

Resource: Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

Aquifer Open Bible Dictionary

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Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

E

Eagle, Earring, Earth, Earth, New, Earthenware, Earthquake, East Gate, East Sea, East Wind, East, Children of the, Eastern Sea, Ebal, Ebed, Ebed-Melech, Ebenezer, Eber, Ebez, Ebiasaph, Ebla Tablets, Ebony, Ebron, Ebronah, Ecbatana, Ecclesiasticus, Eclipse, Edar, Eden, Eder (Person), Eder (Place), Edh, Edna, Edom, Edomites, Edrei, Education, Eduth, Eglah, Eglaim, Eglath-Shelishiyah, Eglon (Person), Eglon (Place), Egypt, Brook of, Egypt, Egyptian, Ehi, Ehud, Eker, Ekrebel, Ekron, Ekronites, El, El Shaddai, El-Berith, El-Bethel, El-Elohe-Israel, El-Elyon, El-Paran, Ela, Eladah, Elah, Elah, Valley of, Elam (Person), Elam (Place), Elamites, Elasa, Elasa, Elath, Eldaah, Eldad, Elder, Elead, Eleadah, Elealeh, Eleasah, Eleazar, Elect Lady, Elect, Election, Elemental Spirits, Elements, Eleph, Elephantine Papyri, Eleutherus, Eleven, the, Elhanan, Eli, Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?, Eliab, Eliada, Eliadah, Eliah, Eliahba, Eliakim, Eliam, Elias, Eliasaph, Eliashib, Eliathah, Elidad, Eliehoenai, Eliel, Elienai, Eliezer, Eliehoenai, Elihoreph, Elihu, Elijah, Erika, Elim, Elimelech, Eliehoenai, Eliphai, Eliphaz, Eliphaz, Eliphaz, Eliphaz, Elisabeth, Elisha, Elishah, Elishama, Elishaphat, Elisheba, Elishua, Eliud, Elizabeth, Elizaphan, Elizur, Elkanah, Elkiah, Elkosh, Ellasar, Elm, Elmadam, Elmodam, Elnaam, Elnathan, Eloah, Elohim, Eloi, Eloi, Lema Sabachthani?, Elon (Person), Elon (Place), Elon-Bethhanan, Elonite, Eloah, Elpaal, Elpalet, Elpelet, Eltekeh, Eltekon, Eltolad, Elul, Eluzai, Elymais, Elymas, Elyon, Elzabad, Elzaphan, Embalm, Embroiderer, Embroidery, Emek-Keziz, Emerald, Emerod, Emim, Emites, Emmanuel, Emmaus, Emmor, Emperor, En-Eglaim, En-Gannim, En-Gedi, En-Haddah, En-Hakkore, En-Hazor, En-Mishpat, En-Rimmon, En-rogel, En-Shemesh, En-Tappuah, Enan, Enchantment, End of the World, Endive, Endor, Engagement, Engraver, Engraving, Enoch (Person), Enoch (Place), Enosh, Enrollment, Enuma Elish, Epaphras, Epaphroditus, Epenetus, Ephah (Measurement), Ephah (Person), Ephai, Ephraim, Ephraim, Gate of, Ephraim, Mount, Ephraim, Tribe of, Ephraimite, Ephraim, Ephraim (Person), Ephraim (Place), Ephraimite, Ephron (Person), Ephron (Place), Epicureans, Epigraphy, Epilepsy, Epileptic, Epiphany, Epistle, Epistle of Barnabas, Epistle of the Apostles, Er, Eran, Erastus, Erech, Eri, Esaias, Esarhaddon, Esau, Eschatology, Esdras, Esek, Eshan, Eshbaal, Eshban, Eshcol (Person), Eshcol (Place), Eshean, Eshek, Eshkalonite, Eshtaol, Eshtemoa (Person), Eshtemoa, Eshtemoa (Place), Eshton, Esli, Espousal, Esrom, Essenes, Esther (Person), Esther, Additions to, Etam, Eternal Life, Eternal Punishment, Eternity, Eth-Kazin, Etham, Ethan, Ethanim, Ethbaal, Ether, Ethiopia, Ethnan, Ethnarch, Ethni, Eubulus, Eucharist, Euergetes, Eumenes, Eunice, Eunuch, Euodia, Euodias, Eupator, Euphrates River, Eupolemus, Euroclydon, Eutychus, Evangelist, Eve, Evening, Evening Sacrifice, Everlasting Life, Evi, Evil, Evil One, Evil Spirit, Evil-Merodach, Ewe, Exaltation of Christ, Execration Texts, Execution, Exhortation, Exile, Exodus, the, Exorcism, Exorcist, Expiation, Eye Paint, Ezar, Ezba, Ezbon, Ezekias, Ezekiel (Person), Ezekiel, Book of, Ezel, Ezem, Ezer, Ezion-Geber, Eznite, Ezra (Person), Ezrah, Ezrahite, Ezri

Eagle

A large bird of prey in the genus *Aquila*. In the Bible, people often confused eagles with vultures, so it is hard to know which bird is meant. Eagles have feathered heads, unlike vultures, but from far away they can look similar.

The Hebrew word translated “eagle” means “to tear with the beak.” It may have referred to all large birds of prey, including both eagles and vultures. Some verses that say “eagle” may actually mean

griffon vulture ([Hosea 8:1](#)). Other verses likely mean a true eagle.

The Holy Land has several kinds of eagle. These include the imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) and the less common golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Eagles are strong birds with wide wings. They move with both grace and power. Their hooked beaks are good for tearing and killing prey. Their short, strong legs and sharp claws (talons) can hold prey very tightly. Eagles hunt during the day.

Eagles in the Bible

In the Bible, the eagle is a picture of speed. The golden eagle can fly 5 to 7 kilometers (3 to 4 miles)

in 10 minutes. This may explain comparisons in [2 Samuel 1:23](#); [Jeremiah 4:13](#); [49:22](#); and [Lamentations 4:19](#). Moses compared an enemy attack to an eagle's sudden strike ([Deuteronomy 28:49](#)). Proverbs compares the eagle's high flight to human ambition ([Proverbs 23:4-5](#); compare [Revelation 12:14](#)).

Eagles were also symbols of powerful nations. Ezekiel compared King Nebuchadnezzar to an eagle ([Ezekiel 17:3](#)). In Babylonian and Assyrian art, an eagle often had the body of a man and the head of a bird. In [Daniel 4:33](#), Nebuchadnezzar's hair became like eagle's feathers and his nails were like birds' claws" during his time of madness.

Eagles build nests on high cliffs or in tall trees ([Jeremiah 49:16](#); compare [Job 39:27-28](#); [Obadiah 1:4](#)). The female lays two or sometimes three eggs. Only the female sits on the eggs, but both parents feed the eaglets. Eagles care for their young and teach them to fly. Some people think [Exodus 19:4](#) and [Deuteronomy 32:11](#) describe an eagle carrying its young on its wings. However, there is little evidence that eagles do this.

Some eagles in captivity have lived more than 100 years. This may be why [Psalm 103:5](#) speaks of the eagle whose youth is renewed. Bible writers often showed awe for the eagle's power ([Job 39:27-30](#); [Proverbs 30:18-19](#)). The eagle also appears in visions, such as Ezekiel's living creature with an eagle's face ([Ezekiel 1:10](#)) and John's vision of a flying eagle ([Revelation 4:7](#)).

See also Birds; Vulture.

Earring

See Jewelry, Jewels.

Earth

The term for our inhabited planet. It is used to distinguish it from heaven and hell. It can also mean land, soil, or several other things. The Bible uses the term "earth" in a variety of ways, similar to how we use it today.

In Hebrew, one word translated as "earth" is also used for "man" or "Adam" ([Genesis 2:7, 19](#)). This word refers to the reddish soil from which Adam's body was made. Another Hebrew word translated as "earth" or "land" can refer to a country ([Genesis 21:21](#)). A word translated as "dust" can simply

mean earth or dry ground ([Genesis 3:19](#)). In the New Testament, a Greek word translated as "earth" can also refer to a land or country ([Matthew 27:45](#)). Another Greek word, from which "ecumenical" is derived, refers to the whole inhabited earth ([Luke 21:26](#)) or to the Roman Empire at that time ([Luke 2:1](#)).

In the beginning, "God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of waters He called "seas." And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth vegetation'" ([Genesis 1:10-11](#)). In some passages, "the earth" is used in a way similar to how we think of the entire planet today ([Job 1:7](#)), hanging in empty space ([Job 26:7](#)). References to the earth's four corners ([Isaiah 11:12](#); [Ezekiel 7:2](#)) refer to the points of a compass, not to the earth's shape. The "circle of the earth" likely refers to the horizon's circumference ([Isaiah 40:22](#); compare [Job 38:13](#)). The earth is sometimes described as being supported by pillars ([Job 9:6](#); [Psalm 75:3](#)) or foundations ([Psalm 104:5](#); [Proverbs 8:29](#); [Isaiah 24:18](#); [Jeremiah 31:37](#)). Many of these descriptions are found in poetic or prophetic passages, so they do not reveal much about the Hebrews' understanding of the cosmos.

"Earth" can also refer to the soil or ground that a farmer works (see [2 Kings 5:17](#)). According to the Bible, the original condition of the earth ([Genesis 2:6](#)) was affected by the curse brought on by human sinfulness ([Genesis 3:17-19](#)). (Modern environmental experts agree that the earth suffers because of human greed and arrogance.) After Abel's blood was spilled on the ground, Cain's difficulty in farming was a constant reminder that he had murdered his brother ([Genesis 4:8-12](#)).

The Israelites were instructed to let the land rest every seventh year ([Exodus 23:10-12](#); [Leviticus 25:4-5](#)) so the soil could replenish the nutrients used up by crops. After seven such "sabbath years," in the 50th "jubilee year," the land would return to its original family owners ([Leviticus 25:10-17](#)). This law reminded the people that God ultimately owned the land and prevented the rise of powerful landowners with huge estates.

The Mosaic law also taught the Israelites that the land's condition was a sign of their relationship with God. Drought or poor crop yields indicated a broken relationship ([Leviticus 26](#); [Deuteronomy 28](#)). Israel was warned that their wickedness could become so great that God would drive them out of His land (see [Leviticus 26:37](#); [Deuteronomy 28:64](#)). But even if this happened, God promised to

eventually restore His people so they could be married to the land again ([Isaiah 62:4](#)).

Many passages in the Bible point to a “coming age” when the earth will be set free from its “bondage to decay,” and the whole creation is said to be “groaning” in anticipation of this ([Romans 8:19–23](#)). The Bible describes a time of great renewal when the earth’s fertility will be restored ([Ezekiel 47](#); [Joel 3:18](#); [Amos 9:13–15](#); [Zechariah 14:6–9](#)). However, one day, “The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and its works will be laid bare” ([2 Peter 3:10](#)). Yet, in the apostle John’s vision, he saw “a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away” ([Revelation 21:1](#)).

See also New Heavens and New Earth.

Earth, New

See New Heavens and New Earth.

Earthenware

Objects made from baked clay, such as pots, jars, and dishes. These items were common household containers in biblical times.

See Pottery.

Earthquake

An earthquake is when the ground shakes or trembles. It happens because of volcanic activity or movement in the earth’s crust.

Earthquakes often happen in Palestine. This is mostly because of volcanoes near the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Earthquakes are most common in these areas:

1. Upper Galilee
2. The Samaritan country near Shechem
3. The western edge of the Judean Mountains near Lydda

In Hebrew, the word for “earthquake” means a great noise or loud roaring. This shows that the Israelites noticed the rumbling sound of earthquakes.

The Bible mentions several earthquakes:

1. At Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the law ([Exodus 19:18](#))
2. During the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites when Korah rebelled against Moses ([Numbers 16:31–33](#))
3. Among the Philistines when Jonathan and his armor bearer fought them ([1 Samuel 14:15](#))
4. After Elijah killed Baal’s prophets and he ran from Jezebel, when he was sitting under a juniper tree feeling sorry for himself ([1 Kings 19:7–9, 11](#))
5. During King Uzziah’s reign ([Amos 1:1](#))
6. When Jesus died on the cross ([Matthew 27:51–54](#))
7. When Jesus rose from the dead ([Matthew 28:2](#))
8. In Philippi when Paul and Silas were in jail ([Acts 16:26](#))

The Bible also talks about earthquakes happening in the future:

1. On the “Day of the Lord” ([Zechariah 14:4–5](#))
2. At the end of this age ([Revelation 6:12–17](#); [11:19](#); [16:18](#))

East Gate

Gate in the walled city of Jerusalem ([Neh 3:29](#)). “East gate” also refers to the gate of the temple mentioned in [Ezekiel 10:19](#); [11:1](#); and [43:1](#). *See Jerusalem.*

East Sea

KJV name for the “eastern sea,” an alternate name for the Dead Sea, in [Ezekiel 47:18](#). *See Dead Sea.*

East Wind

An east wind is a strong, hot wind that blows from the east, usually during May, September, and October. People in Bible times also called this wind a sirocco. This hot wind could cause great damage

to plants and water sources. It destroyed plants ([Genesis 41:6](#); [Ezekiel 17:10](#); [Jonah 4:8](#)). It made flowers dry up and die ([Psalm 103:15–16](#)). It dried up fountains and springs of water ([Hosea 13:15](#)).

The east wind played an important role in several Bible stories. God used an east wind to push back the waters of the Red Sea so the Israelites could walk across on dry ground ([Exodus 14:21](#)). In the Bible, writers sometimes used the east wind as a way to describe God's judgment against people who did wrong ([Isaiah 27:8](#); [Jeremiah 4:11](#); [18:17](#)).

In the New Testament, a strong east or northeast wind pushed the apostle Paul's ship off its planned route ([Acts 27:14](#), called "Euroclydon" in the King James Version). Sailors who travel in the western Mediterranean Sea call this type of wind a "levanter." These winds still cause problems for ships in that part of the sea today.

East, Children of the

Phrase used in reference to those nations that were east of Israel (e.g., [Jgs 6:3](#), nlt "people of the east"). See People of the East.

Eastern Sea

Another name for the Salt Sea, or Dead Sea. The name comes from the sea's location on the eastern boundary of the land of Israel ([Ezekiel 47:18](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Zechariah 14:8](#)).

See Dead Sea.

Ebal

1. Shobal's son and descendant of Seir the Horite ([Gn 36:23](#); [1 Chr 1:40](#)).
2. Joktan's son and descendant of Shem ([1 Chr 1:22](#)). He is called Obal in [Genesis 10:28](#).

Ebed

1. Gaal's father ([Jgs 9:26–35](#)). Gaal led the men of Shechem in an unsuccessful revolt against Abimelech, judge of Israel.

2. Adin's descendant and son of Jonathan. Ebed was the head of a family that returned to Judah with Ezra after the exile ([Ezr 8:6](#)).

Ebed-Melech

Ethiopian eunuch in King Zedekiah's court. He secured the king's permission to rescue the prophet Jeremiah out of a cistern where he had been thrown to die ([Jer 38:6–13](#)). For this righteous act, Ebed-melech was promised God's safety at the fall of Jerusalem ([39:16](#)).

Ebenezer

1. Site where the Israelite army encamped before a battle with the Philistines ([1 Sm 4:1–11](#)). It is thought to have been near Aphek, where the Philistines were encamped. The Israelite army was badly defeated in the battle, and 4,000 of its men were slain on the field. The elders of Israel tried to change their fortunes by bringing the ark of the covenant into their camp, but Israel was again defeated with a loss of 30,000 foot soldiers, and the ark of God was captured ([1 Sm 4:3–11](#); [5:1](#)).
2. Site near Mizpah, where God gave Israel a great victory over the Philistines. To commemorate the victory Samuel set up a stone between Mizpah and Jeshanah and called its name Ebenezer, meaning "the stone of help," for the Lord had helped them get the victory ([1 Sm 7:12](#)).

Eber

1. Abraham's ancestor ([Genesis 10:21-25](#); [11:14-17](#); [1 Chronicles 1:18-25](#); [Luke 3:35](#)). The word "Hebrew" may come from his name. Eber lived 464 years and was the ancestor of the "sons of Eber," a phrase which may refer to the "Hebrews." In the same passage "sons of Heth" equals the "Hittites" ([Genesis 23:10](#)). However, the term "Hebrew" may be a sign of social class rather than of descent from Eber. Eber had a son named Peleg. During Peleg's lifetime, the people on Earth split into two main groups: ones who traveled from place to place (nomads) and ones who stayed in permanent settlements.
2. A Gadite leader during the reigns of Jothan, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel ([1 Chronicles 5:13](#), "Heber" in the King James Version).
3. Benjamite and Elpaal's descendant ([1 Chronicles 8:12](#)).
4. Benjamite and Shashak's descendant ([1 Chronicles 8:22](#)).
5. The head of Amok's priestly family during the days of the high priest Joiakim ([Nehemiah 12:20](#)).

Ebez

City in the plain of Esdraelon, allotted to Issachar's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 19:20](#)).

Ebiasaph

A Kohathite Levite, Elkanah's son and the father of Assir ([1 Chronicles 6:23, 37](#); [9:19](#)). He is also called Abiasaph in [Exodus 6:24](#).

Ebla Tablets

The Ebla Tablets are ancient clay tablets that were discovered in the city-state of Ebla. These tablets date from around 2220 to 2240 BC. Ebla was

located in ancient Syria. Today, this place is known as the archaeological site of Tell Mardikh.

Ebla was a big trading city. People there made cloth, wood items, pottery, and things from gold, silver, and other metals. Many of the clay tablets that were found are economic records that record transactions with cities like Asia Minor, Egypt, Cyprus, and Iran (Persia). The tablets list thousands of city names. Many of these names are familiar from the Bible, such as:

- Hazor
- Megiddo
- Dor
- Joppa
- Gaza
- Uru-salim (which might be Jerusalem or "city of Salem")

One tablet even mentions Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar. It describes Zoar as being "in the territory of Bela" (compare [Genesis 14:2](#)). According to the biblical account, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in the days of Abraham ([Genesis 19:24-29](#)). So, the details in [Genesis 14](#) and [19](#) could only have been recorded through a living tradition.

The clay tablets from Tell Mardikh (another name for Ebla) have many personal names that are like names in the Bible. Some examples are:

- Abram (written as *ab-ra-mu*)
- Israel (written as *ish-ra-ilu*)
- Saul (written as *sha-u-lu*)
- David (written as *da-u-du*)

Some people think this proves the Bible is true. Others have questions about it. For example, how could the name "Israel" be written on tablets four or more centuries before God gave the name to Jacob?

But the Bible does not say the name was new. In those days, people often made names by combining a god's name with a word about what the god did. For example, Isaiah means "Yah is salvation" (Yah is short for Yahweh). So it is possible that before Jacob, parents named their children *ish-ra-ilu* which means "El [God] has prevailed." What was new in Jacob's story was his personal meeting with God and the blessing he received.

Some names from Ebla appear in two forms:

1. with *-ilu* (meaning El, or God)
2. with *-ya* (possibly meaning Yah, short for Yahweh)

Thus, both the names *mi-ka-ya* (Micaiah, Micah) and *mi-ka-il* (Michael) are found alongside other theophoric (God-bearing) names. But, if the ending *-ya* really is a divine name (Yah, the Lord) its appearance raises an important question. In [Exodus 6:3](#), God says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew him as El Shaddai, “but by My name the LORD I did not make Myself known to them.” This implies that the name Yahweh was not known before Sinai.

However, the name Yahweh appears many times in Genesis. It is not just in stories, where a later writer might have added it. It is also in:

- promises people made using Yahweh's name, and
- quotes that suggest people were actually using the name Yahweh.

These oaths and quotes suggest that people were actually using the name Yahweh in their everyday lives.

Biblical scholars have been aware of this problem for a long time and have divided into two main groups:

- scholars who think people did not know the name Yahweh before Moses, or
- scholars who think people knew the name, but think the name developed a new meaning when God freed the Israelites from Egypt.

The clay tablets from Ebla have given us a new way to learn about the past. It will take many years to understand everything written on these tablets. But some things are already clear: it is unlikely the stories about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in [Genesis 11–35](#) were written by authors from the eighth or seventh centuries BC. It is unlikely that a writer from the eighth or seventh centuries BC could have randomly included hundreds of historically accurate names of places, people, trade items, and other details in these chapters. Modern digging (archaeology) has found the same names, places, trade items, and other details in Ebla's tablets. It is

not reasonable to think this is just by chance. The evidence from Ebla strongly challenges the idea that the Genesis stories were created long after the events they describe.

See also Inscriptions.

Ebony

A black wood that people valued highly in ancient times for making furniture. Ebony trees grow mostly in tropical climates in southern Asia. These trees have hard, dark-colored wood at their center.

Ebony comes from the date plum or date tree (*Diospyros ebenaster* and *Diospyros melanoxylon*) of India. This tree is very different from the date palm. Phoenician ships carried ebony across the Arabian Sea and up the Red Sea to the market in Tyre. From there, traders moved it overland using camel caravans.

The outer wood of these trees is white and soft. But when the tree gets old, the inner wood becomes hard, black, heavy, and long-lasting. This inner part makes up most of the valuable ebony sold today. Ebony can be polished to a smooth finish. People value it highly for making cabinets, for turning into shapes, for making fancy decorative items and instruments, and for covering other woods.

Ezekiel mentions ivory and ebony together ([Ezekiel 27:15](#)). Both in the past and today, craftspeople often set ivory into ebony because the colors create such a strong contrast with each other.

Ebron

Town belonging to Asher's tribe, in [Joshua 19:28](#), according to some Hebrew manuscripts. Other manuscripts read Abdon. It was a Levitical city located about 15 miles (24.1 kilometers) south of Tyre and inland from Aczib on the Mediterranean coast.

Ebronah

The King James Version form of Abdonah. Abdonah was one of the places where the Israelites camped during their journey through the wilderness after leaving Egypt ([Numbers 33:34–35](#)).

See Abironah.

Ecbatana

Greek name for the capital of the ancient Median Empire, later one of the capital cities of the Persian and Parthian empires. It is often spelled Achmetha ([Ezr 6:2](#), kjv), approximating its Aramaic name. The Old Persian name, Hangmatana, may have meant “place of assembly.” Modern Hamadan covers most of the ruins of the ancient city.

The city is at 6,300 feet (1,920.1 meters) on the eastern slopes of Mt Oronte (Alvand), a granite peak reaching to a height of 12,000 feet (3,657.4 meters) above sea level, part of an impassable range broken only by the pass leading to Ecbatana. Major trade routes converged on this pass and gave Ecbatana its strategic importance.

The altitude of the city also accounted for its popularity as the summer residence of Persian and Parthian kings. In the winter, blizzards pile snow several feet deep and temperatures plummet below zero, but the summer climate is cool and comfortable; mountains shade the afternoon sun, while melting snows bring ample water. Greek general Xenophon reported that the Persian king Cyrus annually spent three months of spring in Susa, seven months of winter in Babylon, “and in the height of summer two months in Ecbatana.”

The Greek historian Herodotus recorded that the city was established by Deioces, founder of the Median dynasty, early in the seventh century BC. In 550 BC Cyrus captured the city from a Median king, Astyages. It was from Ecbatana that Cyrus issued his 538 BC decree that all Jews throughout his kingdom might return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of the Lord ([Ezr 1:2-4](#)). Later, an Aramaic memorandum regarding this decree was found in the records of Ecbatana after a fruitless search of the archives in Babylon ([6:1-12](#)). After Darius I (521-486 BC) quelled a revolt in securing the throne, he had the famous Behistun inscription carved in the side of Mt Orontes high above the city. The city was taken and pillaged by Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

Although [Ezra 6:2](#) is the only explicit biblical reference to the city, Ecbatana could have been one of the Median cities receiving exiles from the northern kingdom (722 BC), if the city were in existence before fortification by Deioces ([2 Kgs 17:6](#)). The book of Tobit places Jewish exiles in

Ecbatana in the seventh century ([3:7](#); [7:1](#); [14:14](#)), though that is of questionable historical worth. The book of Judith records a battle between a Median king, Arphaxad, and an Assyrian king, Nebuchadnezzar, in which the Assyrians capture Ecbatana ([1:1-2, 14](#)), but the account is dubious because the identity of those kings is unknown. Antiochus Epiphanes may have died there in 164 BC ([2 Macc 9:1-3, 19-28](#)).

Ecbatana is the only one of the three Persian capitals that has yet to be completely excavated, since it lies partly within the modern city of Hamadan, Iran. Ancient Greek authors gave elaborate descriptions of the city and its wealth. Polybius, for example, reported that it “greatly exceeded all the other cities in wealth and the magnificence of its buildings.” Incidental archaeological discoveries of two foundation inscriptions in silver and gold from the time of Darius I and column bases from Artaxerxes II suggest the great promise of excavations there. Excavations have been forestalled, however, because extensive demolition of modern Hamadan would be necessary for access to much of the ancient city below.

See also Persia, Persians.

Ecclesiasticus

See Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach.

Eclipse

Total or partial obscuration of the sun as a result of the passing of the moon between the sun and the earth; thus, a possible explanation for certain unusual astronomical events in the Bible. See Astronomy.

Edar

KJV spelling of Eder in [Genesis 35:21](#). See Eder (Place) #1.

Eden

1. Place where Adam and Eve lived until they sinned against God and were banished ([Gn 2:8, 15; 3:23-24](#)). See Garden of Eden.

2. Alternate form of Beth-eden in [Ezekiel 27:23](#). See Beth-eden.

Eder (Person)

1. Member of Benjamin's tribe and the son of Beriah, a leader in the town of Aijalon ([1 Chr 8:15](#)).
2. Levite of Merari's clan and the son of Mushi ([1 Chr 23:23](#); [24:30](#)).

Eder (Place)

1. First camping place of Jacob between Ephrath (Bethlehem) and Hebron, following Rachel's death. The tower of Eder, meaning "the tower of the flock," was perhaps a watchtower constructed for shepherds to guard their flocks ([Gn 35:21](#)). It was located a short distance from Bethlehem.
2. One of the 29 cities located near the border of Edom in the southern extremity of the land allotted to Judah's tribe for an inheritance. It is listed between Kabzeel and Jagur in [Joshua 15:21](#). Its site is unknown.

Edh

Hebrew name of an altar built in God's honor by the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh ([Jos 22:10, 34](#), nlt mg) when these tribes took possession of Gilead. The name means "witness." The Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Septuagint do not contain the word, but it has the authority of a few ancient manuscripts.

Edna

Raguel's wife and mother of Sarah ([Tb 7:2](#); [10:12](#); [11:1](#)). Sarah married Tobias, son of Tobit ([7:13](#)).

Edom, Edomites

The land of Edom was a region located south and southeast of the Dead Sea. The word "Edom" means "red" and refers to both the land and to Esau, who sold his birthright for red stew ([Genesis 25:30](#); [36:1, 8, 19](#)). People also called this land Seir ([Genesis 32:3](#); [36:30](#); [Numbers 24:18](#)).

Where Was Edom?

The northern border of Edom was the Wadi Zered ("the Brook of the Willows"), a stream valley ([Isaiah 15:7](#)). Long ago, movements in the earth's surface pushed this land upward, forming a high plateau with dark-red sandstone cliffs on its western side. These cliffs drop sharply into a valley called the Arabah, which connects to the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley.

The Edom Plateau rises to 1,523.9 meters (over 5,000 feet), reaching 1,706.8 meters (over 5,600 feet) in places. The area is divided into two unequal parts. Punon is a valley between the smaller northern and the longer southern parts. The northern section is not quite so high, though in a limited area near Radhadiyah it reaches 1,615.4 meters (5,300 feet). The southern section is longer and higher. Its central ridge is 1,523.9 meters (over 5,000 feet) high, with a point at 1,733.3 meters (5,687 feet). To the east, the slope does not fall below 1,219.1 meters (4,000 feet), except in the north. The desert lies beyond and limits expansion eastward. To the west, the land descends sharply into the Arabah.

The size of Edom to the west varied from time to time. Access to the Negev of southern Judah was easy here. Edomites encroached from time to time. The southern frontier had a limestone cliff at the edge of the plateau. This ran eastward from Ain Gharandal in the Arabah. Beyond this barrier to the south lay a rocky, barren desert. Merchants must have journeyed through it to the port at Ezion-geber for trade.

Though most of Edom was difficult to live in, some areas in the northeast were good for farming and raising animals. However, Edom's wealth came mainly from trade. Merchants traveling from India and South Arabia to the Mediterranean coast and Egypt passed through Edom on an important road called the King's Highway ([Numbers 21:22](#)).

The Story of Edom's People

Though [Genesis 10](#) lists many family lines from ancient times, it does not mention Edom. The name first appears in [Genesis 25:30](#), which tells how Esau got the name "Edom." This happened when he traded his special rights as the oldest son (his birthright) to his brother Jacob in exchange for a red stew. [Genesis 36](#) mentions an Edomite kingdom that existed before Israel had its own kings. However, the "chiefs" of Edom may have

been more like tribal leaders (similar to Israel's judges) rather than kings.

The earliest mentions of Edom outside the Bible come from Egypt and seem to confirm this. Amarna Letter 288 (from the early 14th century BC) refers to the "lands of Seir." Egyptian kings Seti II, who ruled from 1214 to 1208 BC, and Ramses III, who ruled from 1198 to 1166 BC, mention the Shashu tribes of Edom crossing into Egypt. There are no Egyptian references to towns or rulers, only to wandering tribes from Seir-Edom.

There is some evidence that Ramses II was in Transjordan (the land east of the Jordan River) from about 1280 to 1270 BC. But, there is no evidence of an organized kingdom with a single ruler before the 13th century BC. Instead, most people lived as shepherds who moved from place to place with their animals. From then on, they started building permanent settlements and cities. This timing helps historians understand when the exodus (Israel's departure from Egypt) might have happened. The Song of Moses in [Exodus 15](#) refers to the "chiefs of Edom." By the time of the exodus, there appears to have been a kingdom of Edom ([Numbers 20:14, 18, 20-23; 33:37; 34:3](#)). The Israelites went around Edom on their journey to the promised land ([Judges 5:4; 11:17-18](#)).

When Israel began to be ruled by kings, Saul fought and won against Edom ([1 Samuel 14:47](#)). Doeg the Edomite was the chief of Saul's herdsmen ([1 Samuel 21:7; 22:9, 18-22](#)). In the early 10th century BC, King David defeated the Edomites in the Valley of Salt and put military bases in their land ([2 Samuel 8:13, 14; 1 Chronicles 18:12-12 Samuel 8](#)). It is unclear if David saw them as a military threat. It is possible he wanted their copper and the wealth from caravan traffic through Edom.

David's successes caused a certain Hadad to flee to Egypt. He was "from the royal line of Edom" ([1 Kings 11:14-17](#)). While in Egypt, he married a member of the Egyptian royal family ([1 Kings 11:18-20](#)). When David died, Hadad returned to Edom, where he became king. It would seem that a kingship had developed by David's time. Solomon continued to influence Edom. He had access to the port of Ezion-geber ([1 Kings 9:26](#)).

The Bible does not mention Edom for many years after King Solomon's rule ended. The next time Edom appears in the story is during the time of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, who ruled from 872 to 848 BC. Jehoshaphat took control of the port city of

Ezion-geber. However, his ships were destroyed there, possibly by the Edomites ([1 Kings 22:48; 2 Chronicles 20:36-37](#)). Later, the three kingdoms of Israel, Judah, and Edom worked together. They fought against King Mesha of Moab but did not win ([2 Kings 3:4-27](#)). During the rule of King Jehoram, who ruled from 853 to 841 BC, Edom broke free from Judah's control and chose its own king ([2 Kings 8:20-22](#)).

Edom stayed independent until King Amaziah of Judah, who ruled from 796 to 767 BC. Amaziah defeated a large Edomite army in the Valley of Salt and conquered their land as far south as the city of Sela ([2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chronicles 25:11-13](#)). This gave Judah control of the copper mines in the Punon area. King Uzziah of Judah was able to extend his control south to Elath (near Ezion-geber; [2 Kings 14:22; 2 Chronicles 26:1-2](#)). Before the end of the eighth century BC, in the days of King Ahaz from 735 to 715 BC, Edom defeated Judah and recovered Elath ([2 Kings 16:6](#)). After this, Judah lost control over Edom.

During the eighth century BC, the Assyrians began to move into Transjordan. Around 800 BC, Adad-nirari III said he had defeated several kingdoms in this area and forced them to pay money and goods as tribute. Later, another Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III, received tribute from Qaus-malaku of Edom.

In 713 BC, Sargon II mentioned an unnamed ruler of Edom who took part in the rebellion of Ashdod. The next Assyrian king, Sennacherib, mentioned that an Edomite ruler named Aiarammu brought him gifts. Esarhaddon referred to Qaus-gabri, king of Edom. Qaus-gabri brought 22 of his local leaders with him to promise their loyalty to Assyria. Edom is also mentioned in records from the time of Ashurbanipal

After this, the Babylonian empire defeated Assyria and took control of the region. Edom continued to serve under Babylonian rule as a vassal. In 594, it joined other nations in talking about a rebellion against Babylon ([Jeremiah 27](#)). However, when King Nebuchadnezzar later attacked some of these nations, he did not attack Edom or Moab.

When the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, Edom stayed neutral in the conflict. They even gave shelter to some people who fled from Judah ([Jeremiah 40:11](#)). However, the prophet Obadiah criticized Edom for not helping Judah during the Babylonian invasion ([Obadiah 1:11](#)). Instead, they

raided Judah, gave captives to Babylon, and took lands in the Negev ([Ezekiel 35](#)).

For many years, there was strong hatred between Judah and Edom. Several prophets spoke strong words against Edom in their messages from God ([Isaiah 11:14](#); [34:5-17](#); [Ezekiel 32:29](#); [Joel 3:19](#); [Amos 1:11-12](#); [Malachi 1:2-4](#)). Edom began to grow weaker. Many people left their cities, and these cities were abandoned. At the same time, groups of Edomites moved to new areas. They settled in the hill country south of Judah, on the western side of the Arabah Valley. Much later, during Roman times, this area became a province called Idumea. Idumea grew out of what had been the Persian province of Edom, and its main government center was in the city of Lachish.

Meanwhile, in Edom's original homeland east of the Arabah Valley, Arab groups began moving into the empty land. Eventually, a people called the Nabateans made their home in what had once been Edom.

Edrei

1. City of residence for Og, king of Bashan ([Dt 1:4](#); [3:10](#); [Jos 12:4](#); [13:12](#)). It was located on the southern branch of the Harmuk River, which was the southern border of Bashan. At this strategic point Og could look over the neighboring region for invaders from the south or from the east, where the land turned into a desert. At Edrei, Moses was able to defeat Og before destroying the city ([Nm 21:33-35](#); [Dt 3:1-6](#)). The territory was allotted to the Machirites, the eastern clan of the tribe of Manasseh ([Jos 13:31](#)). The modern site for Edrei seems to be Derba, a town of 5,000 in Syria. Many important remains from antiquity survive in this town, including shops, cisterns, streets, and underground caves.

2. Fortified city allotted to Naphtali ([Jos 19:37](#)). It was near Kedesh, and may possibly be identified with the modern Tell Khureibeh.

Education

The act or process of educating or being educated. The original purpose of Jewish education was to teach children to know and understand their special relationship with God, to teach them to serve him, and to educate them in holiness. Later Jewish education included character development

and the history of God's people (particularly through rehearsing his acts of deliverance). Because of that education, the Jews knew the Mosaic law and their own history, and so, during periods of subjection to foreign powers, they were able to maintain their national pride. In modern times they have reestablished themselves as a nation (1948).

Preview

- Education in the Home
- Religious Education
- Formal Education
- Literacy among the Jews
- Education in Surrounding Cultures

Education in the Home

The priority given to education stemmed from the value of children in the Jewish family. Children were a great joy and reward ([Ps 127:3-5](#)). Education in the home began soon after a child could talk, and certainly by the age of three. Parents taught prayers and songs, which children learned by repetition, just as children today learn nursery rhymes.

At home, children became aware of certain religious items and symbols. They were encouraged to ask about the meaning of the annual Passover ritual ([Ex 12:26](#)), which served throughout Hebrew history as a fundamental means of instruction about the nature and significance of God's power in human life. Children undoubtedly had questions about objects they encountered, whether sacred vessels, ornaments, or clothing used in the tabernacle or temple worship, or more mundane things of everyday life.

Parental responsibility for education was clearly defined. A father was expected to give his son instruction in religion and in the history of the Hebrew people. He was also specifically required to teach his son a trade, often his own, since a boy without a trade was thought to have been trained for life as a thief. A father's other responsibilities included finding his son a wife and teaching him to swim.

Rabbis held that women could not study the Law because they were "of light mind." Nonetheless, influential women in the Bible include Deborah ([Jgs 4:4-5](#)), Jael (vv [18-24](#)), the wise woman of Tekoa ([2 Sm 14:2-20](#)), the wise woman of Abel ([20:16-](#)

22), Lois, Eunice, and Priscilla ([Acts 18:2](#); [Rom 16:3](#); [1 Cor 16:19](#); [2 Tm 1:5](#)).

The Jewish mother played a considerable role in a child's education, particularly in the earliest years. A mother was expected to assist in teaching her sons, but her major responsibility was to train her daughters. Since daughters were less highly esteemed than sons, a girl's education took place entirely in the home. The mother was responsible for educating her daughters to be successful homemakers: obedient, capable, and virtuous wives. Girls learned the skills of cooking, spinning, weaving, dyeing, caring for children, and managing slaves. They learned how to grind grain and at times helped with the harvest. Occasionally they were expected to help guard the vineyard or, if they had no brothers, to help care for the flocks.

Girls probably learned music and dancing and were expected to have good manners and high moral standards. They were taught to read, and some learned to write and reckon weights and measures. In exceptional circumstances a girl might receive an advanced education privately at home from a tutor.

Even when education was entirely home-centered, it is probable that most wealthy and especially royal children were instructed by a tutor, following a tradition established by other Near Eastern peoples.

Religious Education

At an early age children accompanied their parents to religious services. At the great festivals they were introduced to important episodes in Jewish history. The Jews, an agricultural people, believed that agricultural knowledge had been revealed by God and that tending the ground was a basic human responsibility. Like some other Near Eastern nations, they believed that the land belonged to God. They were merely tenants. If a crop failed, it was because God withheld rain, but he would do that only if the people were sinful.

The celebrations of the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles were associated with the harvest. Throughout the biblical period, those festivals remained closely identified with the growing season. Such occasions became educational opportunities for children. They learned that the Passover commemorated the deliverance of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt. At Pentecost the Jewish people remembered God giving the law to Moses on Mt Sinai. The Feast

of Tabernacles, with its green booths made from tree branches, commemorated God's faithfulness to the Jews on their seemingly endless journey to the Promised Land.

An example of a ceremony used as a teaching tool is the Passover ritual, which, of the three great festivals, was the least directly connected in origin with the harvest. That feast, which was immediately followed by a seven-day period known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread ([Lv 23:6](#)), was associated with the beginning of the barley harvest in April. (The exodus from Egypt had taken place at that time of year.)

In the Passover ceremony the priest would take one of the first sheaves of the barley harvest and wave it before the Lord ([Lv 23:9-11](#)). Before that, the men would choose a barley field at random and bind some of the best sheaves, leaving them standing. The following evening three men would go out to that field with sickles and baskets to reap those specifically prepared sheaves. As onlookers (including the children) gathered to observe the ceremony, the reapers would ask the crowd certain traditional questions. Year by year the children saw that ritual and heard the answers. The barley was cut and taken to the temple court, where it was threshed and winnowed. Some of it was mixed with oil and incense and used as an offering. The remainder went to the priests.

Formal Education

Jewish education during the biblical period helped Jews to know of the Law, study the history of the Jewish people, and become proficient in reading, writing, and a certain amount of arithmetic. To that, incidental information such as the medicinal value of certain herbs (see [1 Kgs 4:33](#)) might sometimes be added.

Teachers

Priests instructed the people in the knowledge of God. As officers of the synagogue, the Levites also performed a teaching role (cf. [Dt 33:10](#); [2 Chr 35:3](#)). Before the exile, the prophets assumed the role of instructors, teaching the historical heritage of the people and acting as critics of injustice and improper social behavior. Their responsibility was to interpret the law for contemporary society. By the fourth century BC, the prophets' role as instructors had passed to the scribes and to others designated as teachers.

In the centuries before Christ, scribes not only transcribed and preserved the traditions in written form but were students and interpreters of the law. The scribes were known as “doctors of the law” ([Lk 5:17](#), kjv), lawyers ([Mt 22:35](#)), and rabbis ([23:8](#)). All higher education was in their hands, and they developed a complex system of instruction known as “the tradition of the elders” ([15:2-6](#)). Although the scribes needed leisure for their scholarly pursuits, they did not despise laborers. Most of them, in fact, practiced a trade as a means of support when necessary.

Although the scribes were influential in the time of Christ ([Mt 23:1-2](#)), they undoubtedly found, like the prophets before them, that their words were not always heeded. The scribes, who exercised an important influence over contemporary life and morals, were notable for their fierce opposition to Jesus ([Mk 2:6](#)) and to the early church ([Acts 4:5; 6:12](#)).

By the NT era, the entire community was expected to establish and maintain elementary schools. The community was also responsible for financing the education of poor or orphaned children. Out of high regard for earlier priests, prophets, and scribes, and because of the eminent position given to education, teachers were highly esteemed by the Jewish people. Because God had given them the law, it was of greatest importance. One who worked as God’s servant expounding the law was therefore the most important person in the community. To be a teacher was life’s highest privilege and the most significant task a man could perform.

Teachers were expected to demonstrate exceptional character along with their academic qualifications. They were expected to keep children from having contact with anything harmful. They were not to show bitterness or give preference to one child over another. Rather than threatening, they were to explain right and wrong and the harmfulness of sin. Teachers were expected to keep promises to children lest the students grow accustomed to broken words and lies. Teachers were to be eventempered, never impatient or lacking in understanding, always prepared to repeat explanations. It was said that children should be treated like young heifers, with their burdens increased daily. Yet any teacher who was too severe was dismissed.

Subject Matter

Early education consisted of learning the law through listening and oral repetition, along with the study of the written text. The content of the law covered three main areas: ceremonial, civil, and criminal. Students needed to master these, preparing themselves to take responsibility for observing the law as adults.

The Scriptures contained such a variety of writings that pupils learned about religion, history, law, morals, and manners, plus reading, writing, and arithmetic. They studied from great literature; along with the Law, they used the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes extensively as texts. The Dead Sea Scrolls have shown that some classical Hebrew was still being spoken in NT times. Students who commonly spoke Aramaic or Greek were faced with a difficult situation when learning the Hebrew of the OT. The problem was especially complex because the Hebrew was written without any vowel sounds. Those had to be memorized in association with the consonants of the text.

Since the ancient Hebrews were generally regarded as the most proficient musicians and singers in the Near East, it is probable that basic instruction in singing and playing instruments, such as the pipe and harp, was received at home. Although no Hebrew hymns have survived in musical form, temple singers would almost certainly have been familiar with the kind of music theory known among the Canaanites. (A musical text recovered from Ugarit [Ras Shamra] consisted of a ballad or a hymn inscribed on clay with curious musical symbols that long defied identification. Dating to perhaps 1800 BC, that Canaanite text has been described as the “oldest sheet music in the world.”)

During the exile especially, great emphasis was placed on recording and preserving ancient customs and ceremonies in order to maintain the distinctiveness of Hebrew culture. The captives recognized the importance of keeping alive their national heritage and the Law during the years they were living in an alien culture.

The synagogue developed during the exile as a place for the study of religion and for prayer, becoming the center of instruction in the Jewish faith. Previously, the temple at Jerusalem had been the only place for sacrifice. Because that ritual could not be performed in Babylon, it was natural for the synagogue to increase in importance in worship as well as in education.

The exile brought about fundamental changes in Jewish life in areas other than the purely religious. Education received considerable stimulation from the Jewish exiles' contact with the more sophisticated culture of the Babylonians. The Babylonian law code was a precise and well-established feature of life. Schools and libraries in Babylonia had been in existence for many centuries. Mesopotamian knowledge of medicine, astronomy, mathematics, architecture, and engineering was far superior to that of the Jews. In that intellectual environment the literature of the Jews took on new meaning; it was from that period that the books of Ezekiel and Daniel emerged.

In the postexilic period, teaching was based extensively on Proverbs and the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. From those works the Jews received practical training for a successful life. The scribes taught that wisdom came from God and that those who obeyed the commandments would bring joy and honor to others.

Under Persian rule in the sixth century BC, the Jews had been encouraged to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. After 332 BC, when Alexander the Great defeated the Persian king Darius, strong efforts were made to Hellenize the conquered peoples. The Greek language was introduced along with Greek religion, political procedures, and educational methods. The drive for Hellenization continued under the rule of the Ptolemies (a Macedonian family line that ruled Egypt) and the Seleucids (a Syrian dynasty). Coincident with the establishment of foreign rule came the dominance of the Jewish priesthood in Judean political matters. Greek influence was seen in the enriched aesthetic appreciation typical of certain Jewish rulers.

