messianic banquet as spiritually present in Jesus (ch [6](#)).

The paradoxical nature of miracles in the Synoptics is even greater in John. He gives more stress to the wondrous nature of the events by providing such details as the stupendous amount of water changed into wine ([2:6](#), approximately 120 gallons, or 454.2 liters); the distance over which Jesus’ healing power works ([4:46](#), almost 20 miles, or 32.2 kilometers); the length of time the man of Bethesda had been lame ([5:5, 38](#) years; cf. [9:1](#), where the man had been born blind); the amount of bread needed to feed the 5,000 ([6:7](#), where Philip said 200 denarii, or days’ wages, would not have bought enough); and the proof of Lazarus’s death ([11:39](#); he had already begun to decay). John has a great interest in the miraculous. Yet at the same time there is even greater stress on the inadequacy of miracles for faith. The miracles as “signs” have saving value and point to the true significance of Jesus but are related to an awakening faith and in themselves are insufficient ([2:11; 4:50](#)). They have christological force, looking to Jesus’ sonship and the Father’s authentication of him but are based on the soteriological decision of the individual. As “signs,” they contain the very presence of God in Jesus, the spiritual reality of the “sight” and “life” he

brings ([9:35–38; 11:24–26](#)). Yet their purpose is to divide the audience and confront it with the necessity of decision. Two camps result—those seeking understanding and those considering only the outward aspects. Some refuse to consider the signs, and thus they reject them ([3:18–21; 11:47–50](#)), while others see them shallowly as mere wonders and fail to see in them the true significance of Jesus ([2:23–25; 4:45](#)). On the other hand, some view them with the eye of faith and go on to a realization of his personhood ([2:11; 5:36–46; 11:42](#)). In John the highest faith of all is that which does not need external stimulation ([20:29](#)).

### Miracles in the Rest of the New Testament

Apart from Acts, several passages in the NT speak of the value of miracles. Paul in [2 Corinthians 12:12](#) and [Romans 15:18–19](#) considered them as “sign-gifts,” which authenticated the divine authority of the “true apostle.” He listed healing and miracles as specific “gifts of the Spirit” in [1 Corinthians 12:9–10](#). In [Galatians 3:5](#) he considered them evidence for the presence of the Spirit. The author of the letter to the Hebrews in [2:4](#) said “God bore witness” to the true message of salvation via miracles. Therefore, in the apostolic age the miracles of God’s servants were seen more directly as authenticating signs of God’s action in his messengers.

*See also Sign; Spiritual Gifts.*

*Miriam*

*Miriam*

**Miriam**

1. A daughter of Amram and Jochebed and the sister of Aaron and Moses ([Exodus 15:20](#); [Numbers 26:59](#); [1 Chronicles 6:3](#)). Miriam first appears in Scripture as a young girl. Her task was to watch her infant brother's cradle, hidden in the reeds of the Nile River ([Exodus 2:4](#)). Her parents made a plan ([Hebrews 11:23](#)) to escape the pharaoh's command to drown of all Hebrew males at birth ([Exodus 1:22](#)). Miriam shows courage, concern, and wisdom when the Egyptian princess finds her brother ([Exodus 2:5-6](#)). She takes the initiative and offers to find a nurse for the child. When they accept her plan, she gets her mother ([Exodus 2:7-8](#)).
2. Miriam first appears by name after the Israelites have crossed the Red Sea ([Exodus 15:20](#)). She is called a "prophetess" and, along with her brothers, was appointed as a leader of Israel ([Micah 6:4](#)). After the Egyptian army drowned in the sea, she led the women of Israel in a song of praise with dancing and musical instruments ([Exodus 15:21](#)).
3. Later, Miriam brought shame upon herself when she became jealous of Moses. Together with Aaron, she complained against Moses because of his greater influence among the people and because he had married a Cushite woman ([Numbers 12:1-2](#)). Because of this attack against God's chosen leader, Miriam was struck with leprosy ([Numbers 12:10](#)). Moses, however, prayed for her healing ([Numbers 12:9-13](#)). She was restored to health, but only after spending seven shameful days outside the camp while all of Israel waited to continue their journey ([Numbers 12:14-15](#)). This sad event is the last recorded event in Miriam's public life. She died near the end of the wilderness wanderings at Kadesh and was buried there ([Numbers 20:1](#)).

2. A child of Mered, who was a descendant of Ezra from the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 4:17](#)).

## Mirma, Mirmah

Son of Shaharaim and Hodesh from Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chr 8:10](#)).

## Mirror

A mirror is a smooth surface that reflects images. The word does not occur in the King James Version, but the idea is there. It is translated from the Hebrew or Greek as "glass," "glasses," or "looking glass." Modern translations use "mirror."

Mirrors in biblical times were made of polished metal such as copper, bronze, silver, gold, or electrum (a mix of gold and silver). People polished these metal surfaces until they were very smooth so they could see their reflection as clearly as possible.

Glass existed during biblical times, but it was usually not clear enough to see through (opaque). The exception was Roman glass, which was clearer. However, people did not use glass for mirrors until after the biblical period ended.

The Bible first mentions mirrors in the time of Moses. It relates to building the tabernacle in the Sinai wilderness after the exodus from Egypt ([Exodus 38:8](#)). When Alexander the Great spread Greek culture, mirrors became more common in the biblical world. Until that time, they were the possessions of either court ladies or prostitutes.

Archaeological digs in Palestine have found bronze mirrors as well as women's jewelry and clothes. Most of these date from the time after the exile to Babylon up through Roman times. The mirrors are usually circular in shape with handles of wood or ivory (if they have handles at all).

## Miscarriage

The sudden natural end of an unborn child before it can survive outside the womb. Miscarriage happens in both animal and human pregnancies ([Genesis 31:38](#); [Job 3:16](#); [21:10](#); [Hosea 9:14](#)). The main problem is not the inability to become pregnant but the difficulty in carrying the

pregnancy to full term. The curse of a "miscarrying womb" means a woman cannot have children ([Hosea 9:14](#)). The blessing of God results in successful pregnancies and long life ([Exodus 23:26](#)).

The key issue in miscarriage is timing, shown by early delivery or what the Bible calls an "untimely birth" ([Psalm 58:8](#); [Job 3:16](#)). Although miscarriages happen for many reasons, the Bible mentions two specific causes:

- poor care of pregnant animals ([Genesis 31:38](#)), and
- physical injury to a pregnant woman ([Exodus 21:22](#)).

[Numbers 5](#) describes a test for a wife suspected of being unfaithful. If she is guilty of adultery, "her belly will swell, her thigh will shrivel" ([Numbers 5:27](#)). These phrases might be ways of describing either a miscarriage or the inability to have children.

The apostle Paul emphasizes his unworthiness to be an apostle by comparing his spiritual birth to a premature physical birth ([1 Corinthians 15:8](#)).

*See also* Barrenness.

## Misgab

KJV translation for a place in Moab ([Jer 48:1](#)), rendered "the fortress" in the nlt.

## Mishael

1. Uzziel's son ([Exodus 6:22](#)). Along with his brother Elzaphan, Moses called him to carry away the bodies of Nadab and Abihu. God had killed Nadab and Abihu because they had not followed God's rules for the altar ([Leviticus 10:1-5](#)).
2. One who stood beside Ezra when the law was read ([Nehemiah 8:4](#)).

3. The Hebrew name for one of Daniel's friends in Babylon ([Daniel 1:6](#)). Mishael, Daniel, and two others remained faithful to God ([Daniel 1:11, 19](#)). When he refused to follow the king's order, Nebuchadnezzar's men threw him into a fiery furnace. But God saved him from the flames ([Daniel 3](#)). His Babylonian name was Meshach ([Daniel 1:7](#)).

*See also* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

## Mishal

Levitical town in Asher's territory ([Jos 19:26](#); [21:30](#); [1 Chr 6:74](#)). *See* Levitical Cities.

## Misham

Elpaal's son from the tribe of Benjamin, who helped to build Ono and Lod with its towns ([1 Chr 8:12](#)).

## Misheal

KJV spelling of the Levitical town Mishal in [Joshua 19:26](#). *See* Mishal.

## Mishma

1. Son of Ishmael, Abraham's grandson, and the father of an Arabian tribe ([Gn 25:14](#); [1 Chr 1:30](#)).
2. Mibsam's son from Simeon's tribe ([1 Chr 4:25-26](#)). His omission in [Genesis 25](#) and inclusion in the 1 Chronicles genealogy may indicate either that he was born after Jacob moved his family to Egypt or that he represented an Arabian tribe that affiliated with Simeon when Simeon's tribe expanded to the south ([1 Chr 4:38-43](#)).

## Mishmannah

Warrior from Gad's tribe who joined David at Ziklag in his struggle against King Saul ([1 Chr 12:10](#)).

## Mishnah

A collection of interpretations of the law. According to rabbinic tradition, these interpretations were given to Moses when he received the law from God on Mount Sinai. They were passed down orally for generations.

This "oral tradition" is the "law" that Jesus referred to in [Matthew 15:1-9](#). By around AD 200, Rabbi Judah completed the work that Rabbi Akiba began around AD 120. This oral tradition was then written down and called the Mishnah. The word "Mishnah" comes from a verb that reflects the way the material was repeated orally from teacher to disciple for many generations.

The Mishnah is divided into six "orders." Each order is divided into sections called "tractates," which are further divided into chapters. The six orders cover specific legal areas:

- 1. Seeds:** Agricultural laws, starting with a tractate on daily prayers.
- 2. Festivals:** Feasts, fast days, and Sabbath regulations.
- 3. Women:** Marriage and family laws.
- 4. Injuries:** Civil and criminal law, along with ethical standards.
- 5. Holy Things:** Ritual laws and priesthood activities.
- 6. Purifications:** Laws of ritual purity.

The Mishnah serves as a commentary on Old Testament law. It forms the basis for the Gemara and the Talmud, which are further commentaries and discussions on the Mishnah and the law.

*See also* Gemara; Talmud.

## Mishraite

Descendant of Caleb and a member of Kiriath-jearim's family from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 2:53](#)).

## Mispar, Mispereth

One of the men who returned with Zerubbabel to Palestine following the Babylonian captivity ([Ezr 2:2](#)); alternately called Mispereth in [Nehemiah 7:7](#).

## Misrephoth-Maim

One of the northernmost places to which the Israelites pursued the fleeing Canaanite armies defeated at the waters of Merom ([Jos 11:8](#)). Misrephoth-maim, meaning "burning of water," defined part of the boundary of land remaining yet to be possessed by Israel during the days of Joshua ([13:6](#)). In all probability, Misrephoth-maim is identical with the cluster of springs at Khirbet el-Musheirifeh near the Mediterranean Sea, 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) south of Sidon and 6 miles (9.7 kilometers) north of Tyre, at the base of Ras en-Nakurah.

## Mite

A small bronze or copper coin. It is worth a fraction of a cent. [Mark 12:42](#) in the King James Version uses this term. *See* Coins; Money.

## Mithcah, Mithkah

One of the temporary camping places of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. [Numbers 33:28-29](#) mentions it as between Terah and Hashmonah.

*See also* Wilderness Wanderings.

## Mithna

Town of Josaphat, one of David's mighty warriors ([1 Chr 11:43](#), nlt). Other translations describe him as "the Mithnite."

## Mithredath

1. Name of the treasurer of King Cyrus of Persia, who was given charge of the sacred vessels to give to the Judean prince Sheshbazzar as the exiles prepared to return to Jerusalem ([Ezr 1:8](#)).
2. Persian officer stationed in Samaria who, along with others, wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes of Persia, protesting the restoration of the city and walls of Jerusalem ([Ezr 4:7](#)).

## Mitre

The King James Version translation for turban. A turban is a kind of headdress, worn by the high priest of Israel, in [Exodus 28:4](#).

*See Priests and Levites.*

## Mitylene

A main city on the island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea near the northwestern coast of Asia Minor. Mitylene was a seaport with two harbors. They first built it on a small island separate from Lesbos.

In New Testament times, a raised roadway across a narrow stretch of water connected it with the main island. [Acts 20:14](#) identifies Mitylene as one of the overnight stopping places where Paul and his traveling companions lodged. This was as they journeyed by ship toward Jerusalem.

## Mixed Marriage

A mixed marriage is when a Jewish person marries a non-Jewish person (a gentile). God gave specific instructions about these marriages. God forbade the Israelites from marrying the original people who lived in Canaan. This rule existed because God was concerned that Israelites might start worshiping idols instead of him ([Deuteronomy 7:1-5](#)). The New Testament also warns believers not to be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers ([2 Corinthians 6:14](#)).

Despite this rule, many Israelites did marry foreigners during the time of the judges ([Judges 3:6](#)). This also happened later ([2 Samuel 11:3; 1 Kings 11:1-8](#)).

God gave no clear prohibition against marriages with other nationalities ([Numbers 12:1](#); [Deuteronomy 23:7](#); [Ruth 1:4](#)). After the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylon, the leaders Ezra and Nehemiah strongly opposed marriages between Jews and non-Jews ([Ezra 9:1-4](#); [Nehemiah 13:23-27](#)).

*See also Marriage, Marriage Customs.*

## Mizar

Small hill apparently situated in northern Palestine on the Transjordan plateau near Mt Hermon ([Ps 42:6](#)).

## Mizpah

A Hebrew name meaning, "watchtower" (also spelled "Mizpeh"). Mizpah designates at least six different locations mentioned in the Old Testament and Apocrypha (a set of ancient texts not included in the Hebrew Bible but accepted by some Christian groups).

1. A place in Gilead where Jacob and Laban made a covenant ([Genesis 31:49](#)). They set up a heap of stones to mark the borders between their territories.
2. A place referred to as "the land of Mizpah" ([Joshua 11:3](#)) or the "valley of Mizpah" ([Joshua 11:8](#)). It was near Mount Hermon and the Hivites lived there.
3. A town in Judah near Lachish referred to in [Joshua 15:38](#).

4. A place in the tribal area of Benjamin ([Joshua 18:26](#)). The Israelites gathered here to war against the tribe of Benjamin ([Judges 20:1; 21:1](#)). This was after the men of Gibeah had abused and killed the concubine of a visiting Levite. It was here that Samuel called all Israel together to pray for victory over the Philistines ([1 Samuel 7:5-8](#)). Later, Samuel called for an assembly at Mizpah to declare Saul as king to the people. Here he also instructed the people and king in the ways of the kingdom ([10:17-25](#)). In the time of King Asa, Mizpah was a fortified town on the border between Israel and Judah ([1 Kings 15:22](#)). After the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, Mizpah became the residence of Gedaliah the governor ([2 Kings 25:23-24; Jeremiah 40:10](#)). Ishmael of the "royal seed" killed Gedaliah there ([Jeremiah 41:3](#)). Two days later, Ishmael murdered a group of travelers who were going to Jerusalem. These people were bringing their offerings to the ruined temple. He threw their bodies into a cistern that Asa had constructed centuries earlier.  
In the period between the Old Testament and New Testament, Mizpah continued to be an important religious center. Judas Maccabeus called the people together at Mizpah, "because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah" ([1 Maccabees 3:46](#)).
5. The home of Jephthah. From here he led the Israelites in battle against the Ammonites. He returned here to carry out his vow ([Judges 10-11](#)). It is possible that this is the same place as the Ramath-mizpeh of [Joshua 13:26](#). Many identify it with Khirbat Jal'ad, south of the Jabbok.
6. A town in Moab to which David fled from Saul ([1 Samuel 22:3](#)).

## Mizpar

KJV spelling of Mispar in [Ezra 2:2](#). See Mispar, Mispereth.

## Mizpeh

Alternate spelling for Mizpah ([Jos 11:3, 8; 15:38; 18:26](#)). See Mizpah.

## Mizraim

A Hebrew word for the land of Egypt and/or its people. Yet, some scholars suggest that Mizraim refers to a site either on the Edomite border or in northern Syria.

[Genesis 10:6](#) identifies Mizraim (Egypt) as one of the sons of Ham who settled south of Canaan. [Genesis 10:14](#) and [Isaiah 11:11](#) distinguish Mizraim from Pathrusim (Upper Egypt). Upper Egypt is the southern half of the United Kingdom of Egypt. There are almost 700 known references to Mizraim. Yet, in the majority of references, there is no distinction between the two parts of the kingdom. The term refers to the Egyptian territory.

*See also* Egypt, Egyptian.

## Mizzah

A son of Reuel and a chief of an Edomite clan ([Genesis 36:13, 17; 1 Chronicles 1:37](#)).

## Mnason

A Christian man who lived in Jerusalem ([Acts 21:16](#)). He was born on the island of Cyprus and had been a follower of Jesus for many years. When Paul and the people traveling with him arrived in Jerusalem, Mnason welcomed them and provided a place for them to stay as his guests.

## Moab, Moabites

Moab was a small kingdom in central Transjordan (east of the Jordan River). Moabites were the people who lived in Moab. The land of Moab was located on a high plateau. The steep cliff of the

Jordan Valley formed a natural boundary between Moab and Judah to the west.

The northern boundary of Moab changed depending on how strong the kingdom was at different times. When Moab was powerful, its territory extended north to the area around Heshbon. When Moab was weaker, the Arnon River (modern Wadi el-Mojib) served as its northern border.

The eastern boundary of the kingdom was formed by the edge of the Syrian desert. This was because the eastern boundary marked the limit of land that could be farmed. To the south, the Zered River (modern Wadi el-Hesa) separated Moab from the neighboring kingdom of Edom.

Even at its largest size, ancient Moab was a relatively small territory. It measured only about 96.5 kilometers (60 miles) from north to south and about 32.2 kilometers (20 miles) from east to west.

### *Land Features of Moab*

Most of Moab is a gentle, rolling tableland divided by many ravines. The King's Highway, an important ancient road, went through the center of Moab. This route was likely significant for military movement and trade throughout the region's history ([Numbers 21:21-22; Judges 11:17](#)).

The high plateau of Moab has always been known for its excellent grazing land for animals ([2 Kings 3:4](#)). The soil and climate in Moab are also very good for growing crops like wheat and barley.

### *Origins of Moab*

According to [Genesis 19:37](#), the Moabites descended from Moab. Moab was the son of Lot and his oldest daughter. [Deuteronomy 2:10-11](#) tells us that before the Moabites lived in this region, a people called the Emim were there. This information relates to the time when the Hebrew people were preparing to enter the land. However, the Bible does not explain how Lot's descendants, the Emim, and the people living in Moab at the time of the Hebrew invasion were connected.

So far, historians have not found specific information about how the Moabite kingdom began. The kingdom existed from around 1300 BC to 600 BC. What we know about Moabite history and culture during this time comes from archaeological discoveries and ancient texts, including writings from Egypt, Assyria, and the Old Testament.

### *Early Relations with Israel*

Before the Israelites traveled through the land east of the Jordan River, the Moabites had lost control of their territory north of the Arnon River. This area was ruled by Sihon, an Amorite king who governed from Heshbon ([Numbers 21:13, 26](#)).