Although Greek philosophy and sports remained outside the realm of Jewish education, there was a noticeable decline in Jewish religious and moral standards in the Hellenistic period. Some Jews were eager to obtain advancement from the foreign masters by adopting the Greek culture. Others fought desperately to preserve their Jewish heritage. During Roman times, the foreign influence was again ignored by faithful Jews whenever possible.

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods, developed from memorizing the Law, stressed the importance of retention and recollection. Children were taught to memorize as

soon as they could talk, and they were trained to repeat the exact words so that no nuance of meaning would be altered. The alphabet was taught and memorized by being repeatedly written and drilled. Students copied and recopied passages from the written Law in precise, neat handwriting. Any piece of writing containing a mistake was considered dangerous, since it might imprint the wrong word or spelling on the learner's mind. Reading aloud was recommended as an aid to memorization.

To aid learning, each boy was also given a personal text beginning with the first letter of his name and ending with the last. As soon as he demonstrated his ability to read, he received a scroll that contained the first words of [Deuteronomy 6:4](#): "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (rsv). That was recited every morning and evening in postexilic times, along with the Hallel (or psalm of praise), the story of Creation, and the main part of the Law contained in Leviticus.

Teachings also came in the form of proverbs or parables, a device later used by Jesus ([Mk 4:1-2](#)). An open sharing of knowledge occurred in question-and-answer periods (for example, the visit of the 12-year-old Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem, [Lk 2:46-47](#)).

Very little information is available on education in the early Christian era. We know that Jesus could read and expound the Scriptures and was knowledgeable enough to discuss theology with the learned men in the temple. He probably learned at home and received the elementary education common to most Jewish boys at that period.

Discipline

Discipline, almost always an important element in education, was important to the ancient Hebrews. A system of reward and punishment was used in which corporal chastisement was normal. Punishment was considered to be an outward symbol of God's love and concern for the instruction of his people ([Ps 94:8-13](#)), although the Jews as a people did not always learn from those corrections ([Jer 5:3](#); [Am 4:6-13](#)). A child was thought to need "breaking" like a horse: "A horse that is untamed turns out to be stubborn, and a son unrestrained turns out to be wilful" ([Ecclus 30:8](#), rsv).

Adult Education

When Ezra the scribe returned from Babylon with a copy of the Book of the Law, he taught it to the Levites and to the people. That material, together with the book of Proverbs and literature from the preexilic and exilic periods, became basic in Jewish education. In the postexilic period, priests traveled to the towns, addressing people in the synagogue on the Sabbath and in the square on market days, when a large crowd would be gathered. Some individuals may have extended their learning through discussion with the elders (cf. [Ez 8:1](#)).

For those who continued their education, the next phase was probably instruction by scribes. The scribes, leaders of a Jewish sect called Pharisees, had developed Ezra's principles into strict rules on tithing, ritual purity, and synagogue worship. As a young man, Saul of Tarsus came to Jerusalem to study with Gamaliel, an honored rabbi ([Acts 22:3](#)). At that time the curriculum was an advanced study of theological law, both written and oral, along with the rites and ceremonies of Jewish culture.

School Buildings

By NT times, some schools operated in special buildings and others in the teachers' own houses, but most were attached to the synagogue. When a separate building was designed, it was considered inadvisable to construct it in a crowded area. In a large town the community was expected to provide two schools, especially if a river divided the town. A school did not operate in the heat of the day (between 10 am and 3 pm), and would meet only four hours a day in July and August. Class size was expected to be 25, with a teacher and an assistant for 40 students and two teachers for 50. At school the boys sat on the ground at the teacher's feet and learned from the Scriptures. Thus, the school became known as the "House of the Book."

Literacy among the Jews

The extent of literacy among Jews over the centuries is difficult to determine, but indications can be found from specific examples. The book of Joshua describes three men chosen from each tribe who had to prepare a written report about the land of Canaan ([Jos 18:4–9](#)). Later, Gideon captured a youth who was able to make a written list of the important men of the city ([Jgs 8:14](#)). Writing was probably a common skill since the Israelites were exhorted to use it frequently ([Dt 6:9](#); [27:2–8](#)). Simple mathematical terms could be written and understood by boys, and there are indications of

familiarity with the geometrical relationship of a circle's radius and circumference (the concept of pi; see [2 Chr 4:2](#)). The development of cursive script implies widespread use of writing from at least the eighth century BC. It is noteworthy that a synagogue service could be performed by any ten men in the congregation, which presupposes that there were more than 10 men in any synagogue who were literate enough to fulfill that duty.

When fears of Hellenism were strong and the existence of Judaism was threatened in the first century BC, it was decreed that every Jewish boy should attend elementary school. Since such a system probably already existed, that decree merely made attendance compulsory for all males up to 16 or 17 years of age. No doubt the reason was that thorough knowledge and careful observance of the Law were vital to the survival of the Jewish heritage.

Joshua ben-Gamala (high priest AD 63–65) is considered the founder of universal education. His instructions for setting up schools in towns and villages were precise, requiring attendance of boys from the age of six or seven years. The community was responsible for setting up a school and maintaining a teacher in any town where there were at least ten Jewish families. Fathers were required to see that their sons attended school. When a family lived in an isolated area, a teacher often lived with the family. Teachers were probably paid either by the family or from a community tax, although scribes were not paid directly for the instruction they gave. It is difficult to know if the goal of universal elementary education was attained.

Education in Surrounding Cultures

The theological emphasis of Hebrew education contrasted sharply with the aims of education in Greece and Rome. Those societies, however, were also concerned with developing a particular type of character.

In Sparta the purpose of educational training was to develop young men to be fighters who would subject themselves to the welfare of the state. Character development was achieved by eliminating luxuries and by systematically disciplining mind and body through physical activity. Survival techniques encouraged resourcefulness and initiative. Girls received the same education, since it was considered important to develop women who could give birth to strong warriors.

In Athens education was deemed essential to life. Because transmission of culture would enable boys to become perfect citizens, they were taught letters, music, morals and manners, mathematics, and gymnastics (development of a healthy body). Education was ideally a noble pursuit—a training of the mind, the birthright of every citizen—but in practice it was restricted to a small section of the aristocracy. The educated despised earning a living as a way of life suitable only for slaves. Women received no education. The teacher in elementary schools was a lowly individual.

Roman education prepared a boy mentally and physically for farm, battlefield, or wherever his services were required by the state. Education was a family responsibility—the boy learning first from his mother, then from his father. Basic reading, writing, arithmetic, language, structure, and debating skills were taught, sometimes by private tutors. When schools were developed, they seem to have been noisy, storefront activities operated by poorly paid teachers. Girls were taught housekeeping skills at home.

Egyptian boys attended the “House of the Books” for their studies and learned reading and elementary arithmetic. Writing in hieroglyphs on papyrus was the most difficult task. Like students in other cultures, boys were subject to corporal punishment. Egyptian teachers considered that “a boy’s ears are in his back,” following up that conviction with frequent use of a cane.

Eduth

A Hebrew word usually translated as “testimony,” “witness,” or “commandment.”

It can refer to:

- The tabernacle ([Numbers 17:7–8](#); [18:2](#); [2 Chronicles 24:6](#))
- The ark ([Exodus 25:16](#))
- The Ten Commandments ([Exodus 31:18](#))
- The law of God in general ([Psalm 19:8](#))

The title of [Psalm 60](#) in Hebrew is *Shushan Eduth*, which means “Lily of the Covenant.”

See also Music.

Eglah

One of the wives of King David and mother of Ithream ([2 Samuel 3:5](#); [1 Chronicles 3:3](#)). Ithream was the sixth son of David. He was born while David was still in Hebron.

Eglaim

Town mentioned in [Isaiah 15:8](#). It cannot be located with certainty, but it was probably in southern Moab. A village called Aigaleim was mentioned by Eusebius and another called Agalla by Josephus (*Antiquities* 14.1.4). However, their identification with Eglaim is uncertain.

Eglath-Shelishiyah

Place in Moab mentioned in [Isaiah 15:5](#) and [Jeremiah 48:34](#) in pronouncements of judgment. The name means literally “the third Eglath.” It was probably near Zoar at the southern end of the Dead Sea, but its exact location is uncertain.

Eglon (Person)

Moabite king who captured Jericho and held it for 18 years, exacting a tribute from Israel. Ehud, an Israelite judge pretending to bring tribute, killed Eglon ([Jgs 3:12–30](#)). *See* Moab, Moabites.

Eglon (Place)

Town situated seven miles (11.3 kilometers) southwest of Lachish, assigned to Judah’s tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 15:39](#)). It is generally identified with the modern Tell el-Hesi.

Egypt, Brook of

See Brook of Egypt.

Egypt, Egyptian

Egypt figured significantly as a stage on which the biblical narrative was enacted. Here Abraham lived

in time of famine. Joseph, his great-grandson, was sold into slavery in Egypt and rose to a position equivalent to that of prime minister. Through Joseph's intercession, Jacob and the rest of the Hebrew patriarchal family living in Palestine came to reside in the eastern delta region of Goshen—again as a result of famine. Initially treated favorably, they were later reduced to bondage; crying to God, ultimately they were released through the 10 plagues. Thereafter, for 40 years, they wandered in the Egyptian Sinai, where they received the law, specifications for building the tabernacle, and instructions for the priestly and sacrificial systems.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, a group of Jews forced Jeremiah to go with them to Egypt ([Jer 43:6-7](#)), where they became numerous during the intertestamental period and gradually forgot their Hebrew. At Alexandria, Jews translated the OT into Greek (the Septuagint) between about 250 and 150 BC. This became the Bible of the early church, especially of those Christians outside Palestine.

When the NT period opened, Egypt served as a refuge for Joseph, Mary, and Jesus as they fled to escape the assassination attempts of Herod the Great ([Mt 2:13-23](#)). At several other points, Hebrew and Egyptian history intersected—for example, when Shishak I invaded Palestine in the days of Rehoboam ([1 Kgs 14:25-28](#)).

Preview

- Geography
- History
- Social Life
- Religion
- Learning and Culture

Geography

Egypt is the gift of the Nile, without which it could not exist. From time immemorial the Nile has deposited a thin layer of rich silt each year as it overflowed its banks. This ribbon of loam along its course contrasts vividly with the sterile sands that stretch from the river valley often as far as one can see. Then, having deposited this soil, the Nile provides water for its irrigation. This is necessary in a land that receives only six to eight inches (15 to 20 centimeters) of rainfall per year along the Mediterranean, two inches (5.1 centimeters) or

less per year at Cairo, and less than that farther south.

The Nile Valley is a tube, shut in on either side by cliffs and corked up at the southern end by cataracts, six places where the river has failed to cut a clear channel and where rocks are piled in irregular masses in the streambed. From cliff to cliff the Nile Valley ranges from about 10 to 31 miles (16 to 50 kilometers) in width between Cairo and Aswan. But the cultivated area along this stretch is only about six to ten miles (10 to 16 kilometers) wide, and narrows to one or two miles (1.5 to 3 kilometers) in width around Aswan. This cultivated tract is only about 5,000 square miles (8,045 square kilometers) in total.

But Egypt is more than the valley. It is also the delta, a pie-shaped area north of Cairo also deposited by the Nile over the millennia. The delta measures some 125 miles (201.1 kilometers) north and south, and 115 miles (185 kilometers) east and west. Its more heavily populated southern region provided ancient Egyptians with some 5,000 square miles (8,045 square kilometers) of farmland, making the total of valley and delta about 10,000 square miles (16,090 square kilometers), roughly equal to the state of Maryland.

West of the Nile extends a chain of oases, the largest of which is the Fayum, about 70 miles (112.6 kilometers) southwest of Cairo. In the center of the Fayum is Lake Qarun, which today covers 90 square miles (144.8 square kilometers) and is about 17 feet (5.2 meters) deep. It is surrounded by about a half million acres of good farmland.

Ancient Egypt extended some 125 miles (201.1 kilometers) from the Mediterranean to Cairo (Lower Egypt) and another 600 miles (965.4 kilometers) from Cairo to Aswan (Upper Egypt). At the height of its power, Egypt also controlled the valley from the first cataract at Aswan south to the fourth cataract (Nubia). Thus its domain extended a total of some 1,100 miles (1,769.9 kilometers) south from the Mediterranean.

Egypt's most important resource was the rich loam along the Nile. On it, in antiquity, farmers raised grains, such as barley, emmer, and wheat. Onions, leeks, beans, and lentils were common vegetables. Dates, figs, and grapes were the most widely grown fruits. Oil came from castor oil plants and sesame rather than from the olive, as in other Mediterranean lands. Flax provided linen for

clothing. Domesticated animals included oxen, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, donkeys, and horses.

Another important resource was an abundant supply of stone. Granite mountains rise between the Nile and the Red Sea, and deposits of alabaster and other fine stone are found in the same region. South of Aswan stand the granite mountains of Nubia. The quarries of Syene at Aswan are famous for their extremely hard and durable red granite. Gold was reasonably plentiful in the Nubian Mountains, and gold-bearing quartz veins were found in the mountains east of the Nile. Egyptians controlled the copper and turquoise mines of the Sinai during much of their important historical periods. In early antiquity some timber was available in Nubia for building the barges that carried the huge loads of stone for construction of pyramids, temples, and other magnificent structures.

The Nile itself was an all-weather highway. One could float northward with the current and sail southward against the weak current (3 miles, or 5 kilometers, per hour) by means of the prevailing northerly winds. In fact, the Nile was the road of ancient Egypt. Land routes normally conducted traffic only to the river's edge. In addition to the massive north-south commerce, ferry boats regularly moved from shore to shore.

Along the river grew papyrus reeds, from which writing material could be made. And along the Nile, clay was deposited from which could be made pottery and sun-dried bricks for the houses of the poor.

The ancient Egyptians lived in comparative isolation and peace in their valley home. The cataracts on the south, the deserts on east and west, and the harborless coast of the Mediterranean protected them from invasion and left them free to develop a homogeneous culture. Outside influences could sift in chiefly at the two northern corners of the delta. There were Semitic incursions from the east, and Libyans (possibly of European origin) from the west. Defenses were erected to protect against both. The security of their valley home and the regular provision of the sun and the Nile gave the Egyptians a sense of confidence and well-being that was not the lot of other peoples of the ancient Near East.

History

It is wrong to think of the contemporary rulers of Egypt as descendants of the pharaohs or the

present inhabitants of the land as Egyptians in any but a geographic sense. Egypt as an area of distinctive civilization ended with the Arab conquest in the seventh century AD and was greatly diluted during the several preceding centuries by Greco-Roman influences.

Origins

Though the origins of the ancient Egyptians are imperfectly understood, physically they show affinities to Hamites, Semites, and Mediterraneans. Hamites with negroid characteristics moved north from Nubia. Asiatics migrated across the Isthmus of Suez into the delta, and the small, brown, finely boned Mediterranean people dominated the Nile Valley from early times. However diverse their origins may have been, Egyptians of the ancient period were conscious of themselves as a nation, a distinctive people. Men stood about five feet six inches (1.7 meters) in height and women about five feet (1.5 meters). They were slight but strong-boned, with round heads and oval faces. The men had little face or body hair, and throughout antiquity they were commonly smooth-shaven, while Semites were bearded.

Archaeologists list a series of successive predynastic cultures—Fayumic, Meridian, Tasian, Badarian, Amratian, Gerzean, and Semainean—who mastered basic techniques and learned how to build a civilization with minimal resources. Of course, they developed an irrigation system for the maintenance of an effective agricultural program. At a very early time they discovered how to turn flax into linen and thus to produce clothing. Boats were made from papyrus reeds and trees that grew along some of the streambeds in the south. Sun-baked bricks provided building material, and clay was available for pottery. The latter was made by hand; the pottery wheel did not appear until dynastic times.

Writing appeared in Egypt about the end of the predynastic period. Their hieroglyphs, or sacred signs, were called "the words of God" and were believed to be of divine origin. By 2700 BC, they had learned how to make "paper" by crisscrossing strips cut from the pith of the papyrus plant and forming them into sheets. About the same time they developed techniques for cutting stone from the quarry. Commonly they cut a groove along a line where a block was to be split off. There they drove in wedges of dry wood and wetted them to swell the wood and split the block off. Sometimes they lit a fire along the groove to heat the stone and

then poured water over it to split it away from the main rock.

Unification of Egypt

In the period just before about 3100 BC, Egypt consisted of the two separate kingdoms: Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt. Then the king of Upper Egypt conquered Lower Egypt and unified the two lands under his sole rule. But the division was never quite forgotten, and Egypt was referred to as the “Two Lands” throughout its history. The pharaohs wore a double crown, a combination of the low red crown of Lower Egypt and the white crown of Upper Egypt. The king’s palace was called the “double palace,” and even the royal granary was double. The Hebrews recognized this duality, for throughout the OT they called Egypt Mitzrayim—a word with a dual ending.

The pharaoh who was credited in the ancient sources with the unification of Egypt was sometimes called Narmer and sometimes Menes; presumably these were different names for the same person. Narmer-Menes began the first dynasty of united Egypt. Though the ancient Egyptians did not reckon in dynasties, modern historians follow the practice of Manetho, an Egyptian priest of the mid-third century BC, who compiled a list of kings down to the Persian period and divided it into 30 dynasties; later others added a 31st dynasty. The ancients did not use such terms as “Old Kingdom” and “Middle Kingdom” either, but modern scholars find them a convenient way of organizing Egyptian history.

Early Dynastic Period (3100–2700 BC)

Kings of the first two dynasties ruled at This, or Thinis, some 300 miles (482.7 kilometers) south of Cairo, but they built Memphis as another administrative center. They consolidated their hold over the land and developed the theory that the king was divine. Contacts with the outside world were considerable, and there are many indications in Egypt of influences from Mesopotamia at this time.

Old Kingdom (2700–2200 BC; Dynasties 3–6)

The Old Kingdom is especially remembered for its building operations. The pyramids were erected at that time. The capital was located at Memphis (biblical Noph), southwest of modern Cairo. Contacts with Phoenicia were numerous, and some believe Egyptians were so heavily involved there and elsewhere that it is proper to speak of the “Old

Empire.” Artistic standards were being developed, and literary and medical beginnings were significant. Egypt was an absolute monarchy. The divine king was served by an army of officials; the whole population might be regimented during his lifetime to prepare his tomb.

The first king of the third dynasty was Djoser, who built the step pyramid at Saqqara. The earliest great stone structure in the world, it consists of six layers, or steps, rising to a height of 204 feet (62.2 meters). The architect was Imhotep, his vizier or prime minister, who later was deified and credited with the beginnings of architecture, literature, and medicine, and identified by the Greeks with the god of medicine, Asklepios.

The fourth-dynasty pharaohs were the great pyramid builders. They were responsible for erecting the three great pyramids at Giza between about 2600 and 2500 BC. The greatest of these, attributed to Khufu, covers 13 acres, originally rose to a height of 481 feet (146.6 meters), and contains about 2.3 million blocks of limestone averaging two and a half tons each. The second pyramid stands 447½ feet (136.4 meters) high and is accompanied by the sphinx, a couchant lion with the face of the king. The third pyramid is 204 feet (62.2 meters) high. These pyramids are not isolated examples. Several more small pyramids were built at Giza, and there were nine pyramid fields in all, scattered along the western bank of the Nile south of Memphis. During the fifth and sixth dynasties, there appeared the pyramid texts, carved and painted inscriptions, magical spells, and hymns that were supposed to aid the deceased in the afterlife.

The artistic standards of Egypt were established during the Old Kingdom. The king and the gods were portrayed in a stylized form. Art tended to be conceptual rather than perceptual; that is, instead of reproducing what he saw, the artist painted what he knew to be there. For example, a school of fish became individual fish painted whole instead of being pictured naturally with one fish obscuring part of the fish next to it. In a similar manner the saddlebags on a donkey were shown with the one facing the viewer reproduced in a natural way; the other one, known to be behind the donkey’s back, was flipped up in the air above the donkey’s back.

The importance of an individual determined his size in a pictorial representation. In a battle scene the pharaoh would be the largest figure, his commanding officers next in size, the common

soldiers smaller yet, and enemy troops smallest of all.

Egyptian art was intended to tell a story: much of it was more like a motion picture than a snapshot. A wine-making scene might include picking the grapes, treading out the juice (normally done by stomping with bare feet), and storing the juice in jars.

Evidently Egyptian medical knowledge was also developing during the Old Kingdom. Though the sources for knowledge of Egyptian medicine are the great papyri of the Middle Kingdom, there is some indication that medical knowledge claims far greater antiquity. Numerous archaic expressions appear in the texts. Perhaps Egyptians knew something of the circulation of the blood; they talked about feeling the “voice of the heart.” Egyptian medical practice combined a hodgepodge of home remedies, charms and incantations, and scientific expertise. The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus is a remarkable study dealing especially with the treatment of broken bones.

During the sixth dynasty, the Old Kingdom began to break up as a result of poor rulers, aggressive nobles, fiscal difficulties, Nubian incursions in the south, and Asiatic attacks in the northeast.

First Intermediate Period (2200–2050 BC; Dynasties 7–11)

During the Old Kingdom, there was political stability and prosperity. The Nile flood came predictably and not devastatingly. There was enough for all to eat. If one behaved himself and worked hard and studied diligently in school, he could count on the proper promotions and general success in life. Familiar social, political, economic, and religious institutions remained constant and could be counted on to assume their regular place in the rhythm of life. Now the old aristocracy had fallen. The central government had broken down; nobles ruled many districts and took the title of kings. It was no longer true that if one did certain things he could count on success. The collapse of the whole philosophy of life of the Old Kingdom brought a spiritual upset and spawned attempts at reevaluation of life. Some of the literature of the time advocates the hedonistic approach of drowning one's problems in pleasure, and some recommended a stoical approach—to steel oneself against the hardships of life.

Middle Kingdom (2050–1780 BC; 12th Dynasty)

Late in the 11th dynasty, princes of Thebes (440 miles, or 708 kilometers, south of Memphis) struggled to restore order and royal control and were partially successful. The Middle Kingdom was the period of the 12th dynasty, native Thebans who made their capital at Lisht in the Fayum. The six rulers of this dynasty took the names of Amenemhet and Sesostris. Each of them ruled some 30 years, and most of them took their sons on the throne as co-regents before death, eliminating the danger of a usurper. Since these kings did not dare to deprive the nobles of their largely independent power, a feudal condition existed during much of the period.

Unable to function as absolute kings, these pharaohs had to rule by persuasion and the development of goodwill. Their rendering of *ma'at* (social justice) was constantly emphasized, and if a person could not obtain *ma'at* at the hands of the nobles, he was promised it at the hands of the king. Their propaganda program also portrayed the pharaoh as concerned with responsible leadership instead of merely exercising authority. The pharaoh was the shepherd of his people.

Middle Kingdom pharaohs were wise enough not to exhaust the treasury on great pyramids; instead, they undertook public works, such as a massive effort to increase cultivable acreage in the Fayum, construction of a defensive wall across the isthmus of Suez, and systematic working of the Sinai copper mines. Trade was extensive with Crete, Lebanon, Syria, and Punt.

The Middle Kingdom was a time when Amon began to emerge as the great god of Egypt. He was grafted onto the sun god Re as Amon-Re and came to supersede the gods who had formerly stood for Thebes. As god of the nation, he was to become the great imperial god under the empire and thus to assume a universal quality. Religious texts, which had graced the walls of the pyramids during the Old Kingdom, now were inscribed on coffins instead, and their use was available to nobles as well as kings.

A literary flowering occurred during the Middle Kingdom. Scientific literature is represented by such outstanding works as the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus and the Smith Surgical and Ebers Medical papyri. The “Instructions of Merikare” portrays something of the wisdom literature of the period,

and the “Tale of Sinuhe” introduces the genre of entertainment literature.

If one holds to the early date of the exodus (c. 1446 BC) and adds 430 years for the period of Israelite sojourn in Egypt ([Ex 12:40](#)), he will conclude that the Israelites entered Egypt about 1876 BC. This would be early in the reign of Sesostri III (of Senwosret, or Sen-User; 1878– 1840 BC). Sesostri was a vigorous king who extended Egyptian control south to the second cataract and campaigned up into Syria. He was also able to reverse the feudalistic conditions of the earlier period; he took away the power of the nobles and appointed royal officials in their stead. Possibly this achievement was somehow related to famine in Joseph’s day and Joseph’s use of that famine to fasten royal control on all the populace of the land ([Gn 47:13–26](#)).

Second Intermediate Period (1780–1570 BC; Dynasties 13–17)

With the passing of the strong 12th dynasty, Egypt relapsed once more into a period of disintegration. The Hyksos (“rulers of foreign lands”), Semites from Syria and Palestine, gradually infiltrated into the delta region and took control there about 1730 BC, maintaining their capital at Tanis, or Avaris, in the eastern delta. Meanwhile, Theban princes ruled weakly in the south and were commonly vassals to the Hyksos.

Apparently as a result of Egyptian hatred of the Hyksos and stringent efforts to obliterate their memory, the Hyksos are a very shadowy people. Little remains on which to base a reconstruction of their history. Presumably they were responsible for introducing new kinds of bronze swords and daggers, the powerful compound bow, and above all the horse and chariot. The Egyptians adopted these with good success and used them to overthrow Hyksos power and then to build an empire in Palestine and Syria. The struggle of Theban princes to gain release from Hyksos control was prolonged and apparently fierce at times. The effort began late in the 16th century BC and was completed by Ahmose I (1570–1546 BC).

The Empire Period (1570–1090 BC; Dynasties 18–20)

Ahmose launched the 18th dynasty, and may be viewed as initiating the empire, or New Kingdom, period as well. After defeating the Hyksos in Egypt, he carried on successful campaigns against Nubia and Sharuhen in southern Palestine. Subsequently

he was forced to subdue nobles who had managed to gain independence from the central government during the Hyksos era. Amenhotep I (1546–1525 BC) was also forced to fight the Nubians in the south and Libyans in the northwest.

Dying without a son to succeed him, Amenhotep was followed on the throne by his sister Ahmose, who married a Thutmose (Thutmose I, 1525–1508 BC), probably a relative. Thutmose had to resubjugate rebellious Nubians during the first year of his reign and in subsequent campaigns considerably expanded Egypt’s Nubian holdings. Between those two Nubian attacks, he mounted an offensive in Syria; thus he could claim an empire that stretched from the Euphrates to the third cataract of the Nile. Moses may have been born early in his reign. Thutmose began the practice of carving out royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings west of Thebes.

Evidently the only surviving child of the union of Thutmose and Ahmose was a daughter, Hatshepsut, who was married to Thutmose II (1508–1504 BC), a son of Thutmose I by a secondary princess. Thutmose II had to quell rebellious Nubians, but little else is known of his reign. Since his marriage to Hatshepsut produced two daughters but no sons, he decided to marry his daughter Marytre to a son by a minor wife (Thutmose III, 1504–1450 BC).

Hatshepsut continued to rule during the minority of Thutmose III and refused to step aside when he came of age. She dominated Egypt from 1504–1482 BC. During her reign, Egypt enjoyed economic prosperity. Her building activities were considerable; not the least of her achievements was the erection of two great obelisks at the temple of Karnak at Luxor. The one remaining shaft stands 97½ feet (29.7 meters) high and weighs about 700,000 pounds (317,800 kilograms). She also conducted trade expeditions to the land of Punt. Hatshepsut is sometimes identified as the pharaoh’s daughter who rescued Moses from the Nile ([Ex 2:5](#)).

Finally, in 1482 BC, Hatshepsut met an untimely end, probably at the hands of Thutmose III as he burst his bonds and assumed rule over the realm. Within 75 days he had assembled an army and was leading it north into Palestine-Syria to subjugate rebellious princes there. A great initial victory at Megiddo and a sack of the city after a seventh-month siege cowed northern Palestinians but did not break their will to resist. Thutmose found

himself campaigning in Palestine or Nubia almost annually for the next two decades.

What started out as an Egyptian impulse to punish the Hyksos turned into a spirit of imperialism, which enjoyed a sense of power in victory. As the frontiers expanded, there was almost always a peril to attend to somewhere during subsequent generations; some of them were real and some remote. Thus the sense of security that Egyptians had enjoyed during earlier centuries when they were shut up in their valley home gave way to a feeling of insecurity. And as the god Amon-Re smiled on Egyptian military efforts, he was rewarded with quantities of booty and handsome gifts. In time the temples gained so much wealth and power that they came to exercise great clout in political and economic circles. Especially great was the power of the priesthood of Amon at the temple of Karnak.

Thutmose III was one of the greatest of Egypt's ancient pharaohs. A conqueror and empire builder, he is often called the Napoleon of ancient Egypt. There was hardly a city of any size in the kingdom where he did not engage in building activities. With him began an effort to glorify the pharaoh as sportsman, athlete, and warrior that was to last for several generations; he had the powers of a god in conducting the affairs of men. If one accepts the early date of the exodus, Thutmose III is often considered to have been the pharaoh of the great oppression of the Hebrews.

Thutmose was succeeded by his son Amenhotep II (1452–1425 BC), who may have been the pharaoh of the exodus. Serving briefly as co-regent with his father, he enjoyed an easy transition to sole rule over the empire. Though forced to conduct two campaigns into Syria and Palestine to subdue rebellious towns, he seems generally to have enjoyed a peaceful reign. Like his father, he sought to be known for his prowess as a sportsman and his ruthlessness as a warrior.

After the little-known reign of Thutmose IV (1425–1412 BC), Amenhotep III (1412–1375 BC) ascended to the throne of Egypt. Frequently called “the magnificent,” he reveled in the wealth that poured in from the empire. Once, in the brief space of only 14 days, he had excavated for his wife a lake 6,400 feet (1,950.6 meters) long and 1,200 feet (365.7 meters) wide. Here on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes a royal barge could float about while musicians aboard provided entertainment for the king and queen. Amenhotep built several temples, including a mortuary temple at Thebes, to which

were attached the famous colossi of Memnon, seated statues of the king about 70 feet (21.3 meters) high. Though artists dutifully represented him as a great conqueror on temple walls, he seems to have engaged in stifling only one uprising in Nubia and probably never set foot in Palestine or Syria.

Just as Amenhotep III made no effort to maintain the empire, neither did his son Amenhotep IV (1387–1366 BC). Because of ill health, Amenhotep III made his son co-regent in 1387 BC, but the son paid little attention to the affairs of state. Of a mystical bent, he devoted himself to the establishment of the cult of the sun god Aton at a new capital named Amarna. Aton worship was almost monotheistic (the king being worshiped along with the god) and thus constituted a virtual religious revolution, but it had few adherents outside the court. Religious changes, political changes connected with the move of the capital, and artistic changes were three of the main elements of the so-called “Amarna Revolution.” The loose naturalism in art, almost bordering on caricature, was not new, however, since it had been accepted as early as the reign of Thutmose IV. Amenhotep IV took the name Akhnaton (“spirit of Aton”).

Akhnaton paid no attention to numerous appeals (the Amarna letters) from royal princes of Palestine and Syria for help to repel invaders, and the empire disintegrated. Acceptance of the early date of the exodus would place the Hebrew conquest and the subsequent settling-in process during the reigns of Amenhotep III and IV, precisely when Egyptian power over Palestine disappeared. However, the Habiru, which some of these appeals name as attackers, should not be identified as Hebrews. Much of what is said about them could not have been true of Hebrews.

When Amenhotep IV died, Tutankhamen (1366–1357 BC) succeeded to the throne. A young boy of eight or nine, he was associated with Eye, a favorite of Akhnaton, as co-regent. When Tutankhamen died nine years later, Eye continued to rule until 1353 BC. Because of the discovery of his magnificently furnished, unrifled tomb in 1922, Tutankhamen has received attention out of proportion to his significance in antiquity. The thousands of objects from his tomb illustrate the wealth, grandeur, and artistic achievements of ancient Egypt and help to demonstrate what it meant for Moses to turn his back on the riches of Egypt ([Heb 11:26](#)).

When Eye died, Harmhab, commander-in-chief of the army, succeeded to the throne (1353–1319 BC). He reorganized the state and reestablished a strong government. Dying childless, Harmhab designated as his successor Ramses I, commander of the army and vizier, or prime minister. Ramses (1319–1318 BC) and Seti I (1318–1299 BC) made valiant attempts to restore the Asiatic empire lost by Akhnaton. In connection with their efforts, the capital was moved to Tanis in the delta, from which military campaigns could be more effectively launched.

Ramses II (1299–1232 BC) continued the effort to restore Egyptian control in Palestine. In the fifth year of his reign, he met the Hittites in battle at Kadesh on the Orontes in Syria and narrowly missed destruction of his forces. Subsequently, he fought battles all the way from southern Palestine to northern Syria. If the Hebrews were then in the land, as an early date of the exodus requires, they probably never made contact with the Egyptians because they were shepherds and vinedressers in the hills of Palestine, and Ramses moved along the coastal road. Finally, in his 21st regnal year, Ramses made a peace treaty with the Hittites and kept it to the end of his days. He built massively all over Egypt, notably at his capital of Tanis, at Thebes, at Abu Simbel (south of Aswan), and at Memphis. Many of those who accept a later date for the exodus believe he was the pharaoh of the exodus.

Ramses' 13th son, Merneptah (1232–1222 BC), was the only Egyptian king who claimed to have defeated the Hebrews in battle. But some scholars argue that he never invaded Asia and that this statement is to be interpreted as a customary claim of victory over the king's opponents in surrounding lands, whether or not he ever met them in battle.

Ramses III (1198–1164 BC) also fought off a Libyan invasion of the delta in his 5th and 11th regnal years, and in his eighth year he repulsed an invasion of Sea Peoples, among whom were Philistines. He was the last ruler of the empire period to maintain outposts in Palestine and Syria. In his later years the Egyptian economy deteriorated, and inflation and breakdown of the government's ability to meet the public payroll brought great suffering. Hunger marches resulted.

During the reigns of Ramses IV–XI (1167–1085 BC), there was a steady decline of the state. Graft and inflation increased. During the reign of Ramses IX (1138–1119 BC) unpaid mercenary troops seem to have roamed as marauders in the delta, and

tomb robbery reached epidemic proportions. Finally Herihor, viceroy of Nubia and commander of military forces in the south, seized control of Upper Egypt and made himself high priest of Amon in Thebes. The empire had come to an end.

The Postempire Period

In the postempire period, Egypt came under the rule of Libyan kings (945–712 BC) and Ethiopian kings (712–670 BC). After a brief period of Assyrian domination (670–663 BC), a native dynasty asserted itself (663–525 BC). Then the Persians conquered and held the land until Alexander the Great marched through in 331. Thereafter, the Ptolemies ruled Egypt until the death of Cleopatra in 30 BC. At that point the Romans took over. They controlled the land when Mary and Joseph fled there after the birth of Jesus. During the Greco-Roman period, Hellenistic culture dominated Egypt.

During the early postempire period, when Egyptian culture was still dominant, several kings figured in biblical history. During the fifth year of Rehoboam, king of Judah (probably 926 BC), Shishak I of Egypt invaded Judah and wrought great havoc there ([1 Kgs 14:25–26](#)). He even marched into the territory of Israel, as archaeological discoveries show. About 700 BC, in the days of King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, Tirhakah of Ethiopia led an army into Palestine to help the Jews against invading Assyrians ([2 Kgs 19:9](#)). Near the end of the seventh century BC, Pharaoh Neco led an army through Judah to come to the aid of weakened Assyria. When King Josiah tried to stop him, the Hebrew monarch lost his life ([2 Kgs 23:28–30](#)). During the last days of the kingdom of Judah, while Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem (588–586 BC), Pharaoh Hophra invaded Palestine in a vain effort to aid the Hebrews and defeat the Babylonians. Jeremiah predicted the Egyptians' destruction ([Jer 44:30](#)).

Social Life

Social Classes

In theory and in practice, the king owned all the land of Egypt. He was divine, and the gods had assigned to him the deeds to all the land. Of course, he made gifts—to the gods for the support of the temples, to his most loyal supporters, and for the maintenance of his own worship cult after his death. Thus, large parts of the kingdom slipped from his hands, but much remained as the

possession of the crown. Although by the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, nobles held great tracts of land, the king managed to sweep aside their power and repossess a considerable amount of acreage. During the Empire, the king made large grants to the temples, especially the temple of Amon at Thebes. This generosity enhanced the power of the priesthood at the expense of the crown.

As increasing amounts of land passed out of the control of the crown, and as social and economic life became more complex, a complicated class structure developed. The major division in Egyptian society was between the educated elite and the uneducated masses, but such an observation is too simplistic. At the top were the royal family and the great nobles. Below them was a group of lesser nobles and officials. Lower yet was a class of craftsmen who served both upper classes. Then, at least during the Empire, there were farmers who owned small plots which they worked themselves. At the bottom of the social structure were free serfs and slaves. Slavery became common only under the Empire, when slaves were obtained as prisoners of war, primarily in Palestine and Syria to the north and Nubia to the south. Some slaves found their way into domestic service at the palaces and on the large estates, but most of them worked on the land and some served in the mines. Slavery was never as important in Egypt as in other Near Eastern countries.

Family Life

Egyptians apparently married in early adolescence. Children were weaned at three. Boys were circumcised between the ages of 6 and 12. Although education was designed for boys of the upper classes, girls—especially of royal families—frequently received some formal education. Egyptian women evidently enjoyed much greater freedom and prestige than women of other Near Eastern countries. They went about rather freely; they accompanied their husbands in the conduct of business and even at social events. The family might even accompany the husband and father on an outing when he went fishing or hunting, though they did not take part in the action. Egyptians normally were not monogamous, the size of the harem being dictated by economic considerations. But the status of the chief wife was protected, and her first son was her husband's heir. Professions open to women included the priesthood, midwifery, mourning, dancing, and perhaps scribal activity (there was a feminine word for scribe).

Furniture was meager in an Egyptian house. Beds, chairs, stools, footstools, and stands for water jugs seem to have been the main items. Dining tables do not appear to have been used; there were stands on which trays of food might be placed. The poor simply sat on the floor, slept on mats on the floor, and spread out their meals on the floor.

Houses were normally built of mud brick. Those of the wealthy were set amid gardens and frequently had decorative pools. Rooms might be color-washed on the inside and even decorated with frescoes. Roofs were flat and provided a second bedroom in the hottest months. Houses sometimes had a second story. Though remains of two or three villages of workmen on government projects have been found, virtually nothing is known of the layout or size of the important cities of ancient Egypt.

Dress

Women wore long linen garments extending from the armpits to the ankles and held up by straps over the shoulder. During the Empire period, the skirt was made fuller and pleated. Men wore loincloths fastened with a belt and extending to the knee. The upper classes often wore it pleated in front. During the Middle Kingdom and the latter part of the Empire, the loincloth was extended to midcalf, and men sometimes also wore a short-sleeved tunic. As a result of Asian influence, Egyptians of the upper classes frequently wore colored clothing during the Empire, instead of the prevailing white of other periods.

Men were clean-shaven, but the king and a few top officials wore false beards for ceremonial purposes. Both men and women wore wigs, and both men and women used eye paint for medicinal and decorative purposes. Women wore lipstick and rouge and applied henna to their nails, the palms of their hands, and the soles of their feet. Men and women of the upper classes wore a variety of jewelry. People of all classes applied oils and fats to their skin to protect them in the hot, dry climate. The use of perfume was also universal.

Entertainment

There were no organized games in ancient Egypt. Sportsmen went out alone or with their families. They might hunt in the desert with bows and arrows and dogs, go fishing, try to knock down birds with a boomerang in a marsh, or go driving in a chariot. Boys and young men among the peasants especially enjoyed wrestling. Soldiers participated in war dances, which were a sort of physical drill. A

game like checkers was the chief indoor game of men and women alike.

Law and Punishment

The king was viewed as the source of all law, and apparently there was no written code to which all could appeal. Courts followed precedent set in past cases, and periodically the king modified the legal system by new edicts. Procedure in the courts involved administering an oath to tell the truth, speeches by accuser and accused, judgment of the court, and note taking by a court recorder. In some cases torture was used to extract a confession.

Treason, murder, and perjury were among the capital crimes. The latter was so serious because the court oath was taken "by the life of Pharaoh"; thus, swearing falsely meant injury to the king. Other serious crimes were punishable by mutilation (cutting off nose or ears) or hard labor in the mines and quarries (a living death). A person convicted of theft might be sentenced to repay double or triple what he had taken. Beating was the usual punishment for minor offenses. During the Empire, Egypt had a kind of police force with a contingent in each town.

Religion

All of Egyptian life was bound up with religious considerations. As the "gift of the Nile," Egypt worshiped the great river as Hapi. The sun, which gave life to all things, was deified under such names as Amon-Re and Aton. The king was the offspring of the gods and was in some sense god incarnate. The 10 plagues in Moses' day were an attack on the gods of the Egyptians. Turning the Nile into blood, bringing intense darkness on the land, and smiting the firstborn of the divine pharaoh involved a discrediting of Egyptian gods, as did the other plagues in various ways.

The greatest concern of all individuals was immortality and the blessing of the gods upon them in the next life. Egyptians were not morbid in that they were preoccupied with death; they sought to project or continue as many of the pleasant aspects of this life as possible into the next life.

Ancient Egyptians, unlike modern Western peoples, had no concept of an inanimate world. All natural phenomena were personalized and acted as friendly or unfriendly beings whenever they affected human activity. The gods were looked on as patrons of various activities or functions. Thus, Bes, a bandy-legged dwarf, was the patron of music

and conception, and the goddess Taurt (a combination of hippopotamus, lioness, and crocodile) was associated with childbirth. Charms of both were made in abundance, and these two seem to have been more widely regarded among the masses than the chief gods of Egypt.

Most important of all the gods was Re, or Ra, the sun god. The pharaoh was his physical son and earthly embodiment. When he died, he rejoined his divine father in the sky. Re generated the god Shu, personification of air, and the goddess Tefnut, personification of moisture. These gave birth to two children, Geb the earth god and Nut the sky goddess. The legends present different stories of how mankind came into being. One legend has Re generating them with his tears; another has Khnum forming them on his potter's wheel. During the Empire, the god of Thebes, Amon, was identified with Re, and the sun god henceforth became known as Amon-Re. The great triad of Thebes was Amon, his consort Mut, and their son Khonsu (the moon god).

Rivaling Amon-Re in importance was Osiris, god (king) of the dead. Legend has it that the benevolent ruler Osiris was murdered by his brother and brought back to life by his wife, Isis, through various magical devices; thereafter, he ruled in the west as king of the blessed dead. Eventually the experience of Osiris became that of every human being. Through magical formulas of the sort used by Isis, the individual could come to Osiris and even in some sense become Osiris. In addition to the knowledge and pronouncement of such formulas, the individual had to appear at a judgment for the weighing of his heart in the balance of righteousness. If declared innocent of wrongdoing, he was allowed to enter the kingdom of Osiris and enjoy a blessed hereafter.

Some of these notions about exiting to the next life began to appear on the walls of pyramid tombs in the Old Kingdom ("pyramid texts"). During the Middle Kingdom, they were recorded on coffins ("coffin texts"). During the Empire, they were compiled as the "Book of the Dead." Portions continued to be inscribed on the walls of tombs from the Empire period to about AD 300.

Learning and Culture

Language and Writing

Ancient Egyptian was related to both Semitic and Hamitic languages. By about 311 BC, both hieroglyphics (pictorial characters used in

inscriptions and more formal writing) and hieratic (a more running hand) were in use. Hieroglyphs may stand for a letter, a syllable, a sound, a word, or an idea. Francois Champollion cracked the decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822, primarily with the help of the Rosetta Stone. About 700 BC, a more rapid script called demotic came into being and continued to be written until early Christian times. Thereafter, Coptic, the ancient Egyptian language, came to be written down in a Greek script with a few extra letters.

Education

Egyptian education, available almost exclusively to upper-class boys, was designed to provide trained personnel for the priesthood, government offices, or the professions. Few had a chance to obtain any education at all. Boys began their training at an early age, commonly about four. Classes started early in the morning and normally ended about noon, in order to avoid the heat of the day. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were the standard fare. Good handwriting and the ability to compose letters were essential for all leaders in society. Eloquence was also valued. Learning by imitation was achieved through copying handwriting samples and model letters. Pieces of stone and potsherds provided inexpensive writing tablets, with papyrus being reserved for final drafts of important compositions. Knowledge of arithmetic was especially important for workers in government offices where taxes were collected in kind.

The highest form of education was priestly training, and a prince might enroll in a school for priests. But often he was educated by tutors in classes held at the palace. Such classes normally were designed for children of the harem; princesses and nonroyal children might also attend them.

After lower school, a boy might attend a "House of Life," a kind of academy or senior college. There outstanding persons might lecture on a variety of subjects (including medicine). Presumably resembling Plato's academy in Athens, such "Houses" did not have a prescribed curriculum or regular examinations. They were equipped with libraries.

Science

The ancient Egyptians excelled in applied mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The annual flood of the Nile required an early

development of the ability to resurvey the land rapidly after waters receded. Engineering skills were necessary to produce the irrigation system on which all Egyptian life depended. Moreover, their massive building projects necessitated a knowledge of mathematics. Egyptians could add and subtract but had cumbersome procedures for multiplication and division. They could calculate the area of a square, a triangle, a rectangle, and a circle and could do simple exercises in geometry. It is thought that experience rather than mathematical reasoning ability was responsible for most of their mathematical successes. They understood that the calendar must have 365¼ days in it, and they divided the year into 12 months and the months into three 10-day weeks. As early as 2000 BC, they had invented an adequate water clock.