The Israelites asked for permission to travel through Edom and Moab along the King's Highway, but they were refused. They then fought against Sihon and won in one of their most famous battles. King Balak of Moab was afraid that Israel might conquer his land. He went to war against the Israelites ([Numbers 22:6; Joshua 24:9](#)). He hired the Mesopotamian fortune teller, Balaam, to pronounce a curse upon his enemies ([Numbers 22-24](#)).

The tribes of Reuben and Gad settled in the territory of Sihon. The Arnon River formed the border between Israel and Moab (chapter [32](#)). The land north of the Arnon River was once controlled by Moab. This area became a source of conflict after the Israelites took it from King Sihon. Later, this territory was involved in idol worship practices at a place called Shittim (chapter [25](#)).

### *Period of the Judges and Ruth*

For a time, Eglon, the king of Moab, ruled over the Hebrew tribes on both sides of the Jordan River until he was killed by Ehud ([Judges 3:12-30](#)). By the time of Jephthah, the Israelites had regained control of northern Moab ([11:26](#)). The book of Ruth shows that there were also periods when Moab and Israel lived peacefully with each other.

### *Kingdom Period to Babylonian Conquest*

During the reigns of Saul and David, from the late 11th until the mid-10th centuries BC, Moab and Israel were at war. Israel usually had the advantage in these conflicts ([1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:2](#)). King Solomon had Moabite women in his harem. He also built a high place (a place of worship) for Chemosh, the main god of the Moabites ([1 Kings 11:1, 7](#)).

After the kingdom of Israel split in 930 BC, Moab enjoyed a short period of independence. This ended when the Israelite kings Omri and Ahab took control of Moab and its king, Mesha, during the ninth century BC. The famous Moabite Stone describes the conflict between Mesha and the dynasty of Omri. This stone and other shorter texts show that the Moabite language was very similar to Old Testament Hebrew.

Moab continued to fight with its neighbors (Israel, Judah, Edom, and most importantly, Assyria). The fighting continued until the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Moabite kingdom early in the sixth century BC ([Ezekiel 25:8–11](#)). These conflicts are recorded in Assyrian writings, which tell us that Moab became a servant state to Assyria in the late eighth century BC. The conflicts are also recorded in the Old Testament ([2 Kings 3; 10:32–33; 13:20; 24:2](#)).

The hatred between Moab, Israel, and Judah is especially clear in several prophecies against the Moabites ([Isaiah 15–16; Jeremiah 9:25–26; 48; Amos 2:1–3; Zephaniah 2:8–11](#)). These passages mention some of the major towns in ancient Moab (Nebo, Medeba, Heshbon, Dibon, Ar, Kir, and Horonaim).

### *Later History of Moab*

After the Babylonian conquest, the Persians took control of the region of Moab. Various Arab peoples moved into the area, especially the Nabateans. Although the Moabite kingdom was never established again, people with Moabite ancestry were still recognized in later Old Testament times ([Ezra 9:1; Nehemiah 13:1, 23](#)). The Jewish community that returned from exile was concerned about following the law written in [Deuteronomy 23:3–6](#), which restricted Moabites from joining the assembly of God.

In AD 106, the region of Moab became part of the Roman province of Arabia. Archaeological research has added much information about Moabite history and culture from prehistoric times through the Ottoman period.

### *Religion in Moab*

During the third and second millennia BC, the religion of Moab was probably similar to what the Canaanites practiced. Over time, however, Moabite religion developed into its own distinct system.

Although the Moabites worshiped other gods, Chemosh was their main national god. The Old Testament refers to the Moabites as the "people of Chemosh" ([Numbers 21:29; Jeremiah 48:46](#)). The frequent appearance of "Chemosh" in Moabite personal names shows how important this god was to them. The Moabite Stone mentions Chemosh about twelve times. These references generally describe him as a god of war who leads his people in battle against their enemies.

They sought divine guidance and favor from their gods. The people respected diviners (people who could predict the future) and oracles (messages from the gods; see [Numbers 22–24](#)). Moabite religion included a priesthood and a system of sacrifices ([Jeremiah 48:7; Numbers 22:40–23:30; 25:1–5; 2 Kings 3:27; Jeremiah 48:35](#)).

No one has discovered a Moabite sanctuary. But, the Moabite Stone and the Old Testament mention their existence ([1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13](#)). Tombs found at Dibon were filled with carefully arranged items, suggesting that the Moabites believed in life after death.

*See also* Canaanite Deities and Religion; Moabite Stone.

### **Moabite Stone**

The longest literary source outside the Old Testament that deals with the history of the region of Palestine and Transjordan during 1300–600 BC.

It is especially important for understanding the history of the Moabites, who lived east of the Dead Sea.

The stone was discovered in the 1860s and provides a detailed narrative of King Mesha of Moab, who reigned in the mid-ninth century BC. The stone is a hard slab with a rounded top, measuring three feet, ten inches (1.2 meters) high, two feet (0.6 meters) wide, and two and a half inches (6.4 centimeters) thick. It contains 39 lines of writing similar to Hebrew.

On August 19, 1868, F. Klein, a German employed by the Church Missionary Society, reported the stone's existence. Interest from the German and French consuls led to disputes among the Arabs who found it, as they sought the best price. In this dispute, the stone was heated and broken into pieces. The fragments were distributed among granaries as blessings for good harvests. Luckily, a French Consulate messenger obtained an impression of the writing, although it began to break during his return to the consulate on horseback. Larger sections were later gathered and smaller pieces were located, allowing the stone to be reconstructed. Despite missing parts, the stone provides a clear history of the Moabites.

The text begins with a dedication to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites. King Mesha, who ruled Moab for 30 years, expresses his gratitude to Chemosh

for delivering him from enemies and allowing him to see his desires fulfilled. Mesha built a high place for Chemosh, possibly at the stone's discovery site.

The text includes a brief history of the Moabites that aligns with the Old Testament. It mentions that "Omri, king of Israel," oppressed Moab for many days because Chemosh was angry with Moab. Omri's son "succeeded him and he too said, 'I will oppress Moab.' In my [Mesha's] time he said [this] but I triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel has perished for ever." This 40-year domination by Israel likely includes the reigns of Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and part of Jehoram's reign.

- Omri was king from 885 to 874 BC ([1 Kings 16](#)).
- Ahab, son of Omri, was king from 874 to 853 BC.
- Ahaziah was king from 853 to 852 BC.
- Jehoram was king from 852 to 841 BC.

The son mentioned in the text on the Moabite Stone is Omri's grandson, consistent with the scripture that Jehoram (also called Joram) tried to suppress Moabite rebels ([2 Kings 3:4–27](#)).

The remainder of the text details Mesha's victories over the Israelites, his public works, and Chemosh's call for Mesha to fight the Hauranites.

*See also* Inscriptions; Moab, Moabites.

## Moadiah

Head of a family of postexilic priests, whose house was headed by Piltai during the days of Joiakim the high priest ([Neh 12:17](#)); alternately called Maadiah in verse [5](#). *See* Maadiah.

## Modius

Dry measure equivalent to about one peck.

## Moladah

One of the cities belonging to Judah's tribe ([Jos 15:26](#)), later assigned to Simeon ([Jos 19:2](#); [1 Chr 4:28](#)). The people of Judah resettled that area after the exile ([Neh 11:26](#)).

Some consider Moladah identical to Malatha, which became an Idumean fortress occupied by the Edomites (Josephus's *Antiquities* 18.6.2). Others place it by Jattir, at modern Khureibet el-Waten, as do Jerome and Eusebius. The evidence is, however, too obscure to make certain identification.

## Mole

Small, burrowing rodent ([Is 2:20](#)). *See* Animals.

## Molech

Molech was a god worshiped by the Ammonite people. People who worshiped Molech would sacrifice humans to him ([Leviticus 18:21](#); [Jeremiah 32:35](#)). Molech is also known as Milcom or Malcham.

*See* Milcom.

## Molid

Son of Abishur and Abihail from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 2:29](#)).

## Moloch

Another spelling of Molech, an Ammonite god ([Acts 7:43](#)).

*See* Milcom.

## Molten Sea

Alternate name for the laver in King Solomon's temple in [1 Kings 7:23](#). *See* Bronze Sea; Laver; Tabernacle; Temple.

## Money

Medium of exchange, measurement of value, means of payment.

Money was developed as a convenient medium of exchange to supplement and later to replace bartering, although the two systems operated concurrently for many centuries. From the patriarchal period to the present day, wealth has

been measured in terms of goods and precious metals, particularly gold and silver, which remain universally acceptable mediums of exchange. [Genesis 13:2](#) describes Abraham as “very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.”

Wealth in a nomadic or seminomadic society was frequently measured by the number of cattle a person possessed, and because of this, cattle were a readily acceptable and easily valued, if rather large, medium of exchange. The degree to which cattle were commonly recognized as the standard for value, wealth, and exchange is reflected in the Latin form for money, *pecunia*, which is derived directly from *pecus*, meaning “cattle.” For religious purposes, taxes or donations paid in cattle were most acceptable, and this not only increased the general recognition for this medium but also made the temple a repository for large herds of cattle, as well as smaller animals and produce, which, if they could not be used directly in the temple rituals, could be bartered for whatever commodities were required. Perishable foods were less popular for purposes of exchange than animals such as sheep and asses, although timber, wine, and honey were regularly used as a form of currency ([1 Sm 8:15](#); [2 Kgs 3:4](#); [Ez 45:13–16](#)). Both public and private taxes, tribute, and debts of all kinds were settled by this means. Solomon paid Hiram, king of Tyre, in wheat and olive oil for his assistance in the construction of the temple ([1 Kgs 5:11](#)), and in the eighth century BC taxes were commonly paid in jars of wine or olive oil. Tribute in the form of sheep and wool is recorded in [2 Kings 3:4](#).

All the means of exchange mentioned represented goods that could be measured or counted, and attempts were made to establish a standard rate of exchange for them in relation to each other.

Silver was the precious metal most readily available in the ancient Near East and was therefore the one most frequently mentioned in connection with purchases by weight, and at a later period by coin. The first recorded instance in the Bible of silver being used as a medium of exchange occurs in [Genesis 20:14–16](#), where Abraham received a payment of 1,000 shekels by weight of silver, as well as animals and slaves. Abraham also purchased the field and cave of Machpelah for 400 shekels of silver ([Gn 23:15–16](#)), which according to the custom of the day had to be weighed out in front of the vendor and checked by witnesses (cf. [Jer 32:9–10](#)).

As these events occurred about the beginning of the second millennium BC, the term “shekel” would

not represent the coin familiar from later periods but rather a certain weight of silver. At a later time the brothers of Joseph sold him to traveling merchants for 20 shekels of silver ([Gn 37:28](#)). [Genesis 33:19](#) mentions another unit of weight for metal, *the kesitah* (nlt mg), in connection with the purchase of a field by Jacob; the term occurs again in [Joshua 24:32](#) and [Job 42:11](#). This unit may have represented an amount equivalent to the currency value for a lamb.

In time large animals and material objects came to be considered extremely cumbersome as a means of exchange, and metal became increasingly popular. Transportation of large quantities of precious metal remained a problem, however, and a method had to be devised for easy recognition, accessibility, and storage of particular metals of value.

Over the years, fairly uniform shapes were designed for metals used in transactions. Silver could be piled or tied in bundles, as shown in Egyptian bas-reliefs, and the sons of Jacob took advantage of a similar method in transporting the purchase price of the grain they were buying from Egypt ([Gn 42:35](#)). About 1500 BC, pieces of metal shaped in the form of ingots, bars, tongues, or heads of animals were in use, as well as gold discs and rings of gold wire. Perhaps the most popular pieces acceptable as currency were those that had also been designed as jewelry. The valuables listed among the spoil of the Midianites included gold chains, bracelets, signet rings, and earrings ([Nm 31:50](#)). The bracelets and rings in particular probably represented a standardized weight, and could therefore be used easily as currency. Rebekah received gifts from her fiancé that were in the form of jewelry of specific weight: a gold ring weighing half a shekel and two bracelets weighing ten gold shekels ([Gn 24:22](#)). Job was given a fine ring of gold by a number of relatives, and it is unlikely that they would all have given him the same gift if it did not in fact represent a certain monetary value ([Jb 42:11](#)).

The requirement in [Deuteronomy 14:25](#) to “bind up your money” would again imply either thin strips of silver that could be bundled together or rings that could be strung. In either event, transportation would be facilitated.

The value for weights of silver mentioned in Mosaic times can best be understood in terms of purchasing power. A ram could be bought for two shekels, while fifty shekels was the price of about four bushels of barley ([Lv 27:16](#)). In the time of

Elisha, during a good year, one and one-half pecks of fine flour or three pecks of barley could be bought for one shekel ([2 Kgs 7:16](#)). Needless to say, monetary valuations of this kind would be affected by such economic considerations as supply and demand.

Estimation by eye was an inaccurate means of judging the value of currency, and there is no doubt that cheating was prevalent in the weighing and examination of metal. The weighing, an essential part of every major transaction, was also very time-consuming. In order to ensure the correct value of the weights, which were usually pieces of bronze, iron, or dressed stones, they carried some sort of stamp. Once this practice was generally established, it was a short step to the stamping of the individual pieces of metal, whether tongues, bars, or bracelets, being used as currency. The next logical development was stamping a piece of silver to authenticate its value for purposes of currency. This was the precursor of the coin, which was not known in the ancient Near East prior to the exilic period. Therefore, any reference to money before that time indicates bars, bracelets, rings, or other metal objects, stamped or unstamped.

The earliest minted coins came from the kingdom of Lydia in Asia Minor, being credited traditionally to Croesus (560–546 BC), the fabulously wealthy ruler of that land. The coins from Lydia were made of electrum, a natural alloy of silver and gold, and they depicted a lion and a bull. Like most of the early coins, the reverse simply contained a punch mark.

Originally a coin not only represented a value, but also its weight was worth the amount of silver or gold of its face value. Thus many of the early coins were slashed heavily by some ancient skeptics, who wished to be sure that the coin was of pure silver and not a less valuable metal coated with silver.

The purity of silver or gold was also a factor in the popularity and acceptance of particular coins. Thus in Greek and Roman times the tetradrachma from Tyre was one of the most widely accepted silver coins because of the purity of its metal content.

The use of coins did not eliminate the necessity for weighing, because the fraudulent clipping of the edges of coins was prevalent from their introduction in the sixth century BC. This particular problem plagued all subsequent issues of coinage, and it was only in the late 18th century in Britain that it was surmounted by a process involving the

milling, or reeding, of the edges of the more valuable coins.

In the sixth century BC, when the Jews returned from exile in Babylonia, coins were donated for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, as well as silver and gold in other forms. The gold coin mentioned is a “daric.” The term, apparently derived from the name of the great Persian king Darius I (521–486 BC), was in wide current use and even appears in biblical passages written at a later date but referring to a period before the reign of Darius (cf. [1 Chr 29:7](#)).

Few craftsmen with the skills required for the manufacture of coins would have been available before the sixth century BC, so the earliest gold darics were probably minted at Sardis. The mint itself was taken over by the Persians when they occupied the territory, with production continuing as before.

Western sections of the Persian Empire probably used silver coins more frequently than gold. According to some traditions, coinage developed in Greece at Aegina about the time that the Lydians first adopted the concept. The earliest of these silver coins to be excavated so far dates from the sixth century BC and was minted in northern Greece.

Also in current use were the popular fifth-century BC tetradrachmas from Athens, which had dies on both sides of the coin. These depicted the head of the goddess Athena and the sacred owl.

Although the silver content of many coins in contemporary use was lowered, that of the Athenian tetradrachma remained consistently at its original high standard of purity. This circumstance naturally increased its acceptability, especially in areas caught up in political turmoil where the purity of the local currency was particularly questionable. Because of the stability of the silver content of the coin and the rapidity with which the Greek Empire was expanding, the Athenian tetradrachma was minted and used almost unchanged over a period of 200 years. Many of these coins have been found in hoards all over the eastern Mediterranean.

There is no doubt that by the fourth century BC there was a local mint in Judea, for silver coins imitating the Athenian tetradrachma, but also bearing the legend “Jehud,” have been excavated there.

Because of the extent of trade in Greek and Roman times, the coins from the larger centers had a general acceptance in all the Mediterranean coastal areas. They were also favored in the inland areas, especially in those traversed by trading routes or those that were part of a larger empire.

Mints in Gaza, Joppa, and Tyre were established about the end of the fourth century BC to produce local currency. At this period Sidon continued to be an important supplier of silver coins, as it had been since the fifth century BC.

As the Seleucids gained control of Judea in 198 BC, a period of political turmoil commenced when the Syrians tried to Hellenize the Jewish people. Resentment toward Greek culture and resistance to all tampering with the traditional Jewish faith increased steadily until it found an outlet in the leadership of Mattathias, father of the Maccabees, who began a guerrilla uprising in 167 BC.

When the fortunes of war shifted temporarily to the Maccabees, King Antiochus of Syria granted Simon Maccabeus the right to mint his own coins ([1 Macc 15:6](#)), but before he could take advantage of this prime symbol of independence, the balance of power changed once more. Judea returned to its status as a tributary, and the permission to mint coinage was hastily withdrawn.

Simon's son, John Hyrcanus, succeeded in overcoming the weakened Syrians and declared independence in 129 BC. The small bronze coins minted about 110 BC showed a wreath on the obverse bearing the inscription "Johanan the high priest and the community of the Jews." The reverse displayed a double cornucopia with a poppy head, both of which were Greek symbols of plenty. These were the first genuinely Jewish coins.

With the lack of skilled craftsmen and of a good mint it is hardly surprising that the resulting coins were simple and unpretentious. In consequence they were quite unlike the elaborate, and often delicate, designs of many contemporary coins.

Meanwhile, silver coins continued to be struck in the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon on the orders of the Seleucids, and they remained the most popular silver coins in everyday use in Palestine until Roman times. Even then they continued to circulate side by side with the Roman coinage.

*See also* Banker, Banking; Coins; Money Changer.

## Money Changer

An old job similar to that of a modern banker. A money changer would change money from one country into money from another country. They would also exchange small coins for larger coins or the other way around. Money changers charged a fee for this work.

Standard coins only started being used around 700 BC. Before that, people weighted pieces of silver to pay for things ([Genesis 20:16; 37:28; Judges 17:2](#)). Once standard coins started being used in Asia Minor, other places copied the idea. Coins were different in each country, so money changers had to figure out how much they were worth.

In earlier periods, pieces of silver were weighed out in payment for goods ([Genesis 20:16; 37:28; Judges 17:2](#)). Once the standardized coin was adopted in Asia Minor the idea was copied in other lands, but since coins differed from country to country, equivalents had to be worked out by the money changers.

This was very important in Palestine. Every adult Jewish man had to pay a half-shekel tax ([Exodus 30:11-16](#)). Jews from different countries might bring many types of coins. The temple leaders had to decide which coin was right for this tax. They chose the silver half-shekel coin from Tyre also known as the *tetradrachma*.