With their elaborate practice of embalming, one would expect their knowledge of anatomy to be superior. They distinguished between injuries and diseases and performed some amazing surgery. Treatment was, however, a curious combination of scientific and superstitious efforts. Egyptian scientists, with a practical rather than theoretical motivation, amassed a vast collection of facts about astronomy, chemistry, geography, medicine, surgery, mathematics, and natural history.

Architecture

As the ancient Egyptians built their great temples, they were most concerned with stability and enduring qualities. They were built to last forever. Thus they were made of stone (commonly limestone or sandstone) and roofed with great stone slabs supported on massive columns. The capitals generally were lotus, papyrus, or palm leaf in design. Great statues of a king were placed inside these temples; as mere architectural decoration, these sculptures appear stiff and formal. Light entered the temple through windows in the side of the raised central hall; the side aisles were lower. Though the roofs of these temples were flat, Egyptians knew how to construct a round arch by at least 2700 BC. Greatest of the remaining temples is the temple of Karnak at Luxor. The hypostyle hall there, built by Ramses II, has a forest of 134 sandstone columns, the central avenue of which has 12 columns that soar to a height of 70 feet (21.3 meters), the tallest columns in the ancient world.

Pharaohs of the Old Kingdom built great pyramids as burial places along the west bank of the Nile south of Memphis. Pharaohs of the Middle

Kingdom constructed smaller pyramids in the Fayum area. During the empire period, they carved tombs out of the cliffs west of Thebes. Pharaohs as divine beings covered the walls of their tombs at Thebes with religious scenes. The nobles had their tombs decorated with scenes of everyday life—a life that they wished to perpetuate beyond the grave.

Houses were constructed of sun-dried brick; a few remain at Amarna and in a couple of abandoned workers' camps.

Music

All that is known of Egyptian music must be gleaned from musical instruments found in tombs or representations of musical instruments painted on tomb walls. Three instruments used in religious exercises were the sistrum, tambourine, and castanets. The sistrum was a metal loop fastened to a handle. Holes were cut in the sides of the loop so that three metal rods could be loosely fastened in it. When the sistrum was shaken, the rods would rattle. This is the instrument referred to in [2 Samuel 6:5](#). Miriam used the Egyptian timbrel, or tambourine, in the celebration after crossing the Red Sea ([Ex 15:20](#)).

Stringed instruments in ancient Egypt included the harp, lyre, lute, and a kind of guitar. Wind instruments included the single and double flute and the trumpet, the latter apparently used only for military purposes. At first, instruments were used singly to accompany a singer or dancer. Orchestras existed during the Empire period, when Israel escaped from Egyptian bondage.

See also Exodus, The; Pharaoh; Plagues upon Egypt.

Ehi

Benjamin's son ([Gn 46:21](#)); perhaps a scribal error for Ahiham. *See* Ahiham, Ahihamite.

Ehud

1. Judge of Israel from Benjamin's tribe who delivered Israel from Eglon, king of the Moabites ([Jgs 3:12–30](#)). He was notable because he was left-handed (Hebrew "hindered in the right hand"). Before taking Israelite tribute to Eglon, he made an iron dagger, with which he assassinated the unsuspecting Eglon during a private audience. He

then rallied the Israelites west of the Jordan to encircle the Moabite troops before they could return south to Moab. When the 18-year rule of Eglon over the Israelites ended, an 80-year period of peace began.

2. Bilhan's son, a member of Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chr 7:10](#); [8:6](#)).

Eker

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

Ekrebel

Mentioned in [Judith 7:18](#) as a place "located near Chusi in the vicinity of the brook Mochmur." It is possibly modern Akraheh, which is about 25 miles (40.2 kilometers) north of Jerusalem near the city of Shechem.

Ekron, Ekronites

Most northerly city among the major Philistine settlements. During the Hebrew conquest of Palestine, Ekron was not taken by Joshua ([Jos 13:3](#)). When the land was divided among the 12 tribes, Ekron was given first to Judah and then to Dan ([15:11, 45–46](#); [19:43](#)). It was eventually taken by Judah ([Jgs 1:18](#)), but it subsequently fell back to the Philistines.

Ekron played a prominent role in the story of the capture of the ark of the covenant. After the ark brought disaster to Ashdod and Gath, it was taken to Ekron ([1 Sm 5:1–10](#)). The Ekronites did not want the ark, so they consulted with the "lords of the Philistines" and proposed that the ark be sent back to Israel (v [11](#)).

After David killed Goliath, the Israelites pursued the Philistines to the gates of Ekron, which at that time apparently was the nearest walled city in which fugitives could take refuge ([1 Sm 17:52](#)).

Ekron was apparently the center of the worship of the god Baal-zebub. When Ahaziah injured himself and lay ill, he preferred to consult with Baal-zebub rather than with God. Elijah was sent by God to denounce Ahaziah and tell him that he would die ([2 Kgs 1:2–18](#)). Baal worship may have been increasing in Israel at this time. Ekron is included

in the denunciations of several prophets: Jeremiah ([25:20](#)), Amos ([1:8](#)), Zephaniah ([2:4](#)), and Zechariah ([9:5-7](#)).

Assyrian records inform us that Ekron revolted against Sennacherib in 701 BC. The rebels deposed Padi, the ruler of Ekron, who was loyal to Assyria, and handed him over to Hezekiah in Jerusalem for imprisonment. Sennacherib moved against Ekron, and Ekron called for aid from the king of Mutsri (either Egypt or a district of northwestern Arabia). Sennacherib lifted his siege of Ekron long enough to defeat the army of Mutsri, and then returned to take Ekron. He executed the rebels, made captives of their followers, forced Hezekiah to release Padi, and restored Padi as ruler of the city. Padi also received some territory taken from Judah. Padi's successor, Ikausu, was not so fortunate. He, along with Manasseh of Judah, was forced to pay heavy tribute to both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.

In 147 BC the king of Syria, Alexander Epiphanes, gave Ekron to Jonathan Maccabeus as a reward for his loyalty ([1 Macc 10:89](#)). In the fourth century AD it still had a large Jewish population.

See also Philistia, Philistines.

El

Ancient Semitic name for deity, perhaps meaning "power" (compare [Genesis 17:1](#)). A term used by the Hebrews generally in a poetic sense to refer to the true God of Israel. The same word was used for the senior Canaanite god and the god in Ugaritic mythology, [linked to the ancient city of Ugarit]. The "Il" or "El" of ancient Canaanite mythology (before 3500 BC in the region of Syria) was not as active as the god Baal. Baal struggled with Death and triumphed over Chaos. [Death and Chaos often represent powerful cosmic forces in mythology.]

But Il was the father god of the Canaanite pantheon, [the collective group of gods worshipped by the Canaanites]. Some Old Testament scholars have suggested that the Hebrews adopted the clan gods of the Canaanites, including Il. Yet Phoenician and Ugaritic literature use Il in the feminine form for the names of goddesses. The Hebrew avoids such usage.

El is combined with other adjectives to describe the numerous attributes of God; for example, God Most High ([Genesis 14:18-24](#)), the seeing God ([16:13](#)), the jealous God ([Exodus 20:5](#)), the forgiving God ([Nehemiah 9:17](#)), and the gracious God (verse [31](#)).

See also Canaanite Deities and Religion; God, Names of.

El Shaddai

Hebrew for "God Almighty" ([Ps 68:14](#)). *See* God, Names of.

El-Berith

Local god worshiped at Shechem ([Jgs 9:46](#)). He is usually identified with the god Baal-berith ([8:33; 9:4](#)).

El-Bethel

Name Jacob gave to the place at Luz (Bethel) where he built an altar after he returned from Haran with his family ([Gn 35:7](#)). *See* Bethel (Place), Bethelite.

El-Elohe-Israel

Name of an altar built by Jacob on land he purchased from the sons of Hamor, near Shechem ([Gn 33:20](#)). Jacob used the Canaanite deity's name, El, as a designation for Israel's God.

Some scholars, thinking this a strange name for an altar, have suggested that the combination of names reflects later scribal emendations of the scriptural texts. They argue that the Septuagint corrects the difficulty by saying that Jacob had called "upon" the God of Israel. Others speculate that Jacob built a pillar, not an altar (cf. [Gn 35:14, 20](#)).

See also God, Names of.

El-Elyon

Hebrew for "God Most High" ([Gn 14:18](#)). *See* God, Names of.

El-Paran

Place located on the edge of the wilderness of Paran, probably at the southern tip of the mountains of Seir in the Sinai Peninsula, present-

day Arabia. It was the farthest point south to which King Kedorlaomer and his allies pushed their punitive raid against the rebellious kings of Sodom and Gomorrah ([Gn 14:5–6](#)). *See* Elath.

Ela

Father of Shimei, one of the 12 officers appointed to requisition food for King Solomon's household ([1 Kgs 4:18](#)).

Eladah

KJV form of Eleadah, Ephraim's descendant, in [1 Chronicles 7:20](#). *See* Eleadah.

Elah

1. Esau's descendant and a chief of Edom ([Gn 36:41](#); [1 Chr 1:52](#)).
2. KJV rendering of Ela, Shimei's father, in [1 Kings 4:18](#). *See* Ela.
3. Baasha's son and fourth king of Israel. Elah reigned for only two years (886–885 BC). While in a drunken stupor, he was murdered by one of his generals ([1 Kgs 16:8–14](#)).
4. Father of Hoshea, the last king of the northern kingdom of Israel ([2 Kgs 15:30](#); [17:1](#); [18:1, 9](#)).
5. Caleb's second son and father of Kenaz ([1 Chr 4:15](#)).
6. Uzzi's son, descendant of Benjamin ([1 Chr 9:8](#)). Elah was among the first to resettle in Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. He is not mentioned in the parallel list of [Nehemiah 11](#).

Elah, Valley of

Southernmost valley in the Shephelah, starting at Hebron and descending in a northerly direction before turning west. At the Wadi al-Sant it comes together with other valleys, and at this juncture there is a wide, level valley about one-half mile (.8 kilometer) wide. It was here that the great struggle between David and Goliath took place, with the Philistine army camped on the southern hills and Saul's army on the north or northeast ([1 Sm 17:2, 19](#); [21:9](#)).

Elam (Person)

1. Firstborn son of Shem and a grandson of Noah ([Gn 10:22](#); [1 Chr 1:17](#)).
2. Benjamite and the son of Shashak ([1 Chr 8:24](#)).
3. Korahite Levite and the fifth son of Kore from the house of Asaph ([1 Chr 26:3](#)).
4. Forefather of 1,254 descendants who returned with Zerubbabel to Judah following the exile ([Ezr 2:7](#); [Neh 7:12](#)). Later, 71 members of Elam's house accompanied Ezra back to Palestine during the reign of King Artaxerxes I of Persia (464–424 BC; [Ezr 8:7](#)). In postexilic Judah, Shecaniah, Elam's descendant, urged Ezra to command the sons of Israel to divorce their foreign wives ([10:2](#)); a number from Elam's house eventually did so (v [26](#)).
5. Another forefather of 1,254 descendants who returned with Zerubbabel to Judah ([Ezr 2:31](#); [Neh 7:34](#)).
6. One of the chiefs of Israel who set his seal on Ezra's covenant ([Neh 10:14](#)).
7. One of the priestly musicians who performed at the dedication of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:42](#)).

Elam (Place), Elamites

Elam was a region of land that was about the same size as the country of Denmark. The Elamites were the people who lived in Elam.

Where Was Elam?

Elam was in southwest Asia, located east of Babylonia and north of the Persian Gulf. The area sat on a large flat piece of land that is now called Khuzistan, in the country of Iran. Mountains in the north and east, called the Anshan range, were also part of Elam. The land was good for growing food and living because it had several rivers. The most important river was the Karkheh, which marked the western boundary of Elam.

Who Were the Elamites?

The Elamites were a people who lived in this area for more than 2,000 years. During this time, they often fought with the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and the Persians. Finally, they became part of the Persian Empire. The Elamite people came from two different groups:

- the original people who lived in the land, and
- people who moved there from nearby Mesopotamia (the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers).

What Does the Bible Tell Us About Elam?

Most of what we know about Elam comes from the Bible. Elam is mentioned in connection with Shem ([Genesis 10:22](#)). The book of Acts reports that among the Israelites in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost were some from the old area of Elam ([Acts 2:9](#)). The prophet Isaiah said that Jewish people who were taken to Babylon would return from several places, including Elam ([Isaiah 11:11](#)). These were likely Jewish people who spoke Aramaic and had chosen to stay in Elam even after King Cyrus of Persia said they could return home ([Ezra 1:1-4](#)).

The Bible also mentions an Elamite king named Kedorlaomer ([Genesis 14:1](#)). Historians have found that this is a real Elamite name, which helps show that the story in Genesis is historically accurate. Daniel had a vision while he was in a city called Shushan, in Elam ([Daniel 8:2](#)). The description of this place shows that the author of the book of Daniel knew the area and its rivers very well. All these mentions in the Bible help us learn about the ancient Near East, adding to what we know from other ancient writings.

In the eighth century BC, Isaiah called on Elam to help destroy Babylon as an act of the Lord's judgment ([Isaiah 21:2](#)). However, we do not know much about what Elam actually did when Babylon fell in 540 BC.

Several prophets warned that Elam would face God's judgment along with other nations that rebelled against him ([Jeremiah 25:15-26](#)). Even though Elam was famous for its skilled archers, the prophets said these warriors would not be able to stand against the Lord of hosts ([Isaiah 22:6-12](#); [Jeremiah 49:35](#); [Ezekiel 32:24](#)). The prophet Ezekiel spoke about Elam's terrible fate, describing how they would die without knowing God ([Ezekiel 32:24-25](#)). Jeremiah warns the Elamites that they cannot escape judgment ([Jeremiah 49:38](#)).

What Is the Future of Elam?

But there was also hope. Even though Elam would be completely defeated when Persia conquered them, this would not be their final end (verse [39](#)).

Jeremiah wrote of a time when God would extend mercy to descendants of the Elamites. The anticipation of mercy follows the phrase, "in the last days." Jeremiah might have been talking about the time of the Messiah, God's chosen leader. Some think Jeremiah was imagining the Day of Pentecost, when many people from Elam were in Jerusalem and received God's Holy Spirit.

Elasa

Mentioned in [1 Maccabees 9:5](#) as the place where Judas Maccabeus pitched his tents when Bacchides engaged him in battle and Judas was killed ([9:18](#)). It is usually identified with Il'asa near Beth-horon.

Elasah

1. Priest of Pashhur's clan who obeyed Ezra's exhortation to divorce his pagan wife after the exile ([Ezr 10:22](#)).

2. Shaphan's son and King Zedekiah's envoy to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. On his trip to Babylon, Elasah also carried a letter of encouragement from the prophet Jeremiah to the Jewish exiles there ([Jer 29:3](#)).

Elath

Elath (also spelled Eloth) was a city in the land of Edom. It was at the top of the Gulf of Aqaba, near the eastern edge of the wilderness of El-paran ([Genesis 14:6](#); [Deuteronomy 2:8](#); [1 Kings 9:26](#)). The name *Elath* means "grove of trees." It may have been named for the many palm trees in the area. Some people think it was located in a group of sacred trees.

Elath was on an important trade route. Traders traveled through it on their way between southern Arabia, Egypt, and Phoenicia. Because of this, it was a valuable city.

At one point, Kedorlaomer defeated the Horites and took control of Elath ([Genesis 14:5-6](#)). Later, Elath became the southern border of Edom ([Deuteronomy 2:8](#)). King David probably took Elath when he defeated Edom ([2 Samuel 8:14](#)).

During the time of King Joram, the son of Jehoshaphat, the Edomites took Elath back ([2 Kings 8:20-22](#)). A few years later, King Uzziah of Judah

recaptured and rebuilt the city ([2 Kings 14:22](#)). Judah kept control of Elath until the time of King Ahaz. Then Rezin, the king of Syria, captured it and the Syrians took control ([2 Kings 16:6](#)).

After about 753 BC, Elath became part of Edom again. It stayed that way until sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, when it was abandoned. Later, the Nabateans built a new city a little east of the old one and named it Aila.

See also El-paran.

Eldaah

Midian's fifth son and a descendant of Abraham and his wife Keturah ([Gn 25:4](#); [1 Chr 1:33](#)).

Eldad

Eldad was one of the 70 elders of Israel who were chosen to help Moses govern the people ([Numbers 11:26-27](#)). Eldad and another elder named Medad did not join the other 68 elders who gathered around the tabernacle when Moses called them. Even though they were not present at the gathering, they also received God's Spirit and began to prophesy.

Joshua did not want the authority of Moses to be challenged. So he asked Moses to stop them. Moses responded with great humility and understanding of God's will. He said, "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets" ([Numbers 11:29](#)).

Elder

Person who exercised leadership and judicial functions in both religious and secular spheres in the ancient world. They usually exercised this leadership because of their position in the family, clan, or tribe; by reason of personality, prowess, stature, or influence; or through a process of appointment and ordination. The roots of the development of the presbytery (group of elders) in the NT and post-apostolic church originate in Judaism and the OT, though the figure of the elder or groups of elders can also be found in the world surrounding ancient Israel and in the Greco-Roman world of the NT period.

In the Old Testament

The elder, or the institution of elders, is closely linked with the tribal system. Tribes were composed of clans, and clans of large, extended family units. By virtue of age and function in a patriarchal society, the father of a family ruled. This fact of age, as well as the wisdom and maturity invested in older persons, is certainly the origin of the authority that these elders exercised. A clan was ruled by the heads of the families that made it up, forming a council of elders. In time of war, each clan furnished a group; these were led by a chief, probably chosen from the ranks of the elders.

In Israel's premonarchy period, local administration and judicial action was largely in the hands of those elders. In the exodus narrative, it was the elders of Israel (heads of families) who were instructed by Moses concerning the first Passover meal ([Exodus 12:21-22](#)). It was these elders who, in [Exodus 18:12](#), met with Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and from whose ranks were chosen worthy representatives to assist Moses in the interpretation of the law of God and the administration of justice ([18:13-23](#)). Similarly, according to [Numbers 11:16-17](#), Moses was instructed by God to select 70 men from among the elders of Israel to assist him in leadership of the people. In this latter account, the elders were marked by a special endowment of God's Spirit. In the former the elders—chosen as coadministrators with Moses—were those known to be trustworthy.

A central function of elders was the administration of justice. They were the "judges," who sat "in the gate," the traditional courtroom of ancient villages and towns. Here disputes and trials were settled by the elders, and community affairs were discussed and decisions made ([Genesis 23:10, 18](#); [Job 29:7](#); [Proverbs 24:7](#); [31:23](#)). The preservation and application of the law was clearly in the hands of elders who sat at the gate of the town ([Deuteronomy 19:12](#); [21:19](#); [22:15](#); [25:7-10](#)). [Ruth 4:1-12](#) provides an excellent description of such a process.

During the period of the monarchy, local administration and judicial authority continued to be invested in councils of elders. At the end of Saul's reign, David sent messages and gifts to the elders of the towns of Judah ([1 Samuel 30:26](#)), obviously recognizing that his efficient rule would depend on their goodwill and allegiance. To facilitate her plot against Naboth, Jezebel wrote instructions to the elders and nobles of Jezreel ([1 Kings 21:8-11](#)). It is clear that the elders of Israel were now responsible

for the application of the law within their jurisdictions. Besides administrative and judicial functions, elders also assumed cultic roles ([Exodus 24:1, 9](#); [Leviticus 4:14-15](#)).

The institution of the elders survived the collapse of the royal institutions. Elders were present during the exile ([Ezekiel 8:1](#); [14:1](#); [20:1-3](#)) as well as after the return (e.g., [Ezra 10:16](#)).

In Judaism of the New Testament Period

The Christian office (or function) of elder comes from a very similar institution within Judaism, although the use of the title “elder” to designate officers of various Greek cult associations and village magistrates may have influenced the development of community structure in the gentile churches. In the first three Gospels and in Acts there are numerous references to elders as functionaries within the communal and religious life of Judaism. Generally they are mentioned together with one or more other groups of functionaries (quoting the Revised Standard Version): “elders and chief priests and scribes” ([Matthew 16:21](#)); “chief priests and elders of the people” ([21:23](#); [26:3, 47](#)); “scribes and elders” ([26:57](#); [27:41](#)); “chief priests and elders” ([27:1, 3, 12, 20](#)); “rulers and elders and scribes” ([Acts 4:5](#)); “rulers of the people and elders” (v [8](#)). From these New Testament passages we cannot determine what exactly their functions were, or how they differed from rulers or scribes. However, the duties of Jewish elders are clearly described in the tractate *Sanhedrin* in the Mishnah, as well as in the community rule books of the Qumran ascetics, discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Each Jewish community had its council of elders, who had general administrative oversight and represented the community in relations with Roman authorities. Their primary duty was judicial. They were custodians of the law and its traditional interpretations (see [Matthew 15:2](#)), and they were charged with both its enforcement and the punishment of offenders. The most important of these councils of elders was the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, a group of 71 men who acted as the final court for the entire nation.

In the Christian Community

Since the primitive church eventually regarded itself as the new Israel ([Matthew 21:43](#); [Galatians 6:16](#)), it is easy to see why it should gradually adopt the institution of elders. Though it is difficult to make out the order that prevailed in the first

Christian communities, because it apparently varied according to place and time in both form and extent, the presence and functioning of elders was part of the reality of early church life.

In Luke’s account of the origin and spread of Christianity, the elders are already present in the church at Jerusalem. In Acts we see Christians at Antioch sending famine relief “to the elders [of the Judean churches] by Barnabas and Saul” ([Acts 11:30](#)). On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders in every church” ([14:23](#)). Later, Paul and Barnabas were sent from Antioch to Jerusalem “to the apostles and elders” about the question of circumcision of gentile Christians ([15:2](#)), and were “welcomed by the church, and the apostles, and the elders” (v [4](#)), who gathered to hear the case and resolve the issue (vv [6-23](#)).

Who these elders were, and how they were chosen, we are not told. It seems possible to argue, on the basis of Jewish precedent, that age and prominence gave them the privilege of rendering special service within the community. Veneration for age was a deeply rooted sentiment among Jews, and the name “presbyter” (elder) was derived from Jewish usage. It is also possible that, like the appointment of “the seven” for special service by the laying on of hands ([Acts 6:1-6](#)), the first elders in the Jerusalem church were appointed by the apostles. Apparently they functioned in the Christian community in ways comparable to the elders in the Jewish communities and the Sanhedrin ([11:30](#); [15:2-6, 22-23](#); [16:4](#); [21:18](#)).

Paul apparently continued the practice among the gentile churches, though elders are not mentioned in the earliest Pauline writings. They are mentioned only in the Pastoral Epistles ([1 Timothy 5:17, 19](#); [Titus 1:5](#)). On his last journey to Jerusalem, Paul summoned the elders of the church at Ephesus to Miletus ([Acts 20:17](#)) to bid them farewell, and to instruct them to be faithful in their task of overseeing and caring for the Christian flock, the church of God ([20:28](#)).

Although elders are not explicitly mentioned in Paul’s early letters, they may have been among the leaders who presided over the congregations ([Rom 12:8](#); [1 Thes 5:12-13](#)). [Philippians 1:1](#) certainly reveals a definite stratification of leadership (“overseers and deacons”) within a young Pauline congregation. And [1 Timothy 5:17](#), reflecting what is often considered a later phase in the development of church government, attributes the functions of preaching and teaching to the ruling

elders. Further, that Christian elders exercised pastoral functions may be inferred from [1 Peter 5:1-5](#) and [James 5:14](#).

There is one passage where we find a possible identification of an apostle (Peter) as also being an elder: "I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ" ([1 Peter 5:1a](#), Revised Standard Version). This text may indicate that elders were appointed and functioned as extensions of apostolic servanthood. Paul's practice of appointing elders in the churches before his departure may support such a suggestion. The fact that in the tradition of the later church the "elder" of 2 and 3 John was identified as the apostle John points in a similar direction. Though such an identification is implicit, the apostles could function as elders but not the other way around.

The elders had several functions. For example, [1 Timothy 5:17](#) speaks of elders as involved in preaching and teaching; [James 5:14](#) sees them involved in a healing ministry; [1 Peter 5:2](#) exhorts them to tend the flock. Thus, the prophets and teachers who led the church at Antioch (according to [Acts 13:1-3](#)) may well have been the elders of this community.

Whereas in the later church bishops and elders were clearly distinguished, the NT reflects an early period when these offices were virtually synonymous. In Paul's farewell speech at Miletus ([Acts 20](#)), addressed specifically to the Ephesian church elders (v [17](#)), he tells them that the Holy Spirit has made them "overseers, to care for the church of God" (v [28](#)). Whether "overseer" is used here in the later technical sense of bishop or the more general sense of guardian is not clear. However, in [Titus 1:5-7](#), the elders of verse [5](#) are clearly the same persons as the bishops of verse [7](#). Again, the bishops of [Philippians 1:1](#) are likely to be understood as the elders appointed by Paul upon his leaving this mission station.

It is clear that church government in the NT period was still relatively fluid, but the seeds for the later structures were surely planted. The institution of the elders, on the basis of Jewish precedent, was central. The episcopate (overseers/bishops) probably emerged out of the presbyterate (elders), one elder being appointed as overseer by the entire council of elders.

See also Bishop; Deacon; Deaconess; Pastor; Presbyter; Spiritual Gifts.

Elead

Ephraim's descendant who was killed in a raid against the Philistine city of Gath ([1 Chr 7:21](#)).

Eleadah

Ephraim's descendant ([1 Chr 7:20](#), kjv "Eladah").

Elealeh

Elealeh was a town located across the Jordan River to the northeast of Heshbon. The tribes of Reuben and Gad conquered this town ([Numbers 32:3, 37](#)). Later, the Moabites took control of Elealeh again. The prophets mentioned Elealeh together with Heshbon when they spoke against Moab ([Isaiah 15:4](#); [16:9](#); [Jeremiah 48:34](#)).

Eusebius, a church historian who lived in the fourth century AD, described Elealeh as a large village. Scholars identify Elealeh with the modern village of el-'Al. This village is 910.1 meters (2,986 feet) above sea level in an area known for growing many grapes. Archaeologists have found the remains of walls dating back to the time before the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) lived.

Eleasah

1. Helez's son and member of Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 2:39-40](#)).

2. Raphah's son and descendant of King Saul ([1 Chr 8:37](#); [9:43](#)).

Eleazar

1. The third of Aaron's four sons ([Exodus 6:23](#)). His name means "God has helped." He was consecrated as a priest along with his brothers and Aaron in the Sinai desert ([Exodus 28:1](#); [Leviticus 8:2, 13](#)). After his brothers Nadab and Abihu were killed by God for offering "unholy fire," ([Leviticus 10:1-7](#)), Eleazar and Ithamar took leading roles as Aaron's sons ([Numbers 3:1-4](#)). Eleazar is described as "chief of the leaders of the Levites" ([Numbers 3:32](#)). He was responsible for overseeing the sanctuary and its vessels ([Numbers 4:16](#); [16:37-39](#); [19:3-4](#)). When Aaron died on Mount Hor, Moses installed Eleazar as the high priest ([Numbers 20:25-28](#); [Deuteronomy 10:6](#)). From that point on, he became Moses' assistant ([Numbers 26:1-3, 63](#); [27:2, 21](#)). Joshua was commissioned by Moses in the presence of Eleazar ([Numbers 27:18-23](#)). During the conquest of Canaan, Eleazar worked alongside Joshua as a leader. His role was to inquire of the Lord on Joshua's behalf, providing divine counsel ([Numbers 27:21](#)). Eleazar also participated in dividing the land among the tribes of Israel, both on the east and west banks of the Jordan River ([Numbers 34:17](#); [Joshua 14:1](#); [17:4](#); [19:51](#); [21:1](#)). Upon Eleazar's death, he was highly regarded and memorialized in the land of Ephraim ([Joshua 24:33](#)). His son Phinehas became high priest after his death. Eleazar's descendants were given 16 divisions in the oversight of the priests, while Ithamar's descendants received eight ([1 Chronicles 24](#)). Notable priests like Zadok and Ezra traced their ancestry back to Eleazar ([1 Chronicles 6:3-15, 50-53](#); [24:3](#); [Ezra 7:1-5](#)). In later times, during King Solomon's reign, the priests descended from Zadok replaced Abiathar, who was

from Ithamar's line ([1 Kings 2:26–27, 35](#)). According to Ezekiel's vision of an ideal temple, only the descendants of Eleazar would be permitted to serve as priests ([Ezekiel 44:15](#)). See also Aaron.

2. Abinadab's son. He was put in charge of caring for the ark by the people of Kiriath-jearim, when it was brought from Beth-shemesh and placed in the "house of Abinadab on the hill" ([1 Samuel 7:1](#)).
3. Dodo's son, one of the three mighty men whose feats against the Philistines made him famous ([2 Samuel 23:9](#); [1 Chronicles 11:12](#)).
4. A Merarite Levite, son of Mahli. Eleazar died without sons, so his daughters were married to their first cousins ([1 Chronicles 23:21–22; 24:28](#)).
5. A priest who descended from Phinehas. This Eleazar helped record the items in the temple treasure after returning from the exile in Babylon with Ezra ([Ezra 8:33](#)).
6. Parosh's son, listed with others who divorced their non-Jewish wives in the reform under Ezra ([Ezra 10:25](#)).
7. A priest who was present at the dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem following the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 12:42](#)).
8. A person in the family list of Joseph, husband of Mary ([Matthew 1:15](#)). See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Elect Lady

Greeting found in [2 John 1:1](#). The phrase has been interpreted two ways.

Some interpreters regard 2 John as addressed to a particular woman. Ancient Greek manuscripts show that the word *kuria* (translated as "lady" or "mistress") was used by letter writers as a personal term for family members or close friends of either

sex. Thus, the phrase could be translated, "to my dear friend, Eklete." Some scholars associate the elect lady with Martha of Bethany (whose name in Aramaic also means "mistress").

Other interpreters regard the phrase as signifying a local congregation. John possibly portrayed this Christian community as a mother, the members as her children, and other congregations as sisters ([2 In 1:13](#); cf. [1 Pt 5:13](#)). The phrase could thus be translated, "the lady elect."

See also John, Letters of.

Elect, Election

In modern English, these words refer to the process of choosing a leader or representative by a group of people. This involves choosing from several candidates.

When the verb "elect" is used theologically in the Bible, it usually refers to God's actions. God does the choosing. In the Old Testament, it is used for God's choice of Israel to be his people (compare [Acts 13:17](#)). Israel became God's people, not because they decided to belong to him, but because God chose them. God did this because of his promise to Abraham, not because of anything special about Israel ([Deuteronomy 7:7–8](#)). God also chose their leaders, such as Saul and David ([1 Samuel 10:24](#); [2 Samuel 6:21](#)). These choices were made by God alone, not by people voting. The word thus indicates God's authority to decide what will happen, independent of human choice.

The New Testament has similar ideas. God's people are described as his "elect" or "chosen ones." This phrase was used by Jesus when talking about a future time when the Son of Man (a title Jesus used for himself) will come and gather together God's people ([Mark 13:20, 27](#)). Jesus will show that God's people were right to suffer and wait patiently for him ([Luke 18:7](#)). In [1 Peter 2:9](#), God's people are called a "chosen [elect] people." This phrase was originally used of the people of Israel ([Isaiah 43:20](#)). It shows that God's people in the Old Testament and the Christian church in the New Testament are connected. The promises God made to Israel are now coming true in the church.

In [Romans 9–11](#), Paul talks about a problem: Why have most Jewish people rejected the good news about Jesus, while many non-Jewish people have accepted it? He says that right now, there is a small group (or remnant) of Jewish people who believe.

God chose this group because of his kindness. This group is “the elect.” This small group has received what God meant for all of Israel. Paul says that many did not accept the message because they became less receptive to it. He describes this as a “hardening,” which he relates to the general human tendency to turn away from God ([Romans 11:5-7](#)).

However, Paul says God has not canceled his choice of Israel as his people. He explains that while many Jewish people have not accepted the message about Jesus, this has allowed non-Jewish people to receive God's blessings. Paul emphasizes that God still loves the Jewish people and will not take back his promises to them ([Romans 11:28](#)). Because of this, Paul believes that in the future, many Jewish people will turn to God.

The word translated “elect” is usually found in its plural form in the Bible. It refers to all of God's people or to members of a specific local church ([Romans 8:33](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [2 Timothy 2:10](#); [Titus 1:1](#); [1 Peter 1:1-2](#); [2 Peter 1:10](#); [Revelation 17:14](#); compare [Romans 16:13](#) and [2 John 1:13](#), which have the singular form). There are two possible reasons for using the plural form. Most New Testament letters were written to groups, not individuals. More likely, it shows that God chooses a community of people, not just separate individuals.

The word “election” shows that being part of God's people starts with God's choice. This choice happened before time began, before anyone could respond ([Ephesians 1:4](#); compare [John 15:16, 19](#)). It is God who has called men and women to be his people, and those who respond are elect. God does not choose people because they are good or deserving. In fact, he often picks:

- Those the world sees as foolish, to embarrass the wise
- The weak, to defeat the strong
- Those seen as unimportant, to show that important people are not special ([1 Corinthians 1:27-28](#))

This means the elect cannot brag about their achievements or status. Everything they are comes from God. They cannot boast or think they are better than others.

God's chosen people have special benefits:

- God supports them, so no one can accuse them in a way that would make God reject them ([Romans 8:33](#)).
- They are like royal priests. This means they can come to God directly ([1 Peter 2:9](#)).
- The early Christian leaders known as apostles went through hard times for them. They did this so God's people could have salvation and live forever with God ([2 Timothy 2:10](#)).

The elect are known for their faith in God ([Titus 1:1](#)). They should act in ways that show they are God's people ([Colossians 3:12](#)). They must make their calling and election sure. That is, they must show that they belong to God by how they live ([2 Peter 1:10](#)). They must continue being faithful to the Lord who called them ([Revelation 17:14](#)).

The relationship between God's call and human response is explained in [Matthew 22:14](#): “For many are called, but few are chosen.” Although God calls many through the gospel, only some of those respond to the call and become his elect people.

The Bible does not fully explain why only some people become God's people. Certainly, when a person does respond to God's call, it is because the gospel comes to him or her “in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction” ([1 Thessalonians 1:4-5](#)). When men and women refuse the gospel, it is because they have become hardened as a result of sin and their trust in their own works. The Bible does not explain more than this, so Christians should not try to add their own explanations.

“Election” can also mean God choosing people for special tasks. Jesus chose the 12 disciples out of the larger group of those who followed him ([Luke 6:13](#); [Acts 1:2](#)). Likewise, in John's Gospel, Jesus said that although he chose the 12 disciples, he calls Judas, who betrayed him, “a devil” ([John 6:70](#); [13:18](#)). When Judas needed to be replaced with another disciple, the church prayed to Jesus. They asked him to show them which of two men to choose to be included among the Twelve ([Acts 1:24](#)). Peter said God chose him to tell non-Jewish people about ([15:7](#)). Likewise, Paul said God chose him to bring the message to non-Jewish people ([9:15](#)). These examples show that God takes the first step in Christian mission. He chooses people to serve him in different ways.

See also Foreknowledge; Foreordination.

Elemental Spirits, Elements

Alternative translations of a Greek word used in the NT, “elemental spirits” being spiritual forces at work in the world, and “elements” being either the basic constituents of the physical world or of human life or the basic principles of a system of thought. In three passages the meaning is clear ([Heb 5:12](#); [2 Pt 3:10, 12](#)). The other four passages, however, have caused considerable debate. The difficult phrase “the elements of the world” appears in three of the four passages ([Gal 4:3](#); [Col 2:8, 20](#)). The meanings of “elements” in the fourth passage ([Gal 4:9](#)) is probably the same as in the other three because of its similar context.

Range of Meanings

The principal meaning of the Greek word is “basic or fundamental component.” The word, however, occurs frequently in ancient Greek literature and takes on a variety of connotations in the different contexts in which it appears. Most frequently it was used literally to refer to the physical elements of the world: earth, air, water, and fire. This is probably the meaning of the term in [2 Peter 3:10–12](#), which states that the world’s elements, the physical matter, will be destroyed by fire.

In antiquity the word also commonly referred to the letters in a word, notes in music, the “elementary” rules of politics, or the foundations or basic principles in science, art, or teaching (particularly logical propositions basic to the proof of other propositions). The last is clearly the meaning of the word in the Epistle to the Hebrews ([5:12](#)), which describes people’s need to have someone teach them the basic principles or elementary truths of God’s Word.

In the third century AD another meaning of “elements”—elemental spiritual beings—became current. The development of this meaning has led to the current debate over its suitability in Paul’s context.

Elementary Spirits

A difficulty with Paul’s use of “elements” is that any of three possible meanings makes sense. One can understand “elements” to mean spiritual beings and view Paul’s reference as similar to his mention of the principalities and powers (e.g., in [Eph 6:12](#)). Translating [Galatians 4:3](#) according to this view (as in the rsv), Paul would have been saying that before

conversion a person is enslaved to spiritual forces who rule this world. In [4:9](#), he asks how the Galatians could wish to be enslaved to these forces again. The references to “beings that by nature are no gods” (v [8](#)) and to angels through whom the law was mediated ([3:19](#)) are both used to substantiate the meaning “elemental spirits.”

Similarly, [Colossians 2:8](#) would be warning Christians against being led away captive through the philosophical speculations and empty deceit that are perpetrated by human traditions and the elemental spirits. Only two verses later Paul declares that Christ is the head of every principality and power ([Col 2:10](#)). Many commentators now believe that Paul intended “principalities and powers” to refer to demons who temporarily ruled various spheres of life in the world. Paul announces that Christ has conquered them and displayed them publicly as captive in his triumphal procession (v [15](#)). Thus, [Colossians 2:20](#) might mean that Christians have “died” to those elemental spirits as elsewhere Paul wrote of “dying” to sin ([Rom 6:2](#)).

However, despite the fact that Paul spoke of the principalities and powers as spiritual forces, and despite the ease with which this meaning fits Paul’s use of “elements of the world,” many scholars regard this interpretation as the least likely of the three possibilities. The earliest certain evidence for the use of “elements” to mean spirits is from the third century AD, which is far too late to reflect common usage in Paul’s day. In addition, nowhere else did Paul speak of Christians being in bondage to angels or having died to demonic powers.

Elementary Principles

Some scholars understand “the elements of the world” to refer to elementary religious teaching (as in [Heb 5:12](#)). Paul may have been appealing to the “ABCs of religion,” perhaps the elementary character of the law (cf. [Gal 3:24](#); [4:1–4](#)) or pagan religious teaching ([4:8](#)). The “weak and beggarly elements” (kjv) may be explained by the fact that the Galatians were legalistically observing special days, months, seasons, and years as if their righteousness before God depended on it.

Similarly, in Colossians the elements of the world seem to be parallel to human traditions ([Col 2:8](#)). The problem again is the same as in Galatians, legalism (vv [16, 20–23](#)). In both contexts the bondage warned against is bondage to elementary religious thinking that comes merely from humans and would be equivalent to contrasting a

kindergarten level of thought with the advanced teaching that comes in Christ. Some scholars believe that this interpretation has more in its favor than the meaning “elemental spirits,” but others argue that it is not precise enough.

Elementary Existence

By far, the most frequent use of “elements” in ancient literature is literal, referring to the physical elements of the world, which were usually considered to be earth, air, water, and fire. The third interpretation, which many scholars prefer, draws on this understanding of “elements of the world.” The meaning of the phrase “of the world” determines how the passages in question are to be interpreted. In the NT writings “world” was not merely physical. Frequently, “world” was viewed in an ethical sense, standing for human life apart from God or even lived in opposition to God and Christ. The world often represented unregenerate humanity with its culture, customs, worldview, and ethics—the part of creation that had not yet been redeemed and was helpless to save itself. Thus, the elements of the world, in this view, are the “basics” of a merely human existence. According to this interpretation, Paul warned the Colossian Christians against being led away captive by philosophical speculation and empty deceit that were in accord with human traditions and with the basics of a merely human existence and not in accord with what they had in Christ ([Col 2:8](#)). They had died from the basics of a merely human life ([v 20](#)), and being no longer bound to that level of existence, they possessed a life that came from Christ ([3:1-4](#)).

This interpretation still leaves the precise meaning of [Galatians 4:1-3](#) uncertain. Was Paul addressing both Jews and Gentiles or only Jews (the “we” in [Gal 4:3](#))? No doubt Paul viewed both Jews and Gentiles as being in bondage to a merely human existence. Even though the Jews possessed God’s law, it was ineffectual for salvation. Christ’s coming broke that bondage and brought the Holy Spirit, who would give Christians a completely new quality of human life. Therefore, Paul warned against becoming enslaved again to such weak and poverty-stricken basics of a merely human existence ([v 9](#)).

In this view, then, the elements of the world are the “basics” of existence before and outside of Christ. Paul nowhere recorded specifically what he included in those basics. The contexts of both Galatians and Colossians, however, seem to imply that the basics at least included the law and “the

flesh” (that is, life lived ethically apart from God). Such a view of “elements” accords well with the wider context of these passages and with other passages (especially [Rom 6-8](#); [Gal 3:2-3, 23-25; 4:1-10](#)).

Eleph

KJV translation for the town Haeleph in [Joshua 18:28](#). See Haeleph.

Elephantine Papyri

A series of Aramaic documents from the fifth century BC discovered at Elephantine, an island in the Nile River. In the fifth century BC, Elephantine was a military outpost of Persia. Some Jewish soldiers and their families lived there.

Over 100 documents were found. They belonged to three groups—two family collections and one community collection. Many of the documents were complete scrolls that were still tied and sealed when they were found. There were also many broken papyri [paper made from plants].

The manuscripts are very important for studying the past. They are several hundred years older than most of the Dead Sea Scrolls. They show how Jewish people outside Israel lived socially, politically, and religiously. There are several similarities to Ezra and Nehemiah.

Most of these documents are about laws. They help us understand how laws changed over time in that part of the world. The texts also show how people spoke Aramaic. They talk about daily life in a Persian military base that was far from Persia.

Ancient Elephantine

Elephantine was on a small island in the Nile River. It was near a large waterfall across from the city of Syene (now Aswan). The Bible probably talks about these two cities when it says, “from Migdol to Syene” ([Ezekiel 29:10; 30:6](#)). This means from the north edge to the south edge of Egypt. *Elephantine* comes from the Aramaic version of an Egyptian name meaning “city of ivories” that was translated into Greek. It was an important place on Egypt’s southern border with Nubia. So, it was probably protected by walls as early as 2700 BC and was important in Egypt’s military history.

Elephantine was also important for trade. Boats could not sail past the waterfall, so they had to stop at Elephantine and Syene. Each town had ports that had soldiers who protected the trade in ivory, animal skins, spices, minerals, slaves, and food. Elephantine was also a religious center with a temple for Khnum, an Egyptian god who controlled the flooding of the Nile.

Discovery of the Papyri

After the papyri were found, Elephantine became important to archaeologists. They were found in three stages.

The first group was published in 1906. They were bought from antiquities dealers [people who collect and sell old findings] and kept in the Cairo Museum. This publication sent German and French archaeologists to dig at Elephantine to discover more papyri.

The archaeologists found the second group in 1911. They were kept in the Berlin Museum.

The final group of papyri had actually already been found. In 1893, American scholar C. E. Wilbour bought papyri from some Arab women in Aswan. When he died, Wilbour's daughter gave them to the Brooklyn Museum. They were published in 1953.

All other digs since 1912 have found no other papyri.

Jewish Colony

When the papyri were written, Jewish people had already been living in Elephantine for some time. The documents show what life was like in the military community there. There were Jewish soldiers ("men of the regiment") and Jewish civilians ("men of the town"). The soldiers were organized into groups that also had social and economic roles. Even though they had to follow military rules, the soldiers had a lot of freedom. They had normal family lives, did business, and could leave their property to their children. To get married in Elephantine, both the bride and her father had to agree. Either the husband or wife could end the marriage by saying in public that they "hate" the other person.

The Jewish people in Elephantine had their own temple. They worshiped the Hebrew God, whom they called Yahu (a different form of Yahweh). The leaders in Elephantine wrote letters to officials in Jerusalem and Samaria.

We do not know exactly when Jewish people first came to Elephantine. They could have come to Egypt at different times from the 8th to early 6th centuries BC. One document says the Jewish temple there was built before the Persians took over Egypt (before 522 BC). This means the temple was built by the mid-6th century BC at the latest.

Elephantine Judaism

The Jewish people in Elephantine had their own temple, even though the Bible says there should only be one temple ([Deuteronomy 12:1–11](#)). Kings Hezekiah and Josiah had recently made changes to focus all worship in Jerusalem. But the Elephantine Jews did not seem to think it was wrong to have a temple in Egypt. None of the excavations at Elephantine has found the Jewish temple, but the documents say it faced towards Jerusalem.