In [Matthew 17:27](#), Peter was told to pay the temple tax for Jesus and himself with the coin he found in the mouth of a fish. The Mishnah says (*Sheqalim* 1:3) that money changers worked in local areas on the 15th day of Adar to collect this tax. This was the month before the Passover. Ten days before the Passover the money changers moved to the temple courts to help Jews from other countries.

Jesus met the money changers in the temple courtyard when he "cleaned the temple" ([Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-16; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-22](#)). People have argued about why he did this. People needed to get the half-shekels to pay their taxes. They also needed to buy birds, animals, or cakes for offerings. All this buying and money changing seemed wrong in the holy temple area (compare [Mark 11:16](#)). Jesus seemed to agree with paying the temple tax itself ([Matthew 8:4; 17:24-26; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14](#)).

It is also possible the money changers and people selling birds and animals were charging too much. The money changers and temple leaders may have done this for their own gain. These activities could

have happened farther from the holy area. The noise and bargaining common in markets might have bothered people praying and making offerings in the temple courts. (compare [Jeremiah 7:11](#)).

*See also* Coins; Money.

## Monotheism

The belief that there is only one God. It is different from:

- Polytheism (the belief in more than one god)
- Henotheism (the worship of one god among many gods)
- Atheism (the denial of any god)

The main monotheistic religions are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

### *What Does Monotheism Say About God?*

If there is only one God, the God must be personal, sovereign, infinite, eternal, perfect, and almighty. Scripture describes God this way. Biblical revelation is the only way we can clearly know who God is and what he is like.

1. God is **distinct** from the world (unlike pantheism, the belief that god is the universe). He is the only Creator and sustainer of the universe.
2. He is beyond his creation (**transcendent**).
3. He enters into time and human affairs (**imminent**).

Monotheism is known through:

- Historical events: "The God who acts" affects history to save the human race.
- Verbal communication: "The God who speaks" communicates through prophets to teach and help his followers.

Monotheism allows for a direct relationship between God and humans. The New Testament shows that this happened because of Jesus Christ.

### *What Does the Bible Say About Monotheism?*

The Bible teaches that humans were originally monotheistic. This is confirmed through [Genesis 1-3](#). Polytheism was a result of sin. Polytheism existed by the time of Abraham. God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees to travel to Canaan, the land God had promised him and his children. This resulted in a rejection of his family's polytheism ([Genesis 11:31-12:9](#)).

When Abraham arrived in Canaan, the people in the land were polytheistic. Every culture in Palestine had many gods ([Genesis 31:3-35](#); [Judges 11:24](#); [1 Samuel 5:2-5](#); [1 Kings 11:33](#)). The descendants of Abraham often strayed from God and worshipped the gods of the Canaanites. They would also mix pagan practices with their worship of God ([Genesis 35:2-4](#); compare [Joshua 24:2](#); [1 Kings 16:30-33](#)).

The role of the prophets was to call the Israelites back to monotheism, worshiping "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" ([Exodus 3:6, 15-16](#); compare [1 Kings 18:17-18](#)). The Israelites needed to be reminded of their monotheism because of the polytheistic beliefs of their neighbors. Even David needed these reminders ([1 Samuel 26:19](#)), as did Solomon ([1 Kings 11:1-7](#)) and later kings ([12:28-32](#); [2 Kings 10:31; 22:17](#)).

Early prophets did not argue for monotheism. Rather, they rejected the pagan gods ([1 Kings 18:24](#)). Eighth-century BC prophets asserted the importance of monotheism in response to persistent polytheism. The exile cured the Israelites of their temptation to polytheism. Their enemies destroyed their idols and showed that they were powerless ([Psalm 115](#); [Isaiah 46](#)). Then, Israel learned that only God could help them when they needed him. He is the true and living God who can save his people when they repent and obey him.

*See also* God, Being and Attributes of.

## Monster

Term designating various creatures of the water.  
*See* Animals (Crocodile; Dragon).

## Month

*See* Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

## Moon

Lesser light in the sky ([Genesis 1:16](#)). Many Semitic languages use the same word for moon as the Hebrew. In three passages in the Hebrew Old Testament, the moon is called “the white one,” and paired with “the hot one,” the sun ([Song of Solomon 6:10](#); [Isaiah 24:23](#); [30:26](#)). Another term, “crescent,” is used in other languages such as Aramaic and Arabic, and “crescent ornaments” ([Judges 8:21, 26](#); [Isaiah 3:18](#)) are mentioned.

In the creation account, it is said concerning the functions of the two luminaries: “Let them be signs to mark the seasons and days and years” ([Genesis 1:14](#)). That is, “times” are determined by their movements. For this reason, when describing the mighty deeds of the Lord in creation, the poet says, “He made the moon to mark the seasons” ([Psalm 104:19](#)).

The ancient Hebrew calendar was lunar ([Sirach 43:6-7](#)), the months beginning with the new moon, marked by special rituals ([Numbers 10:10](#); [28:11-14](#); [2 Chronicles 2:4](#)). Two great festivals, Passover and Tabernacles, began in midmonth when the moon was full ([Leviticus 23:5-6](#); [Psalm 81:3-5](#); and [Leviticus 23:34](#), respectively). The seven-day week is a division of the twenty-eight-day lunar cycle into logical and convenient units, so the moon may be said to provide the basis for the significance of the number seven. As a corollary, the beginning of the seventh month, the Feast of Trumpets ([Leviticus 23:24](#)), marked the climax month of the sacred feasts. It also signified the New Year for the years a ruler had been in power and for agriculture (Josephus’s *Antiquities* 1.1.3; Mishnah, *Rosh Hashanah* 1:1).

One verse in the creation story speaks of the sun’s dominion over the day and the moon’s over the night ([Genesis 1:16](#); compare [Psalm 136:9](#)). The moon is also mentioned (alongside the sun) in the general order of creation when the spheres of the universe were established ([Jeremiah 31:35](#)). From this the luminaries symbolize the continuity of the world order ([Psalms 72:5](#); [89:37-38](#)). The darkening of the moon (and the sun) is a sign of the change of the order in creation in the latter days ([Isaiah 13:10](#); [Ezra 32:7](#); [Joel 2:10](#); [Hebrews 3:11](#); [Matthew 24:29](#); [Mark 13:24](#); [Revelation 6:12](#); the converse is stated in [Isaiah 30:26](#)).

Since the moon resembles the sun, it also has the power to smite ([Psalm 121:6](#)) and to influence the

growth of crops in the field ([Deuteronomy 33:14](#)). In the book of Deuteronomy, the Israelites were warned against worshiping the moon and the rest of the host of heaven ([Deuteronomy 4:19](#); [17:3](#)), but this foreign worship eventually spread into the Judean kingdom ([2 Kings 21:3](#); [23:4-5](#); [Jeremiah 7:18](#); [8:2](#)).

To keep accurate control over the calendar and the feasts, the new moon was carefully observed seven times during the year in Jerusalem. This ensured that the major feasts fell on the proper days. The Sanhedrin would gather early in the morning on the last day of the preceding month, and watchmen were posted to observe the moon’s first appearance. When the evidence became clear, the sacred word was pronounced, and the day became the first of the new month. Fire signals beginning from the Mount of Olives announced the new moon. Later, they were replaced by messengers because the Samaritans had set up false signals along the way.

*See also* Astronomy; Calendars, Ancient and Modern; Feasts and Festivals of Israel.

## Moon, New

*See* Calendars, Ancient and Modern; Feasts and Festivals of Israel; Moon.

## Morasthite

KJV designation for the prophet Micah, taken from the name of the town Moresheth ([Jer 26:18](#); [Mic 1:1](#)). See Micah (Person) #7.

**Mordecai**

1. A Jewish leader during the exile, and we know about him mainly from the book of Esther. According to some rabbinic sources, Mordecai himself wrote the book of Esther. He lived during the reign of King Xerxes of Persia (also called Ahasuerus). At that time, Persia was a large empire that included 127 provinces.

Mordecai was from the tribe of Benjamin and a descendant of Kish (the father of King Saul). His relatives were among the Jews that King Nebuchadnezzar forced to leave Palestine and live in Babylon. Even though Mordecai had a Babylonian name, he cared deeply for his fellow Jews. Even though King Cyrus said they could return to their homeland in 538 BC, they chose to live in other lands instead of facing the difficulties of rebuilding Palestine.

Mordecai's life is connected to his cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. He adopted her after her parents died. When the king removed Queen Vashti from power, Esther became the new queen. This position later helped her save her people.

Mordecai's strong guidance and influence on Esther were very important. However, it was God's protection that made their actions successful. This protected the Jews from the evil plans of Haman, the king's chief advisor.

Haman hated the Jews and made plans to destroy them all. He was angry because Mordecai refused to bow to him. (Bowing was a sign of respect.) When Mordecai learned of Haman's plans, he sent a message to Esther through a royal servant named Hathach.

At first, Esther was afraid to take action. But Mordecai urged her to think about whether God had made her queen for this very purpose (to save their people). He warned her with these famous words:

"Do not imagine that because you are in the king's palace you alone will escape the fate of all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows if perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" ([Esther 4:13-14](#)).

Through these words, Mordecai was telling Esther that God had likely made her queen specifically to help save her people.

While Haman was plotting against Mordecai, he built a tall wooden structure (called gallows) to hang him on. The night it was finished, King Xerxes could not sleep. He asked someone to read him the record book of his reign. From this, the king learned that Mordecai had once saved his life by stopping an assassination attempt. The king asked if Mordecai had ever been rewarded for this good deed. When he found out that Mordecai had never been honored, the king called for Haman.

The king asked Haman what should be done for someone the king wanted to honor. Haman thought the king was talking about him, so he suggested three grand gestures ([Esther 6:7-9](#)). But to Haman's surprise, the king ordered him to do all these things for Mordecai! Later, in an unexpected turn of events, Haman was executed on the very same gallows he had built to kill Mordecai.

After Haman's death, Mordecai and Esther needed to act quickly. The first order to kill the Jews could not be changed since it was already law. But King Xerxes, who now cared about protecting the Jews, made a new law. This new law allowed the Jews to defend themselves and fight back against anyone who tried to attack them. Mordecai sent this new order to all the Persian officials. They worked

with him to protect the Jews, and many of their enemies were killed. After this victory, Mordecai told the Jews to celebrate their rescue every year on the 14th and 15th days of Adar (around March). They called this celebration "Purim." This name comes from the word "pur," which means "lot." It refers to the lot that Haman had used to choose the day he planned to destroy the Jews.

*See also Esther, Book of.*

2. One of the ten Jewish leaders who returned with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 2:2](#); [Nehemiah 7:7](#)).

## Moreh, Hill of

Hill close to the valley of Jezreel, near which the Midianites camped when they were attacked by Gideon ([Jgs 7:1](#)). It was probably called by this name because it was the location of a sanctuary where divination was practiced. Its name may imply instruction or divination. It is generally identified with Jebel Nabi Dahi, across the valley from Mt Gilboa.

## Moreh, Oak of

Abraham's first recorded stopping place upon entering Palestine after leaving Mesopotamia. Here he built an altar to God ([Gn 12:6](#)). Later, Moses mentioned this place as a geographical landmark to identify the whereabouts of Mt Gerizim and Mt Ebal ([Dt 11:30](#)). The kjv improperly reads "plain" of Moreh. The oak of Moreh was located near Shechem.

## Moresheth

Micah's hometown ([Jer 26:18](#); [Mi 1:1](#)). *See* Micah (Person) #7.

## Moresheth-Gath

Town in the lowland country of Judah included in Micah's lament ([Mi 1:14](#)); perhaps the same as

Moresheth, Micah's hometown. The "gath" in Moresheth-gath suggests that the town was in close proximity to the major Philistine city by that name. Its exact location is uncertain. Jerome (a fourth-century AD church father) suggested that Moresheth-gath was situated a short distance east of Eleutheropolis, identifiable with modern Khirbet el-Basel. Another possible site is Tell ej-Judeideh, six miles (9.7 kilometers) southeast of Gath.

## Moriah

Moriah is a name that appears twice in the Old Testament.

The first time is in the story of Abraham. God sent Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac in "the land of Moriah" ([Genesis 22:2](#)). In that place, God provided a ram to take Isaac's place. The story also says that God "appeared" to Abraham there. Some people think the name "Moriah" may be linked to the Hebrew word *ra'ah*, which can mean "see," "provide," or "appear." The ending -iah is short for the Lord's name and is found in many Hebrew names.

The second mention is in [2 Chronicles 3:1](#). This verse says that Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah. It also says that this was the place where the Lord appeared to David. It connects the mountain with the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (compare [2 Samuel 24](#); [1 Chronicles 21](#)). But the Bible does not directly say this is the same place where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac.

Some people believe the two stories happened in the same place because both tell of the Lord appearing. The Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities* 1.13.2; 7.13.4) said that Solomon's temple stood on the same place where Isaac was offered. The book of *Jubilees* (written in the 100s BC) also connects the two events (*Jubilees* 18:13).

Other traditions have different views. Samaritan tradition says Moriah was Mount Gerizim. In Muslim tradition, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem marks the place where Abraham offered Isaac. The large rock under the dome is thought to be the site of the sacrifice.

## Morning Sacrifice

*See Offerings and Sacrifices.*

## Morning Star

Another name for the planet Venus. This term is closely linked to the ideas of "dayspring" ([Job 38:12; Luke 1:78](#)) and "daystar" ([2 Peter 1:19](#)). Jesus confirms he is the Morning Star when he says, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star" ([Revelation 22:16](#)).

This statement is similar to Jesus saying, "I am the light of the world" ([John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46](#)). The main idea behind this symbol is Christ as a light shining in darkness ([Luke 2:32; John 1:4, 7–9; 3:19; 12:35; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:14; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 2:8; Revelation 21:23](#)).

When the Messiah (Jesus) was born, it was like the morning star rising. This event marked the start of the gospel light spreading ([Isaiah 9:1–2; Matthew 4:15–16](#)). The phrase "Morning Star" points to two things about Christ:

1. His glory as the source of light
2. His grace in sharing life with others

Jesus not only called himself the Morning Star, but he also said he gives the Morning Star to those who overcome ([Revelation 2:28](#)).

## Mortar, the

Name given by Zephaniah to a hollow place or depression resembling a mortar in Jerusalem. The "mortar" (Hebrew, Maktesh) was a place of business whose merchants were soon to grieve for their loss of trade ([Zep 1:11](#)). Its location is variously identified with the Phoenician quarter, the Kidron Valley, or the Tyropoeon Valley.

*See also* Jerusalem.

## Moserah, Moseroth

Temporary camping place of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. It was positioned between Hashmonah and Bene-jaakan ([Nm 33:30–31](#)). Later, Aaron died and was buried there ([Dt 10:6](#)). Moseroth is the plural form of Moserah.

## Moses

The great leader of the Hebrew people who led them out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land

of Canaan. He gave them the law at Mount Sinai, which became the foundation of their religious faith for centuries. Moses took on many roles, including:

- Prophet
- Priest
- Lawgiver
- Judge
- Intercessor
- Shepherd
- Miracle worker
- Founder of a nation

The meaning of his name is uncertain. It might be a Hebrew word meaning "to draw out" ([Exodus 2:10](#); compare [2 Samuel 22:17](#); [Psalm 18:16](#)). If Pharaoh's daughter, who found him, gave him an Egyptian name, it might mean "son," as seen in Egyptian names like Ahmose, Thutmose, and Ramses. No one else in the Old Testament has this name.

Moses is the greatest figure in the Old Testament, mentioned by name 767 times. His influence extends to the New Testament, where he is mentioned 79 times. The first 40 years of his life were spent in Pharaoh's household, where he learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians ([Acts 7:23](#)).

For the next 40 years, he lived in Midian as a fugitive after killing an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew. His last 40 years were dedicated to leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants ([Genesis 12:1–3](#)). He died at the age of 120 after leading the Israelites through 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. He brought them to the edge of the promised land on the east side of the Jordan River ([Deuteronomy 34:7](#)). Moses is one of history's great figures, turning a group of slaves into a nation that has profoundly influenced the course of history.

### Preview

- Background
- The First 40 Years—In Egypt
- The Second 40 Years—In Midian
- The Third 40 Years—From Egypt to Canaan

- Moses in the New Testament

### *Background*

We only know about the life of Moses from the Bible. Archaeology confirms the events surrounding Moses but does not know that he existed or what he did. His story begins with the arrival in Egypt of Jacob, his sons, and their families during a famine in Canaan. After being invited by Joseph and welcomed by Pharaoh, the family settled in Goshen in northeast Egypt. They lived there for 430 years ([Exodus 12:40](#)). Over time, their numbers grew rapidly, filling the land ([Exodus 1:7](#)). A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. The Bible does not name this pharaoh, and his identity is debated. He is often identified as:

- Thutmose III, who was pharaoh from 1504 to 1451 BC;
- Seti I, who was pharaoh from 1304 to 1290 BC; or
- Ramses II, who was pharaoh from 1290 to 1224 BC.

Pharaoh was afraid that the Israelites were becoming too many and could become dangerous. So, he tried to reduce their population. He put them to work building the store cities of Pithom and Rameses, but the harsh labor did not reduce their numbers. He then tried to get the midwives to kill the male babies, but they refused to follow his orders. Finally, he commanded his own people to drown the male infants in the Nile River. It was against this backdrop of the first-known Jewish persecution that baby Moses was born.

### *The First 40 Years—In Egypt*

#### **Birth and Early Life**

A man from the family of Levi named Amram married his father's sister, Jochebed ([Exodus 6:20](#); compare [2:1](#)). Their first son, Aaron, was born three years before Moses and before the command to drown Hebrew babies, so his life was not in danger. However, the cruel order was in force when Moses was born. After three months, his mother could no longer hide him. She took a basket made of bulrushes and coated it with bitumen and pitch. She then placed the baby in it and put the basket among the reeds along the riverbank. His older sister, Miriam, stayed nearby to watch what would happen.

Soon, Pharaoh's daughter came to the river to bathe, as she did often. (She is identified by Josephus as Thermuthis and by others as Hatshepsut, though her actual identity is unknown.) She discovered the baby, recognized him as a Hebrew child, and decided to raise him as her own. Miriam then approached and offered to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. The princess agreed, and Miriam brought the baby back to his mother, who nursed him for perhaps two or three years (compare [1 Samuel 1:19–24](#)).

Nothing is recorded about those early years. It is unknown whether his mother saw him in his later childhood and young adulthood or if she told him who he was and taught him the Hebrew faith. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, fitting for a member of the royal household, and became mighty in his words and deeds ([Acts 7:22](#)).

#### **Identification with His Own People**

It is unclear when Moses first learned he was a Hebrew rather than an Egyptian, but by the time he was 40 years old, he knew. One day, he went out to visit his people and see how they were treated. The cruel measures taken against them at the time of his birth were still in place. When he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses killed the Egyptian in anger and buried him. He thought no one had noticed, but someone did. The next day, when he tried to stop two Hebrews from fighting, they turned on him and accused him of murder: "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" ([Exodus 2:14](#)). [Acts 7:25](#) adds: "He assumed his brothers would understand that God was using him to deliver them, but they did not." Realizing that his actions were known and that being part of Pharaoh's household would not protect him, Moses fled to Midian.