The Elephantine Jews may have seen Jerusalem as the center of Judaism. In 410 BC, priests of the god Khnum destroyed the Elephantine temple. The Jews wrote to Johanan, the high priest, and Bagoas, the governor of Judah, asking for permission and help to rebuild it (compare [Nehemiah 12:22; 13:28](#)). They got no answer, maybe because the leaders in Jerusalem did not approve of the temple in Egypt.

Three years later, they wrote again to Bagoas and to Delaiah and Shelemiah, sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. This time, they got an oral answer, which was written down. The answer said they could rebuild the temple and start offering grain and incense again. But they were not allowed to offer animal sacrifices, maybe to avoid offending Egyptian or Persian religious beliefs. A document from 402 BC mentions the temple of Yahu, suggesting it was rebuilt.

The Elephantine Jews probably brought with them the popular religion that the prophets had strongly criticized before Jerusalem's temple was destroyed. God was the most important in their faith, but they also worshiped other gods in a lesser way. This is shown by a list of offerings made to two Aramean gods: Eshembethel and Anathbethel. People in Elephantine usually made promises in Yahu's name, but sometimes they used the names of an Egyptian goddess, Sati, and another Aramean god, Herembethel.

Letters asked for blessings from various gods. Also, Jewish people were marrying non-Jewish people, which was forbidden in the Old Testament because it could lead to worshipping other gods ([Exodus](#)

[34:11–16](#); [Deuteronomy 7:1–5](#)). This was also happening in Israel at the same time, as we see in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah ([Ezra 9:1–10:44](#); [Nehemiah 13:23–28](#)). Children from these mixed marriages in Elephantine often had Egyptian names.

However, the documents also show that the Elephantine Jews still celebrated Jewish festivals. In 419 BC, King Darius II ordered the Jews at Elephantine to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The document is in fragments just before this, but it probably also told them to celebrate Passover. Four ostraca [pieces of pottery] also mention the Sabbath but don't tell us much about how it was observed in Elephantine

Language of the Papyri

The Aramaic language used in the Elephantine documents is very similar to the Aramaic in the Bible. Both are part of a type of Aramaic called Imperial Aramaic, which was used for international communication and trade in the Persian Empire. People's names were still in Hebrew, but we do not have evidence that Hebrew was spoken in the community. Aramaic was the everyday language. There is no sign that people argued about whether Hebrew should be used in Jewish homes as they did with Nehemiah in Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 13:23–25](#)).

Eleutherus

A small river mentioned in [1 Maccabees 11:7](#) and [12:30](#) and almost certainly to be identified with the Nahr-el-Kebir, which begins in the northeast base of Lebanon and flows into the Mediterranean about 18 miles (29 kilometers) north of Tripoli. It marked the limits of Jonathan's expeditions.

Eleven, the

A name used for Jesus's disciples after Jesus was raised from the dead ([Mark 16:14](#); [Luke 24:9, 33](#)) and at the Jewish festival Pentecost ([Acts 2:14](#)). This name was used after Judas Iscariot killed himself.

See Apostle, Apostleship.

Elhanan

1. A Hebrew soldier who became famous for killing a Philistine giant. In one account, he is called the son of Jaare-oregim from Bethlehem. [2 Samuel 21:19](#) says he killed Goliath the Gittite. [1 Chronicles 20:5](#) calls him the son of Jair and says he killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath.
2. A son of Dodo and a warrior among the mighty men of King David ([2 Samuel 23:24](#); [1 Chronicles 11:26](#)).

Eli

A priest in the sanctuary of the Lord at Shiloh during the time of the judges ([1 Samuel 1:3, 9](#)). Shiloh was a sacred place located about 16 kilometers (10 miles) north of Jerusalem. It was the main worship center for the Israelite tribes. Eli had two sons named Hophni and Phinehas who were also priests. These are Egyptian names. The Bible does not clearly state Eli's family line, but there are two possibilities:

- He may have been a descendant of Ithamar, Aaron's younger son ([1 Samuel 22:20](#); [1 Kings 2:27](#); [1 Chronicles 24:3](#)).
- He may have come from the family of Eleazar ([Exodus 6:23–25](#); [2 Esdras 1:2–3](#)).

In [1 Samuel 1](#), Eli blessed Hannah, the childless wife of Elkanah, after he learned about her prayer for a son. Later, Hannah gave birth to Samuel. When Samuel was old enough to be weaned, his mother brought him to Eli for training in the sanctuary, keeping the promise she had made to God.

Hophni and Phinehas were leading the Israelites into sinful ways despite Eli's objections. Because of this sin, God promised to punish Eli's family ([1 Samuel 2:27, 36](#)). God said that Eli's sons would die on the same day ([1 Samule 2:34](#)). This happened during a battle with the Philistines at Aphek ([1 Samuel 4:11, 17](#)). Eli also died when he heard about the defeat and that the Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant. Eli was 98 years old when he died. He had been both a priest and a judge in Israel for 40 years ([1 Samuel 4:15–18](#)). Eli's daughter-in-

law, the wife of Phinehas, died while giving birth. She was heartbroken over the loss of her husband and the ark. She named her son Ichabod because she felt there was no more hope ([1 Samuel 4:19–22](#)).

Eli was sincere and devoted to God, but he was not a strong leader. He was weak and too lenient with his sons.

Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?

One of Jesus's cries from the cross is translated as "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The New Living Translation uses an alternate spelling, "*lema*," for the third word in the expression. This "cry of abandonment" ([Matthew 27:46](#)) differs slightly from another version, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" ([Mark 15:34](#)). Both versions adapt [Psalm 22:1](#) in Aramaic, the common language in first-century AD Palestine. The only difference is that Mark's version is entirely Aramaic, while Matthew keeps the Hebrew word for God, which was common among Aramaic-speaking Jews. Some of Jesus's listeners thought he was calling Elijah, suggesting Matthew's version is likely original. "*Elias*" (Elijah) could be confused with "*Eli*" more easily than with "*Eloi*" ([Matthew 27:47](#); [Mark 15:35](#)).

The different versions of the text show the challenges copyists and interpreters faced with Jesus's words. After reflecting on the passage, Martin Luther exclaimed, "God forsaken of God! Who can understand it?" Luther highlighted a major theological issue: that Jesus was forsaken by God. However, this is not the only way to understand the text. The debate centers on two questions: did Jesus truly express abandonment by God using the psalmist's words, and why did the onlookers mention Elijah?

Meaning of the Cry

Some people find Jesus's words very stark. They think he realized on the cross that he had failed and that all hope for God's kingdom was lost. From this view, Jesus's words were a cry of despair over a lost cause. However, this view does not match the rest of the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus.

On the other hand, some see the words as neither harsh nor negative. They view the cry as Jesus affirming his faith by committing himself to God ([Luke 23:46](#)). These interpreters believe that Jesus

starting with "My God, my God" and using a biblical quote shows religious respect and ongoing faith. In Jewish tradition, quoting the first line of a psalm or song sometimes refers to the entire work. Therefore, Jesus might have quoted [Psalm 22:1](#) to refer to the whole psalm. [Psalm 22](#) is clearly about a righteous person suffering. Lament psalms always express confidence in God, praise to God, and a request for help. Thus, from this perspective, the cry from the cross can be seen as a confident prayer.

Many biblical scholars find the second view as unconvincing as the first. The Gospel writers did not clarify the meaning of the cry. If the words were meant to show confidence or praise, the text would likely indicate this. As they are, the words do not seem to express religious reverence. The words themselves and the fact they were shouted do not suggest a prayer of confidence or praise.

This approach sees the words as showing Jesus's feeling of isolation during extreme anguish, but it denies that God actually abandoned him.

The traditional interpretation is that God did forsake Jesus. In this view, the events in the Garden of Gethsemane ([Matthew 26:36–46](#); [Mark 14:32–42](#); [Luke 22:39–46](#)) show the type of struggle reflected in Jesus's cry on the cross. Jesus identified with sinners so deeply that taking on their sin disrupted his closeness with the Father. Therefore, Jesus's abandonment by God is considered a key part of the atonement. Although this view emphasizes that Jesus was truly forsaken, it also maintains that the unity of the Trinity stayed intact.

Explaining this paradox is challenging. Some see it as a divine mystery and do not try to explain it. Others try to distinguish between what happened on the cross and God's nature. For example, early church thinkers said only Jesus's human side was affected by the separation, while his divine side stayed with God. Others argue that Jesus was separated from the Father in his role in salvation, but not in his actual existence.

The Gospel writers did not explain Jesus's cry, so scholars should avoid giving exact explanations. We can say that:

1. The cry shows Jesus's human side when facing death
2. Dying on a cross was especially shameful

3. Jesus's connection with sinners was very painful

Although the cry relates to the Atonement, the Bible does not say if Jesus was completely abandoned. It also does not explain how God could turn away from sin while "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ," ([2 Corinthians 5:19](#)). To respect the deep emotion in the cry, we should not force the text to say what the author did not mean.

Elijah and the Cry

There are different ideas about the connection between the cry and Elijah. If the cry refers to the entire [Psalm 22](#), the bystanders mentioning Elijah might show they thought Jesus was expressing trust in salvation. The Jews often saw Elijah as a deliverer of the oppressed righteous, so salvation through Elijah would seem natural. Some believe the bystanders twisted Jesus's words to mock him. Others think the mention of Elijah was an honest mistake due to the similarity of the words. The view one adopts depends on how they interpret Jesus's cry.

See also Crucifixion; Seven Last Sayings of Jesus.

Eliab

1. Helon's son and leader of Zebulun's tribe when the Israelites were roaming in the Sinai wilderness after their escape from Egypt ([Nm 1:9](#); [2:7](#); [10:16](#)). As leader, he presented his tribe's offering at the consecration of the tabernacle ([7:24, 29](#)).

2. Member of Reuben's tribe and son of Pallu. Eliab was the father of Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness ([Nm 16:1, 12](#); [26:8-9](#); [Dt 11:6](#)).

3. Jesse's eldest son and brother of King David. An impressive person physically, he was rejected by God for the kingship in favor of David ([1 Sm 16:6](#); [1 Chr 2:13](#)). Eliab served King Saul when Goliath defied Saul's army ([1 Sm 17:13, 28](#)). He was appointed leader of Judah's tribe during David's reign ([1 Chr 27:18](#)). His granddaughter Mahalath married King Rehoboam of Judah ([2 Chr 11:18](#)).

4. Variant name for Elihu in [1 Chronicles 6:27](#). See Elihu #1.

5. Warrior from Gad's tribe who joined David at Ziklag in his struggle against King Saul ([1 Chr 12:9](#)). Eliab was an expert with the shield and spear (v [8](#)).

6. Levite musician assigned to play the harp in the procession when King David brought the ark to Jerusalem ([1 Chr 15:18](#)). He was assigned permanently to service in the tabernacle ([16:5](#)).

Eliada

1. One of the sons of King David. He was born in Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 5:16](#); [1 Chronicles 3:8](#)). He is also called Beeliada in [1 Chronicles 14:7](#).
2. The father of Rezon. He was the king of Damascus and an adversary of King Solomon ([1 Kings 11:23](#)).
3. A general who served under King Jehoshaphat. Eliada and the 200,000 warriors he commanded were from the tribe of Benjamin ([2 Chronicles 17:17](#)).

Eliadah

The King James Version spelling of Eliada in [1 Kings 11:23](#). Eliada was the father of Rezon.

See Eliada #2.

Elijah

KJV form of the name Elijah in [1 Chronicles 8:27](#) and [Ezra 10:26](#). See Elijah #2, #4.

Eliabba

A warrior among the mighty men of David known as "the Thirty" ([2 Samuel 23:32](#); [1 Chronicles 11:33](#)).

Eliakim

1. Hilkiyah's son and a royal officer in the household and court of King Hezekiah ([2 Kings 18:18, 26, 37](#)). His position had become more important since Solomon was king ([1 Kings 4:2-6](#)), so he was second only to the king. As such, Eliakim could do anything as the king's representative.
2. When Sennacherib of Assyria moved against Jerusalem in 701 BC, Eliakim was a messenger for the king who spoke with the Assyrian officers for King Hezekiah ([2 Kings 18:18, 26](#)). He was also sent by Hezekiah in sackcloth to Isaiah to ask for prayer on Jerusalem's behalf ([2 Kings 19:1-5](#)).
3. King Josiah's second son. When Eliakim was made king of Judah by Pharaoh Neco, his name was changed to Jehoiakim ([2 Kings 23:34](#); [2 Chronicles 36:4](#)).
See Jehoiakim.
4. One of the priests who helped dedicate the Jerusalem wall after it was rebuilt by Zerubbabel ([Nehemiah 12:41](#)).
5. Abiud's son in Matthew's family list of Jesus ([Matthew 1:13](#)).
See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.
6. Melea's son in Luke's family list of Jesus ([Luke 3:30](#)).
See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Eliam

1. Another name for Ammiel, the father of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite ([2 Samuel 11:3](#)).
See Ammiel #3.
2. Another name for Ahijah the Pelonite in [2 Samuel 23:34](#).
3. *See Ahijah #7.*

Elias

KJV rendering of the prophet Elijah's name in the NT. *See Elijah #1.*

Eliasaph

1. A leader of the tribe of Gad chosen by Moses. He was the son of Deuel (Reuel) ([Numbers 1:14](#); [2:14](#); [7:42, 47](#); [10:20](#)).
2. A Gershonite from the tribe of Levi and the son of Lael. He had three responsibilities in the tribe:
 3. to take care of the tabernacle coverings;
 4. to take care of the curtains of the court; and
 5. to take care of the main altar ([Numbers 3:24-25](#)).

Eliashib

1. Elioenai's son and a descendant of Zerubbabel in the royal lineage of David ([1 Chr 3:24](#)).
2. Aaron's descendant chosen by David to head the 11th of the 24 courses of priests taking turns in the sanctuary services ([1 Chr 24:12](#)).
3. High priest in the second succession from Jeshua ([Neh 12:10](#)). Eliashib assigned a chamber of the temple to Tobiah the Ammonite, a relative by marriage. When Nehemiah returned from exile, he had Tobiah removed from his temple lodging ([Ezr 10:6](#); [Neh 3:1, 20](#); [13:4, 7-8, 28](#)).
4. Levite and temple singer. He pledged to put away his foreign wife at Ezra's command ([Ezr 10:24](#)).
- 5, 6. Two men, a son of Zattu and a son of Bani, similarly persuaded by Ezra to put away their foreign wives ([Ezr 10:27, 36](#)).

Eliathah

Son of Heman appointed to assist in the temple service during David's reign ([1 Chr 25:4, 27](#)).

Elidad

A man from the tribe of Benjamin. He was the son of Kislon. Elidad was chosen to work under the leadership of Eleazar (the high priest) and Joshua. Their task was to divide the land of Canaan west of the Jordan River among the ten tribes of Israel ([Numbers 34:21](#)).

Eliehoenai

1. Korahite Levite who, with his six brothers and his father, Meshelemiah, served as a temple doorkeeper during David's reign ([1 Chr 26:3](#)).

2. Zerariah's son, who came to Jerusalem with Ezra, bringing his family and others from Babylon ([Ezr 8:4](#)).

Eliel

1. Warrior and head of a family of the half-tribe of Manasseh that lived east of the Jordan River ([1 Chr 5:24](#)).

2. Tola's son, a Kohathite who was one of the Levitical singers in the time of David ([1 Chr 6:34](#)); possibly the same as Eliab ([1 Chr 6:27](#)).

3. Shimei's son and a chief of Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chr 8:20](#)).

4. Shashak's son and a chief of Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chr 8:22](#)).

5. Warrior among David's mighty men ([1 Chr 11:46](#)), called a Mahavite.

6. Another warrior among David's mighty men ([1 Chr 11:47](#)).

7. Warrior from the Gadites who joined David at Ziklag in his struggle against King Saul. Eliel was one of those experts with a shield and spear. Whether the Eliel of [1 Chronicles 12:11](#) should be equated with either of the two Eliels of [1 Chronicles 11:46-47](#) is impossible to say.

8. Levite and chief of the family of Hebron, who was involved in bringing the ark to Jerusalem in David's time ([1 Chr 15:9](#)).

9. Priest who assisted in bringing the ark to Jerusalem ([1 Chr 15:11](#)); possibly the same as #8 above.

10. Levite who assisted Conaniah in the administration of the tithes, contributions, and dedicated things given to the temple during Hezekiah's reign ([2 Chr 31:13](#)).

Elienai

Benjamite and the son of Shimei ([1 Chr 8:20](#)). His name may be a contraction of Eliehoenai (see [1 Chr 26:3](#)).

Eliezer

1. A servant of Abraham who was from the city of Damascus. Before Abraham had his sons, Ishmael and Isaac, he followed the customs of his time by choosing Eliezer to inherit his property ([Genesis 15:2](#)).
2. Moses and Zipporah's second son ([Exodus 18:4](#); [1 Chronicles 23:15-17](#)).
3. Benjamite and Becher's son ([1 Chronicles 7:8](#)).
4. One of seven priests who played trumpets while walking in front of the ark of the covenant (the sacred chest containing God's law) when King David moved it to Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 15:24](#)).
5. Zichri's son and a chief officer in Reuben's tribe ([1 Chronicles 27:16](#)).
6. A prophet whose father was Dodavahu from the town of Mareshah. He warned King Jehoshaphat of Judah that God was not pleased with his alliance with King Ahaziah of Israel ([2 Chronicles 20:37](#)).
7. One of the leaders Ezra sent to meet with Iddo in a place called Casiphia. Ezra asked them to bring back Levites to work in God's temple in Jerusalem ([Ezra 8:16](#)).

8. Three men of Israel—a priest, a Levite, and an Israelite—who were encouraged by Ezra to divorce their foreign wives during the time after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 10:18, 23, 31](#)).
9. An ancestor of Christ ([Luke 3:29](#)). See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Elihoenai

KJV spelling of Eliehoenai, Zerariah's son, in [Ezra 8:4](#). See Eliehoenai #2.

Elihoreph

Prominent official in the time of Solomon ([1 Kgs 4:3](#)) who, with his brother Ahijah, was a royal secretary. Attempts to regard Elihoreph as the title of an official and not a personal name find no support in the Hebrew text.

Elihu

1. Ephraimite, Tohu's son and an ancestor of Samuel the prophet ([1 Sm 1:1](#)); perhaps also called Eliab and Eliel in [1 Chronicles 6:27, 34](#), respectively.
2. One of the soldiers of Manasseh's tribe who joined up with David's army at Ziklag ([1 Chr 12:20](#)).
3. Korahite Levite and a gatekeeper of the tabernacle during David's reign ([1 Chr 26:7](#)).
4. Alternate name for Eliab, David's eldest brother, in [1 Chronicles 27:18](#). See Eliab #3.
5. One of Job's friends, a Buzite, the son of Barachel ([Jb 32:2](#)). He spoke about suffering as a form of discipline after three of Job's friends failed to answer Job's arguments (chs [32-37](#)).

Elijah

1. Ninth-century BC prophet of Israel. Elijah's name means "my God is the Lord"—appropriate for a stalwart opponent of Baal worship. The Scriptures give no information regarding his family background except that he was a Tishbite who probably came from the land of Gilead on the east

bank of the Jordan River. He lived primarily during the reigns of kings Ahab (874–853 BC) and Ahaziah (853–852 BC) of Israel. The biblical account of Elijah runs from [1 Kings 17](#) to [2 Kings 2](#).

Elijah was called by God at a critical period in Israel's life. Economically and politically the northern kingdom was in its strongest position since its separation from the southern kingdom. Omri (885–874 BC) had initiated a policy of trade and friendly relations with the Phoenicians. To show his good faith, Omri gave his son Ahab in marriage to Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre. She brought Baal worship with her to Israel, a false religion whose rapid spread soon threatened the kingdom's very existence. Elijah was sent to turn the nation and its leaders back to the Lord through his prophetic message and miracles.

Warning of Drought

Elijah began his recorded ministry by telling Ahab that the nation would suffer a drought until the prophet himself announced its end ([1 Kgs 17:1](#)). He thus repeated Moses' warning ([Lv 26:14-39](#); [Dt 28:15-68](#)) of the consequences of turning away from God.

Elijah then hid himself in a ravine on the east bank of the Jordan River by the brook Cherith (possibly the valley of the Yarmuk River in north Gilead). There he had sufficient water for his needs, and ravens brought him food twice daily. When the brook dried up, Elijah was directed to move to the Phoenician village of Zarephath near Sidon. A widow took care of him from her scanty supplies, and her obedience to Elijah was rewarded by a miraculous supply of meal and oil that was not depleted until the drought ended.

While Elijah was staying with the widow, her son became ill and died. By the power of prayer, the child was restored to life and good health.

In the drought's third year the Lord told Elijah to inform Ahab that God would soon provide rain for Israel. On his return, Elijah first encountered Ahab's officer, Obadiah, who was searching for water for the king's livestock. Elijah sent Obadiah to arrange a meeting with Ahab. At first Obadiah refused. For three years Ahab had searched Israel and the neighboring kingdoms in vain for the prophet, no doubt in order to force him to end the drought. Obadiah was certain that while he went to bring Ahab, Israel's most wanted "outlaw" would elude them again, thus enraging the king. When

Elijah promised him that he would stay until he returned, the officer arranged for Ahab to meet the prophet.

In the subsequent meeting Elijah rejected the king's allegation that he was the "troubler of Israel" ([1 Kgs 18:17-18](#)). He was only obeying God, he insisted, in pointing out Ahab's idolatry. Ahab had even permitted Jezebel to subsidize a school of Baal and Asherah prophets. Elijah then requested a public gathering on Mt Carmel as a contest between the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the Lord to determine who was the true God.

Confrontation on Carmel

One of the highlights of Elijah's ministry was the contest on Mt Carmel. Ahab assembled all Israel along with 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah. The famous challenge was issued: "How long are you going to waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" ([1 Kgs 18:21](#), nlt). Sacrificial animals were to be placed on two altars, one for Baal and one for the Lord, and the prophets representing each were to ask for fire from their God.

All day long the pagan prophets called in vain on Baal. They danced a whirling, frenzied dance, cutting themselves with knives until their blood gushed. But there was no answer. Finally, Elijah's turn came. He repaired the demolished altar of the Lord and prepared the sacrifice. For dramatic effect, he built a trench around the altar and poured water over the sacrifice until the trench overflowed. Then he said a brief prayer, and immediately fire fell from heaven and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench ([1 Kgs 18:38](#)).

When the people saw it, they fell on their faces in repentance, chanting, "The Lord is God! The Lord is God!" ([1 Kgs 18:39](#)). At Elijah's command the people seized the prophets of Baal and killed them by the brook Kishon. Then Elijah, at the top of Carmel, began to pray fervently for rain. Dramatically, the sky became black with clouds and rain began to pour, ending the long drought. Ahab rode back in his chariot to Jezreel, 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) to the east. God's Spirit enabled Elijah to outrun Ahab, and he arrived in Jezreel first.

Jezebel, furious over the massacre of the Baal prophets, sent a message to Elijah: "May the gods also kill me if by this time tomorrow I have failed to take your life like those whom you killed" ([1 Kgs](#)

[19:2](#), nlt). When Elijah received her message, he panicked and fled to Beersheba.

Experience at Horeb

Elijah left his servant in Beersheba, going another day's journey into the desert alone. There he lay down under a broom tree and, in despair and exhaustion, asked God to take his life. Instead, an angel appeared, nourishing him twice with bread and water. After he had slept, Elijah continued on his way.

After 40 days, Elijah arrived at Mt Horeb, where he found shelter in a cave. There the Lord spoke to him, asking what he was doing there. The prophet explained that he was the only prophet of God left in Israel, and now even his life was threatened. In response, the mighty forces of nature—a great wind, an earthquake, and fire—were displayed before Elijah to show him that the omnipotent God could intercede on his behalf with a powerful hand. Finally God encouraged Elijah in a "still, small voice." The Lord had further tasks for him to accomplish. God also told Elijah that he was not the only faithful person in Israel; 7,000 others remained true to the Lord.

Since Elijah had faithfully delivered God's message to Ahab, the Lord commissioned him to deliver another message, one of judgment on Israel's continuing failure to listen to God. The instruments of retribution were to be Hazael, who would become king in Syria (c. 893–796 BC), and Jehu, who would become king of Israel (841–814 BC). Elijah was instructed to anoint both of them. He was also told to anoint his successor, Elisha, to be his understudy until it was time for Elisha's full ministry to begin.

Confrontation concerning Naboth

After his return to Israel, one of Elijah's boldest confrontations with King Ahab was over Naboth's vineyard. Although Ahab wanted Naboth's property, he was sensitive to the law regarding ownership of land. Further, Ahab never completely abandoned the faith of his fathers ([1 Kgs 21:27-29](#)). Jezebel, however, had no regard for the Mosaic law and conspired to have Naboth put to death on a false charge.

When Ahab then took possession of the vineyard, Elijah branded him as a murderer and a robber. He predicted divine judgment—the fall of Ahab's dynasty and Jezebel's horrible death ([1 Kgs 21:17-](#)

[24](#)). Ahab repented, however, and the judgment was postponed.

Ahaziah's Folly

The Lord's judgment on Ahab was finally executed when the king was killed in a battle with Syria in 853 BC. The dogs licked up Ahab's blood, as the prophet had predicted ([1 Kgs 21:19](#)). Shortly after Ahaziah had succeeded his father as king, he suffered a crippling fall. While lying ill, he sent messengers to ask Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether he would recover. The Lord sent Elijah to intercept them and give them a message for the king: a rebuke for ignoring the God of Israel and a warning of the king's impending death.

Ahaziah angrily sent a captain with 50 soldiers to arrest Elijah. They were consumed by fire from heaven at Elijah's words. A second captain and another 50 soldiers were sent but met the same fate. The third captain who came begged the prophet to spare his and his soldiers' lives. Elijah went with this captain and delivered God's message to the king personally. The king would not recover but would die because he had inquired from pagan gods rather than from the true God.

Warning to Jehoram

Elijah had been called primarily to minister to Israel, but he also delivered God's word of warning to Jehoram, king of Judah, rebuking him for following Israel in its idolatry and for not walking in the godly ways of his father and grandfather ([2 Chr 21:12-15](#)).

Elijah's Ascent into Heaven

When the end of Elijah's ministry drew near, Elisha refused to leave him. After a journey that took them to schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho, the two crossed the Jordan River miraculously; Elijah struck the waters with his mantle and they parted. Elisha requested a double portion (the firstborn's share, cf. [Dt 21:17](#)) of his master's spirit, for he desired to be Elijah's full successor. Elisha knew his request was granted because he saw Elijah pass into the heavens in a whirlwind bearing a chariot and horses of fire. The young prophets who had accompanied Elisha searched in vain for Elijah in the mountains and valleys around the Jordan; God had taken his faithful prophet home. Elijah thus joined Enoch as the only other man in the Bible who did not experience death.

Elijah's Message and Miracles

As the Baal worship of Tyre made inroads into Israel through Jezebel, Elijah was sent to check its spread by emphasizing again that Israel's God was the only God of the whole earth. He began a vital work that was continued by Jehu, who slaughtered many of the Baal worshipers among Israel's leaders ([2 Kgs 10:18-28](#)). Elijah's specific mission was to destroy heathen worship in order to spare Israel, thus preparing the way for the prophets who were to follow in his spirit.

Miracles were prominent in Elijah's ministry, given as a sign to confirm him as God's spokesman and to turn Israel's kings back to God. Some scholars have rejected these miracles or tried to explain them away. The OT, however, clearly testifies to their validity, and the NT affirms them.

Elijah and the New Testament

Malachi named Elijah as the forerunner of the "great and terrible day of the Lord" who will "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" ([Mal 4:5-6](#)). Jewish writers have often taken up the same theme in their literature: Elijah will "restore the tribes of Jacob" ([Ecclus 48:10](#)); he is mentioned in the *Qumran Manual of Discipline* of the Dead Sea Scrolls; he is the central sign of the resurrection of the dead according to the Mishnah, the collection of Jewish oral law; and he is the subject of songs sung at the close of the Sabbath.

In the NT, Malachi's prophecy was interpreted in the angelic annunciation to Zechariah as pointing to John the Baptist, who was to do the work of another Elijah ([Lk 1:17](#), kjv "Elias") and was confirmed by Jesus himself ([Mt 11:14](#); [17:10-13](#)).

Jesus also alluded to Elijah's sojourn in the land of Sidon ([Lk 4:25-26](#)), and the apostle Paul referred to the prophet's experience at Mt Horeb ([Rom 11:2](#)). The apostle James used Elijah to illustrate what it means to be a righteous man and a man of prayer ([Jas 5:17](#)).

Elijah appeared again on the Mt of Transfiguration with Moses as they discussed Jesus' approaching death ([Mt 17:1-13](#); [Lk 9:28-36](#)). Some Bible scholars believe that Elijah will return as one of the two witnesses of the end times ([Rv 11:3-12](#)), in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy that he is to come before the dreadful judgment day of God.

2. Chief of Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chr 8:27](#), kjv "Elijah").
3. Priest who married a gentile wife ([Ezr 10:21](#)).

4. Layman who also married a foreign wife ([Ezr 10:26](#)).

Elika

A Harodite, who was one of the mighty men of King David ([2 Samuel 23:25](#)). Elika's name does not appear in a similar list found in [1 Chronicles 11:27](#).

Elim

A place where the Israelites camped after they passed through the Red Sea ([Exodus 15:27](#); [16:1](#)). Elim was between Marah and the desert of Sin. It had 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees ([Numbers 33:9-10](#)).

Most scholars identify Elim with Wadi Gharandel, which is 101.4 kilometers (63 miles) from Suez. At this wadi, the vegetation consists of palm trees, tamarisks, and acacias. But if Mount Sinai is located in Arabia, Elim would be much closer to the Gulf of Aqaba.

Elimelech

Man from Bethlehem who took his wife, Naomi, and his sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to sojourn in Moab because of famine in Judah ([Ru 1:2-3](#)). While in Moab, he died; then his sons also died; and Naomi decided to return to Judah. One daughter-in-law, Orpah, preferred to remain in Moab; the other, Ruth, chose to accompany Naomi. Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech, bought Elimelech's land and married Ruth ([4:9-10](#)). From this union came a great-grandson, David, and the royal line in which the Messiah would eventually be born. *See* Ruth, Book of.

Elioenai

1. Postexilic descendant of Solomon and the father of Hodaviah and Eliashib ([1 Chr 3:23-24](#)).
2. Simeonite chieftain ([1 Chr 4:36](#)).
3. Head of a Benjamite family ([1 Chr 7:8](#)).
4. KJV spelling of the Levite Eliehoenai in [1 Chronicles 26:3](#). *See* Eliehoenai #1.

5. Man of the priestly family of Pashhur who divorced his foreign wife in Ezra's day ([Ezr 10:22](#)).

6. Zattu's son, who was encouraged by Ezra to divorce his foreign wife during the postexilic era ([Ezr 10:27](#)).

7. Postexilic priest who assisted in the dedication of the rebuilt Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:41](#)).

Eliphal

The son of Ur and one of the mighty men of King David ([1 Chronicles 11:35](#)). He is also called Eliphelet, son of Ahasbai, in [2 Samuel 23:34](#).

See Eliphelet #2.

Eliphalet

The King James Version spelling of Eliphelet, son of King David ([2 Samuel 5:16](#); [1 Chronicles 14:7](#)).

See Eliphelet #1.

Eliphaz

1. Oldest son of Esau and his wife Adah ([Gn 36:4-16](#); [1 Chr 1:35-36](#)). He was the ancestor of a number of Edomite clans.

2. One of Job's friends, called the Temanite (see [Jer 49:7](#)). Teman was traditionally associated with wisdom; hence Eliphaz's speech depicts the orthodox view of sin and punishment. His three addresses ([Jb 4](#), [15](#), [22](#)) failed to grapple with the essence of Job's problem because he assumed previous major sin in Job's life.

See also Job, Book of.

Eliphelehu

Levitical musician who played the lyre (harp) when the ark was brought to Jerusalem in David's time ([1 Chr 15:18, 21](#)).

Eliphelet

1. One of the 13 sons of King David born in Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 5:16](#); [1 Chronicles 3:8](#); [14:7](#)).
2. A son Ahasbai. He was one of the mighty men of David ([2 Samuel 23:34](#)). It is possible this Eliphelet was the same person as Eliphaz, son of Uri ([1 Chronicles 11:35](#)).
See Eliphaz.
3. Another of the sons of David born at Jerusalem. It is possible he was born earlier than #1 above ([1 Chronicles 3:6](#); [14:5](#)).
4. A son of Eshek and a descendant of King Saul and Jonathan ([1 Chronicles 8:39](#)).
5. One of the three sons of Adonikam who returned with Ezra from Babylon ([Ezra 8:13](#)).
6. A son of Hashum whom the scribe Ezra persuaded to divorce his foreign wife during the time after the Jews returned from exile ([Ezra 10:33](#)).

Elisabeth

KJV spelling of Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother.
See Elizabeth.

Elisha

Prophet in Israel during the ninth century BC.

Background and Call

Elisha is first mentioned in [1 Kings 19:16](#), where he is described as the son of Shaphat, who lived at Abel-meholah. That place has been tentatively identified with the modern Tel Abu Sifri, west of the river Jordan, though many scholars place it to the river's east. The prophet Elijah had been ordered by God to anoint Elisha as his successor, but the narrative does not make it clear whether Elisha was already one of Elijah's disciples. When the two met, Elisha was busy plowing a field, and he does not seem to have greeted Elijah with the respect that a disciple would normally show to his teacher.

Elisha's use of 12 yokes of oxen in his agricultural work has been taken as a sign that he was wealthy, for normally two yoked oxen would be handled by one person. When Elijah passed by and placed his cloak on Elisha's shoulder, the latter man knew it was a sign that he should inherit the great prophet's mission. The nation needed a prophet, for it was increasingly indulging in Canaanite idolatry with the encouragement of King Ahab and his Phoenician wife, Jezebel.

After Elijah commissioned him symbolically and strode away, Elisha hurried after the prophet to request a brief interval of time to announce his new vocation to his parents before leaving home. The prophet's reply, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" ([1 Kgs 19:20](#), rsv), helped Elisha to make up his mind immediately. Delay in implementing his vocation would almost certainly have been fatal for Elisha (cf. [Mt 8:21-22](#); [Lk 9:61-62](#)).

To mark the change in his way of life, Elisha made a great feast for his neighbors, roasting two oxen. This is another hint that he came from a wealthy family. From that time, he was no longer a farmer; by associating with Elijah, he began to prepare for his own ministry. There is no record of Elisha being anointed to the prophetic office, but the transfer of prophetic authority by means of the cloak would leave no doubt in anyone's mind that Elisha was the next official prophet in Israel.

"Sons of the Prophets"

That there could have been some question of Elisha's authority is implied by the existence of groups of people known as "sons of the prophets." The phrase meant that those persons were heirs of the prophetic teachings and traditions, though apparently none of them was a major prophet. The prophet Amos even denied any connection with such groups, which seem to have died out in the eighth century BC ([Am 7:14](#)). In the time of Elisha, the "sons of the prophets" were located in Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho, and seem to have exercised a primarily local ministry. They may have gone out under the instructions of Elijah and Elisha to teach people God's law and to pronounce divine revelations, as in the days of Saul (cf. [1 Sm 10:5, 10](#)).

Just before Elijah was taken to heaven, he and Elisha visited such prophetic groups, and Elijah tried in vain to persuade Elisha to stay behind at Gilgal and at Bethel ([2 Kgs 2:1-4](#)). The prophetic group at Bethel may have been warned by God that Elijah would be taken from them, for they

questioned Elisha about the matter and ascertained that he also was aware of the situation.

Successor to Elijah

After miraculously parting the waters of Jordan, Elijah asked his successor what he might do for him ([2 Kgs 2:9](#)). Elisha requested a “double share” of his spirit as they parted, the share of an inheritance normally given to a firstborn son ([Dt 21:17](#)). His request was granted when Elisha saw his master taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, and it took immediate effect when Elisha parted the Jordan’s waters and crossed over ([2 Kgs 2:14](#)).

His prophetic authority now recognized, Elisha began his ministry to Israel at approximately the end of King Ahab’s reign (c. 853 BC). His work lasted for half a century, and in contrast with the harried, austere, and sometimes dramatic ministry of Elijah, the activities of Elisha were mostly quieter and took place among the ordinary people of Israel. But he also addressed the royal court, though not in conflicts with Canaanite priests, such as Elijah had experienced.

Miracles

The miraculous element was prominent in Elisha’s ministry. When the people of Jericho reported that the local springwater was brackish, Elisha purified it ([2 Kgs 2:19-22](#)). To this day, it is the only significant freshwater spring in the area (Tell es-Sultan).

As the prophet left for Bethel, he encountered a group of youths who mocked his baldness ([2 Kgs 2:23-24](#)). He cursed them in the name of the Lord, and two bears came from the woods and mauled the offenders. What at first sight seems to be an immoral act on God’s part was actually full of foreboding for the nation. The youths at Bethel were a generation of Israelites who had so absorbed the immoral, pagan culture of their city that they rejected both the person and the message of God’s prophets. They were not merely irreligious but also unbelievably discourteous, according to ancient Near Eastern standards, in ridiculing a bald man instead of respecting his seniority.

The curses Elisha pronounced “in the name of the Lord” were not his own reactions to the treatment he had received, but instead were covenant curses ([Dt 28:15-68](#)) that would come upon all who rejected the Sinaitic laws and went back on their promises to God (see [Ex 24:3-8](#)). The two bears were also symbolic of Assyria and Babylonia, which

would tear apart the nation at different times. One small incident was thus a somber forecast of what the future held for a wicked and disobedient people.

In one of his contacts with royalty Elisha gave a message (although unwillingly) from God to King Jehoram of Israel (853–841 BC). The king had allied with King Jehoshaphat of Judah (872–848 BC) and the Edomite ruler against Mesha, king of Moab. The allied forces were deep in Edomite territory when they ran out of water, and in despair they turned to Elisha, the local prophet. He refused to say anything at first, but finally predicted ample supplies of water and victory for the coalition. Both occurred on the following day ([2 Kgs 3:1-27](#)).

Miracles of Charity

The kind of work for which Elisha was justly renowned was usually performed for people who could not help themselves. Such a person was a poor widow who had almost pledged her two children to a creditor. Her only asset was a jar of oil. Elisha instructed her to borrow empty jars from her neighbors and fill them with the oil from her own jar. In a miraculous manner every jar was filled. Elisha then told her to sell the oil, pay her debts, and use the balance of the money for living expenses ([2 Kgs 4:1-7](#)).

A similar act of charity was performed for a Shunammite woman, who had persuaded her husband to provide a room where the prophet could stay when in the area. In return for her kindness Elisha predicted that the woman, previously childless, would have her own son. About a year later it happened ([2 Kgs 4:8-17](#)). The boy later contracted a severe ailment, perhaps meningitis, and died suddenly. His mother laid the body on Elisha’s bed while she hurried to Mt Carmel to seek the prophet. Elisha was apparently unaware of the situation until the distraught mother informed him of the boy’s death. As an emergency measure Elisha dispatched his servant Gehazi to put the prophet’s staff on the child’s face. That did not revive the child, but when Elisha arrived and lay down on the body, the boy was healed and returned to his parents (vv [18-37](#)).

Another beneficial incident was the correction of a potentially disastrous situation. When some poisonous gourds were accidentally cooked and served, Elisha rendered the mixture harmless by adding meal to the contents of the cooking pot ([2 Kgs 4:38-41](#)). A miracle similar to Christ’s multiplying of the bread loaves (see [Mt 14:16-21](#);

[15:32-38](#)) occurred when someone brought the prophet several loaves of bread and fresh ears of corn. Elisha instructed his servant to set the food out for 100 people, and when that was done, the people ate and had food left ([2 Kgs 4:42-44](#)).

The healing of Naaman, a Syrian commander, came through the influence of a Hebrew maid in the man's household, who persuaded Naaman's wife that Elisha could heal her husband. The Assyrian king sent his general to the Israelite ruler with instructions for Naaman to be healed. The afflicted man was sent to Elisha, who ordered him to wash in the Jordan River. Reluctant at first, Naaman finally obeyed and was cured of his affliction. In gratitude the Syrian leader acknowledged the power of Israel's God ([2 Kgs 5:1-19](#)).

Encounters with Royalty

When Syria attacked Israel, Elisha revealed the movements of the Syrians to the Israelite king. Syrians tried to capture the prophet at Dothan, but God blinded them and Elisha led them to the Israelite capital of Samaria. Their sight returned, and Elisha advised the Israelite king to spare the captives, feed them well, and send them home. Because their evil was rewarded with good, the Syrians did not attack Israel for a while ([2 Kgs 6:8-23](#)).

When the Syrian king Ben-hadad besieged Samaria years later, famine conditions there became so severe that the king threatened to execute Elisha. In response, the prophet promised an abundance of food the following day. The Syrians fled from their camp for some unspecified reason, and the prophecy was fulfilled ([2 Kgs 6:24-7:20](#)). In an unusual encounter with the ailing king of Syria, Elisha was visited by Hazael, servant of Ben-hadad, who had been sent to ask about the prospects for his master's improvement. Elisha sent back a reassuring reply, but at the same time said that Hazael would shortly succeed Ben-hadad ([8:7-13](#)). On another occasion Elisha sent a prophet to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, as king of Israel to replace Joram, whom Jehu proceeded to kill in battle ([9:1-28](#)).

Elisha's final contact with Israelite rulers came at the time of his own death, when Joash the king visited him to lament the prophet's illness. On that occasion, by the symbolic handling of arrows, the dying prophet promised Joash that he would defeat the Syrians in battle but would not exterminate them ([2 Kgs 13:14-19](#)).

The prophet also intervened a second time on behalf of the Shunammite woman whose son he had healed, instructing her to move her household into Philistine territory during a seven-year famine in Israel. When she came back, her house and property had apparently been occupied by others, so she appealed to the king for help in recovering it. Elisha's servant Gehazi told the ruler about her, and on interviewing her himself, the king ordered all her property to be returned ([2 Kgs 8:1-6](#)).

Continuing Influence

Elisha's final miracle occurred after his death, when a corpse that was tossed hurriedly into the prophet's tomb came abruptly to life ([2 Kgs 13:21](#)). Jesus mentioned Elisha once in connection with the healing of Naaman; Jesus declared that God's mercy was not restricted to the Israelites ([Lk 4:27](#)).

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

Elishah

Javan's son ([Gn 10:4](#); [1 Chr 1:7](#)). The Hebrew term for Greece is Javan; hence, Elishah could be the term for the western Aegean islands or coastlands (cf. [Gn 10:5](#)) that supplied dye stuffs to the inhabitants of Tyre ([Ez 27:7](#)). The Jewish historian Josephus identified Elishah with the Aeolians; other suggestions are Carthage in North Africa, Hellas, Italy, and Elis. A Mediterranean site seems probable from the context of [Ezekiel 27:6-7](#), perhaps an area of Cyprus that exported copper.

Elishama

1. The son of Ammihud. He was the leader of the tribe of Ephraim when the Israelites began their journey through the wilderness ([Numbers 1:10](#); [2:18](#); [7:48, 53](#)). His tribe was ninth in line during the march ([10:22](#)). Elishama was the father of Nun and grandfather of Joshua ([1 Chronicles 7:26](#)).
2. One of the 13 sons of Davidborn to King David in Jerusalem. His mother was one of David's wives ([2 Samuel 5:16](#); [1 Chronicles 3:8](#); [14:7](#)).

3. An ancestor of Ishmael. Ishmael killed Gedaliah. Gedaliah was the governor of Israel appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar ([2 Kings 25:25](#); [Jeremiah 41:1](#)).
4. A man from the tribe of Judah. He was a descendent of Jerahmeel and Sheshan ([1 Chronicles 2:41](#)).
5. Another son of David ([1 Chronicles 3:6](#)). In other passages, he is called Elishua ([2 Samuel 5:15](#) and [1 Chronicles 14:5](#)).
See Elishua.
6. A priest sent by King Jehoshaphat to teach the Judeans about the law of God ([2 Chronicles 17:8](#)).
7. A royal official and scribe (a person who writes official documents). During the time of the prophet Jeremiah, Elishama listened to God's message read by Baruch. Later, the scroll that contained God's words was kept in Elishama's room until the king asked to hear it ([Jeremiah 36:12](#); [20-21](#)).

Elishaphat

Military commander in Judah who supported Jehoiada the priest in overthrowing Queen Athaliah and making the young Joash king ([2 Chr 23:1](#)).

Elisheba

The wife of Aaron ([Exodus 6:23](#)), who gave birth to Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Her father was Amminadab and her brother was Nahshon, the leader of Judah ([Numbers 1:7](#); [2:3](#)). Elisheba was also from Judah. After Aaron died ([Numbers 20:28](#)), Moses made Eleazar, Elisheba's third son, with the office of chief priest.

Elishua

A son of King David. He was one of the 13 children David fathered during the time he ruled as king in Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 5:15](#); [1 Chronicles 14:5](#)). In a

similar list found in [1 Chronicles 3:6](#), most Hebrew manuscripts show the name "Elishama" in the place where Elishua's name should be.

Eliud

Achim's son, Eleazar's father, and an ancestor of Jesus Christ, according to the family list in Matthew ([Matthew 1:14-15](#)).

See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Elizabeth

The mother of John the Baptist and a relative of Mary, the mother of Jesus ([Luke 1:36](#)). She came from a family of priests ([Luke 1:5](#)). The name Elizabeth comes from the same Hebrew word as Elisheba, the wife of Aaron ([Exodus 6:23](#)). It means "my God is an oath." Only the Gospel of Luke, which often emphasizes the role of women, tells us about Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah.

Luke emphasizes that Elizabeth and Zechariah were righteous and lived in a way that pleased God ([Luke 1:6](#)). However, the couple was elderly and had no children, which was often seen as a disgrace in Jewish culture ([Genesis 30:22-23](#); [Luke 1:25](#)). Despite this, they remained faithful in their worship and service to God. One day, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, announcing that Elizabeth would have a son. This son would be the one to prepare the way for the promised Messiah ([Luke 1:13-17](#)). When Elizabeth became pregnant, she stayed in seclusion for five months. During this time, her relative Mary came to visit her.

See also John the Baptist.

Elizaphan

1. A Levite man from the Kohath family and the son of Uzziel ([Numbers 3:29-30](#)). Elizaphan helped remove the bodies of Nadab and Abihu from the camp ([Leviticus 10:4](#)). Elizaphan's descendants were responsible for caring for the ark, the table, the lampstand, and vessels of the sanctuary (compare [1 Chronicles 15:8](#); [2 Chronicles 29:13](#)). His name is also spelled Elzaphan ([Exodus 6:22](#); [Leviticus 10:4](#)).
2. Parnach's son and a leader from Zebulun's tribe. He helped Eleazar and Joshua divide the Canaanite territory west of the Jordan among the nine-and-a-half tribes ([Numbers 34:25](#)).

Elizur

The son of Shedeur and leader of the tribe of Reuben when the Israelites began their journey through the wilderness after leaving Egypt ([Numbers 1:5](#); [2:10](#); [7:30-35](#); [10:18](#)).

Elkanah

1. A Levite who belonged to the family of Korah ([Exodus 6:24](#)). He was a descendant of Izhar ([Exodus 6:21](#)). Elkanah was the son of Assir, and he became the father of Ebiasaph ([1 Chronicles 6:23](#)).

2. The father of the prophet Samuel ([1 Samuel 1:19](#)). He was the son of Jeroham of Ephraim, from Ramathaim-zophim ([1 Samuel 1:1](#)). Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah could not have children at first ([1 Samuel 1:2](#)). Hannah prayed to God many times, asking for a son whom she promised to give to serve God. After this, Samuel was born. After he was weaned, Hannah brought him to the elderly priest Eli for training. Elkanah had other sons and daughters by Hannah ([1 Samuel 2:21](#)). Elkanah became the ancestor of Heman, who was a singer in David's time.
3. A Kohathite Levite who descended from Korah's family line. He was one of the ancestors of Heman the singer ([1 Chronicles 6:26, 35](#)).
4. Another Kohathite Levite who also descended from Korah's line and was among the ancestors of Heman the singer ([1 Chronicles 6:26, 35](#)).
5. A Levite who lived in the village of the Netophathites and later lived in Jerusalem in the time after the exile in Babylon ([1 Chronicles 9:16](#)).
6. A Benjamite warrior who joined David's mighty men at Ziklag ([1 Chronicles 12:6](#)).
7. A gatekeeper (guard) for the ark of the covenant during David's reign ([1 Chronicles 15:23](#)). He is perhaps the same as #6 above.
8. One who was important in King Ahaz's court. Elkanah was killed by Zichri, an Ephraimite, because Elkanah had turned away from the Lord ([2 Chronicles 28:7](#)).

Elkiah

Ananias's son and father of Oziel, an ancestor of Judith ([Idt 8:1](#)).

Elkosh

Home or birthplace of the prophet Nahum ([Na 1:1](#)). Three sites have been suggested: (1) Hilkeesei, a village in Galilee, perhaps corresponding to modern el-Kauzeh; (2) Capernaum near the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus frequently taught; and (3) Bein Jebrin in southern Judea.

Ellasar

Place in Babylonia; a few scholars have suggested that Arioch was its king. He joined a coalition that included Kedorlaomer, king of Elam, and together they raided the Jordan Valley during the time of Abraham ([Gn 14:1, 9](#)).

Elm

KJV mistranslation for terebinth, a large Palestinian tree, in [Hosea 4:13](#). See Plants (Terebinth).

Elmadam, Elmodam

An ancestor of Jesus Christ, according to [Luke 3:28](#). It is spelled "Elmodam" in the King James Version.

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Elnaam

Father of two mighty warriors in David's army, Jeribai and Joshaviah ([1 Chr 11:46](#)).

Elnathan

1. Grandfather of King Jehoiachin. His daughter, Jehoiachin's mother, was Nehushta ([2 Kgs 24:8](#)).

2, 3, 4. Three Jewish leaders whom Ezra sent to Iddo at Casiphia to obtain Levites and temple servants for the caravan of Jews returning to Palestine from Babylonia ([Ezr 8:16](#)).

5. Acbor's son, who was ordered by King Jehoiakim to bring back Uriah from Egypt to be executed for prophesying against the king ([Jer 26:22-23](#)).

Elnathan was present with other princes when Baruch read the Lord's words of warning written at Jeremiah's dictation on a scroll ([36:12](#)); he tried unsuccessfully to prevent Jehoiakim from burning the scroll (v [25](#)).

Eloah

Hebrew name for God stressing that he alone is deserving of worship. See God, Names of.

Elohim

A general name for God in the Old Testament. The origin of the word Elohim is not certain, but most scholars agree that it comes from a root word meaning "might" or "power." The word is plural in form, but when it refers to the true God, it is used as singular and most often with singular verbs. The most common explanation for why Elohim is plural when applied to God is that it is a "plural of majesty," which means all of God's greatness and power are included in this name.

Elohim is a word related to names for deities in other ancient languages, such as Assyrian and Ugaritic. In the Old Testament, it can sometimes refer to the gods of other nations, showing its broader meaning as a term for divine beings. In the Old Testament, especially in the first five books (Genesis through Deuteronomy), Elohim seems to be used in a general way to show God's greatness and his role as creator of the universe. This is somewhat different from the name Yahweh, which usually refers to God in his personal relationships with people.

Elohim is also used as a title for Israel's rulers and judges ([Psalm 82:1, 6](#)). It may refer to their role as God's representatives on earth ([Exodus 21:6](#)). Jesus used this meaning of the word in [John 10:34-36](#) when defending himself against his critics.

The word is also used to describe angels ([Psalm 8:5](#), in the King James Version; compare [Hebrews 2:7](#)) and in the phrase "sons of God" ([Job 1:6](#)).

See also God, Names of.

Eloi, Eloi, Lema Sabachthani?

One of the phrases Jesus's cries from the cross ([Mark 15:34](#)). See Eli, Eli, Lema Sabachthani.

Elon (Person)

1. Hittite who was the father of Basemath (perhaps also called Adah, [Gn 36:2](#)), one of Esau's wives ([26:34](#)).
2. Second of Zebulun's three sons ([Gn 46:14](#)) and the founder of the Elonite family ([Nm 26:26](#)).
3. Judge from Zebulun who judged Israel for 10 years. He was buried in Aijalon ([Jgs 12:11–12](#)).

Elon (Place)

Village near Timnah, the home of Samson's first wife. Elon was included in the inheritance allotted to Dan's tribe in Joshua's distribution of the Promised Land ([Jos 19:43](#); cf. [14:1–2](#)). It is generally identified with Khirbet Wadi 'Alinm near 'Ain Shems.

Elon-Bethhanan

Administrative district in Dan during the reign of Solomon ([1 Kgs 4:9](#)). It is perhaps identifiable with the Danite town of Elon.

Elonite

A descendant of Elon, son of Zebulun ([Number 26:26](#)).

See Elon (Person) #2.

Eloth

Another spelling of the Edomite town Elath, in [1 Kings 9:26](#); [2 Chronicles 8:17](#); and [26:2](#).

See Elath.

Elpaal

Benjamite and one of Shaharaim's sons ([1 Chr 8:11–12, 18](#)).

Elpalet

KJV spelling of Elpelet, an alternate name for David's son Eliphelet in [1 Chronicles 14:5](#). See Eliphelet #3.

Elpelet

Alternative name of David's son Eliphelet in [1 Chronicles 14:5](#). See Eliphelet #3.

Eltekeh

City allotted to Dan's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 19:44](#)); it was later assigned to the Kohathite Levites ([21:23](#)). An important battle was fought near Eltekeh between King Sennacherib of Assyria and the Egyptians. The Egyptians were subsequently routed, and the city was captured by the Assyrians. From here Sennacherib went on to invade Judah ([2 Kgs 18:13](#)). Eltekeh was located north of Ekron and west of Timnah, but its exact site is uncertain.

Eltekon

Town located in the hill country of Judah. It was assigned by Joshua to Judah's tribe ([Jos 15:59](#)), and may be the modern Khirbet ed-Deir, west of Bethlehem.

Eltolad

Town assigned to Simeon's tribe in the southern portion of Judah's inheritance ([Jos 15:30](#); [19:4](#)). It is alternately called Tolad in [1 Chronicles 4:29](#).

Elul

Elul is one of the months in the Jewish calendar. On our modern calendar, it usually occurs during parts of August and September ([Nehemiah 6:15](#)).

See Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

Eluzai

One of the men of Benjamin who came to join David in Ziklag ([1 Chr 12:5](#)). Eluzai was an ambidextrous slinger and bowman.

Elymais

Formerly thought to be a city in Persia, greatly renowned for riches, silver, and gold ([1 Macc 6:1](#)), but now generally regarded as a district of Persia. Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.9.1), following 1 Maccabees, alludes to it as a city, but it is otherwise unknown.

Elymas

Another name for Bar-Jesus. He was a Jewish magician and false prophet mentioned in [Acts 13:8](#).

See Bar-Jesus.

Elyon

Hebrew name for God meaning "Most High." *See* God, Names of.

Elzabad

1. Military leader from Gad's tribe who joined David at Ziklag ([1 Chr 12:12](#)).
2. Korahite Levite from Obed-edom's family, and a gatekeeper of the sanctuary ([1 Chr 26:7](#)).

Elzaphan

An alternate spelling of Elizaphan, a Levite chief, in [Exodus 6:22](#) and [Leviticus 10:4](#).

See Elizaphan #1.

Embalm

See Burial, Burial Customs.

Embroiderer, Embroidery

The art of making decorative designs on clothing. This was an art practiced both in the home and as a profession. Embroidery was done on a loom or with a needle. The tabernacle and temple had delicate, embroidered fabrics ([Exodus 26:1, 31](#)). The clothing of priests were beautifully embroidered ([Exodus 28:6, 8](#); [39:2](#)). Embroidery was practiced in:

- Canaan ([Judges 5:30](#))
- Egypt ([Ezekiel 27:7](#))
- Syria ([Ezekiel 27:16](#))
- Babylonia ([Joshua 7:21](#))
- Assyria
- Persia ([Esther 1:6](#))

See also Cloth and Cloth Manufacturing.

Emek-Keziz

City allotted to Benjamin's tribe for an inheritance; it was mentioned between Beth-hoglah and Beth-arabah ([Jos 18:21](#)).

Emerald

Rich green variety of beryl, regarded as a precious stone. *See* Stones, Precious.

Emerod

1. KJV rendering of ulcer in [Deuteronomy 28:27](#). *See* Sore.
2. KJV rendering of tumor in [1 Samuel 5:6-12](#) and [6:4-17](#). *See* Tumor.

Emim, Emites

Name given to the original inhabitants of Moab ([Gn 14:5](#)) by the Moabites who ousted them from their land. They were a tall people, known also as Rephaim ([Dt 2:10-11](#)), and were compared with the Zuzites, Anakim, and Horites for their size. This phenomenon is evidently an indication of genetic isolation. *See* Giants.

Emmanuel

A different spelling of Immanuel in [Matthew 1:23](#).

See Immanuel.

Emmaus

Town in Judea that appears in Luke (see [24:13](#)). It is also mentioned in 1 Maccabees ([3:40, 57](#)). This town is important in the story of Jesus appearing to two of his followers after his resurrection.

After Jesus's death and resurrection, two of his followers were walking to Emmaus. One was named Cleopas, and he was traveling with a friend. On their way, they met another traveler, but they did not recognize that it was Jesus.

Jesus asked them what they were talking about. They told him about Jesus's death, the empty tomb they had found, and how disappointed they were that things had not happened as they had hoped.

Jesus corrected them for their lack of understanding. Then he explained what the Scriptures said about himself, starting with the writings of Moses and all the prophets ([Luke 24:27](#)). When they reached Emmaus, they invited Jesus to stay the night with them. During the evening meal, Jesus blessed some bread, broke it, and gave it to them. At that moment, they recognized that the stranger was Jesus. Then Jesus disappeared.

The two followers immediately went back to Jerusalem to tell the other followers of Jesus what had happened.

Where Was Emmaus?

Emmaus means "warm wells." It was near Jerusalem, but its location is unknown. Several locations have been suggested:

1. **Colonia (Qaloniyyeh):** about 6.5 kilometers (4 miles) west of Jerusalem on the main road to Joppa.

2. **El-Qubeibeh:** about 11.3 kilometers (seven miles) northwest of Jerusalem on a Roman road by Nebi Samwil. Its identification with Emmaus dates back to AD 1099 when the Crusaders found a Roman fort there named Castellum Emmaus.
3. **Abu Ghosh:** about 14.5 kilometers (nine miles) west of Jerusalem. Identified with the Old Testament Kiriath-jearim, it is also known as Kiryat el-Enab. A Crusader church was built over a Roman fort there. This site appears to be too far from Jerusalem to be the biblical Emmaus.
4. **Amwas,** also known as Nicapolis, is about 32.2 kilometers (20 miles) west of Jerusalem on the Jaffa road. This is the Emmaus of [1 Maccabees 3:40, 57](#). This site has the earliest claim to being Emmaus and also has two "warm wells." Eusebius and Jerome accepted it as the site. The main objection to its being the New Testament Emmaus is its distance from Jerusalem. It exceeds the distance stated by Luke in several manuscripts.

No proof has been offered to support the claim that any of these sites is Emmaus. So, its location is unknown.

Emmor

The King James Version rendering of Hamor. He was the father of Shechem ([Acts 7:16](#)).

See Hamor.

Emperor

Official designation of the Roman sovereign beginning in 27 BC with the reign of Caesar Augustus; a derivation of imperator, an honorary title of supreme command conferred by the Roman Senate upon one of its victorious generals. See Caesars, The.

En-Eglaim

Place mentioned in [Ezekiel 47:10](#) where, in a description of the millennial age, it is said that “fishermen will stand beside the sea; from En-ge-di to En-eglaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea” (rsv). This condition will be in sharp contrast to the present lack of marine life in the Dead Sea. The location is on the shore of the Dead Sea, probably south of Khirbet Qumran, perhaps 'Ain Feshkha.

En-Gannim

1. Village in the lowland of Judah near Beth-shemesh ([Jos 15:34](#)). Some identify it with the modern Beit Jemal, but this is doubtful.

2. Town on the boundary of Issachar ([Jos 19:21](#)). It was a Levitical city of the Gershonites ([21:29](#)) and the Anem of [1 Chronicles 6:73](#), which may be a copyist's mistake. It seems to be the Ginaea of Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.6.1). Its site is the modern Jenin, a village on the southern edge of the plain of Esdraelon, five miles (8.1 kilometers) northeast of Dothan and about 68 miles (109.4 kilometers) north of Jerusalem.

See also Levitical Cities.

En-Gedi

En-ge-di is an important oasis on the west side of the Dead Sea, about 56.3 kilometers (35 miles) southeast of Jerusalem. It was part of the land given to the tribe of Judah ([Joshua 15:62](#)). En-ge-di had a hot water spring flowing from a limestone cliff. It created plants that thrived in warm climates. The area became known for its palms, vineyards, and balsam ([Song of Solomon 1:14](#); Josephus's *Antiquities* 20.1.2). The ancient site was southeast of the oasis at Tell el-Jarn near modern 'Ain Jidi.

En-ge-di was also called Hazazon-tamar ([2 Chronicles 20:2](#)). It appears in several Old Testament stories:

- Chedorlaomer conquered the Amorites there ([Genesis 14:7](#))
- David hid from Saul in the caves of En-ge-di ([1 Samuel 23:29](#))
- In Ezekiel's vision of a restored Israel, fishermen catch fish from the Dead Sea between En-ge-di and En-eglaim ([Ezekiel 47:10](#))

En-Haddah

City allotted to Issachar's tribe for an inheritance, mentioned between En-gannim and Beth-pazzez ([Jos 19:21](#)).

En-Hakkore

Spring of water that burst forth when Samson cried to the Lord after he had slaughtered the Philistines ([Jgs 15:19](#), nlt mg).

En-Hazor

Fortified city of the OT ([Jos 19:37](#)). One of several Hazors in the OT, En-hazor was probably located in Galilee.

En-Mishpat

Early name for Kadesh, mentioned in the account of Kedorlaomer's battles ([Gn 14:7](#)). *See* Kadesh, Kadesh-barnea.

En-Rimmon

Town assigned first to Judah and then to Simeon ([Jos 15:32](#); [19:7](#); [1 Chr 4:32](#)). These verses refer to two places, Ain and Rimmon, but this was probably a scribal error for the one town, En-rimmon (see [Jos 19:7](#)). It was resettled after the exile ([Neh 11:29](#)), and is perhaps the Rimmon south of Jerusalem mentioned in [Zechariah 14:10](#). En-rimmon is thought to be the modern Khirbet Umm er-Rumamin, nine miles (14.5 kilometers) north of Beersheba.

En-rogel

En-rogel is a spring (natural water source) near Jerusalem. En-rogel marked part of the border between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin ([Joshua 15:7](#); [18:16](#)).

Jonathan and Ahimaaz once hid at En-rogel while spying on Absalom's army for King David ([2 Samuel 17:17](#)). A servant girl carried their message from the spring to the king. Later, Adonijah offered sacrifices there when he tried to make himself king before David died ([1 Kings 1:9](#)).

Some think En-rogel was a spring in a cave near Siloam, on the west side of the Kidron Valley. This spring is called the Virgin's Fount. However, many scholars believe this spring is actually the Gihon Spring ([1 Kings 1:33](#)), which the Bible treats as a different place. A better suggestion is that En-rogel was a spring south of Jerusalem, known today as the Well of Job.

En-Shemesh

Place mentioned only in [Joshua 15:7](#) and [18:17](#) as a boundary marker between Judah's northern border and Benjamin's southern border. The usual identification is with 'Ain el-Hod, about three miles (4.8 kilometers) east of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho. On the basis of a tradition that the apostles drank there, it is sometimes referred to as the Spring of the Apostles.

En-Tappuah

Canaanite town located on the border between Ephraim's and Manasseh's territory ([Jos 17:7](#)). It is usually identified with the modern Sheikh Abu-Zarad, about eight miles (12.9 kilometers) south of Shechem. *See* Tappuah (Place) #2.

Enan

Ahira's father. Ahira was appointed by Moses as the commander of the tribe of Naphtali during the first census of Israel in the desert of Sinai ([Nm 1:15](#); [2:29](#); [7:78](#), [83](#); [10:27](#)). The name is apparently preserved in the name Hazar-enan (-enon), a town somewhere between Damascus and Hauran ([Nm 34:9](#); [Ez 47:17](#); [48:1](#)).

Enchantment

The act of casting charms or spells to influence others or to gain insight. Balaam could cast no enchantment against Israel but could only bless them ([Numbers 23:23](#)). Enchanters were among the wise men of Nebuchadnezzar's court. Daniel and his three friends were judged to be ten times wiser than the enchanters ([Daniel 1:20](#)). The enchanters were not able to recall King Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream ([2:2-27](#)). They could not interpret his second dream, either ([4:7](#)). Later, under Belshazzar, they could not read the handwriting that appeared on the palace wall ([5:7-15](#)). According to the prophet Isaiah, the great powers of Babylon's enchantments would not save it from destruction ([Isaiah 47:9, 12](#)). The psalmist writes of the wicked "refusing to hear the tune of the charmer who skillfully weaves his spell." ([Psalms 58:5](#)).

See also Magic; Sorcery.

End of the World

See Day of the Lord; Eschatology; Last Judgment.

Endive

Endive (*Cichorium endivia*) is a leafy vegetable with a slightly bitter taste. It is related to chicory and has curly leaves that grow in a loose head. Endive grows well in the Middle East and has been cultivated as a food plant in the region for centuries.

Some scholars suggest that endive may have been among the bitter herbs (*merorim*) eaten by the Israelites during Passover ([Exodus 12:8](#)), though the Bible does not specify which plants were used. In ancient times, people ate endive both raw and cooked as a green vegetable.

See Bitter Herbs.

Endor

Ancient Canaanite city, four miles (6.5 kilometers) south of Mt Tabor, assigned to the tribe of Manasseh, though never fully taken by them ([Jos 17:11](#)). The city witnessed the defeat of Jabin and Sisera by Barak ([Ps 83:9-10](#)). Endor is best known as the dwelling place of the witch who was called

upon by King Saul ([1 Sm 28:7](#)). On that occasion, Saul disguised himself because his journey to Endor took him near the Philistine army encamped at Shunem.

Engagement

Act of committing oneself to another by a pledge to marry. *See* Marriage, Marriage Customs.

Engraver, Engraving

An engraver is a person who cuts or carves designs into hard surfaces like stone or metal. Engraving is the art or process of cutting designs, patterns, or writing into hard materials.

See Stonecutter.

Enoch (Person)

1. Cain's son and grandson of Adam ([Gn 4:17, 19](#)).
2. Jared's son among the descendants of Seth; Methuselah's father ([Gn 5:18–24](#); [1 Chr 1:3](#)). He lived in such close relationship to God that he was taken to heaven without having died.

Enoch (Place)

City that Cain named for his first son, Enoch ([Gn 4:17](#)).

Enosh

Seth's son and the grandson of Adam ([Genesis 4:26](#); [1 Chronicles 1:1](#)). He became the father of Kenan at 90 years of age, after which he had other sons and daughters, dying at the age of 905 ([Genesis 5:6–11](#)). He is mentioned as Jesus's ancestor in [Luke 3:38](#). Enosh is spelled "Enos" in the King James Version and Revised Standard Version.

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Enrollment

A registration of people according to tribe, family, and position.

See Census.

Enuma Elish

Title of the Babylonian creation epic found during excavations at Nineveh (1848–76). The words *enuma elish* mean "when on high" and are the first two words of the epic, introducing the reader to a time when the heavens "on high" had not been named and the earth did not yet exist. The cuneiform tablets containing the epic were found in the library ruins of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal. The epic was probably composed in the time of the Babylonian king Hammurabi (c. 1791–1750 BC). One of the chief purposes of the epic is to show the sovereignty of the Babylonian god Marduk.

See also Ashurbanipal; Creation; Creation Myths.

Epaphras

Coworker with the apostle Paul. Epaphras, a native of Colosse, was responsible for the city's evangelization, as well as that of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Through him Paul learned of the progress of the Colossian church and thus wrote his letter to the Colossians. Paul's high regard for Epaphras was evidenced by his use of such terms as "beloved fellow servant," "faithful minister of Christ" ([Col 1:7](#)), and "servant of Christ" ([4:12](#)), a title of esteem Paul bestowed only on one other person—Timothy ([Phil 1:1](#)). Epaphras was in prison with Paul at the time the letter to Philemon was written ([Phlm 1:23](#)).

See also Colossians, Letter to the.

Epaphroditus

Leader in the Philippian church. Epaphroditus was sent to the apostle Paul during Paul's first Roman imprisonment; his mission was to deliver gifts ([Phil 4:18](#)) and to assist the apostle in his work ([2:25](#)). While in Rome, Epaphroditus became seriously ill and nearly died. After a period of convalescence, he returned to Philippi with Paul's letter instructing the church to receive him (v [29](#)). Epaphroditus's devoted service endeared him to the Philippian believers and to Paul, who termed him "brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier" (v [25](#), rsv).

See also Philippians, Letter to the.

Epenetus

Believer greeted by Paul in [Romans 16:5](#) as “my dear friend” and “the very first person to become a Christian in the province of Asia” (nlt). It is not known if Epenetus was a personal convert of Paul. Mention of his name has been used to promote the hypothesis that the letter was written for the Ephesians, but this is not sufficient grounds for making this identification.

Ephah (Measurement)

Measure of grain, about half a bushel (18 liters). *See* Weights and Measures.

Ephah (Person)

1. Son of Midian, an offspring of Abraham through his concubine Keturah ([Gn 25:4](#); [1 Chr 1:33](#)). Isaiah mentions him as a gold trader ([Is 60:6](#)). Some manuscripts mention two sons of Midian with the same name, Ephah, but that is an error of misspelling.
2. Caleb's concubine, who bore him three sons ([1 Chr 2:46](#)).
3. Jahdai's son from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 2:47](#)).

Ephai

Netophathite (resident of the town Netophah, near Bethlehem) whose sons fought against the Babylonian army ([Jer 40:8](#)). They, with others, approached Gedaliah, the governor of Judah appointed by Babylon, and requested his protection. They died, along with Gedaliah, in an uprising led by Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah ([41:3](#)).

Epher

1. Son of Midian and grandson of Abraham through his concubine Keturah, whose tribe was sent to the east. Some were supportive of Abraham's descendants and others became enemies ([Gn 25:4](#); [1 Chr 1:33](#)).
2. Son of Ezra from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 4:17](#)).

3. Head of a household and a great warrior in the half-tribe of Manasseh. He lived between Bashan and Mt Hermon ([1 Chr 5:24](#)).

Ephes-Dammim

Location between Socoh and Azekah in Judah ([1 Sm 17:1](#)) where the Philistines encamped. It was called Pas-dammim in [1 Chronicles 11:13](#). The reference to blood (dammim) in the name probably has to do with the number of battles fought there, or it may refer to the red earth of the area. Traditionally identified with the ruins of Damun, about four miles (6.5 kilometers) northeast of Socoh, the exact location of the site is unknown.

Ephesians, Letter to the

Letter to the Christians in Ephesus and the surrounding churches written with a magnificence that both instructs and inspires the reader. It provides a sweeping view of the role of the church as history moves toward the ultimate recognition of the universal headship of Christ.

Preview

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

Author

The writer of the letter identifies himself as the apostle Paul ([Eph 1:1](#); [3:1](#)). He also describes his own ministry in terms that reflect what we know of Paul ([3:7, 13](#); [4:1](#); [6:19–20](#)). This claim is confirmed by the testimonies of Irenaeus, Origen, Polycarp, Tertullian, and Ignatius, who in his own epistle to the Ephesians alludes to the frequent and affectionate mention made by Paul of the Christian state, privileges, and persons of the Ephesians.

There are some characteristics of the letter, however, that have caused many scholars to question its clear claim to Pauline authorship. Some of these characteristics would be a problem only if the letter were intended exclusively for people in Ephesus, but such was probably not the

case. Otherwise, it would be hard to understand why, after establishing the church there over a three-year period, Paul would write as though author and recipients had only a secondhand knowledge of each other. It would also be strange that the warm personal words of greeting to various individuals that are found in other Pauline letters are missing here. There is instead only a general greeting to “the brothers” ([6:23](#)). But all this can be easily explained once it is understood that the epistle was an encyclical for several churches.

Destination

This epistle was addressed, most probably, to several churches in the district around Ephesus—namely, Asia. The Epistle to the Ephesians, so-called, was not really intended to be only for the church at Ephesus. Most modern scholars are convinced that it was an encyclical that went to several churches in Asia, including Ephesus. There are several reasons to affirm this. First, the earliest manuscripts (the Chester Beatty Papyrus—P46, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus) do not contain the words “in Ephesus” in [Ephesians 1:1](#). It appears that Paul purposely left the name of the locality out, so as to be filled in later as the letter circulated to each locality. (The Greek construction in [1:1](#) calls for a prepositional phrase designating a locality to be present in the sentence.) Since Ephesus was the leading city of Asia, it was quite natural for scribes to assign this epistle to the church at Ephesus. Second, the Epistle to the Ephesians has all the marks of being a general treatise rather than an epistle to a specific local church. Paul had lived with the believers at Ephesus for three years ([Acts 20:31](#)). He knew them intimately, yet in this epistle there are no personal greetings or specific exhortations. When we consider Paul’s manner in many of his other epistles, it would be quite unlike him to have excluded these personal expressions. Quite the contrary, Paul speaks to the saints whom he has only heard about and who have only heard about him (see [Eph 1:15](#); [3:1](#)). It is possible that this epistle was the one sent to Laodicea.

In all fairness it must be said that the encyclical theory has been opposed by some scholars. For example, Henry Alford makes the following objections to this theory: (1) It is at variance with the spirit of the epistle, which is clearly addressed to one set of persons throughout, coexisting in one place and as one body and under the same circumstances. (2) It is improbable that the apostle, who in two of his epistles (2 Corinthians and

Galatians) has so plainly specified their encyclical character, should have here omitted such specification. (3) The absence of personal greetings is not an argument for either of the two theories, for similarly there are none in Galatians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Timothy. The better he knows the parties addressed, and the more general and solemn the subject, the less he seems to give of these individual notices.

Date and Origin

[Ephesians 3:1](#), [4:1](#), and [6:20](#) indicate that the letter was written while Paul was a prisoner. Since he was imprisoned several times, it is necessary to narrow the options. The first major imprisonment may have been at Ephesus itself, but this is obviously not in consideration. The second was at Caesarea for two years ([Acts 24:27](#); cf. [23:23–24, 33](#)). It is possible that Paul wrote some letters at that time, but most scholars think that Ephesians (along with Colossians, Philemon, and probably Philippians) was written during Paul’s imprisonment at Rome ([28:16, 30](#)). This probably took place sometime between AD 59 and 63 and lasted for two years. This period of time, following about 25 years of spiritual growth and 12 years or so of missionary experience, gave Paul a splendid opportunity for reflection and writing.

Background

Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor, located on the Cayster River, with a harbor on the Aegean Sea. With this location it became a center for commercial travel, and major trade routes led to it from several directions. A great pagan temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis (Diana) was located in Ephesus. Paul made the city a center of evangelistic and church-building ministry ([Acts 19](#)), spending three years there ([20:31](#)). It was natural, therefore, for a letter intended for a wide readership in that part of Asia Minor to have Ephesus as its main destination.

Paul’s first visit to Ephesus (on the seacoast of Lydia, near the river Cayster) is related in [Acts 18:19–21](#). The work, begun by his disputations with the Jews in his short visit, was carried on by Apollos (vv [24–26](#)) and Aquila and Priscilla ([18:26](#)). At his second visit, after his journey to Jerusalem, and thence to the east regions of Asia Minor, he remained at Ephesus “three years” ([19:10](#)—the “two years” in this verse are only *part* of the time—and [20:31](#)); therefore, the founding and rearing of this church occupied an unusually

large portion of the apostle's time and care. The language in the epistle shows a warmth of feeling and a free outpouring of thought, and a union in spiritual privileges and hope between him and them, such as are natural from one so long and so intimately associated with those whom he addresses. On his last journey to Jerusalem, he sailed by Ephesus and summoned the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him at Miletus, where he delivered his remarkable farewell charge ([20:18-35](#)).

Purpose and Theological Teaching

It may be said that the purpose of Ephesians is "doxological"; that is, it should cause the readers to glorify God, both in grateful praise and in manner of life. This is seen in the opening section, which is like a hymn in style: "Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Eph 1:3](#); cf. the Doxology often sung in church). Paul says three times in the first chapter that the result of God's blessings should be praise (vv [6, 12, 14](#)).

While the letter contains much doctrinal and moral instruction (with the latter solidly based on the former), its purpose is not only teaching or exhortation, important as these are. It is rather to lift up its readers to a new vantage point that will help them to identify with the risen, ascended Christ and to share his perspective on the church and its role in the world.

In this connection a significant term occurs in [1:3](#) and elsewhere. It is perhaps best translated "heavenly realms." It is different in form from the usual word for "heaven" and seems to have a special significance in Ephesians as the realm of Jesus' victorious reign in the present age. This is seen in [1:20](#), read in the context of verses [19-23](#). Whatever beings there may be, Christ is above them all. The believer, although obviously on earth physically, "sits with Christ" in the heavenly realms ([2:6](#)) and is "blessed" ([1:3](#)), drawing on the unlimited resources of heaven for his daily life. It is also in this realm that the spiritual conflict takes place ([6:12](#)).

Paul thus makes it clear that Christians are not to have a limited or merely earthly viewpoint. Those who do, mistakenly think that their enemies are people ([6:12](#)) and our resources human ([2 Cor 10:3-4](#)). With this orientation to the heavenly world of the Lord's present exaltation, the reader is prepared to understand that the church does not function merely to carry out routine activities here, but that it displays the wisdom of God to beings

who exist in the heavenly realms ([Eph 3:10](#)). Even the function of church leaders is discussed in terms of the gifts of the Christ who has ascended to the heavens ([4:8-10](#)).

There is a strong sense of ultimate purpose in Ephesians. The first chapter contains a number of different expressions of purpose. The great goal of history is expressed in [1:10](#). The sense of purpose is never lost. The church is even seen, in chapter [3](#), as the expression of God's eternal, secret plan. There is also a movement throughout the letter, from (1) reconciliation of individuals to God, to (2) their reconciliation to each other, to (3) their life together in the church. There is no arguing of points along the way, such as one finds in most of the letters, but rather a connected series of affirmations, each leading the reader on to the next.

Paul discusses a number of topics from this heavenly perspective and the sense of purpose this provides. These topics will be discussed below in such a way as to show their interconnection, rather than necessarily in the order of their importance or prominence in Ephesians.

The Church

Paul employs a number of figures of speech to describe the church, including a household, a temple, and a body ([1:22-23](#); [2:19-22](#)). Actually, it may be insufficient to call the word "body" a figure of speech, because it seems to be more than that. There is a sense in which Christ and the church have an actual organic relationship, in which he functions as the head and believers as parts of his body.

The church is the result of the reconciling work of Christ, whose death has made peace between mutually hostile Jews and Gentiles ([2:11-18](#)). The ensuing unity was long planned by God ([3:2-6](#)), and is furthered by a proper attitude and mutual ministry (ch [4](#)).

An especially remarkable feature of Ephesians is the parallel drawn between the relationship between a husband and wife and that between Christ and the church ([5:22-33](#)). In this comparison the prior reality is not marriage, with the relationship of Christ and the church only providing an illustration. Rather, the essential reality is Christ and the church.

The Headship of Christ

Not only is Christ the head of the church, but he is head over all things to the church's benefit ([1:22](#)).

The meaning of [1:10](#) is that the presently disparate parts and beings of the universe will be brought into order under the headship of Christ. This universal headship is anticipated in the ascension and present exaltation of Christ. The expression of universal domination—"God has put all things under his feet" ([1:22](#), from [Ps 8:6](#))—fortifies this expectation.

The "Mystery" or "Secret Plan"

The Greek word "mystery" has a special meaning in early Jewish and Christian literature. It refers to the private eternal decisions of God concerning his saving work and his ultimate purposes in history, which are revealed stage by stage. The term is used in connection with the kingdom in the Gospels ([Mt 13:11](#)), with the preaching of the gospel in [1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16](#), with the destiny of Israel in [Romans 11:25](#), and elsewhere with differing applications. Finally, [Revelation 10:6-7](#) declares that there will be no more delay, but that God's "mystery," initially announced by the prophets, will reach its completion.

The aspect of God's plan that Paul presents in [Ephesians 3:3-6](#) is not only the inclusion of Gentiles among God's people but their complete integration with Jews in the church. The extent of this was not revealed prior to the time of Paul's ministry.

Content

The Divine Purpose: The Glory and Headship of Christ ([1:1-14](#))

This whole section constitutes a "doxology." Paul reminds readers, by expressing his own prayer of praise, of all the blessings God has given believers. These include being chosen to live in God's presence without guilt (v [4](#)), being given the destiny of full sonship (v [5](#)), and being forgiven because Christ died for them.

But Paul is not only giving a recitation of what God has done; he interweaves a number of words and phrases indicating *why* God has acted, that is, what God's *purposes* are. Various translations use different English words to represent Greek expressions of purpose, such as "chose," "predestined," "plan," "will," "secret reason," "good pleasure," "purpose" (vv [4-10](#)). Perhaps the most comprehensive statement is in verses [11-12](#).

It is clear from this that the ultimate purpose of God's saving work is not merely the happiness of

believers but the glory of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit is given to guarantee not only the believer's security but also God's investment, so to speak, in the believer.

Prayer That Christians May Realize God's Purpose and Power ([1:15-23](#))

Paul's prayer issues from his opening section, constituting a request that believers may appropriate all that is contained in that statement. It is here that the fact of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension is cited as the basis for the believer's present vantage point and power.

Steps toward the Fulfillment of God's Purpose ([2:1-3:21](#))

The first step was the death of Christ in order to save individuals from sin and death ([2:1-10](#)). Since this was at God's initiative, not man's, and since man was spiritually "dead" and helpless, salvation can only be by grace.

The second step was the reconciliation of people not only to God but to each other ([2:11-18](#)). Paul thus moves from the individual to the corporate aspect of salvation. This was particularly significant for Gentiles, who previously did not have even a formal relationship with God. One of the key words in this section is "peace" (vv [14-17](#)).

Step three goes beyond reconciliation to the actual uniting of Jews and Gentiles in one "household" ([2:19-22](#)). God has not only brought people individually to himself, and to each other as individuals, but has formed a new corporate entity, a new society that is described both in political and family terms. Ultimately, believers together form a corporate body in whom God is exalted.

This third step is amplified in a fourth step, the revelation of God's eternal purpose in the formation of this one body, the church ([3:1-13](#)). Using the biblical concept of the "mystery," Paul shows how the church displays the wisdom of God to all who may be looking on throughout the universe. This immediately gives the believer a new awareness of the reason for his salvation and participation in the church. Self-centeredness and boredom with the routine of church activity give way to a sense of meaning and purpose.

These steps are now summarized in a second prayer ([3:14-21](#)). An exalted series of petitions culminate in another "doxology." This expresses Paul's awe over the infinite power of God to accomplish all that he has described in the epistle

thus far, and his desire that this will indeed result in great glory to God both in the church and in Christ.

Practical Ways to Fulfill God's Purpose in the Church (4:1-6:20)

Doctrine and life are never separated in Paul's thinking, but in Ephesians the connection is even more vital than usual. The believer's life is to be lived in a manner worthy of the great purposes of God. The believer's "calling" is not merely to be saved or eternally happy, but to participate with the entire body, the church, in bringing glory to God. This contributes to the realization of the prayer in [3:20-21](#).

The first way to fulfill God's purpose is to maintain the unity he established in the church. This is accomplished by recognizing the strong basis for unity ("one Lord, one faith," etc., [4:5-6](#)). Then believers must acknowledge diversity in that unity, remembering that God has given each one special abilities (vv [7-8](#)). These abilities are to be used to bring the church both individually and corporately to maturity. This diversity in unity constitutes the second way in which God's purpose is fulfilled. Christian maturity enables the individual members of the church to relate to each other in love (v [16](#)).

The third way to accomplish the purposes of God is by renewal of personal life ([4:17-5:21](#)). Paul emphasizes the kind of lifestyle that is expected of a Christian by contrasting the behavior patterns that had characterized the believers before their conversion. But the new life of the believer is not simply structured as a reaction against the old. Rather, the Lord has given both his teachings and the example of his own sacrificial love ([4:20-21](#), [32](#); [5:1-2](#)). The believer should cast off his old way of life, his old self or character. (The actual term is "old man" in Paul's wording, not, as is often thought, "old nature.") He should at the same time put on the "new man," which, in Paul's words in verse [24](#), is "created according to God" (niv "created to be like God"). The section closes with the important exhortation to be filled with the Spirit ([5:18](#)).

The expression of the new character in interpersonal relations is the fourth way in which believers can forward the purposes of God in the church. Unity is either achieved or broken in accordance with the presence or absence of the proper submission described in [5:22-6:9](#). The basic principle of submission is first expressed by verse [21](#) as a result of the Spirit's full control.

Marriage then provides the first example of mutual submission. The wife submits to the husband, and this in turn is an expression of her submission, along with that of the whole church, to the Lord. The husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church. While the husband's love is not described as submission, in effect, love does cost the lover his freedom. Jesus thus expressed his love for the church by his death ([5:25](#)). Further, husband and wife are bound together in a unity, just as God intended at the time of creation ([Gn 2:24](#), quoted here in [5:31](#)). This unity portrays that spiritual unity that exists between Christ and the church.

It should be noted that this list of examples is similar to a pattern used elsewhere in the NT (e.g., [Col 3:18-4:1](#); [1 Pt 3:1-7](#)). Thus, following the example of marriage, Paul turns to the relationship that should exist between parent and child. The child obeys the father; the father refrains from excessive reactions ([6:1-4](#)). The last example is that of slaves and masters.

The final way in which believers forward God's great purposes is to carry on the spiritual conflict by depending on spiritual resources ([Eph 6:10-20](#)). Drawing on imagery both from the OT and from contemporary Roman warfare, Paul shows that the heavenly perspective is essential for victory. This includes dependence on God as expressed in prayer (vv [18-20](#)). He acknowledges his own need in this respect.

The conclusion to the letter ([6:21-24](#)) is a word of encouragement and an explanation of Paul's decision to send the letter in the good hands of Tychicus. One of the concluding words is "grace," a word that underlies the entire divine process described in Ephesians.

See also Colossians, Letter to the; Ephesus; Paul, The Apostle.

Ephesus

Where Is Ephesus Located?

This was the most important city of the Roman province of Asia. It was located on the western shore of Asia Minor in modern Turkey. Ephesus was built on a natural harbor. The Roman writer Pliny the Elder said that the waves "used to wash up to the temple of Diana." The early Greek geographer Strabo described Ephesus as the largest commercial center west of the Taurus

Mountains. Ephesus was also well-known as the “guardian” of the temple of the goddess Artemis, also referred to as Diana by the Romans ([Acts 19:34](#)).

Ephesus in the New Testament

Christianity threatened that pagan temple and the commerce it produced for those who made idols. It caused a riot where the apostle Paul was almost killed ([Acts 19:24, 30–31](#)). Priscilla and Aquila were associated with the early preaching of the Gospel in Ephesus ([18:18–19](#)). The same was true for Timothy ([1 Timothy 1:3](#)) and the helper of Paul named Erastus ([Acts 19:22](#)). The early Christian writer Irenaeus said that after the apostle John was exiled on the island of Patmos ([Revelation 1:9](#)), he returned to live in Ephesus until the time of the emperor Trajan (AD 98–117). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes how the Christian community of Ephesus lived well. By the time the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, the Ephesian church had abandoned how much they first loved God ([Revelation 2:4](#)).

Ephesus's Early History

Ephesus was founded by Ionian Greeks located where the Cayster River emptied into a gulf of the Aegean Sea. By the time of the third missionary journey of the apostle Paul, Ephesus had been a city for about 1,000 years. The city worshipped Artemis since its founding. The temple was built in the middle of the sixth century BC. It was the largest building in the Hellenistic world. In addition, this building was the first massive temple ever made entirely of marble. There are two images of Artemis magnificently sculpted in marble. They date to the period of the emperors Domitian and Hadrian. These emperors ruled while the apostle John lived. The temple of Diana, called the “mother of the gods,” was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Physical Evidence from Ancient Ephesus

The hard work of the British archaeologist J. T. Wood resulted in his discovery of the temple of Diana in 1869. Yet, its great altar was not found until recently. Excavation has shown the altar of Diana was larger than the altar of Zeus, built later at Pergamum. Her first temple was partially destroyed in 356 BC. But it was later rebuilt according to its original plan.

Excavations have also uncovered the theater mentioned in [Acts 19:29](#). It was located next to the

main shopping area (Greek agora). The theater had three levels that could seat 24,000 people. It was 151 meters (495 feet) across. It had two doors that opened to the most impressive street in Ephesus. That street led to the harbor and was about 10.5 meters (35 feet) wide. Tall columns surrounded it.

The street passed through a magnificent and massive gateway located on its western end. In the other direction, the road continued around the theater and marketplace. Then, the road went southeast between Mount Koressos and Mount Pion. As it continued, the road narrowed. Lovely fountains, civic buildings, houses, shops, a library, baths, and a small theater bordered it. The theater was probably also used as a council chamber for city officials.

Daily Life in Ephesus

Ephesus was a wealthy, upper-middle-class society. It had residences with multiple levels that were located on the north terraces of Mount Koressos. Some homes had floors with mosaics and walls of marble. Two homes discovered had heated bathrooms. Many people had running water. A few discoveries suggest that Ephesus was an immoral city. There was a centrally located house of prostitution and gambling tables. Statues of Diana found with exaggerated sexual features give evidence of fertility themes.