### *The Second 40 Years—In Midian*

#### **Marriage into the Family of Jethro**

After arriving in Midian, Moses sat down by a well. There, he saw the seven daughters of the priest of Midian drawing water for their father's flock. When shepherds tried to drive them away, Moses helped them water their animals. The priest, Jethro, invited Moses to stay with his family and gave him his daughter Zipporah as a wife ([Exodus 3:1](#); Jethro is also called Reuel in [Exodus 2:18](#); or Hobab in [Numbers 10:29](#)). There is some disagreement

among scholars regarding Hobab's identity in [Numbers 10:29](#). Some think he was Moses's father-in-law, while others think he was Moses's brother-in-law.

*See also* Hobab

In Midian, Moses and Zipporah had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer ([Exodus 2:22; 18:4](#)). During his 40 years in Midian, Moses's thoughts about his life in Egypt likely faded. He could not have foreseen that God would soon call him back to Egypt to confront the new Pharaoh and demand the release of the Hebrews from bondage. God had not forgotten his people and was now ready to deliver them.

### Encounter with God at the Burning Bush

One day, while Moses was taking care of the flocks of his father-in-law, he led them to Mount Horeb (also known as Sinai). God appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush that burned but was not consumed. Moses approached to observe the strange sight more closely and heard God speak to him out of the bush:

"Moses, Moses!" "Here I am," he answered. "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ([Exodus 3:4-5](#)).

God identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and assured Moses that He had heard His people's cries and was aware of their suffering. God revealed His plan to send Moses to Egypt to deliver His people from bondage.

Moses, feeling unable to do the task, began making excuses. God assured Moses that He would be with him ([Exodus 3:11-12](#)). When Moses expressed concern about what to say if the people asked for God's name, God responded mysteriously: "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ([Exodus 3:13-14](#)). Scholars have proposed many meanings for the name. What is certain is that the name suggests that God exists through his own power and is sufficient for himself.

Moses then worried that the people would not believe him. God gave him three signs:

1. turning his staff into a serpent
2. making his hand leprous
3. turning water from the Nile into blood ([Exodus 4:1-9](#)).

Despite these signs, Moses still hesitated: "Please, Lord...I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since You have spoken to Your servant, for I am slow of speech and tongue." ([Exodus 4:10](#)). God told him that he would tell him what to say. Nonetheless, Moses asked God to send someone else. God finally agreed to let Moses's brother, Aaron, speak for him. God would give His instructions to Moses, and Aaron would relay them to the people.

### Return to Egypt

Moses took his wife and sons and set out for Egypt, telling his father-in-law that he wanted to visit his family there ([Exodus 4:18](#)). According to the biblical account, he put his wife and sons on a donkey for the journey ([Exodus 4:20](#)). This shows that both children were young and had not been born early in Moses's marriage.

At a rest stop on the journey, something strange happened. The Lord met Moses and tried to kill him because Moses did not circumcise his baby before leaving Midian ([Exodus 4:24](#)). When Zipporah realized Moses's life was in danger, she performed the circumcision herself. She then said to her husband, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me" ([Exodus 4:25](#)). This strange event was a reminder that the leader of the covenant people must follow the covenant ([Genesis 17:10-14](#)). (Israel was God's covenant people because God made a covenant [special agreement] with them that the men would be circumcised.)

God told Aaron, who was still in Egypt, to go to the mountain where Moses had met God at the burning bush and meet his brother there. Moses told Aaron everything that had happened, and together they went to Egypt, gathered the elders, and informed them of these events. When Moses and Aaron performed the signs in front of the people, they believed these leaders had been sent by God to save them ([Exodus 4:30-31](#)).

### The Third 40 Years—From Egypt to Canaan

#### The Encounter with Pharaoh

Soon after his return to Egypt, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh. Moses repeated the demands of the Lord: "Let My people go, so that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness" ([Exodus 5:1](#)). Pharaoh refused, saying he had never heard of this God. Since Egyptian kings thought of themselves as gods, Pharaoh felt very insulted. He not only refused Moses's request but also made the

Hebrews work harder. They now had to gather their own straw to make bricks, but still had to make the same number of bricks as before.

The Hebrews were upset and angry and blamed Moses for their troubles. Moses, confused and upset, complained to God. God reassured Moses that He would free the Hebrews from their slavery and bring them to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He told Moses to go back to Pharaoh and repeat the demand, warning of serious consequences if Pharaoh refused.

When Moses and Aaron went back to Pharaoh, Moses repeated his request to let the Israelites go. He tried to show Pharaoh a miracle by turning his rod into a snake. But the Egyptian wise men did the same thing with their magic, so Pharaoh still refused to listen. Then, Moses brought nine plagues to Egypt to show God's power and force Pharaoh to obey. These plagues included:

1. Turning the Nile water into blood
2. A plague of frogs
3. Gnats
4. Flies
5. A disease on livestock
6. Boils on people
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Complete darkness

During some of these plagues, Pharaoh would agree to let the Israelites go, but once the plague was over, he would change his mind and refuse again. The first nine plagues caused terrible damage to Egypt, but the Israelites were still not freed. There was one more plague to come, the worst of all.

### **The First Passover**

God told Moses that there was one more plague coming to Egypt: "Every firstborn son in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the servant girl behind the hand mill, as well as the firstborn of all the cattle" ([Exodus 11:5](#)). He promised Moses that the plague would not affect the Hebrews, "Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel" ([Exodus 11:7](#)).

God instructed the people through Moses and Aaron to get ready to leave Egypt quickly. They were to ask the Egyptians for their silver and gold jewelry ([Exodus 11:2-3](#)). The Egyptians agreed, likely out of fear and hoping the gifts would stop the terrors. The Hebrews were also told to prepare a lamb for each family for their last meal in Egypt. This became the pattern for the Jewish Passover. They were to put the lamb's blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses, where the Passover meal would be eaten that night. Wherever the blood was on the door, no harm would come to that household. They were also told to prepare unleavened bread (bread that has not been left to rise).

At midnight, an angel from the Lord killed all the firstborns in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the lowest prisoner; no one was saved. When Pharaoh saw what had happened, he ordered Moses and the Israelites to leave immediately ([Exodus 12:31-32](#)). The Bible says about 600,000 Hebrew men left Egypt. Including women and children, the total would have been over 2 million people.

### **The Exodus from Egypt**

The exodus is the central event of the Old Testament and marks the birth of Israel as a nation. Jewish people still look back to this event as the great act of God saving his people, much like Christians see the cross as the key act of their faith.

We cannot know the exact route the Hebrews took out of Egypt, though many ideas have been suggested. They did not take the shortest route to Canaan, which would have been about a 10-day journey along the Mediterranean coast. Instead, they headed toward Mt. Sinai, where Moses had earlier met God at the burning bush. God told Moses He would bring the people to that same spot as a sign that Moses had been sent to deliver them ([Exodus 3:12](#)). The Hebrews also remembered Joseph's request to carry his bones with them when they returned to their land ([Genesis 50:25](#); [Exodus 13:19](#)).

As the people traveled, they were led by a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. These pillars represented God's presence and guided them along their route.

Back in Egypt, Pharaoh regretted letting the Hebrews go and decided to chase them with his army. When the Hebrews saw the approaching Egyptian army, they were terrified. The sea was in

front of them, and the Egyptians were behind them; there seemed to be no escape. The people blamed Moses for bringing them out of Egypt. God assured them they did not need to be afraid or do anything to defend themselves. He promised to fight for them and give them victory ([Exodus 14:14](#)).

The Lord parted the waters of the Sea of Reeds (often mistakenly called the Red Sea) with a strong east wind, allowing the Israelites to cross on dry ground. The Egyptians followed them into the sea. But, the waters crashed down and destroyed the Egyptian army. The Israelites were safe on the other side. The people celebrated their deliverance in song ([Exodus 15](#)) and continued their journey. The narrative that follows describes the Israelites' struggles to survive in the desert:

- The Israelites had problems with food and water.
- The Israelites argued among themselves.
- The Israelites complained about Moses.
- The Israelites had battles with enemies.

Through all their experiences, Moses stood as the unifying force and great spiritual leader.

Despite witnessing God's great act of deliverance, the Israelites' faith was weak. Three days later, they found undrinkable water and complained about Moses. The Lord showed Moses how to purify the water, satisfying the people's needs ([Exodus 15:22–25](#)). When they reached the wilderness of Sin, they complained again due to a lack of food. God provided manna, a bread-like substance, to feed them until they reached Canaan ([Exodus 16:1–21](#)). Later, camped at Rephidim, the people complained again about the lack of water. God supplied water from a rock at Horeb ([Exodus 17:1–7](#)). The Amalekites attacked them at Rephidim, but God gave the Israelites a great victory ([Exodus 18:8–13](#)).

Moses and the people reached Sinai and camped there. Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, came to visit, bringing Moses's wife and sons. Zipporah had apparently decided to stay with her father rather than go to Egypt with Moses. It was a joyful reunion, and Jethro made a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. Moses could not settle all the disputes of the Hebrews by himself. So, Jethro suggested that Moses give some tasks to

responsible men among the people. Moses agreed, and Jethro returned to his land. He did not stay at Sinai to take part in the ratification of the covenant ([Exodus 18:13–27](#)).

### **Giving of the Law at Sinai**

God kept his promise to Moses. God lead the Hebrews out of slavery and lead them to Mount Sinai, where he originally called Moses. God created an agreement with Israel there. God descended onto Sinai and called Moses to come up to the mountaintop. There were dramatic displays of lightning, thunder, thick clouds, fire, smoke, and an earthquake. Moses remained there for 40 days to receive the law, which formed the covenant's foundation.

At Sinai, God revealed Himself as a deity who demands His people's worship in all aspects of life and wants a personal relationship with them.

### **Apostasy of the People**

During Moses's long stay on Mount Sinai, the people grew impatient and doubted that he would come back. They asked Aaron to create idols for worship. Aaron collected gold earrings from the people, melted them down, and fashioned a golden calf. "He took the gold from their hands, and with an engraving tool he fashioned it into a molten calf. And they said, 'These, O Israel, are your gods, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt'" ([Exodus 32:4](#)).

The next day they worshipped the idol with sacrifices and celebration. God informed Moses of the people's actions and intended to destroy them, offering to make a great nation from Moses's descendants. Moses interceded for the people, and God's anger subsided. Moses descended the mountain with the stone tablets inscribed with the law. Upon seeing the idolatry, he broke the tablets in anger, ground the calf into powder, mixed it with water, and made the people drink it. Confronting Aaron, Moses demanded an explanation, but Aaron minimized his role, saying, "I threw them [the gold] into the fire—and out came this calf!" ([Exodus 32:24](#)).

Moses called for volunteers to execute God's judgment on the people. The Levites responded and killed about 3,000 men, later receiving commendation and reward ([Deuteronomy 33:9–10](#)). Moses again interceded for the people, requesting to be destroyed if God could not forgive

them. God relented and promised His angel would still accompany them ([Exodus 32:34](#)).

Moses requested to see God's glory. God instructed him to carve out two more stone tablets and return to the mountain. There, God proclaimed His name: "The LORD, the LORD God, is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion and faithfulness" ([Exodus 34:6](#)). Moses spent another 40 days on the mountain, being warned about idolatry, being given rules, and getting another copy of the Ten Commandments. When he came down, his face was shining from speaking with God. The people were afraid of him. Moses put a cover over his face. He removed it when in God's presence. Paul explained that the cover prevented the people from seeing the heavenly light fade from Moses's face ([2 Corinthians 3:13](#)).

### The Tabernacle and Establishment of the Priesthood

During Moses's first climb up the mountain to receive the law, God told him to collect materials to build the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a portable sanctuary used for worship. The materials used to build the tabernacle included:

- Gold
- Silver
- Bronze
- Various colored yarns
- Fine linen
- Goat's hair
- Tanned skins
- Acacia wood
- Oil for lamps
- Spices for anointing oil and incense
- Precious stones ([Exodus 25:3-7](#))

God gave him specific building instructions and rituals for dedicating the priests. Bezalel, assisted by Oholiab, was appointed to oversee the tabernacle's construction ([Exodus 31:1-6](#)). The tabernacle was portable, like a tent, so it could be taken down and moved from place to place as the Hebrews continued their journey toward Canaan.

God also gave Moses instructions for various burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt offerings ([Leviticus 1-7](#)).

Moses performed the solemn ceremony to ordain Aaron and his sons as priests and begin worship practices ([Leviticus 8-9](#)).

After the first ceremonies, Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, offered unauthorized fire before the Lord. Because they did this, they were consumed by divine fire. Moses prevented Aaron and his remaining sons from mourning, emphasizing the holiness violated by the act ([Leviticus 10:1-7](#)). This event highlights the importance of holy living, about which the rest of Leviticus gives regulations.

### From Sinai to Kadesh

A year after leaving Egypt, the Israelites took a census ([Numbers 9:1](#)). God reminded them to observe the Passover. A month later, they set out from Sinai, complaining about their boring diet of manna and longing for Egyptian foods like:

- Fish
- Cucumbers
- Melons
- Leeks
- Onions
- Garlic ([Numbers 11:4-6](#))

In anger, God sent quail, but many died from a plague as they ate the meat.

Miriam and Aaron also complained against Moses, particularly regarding his Cushite wife ([Numbers 12:1-2](#)). Whether the Cushite was Ethiopian or another reference to Zipporah is unclear. If Moses did marry a second time, it is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament. Moses remained silent, and God defended him, smiting Miriam with leprosy. Aaron acknowledged their sin, and Moses's intercession led to Miriam's healing after seven days.

While the people were at Kadesh (also called Kadesh-barnea in [Numbers 32:8](#)), Moses sent 12 men into Canaan. One man from each tribe was sent to spy out the land to get ready for Israel's entry. After 40 days, the spies returned. They agreed that the land was fertile and inviting, ten of them were afraid of the Canaanites and recommended not to go into the land. Only Joshua and Caleb urged the Israelites to trust in God and

move forward into Canaan. This underscores their unique courage and loyalty.

Despite their encouragement, the Israelites' fear and lack of faith led them to reject this plan. Instead, they conspired to return to Egypt and appoint a new leader. Their rebellion reached a peak when they threatened to stone Moses and Aaron. This crisis prompted divine intervention. God, angered by their persistent disobedience, was ready to destroy the people. However, Moses interceded ([Numbers 13:1–14:19](#)). He said that if God did not bring the people into Canaan, the nations would believe that the God of the Israelites was not able to bring them into the land.

God listened to Moses and decreed that none of the men aged 20 and older who had voiced their complaints would enter the promised land. This decision meant they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until that generation had died. Their children would be the ones to enter Canaan ([Numbers 14:29–33](#)). Upon hearing this judgment, the Israelites, in an attempt to reverse their fate, decided to enter the land immediately. However, this action, done without God's blessing, resulted in a large defeat by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

### **Forty Years in the Wilderness**

Very little is known about events during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. The Israelites repeatedly showed a lack of faith and obedience despite receiving signs and punishments. A man named Korah led another rebellion against the authority of Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron pleaded with God not to punish the entire community for the rebellion ([Numbers 16:22–24](#)). God separated the Israelites from the rebels. While the people watched, the ground split open and swallowed them up, as well as their families and possessions. Despite seeing this punishment, the Israelites still complained about Moses and Aaron. This caused a plague that killed 14,700 people before Moses stopped it.

To confirm Aaron's leadership, God instructed Moses to gather a rod from each tribe and place them in the Tent of Meeting. Aaron's rod budded, bloomed, and produced almonds, showing that God chose him. Yet, the people still complained.

As the Israelites neared the end of their wanderings, Miriam died and was buried in Kadesh ([Numbers 20:1](#)). Soon after, the people grumbled for lack of water. God told Moses to speak to a rock

to bring forth water, but Moses, in a moment of frustration, struck the rock twice with his rod. Though water flowed, God rebuked Moses and Aaron: "Because you did not trust Me to show My holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them!" (verse [12](#)). Moses and Aaron were honoring themselves over God. Because of the sin, they were not allowed to take the Israelites into the promised land. This severe punishment shows that the leadership given to Moses and Aaron was a privilege that came with a lot of responsibility.

The Israelites traveled from Kadesh to Mount Hor, near the border of Edom. There, Aaron died. Moses took Aaron's priestly garments and gave them to his son Eleazar, passing on the role of priest to him ([Numbers 20:28](#)).

As they continued their journey, they encountered various forms of resistance. They won a victory over the king of Arad at Hormah ([Numbers 21:1–3](#)). However, during their trek around Edom, the people complained again about the lack of food and water. This time God sent poisonous snakes among them. Many of them died from the snake bites. Those who had not yet been bitten came to Moses, acknowledged their sin, and asked that the serpents be taken away. God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. If a person bitten by a serpent looked up at the bronze serpent, he or she would live.

As they approached the territory of Sihon, king of the Amorites, the Israelites requested peaceful passage but were met with hostility. In the ensuing battle, Israel defeated Sihon, capturing his land and cities, thus continuing their progress toward the promised land ([Numbers 21:21–25](#)).

### **Arrival at the Jordan River**

After the Israelites defeated Sihon, they camped in the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho. They could see the promised land from there. The Moabites felt scared of the Israelites because of their recent victories. To harm the Israelites, Balak, the king of Moab, hired Balaam, a magician, to curse them. However, God turned each of Balaam's three attempts to curse the Israelites into blessings instead ([Numbers 22–24](#)).

Although Balaam could not curse Israel, he caused more trouble by advising the Moabites to tempt the Israelites into idolatry and immoral behavior ([Numbers 25:1–3; 31:16](#); [2 Peter 2:15](#); [Revelation 2:14](#)). The Moabites followed this advice. They

sacrificed to the Moabite gods and joined in pagan worship. This angered God, and He sent a plague that killed 24,000 Israelites ([Numbers 25:9](#)). This event marked an early instance of Israel's struggle with idolatry, which foreshadowed future struggles with idolatry in Canaan. Their continued idolatry would eventually lead to their ruin.

After the plague, God instructed Moses and Eleazar to take a census similar to the one taken 40 years earlier. Although an entire generation had died in the wilderness, a new generation had grown, and their numbers were almost the same. The census counted 601,730 men aged 20 and older who were fit for war ([Numbers 26:51](#)). Every man on the first census had died except Caleb and Joshua.

God then commanded Moses to commission Joshua as his successor in a public ceremony witnessed by Eleazar, the priest, and the congregation ([Numbers 27:12–23](#)). Moses was also given instructions regarding feasts, offerings, and vows ([Numbers 28–30](#)). As Moses's final act of leadership, God ordered him to avenge Israel on the Midianites. In this campaign, the Israelites achieved a decisive victory, killing the Midianite kings and Balaam.