Ephesus in Church History

Ephesus felt the impact of Christianity for centuries. In AD 431, the third ecumenical council met northwest of the theater in the Church of Mary. This was a council that established the title of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the “Mother of God” (Greek *Theotokos*). By that time the temple of Diana was no longer influential among the Ephesians. This was because the Goths burned her temple in AD 262. The message of the apostle Paul had to some extent come true: “man-made gods are no gods at all” ([Acts 19:26](#)).

See also Ephesians, Letter to the.

Ephlal

Jerahmeel's descendant, who could trace his ancestry through Perez to Judah ([1 Chr 2:37](#)).

Ephod (Garment)

An ephod was a special upper garment worn during religious services at the tabernacle or temple. The term "ephod" generally referred to the decorated vest that the high priest wore over a blue robe ([Exodus 28:31](#)). The ephod held the Urim and Thummim, which were holy objects (lots) used to determine God's will. Sometimes "ephod" meant the complete outfit of the high priest or similar clothes worn by other priests ([1 Samuel 2:28](#); [23:6](#); [30:7](#)).

The ephod was made of colored material and fine linen. It was decorated with blue, purple, scarlet, and gold thread. At the upper part were two shoulder straps. Each strap had an onyx stone with the names of Israel's 12 tribes engraved on it. The breastplate, which also contained the tribal names, was attached to the ephod by a series of cords and chains ([Exodus 28:22-29](#)).

Jewish writers suggest different possible appearances for the ephod:

1. Like an apron, covering the body from the chest to the heels;
2. Covering the body only from the waist down, with the upper body covered by the breastplate; or
3. Like a jacket with sleeves, with the middle of the chest uncovered so the breastplate could be inserted easily.

Before the Babylonian exile (when the people of Israel were taken to Babylon), the ephod was used as a way to receive messages from God, especially about military matters. Abiathar the priest once brought the ephod to David's camp so they could ask God for guidance ([1 Samuel 23:6-9](#); [30:7](#)). It is not clear whether the priest wore the ephod or held it while seeking God's will through the Urim and Thummim..

During the period of the judges, the ephod was often misused. Gideon, Micah, and Jonathan, the grandson of Moses, all misused it ([Judges 8:27](#); [17:5](#); [18:30](#); compare verses [14](#), [17](#), [20](#)).

Either the garment itself or an image representing God, on which the garment was placed, was worshiped as people sought guidance in ways that God had forbidden. Household idols (called teraphim) were also part of this ungodly practice ([Judges 17:5](#); [Hosea 3:4](#)).

Besides the high priest, other priests wore an ephod for certain religious services ([1 Samuel 22:18](#)). Even Samuel and David wore one ([1 Samuel 2:18](#); [6:14](#)). By the time after the exile, and perhaps as early as Solomon's reign, the ephod was no longer used for seeking God's guidance ([Ezra 2:63](#); [Nehemiah 7:65](#)). There was no need for the ephod or Urim once God spoke through prophets, as Moses had promised ([Deuteronomy 18:15-22](#)). However, the high priest continued to wear this special garment until the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

See also Priests and Levites.

Ephod (Person)

The father of Hanniel. Hanniel was a leader from the tribe of Manasseh, one of the two tribes that came from Joseph ([Numbers 34:23](#)). He helped divide the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel.

Ephphatha

An Aramaic word meaning "be opened." Mark writes it using Greek letters to show the sounds of the Aramaic word. Jesus said this when he healed a man who could not hear or speak ([Mark 7:34](#)). Jesus was not trying to create a magical formula. Mark simply records the exact words Jesus used.

Ephraemi Syri, Codex

See Bible, Manuscripts and Text of the (New Testament).

Ephraim (Person)

Joseph's younger son, born of Joseph and Asenath before the seven years of famine in Egypt ([Gen 41:52](#)). He was the ancestor of an Israelite tribe, and his name came to designate the northern kingdom of Israel ([Is 7:5, 8](#); [Jer 31:18-20](#); [Hos 5:3-5](#)). Ephraim's boyhood overlapped the last 17 years of his grandfather, the patriarch Jacob, who migrated to Egypt during the years of famine. Thus Ephraim could learn of God's promises and blessings directly from Jacob. After Jacob exacted an oath from Joseph to bury him in Canaan he

adopted his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. That adoption gave the two brothers the position and legal rights equal to Jacob's eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon ([Gn 48:5](#)).

See also Ephraim, Tribe of.

Ephraim (Place)

1. A region in the central highlands of Israel. It was the land Joshua assigned to the tribe of Ephraim as their inheritance ([Joshua 16:5-8](#); [17:7-11](#)). At first, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were called "the people of Joseph" ([Joshua 16:4](#)). Together, they lived in the hill country between Jerusalem and the plain of Esdraelon. Ephraim's land was south of Manasseh's land. This area was high and rocky. The Bible often calls it "the hill country of Ephraim" ([1 Samuel 1:1](#)). The land had steep hills made of hard rock, and deep valleys. Because of this, roads followed the ridges between valleys instead of going through the valleys. Travel between Ephraim and the coast was difficult. One way through was along the edge of the Sarida Valley. Another road came from Aphek. The Philistines used this road to invade Israel ([1 Samuel 4](#)) [Joshua 16:9](#) says that there were towns inside Manasseh's land that were given to the people of Ephraim. This may mean the two tribes once disagreed about their borders. But Ephraim grew stronger over time and became a powerful tribe in Israel. Later, the name "Ephraim" was sometimes used to mean all of Israel ([Hosea 4:17](#); [5:3, 11-14](#); [6:4, 10](#)).

Boundaries of Ephraim The land given to the tribe of Ephraim is described in [Joshua 16:5-8](#) and [17:1-11](#). These verses give many place names, but the exact location of some of them is still uncertain today.

The eastern boundary began at Micmethah. It

might be the same as the site now called Khirbet en-Nabi. From there, the boundary went south through Taanath-shiloh, Janoah, Ataroth, and Naarah to a place near Jericho. The southern boundary seems to have passed westward toward Bethel, Beth-horon, and Gezer. Then it went to the Mediterranean Sea.

The western boundary is not clearly described. It may have included some land that still belonged to the Canaanites at that time.

The northern boundary separated Ephraim from the tribe of Manasseh. It started again at Micmethah, which was near Shechem. From there, it went to Tappuah and then followed the Wadi Qana, a small seasonal river. This line reached the Mediterranean Sea north of the city of Joppa.

Even though the Bible gives many details, the exact borders of Ephraim's land are not completely clear. The tribe of Benjamin lived just to the south of Ephraim.

Climate of Ephraim The hill country of Ephraim gets more rain than the land of Judah, which is farther south. The soil in Ephraim is reddish, rich, and good for growing crops.

Because of this, the land was very productive. Even today, the area has many orchards, and olive trees grow in large numbers.

[Deuteronomy 33:14-17](#) describes the land: "The bountiful harvest from the sun and the abundant yield of the seasons, with the best of the ancient mountains and the bounty of the everlasting hills, with the choice gifts of the

land.” This description gives a good picture of how rich and fruitful the land of Ephraim was.

1. A town near Baal-hazor. Absalom invited his half brother Amnon to this town so that he could have him killed ([2 Samuel 13:23–29](#)). Absalom did this because Amnon had committed incest with Absalom’s sister Tamar. The town lay to the north of Jerusalem. It might be the same as Ephron ([2 Chronicles 13:19](#)). It was probably the place near the wilderness where Jesus went after He raised Lazarus from the dead ([John 11:54](#)). Many people today identify this town with a village called et-Taiyibeh. It is about 20.9 kilometers (13 miles) northeast of Jerusalem and about 6.5 kilometers (4 miles) northeast of Bethel.

Ephraim, Gate of

Gate in the Jerusalem wall positioned about 600 feet (182.9 meters) east of the Corner Gate ([2 Kgs 14:13](#); [2 Chr 25:23](#)). It was rebuilt in Nehemiah’s day ([Neh 12:39](#)) and was situated close to the Water Gate and courts of the temple.

See also Jerusalem.

Ephraim, Mount

KJV expression referring to the hill country in central Palestine where Ephraim’s tribe was located ([Jos 20:7](#); [Jgs 19:1, 16, 18](#); [1 Sm 1:1](#)). The area was one of the most productive in Palestine.

See also Ephraim (Place) #1.

Ephraim, Tribe of

The tribe descended from Joseph’s second son. Both Ephraim and his brother Manasseh were seen as sons also by their grandfather Jacob and became his heirs.

The Territory of the Tribe of Ephraim

Many Bible commentators think that Ephraim is a play on words based on a Hebrew root meaning “to

be fruitful” ([Genesis 41:52](#)). The hill country given to Ephraim was among the most fertile areas in Palestine, rich in vines, fruit trees, and dense forests ([Joshua 17:18](#)). Even when kings ruled Israel, this region was still home to wild animals ([2 Kings 2:24](#)).

It is not clear where the borders of Ephraim are because it is often mentioned alongside the territory of Manasseh. Ephraim’s land was located in the center of Canaan, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Manasseh’s territory was located to the north ([Joshua 16:5–9](#)).

Ephraim’s Rise and Influence in Israel

Ephraim grew into a powerful and influential tribe. At the first census in the wilderness, 40,500 Ephraimite soldiers were counted ([Numbers 1:33](#)). However, this number decreased to 32,500 by the time of the second census ([Numbers 26:37](#)). Ephraim was assigned the leadership of the western camp of Israel, between the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin ([Numbers 2:18–24](#)).

Joshua, the son of Nun, one of the 12 spies, was descended from Ephraim ([Numbers 13:8](#), “Hoshea”). Joshua’s leadership strengthened Ephraim’s importance among the tribes of Israel. ([Joshua 16](#)).

During the time of the judges, the Ephraimites often became angry when they were left out of important battles. They felt they were being treated unfairly or disrespected. They fought with:

- Gideon after his victory over the Midianites ([Judges 8:1–6](#))
- Jephthah of Gilead, who defeated the Ammonites ([Judges 12:1–6](#))

The judge Abdon came from Ephraim’s tribe ([Judges 12:13](#)). Micah, who worshiped false gods, as well as the prophet Samuel, lived in Ephraim ([Judges 17:1](#); [1 Samuel 1:1](#)). Ephraim’s military and political importance is shown in the Song of Deborah, an ancient biblical poem ([Judges 5:14](#)).

Ephraim in the Northern Kingdom of Israel

Ephraim was a significant rival to the tribe of Judah, with tensions persisting even during King David’s reign ([2 Samuel 18](#); [19:41–20:22](#)). These tensions contributed to the eventual division of the kingdom after Solomon’s reign ([1 Kings 11:26–40](#)). The northern tribes, including Ephraim, were unhappy with the rule from Jerusalem. This unhappiness led

the 10 northern tribes, led by Jeroboam I, to separate from the southern tribes and form their own kingdom. It was called the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

The capitals of the northern kingdom—Shechem, Tirzah, and Samaria—were all located within Ephraim's territory. The establishment of Samaria by King Omri enhanced Ephraim's strategic importance by providing direct access to the Via Maris, a major trade route along the sea. However, this increased exposure to trade also brought greater temptation for the northern kingdom to stray from God.

Despite Ephraim's role in the division of the kingdom, the prophets foretold a future reunification of Ephraim with Judah in a future kingdom ruled by God's chosen leader ([Hosea 1:11](#)). A descendant of David would heal the division caused by Jeroboam I and restore unity among all the tribes of Israel ([Ezekiel 37](#)).

See also Ephraim (Person); Ephraim (Place) #1; Israel, History of.

Ephraimite

Name given to a person from the tribal area of Ephraim. *See* Ephraim (Place) #1.

Ephraim

KJV form of Ephron, a town near Bethel, in [2 Chronicles 13:19](#). *See* Ephron (Place) #2.

Ephrath (Person)

Mother of Hur and Caleb's second wife ([1 Chr 2:19, 50](#)).

Ephrath (Place)

1. Town in the Judean hill country later named Bethlehem. It was on the road to Ephrath that Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin ([Gn 35:16–19](#)). This town was the home of Naomi's family, who identified themselves as Ephrathites ([Ru 1:2](#)). Ephrath was the dwelling place of Ruth and Boaz ([Ru 4:11](#)), the childhood home of David

([1 Sm 17:12](#)), and the announced birthplace of the Messiah ([Mi 5:2](#)).

See also Bethlehem #1.

2. District in which the city of Kiriath-jearim was situated and where the ark of the covenant was kept ([Ps 132:6](#)).

Ephrathite

Inhabitant of the town of Ephrath (Bethlehem) in Judah ([1 Sm 17:12](#)). *See* Ephrath (Place) #1.

Ephron (Person)

Hittite from whom Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah with its adjoining field for 400 shekels of silver ([Gn 23:8–17](#)). Sarah was buried there, as was Abraham ([25:9](#)) and Jacob ([50:13](#)).

Ephron (Place)

1. Mountainous district on the northern edge of Judah ([Jos 15:9](#)).

2. City near Bethel, captured by Abijah ([2 Chr 13:19](#)); perhaps the Ophrah of [Joshua 18:23](#).

Epicureans

Those who followed the teachings of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (342–270 BC). Paul encountered some of them while in Athens ([Acts 17:18](#)).

Epicurus spent his childhood on the island of Samos, near the western coast of what is today Turkey. In his late teens he moved to Athens for military service. After his tour of duty, he devoted his time to the study and teaching of philosophy. This work took him from Athens, but he returned in 307 BC to found a school. He attracted a considerable following, and his disciples spread his message throughout the civilized world. The fact that Paul met Epicureans over three centuries after the death of Epicurus shows both the attractiveness of his teachings and the commitment of his disciples. In the first century BC these teachings found expression in the writing of the Roman poet Lucretius. His *On the Nature of Things* is a helpful guide to understanding

Epicurus, especially since only fragments of Epicurus's own writings remain.

The Epicureans were empiricists; they relied upon sense experience for knowledge. This put them in opposition to those who chose to make statements about the world on the basis of reason alone, distrusting or rejecting the data of the senses. Epicureans were concerned with natural evidence and with practicalities, thus showing a somewhat scientific character. They were unenthusiastic about mathematics because of what they took to be its abstract quality, having little to do with the important matters of living. Ethics, the study of right behavior, was their focus.

The Epicurean judged the value of an action or thing in terms of the pleasure or pain it brought—a position called hedonism. It was egoistic hedonism because the person sought his own pleasure rather than the pleasure of others. This description can bring to mind the image of an irresponsible glutton or lover of wild parties, but this image, encouraged by the modern sense of the word "epicurean," is misleading. Epicurus rejected just such behavior. He realized that momentary pleasure can lead to enduring pain and that some pain can be beneficial. He viewed pleasure more as a quality of life than a series of thrills. What he sought is better called happiness. Basing his counsel on experience, he urged moderation, calm, friendship, a simple life. He avoided feasting, sexual passion, and strife. In fact, he avoided pain more than he sought pleasure. The pleasure of tranquillity, of peace, could be found in the absence of pain, and this was his aim. To ensure tranquillity, a man must tend to his stomach, but he must also attend to his mind, directing it toward wisdom.

Epicurus saw belief in gods as a serious threat to tranquillity. Gods were generally viewed as meddling and powerful beings who terrified ordinary mortals—sources of insecurity, not peace and happiness. Epicurus taught that the gods were not, in fact, like this but were tranquil hedonists who stayed away from men. They avoided the strife involved in contact with people on earth. In short, they were nothing to fear.

Epicurus taught that we, and everything in our world, are made up of atoms of different qualities. For example, the atoms of the human soul are smooth and round. Although atomic theories often lead to the conviction that all human actions are determined by the laws that rule the motion of atoms, Epicurus's theory did not. He allowed for human freedom by claiming that some atoms

spontaneously leave their straight paths, thus setting off an unpredictable chain of collisions. Man's behavior is then free and not machinelike.

In spite of his freedom, man is still a collection of atoms, and when the atoms separate, the man ceases to exist; he is not immortal. Epicurus saw this as reason no longer to fear death. For after death, all experience ceases. There will be no pain, and so there is no cause for anxiety.

Epicurean themes can be found in the Bible—for example, moderation ([Phil 4:5](#)) and the peace that comes from the exercise of wisdom ([Prv 3:13–18](#)). But the differences are clear. The Bible reveals a God who is intimately involved in the world; the immortality of man's soul; and the truth that genuine happiness depends upon communion with and service to God ([Phil 4:6–7](#)).

See also Philosophy.

Epigraphy

The study of ancient inscriptions. *See* Inscriptions (Alphabet).

Epilepsy, Epileptic

Epilepsy is a disease of the brain and nerves. An *epileptic* is a person who has this disease. The main signs of epilepsy are passing out and shaking attacks called seizures. There are two types of attacks. The first type of attack is called *petit mal*, which involves small face or hand movements, stomach pain, and maybe passing out for a short time). The second type of attack is called *grand mal*, which are big attacks that involve shaking all over, foam coming from the mouth, and passing out for 5 to 20 minutes.

We do not know what causes epilepsy, but there are now medicines to stop or control the attacks. In Bible times, people called epilepsy the "falling sickness." At that time, people did not have good medicines to treat it. Jesus healed a boy who had this condition ([Matthew 17:14–18](#); [Mark 9:17–27](#); [Luke 9:37–42](#)).

The King James Version calls the boy a "lunatic." This comes from the Latin word, *luna*, which means "moon." The Greek word in Matthew means "affected by the moon" or "moonstruck." This shows that people back then thought some diseases were connected to the phases of the moon.

The Bible says Jesus healed the boy by ordering an evil spirit to leave him.

See Medicine and Medical Practice.

Epiphanes

A name used to refer to Antiochus IV. Epiphanes means the “Manifest God.” Alexander Balas also used the name Epiphanes in his claim to be king. See Antiochus IV; Alexander (Balas) Epiphanes.

Epistle

See Letter Writing, Ancient.

Epistle of Barnabas

This anonymous letter discusses a question often asked in the early church: *What should Christianity's relationship to Judaism be?* Clement of Alexandria often quoted this document and attributed it to “Barnabas, who also preached with the apostle Paul.” Jerome believed this also. However, the writer does not claim to be Barnabas. The earliest claims of authorship come from Alexandrian church leaders. The writing and interpretation style is purely Alexandrian. As a result, many assume the author wrote the letter from Alexandria.

The author of this letter plainly states there is no connection at all between Judaism and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, he does not claim that the Old Testament opposes the New Testament. Instead, he finds that Christianity is represented everywhere in the Law and the Prophets. He believed all Jewish ceremonies were spiritual revelations pointing to Christ, and an evil angel had prevented the Jews from understanding this.

The letter mentions the destruction of Jerusalem, so the author must have written it after AD 70. A second destruction occurred in AD 132, ending the Bar-Kochba revolution. This defeat would have been really useful for the author's argument. He probably would have mentioned it if he had written this epistle after that event.

Many scholars believe the author wrote the letter around AD 130, which was a time of strong Jewish nationalism. This nationalism would have put pressure on many Jewish Christians to return to

Judaism. As a result, the author of the Epistle of Barnabas wrote to defend Christianity against Judaism.

The Epistle of Barnabas has two parts. The first section offers allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament (chapters 1–17). These spiritual and mystical interpretations intend to counter Jewish legalism and show how the Old Testament points to Jesus Christ. The author recognizes righteous figures like Moses, David, and the prophets understood the true meaning of the law of Moses. However, he argues that the rest of Israel interpreted God's covenant incorrectly.

As a result, the Jews lost their claim to the blessings of the covenant, which God transferred to Christians instead. This allegorical style of interpretation was very popular among Alexandrian church leaders. The New Testament book of Hebrews also uses this style of interpretation. The author of the Epistle of Barnabas often quotes the Septuagint, though the quotes tend to be similar rather than identical to the original text.

Until 1859, only a Latin version of the first section of the Epistle of Barnabas was known. The discovery of Codex Sinaiticus revealed the first known Greek version of the Epistle. This Greek version was included with the New Testament books, along with The Shepherd of Hermas and the Didache.

The Greek version has a second section that starts with, “Now let us pass on to quite a different sort of instruction.” This section includes moral teachings that compare the way of spiritual darkness with the way of light. Much of it seems borrowed from the “Two Ways” in the Didache. It has little connection with the first section. Many scholars believe another writer added the second section later.

See also Apocrypha; Barnabas.

Epistle of the Apostles

This epistle, or letter, claims to come from the apostles of Jesus (the eleven remaining after Judas Iscariot's death). It is addressed to the churches “of the east and the west, of the north and the south, declaring and imparting to you that which concerns our Lord Jesus Christ.” Some scholars believe the letter was written in Asia Minor around AD 160. Others think it came from Egypt. It was probably written sometime in the middle of the

second century AD. The surviving copies include a damaged Coptic manuscript from the fourth or fifth century, a complete version in Ethiopic, and a short fragment in Latin. The work was unknown until 1895, when the Coptic manuscript was discovered.

After an introduction, a declaration follows that “our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ is God the Son of God who was sent of God the Lord of the whole world.” The letter then summarizes several incidents from the Gospels. This includes a negative formulation of the Golden Rule: “Love your enemies, and what you would not that man do to you, that do to no man.” Chapter 24 introduces the subject of the resurrection. This section includes questions from the disciples and answers from Jesus.

A prophecy of the conversion of Paul appears in chapter 31. In chapter 31, there is a prophecy about Paul’s conversion. Later, in chapter 43, the five wise virgins are said to represent Faith, Love, Grace, Peace, and Hope. The five foolish virgins are called Knowledge, Understanding (Perception), Obedience, Patience, and Compassion.

The most substantial part of the letter consists of questions and answers, and resembles in style some of the texts found in the Gnostic library at Nag Hammadi, especially the Apocryphon of John. However, the warnings that Cerinthus and Simon (chapter 7) are “enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ” make it clear that this is not a Gnostic text. The letter supports many traditional Christian beliefs, although it also departs in some ways from the teachings of the apostles.

See also Apocrypha.

Er

1. The eldest son of Judah and Bathshua, a Canaanite woman ([Genesis 38:3](#)). The Lord killed him before he and his wife, Tamar, could have any children ([Genesis 38:7](#); [46:12](#); [1 Chronicles 2:3](#)).
2. The grandson of Judah and father of Lecah ([1 Chronicles 4:21](#)). He was the nephew of #1 above.
3. Joshua’s son and an ancestor of Joseph, the husband of Mary ([Luke 3:28](#)). *See* Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Eran

Eran was a grandson of Ephraim and the oldest son of Shuthelah ([Numbers 26:36](#)). The Eranite family came from Eran. In [1 Chronicles 7:20](#), the name Eran does not appear. Instead, the name Eleadah is used in a similar family list. This difference might be because someone made a copying mistake when writing down these records.

Erastus

A name mentioned three times in the New Testament. It is uncertain if it refers to only one individual. Although, in each case, Erastus is a helper of the apostle Paul. The three mentions of Erastus in the New Testament are:

1. A helper of Paul sent with the apostle Timothy into Macedonia ([Acts 19:22](#)).
2. The city treasurer of Corinth, an official who managed finances. He might have been a slave or a wealthy freed slave and an important man in the Corinthian community. He sends greetings with Paul to the church in Rome ([Romans 16:23](#)).
3. A friend of Paul who stayed at Corinth ([2 Timothy 4:20](#)).

Erech

Important Sumerian city, located at what is now called Warka near the Euphrates River, 40 miles (64.4 kilometers) northwest of Ur and 160 miles (257.4 kilometers) south of Baghdad. [Genesis 10:10](#) refers to Erech as the second of four cities founded by Nimrod. Partial excavations have uncovered the city walls (6 miles, or 9.7 kilometers, in circumference), canals, and the remains of elegant buildings with fluted walls decorated with colored cones and inscriptions. Two ziggurats are among the oldest ever discovered, and several temples date back to the late fourth or early third millennium BC. The use of clay cylinder seals began in Erech, and from the same period have come hundreds of pictographic inscriptions.

Ancient inscriptions indicate that Erech and its surroundings were regarded as extremely

beautiful and fertile. Its religious pantheon centered on the aggressive goddess of love, Inanna, who was supposed to have brought to Erech the “divine laws” to which it owed its greatness. She helped Erech to subjugate its enemies and married King Dumuzi to ensure the fertility and prosperity of Sumer. Dumuzi, in turn, was identified with Tammuz, the fertility god widely worshiped in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

Among Erech’s rulers in the third millennium was Gilgamesh, hero of the great Akkadian epic. From the time of Hammurabi, Erech became part of Babylonia, and it continued to flourish until after 300 BC. [Ezra 4:9](#) refers to “Archevites” (kjv), or men of Arku, the Assyrian name from which the Hebrew “Erech” is derived. Strabo, Ptolemy, and Pliny mention its renown as a center of learning, chiefly astronomical.

Eri

Gad’s fifth son ([Gn 46:16](#)) and founder of the Erite family ([Nm 26:16](#)).

Esaias

KJV form of Isaiah the prophet, in the NT. *See* Isaiah (Person).

Esarhaddon

King of Assyria (681–669 BC). Though probably not the eldest son of Sennacherib, he was the eldest surviving son following several interfamily murders. Sennacherib was assassinated by his sons Adram-melech and Sharezer, and civil war ensued between their supporters and those who accepted the youthful, newly proclaimed king, Esarhaddon. As the threat from the brothers was eliminated by death or exile, Esarhaddon solidified his position. He ruled from Nineveh and proclaimed his twin sons, Ashurbanipal and Samas-sum-ukin, crown princes of Assyria and Babylonia but his attempt thus to ensure a smooth changeover of rule at his own death was frustrated.

Esarhaddon’s immediate task was to settle the rebellious border areas, which he did by launching military campaigns. He installed governors he could rely on, and he increased substantially the level of tribute required. Some kings were replaced

and others subsequently restored. Of the latter, Manasseh ([2 Chr 33:11](#)), taken in chains to Babylon, later continued to reign in Jerusalem, although this incident may not have taken place until the reign of Ashurbanipal. Of the strong cities, Sidon was finally subdued, but Esarhaddon was forced to come to terms with Baslu, king of Tyre.

In 675 BC, Esarhaddon invaded Egypt and destroyed the royal city of Memphis, together with many other towns and cities. Prince Taharqa, who had fled to Nubia on the initial invasion, continued to rule over Egypt and subsequently led a rebellion against Esarhaddon. During his second Egyptian campaign, Esarhaddon succumbed to a fatal sickness.

Esarhaddon was a strong, cruel, and fearless ruler who was proud of his achievements. He maintained dominion over a vast area, claiming control not only of Babylonia and Syria but also of Egypt and Ethiopia, the lands bordering on Assyria, and some of the islands of the eastern Mediterranean. He built a palace at Kar-esarhaddon near Nineveh and restored the fabled temple of Ashur originally constructed by Shalmaneser I about 1250 BC. He commemorated the deeds of his reign on numerous stelae and prisms. Esarhaddon is mentioned in [2 Kings 19:37](#), [Ezra 4:2](#), and [Isaiah 37:38](#).

See also Assyria, Assyrians.

Esau

Esau was the older twin brother of Jacob. He was the son of Isaac and Rebekah ([Genesis 25:24–26](#)).

Esau's Name and Meaning

His parents named him Esau because he had a lot of hair on his body when he was born.

Esau’s skin looked red when he was born. Later, he sold his rights as the firstborn son to Jacob for some red lentil soup ([Genesis 25:30](#)). Because of this, people called him “Edom,” which means “red.”

The people of Edom said they came from Esau. They named their land Seir. This name may come from the Hebrew word *sair*, which means “hairy.”

Esau's Work and Personality

Esau was a skilled hunter. He brought wild meat to his father, Isaac, who liked the strong taste. Jacob, who stayed with the flocks, gave milder meat. Isaac preferred Esau’s food.

One day, Esau came home from hunting. He had not caught anything and was very hungry. Jacob offered him some food. In exchange, Esau gave up his birthright ([Genesis 25:29–34](#)).

Family Conflict and Blessing

Archaeologists found records at Nuzi that show a man could give his birthright to another family member. So Esau giving his birthright to Jacob was not unusual in that time.

Esau later married two local women who were not from Abraham's family. This caused great trouble for his parents, Isaac and Rebekah ([Genesis 26:34–35](#)). Because of this, Rebekah helped Jacob trick Isaac into giving him the blessing that normally belonged to Esau, the older son (chapter [27](#)). When Esau found out, he became very angry. Jacob had to run away to Haran. After 20 years, Esau forgave Jacob. The two brothers met again in peace ([33:4–16](#)).

Esau's Descendants

When Jacob was born, he was holding Esau's heel. People saw this as a sign. They believed it meant that Esau's descendants, the Edomites, would one day serve Jacob's descendants, the Israelites.

This happened during the time of King David. The Edomites were under Israel's rule ([2 Samuel 8:11–15](#); [1 Chronicles 18:13](#)). This continued until the time of King Jehoram ([2 Kings 8:20–22](#); [2 Chronicles 21:8–10](#)).

In 845 BC, the Edomites rebelled and became free for a time. But King Amaziah of Judah conquered them again. He ruled Judah from 796 to 767 BC. Later, in 735 BC, the Edomites became free once more and stayed independent from Judah.

See Edom, Edomites.

Eschatology

A branch of theology concerned with the study of the last things, or end times. These beliefs include:

- What happens when people die
- What happens when Jesus returns
- What the final future will be like for both individuals and the whole world

Topics of Eschatology

Death

The Bible teaches that all humans will die ([Hebrews 9:27](#)). The only exceptions will be those who are still alive when Christ returns ([1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)). Physical death, or the "first death," is the separation of the soul from the body. Because of the presence of sin in the world, everyone must die ([Romans 5:12](#)).

The Intermediate State

This refers to the condition of the person between the time of death and the resurrection. The traditional orthodox view is that believers experience a state of conscious bliss in the presence of the Lord. Unbelievers are tormented by separation from the presence of God. This, however, is a relatively incomplete state when compared with the final destiny of each.

Some groups, such as Seventh-Day Adventists, have held a belief in a type of "soul sleep," or unconsciousness, between death and resurrection. Still others, notably Roman Catholics, believe in a place of purging in preparation for the future life.

The Second Coming

Scripture teaches that at the end of time, Christ will return in a personal, bodily form ([Acts 1:11](#)). No one knows exactly when this will occur, and it will consequently catch some by surprise, coming as a thief in the night ([Luke 12:39–40](#)). The time is unknown, but the fact that it will occur is very definite. Many of Jesus's parables refer to this fact and to the appropriateness of alert, faithful, and intensive activity. [Matthew 24–25](#) provides a good example of this.

The Resurrection

All who have died will come to life. This will be a bodily resurrection. This is a resumption of the bodily existence of each person. For believers, this will take place in connection with the second coming of Christ. The resurrection will involve the transformation of the body of this present flesh

into a new, perfected body ([1 Corinthians 15:35–56](#)). The Bible also indicates a resurrection of unbelievers, unto eternal death ([John 5:28–29](#)).

The Judgment

There will be a time of judgment in which the Lord will determine the spiritual condition of all who have lived. This is based on their relationship to him. Some will be sent off to everlasting reward and others to eternal punishment. Some theologians distinguish between the times when believers and unbelievers will be judged. Some see as many as seven different judgments occurring.

Heaven and Hell

The Bible teaches the existence of heaven. Heaven is a place of eternal joy. It is where Christians are in the presence of God. The Bible also speaks of hell. Hell is also called Gehenna or the lake of fire. Hell is a state of tragic separation of unbelievers from the presence of God. These are fixed states that are determined by decisions made within this life.

The Millennium

Many Christians believe there will be an earthly reign of Jesus Christ. This is called the Millennium. It immediately precedes the final judgment. This belief is based on [Revelation 20:4–7](#). There are three main views on the Millennium:

1. Premillennialists. They believe Christ will return personally to inaugurate this period.
2. Postmillennialists. They believe the kingdom will be established through the progressive successful preaching of the gospel.
3. Amillennialists: They do not believe that there will be any earthly reign of Christ at all. They interpret the 1,000 years of [Revelation 20](#) symbolically.

The Great Tribulation

The Bible speaks of a time of great anguish or tribulation. This time will come upon the earth, exceeding anything that has ever occurred before. Some identify this with the 70th week of [Daniel 9:24–27](#). They believe it will be of seven years duration. Some believe the church will be present to experience this because the Lord will not return until the end of the period. These are termed

posttribulationists. Others, known as pretribulationists, believe that the Lord's second coming will be in two stages, or phases:

1. Christ will come for his church to take the believers away before the great tribulation.
2. Christ will then make an open display of his glory before the whole world.

Still others, known as midtribulationists, believe that the church will be present for the first half of the seven years. The church will be removed before the severe part of the tribulation begins.

See also Apocalyptic; Day of the Lord; Death; Eternal Life; Heaven; Hell; Intermediate State; Judgment; Last Days; Last Judgment; Millennium; Resurrection; Second Coming of Christ; Daniel, Book of; Tribulation; Wrath of God.

Esdris

Mentioned in [2 Maccabees 12:36](#) as an army officer under Judas Maccabeus. Some Greek texts and the kjv read Gorgias, which may be either a place or a person.

Esek

Name Isaac gave to a well dug by his servants in the valley of Gerar ([Gn 26:20](#); see nlt mg). The name means "argument." When the herdsmen of Gerar claimed it belonged to them, Isaac relinquished Esek and another well, called Sitnah, to induce the men of Gerar to allow him to live peacefully in the land.

Eshan

Town in the hill country of the territory allotted to Judah's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 15:52](#)).

Eshbaal

Eshbaal was the fourth son of King Saul. He became the king of Israel after Saul died. Eshbaal's name means "man of Baal" or "Baal exists." ([1 Chronicles 8:33](#); [9:39](#)). In the time of the judges and when Israel first had kings, many Hebrew names

included the word *baal* (which means “master” or “possessor”).

Later, people wanted to avoid saying the name *baal*, because Baal was the name of a false god. So they changed *baal* to *bosheth*, which means “shame” (compare [Hosea 2:16–17](#)). That is why Eshbaal is called Ishbosheth in [2 Samuel 2:8](#), which means “man of shame.” Some think scribes changed the name in the book of Samuel because people read it out loud in public during synagogue services. The book of Chronicles was not read in the same way.

After Saul and his older sons died, Abner (Saul’s army commander) made Ishbosheth king ([2 Samuel 2:8–9](#)). But the tribe of Judah followed David instead. This caused a long struggle between David and Ishbosheth. Over time, David’s side grew stronger, while Ishbosheth’s side became weaker ([3:1](#)).

Later, Abner left Ishbosheth. Soon after, Joab, one of David’s men, killed Abner ([2 Samuel 3:27](#)). After Abner’s death, the people lost hope ([4:1](#)). Soon after, two of Ishbosheth’s own captains killed him (verse [7](#)). David did not approve of these deaths. But with Abner and Ishbosheth gone, nothing stood in the way of David becoming king over all the tribes.

See also David; Israel, History of; Saul #2.

Eshban

Dishon’s second son and grandson of Seir the Horite ([Gn 36:26](#); [1 Chr 1:41](#)).

Eshcol (Person)

Amorite who, with his brothers Mamre and Aner, helped the patriarch Abraham defeat the forces of Kedorlaomer and rescue Lot and his family ([Gn 14:13, 24](#)).

Eshcol (Place)

Valley near Hebron from which the spies sent by Moses brought back pomegranates, figs, and a large cluster of grapes ([Nm 13:23–24](#); [32:9](#); [Dt 1:24](#)). This site may be identifiable with ‘Ain Eshkali, just north of Hebron.

Eshean

KJV spelling of the town Eshan in [Joshua 15:52](#). *See* Eshan.

Eshek

Descendant of Jonathan, Saul’s son. Eshek’s grandsons were mighty men of valor in the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chr 8:38–40](#)).

Eshkalonite

Inhabitant of the Philistine city Ashkelon ([Jos 13:3](#), kjv). *See* Ashkelon.

Eshtaol

Lowland town on the border between Judah and Dan ([Jos 15:33](#); [19:41](#)), always mentioned along with nearby Zorah. In this area the young Samson began to be moved by the Spirit of the Lord ([Jgs 13:25](#)), and here he was later buried ([16:31](#)). Dan’s tribe sent out five brave men from Zorah and Eshtaol to seek additional land for tribal expansion. When they reported the vulnerability of the city of Laish, 600 men from Zorah and Eshtaol attacked it, opening the area for occupation by the Danites (ch [18](#)).

Eshtemoa (Person)

1. Ishbah’s son from Judah’s tribe ([1 Chr 4:17](#)).
2. Maacathite from Judah’s tribe ([1 Chr 4:19](#)).

Eshtemoa, Eshtemoh (Place)

City south of Jerusalem allotted to Judah when Palestine was divided among the 12 tribes ([Jos 15:50](#)). Eshtemoa was assigned to the Levites ([Jos 21:14](#); [1 Chr 6:57](#)). After an Amalekite victory, David sent booty to his allies in Eshtemoa ([1 Sm 30:26–31](#)). The site may be modern al-Samu’a, eight miles (13 kilometers) south of Hebron.

See also Levitical Cities.

Eshton

Mehir's son and the grandson of Chelub from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 4:11–12](#)).

Esli

Nahum's father and ancestor of Jesus, according to [Luke 3:25](#).

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Espousal

See Marriage, Marriage Customs.

Esrom

The spelling of Hezron, Perez's son, in the King James Version in [Matthew 1:3](#) and [Luke 3:33](#).

See Hezron (Person) #2.

Essenes

Jewish sect or community in Palestine in the last century BC and the first century AD.

Preview

- The Name
- Sources of Information
- Origin and History
- Admission to the Sect
- Community Life
- Religious Beliefs
- The Essenes and the Qumran Community

The Name

The sect is called *Esseni*, *Osseni*, *Ossaei*, *Essaeans*, and other variations; sometimes two different forms are found in the same author. No satisfactory explanation of the name has been given, but a number of scholars tend to prefer “healers,” which hardly seems likely since the term describes the

Therapeutae (“Healers”), a sect that was only distantly related to the Essenes, if at all.

Sources of Information

The principal sources of information about the Essenes are (1) Philo of Alexandria, a Jew who lived in Egypt from about 30 BC to sometime after AD 40, in his works *Let Every Good Man Be Free* and *Apology for the Jews*; (2) Flavius Josephus, a Jew of Palestine and later of Rome, who lived from AD 37 to about AD 100, in his works *War of the Jews* and *Jewish Antiquities*—our most extensive sources; (3) Pliny the Elder, a Roman who died in AD 79 and who may have been in Palestine with Titus during the Jewish War, in his *Natural History*; and (4) Hippolytus of Rome, in his work *A Refutation of All Heresies*, written about AD 230 and largely dependent on Josephus.

Josephus tells us that he determined to know the three Jewish “sects” intimately, so he joined the Essenes when he was 16. But since he was a Pharisee by the time he was 19, and since it took at least three years for the initiatory rites of the Essenes, we must conclude that he did not have time or opportunity to learn much about the inner life of the Essenes.

Origin and History

The first mention of the Essenes, as well as that of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, is in the time of Jonathan (160–143 BC), successor of Judas Maccabeus (see Josephus's *Antiquities* 13.5.9). Josephus calls these groups “sects” (Greek *haireseis*), a term that sometimes connotes heretical movements, but this is a later meaning of the word. Luke uses the very same term for Pharisees ([Acts 15:5](#); [26:5](#)), Sadducees ([5:17](#)), and Christians ([24:5, 14](#); [28:22](#)).

The Maccabean revolt began in 167 BC. The background of the uprising had been a struggle between the Seleucid Greeks and the Ptolemaic Greeks, with Palestine as the object of the struggle. The Seleucids won in 198 BC, but there were pro-Syrian and pro-Egyptian parties in Judea. Moreover, Hellenism, which was strongly promoted by the Seleucids, had taken a deep hold on many Jews. In order to participate in the athletic games, some Jews even resorted to operations to obliterate the sign of circumcision ([1 Macc 1:15](#)). In 168 the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes sold the Jewish high priesthood to the highest bidder, Menelaus. When this was rejected by the Jewish populace, violent persecution broke out.

Somewhere along the line a group of pious Jews came into existence, and they joined the Maccabees in the revolt. We know them as the Hasidim (or Hasideans, Assideans, “pious ones”; cf. [1 Macc 2:42](#)).

Because of numerous similarities in doctrine, it is generally accepted that the Pharisees are either the direct descendants of the Hasidim or one of two or more groups of descendants. It is further generally accepted that the Essenes are a group that split either from the Pharisees or from the Hasidim. Qumran (the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls) is looked upon either as a branch of the Essenes or as another closely related group of separatists whose origin was at approximately the same point in time.

Josephus speaks of only three Jewish sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes (*Antiquities* 18.1.2). Therefore, it is often concluded that these were the only Jewish sects at that time. This is a false conclusion. We know of at least seven Jewish sects, and perhaps as many as twelve. There is probably some overlap, and it is not always clear whether a particular group should be described as a religious party (e.g., the Zealots). But we can argue against Josephus’s number of sects by other data he supplies. According to Josephus, there were 6,000 Pharisees (*Antiquities* 17.2.4) and 4,000 Essenes (*Antiquities* 18.1.5; cf. Philo’s *Every Good Man* 76), and the Sadducees were fewer in number than the Pharisees (cf. *Wars* 2.8.14). This would account for, at most, 16,000 persons, and the population of Judea was well beyond that figure. Moreover, Josephus himself speaks of a “fourth philosophy” (*Antiquities* 18.1.6), which some scholars identify with the Zealots, although Josephus never does so. We can only conclude that in Josephus’s view there were three principal sects or groups of Jews.

The Essenes left the cities of Palestine and lived in the towns and villages. Pliny locates them west of the Dead Sea and says, “Below them was En-gedi” (*Natural History* 5.15.73), a statement that could mean either that En-gedi was at a lower elevation or that it was to the south. Scholars are not unanimous in the interpretation of this statement.

Admission to the Sect

Admission to the Essenes was a long, complicated process, consisting of one year as a postulant and two additional years of limited participation in the community. The novice took solemn oaths, which included his relationship to God and to his fellow members. He swore to hate the wicked and to love

truth, to conceal nothing from the community and to reveal nothing to outsiders, and to transmit doctrines exactly as he received them. Until he took these oaths, he could not touch the food of the community.

Community Life

When a new member joined the Essenes, he turned over all property to the community. The individual members were without goods, property, or homes. They lived frugally, having only what was necessary for life. They despised riches, had no slaves, and did not engage in commerce. They worked in fields or at crafts that contributed to peace, and would not make instruments of war. They dwelt in brotherhoods, ate together, held property in common, had a common purse and a common store of clothing. They always wore white clothing.

Evidence is somewhat confusing about their views on marriage. They either banned it entirely or disdained it, counting continence as one of their virtues. There were Essenes who did marry, but these looked upon the marriage relationship as existing only for the purpose of raising children so that the race might continue.

There is also mixed evidence concerning children. According to Philo, they had no children, no adolescents, not even young men. Josephus, on the other hand, tells us that they adopted children, and the Essenes who married raised children of their own.

The Essenes were divided into four lots or ranks and would do nothing unless ordered by superiors, except for works of mercy. They obeyed their elders. Justice was dispensed at an assembly of 100 members or more. For serious offenses the penalty was expulsion from the community, and the expelled member usually starved to death because of the tremendous oaths he had taken.

A Typical Day

Josephus describes a typical day in the life of the Essenes. They rose before dawn and recited prayers to the rising sun (which probably is not to be interpreted as sun worship). Then each man worked at his craft until the fifth hour (11 am). At that time the community assembled, put on linen loincloths, bathed in cold water, and then went to the building that was restricted to members, to a dining hall that was further restricted to those who were pure. Each Essene received bread and one

bowlful of food. The priest said a prayer before anyone was permitted to touch the food, and another prayer after the meal. Then the members laid aside their sacred garments and resumed their work until evening. The evening meal was in the same manner as the noon meal. They ate quietly and spoke only in turn, eating and drinking only what they needed to satisfy them.

Religious Beliefs

It is somewhat risky to attempt to reconstruct Essene theology from Josephus and Philo, for both of these writers thought in philosophical rather than theological forms.

The Essenes were not concerned with logic or natural philosophy, but rather devoted themselves to ethics. Josephus likens them to the Greek Pythagoreans (*Antiquities* 15.10.4), but he does not explain this further. The Essenes were concerned with purity and holy minds. They rejected oaths (apparently excepting the tremendous oath they took upon entering the sect), and considered their word sufficient. They observed the seventh day, going to synagogues and sitting according to age. One would read and another explain, making use of symbols and the triple use of definitions (which may be a reference to the rabbinic method of exegesis). They would do no work on the Sabbath. There is confusion concerning the matter of sacrifices; either they did not offer sacrifices (Philo's *Every Good Man*) or they sacrificed among themselves and did not send sacrifices to the temple (Josephus's *Antiquities* 18.1.5). They did send offerings to the temple, according to this same passage in Josephus. The name of the lawgiver (Moses? or God himself?) was an object of great veneration.

The Essenes studied holy books and were skilled at predicting the future. Josephus tells of one Essene, Menahem, who foretold that Herod would be king (*Antiquities* 15.10.5). They also studied the works of the ancients (which appears to mean works other than the Scriptures), and became proficient in the knowledge of healing, of roots, and of stones. The Essenes believed that their souls were immortal; however, as Josephus seems to have understood this doctrine, the body was "corruptible and its constituent matter impermanent" (*War* 2.8.11), which may imply a denial of the resurrection.

The material available to us is hardly satisfactory for reconstructing Essene theology. It is clear, however, that they were Jews, devoted to the law,

but with certain emphases or aberrations that set them apart from both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were ascetic, although some of them married, and they were pacifists, although Josephus tells of an Essene named John who was a general in the army (*War* 2.20.4). Above all, they were exclusivistic, withdrawing from other Jews and living a communal or communistic type of life.

The Essenes and the Qumran Community

There are many similarities between the Essenes and the people of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Both were Jewish sects. Both were communal groups that had withdrawn from the common stream of Judaism. Both were located west of the Dead Sea. Both had long and rigid processes for admission of new members. Both had an oath of admission. Both hated the wicked and loved the members of the community. Both required the handing over of all property to the sect. Both kept their secrets within their own group. The daily life—prayers, ritual bathing, common meals, the study and interpretation of the Bible, and concern with purity—is markedly similar. Scrupulous observance of the Sabbath, the division into ranks or lots, and the authority of elders and superiors are features of each group. Both had a minimum group of ten required for assembly. Both had laws of expulsion for serious offenses.

The differences are also noteworthy and not as often pointed out. Obviously the Qumran community could not have constituted all of the Essenes but were at most a small fraction (perhaps 200) of the 4,000 Essenes. Moreover, they were at best only one of the towns and villages of the Essenes. If Qumranians worked at crafts, we know nothing of it either from their texts or from the archaeology of Qumran. Similarly, we know nothing of their attitude toward war or the implements of war. But we do know from the War Scroll (1QM) that they had an elaborate concept of the final war, with an army, weapons, maneuvers, and the like, and they do not sound like pacifists (cf. 1QS 9:16, 22–23; 10:18; 1QSa 1:19–21). It appears that the Qumranians did engage in commerce (CD 13:14–15). We have no information about any common store of clothing at Qumran. From the Dead Sea literature we know that there were provisions for marriage, for young children, adolescents, and young men. Of course, the Qumranians may have been the marrying Essenes to whom Josephus refers. Admission to the Qumran group was a two-year process; to the Essenes, it was three years.

We know nothing of Qumran prayers to the sun or of daily bathing, although some of the “cisterns” were probably immersion pools. Unlike the Essenes, the Qumranians did use oaths, and there are extended sections on oaths in their literature (CD 9:8–12; 15:1–10; 16:6–18). The Qumran attitude toward sacrifices is not entirely clear, but there is provision for sending sacrifices to the temple. We know of no aversion to oil among the Qumranians, such as is described for the Essenes.

There is no evidence that the Qumranians used triple definitions in their biblical interpretation. There is a minimum use of symbols in their writings. There is no evidence that they studied the knowledge of healing, roots, or stones. If they were experts at predicting the future, we have no record of it.

The seating arrangement at Qumran was by rank and not by age, as among the Essenes. Rank was altered by an annual examination at Qumran. There is no indication that justice at Qumran was handled by 100 men; rather, it seems to have been administered by a council of 15 (1QS 8:1) or 10 (CD 9:4–5).

In view of the similarities, we must conclude that there was some kind of relationship between the Essenes and the Qumran community. In view of the differences, we are forced to the conclusion that they were not exactly the same. There are several possible explanations: (1) The Essenes and the Qumranians may have started out as the same split-off from the Hasidim, and then later split again. In fact, the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly the Damascus Document (CD), hint at some kind of split in the earlier period of the group. (2) The Essenes of Josephus and Philo are about a century later than the literature of the Qumranians, and may have altered somewhat during that period of time. (3) The Essenes were located in a number of towns and villages and they may have developed significant local variations, so that Josephus may have drawn his description from one location, Philo and Pliny from others, while the Qumran group represents yet another local variant form. There is little to guide a preference for any one of these explanations.

See also Dead Sea Scrolls; Judaism; Pharisees; Qumran.

Esther (Person)

Esther was a Jewish queen of Persia who had two names. Her Jewish name was Hadassah (which means “Myrtle” in Hebrew). Her Persian name was Esther (which means “Star”). Some researchers think her Persian name might be connected to Ishtar, a Babylonian goddess, because Jewish people living in exile were sometimes given names from other religions (see [Daniel 1:7](#)).

Esther had no parents (she was an orphan). She belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, one of the twelve family groups of the Jewish people. At this time, many Jewish people were living away from their homeland in the country of Persia because they had been forced to leave (they were exiles). Esther lived with her cousin Mordecai in Susa, the capital city of Persia. Mordecai worked for the government and was also a secret leader of the Jewish people who lived there (see [Esther 3:5–6](#)).

Esther later became queen. This happened because King Ahasuerus (also called Xerxes) became angry with his first wife, Queen Vashti. The king had ordered Vashti to come to a feast, but she refused to come ([Esther 1:11–12](#)).

After Esther became queen, she earned the king's trust by telling him about a secret plan to kill him ([Esther 2:21–23](#)). Because the king now trusted her, Esther was later able to save her people from Haman. He was one of the king's most important officials. Haman had planned to kill all the Jews.

The Jewish people started a special celebration called Purim. This celebration remembers how God used Esther and Mordecai to save their people. Jewish people still celebrate Purim every year.

See also Esther, Book of.

Esther, Additions to

The Additions to Esther are six passages, or about 105 verses, added to the Hebrew text of Esther. The author was the work of a Jewish writer who wanted to add a theological note that was missing from the book of Esther. Some scholars think the additions were originally written in Greek, while others believe they were translated from Hebrew or Aramaic. The exact date is unknown, but most suggest a date of 100 BC. This would be much later than the original book of Esther.

A summary of the additions is as follows:

1. [11:2–12:6](#): Mordecai's dream, including the plot against the king's life. This passage comes before [Esther 1:1](#).
2. [13:1–7](#): The edict of Artaxerxes. This addition comes after [Esther 3:13](#), where the king is called Ahasuerus.
3. [13:8–14:19](#): The prayers of Mordecai and Esther. This passage was to be included after [Esther 4:17](#).
4. [15:1–16](#): The king's anger at Esther's appearance, followed by his change of attitude. This was to be added before [Esther 5:3](#) since it expands on [Esther 5:1–2](#).
5. [16:1–24](#): The edict of Ahasuerus about the Jewish people. This section follows [Esther 8:12](#).
6. [10:4–11:1](#): The interpretation of Mordecai's dream. This addition follows [Esther 10:3](#).

The additions have differences that show they were not originally part of Esther:

- Compare [Esther 1:19](#) and [8:8](#) with [16:17](#)
- Compare [Esther 2:15–18](#) with [14:15](#)
- Compare [Esther 2:16–19](#) with [11:3–12:1](#)
- Compare [Esther 2:21–23](#) and [6:3–4](#) with [12:5](#)
- Compare [Esther 3:1](#) with [16:10](#)
- Compare [Esther 3:5](#) with [12:6](#)
- Compare [Esther 5:4–8](#) with [14:7](#)
- Compare [Esther 7:10](#) with [16:18](#)
- Compare [Esther 9:20–32](#) with [16:22](#)

The Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament) and Old Latin texts included these additions to Esther. Jerome, a fourth-century Christian scholar, placed the additions as an appendix in the Vulgate, his Latin translation of the Bible.

Etam

1. Rocky area in western Judah where Samson hid from his pursuers ([Jgs 15:8, 11](#)).
2. Unknown site located in Simeonite territory ([1 Chr 4:32](#)).

3. Town in the Judean uplands near Bethlehem fortified by Rehoboam of Judah after the division of the kingdom ([2 Chr 11:6](#)). It is identified with Khirbet el-Khokh, just southwest of Bethlehem. The spring at Etam supplied Jerusalem with additional water in the Greek and Roman periods.

Eternal Life

Mode of existence referred to in Scripture characterized by either timelessness or immortality. The kind of life attributed to God and distributed to believers. The biblical writers understood that there was a living God who existed prior to the world's creation and who will continue to exist when the end of time arrives. God's gift to those who are obedient and responsible to him is designated as "eternal life" or some such synonym. John's Gospel provides the most definitive material on eternal life.

The phrase "eternal life" occurs only once in the Greek version of the OT ([Daniel 12:2](#), with the basic meaning of "the life of the age," designating the life of the age beyond the resurrection from the dead). The primary meaning of "life" in the OT, however, is the quality of well-being in earthly existence.

During the intertestamental period, the rabbis made a clear distinction between "this age" and "the age which is to come". They emphasized that the concept of life in the new age consists of a qualitative distinction from the present age, rather than simply a quantitative one.

The Greek word translated "eternal" is derived from the word for "age" or "eon". Placing the NT within the context of Judaism, with its concept of a living God and the promise of "the age which is to come," gives depth and color to the meaning of the adjective "eternal." Jesus Christ's coming as God's definitive revelation makes the qualities of life in the future messianic age accessible in the present reality.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked for directions on how to inherit eternal life ([Mark 10:17](#)). He was obviously thinking of resurrection in the age to come. Jesus answered in the same terms (v [30](#)).

In his response to the rich young ruler, Jesus equated the reception of eternal life with entrance into the kingdom of God ([Mark 10:23–25](#)). The kingdom of God is not simply a future event but is already inaugurated in Jesus' life, ministry, and

teachings. The kingdom is a gift of life available while the follower still lives within the present age. Many of Jesus' parables emphasize this point (e.g., those in [Matthew 13](#)). The Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount ([5:3–12](#)) reinforce the concept of a present blessedness that includes salvation, forgiveness, and righteousness. Therefore, eternal life is a present blessing for those who submit to God's reign and enjoy the blessing of this new era of salvation before the end of the present age.

The most thorough discussion of eternal life comes from John's Gospel. John's purpose highlights the crucial significance of the concept: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" ([John 20:31](#), Revised Standard Version). The earliest Johannine reference to eternal life is found in [John 3:15](#).

John clearly shared in the Jewish expectation of the age to come with its anticipated blessings (e.g., [John 3:36](#); [4:14](#); [5:29, 39](#); [6:27](#); [12:25](#)). Eternal life is defined by the special gifts of the messianic age when it arrives at consummation. Lazarus's resurrection (ch [11](#)) was a living parable demonstrating the future life available to those who trust in Christ. Martha, before her brother's actual resurrection, asserted her belief that Lazarus would be raised on the last day (v [24](#)). Jesus responded that he himself is the resurrection and the life, and that those who believe in him will never die, even if they die physically (vv [25–26](#)).

The main focus of John's Gospel, however, is not on the anticipated future but in the present experience of that future life. The life of the age to come is already available in Christ to the believer. The metaphors with which Jesus defined his own mission emphasize the present new life: living water that is a spring of water welling up to eternal life ([John 4:10–14](#)); living bread that satisfies the world's spiritual hunger ([6:35–40](#)); the light of the world who leads his followers into the light of life ([8:12](#)); the good shepherd who brings abundant life ([10:10](#)); the life giver who raises the dead ([11:25](#)); the way, the truth, and the life ([14:6](#)); and the genuine vine who sustains those who abide in him ([15:5](#)).

Jesus was very careful to note that the accomplishment of his mission did not rest in his own nature and ability but in the Father who sent him. Jesus' submission to the Father highlights again the fact that life is a gift of God. Those who believe in the Son of God are recipients of the life

that God alone gives—eternal life. Therefore, the promise of resurrection for all believers is the natural consequence of God's gift ([John 5:26–29](#)). It has been made explicit in Lazarus's resurrection and guaranteed in Christ's resurrection as the "firstfruits" (in Pauline terminology, King James Version [1 Corinthians 15:23](#)).

Jesus added further content to the concept of eternal life by connecting it with knowing the true God ([John 17:3](#)). In Greek thought, knowledge referred to the result of either contemplation or mystical ecstasy. In the OT, however, knowledge meant experience, relationship, fellowship, and concern (cf. [Jeremiah 31:34](#)). This connotation of knowledge as intimate relationship is underlined by the usage of the verb form to designate sexual relations between male and female (cf. [Genesis 4:1](#)). Jesus stated, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father" ([John 10:14–15](#), Revised Standard Version). The intimate and mutual relationship of Father and Son is the model for the relationship of the Son and his disciples. This knowledge does not come by education or manipulation of the mind but by revelation through the Son ([1:18](#); cf. [14:7](#)).

A brief survey of the primary elements in the concept of eternal life clearly shows that it is not simply an endless or everlasting life. Although there are no final boundaries to eternal life, the Bible's primary emphasis is on the quality of life, especially its divine elements. Eternal life is the importation of the qualities of the age to come into the present through the revelation of a faithful God in Christ, and it brings knowledge of God's relationship with him.

See also Life; New Creation, New Creature; Regeneration.

Eternal Punishment

See Hell.

Eternity

Time without beginning or end.

Eternity in the Old Testament

The Old Testament does not have a single word that means the same as our English word

"eternity." Instead, this idea comes from phrases like "from generation to generation" and "from age to age." The idea that God created and controls history led to the belief that God's life has no end. Therefore, God is described as "eternal" (see [Genesis 21:33](#); [Isaiah 26:4](#); [40:28](#)). The Hebrews knew that God is eternal, unlike humans. Their time on earth is limited.

Eternity in the New Testament

The New Testament continues these ideas from Judaism and the Old Testament. In the Greek language, one word describes both periods of time and God's eternal nature. For example, the word translated as "eternal" in [Romans 16:26](#) comes from the Greek word translated as "eon," which means "age" or "a very long time."

God rules over all time periods, and he has no beginning or end. He gives purpose and order to human life, even though humans only live for a limited time. The New Testament tells us that time will eventually end. This adds to what the Old Testament teaches about God creating everything. Together, these teachings help us understand that God is eternal. Another way to say this is that God existed before everything else and will continue to exist after everything else.

The New Testament talks about how God showed himself through Jesus Christ in similar ways to how the Old Testament describes God showing himself to Israel. The way the New Testament uses prepositions with the word "eon" in different ways when talking about time. For example:

- "Never before" is literally "out of the age" in [John 9:32](#)
- "of ages past" is literally "from the age" in [Luke 1:70](#)
- "forever" is literally "into the age" ([Jude 1:13](#))
- "to eternal" is literally "into the ages" ([John 4:14](#))

The first two phrases refer to a time long ago in the past. The last two phrases refer to an undefined future, often translated as "forever."

Different Views of Time and Eternity

The Bible's view of eternity was different from what other cultures believed at that time. Many cultures thought time moved in circles, like events

happening over and over again. This was especially true in Greek culture, where people saw time like a circle that kept repeating.

In Greek thinking, salvation meant finding a way to escape this endless cycle of time to reach a state where time did not exist. But the Bible sees time differently. It describes time as a straight line that has both a beginning and an end, with God controlling both.

This means the Bible views salvation differently too. In the Bible, salvation does not happen through escaping time. Instead, it happens in each person's life as they experience God, and it moves toward the final completion that God has planned.

The Greek and biblical views of time differ. This raises the question: what is eternity? Is it just endless time? Or, is it something else, like timelessness? The Bible suggests that eternity is not timelessness. It is not the opposite of present time. Present time and eternity share some basic traits.

The Two Ages of Time

The New Testament (following Jewish teaching) divides time into two parts::

- "this present age" (the time we live in now)
- "the age to come" (the future time God has promised)

The difference between these ages is not just about time versus no time. The 'age to come' will be a real future time with its own special qualities. When the Bible describes how this new age will begin, it shows us many details about what will happen.

This new age will not simply return things to how they were at the very beginning. Instead, it will complete God's plan for everything, as described in [Revelation 1:4](#) where God is called "Him who is and was and is to come." This is why the Bible calls it "the new creation."

The New and Present Ages Together

The New Testament teaches that the "age to come" has already started. It started with the life and work of Christ, even though we still live in the present age. Both ages are happening at the same time right now.

We can see this idea in several phrases the Bible uses. For example:

- "the firstfruits"
- "the pledge of our inheritance"
- "the last days"

For example, [Hebrews 6:5](#) talks about people who have already "who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age." This means that followers of Jesus can enjoy some of the future age's blessings right now, because of what Jesus did to save us.

Understanding Time and Eternity

Eternity is not the opposite of time. It is not a state where time doesn't exist. Instead, eternity is time without limits. It began when Jesus brought God's kingdom, and it continues forever into the future.

God rules over both our present time (which [Galatians 1:4](#) calls "the present evil age") and eternity. As Lord of all time, God gives purpose and meaning to both.

See also Age; God, Being and Attributes of.

Eth-Kazin

One of the towns marking the eastern boundary of Zebulun's tribe ([Jos 19:13](#)).

Etham

The first encampment of the Hebrews after leaving Succoth ([Exodus 13:20](#)). It was perhaps on the border of the wilderness of Shur ([Exodus 15:22](#); [Numbers 33:6-8](#)). Some scholars have suggested it was an Egyptian fortress, but it probably was not.

Ethan

1. Wise man comparable to Solomon ([1 Kgs 4:31](#)) and probably the author of [Psalm 89](#). It is uncertain whether he was a contemporary of Solomon.
2. Descendant of Judah and son of Zerah ([1 Chr 2:6](#)), perhaps the same as #1 above. However, they are ascribed different fathers in the two passages.
3. Son of Zimmah, a descendant of Gershon, Levi's oldest son ([1 Chr 6:42](#)).
4. Descendant of Levi through his son Merari, and the son of Kishi ([1 Chr 6:44](#)) or Kushaiah ([15:17](#)).

He was one of three outstanding musicians, along with Heman and Asaph, appointed by David (vv [16-19](#)). It was probably this Ethan whose name is ascribed in the title to [Psalm 39](#) (as "Jeduthun," which he is called in [1 Chr 16:41](#); [25:1](#)) as "chief musician"; it is likely that he composed the music for the psalm.

Ethanim

Early name for the seventh month in the Jewish calendar ([1 Kgs 8:2](#), nlt mg). *See* Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

Ethbaal

King of Sidon whose daughter Jezebel entered into a political marriage with Ahab of Israel ([1 Kgs 16:31](#)). Ethbaal was credited with building Botrys in Phoenicia and founding the colony of Auza in Libya. He also established commercial relations with Damascus.

Ether

1. A town in Judah in the Shephelah region ([Jos 15:42](#)). The modern town of Khirbet el-Ater is the probable site.
2. A village in Simeon ([Jos 19:7](#)), paralleled in [1 Chronicles 4:32](#) by "Token."

Ethiopia

The Bible uses two different names for the land south of Egypt. In the Old Testament, Ethiopia was called "Cush" ([Genesis 10:6](#); [1 Chronicles 1:8](#); [Isaiah 11:11](#)). "Cush" is the English spelling of the Hebrew word for this land. When the Bible was later translated into Greek, the translators used the name "Ethiopia" instead of "Cush."

However, they kept the name "Cush" when listing different groups of people in [Genesis 10:6-8](#) and [1 Chronicles 1:8-10](#). Some English Bible translations follow this Greek pattern and use "Ethiopia" for the place and "Cush" when it is a personal name. Other English translations use "Cush" for both the place and the personal name, as well as "Cushite" for people living in the land ([2 Samuel 18:21-23](#), [31-32](#)).

The History of Ancient Ethiopia and Its Names

The Hebrew name "Cush" originally came from the Egyptian language. The Egyptians first used this name during a time called the Middle Kingdom. Back then, it only meant a small area near two rocky parts of the Nile River. Later, during a time called the New Kingdom (from about 1570 to 1160 BC), the name Cush was used for a much larger area that stretched further south. Today, this larger area includes parts of what we now call Nubia and northern Sudan.

It is important to understand that the Ethiopia mentioned in the Bible is not the same as the country called Ethiopia today. The modern country of Ethiopia used to be called Abyssinia. The name "Ethiopia" comes from the Greek language. Some scholars think it means "burnt-faced" (compare [Acts 8:27](#)). This old name influenced the Arabic name "Beled es Sudan," which means "land of the blacks." This is where we get the modern name "Sudan."

The Old Testament writers used the name "Cush" the same way the Egyptians did. They used it to describe the dry land that stretched south to a city called Aswan (which the Bible calls Syene in [Ezekiel 29:10](#)). No one, not even the Egyptians, knew exactly where the borders of this land ended. They just knew it went somewhere past a city called Meroé in what is now Sudan.

Most of Ethiopia was desert land east of the Nile River. The land's rough features made it very dangerous to travel through. The river itself was dangerous, too. Large rocks stuck out of the water, forcing the river into narrow paths. This created rough waters that could easily sink boats. These natural barriers helped protect Egypt from attacks from the south. However, they also made Ethiopia a very difficult place to live.

The land in Egyptian Nubia and northern Sudan was mostly good for farming, but it was often flooded. Because of this flooding, the Nubian people had to move to an area between two cities called Aswan and Kom Ombo.

Because Nubia is mostly desert, it gets very little rain. Only the areas farther up the river receive more rainfall. The city of Meroé was once the capital of this region. It sits in a special area between two rivers, the Nile River on one side and the Atbara River on the other. People called this area the "island of Meroé." In ancient times, this land had good soil for growing plants and may have

been covered with many trees because it got rain at certain times of the year.

Ancient Ethiopia in the Bible

The book of Esther tells us that Ethiopia (Cush) was the farthest southwest province in the Persian Empire ([Esther 1:1](#); [8:9](#)). Ethiopia's "rivers" were probably the Nile and the Atbara Rivers (compare [Isaiah 18:1](#); [Zephaniah 3:10](#)). Many valuable things came from Ethiopia ([Job 28:19](#); [Isaiah 45:14](#)). Egyptian records tell us these included valuable stones, animals, and farm products.

Some of God's prophets wrote about Ethiopia in different ways. Some said that Jewish people who were forced to live in Ethiopia would return home ([Psalm 87:4](#); [Isaiah 11:11](#)). Other prophets warned that God would judge Ethiopia ([Isaiah 20:3](#); [Ezekiel 30:4](#); [Zephaniah 2:12](#)). But because Ethiopia was under God's control, it could receive both God's punishment and blessing. Some prophets wrote that the Ethiopian people would one day believe in the God of Israel ([Psalm 68:31](#); [Isaiah 45:14](#); [Zephaniah 3:10](#)).

The Ethiopia mentioned in [Acts 8:27](#) was the kingdom of Candace. "Candace" was the title given to all queens who ruled Ethiopia. The queen ruled from a city called Meroé. Around 300 BC, Meroé had become the new capital of Ethiopia.

See also Cush (Place).

Ethnan

Member of Helah's family from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 4:7](#)).

Ethnarch

The title given to a person who rules because of the permission given by another country. Ethnarch was a position below a king but above a tetrarch or governor. Three ethnarchs ruled in Palestine:

1. Simon, during the Maccabean period ([1 Maccabees 14:47](#))
2. Archelaus in the time of Jesus ([Matthew 2:22](#))
3. Another in Damascus during the life of the apostle Paul ([2 Corinthians 11:32](#))

Ethni

Alternate name for Jeatherai, Zerah's son, in [1 Chronicles 6:41](#). *See* Jeaterai, Jeatherai.

Eubulus

A Roman Christian who sent greetings to Timothy while the apostle Paul was imprisoned for a second time in Rome ([2 Timothy 4:21](#)). Since Eubulus is a Greek name it could indicate his gentile (non-Jewish) origin.

Eucharist

The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, which means "thanksgiving." It refers to one of the central Christian mysteries: sharing in the body and blood of Christ through bread and wine. The Eucharist is also called Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.

See Lord's Supper, The.

Euergetes

Title of honor belonging to two Ptolemaic rulers. From the Greek word meaning "Benefactor," the title was ascribed to rulers known for their benevolent actions. *See* Ptolemaic Empire.

Eumenes

The designation of a king of Pergamum, Eumenes II (197–158 BC) mentioned in [1 Maccabees 8:8](#) in connection with an alliance that Judas Maccabeus made with the Romans during their war with Antiochus the Great.

Eunice

The mother of the apostle Timothy and daughter of Lois ([2 Timothy 1:5](#)). She was the wife of a pagan Greek man. Eunice was a Jewish Christian ([Acts 16:1](#)). She taught Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures "from infancy" ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)). Eunice converted to Christianity during the first trip of the

apostle Paul to her home in Lystra. This happened sometime before his visit mentioned in [Acts 16:1](#).

See also Timothy (Person).

Eunuch

An officer in the court or household of a ruler, often assigned to the women's quarters. Many of these men were castrated (having their male genitalia removed), though not always (compare [Genesis 39:1](#)). Eunuchs were public officials in:

- Israel ([1 Samuel 8:15](#); [1 Chronicles 28:1](#))
- Persia ([Esther 2:3](#))
- Ethiopia ([Jeremiah 38:7](#); [Acts 8:27](#))
- Babylon ([Daniel 1:3](#))

Eunuchs were not part of public worship in Israel ([Deuteronomy 23:1](#)), but the prophet Isaiah referred to them in the restored messianic kingdom ([Isaiah 56:3–5](#); see [Acts 8](#)).

The Ethiopian eunuch in [Acts 8:27–39](#) was probably in charge of the treasury. They have been credited with spreading Christianity to Ethiopia.

Jesus mentioned three kinds of eunuchs ([Matthew 19:12](#)), including those who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. This probably refers to those who decide never to get married to serve the kingdom (for example, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostle Paul).

Euodia, Euodias

Prominent woman in the Philippian church whom Paul asked to resolve her differences with Syntyche ([Phil 4:2](#)). The nature of their disagreement is not known, but it was of enough severity to reach Paul in Rome. Both women had labored with him in the work of the gospel ([4:3](#)).

Eupator

The family name of Antiochus V. He was a king of the Seleucid Empire (a kingdom that ruled parts of the Middle East and Asia from about 312 BC to 63 BC). The name Eupator means "son of a noble father." *See* Antiochus V.

Euphrates River

The Euphrates is the largest river in western Asia. It starts in the mountains of central Armenia, where two smaller rivers (the Kara-Su and the Murat-Suyu) join together.

The river flows southeast for about 2,900 kilometers (1,800 miles). It meets the Tigris River near a place called Korna, about 160 kilometers (100 miles) from the Persian Gulf.

For most of its length, the Euphrates is shallow. Small boats can travel about 1,930 kilometers (1,200 miles) along the river. Larger ships, such as ocean liners, can travel only after the Euphrates and Tigris rivers join, as far as the city of Basra.

The river rises in spring (March to June) because of melting snow in the mountains. In ancient times, people built canals to store water during this season. These canals helped control flooding and made farming successful. Because of this, the land could support many people.

The Euphrates was one of four rivers that came from the river that watered the garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:14](#)). God promised Abraham that his land would reach as far as the upper part of the Euphrates ([Genesis 15:18](#); [Deuteronomy 1:7](#); [11:24](#)). During the time of Kings David and Solomon, Israel's land almost reached this boundary ([2 Samuel 8:3](#); [10:16](#); [1 Kings 4:24](#)).

The Bible often calls the Euphrates "the river" ([Numbers 22:5](#); [Deuteronomy 11:24](#); [Joshua 24:3, 14](#)). The Bible also calls the Euphrates "the great river" ([Joshua 1:4](#)). People who lived east of the Euphrates called the land of Israel "beyond the river" ([Ezra 4:10](#); [Nehemiah 2:7-9](#)).

The prophet Jeremiah sent a man named Seraiah to this river with a book of prophecies. These prophecies were about the destruction of Babylon. After reading them, Jeremiah told Seraiah to throw the book into the Euphrates. This was a symbol for the way Babylon would never come back to power ([Jeremiah 51:63](#)).

The book of Revelation also mentions the Euphrates. It speaks of angels released at the river and a time when the river dries up to prepare the way for kings from the east ([Revelation 9:14](#); [16:12](#)).

See also Babylon, Babylonia; Mesopotamia.

Eupolemus

A Jewish ambassador sent by Judas Maccabeus to Rome along with Jason, the son of Eleazar, to establish an alliance. He is identified in [1 Maccabees 8:17](#) as the son of John, the son of Accos.

Euroclydon

The King James Version transliteration of the Greek word for the powerful northeasterly wind mentioned during Paul's journey to Rome in [Acts 27:14](#). This dangerous storm wind struck the ship suddenly after they sailed from the harbor of Fair Havens on the island of Crete. Modern Bible translations call this a "northeaster."

See Northeaster.

Eutychus

A young man whose name was common among slaves. Eutychus appears only once in the Bible, in [Acts 20:9](#). The name Eutychus comes from Greek origins and means "fortunate" or "good fortune." This meaning creates an interesting contrast with his story.

Eutychus appears in a story about an accident that happened while the apostle Paul was preaching in the city of Troas. Eutychus was sitting on a windowsill listening to Paul's long sermon. As the night went on, Eutychus became very sleepy. He fell into a deep sleep and then fell from the window, which was on the third floor of the building. People thought he was dead from the fall, but the apostle Paul went down to him and brought him back to life (verses [7-12](#)).

Evangelist

An evangelist is a person who announces and shares the good news about Jesus Christ. This term appears three times in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul urged the Ephesian church to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received" ([Ephesians 4:1-12](#)). His urging emphasized the gifts given to each person "to preserve the unity of the Spirit" (verse [3](#)). Paul explained that after Jesus went up to heaven, he

“gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (verse [11](#)). This means Jesus chooses people for these different roles and gives them to the church as gifts.

The evangelist is one of the gifts Jesus gives to the church. The meaning of the term indicates that the task of the evangelist is to tell people outside the church about Jesus. Their role is similar to an apostle's, but with one key difference. An apostle had to know Jesus personally during his time on earth ([Acts 1:21-22](#)). The evangelist is different than the pastor or teacher. While evangelists first introduce people to Jesus, pastors and teachers help believers grow in their faith afterward. The reference to "Philip the evangelist" ([21:8](#)) supports the idea of evangelist as a title. It is a gifted ministry to which Jesus calls some in the church.

A person can have more than one role in the church. For example, Paul told Timothy, who was a pastor and teacher, to “do the work of an evangelist” ([2 Timothy 4:5](#)). This shows that “evangelist” can mean both a main role that someone is called to do and a task that other church leaders might do as part of their work.

See also Spiritual Gifts.

Eve

The first woman, who was called the “the mother of all living” ([Genesis 3:20](#)). The book of Genesis tells us that after God created Adam, he saw that Adam should not be alone. God decided to create “a suitable helper” for Adam ([2:18](#)). The Hebrew word for helper is *ezer*, which is also used in other parts of the Old Testament to describe how God helps Israel. God made Adam fall into a deep sleep. Then God took one of Adam's ribs and used it to create Eve (verses [21-25](#)).

Her Name

Adam gave his wife Eve two names. First, he called her “woman.” This name showed her connection to man ([Genesis 2:23](#)). Later, after they disobeyed God, he named her Eve, which means “life.” It refers to her role as the first mother of the human race ([3:20](#)).

Her Story

Adam and Eve first lived in the garden of Eden. They obeyed God by serving him and caring for one

another. Then evil entered the world. The serpent tempted Eve to disobey what God commanded. God had told them not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ([Genesis 2:17; 3:3](#)). The serpent tricked Eve with clever words, and she ate the fruit. She then gave some fruit to Adam, who also ate it even though he was not tricked like Eve was. After eating the fruit, they realized they were naked and made clothes from fig leaves.

When God came to talk with them, they hid from him. When God asked what happened, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. God told Eve that because of their disobedience, giving birth would be painful. He also said that her husband would rule over her ([Genesis 3:16](#)). Later, Eve became the mother of Cain, Abel, Seth, and other children ([4:1-2, 25; 5:4](#)).

Her Future

The New Testament mentions Eve twice. The apostle Paul refers to Eve when discussing whether women should teach in the church. He writes, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man” ([1 Timothy 2:12](#)). The Greek word for “man” is the same word for “husband,” so some scholars argue that Paul may be referring specifically to a woman's relationship with her husband rather than to all men in general. Paul's reasoning is that man was created first, and the woman was deceived and became the first to sin ([1 Timothy 2:12-15; 2 Corinthians 11:3](#)).

Some interpret this as Paul emphasizing the creation order and the fall (when Adam and Eve first sinned) as reasons for limiting women's authority in the church. Others argue that Paul's instructions were specific to the church in Ephesus at that time, where false teaching was a problem. They understand Paul's words as addressing a particular situation rather than establishing a universal rule that forbids all women in all churches from teaching.

See also Adam (Person); Garden of Eden.

Evening

The time at the end of the day when the sun sets and darkness begins. In biblical timekeeping, evening marked the transition to a new day, as days were counted from sunset to sunset.

See Day.

Evening Sacrifice

See Offerings and Sacrifices.

Everlasting Life

See Eternal Life.

Evi

Evi was one of five kings of Midian who were killed in a battle against Israel under the leadership of Moses ([Numbers 31:8](#)). God apparently told Moses to fight against Midian because the Midianites had led the Israelites to practice pagan religions. [Joshua 13:21](#) calls Evi a prince of Sihon, the Midianite king.

Evil

Evil refers to everything that stands against God's character, will, and purposes. It includes moral wrongdoing, rebellion, sin, corruption, suffering, and demonic influence. Evil is not something God created but is a corruption of what God made good ([Genesis 1:31](#); [Ecclesiastes 7:29](#); [Isaiah 5:20](#)).

Biblical Terms for Evil

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *ra'* (meaning "evil" or "bad") is commonly used for evil. This word covers both moral evil (like sin and injustice) and calamity (like natural disasters or judgment). In the New Testament, the Greek terms *ponēros* (meaning "evil" or "morally corrupt") and *kakos* (meaning "bad" or "harmful") are common. Satan is called *ho ponēros*, which means "the evil one" ([Matthew 6:13](#); [1 John 5:19](#)).

Origin and Nature of Evil

Evil entered the world through the rebellion of created beings. The Bible teaches that God is not the creator of evil ([James 1:13](#); [1 John 1:5](#)). Instead, moral creatures (angels and humans) freely chose to rebel against God. Satan, who was originally created good, fell because of pride ([Luke 10:18](#); [Revelation 12:7-9](#); see also [Isaiah 14:12-15](#) and [Ezekiel 28:12-17](#), which some interpret as referring to Satan's fall). Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden of Eden brought sin and

death to all humans ([Genesis 3](#); [Romans 5:12](#)). Evil depends on good to exist and twists good things for destructive purposes.

Types of Evil

Many Christians recognize three types of evil:

1. **Moral Evil:** Evil caused by human choices that go against God's law (for example, murder, idolatry, oppression; see [Mark 7:21-23](#)).
2. **Natural Evil:** Suffering caused by the broken state of creation (such as disease and natural disasters). This is part of the curse that came after sin entered the world ([Genesis 3:17-19](#); [Romans 8:20-22](#)).
3. **Personal Evil:** Evil caused by personal beings, such as Satan and demons, who actively oppose God's purposes and seek to destroy ([John 10:10](#); [Ephesians 6:12](#)).

God's Sovereignty and Evil

While God is not the cause of evil, God remains in control over it. Scripture teaches that God can use evil for his purposes without being morally responsible for it ([Genesis 50:20](#); [Acts 2:23](#); [Romans 8:28](#)). God is not responsible for evil because evil is a result of the misuse of free will by created beings. While God allows evil to occur for reasons related to God's greater plan, God does not cause it, and it is not in line with his perfect and good nature. The cross of Christ is the greatest example of God bringing redemptive good out of the worst evil.

Jesus's Victory Over Evil

Jesus came:

- to destroy the works of the devil ([1 John 3:8](#)),
- to abolish sin ([Hebrews 9:26](#)), and
- to bring final judgment on evil ([Revelation 20:10, 14](#)).

Jesus's resurrection marks the decisive victory over sin, death, and Satan ([Colossians 2:15](#)). Followers of Jesus are called to resist evil ([Romans 12:21](#); [Ephesians 6:10-18](#)). They are also called to

trust in God's justice and mercy as they wait for the complete realization of the new creation, where evil will no longer exist ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

Evil, though real and deeply destructive, is temporary. It cannot stop God's ultimate plan. Evil shows us the need for salvation through Jesus and the hope of final restoration.

See Sin.

Evil One

NT designation for Satan. *See Satan.*

Evil Spirit

Another name for demon. *See Demon; Demon-possession.*

Evil-Merodach

Son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon, who reigned for two years (561–560 BC). During his reign, he released Jehoiachin, former king of Judah, from imprisonment ([2 Kgs 25:27–30](#); [Jer 52:31–34](#)). Aside from this fact, little is known about his reign. He was killed by his brother-in-law Neriglissar, who succeeded him to the throne. *See Babylon, Babylonia.*

Ewe

Female sheep. *See Animals (Sheep).*

Exaltation of Christ

The glory and authority Jesus received after his work on Earth ended in suffering and death. This exaltation is both the completion of his sacrifice for humanity and the reward for his complete obedience to God the Father. The exaltation includes three key events:

1. Jesus's resurrection (coming back to life after death)
2. Jesus's ascension (going up to heaven)

3. Jesus's enthronement in heaven (taking his place as ruler in God's kingdom)

During his earthly ministry, Jesus predicted that he would suffer, die, and be buried ([Matthew 20:28](#); [John 3:14](#); [6:51](#); [10:11](#)). He also predicted that God the Father would raise him to a position of power and glory in heaven ([Luke 24:26](#); [John 17:5](#)). Jesus showed this pattern of suffering followed by glory when he met some Greeks who wanted to see him ([John 12:20–36](#)). Jesus said that, through his suffering and resurrection, even gentiles (non-Jewish people) could know God. When Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” ([John 12:23](#)), he meant that he would be honored and glorified in heaven after his suffering. This teaching became the foundation for the early church's understanding of Jesus's exaltation.

The Resurrection: Jesus Came Back to Life After Death

The resurrection of Jesus is the first event in his exaltation. It is a central teaching of the New Testament ([Acts 2:24, 32](#); [3:15](#); [4:10](#); [Romans 1:4](#); [1 Corinthians 15:4](#)). From the beginning, Christians believed that at a specific time and place, Jesus rose from the dead and entered eternal life. The unique event of Jesus's resurrection sets Christianity apart from other religions. The New Testament shows that Jesus predicted his resurrection. When the Jews questioned his authority, Jesus said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again” ([John 2:19](#)). After Peter confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, Jesus told his disciples he would be killed and then raised on the third day ([Matthew 16:21](#)). He repeated this to his disciples in Galilee, saying he would be killed and raised on the third day: “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised to life” ([Matthew 17:22–23](#)). The New Testament emphasizes the certainty of Jesus's resurrection three days after his death.

The New Testament also explains the significance of Jesus's resurrection:

1. It proves Christ's power over death ([Acts 2:24](#); [1 Corinthians 15:54–56](#))
2. It confirms Christ's teachings, particularly his claim to be the Son of God ([Acts 2:36](#); [Romans 1:4](#))

3. It shows God approved of Jesus's suffering ([Philippians 2:8-9](#))
4. It allows believers to be made right with God ([Romans 4:25](#)) and experience spiritual rebirth ([1 Peter 1:3](#))
5. It guarantees that Christians will also be resurrected ([Romans 6:5](#); [1 Corinthians 15:22-24](#))

The New Testament teaches that God raised Jesus from the dead ([Psalm 16:10](#); [Acts 2:32](#); [Ephesians 1:19-20](#)), but it also says that Jesus had the power to raise himself ([John 2:19](#); [10:17-18](#)).

The Ascension: Jesus Went Up to Heaven

The ascension represents the second phase of the exaltation of Christ. According to the New Testament ([Luke 24:50-51](#); [Acts 1:9-11](#)), Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after his resurrection. In the Gospel of John, Jesus often mentions his ascension ([John 3:13](#); [6:62](#); [14:12](#); [20:17](#)), showing he believed he would go to a real place in heaven ([John 14:2](#)). The apostle Paul connected the ascension with Christ's victory over his enemies and the giving of spiritual gifts to the church ([Ephesians 4:8](#)). Jesus, having won the victory, returned to the throne of his Father to bless his followers. Paul describes this event as the "mystery" of the Christian faith: that Christ, who "appeared in the flesh," was "taken up into glory" ([1 Timothy 3:16](#)).

The Epistle to the Hebrews links Jesus's ascension with his role as High Priest in the heavenly temple. Jesus, who resisted all earthly temptations, "passed through the heavens." He now fully sympathizes with his followers. He offers them grace in times of need ([Hebrews 4:14-16](#)). Hebrews says Jesus ascended to the heavenly temple ([Hebrews 6:19](#)). He brought his blood ([Hebrews 9:12](#)) as the ultimate sacrifice to appear before God for humanity ([Hebrews 9:24](#)).

The New Testament gives great importance to this part of Jesus's exaltation. Through his ascension to the Father, Jesus:

1. Demonstrated his victory over every earthly enemy ([Ephesians 4:8](#))
2. Sent the promised Holy Spirit ([John 16:7](#); [Acts 2:33](#)), which could only happen after his glorification ([John 7:39](#))
3. Began his work as the High Priest in heaven ([Hebrews 6:20](#))

The Enthronement: Jesus Took His Place as Ruler in God's Kingdom

The final stage of Jesus's exaltation is his enthronement at the right hand of God the Father. After his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, the Bible describes Jesus as sitting at the right hand of God. The phrase "right hand of God" ([Acts 7:55-56](#)) is a figurative way of saying that Jesus now has universal power and authority in the presence of God. This part of Jesus's exaltation fulfills his prayer recorded in [John 17:5](#): "And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed."

In the Old Testament, God is often described as seated on the throne of the universe. This shows his:

- Sovereignty ([1 Kings 22:19](#); [Psalm 99:1](#))
- Majesty ([Isaiah 6:1-4](#))
- Holiness ([Psalm 47:8](#))

In Eastern cultures, being invited to sit at the right hand of a ruler was a sign of great honor and authority ([1 Kings 2:19](#)). The Old Testament predicted that the exalted Christ would receive this special honor (see [Psalm 8:5](#), which is quoted in [Hebrews 2:8](#); also see [Psalm 110:1](#)).

The Epistle to the Hebrews focuses on Christ's exaltation. It sees his heavenly enthronement as the result of his completed sacrifice. It also is the start of his role as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. [Hebrews 8:1-2](#) presents Christ as seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven, serving as a minister in the heavenly temple. This enthronement confirms the end of Jesus's work on earth and his new role as the mediator of a better covenant. [Hebrews 10:11-18](#) contrasts the Old Testament priests' repeated, ineffective sacrifices with Christ's once-for-all, effective sacrifice. He now sits at God's right hand, interceding for believers.

Execration Texts

Old Egyptian writings from around 2000 to 1800 BC (the Middle Kingdom period). They contain curses against the pharaoh's enemies. Archaeologists have found these texts on bowls from Thebes dating to the 20th to 19th centuries BC, and on figurines (small human figures) from Saqqara dating to the 19th to 18th centuries BC. The bowls or figurines were inscribed with names of rulers, cities, or persons, along with a curse. They were then ceremonially broken and given a ritual burial. This act symbolized the damage the curse was meant to do to those named in the writing.

This form of magic was directed at both nations and individuals who posed a threat to the Egyptian kingdom. Egypt's neighbor Libya is mentioned infrequently in the texts. However, there were apparently more powerful enemies in Sudan. Eight Egyptian individuals, who were likely part of a plot against the pharaoh (called a harem conspiracy), were also cursed in these texts.

The greatest threat, according to these texts, seemed to come from the area of Palestine and Syria. Over 60 towns or regions in this area were singled out for cursing. The list of place names includes well-known towns such as:

- Byblos
- Ashkelon
- Tyre
- Jerusalem
- Beth-shan

This list of places provides an important source for studying the historical geography of ancient Palestine.

Execution

See Criminal Law and Punishment.

Exhortation

Exhortation means strongly encouraging someone to do what is right. The word comes from a Greek word that means "a calling of someone alongside to help." In the New Testament, it usually means urging someone to do the right thing. Sometimes, the same word can also mean comforting and

supporting someone. Which meaning is correct depends on how the word is used in that part of the Bible.

Examples of Exhortation

[Luke 3:7-18](#) shows a good example of exhortation as encouraging people to take action. In this passage, John the Baptist strongly urged the Jewish people to do several things:

- Show through their actions that they were truly sorry for their sins
- Stop thinking that being descendants of Abraham would protect them from God's punishment
- Share their clothes and food with people who needed them

He also told specific groups what they should do:

- He told tax collectors to only collect the amount of money they were supposed to
- He told soldiers to:
 - Not steal money from people
 - Not make false accusations against people
 - Be satisfied with their pay

Exhortation as a Spiritual Gift

God gives some people in the church the special ability to encourage and guide others. This gift of exhortation benefits the whole church ([Romans 12:8](#)). When someone properly uses the gift of prophecy, one result is that they can encourage others to do what is right ([1 Corinthians 14:3, 31](#)). It was also a duty that Paul commanded of Timothy: "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching" ([1 Timothy 4:13](#)). The book of Hebrews also talks about encouragement, telling readers not to take God's correction lightly or give up when God corrects them ([Hebrews 12:5](#)).

Exhortation as Comfort and Encouragement

In [2 Corinthians 1:3-7](#), the Greek word for exhortation means comfort and encouragement. In this passage, Paul writes about people who were suffering because they followed Christ. He explains

that God comforts us during difficult times so we can comfort others who are going through similar struggles.