The Lord provided Moses with detailed instructions for the boundaries of the promised land and named the leaders who would divide it among the tribes ([Numbers 34](#)). God also gave the Levites 48 cities, including six cities of refuge. These cities protected those accused of manslaughter, ensuring that they would receive a fair trial before the people rather than being harmed in revenge ([Numbers 35](#)).

### Moses's Death

The book of Deuteronomy serves as Moses's farewell address to the Israelites, presenting his final instructions and reflections before his death. In this book, Moses stands as the sole speaker, addressing the gathered congregation and recounting their journey since leaving Mount Sinai. He reviews their past failures, including the refusal to enter the promised land 38 years earlier ([Deuteronomy 2:14](#)). He recalled on his request to cross the Jordan and see the land. God had granted Moses only a view of the land from the top of Mount Pisgah, but did not allow him to enter it.

Moses uses this occasion to urge the people to follow God's laws and commandments, emphasizing that their obedience will lead to blessings in the land they are about to enter.

As Moses nears the end of his life, God instructs him and Joshua to meet at the Tent of Meeting, where Joshua is formally commissioned as the new leader of Israel ([Deuteronomy 31:14–23](#)). Before his death, Moses blesses the Israelites ([Deuteronomy 33](#)).

Moses then ascends Mount Nebo, specifically to the peak of Pisgah, where God shows him the promised land, although he is not permitted to cross into it himself. Moses dies there, and God Himself buries him in a valley in Moab, opposite Beth-peor ([Deuteronomy 34:6](#)).

Moses was 120 years old when he died, and the Israelites mourned his death for 30 days. The final tribute to Moses in Deuteronomy 34:10 reflects his unique relationship with God: "Since that time, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face" ([Deuteronomy 34:10](#)).

### *Moses in the New Testament*

All Jews and Christians in the New Testament times considered Moses the author of the Pentateuch. The following expressions show that he was associated with the books in the Old Testament attributed to him:

- “The law of Moses” ([Luke 2:22](#))
- “Why did Moses order” ([Matthew 19:7](#))
- “Moses said” ([Mark 7:10](#))
- “Moses wrote” ([Mark 12:19](#))

He is mentioned in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament figure, a total of 79 times. He is mostly represented as the lawgiver ([Matthew 8:4](#); [Mark 7:10](#); [John 1:17](#); [Acts 15:1](#)). He appears at the transfiguration of Jesus, representing the Old Testament law. Elijah also appeared, representing the Old Testament prophets ([Matthew 17:1–3](#)).

Moses is also represented as a prophet in the New Testament. As a prophet, he spoke of the coming Messiah and his sufferings ([Luke 24:25–27](#); [Acts 3:22](#)). The New Testament connects Moses and Jesus to illustrate patterns of life under the new covenant. For example:

- The nativity story of Jesus parallels the story of Moses as an infant deliverer who escapes from the murderous plans of an earthly ruler ([Matthew 2:13–18](#)).
- Jesus's Sermon on the Mount mirrors the giving of the law at Sinai, presenting Him as the authoritative interpreter of God's will ([Matthew 5–7](#)).
- Paul contrasts the old law with the new relationship with God in Galatians. The law given through Moses prepared people for the faith in Christ that now justifies believers ([Hebrews 3:5–6; 9:11–22](#)).
- John's Gospel contrasts the law given through Moses with the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ ([John 1:17](#)).
- John also compares the manna in the wilderness to Jesus as "the bread of life" ([John 6:30–35](#)).

Other references to Moses or to events associated with him include:

- His birth ([Acts 7:20; Hebrews 11:23](#))
- The burning bush ([Luke 20:37](#))
- The magicians of Egypt ([2 Timothy 3:8](#))
- The Passover ([Hebrews 11:28](#))
- The exodus ([Hebrews 3:16](#))
- The crossing of the sea ([1 Corinthians 10:2](#))
- The covenant sacrifice at Sinai ([Matthew 26:28](#))
- The manna ([1 Corinthians 10:3](#))
- The glory on Moses's face ([2 Corinthians 3:7–18](#))
- The water from the rock ([1 Corinthians 10:4](#))
- The bronze serpent ([John 3:14](#))
- The song of Moses ([Revelation 15:3](#))

*See also* Egypt, Egyptian; Exodus, The; Israel, History of; Plagues upon Egypt; Priests and Levites; Tabernacle; Temple; Commandments, The Ten; Wilderness Wanderings.

## Moses, Books of

*See* Deuteronomy, Book of; Exodus, Book of; Genesis, Book of; Leviticus, Book of; Moses; Numbers, Book of; Pentateuch.

## Moses' Seat

A phrase that appears only in [Matthew 23:2](#). There, Jesus talks about the scribes and Pharisees sitting on Moses's Seat.

In Bible times, where someone sat often showed how important they were ([Matthew 23:6](#)). Sitting on "Moses's Seat" meant having a respected position and the right to explain Moses's laws.

The scribes were seen as continuing Moses's authority. People looked to them to explain what Moses taught.

In [Matthew 23:2](#), Jesus does not seem to question their right. He tells people to follow what the

scribes and Pharisees say when they teach Moses's laws correctly. But Jesus warns people not to copy what these teachers do because the scribes and Pharisees do not practice what they preach.

At other times, Jesus spoke against the scribes' and Pharisees' traditions that did not match Moses's laws ([Matthew 15:3–6; 23:4, 16–22](#)).

## Most High

An ancient name for God used in both the Old and New Testaments ([Psalm 21:7; Acts 7:48](#)). This title emphasizes God's supreme authority and position above all other powers.

*See God, Names of.*

## Most Holy Place

The inner room of the tabernacle and temple where they kept the ark of the covenant. The ark was a gold-covered wooden box that held important holy items, including the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 25:10–22](#)).

This room was the most holy space in Israelite worship. Only the high priest could enter it, and only once each year on the Day of Atonement ([Leviticus 16](#)). Before entering, the high priest had to perform special cleansing rituals.

In the temple, the most holy place was separated from the rest of the building by a thick curtain. This curtain tore from top to bottom when Jesus died ([Matthew 27:51](#)).

The room was also called the "holy of holies," which means "the holiest place."

*See Tabernacle; Temple.*

## Mote

A term used in the King James Version to describe a small piece of material stuck in the eye of a "brother" ([Matthew 7:3–5; Luke 6:41–42](#)). More recent translations use the term "speck."

## Moth

An insect from the *Tineola* family, that lays its eggs on wool or furs. The larvae feed on those materials.

Several biblical passages refer to the destructive qualities of moths ([Job 13:28; Psalm 39:11; Isaiah 50:9; Hosea 5:12; Matthew 6:19–20; Luke 12:33; James 5:2](#)).

In [Isaiah 51:8](#), "worm" refers to larvae of the clothes moth. These larvae symbolize decay and weakness. They are the only harmful stage; adults pose no threat and mainly feed on flower nectar. Adults are also easy to crush ([Job 4:19](#)). Clothes moths breed in May or June and enter homes at night. A week after laying eggs, larvae emerge and start damaging animal fiber items.

Moths quietly destroy things, unlike swarms of insects that block out the sun. In the past, wealth was in possessions, not just money. Wool clothing was especially valuable. So, moths could cause economic disaster. This context highlights Jesus's words in the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 6:19–20](#)).

Palestine has many moth species besides the clothes moth. These moths do not harm plants or seeds. Like the clothes moth, only the larvae cause damage

## Mount Ebal

Mount Ebal is a mountain in the central hill country of Israel. It is 914 meters (3,000 feet) high.

In the Bible, Mount Ebal is often mentioned together with Mount Gerizim ([Deuteronomy 11:29; 27:13; Joshua 8:33](#)). The meaning of its name is uncertain. It is unlikely that it refers to a son of Shobal even though the spelling of his name and the mountain are the same ([Genesis 36:23; 1 Chronicles 1:40](#)). Compare [1 Chronicles 1:22](#), where "Ebal" is a variant of the spelling "Obal" ([Genesis 10:28](#)).

Before entering the promised land, God told Moses that the tribes of Israel should gather at the twin mountains Ebal and Gerizim. On these two mountains, the people recited the curses and blessings of [Deuteronomy 27–28](#). According to [Deuteronomy 27:12](#), six tribes of Israel were to stand on Gerizim and shout the blessings. These tribes were Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. "Joseph" here would mean the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. These two mountains were in their territory. The other six tribes were Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. They were to speak the curses from Mount Ebal. Mount Ebal is on the north side of the valley that

runs between these two mountains. It is notable that the tribes who stood on Mount Ebal were mostly from the northern parts of Israel.

Joshua followed God's instructions in two ways at Mount Ebal. He gathered the tribes there to speak the blessings and curses ([Joshua 8:33](#)). He also built an altar there using uncut stones ([Joshua 8:30](#)). Moses had commanded the people to do ([Deuteronomy 27:4](#)).

## **Mount Gaash**

*See* Gaash.

## **Mount Gerizim**

*See* Gerizim, Mount.

## **Mount Gilboa**

Mount Gilboa is a mountain in northern Israel. It sits on the east side of the plain of Esraelon. This plain lies between Galilee in the north and Samaria in the south. Today, people call it Jebel Fuqu'ah.

Mount Gilboa rises about 518 meters (1,700 feet) above sea level. It is made of limestone and has been shaped by wind and rain over time.

Many battles happened near Mount Gilboa. One early battle took place during the time of the judge Deborah. She and Barak defeated the army of Sisera. Heavy rain made the nearby Kishon River flood, which helped them win the battle ([Judges 5:21](#)). The Kishon River starts in the area around Gilboa.

Later, Gideon may have set up his camp in this area before fighting the Midianites ([6:33](#)).

The Bible names Mount Gilboa when it talks about the last battle of King Saul. The Philistines fought against Israel. Saul's sons died in the battle. After that, Saul killed himself ([1 Samuel 31:1, 8](#); [2 Samuel 1:6, 21](#); [21:12](#); [1 Chronicles 10:1, 8](#)).

*See also* Saul #2.

## **Mount Hermon**

*See* Hermon, Mount.

## **Mount Hor**

*See* Hor, Mount.

## **Mount Horeb**

*See* Sina, Sinai.

## **Mount Nebo**

*See* Nebo, Mount.

## **Mount Nebo**

The name of a high mountain on the east side of the Jordan River opposite the city of Jericho. The Israelites encamped near it on the last stage of their journey to the promised land ([Deuteronomy 32:49](#)). The mountain now identified as Nebo has two peaks. The Old Testament name of the peak of Nebo is "Pisgah" ([34:1](#)). From this high place, Moses saw the land God had promised to give to Israel (verses [1-5](#)).

## **Mount of Assembly**

*See* Congregation, Mount of the.

## **Mount of Corruption**

*See* Corruption, Mount of.

## **Mount of Olives**

*See* Olives, Mount of.

## **Mount of the Amalekites**

*See* Amalekites, Hill Country (Mount) of the.

## **Mount of the Amorites**

*See* Amorites, Hill Country (Mount) of the.

## Mount of the Beatitudes

Place where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. *See Beatitudes, The.*

## Mount of the Congregation

*See Congregation, Mount of the.*

## Mount Perazim

A mountain mentioned in [Isaiah 28:21](#). It seems it was near Baal-perazim, which means “Baal of Breaches.” Baal-perazim is where King David defeated the Philistines. From the context of [2 Samuel 5:20](#), it appears that this battleground was in the valley of Rephaim, which is southwest of Jerusalem.

## Mount Pisgah

A mountain located at the northeast end of the Dead Sea near the ancient city of Jericho. King Balak took the fortuneteller Balaam to the top of Pisgah ([Numbers 23:14](#)). God told Moses to go to its summit to view the promised land ([Deuteronomy 3:27](#)). Later, Moses returned to the top of Pisgah to die ([34:1](#)).

The slopes of Pisgah border the Dead Sea, also known as the Sea of the Arabah ([Deuteronomy 3:17; 4:49](#); [Joshua 12:3; 13:20](#)). The King James Version sometimes refers to these slopes as “Ashdoth-pisgah.” Many scholars identify Mount Pisgah with modern, Ras es-Siyaghah, north of Mount Nebo.

*See also Mount Nebo.*

## Mount Sheper

A temporary camping place for the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. Mount Sheper was located between Kehelathah and Haradah ([Numbers 33:23-24](#)).

*See also Wilderness Wanderings.*

## Mount Sinai

*See Sina, Sinai.*

## Mount Tabor

*See Tabor, Mount.*

## Mount, Mountain

A high area of land. In Israel and nearby countries, people thought of mountains as places to meet God. Many important events in Israel's religion happened on Mount Sinai or Horeb (see [Exodus 3:1-4; 16; 19-23](#); [1 Kings 19:8-18](#)).

Mount Zion became almost as important when David was king ([Psalm 50:2; Isaiah 2:2-4](#)).

Israel's neighbors sometimes thought mountains were magical places where their gods lived. But Israelites knew their God lived in heaven. He only came down to the mountain at special times ([Exodus 19](#); compare [1 Kings 8:27](#)).

In the New Testament, Jesus did many things on mountains:

1. He taught there ([Matthew 5:1](#))
2. He retired there to pray ([Luke 6:12](#))
3. He was transfigured on a mountain ([Luke 9:28-36](#)).

## Mourning

A set of practices that people follow when someone dies. These practices were followed by the dead person's family and friends.

### *Mourning in the Old Testament*

It began with the closing of the eyes of the dead, the embracing of the body, and its preparation for burial ([Genesis 46:4; 50:1](#)). Immediate burial was necessary due to the hot climate ([Acts 5:1-10](#)). We do not have a lot of details about burial practices before the New Testament ([Matthew 27:59; John 11:44](#); [19:39-40](#)). Archaeological evidence suggests that people were buried fully clothed and not in coffins. The Israelites did not embalm or burn their dead, but a proper burial was very important.

When someone died, it was common to:

- Tear one's clothes ([Genesis 37:34; 2 Samuel 1:11; Job 1:20](#))
- Put on sackcloth ([2 Samuel 3:31](#))
- Take off one's shoes ([2 Samuel 15:30; Micah 1:8](#)) and headdress.
- A man might cover his beard or veil his face ([Ezekiel 24:17, 23](#))
- Mourners put earth on their heads ([Joshua 7:6; 1 Samuel 4:12; Nehemiah 9:1; Job 2:12; Ezekiel 27:30](#))
- Rolled themselves in the dust ([Job 16:15; Micah 1:10](#))
- Sat on a heap of ashes ([Esther 4:3; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Ezekiel 27:30](#))

Some mourning practices were forbidden because they were done by pagans ([Leviticus 19:27–28; Deuteronomy 14:1](#)):

- Shaving the hair and the beard
- Making cuts on the body ([Job 1:20; Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37; Ezekiel 7:18; Amos 8:10](#))

People in mourning would stop washing and using perfumes ([2 Samuel 12:20; 14:2](#)).

Fasting was also a common mourning rite ([1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:12](#)). Neighbors or friends would bring mourning bread and the "cup of consolation" to the relatives of the deceased ([Jeremiah 16:7; Ezekiel 24:17, 22](#)). This was done because food could not be prepared at the house of the dead due to ritual uncleanness. The dead were considered unclean to the extent that priests could only participate in mourning rites for their closest blood relatives (mother, father, son, daughter, brother, and sister, provided she was still a virgin; [Leviticus 21:1–4, 10–11](#)). Mourning rites were expressions of grief and affection rather than acts of worship directed toward the dead or constituting a cult for the dead.

At the graveside, lamentation for the dead was common ([1 Kings 13:30; Jeremiah 6:26; Amos 5:16; 8:10; Zechariah 12:10](#)). Men and women mourned in separate groups ([Zechariah 12:11–14](#)). These exclamations of sorrow might develop into rhythmic laments ([2 Samuel 1:17–27; Amos 8:10](#)).

Professional mourners, especially women, were often employed to lead the lamentations ([Jeremiah 9:17–19; Amos 5:16](#)). The book of Lamentations exemplifies this genre. Lamentations reminds us that mourning was not always associated with death but could also express brokenness of spirit for sin, both individual and national.

These mourning rites showed deep sorrow. Some practices, like tearing clothes, wearing sackcloths, covering oneself with dust and ashes, and even cutting yourself, reflected intense grief. The religious meaning of these practices is now unclear to us. Mourning was not just an inner feeling or a mental state; it was a deliberate, established ritual. When someone died, an Israelite wept because it was customary and proper. People built monuments or memorials ([2 Samuel 18:18](#)). However, most Israelites were too poor for this to be a common practice.

### *Mourning in the New Testament*

Mourning practices in the New Testament were similar to those in the Old Testament. Mourning was associated with:

- Christ's second coming ([Matthew 24:30](#))
- Repentance ([James 4:8–10](#))
- Christ's leaving the 12 ([Matthew 9:15](#))
- Deep spirituality ([5:4](#))
- Death ([Mark 5:38–39; Luke 7:13; John 11:33](#))

Even though Christians believed that Christ's resurrection had defeated death ([1 Corinthians 15:54–57](#)), they still mourned, but not like those without hope ([1 Thessalonians 4:13; Revelation 21:4](#)).

*See also* Burial, Burial Customs; Funeral Customs.

## Mouse

A mouse is a small animal with a long tail and short legs. According to the Bible, mice were considered ceremonially unclean animals because they crawl close to the ground ([Leviticus 11:29](#)).

House mice that live with humans (called "commensal mice" by scientists) usually have longer tails and darker fur than wild mice. Wild

mice are most active at night. All mice can climb and swim well. Wild mice eat many different kinds of plants, such as seeds, soft roots, leaves, and plant stems. They also save and store food to eat later.

The Hebrew word for "mouse" likely refers to various rats and mice ([Leviticus 11:29](#); [1 Samuel 6:4-5](#); [Isaiah 66:17](#)). The word comes from a phrase meaning "destroyer of grain," because these animals damaged the crops of farmers. In the region of Palestine, there are at least 23 types of mouse-like rodents. They spoil food, damage property, and carry fleas. These fleas spread diseases like typhus, spotted fever, and bubonic plague. It is possible that plague bacteria caused tumors or swellings in the Philistines ([1 Samuel 6:5](#)).

In [Isaiah 66:17](#), there is a reference to people eating mice as part of ancient Canaanite religious practices. This might actually be talking about hamsters rather than mice. Even today, some people in the Middle East eat certain types of these small animals (for example, many consider gerbils a special food).

*See Mole.*

## Moza

1. Caleb's son by his concubine Ephah ([1 Chr 2:46](#)).
2. Zimri's son, the father of Binea and a descendant of Saul and Jonathan ([1 Chr 8:36-37; 9:42-43](#)).

## Mozah

Town in the territory assigned to Benjamin's tribe ([Jos 18:26](#)); tentatively identified with the village of Qalunyah. It has been suggested that the name is preserved in the modern Khirbet beit Mizza, a small village about four miles (6.4 kilometers) northwest of Jerusalem.

## Mulberry

A tree that produces dark, blue-purple berries that people can eat. This tree family includes some trees with dark-purple fruit and others with white fruit. The leaves of these trees are used as food for silkworms.

The mulberry tree mentioned in [Luke 17:6](#) is likely the black mulberry (*Morus nigra*). It is a low-growing tree with a thick crown and stiff branches. It usually grows between 7.3 to 10.7 meters (24 to 35 feet) tall, though rarely more than 9.1 meters (30 feet).

The black mulberry originally came from northern Persia (modern Iran). Today, people grow this tree throughout the Middle East for its fruit.

The Chinese or Indian mulberry species (*Morus alba*) was widely grown in Syria and Israel and the surrounding areas until recent times, but it is not native to those areas.

## Mule

A mule is an animal born from a male donkey and a female horse. Its scientific name is *Equus asinus mulus*. Mules cannot usually have babies of their own. When a female donkey and a male horse have a baby, it is called a hinny. Hinnies are smaller than mules and not as useful.

The law in the Old Testament did not allow crossbreeding of animals ([Leviticus 19:19](#)). This is why the Israelites bought mules from other nations instead of breeding them. They probably bought them from the Phoenicians, since the city of Tyre (a Phoenician seaport in what is now southern Lebanon) sold horses and mules ([Ezekiel 27:14](#)).

Mules did not appear in Israel until King David's time ([2 Samuel 13:29](#)). This may be because horses were rare among the Hebrew people. Mules were mainly used by the royal family and other important people. King David rode on a mule, and Solomon rode on King David's mule when he became king ([1 Kings 1:33](#)). Absalom, one of David's sons, died while riding a mule ([2 Samuel 18:9](#)). After the exile, there were fewer mules than horses, camels, and donkeys in the community ([Ezra 2:66](#)). In ancient times, Asia Minor (modern Turkey) was known for breeding excellent mules.

Mules are known today for being stubborn, but the Bible does not mention this trait. People value mules for riding and for carrying heavy loads, especially in hot, mountainous areas. They have sure feet on difficult paths and do well in hot, dry climates. Mules have the toughness, endurance, and steady walking style of a donkey, along with the size, strength, speed, and courage of a horse. Mules almost never get sick and live longer than

horses. They can carry up to 136 kilograms (300 pounds) for 48.3 kilometers (30 miles) a day.

*See also* Travel.

## Muppim

One of the ten sons of Benjamin ([Genesis 46:21](#)). He is elsewhere called Shephupham ([Numbers 26:39](#)) and Shuppim ([1 Chronicles 7:12](#)). He may be the same person as Shephuphan ([1 Chronicles 8:5](#)).

*See* Shephupham.

## Murder, Murderer

*See* Civil Law and Justice; Criminal Law and Punishment; Commandments, The Ten.

## Mushi, Mushite

The son of Merari, the grandson of Levi, and Mahli's brother ([Exodus 6:19](#); [Numbers 3:20](#); [1 Chronicles 6:19, 47](#)). He was the father of Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth ([1 Chronicles 23:21-23](#); [24:26, 30](#)). He was the founder of the family of Mushites ([Numbers 3:33](#); [26:58](#)).

## Music

Music is a natural human expression that probably began with speech-singing and developed into songs. Musical instruments as accompaniment followed. Music as we know it has become quite complex, a luxury and entertainment. Music in ancient times was more of a practical expression of daily life, work, and worship.

The phrase "sing to the LORD" is common to the Old Testament ([Exodus 15:21](#); [1 Chronicles 16:9](#); [Psalms 68:32](#); [96:1-2](#); [Isaiah 42:10](#); [Jeremiah 20:13](#)). But this phrase was not unique to the Jewish nation. All religions draw on the natural human impulse to sing. The command to "sing to the LORD" was a signal for the people to express their praise in song.

The Bible is limited in its treatment of music in ancient Israel. There was no written musical notation. The primary historical record of music is a collection of texts, including the psalms, and a few musical instructions. The biblical writers were not

writing a history of their culture, but of a relationship with God. The biblical documents cover a long span of history and are grouped by category rather than in chronological order. Their comments about music are not critical. This makes it difficult to order the development of musical style with precision. Finally, there is the problem of understanding the biblical descriptions of music and its performance. Only since the 20th century have scholars been able to interpret the information provided in the Bible in terms of Eastern music systems.

### Music in the Old Testament

The first musician mentioned in the Bible is "Jabal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute" ([Genesis 4:21](#)). It is important to note that Jubal's profession is equal in importance to those of his brothers Jabal, the herdsman, and Tubal-cain, the smith. Music making is among the earliest professions of nomadic peoples. The name Jubal is believed to be a derivative from the Hebrew word for "ram." The ram's horn (*shophar*) was an early instrument of the Jewish people. The shophar was and is significant in signaling important events.

The music described in early biblical history was largely of a functional nature. Music gained special significance as it became an important part of temple worship. Many of the descriptions of music making in ancient Israel before David's time are quite practical. There are accounts of music at times of:

- farewell ([Genesis 31:27](#)),
- rejoicing and feasting ([Exodus 32:17-18](#); [Isaiah 5:12](#); [24:8-9](#)),
- military victories ([2 Chronicles 20:27-28](#)), and
- for work ([Numbers 21:17](#), the song of the well diggers; [Is 16:10](#); [Jeremiah 48:33](#)).

Most of this music was probably rather basic and simple in nature. The music associated with military advances, for example, was meant to terrify the enemy ([Judges 7:17-20](#)). The music and dancing that greeted Moses as he descended from the mountain was described as if it sounded like "war in the camp" ([Exodus 32:17-18](#)).

In the early history of the Jewish people, women played an important part in the performance of music. The image of women dancing and singing for

joy accompanied by percussion instruments is repeated several times:

- Miriam led the women in a hymn of thanksgiving after the deliverance from the Red Sea ([Exodus 15](#)).
- Jephthah's daughter welcomed her father in his victory ([Judges 11:34](#)).
- Deborah joined with Barak in singing a song of victory ([Judges 5](#)).
- Women hailed David after his defeat of the Philistines ([1 Samuel 18:6-7](#)).

There is little mention of women as musicians following the establishment of the temple in Jerusalem. There are a few allusions to female participation in singing and dancing. For example, male and female singers are mentioned when the Jews returned from exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 7:67](#)). This confirms that women still took part in musical performance at times.

As Jerusalem became the religious center of the Hebrew people between 950 and 850 BC, the role of the professional musician became more important. The women's songs became insignificant compared to the formal ceremonies associated with the temple and the royal court. Levitical singers (belonging to the priestly group called the Levites) took most of the musical responsibility at the temple. But the people joined in on responses in the singing of psalms as antiphonal singing (back-and-forth singing between two groups) developed.

### **Musical Style and Use**

The Jewish people seem to have been especially musical. Other ancient cultures were influential, but there is evidence that Jews were in demand as musicians by other peoples. An Assyrian document shows King Hezekiah giving many male and female Jewish musicians in tribute to King Sennacherib. The Babylonians demanded that the captive Jews sing and entertain them (compare [Psalm 137:3](#)).

The Old Testament's purpose was to tell the story of the relationship between the Jewish nation and God. In this context, most music references deal with music's function in worship. Evidence shows that there was also a large body of non-religious musical literature. There may have been groups of poets and singers early in Jewish history.

The kinds of songs recorded in the early part of the Old Testament represent a folklike poetry. The song of thanksgiving to the Lord by Moses and the people of Israel after their escape at the Red Sea is a stirring national song. Many descriptions of the biblical writers reflect the spirit of storytelling through song. This would be logical, as these stories were meant to be passed on. Marching songs ([2 Chronicles 20:27-28](#)), and songs of triumph ([Judges 5](#)) also indicate a secular body of music.

### **Music in Worship**

The singers and musicians for the temple worship were chosen from the tribe of Levi. King David assembled the Levites for a census, and out of the total of 38,000 men over the age of 30, 4,000 were chosen as musicians. These 4,000 were later given specific jobs. "David and the commanders of the army set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun to prophesy with the accompaniment of lyres, harps, and cymbals...Together with their relatives, who were all trained and skillful in the songs of the LORD, they numbered 288" ([1 Chronicles 25:1, 7](#)). The singers were further divided into 24 groups of 12 singers. These groups rotated in participating in the weekday, Sabbath, and high holy day services.

A later source shows there were minimum and maximum numbers of singers and instrumentalists required at each service. The minimum number of singers was twelve, the maximum was unlimited. At each service, these instruments had to be included:

- at least two harps but no more than six
- at least two flutes but no more than twelve
- a minimum of two trumpets with no maximum
- a minimum of nine lyres with no maximum
- one player with a pair of cymbals

A singer was admitted to the Levitical choir at the age of thirty following a five-year apprenticeship ([1 Chronicles 23:3](#)). Five years is a relatively short time considering the amount of material these singers had to memorize (there was no written notation). They also had to memorize and master

worship practice. Singers may have been in some level of training from childhood.

Levites lived in villages outside the city wall. They may have been actively involved in the musical education of their children ([Nehemiah 12:29](#)). The Levites performed other duties connected with the sacred service. Singers were excused from all other duties because they were on duty day and night ([1 Chronicles 9:33](#)). Their skills were an important part of the temple worship, so they were able to devote their entire life to developing their musical ability. A singer served in the choir for 20 years, from age 30 to 50. The music was of a high quality due to strict discipline and continuous practice and performance.

From the beginning of Jewish formal worship connected with the tabernacle, music and sound was important. The descriptions of Aaron's robe in [Exodus 28:34-35](#) includes bells attached to the lower hem to sound as he entered the Holy Place.

The first music related to worship mentioned in the Old Testament is found in [2 Samuel 6](#) in the descriptions of the transfer of the ark of God. David and the Israelites sang, played instruments, and danced to the glory of the Lord. This music was very different from the formal ceremony described later in Solomon's temple.

In [2 Chronicles 7:6](#), David is recognized for inventing the musical instruments used in the temple. Post-exile, Levitical singers are mentioned as the descendants of Asaph, the "singing master" appointed by David ([Ezra 2:41](#); [Nehemiah 7:44; 11:22-23](#)). Passages like these indicate that worship music and organization came from David's time.

The ceremonies in the Jewish temple were organized around the sacrifice. Singing formed an essential part of the sacrificial service and was necessary to make the sacrificial action official. There were special musical settings for each sacrifice. Daily burnt offerings, offerings for forgiveness of sin, praise offerings, and drink offerings each had individual ceremonies.

Particular psalms became associated with certain sacrifices as well as with certain days of the week. The psalm of the day was sung as the high priest started to pour out the drink offering. The psalm was divided into three sections, each signaled by the blowing of the trumpets. At the trumpet sound, the people would prostrate themselves. This is the only time the trumpets were used together with the

other instruments in orchestral fashion on solemn occasions ([2 Chronicles 5:12-13](#)).

### *Music in the Psalms*

#### **Musical Psalm Titles**

The collection of 150 lyric poems known as the book of Psalms contains the most information on music making in ancient Israel. The Psalter contains not only religious songs but also songs that have their roots in secular or popular songs. Work songs, love songs, and wedding songs may have influenced the Psalms. The majority are songs of praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and repentance. There are also historic odes (formal poems) that relate great national events. [Psalm 30](#) is "a song for the dedication of the temple." [Psalm 137](#) portrays the sufferings of the Jews in captivity.

The psalms were an important part of all the services of the temple. The Psalter became the hymnal used in Israelite worship practices. Worship included an appointed psalm for each day of the week:

- On the first day of the week, the people sang [Psalm 24](#) in remembrance of the first day of creation.
- On the second day of the week, [Psalm 48](#).
- On the third day of the week, [Psalm 82](#).
- On the fourth day of the week, [Psalm 94](#).
- On the fifth day of the week, [Psalm 81](#).
- On the sixth day of the week, [Psalm 93](#).
- On the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, they sang [Psalm 92](#).

After the sacrificial offerings, [Psalm 105:1-5](#) was sung at the morning service and [Psalm 96](#) at the evening service. The Hallel psalms ([Psalms 113-118, 120-136, 146-148](#)) were sung during the offering of the paschal lamb at the Passover feast.

Most of the worship music was performed by Levites. But texts of the psalms suggest that there was also congregational participation. Both

synagogue and church chant forms can be traced to the poetic text of the psalms.

There are several types of psalmody:

- Plain psalmody is sung by one person (for example, [Psalms 3–5, 46](#)).
- Responsorial psalmody means the soloist is answered by the choir (for example, [Psalms 67:1–2](#); the soloist sang verse [1](#) and the choir answered with verse [2](#)).
- Antiphonal psalmody involves two groups singing alternately (for example, [Psalms 103:20–22](#)). The congregation would chant a refrain such as appears in [Psalms 80](#): "Restore us, O God, and cause Your face to shine upon us, that we may be saved" appears often throughout the psalm.

Even though the synagogue had no altar for sacrifice, psalm singing retained an important place. When the Romans destroyed the temple, the worship heritage of the Jews was at risk of being lost. Translating customs of temple worship like music to synagogue worship kept the worship heritage intact.

The part of the psalms most difficult to understand are the headings that are not part of the poetic text. The first question is whether these should even be considered as superscripts. Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and other ancient languages were written so that text did not include chapter or paragraph breaks between. Verses and even the division of the psalms themselves were partially made by copyists, chiefly the Masoretes (ancient Jewish scholars who preserved the Hebrew text of the Old Testament).

There is some question about which psalms the texts that are not part of the poem belong with. They may be subscripts (notes at the beginning) instead of superscripts (notes at the end). Sumerian and Babylonian poetry listed information like the name of the author, the musical instrument used for accompaniment, the tune, the purpose, at the end of the poem. Hence, some of the headings may be endings.

The notes at the beginning of a psalm are grouped into three categories:

- musical terms giving direction for the actual performance
- musical cues designating the tune to which the psalm would be sung
- comments indicating the function of the psalm.

These terms have been interpreted in various ways.

Originally, these headings may have been marginal notes for the choir leaders. Realizing that these terms were not related to the psalm text, early biblical scribes may not have been careful with their placement in the text. This may explain some of the discrepancies among the early manuscripts. Certain words are left out in some and some terms assigned to only a few psalms may originally have been indicated on more of them.

All but 50 of the psalms contain a proper name in the heading. These names possibly indicate the author. Other commentators interpret the preposition appearing before the names to mean "for." This would mean that the names represent dedication instead of authorship. Thus, the title would be "A Psalm for David," not "A Psalm of David."

This may be the case with the names of Asaph, Heman, Ethan, and especially the sons of Korah. It would make better sense for the psalm to be written for rather than by the family. Seventy-three psalms have David's name in the heading, hence the common reference to the Psalter as the Psalms of David. Twelve include the name of Asaph, eleven include the children of Korah, two include Solomon, and one each contains Moses, Heman, and Ethan.

### Musical Terms in the Psalm Titles

Many musical terms are included in the superscriptions. These cue the kind of instrumental accompaniment, mood, and style of performance for the psalm.

*Alamoth* is one of the most controversial terms found in the psalm headings. It appears at the beginning of [Psalms 46](#) and also in [1 Chronicles 15:20](#). One meaning for the Hebrew word is "maiden." Some musicologists interpret this as an instruction that the psalm should be sung in the range of the female singing voice. The reference in Chronicles is to harps in the range of women's voices. This interpretation does not seem to fit

[Psalms 46](#), but it becomes more logical if we look at the preceding psalm and read the term as a subscript. [Psalm 45](#) is a song of love, actually a nuptial ode, so it would be natural for women to sing the second half (verses [10–17](#)).

There is little mention of women singing in the temple, but young boys in training may have sung along with the Levitical singers. Also, this may be a case where the term appears only once in the modern text but may have been used more often in the original. Another possible meaning for *alamoth* is "flutes." This meaning would describe the kind of musical accompaniment for the performance of the psalm.

*Gittith* is a term found in the superscriptions of [Psalms 8](#), [81](#), and [84](#). It may be a musical cue, indicating a mood for the performance of these psalms. But a more common explanation is that it is a collective term for the stringed instruments that would have accompanied them.

*Mahalath* has been left in its original Hebrew form by early translators and is found in the headings of [Psalms 53](#) and [88](#). It may have roots in the Hebrew *mahaleh* "sickness" or *mahot* "dance," though neither of these words can be related to the psalm texts. Another explanation is a musical one. *Mahalath* may come from the word *halal* meaning "to pierce," implying that the psalm was to be accompanied with pipes.

*Maskil* (or "Maschil" in the King James Version) appears in the headings of 13 psalms ([Psalms 32](#), [42](#), [44–45](#), [52–55](#), [74](#), [78](#), [88–89](#), [142](#)). The term is probably derived from the verb *sakal*, "to have insight or comprehension," but there is no agreement among commentators. The instructive nature and the structure of stanzas and refrains in the psalms themselves leads musicologists to conclude the term represents a song of praise. It may have been sung by a soloist with participation by the choir.

*Menazzeah* appears in the heading of 55 psalms. It appears 52 times in the first three books of Psalms ([Psalms 1–89](#)), not at all in book four ([Psalms 90–106](#)), and 3 times in book five ([Psalms 107–150](#)).

The most common modern translations are:

- "to the Choirmaster" (Revised Standard Version)
- "to the choir director" (New American Standard Bible, New Living Translation)
- "to the director of music" (New International Version)
- "to the chief Musician" (King James Version, New King James Version)

The word is derived from the Hebrew verb *nazzah*, appearing in [1 Chronicles 23:4](#) and [Ezra 3:8–9](#) in the sense of "administering." In [1 Chronicles 15:21](#) the word is found in relation to leading or directing song in the temple. *Menazzeah* relates to the choirmaster and represents the singer chosen to lead the music. This person was probably involved in rehearsing and instructing.

It is now assumed that *menazzeah* indicates the psalm was to be sung partially or entirely by a soloist. In some texts, this shows when there is a change in person, from "I" for the soloist to "we" for the choir or congregation. [Psalm 5](#) is an example of a text divided for solo and choral singing:

- verses 1–3 solo
- verses 4–6 choral
- verses 7–8 solo
- verses 9–10 choral
- verses 11–12 end the psalm with the combined soloist and choir

*Miktam* (or "Michtam" in the King James Version) is another term that has no clear musical meaning, due mainly to the fact that its origin is unknown. It occurs in [Psalms 16](#) and [56–60](#), all of which have a character of lamentation (expressing sorrow) or supplication (asking for help). In a musical sense, it probably meant that a certain well-known tune was to be selected as the melody of the psalm.

*Mizmor* (a Hebrew word meaning a song sung to instrumental accompaniment) is found nowhere else in the Bible. It is included in the superscriptions of 57 psalms. *Mizmor* probably indicated a song accompanied by melodic instruments. This would be in contrast to a dance song accompanied by rhythmic instruments.

*Neginah* appears in the superscriptions of [Psalms 4](#), [6](#), [54–55](#), [61](#), [67](#), and [76](#). The term *neginah* and

its plural *neginoth* are found in [Psalm 77:7](#), [Lamentations 5:14](#), [Isaiah 38:20](#), and [Habakkuk 3:19](#). *Neginah* comes from the Hebrew root *naggen*, "to touch the strings." This note instructs stringed instruments to accompany the singing.

*Nehiloth* is found only in the introduction to [Psalm 5](#) (King James Version). The origin of the word is problematic. It could come from the verb *nahal*, "to possess or inherit," or more possibly from *halal*, meaning "to pierce." The latter implies the idea of a pierced instrument (the flute or pipe) to be used for accompaniment.

*Sheminith* appears in [Psalms 6](#) and [12](#) and also in [1 Chronicles 15:21](#). The Hebrew word means literally "over the eighth." Some scholars feel it had something to do with an octave. But the Hebrew musical language probably did not include a musical unit divided into eight parts.

Other scholars interpret *sheminith* as meaning an eight-stringed instrument. A more logical interpretation comes from examining its use in 1 Chronicles. In [15:20](#) the instructions are for musicians to play the harps according to *alamoth* and in verse [21](#) to play the lyres according to *sheminith*.

Here the terms *alamoth* and *sheminith* seem to be used in opposition. If *alamoth* implies a register of the female voice, then *sheminith* would imply a lower register. Thus, it may have been an instruction to use a lower pitched instrument for accompaniment.

### Psalm Varieties in the Titles

Some of the notes in the psalm headings are indications of the type or variety of psalm.

*Hazkir* is found in the headings of [Psalms 38](#) and [70](#). According to the Targum (an ancient Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible), this is an indication that the psalm was sung at the sacrificial rite called *askara*. The word is then translated "for a memorial offering."

*Lammed* appears in the superscription of [Psalm 60](#) in the phrase *le-lammed*, translated "to teach." According to tradition, this was a psalm, though undoubtedly not the only one, taught to young people as part of their education. This is another example of a term that may have been omitted from other psalms in later versions of the Psalter.

*Shiggaion* is in the heading of [Psalm 7](#) and also in [Habakkuk 3:1](#). The word probably comes from the Hebrew verb *shagah*, "to wander." It may also be

connected with the Assyrian worship term *shigu*, which represented a sad song in several stanzas. Biblical scholars have assumed *shiggaion*, plural *shigionoth*, was a lament or a song expressing sorrow for wrongdoing.

*Shir* is the simplest word for "song" and was probably used in the headings at an early stage of the Psalter; it is usually found with *mizmor* (13 times). Fifteen psalms have this heading. It was probably the term for a specific type of praise song, usually performed by the choir.

*Shir Hamaalot* and *Shir Lamalot* occur in the headings of [Psalms 120–134](#), which are often referred to as the Psalms of Ascent (King James Version "Psalms of Degrees"). Most explanations offered relate to the fact that the temple was situated on high ground.

Often these 15 psalms are associated with the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Israelites. But most modern scholars believe the idea of "going up" referred to the pilgrims' journey to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. These psalms are short, with popular appeal, making them appropriate for singing during the journey.

*Shir Hanukkat Habayit* is found only in the heading of [Psalm 30](#). This phrase tells that the psalm was to be used for the dedication or rededication of the house of God.

*Shir-yedidot* appears only in [Psalm 45](#). It refers to a love song that was probably sung at wedding ceremonies.

*Tefillah* is a common term for "prayer" and appears in the headings of [Psalms 17, 86, 90, 102](#), and [142](#), and also in [Habakkuk 3:1](#). The word probably refers to a specific form of poetic prayer.

*Selah* is one of the most frequently used, but most mysterious, terms found in the book of Psalms. It occurs in 39 psalms, appearing a total of 71 times in the Psalter. *Selah* occurs 67 times within the text and 4 times at the end of a psalm. It is most frequent in the first three books:

- In the first book *selah* appears in 9 psalms.
- In the second book, 17 psalms.
- In the third book, 11 psalms.
- In the fourth book it is not found at all.
- In the fifth book it appears in only two psalms.

Thirty-one of these psalms also include the term *menazzeah* in their superscriptions. This implies that they were sung by a soloist and choir.

Most commonly, *selah* is interpreted as a signal for a break in the singing and possibly for an instrumental interlude. It never appears at the beginning of a psalm but only in the middle of the text or at the end. The regularity of its appearance within a psalm is not consistent. In only a few instances do these divisions break the psalm into equal sections.

Because of the random placement of the term, some scholars believe that, like the headings, *selah* was not always carefully copied into the text. It may have been a note appearing only in the texts of the musicians, which would explain this inconsistency.

An explanation of *selah* is found in the Talmudic tradition: "Ben Azra clashed the cymbal and the Levites broke forth into singing. When they reached a break in the singing they blew upon the trumpets and the people prostrated themselves. At every break there was a blowing of the trumpet and at every blowing of the trumpet a prostration. This was the rite of the daily whole offering in the service of the House of our God." *Selah*, then, would be an instruction for the musicians that the singing was to stop and the instrumentalists were to play.

The term *higgaion selah* appears once, in [Psalm 9:16](#). The word *higgaiaon* comes from the root *hagah*, "to murmur, to growl, to produce a low sound." This may have been an instruction for the interlude to be more subdued than a normal *selah*.

### Ancient Melodies in the Titles

Many psalms contain headings that are not direct musical references. They are cue words to suggest well-known tunes. These references probably refer either to names or the first words of popular secular songs (*makams*) whose melodic patterns were used in singing the psalm. Biblical scholars

have sometimes tried to find hidden meaning in these headings. Most musicologists believe these are simply references or introductions to melodies.

- *Aijeleth Shahar*, in [Psalm 22](#) (King James Version), is translated "according to The Hind of the Dawn" (Revised Standard Version), and "To the tune of 'The Doe of the Morning'" (New International Version), "To the tune 'Doe of the Dawn'" (New Living Translation).
- *Al-taschith*, in [Psalms 57–59](#) and [75](#) (King James Version), is translated "To the tune 'Do Not Destroy!'" (New Living Translation).
- *Jonath-elem-rechokim*, in [Psalm 56](#) (King James Version), is translated "according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths" (Revised Standard Version), and "To the tune 'Dove on Distant Oaks'" (New Living Translation).
- *Mahalath Leannoth*, in [Psalm 88](#), is translated "To the tune 'The Suffering of Affliction'" (New Living Translation).
- *Muthlabben*, in [Psalm 9](#), is translated "To the tune 'Death of the Son'" (New Living Translation).
- *Shoshannim*, in [Psalms 45](#) and [69](#) (King James Version), is translated "To the tune 'Lilies'" (New Living Translation).
- *Shoshannim-Eduth*, in [Psalm 80](#) (King James Version), is translated "To the tune 'Lilies of the Covenant'" (New Living Translation).
- *Shushan-eduth*, in [Psalm 60](#), is translated "To the tune 'Lily of the Testimony'" (New Living Translation).

These melody types appear only in the first three books of the Psalter. This may imply that these popular makams had stopped being used by the time the final books of the Psalter were written. Other makam-types had probably become popular.

The authors, realizing the relatively short life of a popular tune, did not include them in the headings of the Psalms. They left the choice up to the performer.

### *Music in the New Testament*

#### **First-Century Influences: The Synagogue**

By the time of Christ, the synagogue had become the chief place of worship for the Jewish people. It began as a place for study of the law but gradually became the center of worship for Jews unable to attend the temple.

The worship service of the temple could not be duplicated in the synagogue as there was no sacrificial rite. The music could not be exactly reproduced without trained Levitical singers. Scholars do not agree about the amount of continuity between the music of the temple and the music of the synagogue. But there is evidence that certain musical practices did remain constant between the two places of worship.

Information on the customs and rituals of the synagogue come from Talmudic writings. The musical elements of worship in the synagogue were the chanting of Scripture and the singing of psalms and spiritual songs. The choral singing of the temple was replaced by a single cantor (song leader).

The cantor was a layman who, according to tradition, had to have the following qualifications: "He had to be well educated, gifted with a sweet voice, of humble personality, recognized by the community, conversant with Scripture and all the prayers; he must not be a rich man, for his prayers should come from his heart." A cantor's most important job was the cantillation (musical chanting) of the Law and the Prophets. A series of accents and punctuations, early musical notation, were indications for the cantor in the musical interpretation of the Scripture.

Psalm singing was gradually transplanted from the temple to the synagogue. This practice influenced the early Christian church. Gregorian psalm tones have their roots in Hebrew singing of psalms.

#### **First-Century Influences: Greek and Roman Cultures**

Both the temple and the synagogue were familiar to the early Christians ([Acts 2:46–47; 3:1; 5:42; 9:20; 18:4](#); and so forth). But the Greek and Roman cultures also played a major part in shaping the

young church. Greek influences by the time of Christ had long been felt in the Middle East. Some Jewish leaders strongly opposed this influence, but the Greek arts had permeated Jewish culture.

Greek philosophers considered music an emotionally cleansing force. They thought it could lead humans into spiritual knowledge. This understanding led to the belief that music had a moral substance that could influence people to either good or evil. If this philosophy had effectively transferred into Judeo-Christian thought, certainly Paul would have encouraged the use of music to spread the gospel. Paul's omission of this theory implies that the Judeo-Christian world at that time had rejected the Greek ideal, at least in part.

Jewish rabbis considered music an art form for the praise of God. Greek philosophers thought of it as a powerful moral force in creation. The Romans considered music mainly as entertainment. The music of the Roman games was neither religious nor philosophic. From the accounts of witnesses, it was not technically exceptional. In the Roman Empire musicians were given a lower status and looked on as mere entertainers. One reason the early church did not include instrumental music in their worship was in reaction to the secular use of instruments by the Romans.

#### **In the New Testament Writings**

One of the few mentions of instruments in the New Testament is the use of flutes at a wake ([Matthew 9:23](#)). As in the Old Testament, music is associated with feasting and merrymaking (for example, the return of the prodigal son, [Luke 15:25](#)). Five passages mention music metaphorically ([Matthew 6:2; 11:17; Luke 7:32; 1 Corinthians 13:1; 14:7–8](#)). The most well-known of these is Paul's celebration of love in [1 Corinthians 13](#). The denunciation of the gong and cymbals must be understood because of the attitude of the early Christians toward the music of the Pharisees. Here the signal instruments of the temple were used to represent pompous display of religious devotion.

Most references to music are found in the visions and prophetic passages about the end times. These are found in many places in the New Testament, most frequently in the book of Revelation (also [Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 12:19](#)). Many of these descriptions are associated with musical references in the Old Testament (for example, the use of harps and trumpets and the singing of the

Hallelujah). But the value of many of the passages in Revelation comes from their literary style. These passages that praise God and resemble psalms were probably spontaneous "spiritual songs" created by the early church (for example, [Revelation 5:9–10](#)).

The passages that mention religious or worship music are often more abstract than literal. Two parallel passages describing the Last Supper ([Matthew 26:30](#); [Mark 14:26](#)) mention that Christ and his disciples sang a hymn. This is the only direct account of Jesus singing. It is probable that when he read in the synagogue he did so in the accepted vocal style ([Luke 4:16–20](#)). Despite controversy surrounding the actual events at the Last Supper, it is a safe assumption that the hymn sung was a traditional Jewish hymn, probably associated with the Passover.

From the account in [Acts 16:25](#) we know that Paul and Silas sang hymns while in jail. Paul gives instruction for music making in [1 Corinthians 14:15, 26](#) in terms of a balance between rationalism (logical thinking) and emotion. And, as with all the gifts of the Spirit, Paul asks that singing be done for edification (helping other believers learn and grow spiritually).

In two similar passages ([Ephesians 5:19](#); [Colossians 3:16](#)) Paul groups together three musical terms:

- psalms
- hymns
- spiritual songs

The singing of psalms was an obvious continuation from the synagogue. Early Christian psalm singing probably followed the Jewish style.

The term for "hymns" probably refers to poetic texts. These songs were probably modeled after the psalms, but praise Christ. "Spiritual songs" may refer to a spontaneous, ecstatic form of musical prayer, possibly wordless (perhaps related to speaking in tongues). There is evidence that this style was popular in mystical Judaism, too. These outbursts of song were probably melismatic (sung on one tone) and are perhaps the early examples of the later Alleluia chant.

### Hymnody in the New Testament

It can be assumed that the early Christians composed hymns in praise of Christ. Most New Testament hymns are based on Hebrew poetic

psalm forms, but there is Greek and Latin influence also. The hymns from the Gospel of Luke have become well-known canticles (psalm-like songs) used by the church:

- the Magnificat ([Luke 1:46–55](#))
- the Benedictus ([Luke 1:68–79](#))
- the Gloria ([Luke 2:14](#))
- the Nunc Dimittis ([Luke 2:29–32](#)).

These songs are written like the psalms in the Old Testament. They express strong trust in Jesus as savior and show excitement about his promised return. Other hymns about Christ found in the New Testament include the introduction to the Gospel of John, [Ephesians 2:14–16](#), [Philippians 2:6–11](#), [Colossians 1:15–20](#), [1 Timothy 3:16](#), [Hebrews 1:3](#), and [1 Peter 3:18–22](#).

## Musical Instruments

Stringed, wind, and percussion instruments used to make music.

The Old Testament tells us a lot about how people used music in worship at the temple. However, it does not give many details about what the instruments looked like or how they were made. This is partly because of God's second commandment. The Hebrew people understood this commandment to mean they should not make pictures or drawings of things, including musical instruments. The book of Daniel mentions six different instruments that were played in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace.

The ancient Hebrew people had special rules about which instruments they could use in temple worship. They did not choose instruments based on how they sounded. Instead, they chose them based on whether they were considered "clean" (acceptable) or "unclean" (not acceptable) for worship. Some instruments were not allowed in the temple because they were considered unclean.

### Stringed Instruments

The Jewish people especially valued instruments with strings. They thought these instruments were best for playing music during worship at the temple. Many other ancient peoples also thought stringed instruments were very important. For example, King David played a stringed instrument called a lyre. In [Psalm 150:4](#), the Hebrew word

minim (which means "strings") refers to all the different types of stringed instruments that people used to praise God.

### Asor

Asor occurs three times in the book of Psalms ([Psalms 33:2; 92:3; 144:9](#)). The word asor (which means "ten" in Hebrew) might refer to an instrument with ten strings. Scholars think the asor was probably like a zither (a flat stringed instrument) from Phoenicia that had ten strings. It might also have been similar to a lute (another type of stringed instrument).

### Kathros

A kathros was played in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace. It was probably similar to a lyre, a small harp-like instrument that people held in their hands ([Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 15](#)).

### Kinnor

The kinnor appears more often in the Bible than any other instrument. It is mentioned 42 times. Many people call it "David's harp," and it became the most loved instrument of the Jewish people. It was more like a lyre than a big harp. The number of strings is uncertain, but they were made from sheep intestines. The sounding box was at the bottom of the instrument.

We are not sure if people played the kinnor with a pick or with their hands. The Bible tells us that David "played it with his hand" ([1 Samuel 16:23](#)). This might mean that playing with hands was not the usual way. The kinnor was "sweet-sounding" ([Psalm 81:2](#)). It was used in worship, celebrations, and state occasions ([1 Samuel 10:5; 2 Samuel 6:5; Isaiah 5:12](#)). It was also played by shepherds ([1 Samuel 16:16](#)).

### Nebel

appears 27 times in the Bible. The word nebel means "skin" or "skin bottle" in Hebrew. This might be because the instrument was shaped like a bottle, with a round, wide bottom part that made the sound. It was a type of harp ([2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Kings 10:12; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalm 57:8; Amos 5:23](#)). It was probably similar to harps from Egypt. People likely played the nebel with their hands instead of a pick. It was bigger and made a louder sound than the kinnor.

Modern English Bibles usually translate nebel as "harp." The King James Version uses the words

"psaltery" or "viol" (both are old names for stringed instruments).

### Psantrin (Pesanterin)

The psantrin (also called pesanterin) was an instrument from Greece. It was played in King Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra ([Daniel 3:5-15](#)). It might have been like a dulcimer (a stringed instrument that people play by hitting the strings with small hammers).

### Sabcha (Sabbeka)

The sabcha (also called sabbeka) was a stringed instrument played in the king's palace in Babylon ([Daniel 3:5-15](#)). The Greeks called it *sambuke*, and the Romans called it *sambuca*. It was shaped like a triangle. It had four strings and made a high, sharp sound. The Revised Standard Version calls the sabcha a "trigon." The King James Version calls it a "sackbut."

### Wind Instruments

Wind instruments (instruments that people blow into to make music) can be divided into two groups: pipes and horns.

### Halil

The halil was a type of pipe instrument that appears six times in the Bible. Many Jewish writers after Bible times also wrote about it. The halil was similar to the Greek *aulos* (an ancient instrument like the modern oboe). Many Bible translations call it a "flute" ([Matthew 9:23; 1 Corinthians 14:7; Revelation 18:22](#)). People made early versions from hollow plants like reeds. It had a special mouthpiece made with two small pieces of reed, and it probably made a loud, high-pitched sound.

People played the halil for different occasions:

- They used it at happy events like feasts ([Isaiah 5:12](#)).
- They used it when prophets were filled with God's Spirit ([1 Samuel 10:5](#)).
- They also played it at sad times for crying and mourning ([Jeremiah 48:36](#)).

### Hatzotzrot

The hatzotzrot was a type of trumpet used in ancient times. We know more about this instrument than many other Hebrew instruments because we can see pictures of it. When the Romans captured Jerusalem, they took two of these trumpets from the temple. They carved pictures of these trumpets on a victory arch in Rome that was built for their leader Titus.

The hatzotzrot was about 0.9 meters (one yard) long but narrow, with a wide opening at the end. People made these trumpets from silver or gold. The design may have come from Egyptian trumpets. Similar instruments were also used in Assyria, the Hittite Empire, and Greece.

God told Moses to make two silver trumpets ([Numbers 10:2](#)). Only the descendants of Aaron (the first high priest) were allowed to play these instruments. These ancient trumpets were the early version of what we now call herald trumpets.

The Bible says these trumpets helped people remember God ([Numbers 10:10](#)). People used them to:

- Call people to gather at the tent of meeting
- Give warnings
- Tell the camps when to move
- Signal the start of battles

The hatzotzrot became very important in temple worship. The temple always used at least two trumpets for daily services. During special religious celebrations, they could use many more trumpets ([1 Chronicles 15:28; 2 Chronicles 15:14](#); [Psalm 98:6; Daniel 3:5–15; Hosea 5:8](#)).

### Mashroqita

The mashroqita was an instrument played in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace ([Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 15](#)).

Scholars think it was like a Pan's pipe similar to the Greek *syrinx*, which had a row of different-sized hollow tubes joined together. These tubes make different musical notes when someone blows across the tops.

### Shophar

A shophar is a horn instrument (like a trumpet) that was used in ancient Israel. People still use it today in Jewish religious services. It is mentioned 72 times in the Bible, which is more than any other Hebrew instrument.

The early shophar was curved like the horn of a male sheep (called a ram). Later versions were straight with a bend near the wide end of the horn. The shophar could only make two or three different sounds. Because of this limited range, some people do not consider it a true musical instrument. Instead, people used it mainly to send signals and messages.

People used the shophar in many religious ceremonies, including:

- When they moved the ark ([2 Samuel 6:15; 1 Chronicles 15:28](#))
- When King Asa renewed the agreement between God and his people ([2 Chronicle 15:14](#))
- When people gave thanks to God ([Psalm 98:6; 150:3](#))
- At the start of each new month
- At the beginning of the jubilee year (a special year that happens every 50 years)

People also used the shophar for important events related to kings:

- When Absalom declared himself king ([2 Samuel 15:10](#))
- When Solomon was chosen as king ([1 Kings 1:34](#))
- When Jehu became king ([2 Kings 9:13](#))

### Sumponia

A sumponia is a word found in [Daniel 3](#), but scholars are not sure what it means exactly. Some Bible teachers think sumponia refers to a bagpipe.

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible translates it this way. However, experts who study ancient musical instruments strongly disagree. They say there were no bagpipes during the time of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Other scholars suggest that sumponia might not be an instrument at all. Instead, they think it might describe many instruments playing music together. This meaning would make sense because the word comes from the Greek word *symphonia*, which means "sounding together." In [Luke 15:25](#), it is translated as "music."

### **Ugab**

An ugab is an ancient instrument similar to a flute. The Bible mentions the ugab four times ([Genesis 4:21](#); [Job 21:12; 30:31](#); [Psalm 150:4](#)). Usually when the ugab is mentioned, it is not connected to religious events. Only in [Psalm 150](#) is it used in worship. The King James Version mistranslates it as "organ."

### *Percussion Instruments*

Percussion instruments (instruments that make sound when hit or shaken) appear most often in the early stories of the Jewish people. Over time, people stopped using these instruments in temple worship. This might have happened because other religions used similar instruments to worship false gods.

### **Mena Anim**

A mena anim is a type of loud metal rattle. It had metal rings that hung on a frame and made noise when shaken. The mena anim was probably similar to the sistrum (a sacred rattle used in ancient Egypt). The mena anim appears in [2 Samuel 6:5](#). The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible translates it as "castanet." The King James Version (KJV) incorrectly translates it as "cornet."

### **Pamonim**

The pamonim were small bells that priests wore on their special clothes ([Exodus 28:33-34; 39:25-26](#)). The bells made soft sounds when the high priest walked. This helped people know where he was when he went into the holy place to worship God.

### **Shalishim**

A shalishim is a type of rattle that appears in the Bible. Some Bibles translate this word as "sistrum"

(a sacred rattle from ancient Egypt) or "timbrel" (a kind of tambourine). Scholars are not sure if the shalishim was actually a musical instrument. The shalishim appears in [1 Samuel 18:6](#). In this story, people used it to celebrate when King Saul and David returned from fighting against the Philistines.

### **Toph (Tof)**

A toph (also called tof) was a type of hand drum used in ancient Israel. Women usually played the toph, but some Bible passages suggest men played it too ([1 Samuel 10:5](#); [2 Samuel 6:5](#); [1 Chronicles 13:8](#)). The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible calls it a "tabret."

Toph occurs 15 times in the Bible. It had a frame of wood or metal shaped like a circle. Animal skin was stretched over the frame (from a male sheep or wild goat). People played it by hitting it with their hands. We do not know if the toph had animal skin on one side or both sides. Some scholars say it was like a tambourine or timbrel (a small drum). However, there is no evidence that it had metal pieces that made jingling sounds like a tambourine does.

People played the toph during celebrations. It made loud sounds ([Exodus 15:20](#); [Psalm 81:2](#)).

### **Zelzelim (Meziltayim)**

Zelzelim and meziltayim were cymbals used in ancient Israel. These words come from the Hebrew word *zala*, which means "to make a ringing sound." The Bible always uses these words in a dual form (showing that two items go together). This tells us that cymbals were always used as pairs.

Some Bible translations incorrectly translate these words as "castanets" (wooden or metal blocks that make clicking sounds).

People made these cymbals from metal. They came in pairs, and one person would play both cymbals together. These were the only percussion instruments allowed in temple worship. Metal cymbals were common in many ancient cultures.

Cymbals first appear in the Bible when people moved the ark to Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 6:5](#); [1 Chronicles 13:8](#)). Later, the leaders of the Levitical singers (musicians from the tribe of Levi) played cymbals in the temple ([1 Chronicles 15:19](#)).

The cymbals had a special purpose in worship. Instead of making music, they were used to:

- Signal when people should start singing
- Mark different sections of the psalms

[Psalm 150](#) mentions two different kinds of cymbals. We are not sure how these cymbals were different. They might have been different sizes or made from different materials.

## Musician

See Music; Musical Instruments.

## Mustard

A herb noted for its small seed ([Matthew 13:31](#)). Various plants in this family are native to Europe and Asia, and some are grown for their edible seeds.

While experts disagree about which exact plant is the "mustard" mentioned in [Matthew 13:31–32](#), [17:20](#), [Mark 4:31](#), [Luke 13:19](#), and [17:6](#), most believe it is the common black mustard (*Brassica nigra*).

The mustard Jesus talked about might also be the charlock or wild mustard (*Brassica arvensis*). This mustard usually grows from 0.3 to 0.9 meter (1 to 3 feet) tall. Some scholars have suggested it could be *Salvadora persica*, a plant found in thickets around the Dead Sea. This plant has a pleasant taste similar to mustard. If eaten in large amounts, it can irritate the nose and eyes like mustard does. However, this plant does not grow as far north as Galilee, and its fruits are rather large and hard. This does not match the description in Jesus's parable.

While mustard seeds are not actually the smallest seeds known in the world, they were probably the smallest seeds familiar to the common people who made up Jesus's audience in Galilee.

## Muster Gate

RSV translation for the Jerusalem gate located opposite the house of the temple servants and the merchants during the days of Nehemiah ([Neh 3:31](#); kjv "Miphkad Gate"; niv "Inspection Gate"). Its exact location is uncertain. Some suggest that it was a temple gate or a gate in the wall of the old city of David. See Jerusalem.

## Muteness

The inability to speak. Muteness (also called aphasia by doctors) can last for a short time or be permanent. It may happen because of mental disability, brain damage, or being unable to hear.

The Bible records several examples of muteness. Zechariah was made mute by the angel Gabriel because he did not believe he would become the father of John the Baptist ([Luke 1:18–22](#)). That condition lasted at least nine months until the baby was born and named ([Luke 1:62–64](#)).

Not being able to speak is usually associated with brain diseases or when the brain is not formed correctly. Jesus healed people who could not speak and people who could not hear ([Matthew 9:32–33](#); [12:22–23](#); [15:30–31](#); [Mark 7:32–37](#); [9:17–27](#); [Luke 11:14](#)). When he did this, people were amazed.

Other passages of the Bible talk about muteness in people ([Proverbs 31:8](#); [Isaiah 35:6](#)) and in animals ([Isaiah 56:10](#); [2 Peter 2:16](#)). The prophets often argued false gods and idols cannot speak ([Hebrews 2:18–20](#); [1 Corinthians 12:2](#)). The prophets contrasted these gods with the living and speaking God of Israel.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice.

## Myra

A port city on the southern coast of Asia Minor in the province of Lycia, identified with the modern Demre in Turkey. According to [Acts 27:5–6](#), Paul and his military escort stopped here for a short time. They changed ships on their journey to Rome, where Paul was going to trial before Caesar.

## Myrrh

A fragrant gum resin obtained from various shrubs or small trees. It is used in perfume and incense.

Most Bible references to myrrh likely refer to *Commiphora myrrha*. But the Bible might also refer to *Commiphora kataf* since it grows in the same region and is similar. Both trees are native to Arabia, Ethiopia, and the east African coast of Somalia. These trees produce a gummy substance that makes up most of the myrrh sold commercially.

Both species are low, scrubby shrubs or small trees with thick, stiff branches and thorns. They grow in rocky areas, especially on limestone hills.

In eastern cultures, myrrh is highly valued as a fragrant substance, perfume, and medicine. The ancient Egyptians burned it in their temples and used it to preserve their dead bodies. The Jews also used myrrh for preparing bodies for burial ([John 19:39](#)). The Hebrew people valued myrrh highly as a perfume ([Psalm 45:8](#)).

## Myrtle

An evergreen shrub with small leaves and scented flowers ([Isaiah 41:19](#)). The myrtle tree (*Myrtus communis*) is common in Israel and the surrounding areas, especially around Bethlehem, Lebanon, Hebron, as well as the slopes of Mount Carmel and Mount Tabor. It is native to western Asia and in good growing conditions can become a small evergreen tree 6.2 to 9.1 meters (20 to 30 feet) tall. More often, however, it grows as a short bush 0.5 to 1.2 meters (one and a half to four feet) tall.

In the Bible, myrtle is mainly mentioned as a symbol of God's generosity. Nehemiah ordered people to gather branches of myrtle trees, among others, for the Feast of Tabernacles ([Nehemiah 8:15](#)). The myrtle was symbolic not only of peace but also of justice.

## Mysia

A region in northwest Asia Minor (which is now modern Turkey). The area has a long history. In 133 BC, Mysia became part of the Roman Empire within the province of Asia. For about 150 years before joining the Roman Empire, Mysia was part of the kingdom of Pergamum. The travel account in [Acts 16:7-8](#) indicates that the apostle Paul passed through this region. This was on his second missionary journey but he did not preach there.

*See also* Pergamos, Pergamum.

## Mystery

A special plan that God reveals to his people. In most biblical passages, it means God's wise guidance of world events toward a future purpose. The most important use of this idea is about God's

plan for Jesus's death. This does not mean a secret God wants to hide or something so confusing that no one could understand it.

The Bible uses this idea of mystery over 30 times. Some of the most important passages include [Daniel 3:18-28; 4:6](#) (Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament); [Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 4:1; 15:51; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3-6, 9-12; Colossians 1:26-29; 2:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Timothy 3:9, 16; Revelation 1:20; 10:7; 17:5-18](#).

### *Mystery in the Old Testament and Other Jewish Writings*

In the book of Daniel, the mystery is about God helping Daniel understand King Nebuchadnezzar's special dream about the future. None of the king's advisors (not the wise men, magicians, or anyone else) could explain the dream. But God could. As Daniel says, "there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries" ([Daniel 2:28](#)).

Recent studies have found similar ideas in Jewish writings, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. These writings focus on God's plans for the future, especially about the end time. People often wonder about big questions like why bad things happen to good people. Why does God allow suffering if he is good and powerful? (This is known as the problem of evil.)

Believers experience these same questions but trust that God has a plan. Believers trust that one day, God will make everything clear. God will bring justice. Those who are wronged will be set right. Those who do wrong will be judged. This is part of the "mystery" and was important in the writings around the time of Jesus. God controls everything that happens in the world. In the end, all nations will do what God has planned.

### *Mystery in the Gospels*

In [Matthew 13:11](#), [Mark 4:11](#), and [Luke 8:10](#) Jesus tells parables that teach about God's kingdom. These stories show us how God will complete his final work in history. Jesus uses examples that people can understand. For instance, he talks about harvest time, which represents God's final judgment. This is why the word "mystery" is important here.

Jesus explains that he uses these stories for two reasons. First, they help explain the truth using

everyday examples. Second, they hide the meaning from people who are not willing to listen.

The "mystery" (which Matthew and Luke call "mysteries") is about the deep meaning of Jesus's teaching about God's kingdom. People who accept Jesus's message will understand what these stories mean. But those who reject the message will not only not understand the meaning but may also lose their chance to hear and respond to God's message of salvation ([Matthew 13:12–15](#)).

These verses lead to another question. If the Messiah (God's chosen one) has come, why does evil still exist in the world? The servants in one of the parables wanted to pull up the weeds. The weeds represent evil or evil people. The owner tells the servants to allow them to grow until the time of harvest. The time of the harvest is the judgment ([Matthew 13:24–30](#)). The presence of evil in the world and the way God will eventually deal with it is one of the "mysteries."

### *Mystery in Romans*

[Romans 11:25](#) is part of a larger section of [Romans 9–11](#). This section deals with the people of Israel and their future. Once more, there is a mystery of the present problem and its future resolution. In Romans 9–11, the problem is the unbelief of Israel. Paul calls Israel's hard hearts during the present time a "mystery" ([Romans 11:25](#)). God's plans will not be stopped, "and so all Israel will be saved" ([Romans 11:26](#)). Paul's emphasis on God's purposes is closely connected to the idea of "mystery." This emphasis is found throughout Romans 9–11.

[Romans 16:25](#) concerns all people. Paul connects the "revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past" with Paul's "gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ." Here the focus is more closely on the meaning of the death of Jesus.

### *Mystery in First Corinthians*

In [1 Corinthians 2:7](#), Paul mentions God's "secret wisdom." The context is the message of the cross that Paul preaches. This message lacks good sense to those who consider themselves wise but are lost. It is the "foolishness" of what is preached that brings salvation to believers ([1:18–25](#)). Paul does not try to proclaim worldly "wisdom." He gives a "message of wisdom" to those who are spiritually mature ([2:6](#)). To these, he speaks the "secret wisdom" or "wisdom in a secret" ([2:7](#)).

In this passage, the basic idea of "mystery" connects the thoughts and will of God with the death of Jesus as the way of salvation. It also connects mystery with the process of history or "the rulers of this age" and with God's purposes from Old Testament times into the future. [First Corinthians 2:10](#) says that God has shown these mysteries to us.

In [1 Corinthians 4:1](#), Paul talks about how God's wisdom is different from the world's wisdom ([3:18–23](#)). Paul explains that God has given him two important things: special truths that were once hidden (mysteries), and the responsibility to take care of these truths. God trusted Paul to share these special truths with others faithfully. Paul writes about this same idea again in [Ephesians 3:2–6](#).

In [1 Corinthians 15:51](#), Paul again talks about how God's mystery relates to the end times. Earlier in [2:9–16](#), Paul explained that humans cannot understand God's plans on their own. But God has shown these special truths to believers.

One important part of this truth is about how believers will join God. Paul writes: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" ([1 Corinthians 5:51–52](#)). This means that when Jesus returns, some believers will still be alive. God will change all believers (both the living and the dead) in an instant. Paul also mentions mysteries in [13:2](#) and [14:2](#). These verses are part of his teaching about spiritual gifts in chapters [12–14](#). These gifts include receiving special messages from God, so it makes sense that Paul talks about mysteries here.

### *Mystery in Ephesians*

Ephesians opens with a series of statements about God's purpose in history. These statements end in the universal headship of Christ "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ" ([Ephesians 1:10](#)). These statements include such terms as "chose," "destined," "will," "purpose," "plan," and "counsel." This is clearly the range of ideas connected with the word "mystery" in ancient Jewish writings. These ideas shed light on Paul's use of the summary statement: "And He has made known to us the mystery of His will" ([1:9](#)).

Part of God's purpose was to form a body of believers. He brought them into a relationship with himself and to each other through the cross ([Ephesians 2:14–18](#)). In this body, Jewish and non-Jewish (gentile) believers have been made body

parts together of one body. God made them share in the promise of Jesus. This is a new phase of God's revealed plan. Paul calls this a "mystery" ([3:6](#)). As noted above, Paul himself has a responsibility to minister the truth of this "mystery" faithfully ([3:2–5](#); compare [1 Corinthians 4:1–5](#)).

### *Mystery in Colossians*

Colossians continues to show Paul's sense of responsibility concerning this "mystery." This is now identified with the "word of God" ([Colossians 1:25–29](#)). Once again there is the idea of the span of history linked with the mystery that is known only by revelation. "The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints" ([Colossians 1:26](#)). As in Ephesians, the church is the center for the working out of God's mystery, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" ([Colossians 1:27](#)). This Christ is proclaimed in wisdom, so that believers may reach maturity in him ([Colossians 1:28](#)). The Colossian believers are asked to pray for Paul as he preaches this "mystery" ([4:3](#)).

### *Mystery in the Pastoral Letters*

It is made clear in [1 Timothy 3:16](#) that the "mystery of godliness" includes the basic elements connected with the "mystery" of God bringing justice to the world. However, this major plan of God does not happen without opposition. In connection with the coming of the end time, Paul again mentions a mystery. This time it is an evil mystery called the "secret power of lawlessness" ([2 Thessalonians 2:7](#)).

### *Mystery in Revelation*

A similar evil force, "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes," is introduced in the book of Revelation with the word "mystery" ([Revelation 17:5](#)). Perhaps the idea is that there are forces that oppose God whose actions are also impossible for humans to understand. God's truth and power will win over these. He brings his own mystery. He brings his plan to completion.

[Revelation 10:6–7](#) describes this completion. The ages of waiting in confusion and the existence of evil are over. The angel announces, "There will be no more delay!" The time has finally come when "the mystery of God will be fulfilled." Pay attention to how this mystery changes in this context. More than a truth, it is something that can be "fulfilled" or "accomplished."

This great completion of history is in agreement with what God revealed "to his servants, the prophets." The mystery is God's wise plan. It guides history and is revealed in its completion. It expresses God's answer to the problem of evil. It expresses God's answer to the evil powers that stand against him. It declares the meaning of the central event in history, the death of Jesus. It shows the results of the resurrection in the ultimate change of all believers at the coming of Christ.

## **Mystery of Lawlessness**

Phrase used by the apostle Paul to describe a lawless power or force threatening the world. The expression is found only in [2 Thessalonians 2:7](#) and must be considered in the light of its context.

Evidently, some members of the church at Thessalonica were convinced that Christ had already returned ([2 Thes 2:1–2](#)). In order to counter this belief Paul describes some of the events that must occur before the return of Christ. These events center around the coming of "the man of lawlessness," an evil figure who takes his seat in the temple of Jerusalem and proclaims himself to be God (vv [3–4](#)). Although the man of lawlessness is presently being restrained, the evil that he will perpetrate is already at work (v [6](#)). Paul calls this evil "the mystery of lawlessness."

The identity of the man of lawlessness, the restrainer, and the content of the mystery of iniquity have been subject to much debate. Among the suggestions that have been made, the following three predominate:

1. The mystery of lawlessness is the tyranny of the Roman Empire, and the man of lawlessness is a future Roman emperor who is being kept from power by the present Roman ruler. In support of this position it can be said that the Jewish apocalypses of Paul's day considered Rome to be the quintessence of evil. In addition, approximately 10 years before the writing of 2 Thessalonians, Caligula, the Roman emperor, ordered his statue to be erected and worshiped in the Jerusalem temple (Josephus's *Antiquities* 18.8.2–6; *War* 2.10.1–5).
2. The mystery of lawlessness is the religion of Judaism, and the man of lawlessness is the high priest who is restrained by apostolic preaching. However, it is doubtful that Paul would have considered Judaism in this light (cf. [Rom 9:1–5](#)).

3. Dispensational theology identifies the mystery of lawlessness as the whole course of evil, consummated in the figure of the Antichrist (the lawless one) and presently restrained by the Holy Spirit. In such a context, it is difficult to establish a scriptural basis for the Holy Spirit being “taken out of the way” ([2 Thes 2:7](#)).

*See also* Antichrist; Eschatology; Second Coming of Christ; Thessalonians, First Letter to the; Thessalonians, Second Letter to the.