Another example is in [Acts 15:31](#). The church in Antioch received encouraging news from the leaders in Jerusalem. The people had been worried that some teachers were saying all Christians must follow Jewish customs like circumcision to be saved. When they heard that this was not true, they felt comforted and relieved.

Paul also uses this word to mean "comfort" in [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#). Here, he tells believers that people who die as followers of Christ will not miss the blessings that Jesus will bring when he returns. He tells them to comfort each other with this truth.

See Spiritual Gifts.

Exile

See Diaspora of the Jews.

Exodus, the

Departure of Israel from Egypt led by Moses. The exodus was one of the most significant events in the history of the Hebrews. It was a unique demonstration of God's power on behalf of his people, who were working under conditions of forced labor for the Egyptians. So dramatic were the circumstances in which the exodus occurred that they were mentioned frequently in subsequent OT periods. When the Hebrews were oppressed, they looked back to that great historical event and trusted God for future liberation.

The historicity of the exodus from Egypt is, beyond question, one of the pivotal historical and religious points of the Jewish tradition. It is quite another matter, however, to assign a firm date to the event, partly because certain scriptural references can be interpreted in various ways, and partly because little archaeological evidence from Egypt exists that bears on the question. Since the Egyptians regularly ignored defects in their records and defaced inscriptions belonging to unpopular fellow countrymen, it is improbable that anything approaching an Egyptian literary record of the exodus will ever be obtained. Much of the information regarding the date of the exodus is therefore inferential in character, and that presents

biblical historians with one of the most complex problems of chronology.

Date of the Exodus

Determining the date of the exodus has long been a problem for biblical scholars. At the beginning of the 20th century many scholars, both liberal and conservative, placed the date toward the end of the 13th century BC. Not all of them agreed that the exodus was a single event, however. Some believed that the Hebrews entered Palestine twice at widely separated times. But such a view disregards the biblical account.

According to [Exodus 12:40](#), the length of time that Jacob's descendants resided in the land of Egypt was 430 years. God had already predicted that interval of time to Abram ([Gn 15:13](#)). The Genesis prophecy, however, did not indicate when that occupation would begin.

The Septuagint (the first Greek translation of the OT), in its version of [Exodus 12:40](#), reduced the period of occupation in Egypt to 215 years. That may mean that two traditions of exodus history existed. A stay of four centuries may have been reckoned from the period when an Asiatic people known as the Hyksos invaded Egypt (c. 1720 BC) and governed it for about a century and a half. The period of 215 years preserved in the Septuagint may be the interval of time between the expulsion of the Hyksos and the exodus itself.

More specific information from Israel's early monarch, however, has a bearing on the time when the Hebrews escaped from Egypt. [First Kings 6:1](#) indicates that Solomon constructed the temple in Jerusalem 480 years after the Israelites were led out of Egypt by Moses. Taking that figure at face value, and allowing a date of 961 BC for the reference to Solomon, the exodus would have occurred about 1441 BC. On the basis of such biblical data, some scholars argue for a 15th-century BC date for the exodus, connecting it with the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep II (c. 1450–1425 BC) as the time of Israel's oppression. Other scholars feel equally persuaded that the exodus occurred in the 13th century BC.

Route of the Exodus

The biblical data concerning the route of the exodus placed the beginning of the flight at Rameses ([Ex 12:37](#)). This place was identified with Tanis by early investigators, but more recent work suggests Qantir, about 17 miles (27.4 kilometers)

southwest of Tanis, as the preferred site. It now seems certain that the monuments at Tanis apparently erected by Ramses have been misunderstood. None of those monuments seems to have originated at Tanis but were brought there by later kings who reused them. Thus the primary evidence for identifying Tanis with Ramses has proved to be misleading. Excavations at Qantir, on the other hand, have revealed indications of palaces, temples, and houses, all of which were local in origin. Such evidence suggests that Qantir, not Tanis, was the Rameses from which the exodus commenced. In addition, Rameses, unlike Tanis, was located beside a body of water (the “Waters of Re” mentioned in Egyptian sources), which again conforms to the biblical account.

From Rameses the Israelites moved to Succoth ([Nm 33:5](#)), generally identified with Tell el-Maskhuta, a fortification in the eastern area of the Wadi Tumeilat, west of the Bitter Lakes. From Succoth they journeyed to Etham ([Ex 13:20](#)), which was on the frontier of the wilderness of Shur. The Hebrews were then instructed to return northwestward so that the stage might be set for the events of the exodus proper. Accordingly, they encamped between Migdol and the “sea,” close to two sites called Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon. Pi-hahiroth may have been a lake, the “Hi-waters,” mentioned in Egyptian documents. Baal-zephon has been identified with the later Tahpanhes (Tell Defenneh) near Qantara. Both identifications lack certainty, but these places were probably located in the northeast part of the Nile River delta area near Lake Menzaleh. The “sea” was a lake of papyrus reeds, described in [Exodus 15:22](#) as the “reed sea,” the English equivalent of an Egyptian phrase meaning “papyrus marshes.” In most English translations from the time of the kjv onward, the Hebrew for “reed sea” was rendered as “Red Sea.”

Sources from the 13th century BC mention the existence of a large papyrus marsh in the area of Rameses that could be the one referred to in Scripture. Other suggestions equate the “reed sea” with the southeast extension of Lake Menzaleh, or with some body of water just to the south, perhaps Lake Ballah, all of which are reasonably close to each other. The topography can never be determined with complete accuracy, since the construction of the Suez Canal drained a series of lakes and swamps, of which the “reed sea” was possibly one.

At the camp at Migdol, the Hebrews were overtaken by the pursuing Egyptians and appeared

to be trapped hopelessly. Then the Lord worked one of the greatest miracles of history. He first prevented the Egyptians from encountering the Hebrews that night by means of a pillar of cloud ([Ex 14:19–20](#)). Moses raised his rod over the reed sea, and a strong east wind blew on the water all night. By morning a strip of the sea bottom had been exposed and dried out, enabling the Israelites to flee across it. When the Egyptians pursued their former slaves, Moses again raised his rod, the wind ceased, and the waters returned to normal levels, trapping the Egyptian chariots and soldiers and causing heavy losses. A victory song ([Ex 15:1–21](#)), typical of ancient Near Eastern customs in warfare, was the liberated captives’ immediate response to God.

The parting of the waters is a phenomenon that has been observed periodically in various parts of the world. It always occurs in the same manner and involves a strong wind displacing a body of water. Shallow lakes, rivers, or marshes are parted readily under such conditions. The scriptural reference to the east wind indicates that God miraculously employed that natural phenomenon to rescue his people.

Having escaped successfully from the Egyptians, the Hebrews journeyed to the wilderness of Shur, three traveling days away from the bitter waters of Marah ([Ex 15:22–25](#)). In [Numbers 33:8](#) the wilderness of Shur is identified with Etham, which the Israelites had already left. Thus it appears that they had moved north from Migdol, after which they moved south again to the wilderness in the area of Etham. The Israelites were not able to go into the Sinai Peninsula along the normal routes, which were guarded by Egyptian fortresses. In addition, they had been instructed not to travel along the northward road going to the “way of the land of the Philistines” ([Ex 13:17](#)) into Canaan. Consequently, the best means of satisfying both conditions was to move southeastward to Sinai as unobtrusively as possible, taking care to avoid the access routes to Serabit el-Khadem in the central peninsula region, where the Egyptians mined turquoise and copper. The narratives of [Numbers 33:9–15](#) show that the Israelite camps were located in an area south of the “reed sea,” proving that the refugees had not taken the northerly, or “Philistine,” route.

The Exodus Theme in Scripture

Old Testament

The motif of deliverance from captivity in Egypt became etched indelibly upon the Hebrew mind, particularly since it was reinforced each year by the celebration of the Passover meal ([Ex 12:12–14](#)). At each celebration thereafter the Hebrews were made aware that they had once been captives, but by the provision and power of God they were now free people—an elect nation and holy priesthood ([Dt 26:19](#)).

In later periods psalms were written recounting Israel's history in the light of the great liberating event of the exodus ([Pss 105; 106; 114; 136](#)). Those compositions resound with triumph and thanksgiving. Hebrew accounts of the bondage in Egypt depict the rigorous life, the oppression, and the hard labor. It is now known that there were a number of foreign groups in Egypt at the time, and that the corporal punishment suffered by the Hebrews was a normal feature of everyday Egyptian life. In short, there was no discrimination against the Hebrews as a group; instead, they enjoyed the dubious distinction of being treated like ordinary Egyptian workers. Ever after, when they were oppressed, the Hebrews could look back to the great miracle of the exodus and believe that what God had done once he could do again. That was of great consolation to the faithful exiles weeping by the waters of Babylon ([Ps 137:1](#)) as they looked forward to another exodus when God would lead them in triumph from a destroyed Babylon (v 8) back to Palestine.

New Testament

God's mighty work at the time of the exodus was recalled on a few occasions by NT writers, even though Christ had been sacrificed as "our Passover lamb" ([1 Cor 5:7](#), niv) by that time. In his speech before the Jerusalem Council, Stephen gave a traditional recital of OT history, mentioning the event of the Red Sea ([Acts 7:36](#)) as part of a demonstration of God's power to change human affairs. The apostle Paul used the experience of the exodus to remind his hearers that many who were delivered from oppression at that time never reached the Promised Land ([1 Cor 10:1–5](#)). Instead of committing themselves wholly to God in trust and obedience, the Israelites fell victim to temptations of various kinds in the wilderness. Thus, Paul stressed that since it is possible for Christians to become castaways ([9:27](#)), they should

cling to Christ the Rock and take their spiritual responsibilities seriously. In [Hebrews 11:27–29](#) another historical recital lists the heroes of faith, mentioning especially Moses and his role at the exodus.

See also Exodus, Book of.

Exorcism, Exorcist

An exorcism is the practice of driving out demons and evil spirits. An exorcist is a person who performs an exorcism.

Many people in the ancient Near East claimed they could drive out or control demons. Some of the miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels are exorcisms. But [Acts 19:13](#) is the only other biblical reference to exorcism among the Jews. But, in [1 Samuel 16:14–23](#), David acted as an exorcist when he played his harp to drive away an evil spirit from King Saul.

See also Demon; Demon-possession.

Expiation

Atonement, purification, or removal of sin or its guilt. The term occurs in some English translations (such as asv, erv) for "reconciliation" ([Heb 2:17](#)) or "propitiation" ([Rom 3:25](#); [1 Jn 2:2](#); [4:10](#)). "Expiation" also appears in some English translations of some OT passages ([Nm 35:33](#); [Dt 32:43](#); [1 Sm 3:14](#); [Is 27:9](#)). The word does not appear in modern Bible translations.

The Hebrew family of words translated by "expiation" speaks fundamentally of a solution for sin, and the most common association is with the idea of atonement. Expiation has to do with removing the blot of sin, and hence the term is related to such words as "forgive," "purge," "cleanse," or "atone."

All NT references to expiation have to do with the sacrifice of Christ for human sin. In the Bible both expiation and propitiation are part of God's atoning work. Christ's sacrifice both propitiates (turns away) the wrath of God and expiates (covers) human sin. God's redemptive work is both personal, or relational, and objective. When a biblical context concentrates on God's wrath, propitiation is involved; when human sin is the focus, then redemption provides expiation.

See also Atonement; Offerings and Sacrifices; Propitiation.

Eye Paint

See Cosmetics.

Ezar

KJV spelling of Ezer, Seir's son, in [1 Chronicles 1:38](#). See Ezer #1.

Ezbai

The father of Naarai. Naarai was one of King David's special warriors called "the thirty" ([1 Chronicles 11:37](#)). [2 Samuel 23:35](#) calls him Paarai the Arbite. Some interpreters suggest that "the son of Ezbai" in the 1 Chronicles passage is a corruption of "the Arbite." The correct reading of his name should be "Naarai the Arbite."

Ezbon

1. Gad's son ([Gn 46:16](#)), called Ozni in [Numbers 26:16](#); perhaps an eponym of a Gadite family.
2. Benjamin's grandson ([1 Chr 7:7](#)). It has been proposed that [1 Chronicles 7:6–11](#) is a genealogy of Zebulun assigned to Benjamin by error, and that Ezbon suggests Ibzan ([Jgs 12:8–10](#)), a minor judge of Bethlehem.

Ezekias

The King James Version spelling of Hezekiah, Judah's king, in [Matthew 1:9–10](#).

See Hezekiah #1.

Ezekiel (Person)

Priest and prophet during Israel's Babylonian exile. Ezekiel was a descendant of the influential priestly family of Zadok ([Ez 1:3](#)). He was probably reared in Jerusalem and was familiar with the temple ritual; it is unknown whether he served as a priest there.

All that is known of his personal life is obtained from the OT book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was married ([24:16–18](#)) and lived at Tel-abib in Babylonia ([3:15](#)), in his own house ([3:24; 8:1](#)). Most of the Judean captives had settled by the Kebar Canal ([1:3](#)), which went from Babylon by Nippur to Erech. The elders of Israel there sought out Ezekiel for counsel ([8:1; 14:1; 20:1](#)). In the fifth year of the exile, when Ezekiel was between 25 and 30 years old, he received God's call to the prophetic office ([1:1–3:11](#)). His wife died suddenly during the exile, but he was forbidden to mourn for her in public ([24:16–18](#)). Her sudden death was meant to convey a striking and solemn warning of what would occur in the captives' homeland (vv [15–27](#)).

The time of Ezekiel's ministry was unusual in many ways. It was a period of great prophetic activity. With the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, Ezekiel spoke to the nation's needs at the time of the Babylonian captivity. It was an era of upheaval and uprooting for the southern kingdom of Judah, and a time of persistent apostasy, idolatry, and general disobedience to the Mosaic law. It was also a period of international conflict and shifting power balances throughout the Near East.

Ezekiel's ministry seems to have extended from 592 BC to at least the 27th year of the exile ([29:17](#)). It falls into two main periods. During the first period (592–587 BC), his messages were repeated warnings—in prose discourse and symbolic acts—intended to lead the exiles to repentance and faith in God. During the second period (586–570 BC), after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the prophet comforted the exiles and encouraged them to look to the future in hope (chs [33–48](#)). There were 13 years in which no prophetic utterances were delivered, namely 585 BC ([32:1, 17; 33:21](#)) to 572 BC ([40:1](#)). The prophet learned of the fall of Jerusalem while in Babylon ([33:21–22](#)).

The burden of Ezekiel's message was that Judah was ripe for judgment. His preparation for speaking God's message is given in the picture of his eating the written prophecies ([2:8–3:3](#)). At first the messages were not accepted, but later his prophecies were vindicated as they began to come true and as the nation was purged of its idolatry. Ezekiel has been called "the father of Judaism" because of his supposed influence on Israel's later worship. His greatest contribution to postexilic Jewish worship consisted in establishing the basis of the synagogue. He stressed the teaching of

personal immortality, resurrection, and the ritual law.

Ezekiel carried out his messages with vivid and dramatic acts of symbolism (e.g., [4:1-8](#); [5:1-17](#)). His style has been characterized as heavy and repetitious, but it was designed with the themes of apostasy and subsequent judgment in view.

The place and circumstances of his death are unknown, and Ezekiel is not mentioned elsewhere in the OT.

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

Ezekiel, Book of

Prophetic book of the OT, originating in the time of the Babylonian exile.

Preview

- Author
- Date and Background
- Content

Author

Ezekiel was the son of Buzi ([1:3](#)), a member of a priestly family. It is unclear whether he actually served in the temple as a priest, but such was his training. His writings show that he knew the regulations for sacrifices, the rituals, and the people's expectations of a priest. In exile Ezekiel the priest spoke God's word about the future of the temple to his fellow exiles. Settled at Tel-abib, on the canal of Kebar, the thousands of deportees eked out a meager existence. They hoped for a speedy return to Judah and a change for the better in the international situation. Their hope was enflamed by the spirited preaching of false prophets, likened to jackals among the ruins ([13:4](#)). They piously said, "The Lord declares . . .," but they were actually self-commissioned (v [6](#)). They deceived the people with a message of peace at a time when God's judgment was about to be poured out on his people (v [10](#)). They had led the people to distrust prophecy to such an extent that a proverb circulated among the people that "the days grow long, and every vision comes to nought" ([12:22](#)). Much time had passed since visions of God's judgment had been given to the people, and nothing could be interpreted as a fulfillment of those visions. Ezekiel was called to serve his

community by symbolic acts, visions, and verbal messages in order to convince the people that God's judgment was imminent (v [23](#)).

Date and Background

The ministry of the prophet Ezekiel can be understood best against the backdrop of his time. If, as the church father Origen believed, the vague reference "in the thirtieth year" ([1:1](#)) marks the prophet's age at the time of his first vision, Ezekiel was born during the rule of King Josiah of Judah (c. 640–609 BC). Josiah was the grandson of King Manasseh, whose sacrilegious acts had brought God's judgment on the kingdom of Judah ([2 Kgs 21:10-15](#)).

Though Judah's political situation was perilous, Josiah led the nation in a radical reformation that began with the finding of the "Book of the Law" ([2 Kgs 22](#)) in the year that Ezekiel was born (c. 621 BC). Idolatry was done away with and the people turned back to God, but God's judgment on Judah was unchangeable ([23:26-27](#)). Josiah erred in trying to make Judah a kingdom with which other states had to reckon. He was threatened when the Egyptian pharaoh Neco passed through Judah on his way to aid the weakened Assyrian kingdom. Josiah marched to meet the Egyptian forces, but his troops were unable to stand against the Egyptians, and he died in battle (v [29](#)). Egypt took control of Judah, and Pharaoh Neco placed Jehoiakim in power over Jerusalem. Egyptian control did not last long, however, for in 605 BC Egypt and Assyria were defeated by Babylonia's king Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish. The Babylonians then pushed south to Jerusalem, and the first deportation of Judean leaders (among them the prophet Daniel) took place.

Jehoiakim was permitted to continue ruling over Judah as a vassal king of Nebuchadnezzar. But his dealings with Egypt brought the emperor's wrath down upon him. Before the Babylonians could address the Judean situation, Jehoiakim died and his son Jehoiachin was crowned. When the Babylonian forces arrived at the gates of Jerusalem, Jehoiachin and thousands of the aristocracy were taken to Babylon ([2 Kgs 24:10-17](#)). Among those deportees was Ezekiel, then about 25 years old.

Although the book says otherwise, many scholars think that Ezekiel lived and taught in Judah for the duration of the siege and the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC). They conclude this from Ezekiel's familiarity with idolatry in the temple and his vivid descriptions of Jerusalem's last days ([Ez 8:11](#)).

Others believe that Ezekiel ministered both to the exiled community and to the Judeans living in Judah. Neither interpretation does full justice to the claims of the book itself. Ezekiel was exiled in 597 BC. He was called to bring God's word to the deportees at Tel-abib; he was granted a vision of the horrible practices in the temple court; and he was familiar with Jerusalem and Judah from having lived there and from reports on affairs in Jerusalem coming to the exiles through messengers. Jeremiah, Ezekiel's contemporary, was prophesying in Jerusalem, but there is no evidence that Jeremiah and Ezekiel knew of each other's ministry. If Ezekiel had brought God's word to Jerusalem during the siege, some reference to Jeremiah might appear in his writings. If Jeremiah was supported by Ezekiel's ministry in Jerusalem, he probably would have included a positive word for his colleague in his book. The book of Ezekiel plainly says that Ezekiel lived and preached in exile (see [1:1-3](#); [11:24-25](#)).

Content

The prophecy of Ezekiel is easily outlined by subject matter and chronology. The chronology of the period permits a division before and after 586 BC (the fall of Jerusalem). Chapters [1-24](#) cover the pre-586 ministry of Ezekiel, whereas chapters [33-48](#) represent his post-586 ministry. Chapters [25-32](#) (oracles against the foreign nations) function as a transition between the book's two major divisions.

The book's outline according to subject matter divides into four parts: Ezekiel's call ([1:1-3:21](#)); prophecies of judgment against Israel ([3:22-24:27](#)); oracles against the nations ([25:1-32:32](#)); and proclamation of hope ([33:1-48:35](#)).

Ezekiel's Call ([1:1-3:21](#))

The prophet's call in one sense was similar to that of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah received his mission in a vision of God's glory in the temple ([Is 6](#)). Jeremiah was called unexpectedly in his youth, and received signs that solemnly set forth the nature of his mission ([Jer 1:11-15](#)). The call of Ezekiel combined those two elements. Revelation of God's glory to the prophet at the same time revealed the nature of the prophet's mission. Ezekiel's call contained a full description of God's glory. Isaiah briefly stated that he saw the Lord enthroned in the temple, and he concentrated on the seraphim representing and magnifying God's glory. Ezekiel elaborated on the revelation of the Lord's glory as

well as on the ministering angels who went before the Lord as part of his royal entourage. The vision of God's glory, though difficult to understand, is the key to the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel, as a priest, was concerned about the future of the temple. That sacred place had been ordained by God as his home among his people. The glory, presence, and holiness of God were symbolized in the temple (see [1 Kgs 8:10-11](#)). In exile Ezekiel could not serve his people as a priest, for they were far from Jerusalem, the city God had chosen. Against all expectations the Lord revealed himself to Ezekiel in the land of Babylon. In calling Ezekiel to a prophetic ministry, God assured his servant that he had not forsaken his people, even though they had been banished from the Promised Land.

The prophet's vision began with a storm. As a large cloud approached from the north, Ezekiel saw a brightness surrounding the cloud, four creatures, and four wheels. The combination of creatures and wheels suggests that the Lord appeared in a chariot. God's chariot is a familiar OT representation of his coming in judgment (see [Is 66:15-16](#)). The wheels within wheels and the position of the four living creatures may signify God's total control over the whole earth, so he could move his "chariot of judgment" in any direction. It is also possible that the living creatures with their four faces, and the wheels full of eyes, may be separate symbols showing that God sees all that happens and thereby knows the plight of the exiles. In the vision the prophet's attention was drawn to a throne above the heads of the creatures. On the throne was "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" ([1:28](#)). In his vision of God's coming in judgment, Ezekiel received his call to the prophetic ministry: "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me" ([2:3](#), rsv). During a dark hour of Israel's history, Ezekiel had to prophesy, rebuke his fellow exiles ([3:11](#)), and be responsible as a watchman over the house of Israel ([3:17](#); cf. [33:1-9](#)). Symbolic of his mission was a scroll filled with lamentations and woe ([2:9-10](#)), which when eaten became sweet as honey ([3:1-3](#)). Difficult as the mission was, God's presence and the certain fulfillment of the prophecies sweetened Ezekiel's task. Such encouragement was intended to take away any fear of the rebellious Israelites ([2:6-7](#)). Instead of being elated with his mission, however, Ezekiel became despondent.

A week later, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel to remind him of his important role as a watchman

([3:16–17](#)). Ezekiel became responsible for Israel as a nation, not just for individuals. His witness to Israel had the express aim of national repentance (vv [18–19](#)).

Ezekiel was confined to his house by God ([3:24–25](#)). The house ministry was to be carried on only with those Israelites who sought God's will, for the Lord had abandoned those who continued in their apostasy. The prophetic word would not help the apostates (v [26](#)). The principle of Ezekiel's ministry is found in [3:27](#): "Whenever I give you a message, I will loosen your tongue and let you speak. Then you will say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says!' Some of them will listen, but some will ignore you, for they are rebels" (nlt; cf. [Mt 11:15; 13:43](#)).

Prophecies of Judgment against Israel ([3:22–24:27](#))

Symbolism figures prominently in Ezekiel's writing. His priestly background and preparation probably suited him to receive and communicate God's word in symbolic acts and speech. Chapters [4](#) and [5](#) contain four symbolic acts: (1) Jerusalem's siege is portrayed on a brick ([Ez 4:1–3](#)); (2) Israel's iniquity is represented by Ezekiel's lying on his sides (vv [4–8](#)); (3) Jerusalem's grief and horror in the last days of the siege are represented by Ezekiel's food and drink (vv [9–17](#)); (4) Jerusalem's fate is represented by the prophet's hair being cut off ([5:1–4](#)).

Ezekiel's instructions were further illuminated by God's explanation of Israel's apostasy ([5:6–7](#)) and his judgment on Israel (vv [8–12](#)). The judgment will last until the Israelites admit that in covenant faithfulness their Lord has inflicted righteous judgment on them (v [13](#)).

God would direct his judgment first against the people and the city of Jerusalem. Next in line were the mountains of Israel (ch [6](#)) and the land (ch [7](#)). God's wrath included the cities and cultic sites in the hill country of Judah, leaving no protection for the people ([6:3–6](#)). Abominations that were practiced throughout the land caused God's judgment to fall on the land as well as on the people ([7:2–3, 10–11, 23](#)). But because God is righteous, he judged the people according to their ways of life, desiring that they would once more acknowledge him as their God ([7:27](#)).

The prophet then (chs [8–11](#)) focused on the abominations practiced in Jerusalem, particularly idolatry in the temple courts, which caused the

judgment announced in chapters [1–7](#). An idol had been erected in the inner court ([8:3–5](#)). By the wall of the court, elders of the city were paying homage to the idols that surrounded the court (vv [11–12](#)). Closer to the temple, women were weeping for the god Tammuz (v [14](#)), and men were worshipping the sun (v [16](#)). In preparation for the ultimate judgment on the land, the prophet placed a mark on the foreheads of the few faithful Israelites so that they would survive ([9:4–6](#)). Then (ch [10](#)), the glory of God, which had filled the temple from the time of Solomon, gradually left: "Then the glory of the Lord went up from the city and stopped above the mountain to the east" ([11:23](#), nlt). The people, now without divine protection, were being handed over to the Babylonians (v [9](#)).

The message of doom for Jerusalem contains four elements of hope: restoration of the people ([11:17](#)), restoration of the land (v [17](#)), purification of the people (v [18](#)), and renewed fellowship between God and his people (vv [19–20](#)). The prophet develops those four themes in chapters [33–48](#).

The visions of chapters [10](#) and [11](#) made clear that when God removed his presence from Jerusalem, the exile was approaching. Those who were already in Babylon were unwilling to believe that such an extensive devastation of Jerusalem would happen or that the people would all be exiled and the land become desolate.

Ezekiel acted out the certainty of God's word of judgment by packing his bags and showing the baggage to his fellow exiles. First, he placed the bags in the courtyard outside his modest home. Next, he went out by making a hole through the wall. Finally, the prophet walked about the settlement with his bags in full view. Skeptical observers did not understand Ezekiel and probably thought he was crazy. The believers who saw him understood. His strange actions dramatized how the king's aides would do all they could to help King Zedekiah escape just before the fall of Jerusalem. [Second Kings 25](#) tells how the king and his soldiers left Jerusalem for the wilderness, to be overtaken by the Babylonians at Jericho and brought before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. As a captive, Zedekiah witnessed the murder of his sons; then his eyes were put out, and he was sent into exile with the other Judeans (cf. [Ez 12:13](#)). The prophet's explanation concluded with a word of comfort. Because of his covenant with Abraham, God promised not to destroy the people completely. A remnant who overcame the sword, famine, and

pestilence would live to tell the story of God's judgment (vv [15-16](#)).

Ezekiel further illustrated the nation's plight by eating as though full of fear, depicting the great trauma that all of Judah's inhabitants would soon undergo.

Both symbolic acts, packing his belongings and eating, emphasized the truthfulness of God's word. The people needed to face the nature of their God: He is magnificent, and when he speaks, his words are powerful and come to pass. Thus, the devastation of the land and the people's exile were a fulfillment of God's word through the prophets. The judgment was meant to produce a recognition of the Lord, repentance, and a return to God. Some in Judah doubted the efficacy of God's prophecies, saying, "Time passes, making a liar of every prophet" ([12:22](#)). Others thought God's word would come true in the distant future (v [27](#)). The prevailing attitude of distrust in God's word had been stimulated by the popular preaching of false prophets (ch [13](#)). Never commissioned by the Lord, they deceived God's people by lying and misdirecting them with messages of peace (vv [8-10](#)). Wickedness, lying, and deceit were encouraged among the people by such false prophets (v [22](#)). The magnitude of their sin and their great responsibility for Judah's fall would be matched by the Lord's heavy judgment. Yet God would save his people from such evil and will prepare a righteous nation with whom to maintain his covenant (v [23](#)).

The certainty of the judgment has been connected with the truthfulness of God's word. Ezekiel's difficult task of affirming the doom of Jerusalem to stubborn hearers was intensified by the people's idolatry. Their whole way of life denied the existence of God. They practiced idolatry in their worship, and they had set up idols in their hearts ([14:3](#)). Before the covenant with God could be restored, they had to be purified from their idolatry. Even so, repentance would not guarantee immunity from judgment. Sword, famine, wild beasts, and plagues would ravage the population (v [21](#)). After the execution of his judgment, God would take back those survivors who had turned to him for mercy. God would surely accomplish all that he intended for his people's good (v [23](#)).

In chapters [15-17](#) Ezekiel uses three parables to set forth the apostasy, present uselessness, and judgment of Israel. Jerusalem and Judah are compared to a piece of charred wood, an adulterous woman, and a vine.

Chapter [15](#) reviews Jerusalem's case. Jerusalem is compared to a piece of wood, both ends of which have been charred with fire, so that the wood is of no value. As the whole piece of wood is burned instead of being saved, so Jerusalem would undergo complete devastation ([15:7-8](#)).

Chapter [16](#) presents God's case against Jerusalem from a different perspective, stressing his care for Jerusalem in the past. The beginnings of her history are compared to the birth of a female child, left abandoned by her mother ([16:3-5](#)). God adopted the child and washed and clothed her (vv [6-7](#)). He made a covenant with her (v [8](#)), making her his own possession. He generously gave her all the fine things of life (vv [9-13](#)). In the height of her development, Jerusalem's fame spread to the nations (v [14](#)). Her self-reliance made her a spiritual prostitute as she took up the religious practices and way of life of the nations (vv [15-34](#)). The cities of Sodom ([Gn 19](#)) and Samaria ([2 Kgs 17:6](#)), known for their immorality, are called Jerusalem's sisters ([Ez 16:46](#)). They had been judged by God, but the corruption of those cities was little compared to the lewdness of Jerusalem (vv [48-51](#)). Thus, Jerusalem also would surely fall and become desolate. Yet Ezekiel anticipates the judgment's final outcome; Jerusalem will be restored to covenantal blessing (vv [62-63](#)) after her repentance.

The third parable (ch [17](#)) focuses on God's sovereignty over political developments. Assyria was no longer a power to be reckoned with. Babylon and Egypt both exercised dominion, although the balance of power was veering in favor of Babylon. Their extension of power is likened to an eagle. Nebuchadnezzar, pictured as "a great eagle with broad wings full of many-colored feathers," took control over the affairs of Judah by removing Jehoiachin, "the highest branch of a cedar tree," from office and by exiling him with young leaders of the Judean state ([17:3-4](#)). Ezekiel was among them. Nebuchadnezzar let the Judeans control their own affairs under Zedekiah but expected them to be subject to Babylon and not to any other power. But Judah (likened to a vine) tried to ally itself with Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt, "another great eagle with broad wings and full plumage" (v [7](#)), against Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah's folly in turning to Egypt would cause Nebuchadnezzar to pull up the vine by its roots and make it wither (vv [9-10](#)). In explaining the parable, God told the exiles that Judah's fall was a result of its unfaithfulness to King Nebuchadnezzar, to whom Judah owed allegiance by covenant (vv [13-](#)

[18](#)). Judah's unfaithfulness thus extended to all of its relationships: religious, cultural, and political. After the exile, God promised, he would restore his people to their land under a Messiah, "a tender shoot" (v [22](#)). The messianic rule is signified by the young twig, which when planted in the land will become a magnificent cedar, giving shade and protection to the birds. Chapter [17](#) is an inspiring affirmation of the sovereignty of God in human affairs ("All the trees will know that it is I, the Lord, who cuts down the tall tree and helps the short tree to grow tall. It is I who makes the green tree wither and gives new life to the dead tree"—[17:24](#), nlt).

Chapters [18–22](#) contain Ezekiel's oracles to Judah, its leaders, and the exiles. First, he enunciates God's standard of righteousness: "The person who sins will be the one who dies" ([18:4](#), nlt). The people are charging God with injustice, for they believe themselves to be under God's judgment for the sins of their ancestors (vv [25–29](#)). Although the Ten Commandments do say that God may punish "the sins of their parents to the third and the fourth generations" ([Ex 20:5](#), nlt), the prophet vindicates God's justice, telling the people that they are not being punished merely for their ancestors' sin. Each person must be directly accountable to God; the sinner will die in wickedness, and the righteous will live by righteousness. A life of faithfulness to God's moral and civil law will be rewarded ([Ez 18:5–9](#)). Even if one's father was a sinner, the father's sin is not transferable (vv [14–18](#)). God is ready to forgive any sinner who repents (v [27](#)). The prophet's vindication of God's justice becomes a call to repentance. The sinners in Judah and in exile were thus warned of the consequences of their evil, and were exhorted to return to their God and his standard of right and wrong (vv [31–32](#)).

Chapter [19](#) contains two parables in the form of a lamentation. The first portrays a lioness and her two cubs. The lioness is Hamutal, the wife of King Josiah ([2 Kgs 23:31](#)), who bore two sons: Jehoahaz and Zedekiah. Jehoahaz is referred to in [Ezekiel 19:3–4](#) as a cub who grew up and was taken to Egypt (by Pharaoh Neco in 608 BC; see [2 Kgs 23:31–34](#)). Zedekiah succeeded to the throne ten years later. In the lamentation the prophet imaginatively represents Zedekiah as a young cub who is ultimately taken to Babylon as a rebellious ruler ([Ez 19:7–9](#)). The second parable changes the imagery to a vine, representing Israel (v [10](#)). In its early days God blessed Israel with strong rulers, but now the vine was wilting as Zedekiah irresponsibly led Judah to its last days. Ezekiel's lamentation stresses the lack of a good candidate

for the throne and the lack of life in the vine (vv [13–14](#)).

In chapter [20](#) the prophet concludes God's argument against his people. He reviews the history of Israel's past, starting with God's self-revelation in Egypt ([20:5–6](#)). He took to himself a stubborn nation, tied to idolatry (v [8](#)) and prone to apostasy (vv [13, 21](#)). Israel wanted to be one of the great nations (v [32](#)) instead of a sanctified people (v [12](#)). As a result of its spiritual hardness, Israel is dispersed to live among the nations (v [35](#)). Yet God had a solemn covenant with Israel, made by oath to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the basis of that covenant, God will reach out with compassion to those who repent of their sinful ways (vv [37–44](#)). In Israel's judgment and restoration the nations will see the holiness of God, which does not tolerate unfaithfulness in Israel (v [41](#)).

Ezekiel's prophecies alternate between God's judgment on Israel's sin and his restoration of Israel, spanning the bridge between Israel's past and future. In view of the people's doubts of the coming judgment on Jerusalem, he stresses the necessity of judgment and the need for repentance. Still, the future restoration of a remnant is touched upon here and there as the counterpart of his message of judgment. After announcing the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet shifts from a message of judgment to one of hope.

The prophet returns to the proclamation of judgment in four oracles ([20:45–21:32](#)). He speaks against the Negev Desert area ([20:45–49](#)), Jerusalem and the land of Israel ([21:2–17, 20–27](#)), and against the Ammonites (vv [28–32](#)). God permitted the sword of Nebuchadnezzar to be his instrument of judgment upon the Judeans (v [19](#)). He would see to the judgment on the Ammonites. The Judeans would recover their previous glory, but the memory of the Ammonites would perish (vv [27, 32](#)). The oracle against the Ammonites anticipates a larger treatise on Israel's other neighbors: Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt (chs [25–29](#)).

Chapters [22–24](#) contain a renewed series of indictments against Jerusalem. Jerusalem's religious and civil leadership (the prophets, priests, and princes) are corrupt, and the people have followed their example ([22:25–30](#)). The parable of the two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, is a variation of the parable of adulterous Jerusalem (ch [23](#); cf. ch [16](#)). It differs in that the comparison drawn between Jerusalem, soon to be exiled, and Samaria,

already in exile, is more explicit in the parable of Oholah and Oholibah. In chapter [16](#) Jerusalem was charged with greater sins than Sodom and Samaria, but was promised restoration. Only the adulterous nature of the two sisters and God's judgment on them is emphasized in chapter [23](#), with no word of restoration. This parable is a fitting introduction to that of the boiling pot (ch [24](#)), in which Jerusalem is compared to a rusty pot boiling with water. The Jerusalemites, likened to pieces of meat in the boiling pot, will die in the city. The parable was pronounced on the starting day of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. Thus, the exiles were divinely forewarned of God's intent to destroy the temple ([24:21](#)) and were prepared for messengers bringing the bad news of Jerusalem's fall.

Those oracles and parables conclude the first division of the book. Ezekiel has stated God's case against the rebellious house of Judah in many ways. His metaphors have likened Judah to a burnt piece of wood, to an uprooted vine, to a baby who grew up to be an adulteress, and to Oholibah, the adulterous woman. He has countered arguments against the fulfillment of God's word and against the justice of God. He has reassured the exiles that God will not leave the righteous and that the future of Israel begins with a righteous remnant. The pendulum of Ezekiel's writing has swung from judgment to restoration, while the clock was bringing Judah closer to the hour of its fall.

Oracles against the Nations ([25:1-32:32](#))

Ammon, Moab, and Edom were Israel's neighbors to the east. Because they were ethnically related to Israel, they were not attacked by the Israelites on their march to the Promised Land. Ammon and Moab were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew, and the Edomites descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob. Although God forbade war with them, relations between Israel and its eastern neighbors were always tense. Israel had been overrun by the Ammonites for a time, and Israel was never successful in controlling the Edomites' competitive trade relations. Those neighboring nations joined the Babylonian attack against Jerusalem and rejoiced when Jerusalem fell and the temple was devastated ([Ez 25:3-12](#)). They were ready to take over and loot Judah's cities, and to instigate trouble in a time when Jerusalem was distressed. Therefore, says Ezekiel, God's judgment will also extend to Ammon, Moab, and Edom (vv [4-14](#)).

The Philistines had been Israel's enemy to the southwest. During the period of the judges and the united monarchy, the Philistines had controlled much of Israel's territory. King David successfully limited the Philistine threat by confining them to their own territory. But in Ezekiel's day they were still considered Israel's "everlasting" enemy ([25:15](#)), possibly intensified by Philistine support of the Babylonian invasion of Judah.

The city of Tyre had received reports of the overthrow of Jerusalem and was ready to exploit the opportunity for its own advantage ([26:2](#)). Tyre's trade position was unrivaled; its ships crossed the seas to exchange goods with many distant lands ([Ez 27](#)). But Tyre would soon be broken by the Babylonians, its wealth dried up with the destruction of the fleet and the murder of its sailors ([27:26](#)).

The prince of Tyre is singled out in chapter [28](#), but verse [12](#) refers to the "king" of Tyre. Interpreters disagree whether they are one person or two. Those who distinguish between the two understand the prince of Tyre to be the ruler of that city, but they consider the "king" of Tyre to represent Satan ([28:13-15](#)). The Garden of Eden with all its splendor is an appropriate setting for the original glory of an angelic Satan before his fall. But there is no reason within the context to distinguish between the prince and the king of Tyre. Each is said to have exalted himself, and both took authority over men as if they were gods and enjoyed all the splendor and royalty that belong to God. And both prince and king fall from their high position. The passage is a magnificent example of Ezekiel's literary ability. He draws a glorious picture of the Garden of Eden, reworking the same theme as he depicts the glory and fall of the king of Tyre. Ezekiel presents him as a cherub, in accordance with the local belief that the king was divine. He wore the finest clothing, with nine kinds of precious stones (v [13](#)). Though God had elevated him to the royal throne (vv [13-14](#)), the king's heart turned to materialism and to religious and judicial corruption (vv [16-18](#)). In a sense the king (prince) represents the people of Tyre. They were all guilty of corruption, injustice, and violence. If God judged his covenant people for their perversion of justice and for their sins, his judgment would surely come also on the city of Tyre (vv [18-19](#)). When the Babylonians marched on Tyre, they laboriously built a jetty from the mainland to the city. At the same time Tyrian ships loaded with goods and treasures sailed out across the Mediterranean, so that when Nebuchadnezzar's troops finally

breached the walls, little loot could be taken ([29:18](#)).

The city of Sidon also cheered Jerusalem's destruction. Sidon was a port city in Phoenicia, to the north of Tyre. By pestilence and war, the inhabitants of Sidon would learn the justice of Israel's God.

Six nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, and Sidon) scorned Israel at the fall of Jerusalem. Because God had invested his holiness in the temple of Jerusalem and in his people, the temple's destruction and the people's exile signified to the nations that Israel's God was impotent. They did not realize that the reason for Israel's fate was God's intolerance of his people's sin. God's holiness required the punishment of sin, and it also required vindication for his name ([28:22-23](#)). God was still concerned for his people, that Israel might know he had removed the scorn of their neighbors (v [24](#)). In the restoration of Israel the Lord would further manifest his holiness before the nations. Israel would receive back the land, vineyards, and houses, and would enjoy the bounty of the Lord in peace (vv [25-26](#)).

Egypt had convinced the people of Israel and Judah that with its help the Assyrians and the Babylonians could not stand their ground in Palestine. In 722 BC the Assyrian troops took the northern capital of Samaria, and in 586 the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, while Egypt remained passive. The Egyptians had desired control over Palestine for economic reasons, but not at the expense of their own welfare. Egypt, too, would lose its leadership under God's judgment ([29:9-16](#)). Reduced to dependence on foreign powers, Egypt would no longer be a stumbling block for Israel. First, Babylonia was permitted to break Egypt's power ([23:1-32:21](#)); later, the Persians, Greeks, and Romans would incorporate Egypt as a province. The fall of Egypt coincided with the fall of several great and small kingdoms: Assyria ([32:22-23](#)), Elam (vv [24-25](#)), Meshech and Tubal (vv [26-28](#)), Edom (v [29](#)), and Sidon (v [30](#)).

Proclamation of Hope ([33:1-48:35](#))

After the visions of God's judgment on the surrounding nations, Ezekiel returns to the future hope of Israel. In the first major section of his book he dealt with the reasons for Judah's exile and the destruction of the temple, alluding often to the future of Israel. But the prophet's organization of his material included, between prophecies of Israel's judgment and restoration, the oracles of

God's judgment on Israel's neighbors who had encouraged and rejoiced in its fall. Throughout its history Israel had allowed foreign nations to influence its religion, culture, and form of government. The reduction of their powers meant Israel, restored to the Promised Land, would be more free for faithfulness to God. Before taking up the theme of the restoration, Ezekiel reviews the emphases of chapters [1-24](#): (1) He was called to be a watchman over Israel ([33:1-9](#); cf. [1:1-3:21](#)). (2) Israel had sinned against the Lord and had to receive a righteous judgment ([33:10](#)). (3) Jerusalem was to be taken by the Babylonians (v [21](#)). (4) Israel's repentance is necessary for restoration (vv [11-16](#)).

Thus far, his ministry had not met with success. The exiles who had heard his messages were full of appreciation for Ezekiel's rhetorical and literary abilities ([33:32](#)). They readily accepted Ezekiel as a watchman who warned the people of the impending catastrophe at Jerusalem, and they may have admitted that their sin was the reason for God's judgment on Israel and Jerusalem. But they were slow in applying the prophetic word to their own lives. God was ready to forgive their sins if they repented, acknowledged him, and demonstrated their renewed spirit by practicing the law of God (v [32](#)). Now that the news of Jerusalem had been reported to the exiles (v [21](#)), the necessity for the people to act responsibly was even more urgent. The Lord had demonstrated that Ezekiel was a true prophet (v [33](#)).

The success of Ezekiel's ministry was not measured in numbers. He faithfully declared the word of God in word, sign, and parable. The exiles had followed the false hopes proclaimed by false "shepherds" who had fattened themselves at the expense of the flock ([34:2-3](#)). They did not take care of those in need (v [4](#)), and they allowed the flock to be scattered (vv [5-6](#)). God promised his people that he would be the faithful shepherd, bring the sheep together, feed them, and care for them ([34:11-15](#); cf. [Ps 23](#)). God would also distinguish between the sheep and the goats, to find out whose hearts were right with him, so that the true sheep could be restored to God's flock ([Ez 34:20-22](#)). God's promise included the restoration of the land and the restoration of the divinely appointed Davidic dynasty (v [24](#)). The renewed fellowship between the Lord and Israel under the messianic ruler would be sealed with a new covenant, the "covenant of peace." That covenant assured the people of God's blessing on their labor, bringing them abundant harvests (vv [26-27](#)). The people

would not be forced to fight against nature in their pursuits (vv [25-28](#)). They would not have to struggle against other peoples who might try to share in their blessings by force (vv [27-29](#)). The prophetic vision telescoped the events of the restoration of Israel after the exile, the coming of Jesus the Messiah (cf. [Jn 10](#)), and the full restoration of the sin-cursed world.

Chapter [34](#) is the key to the messages of restoration. The emphases include the outworking of the frequently repeated verse "They will truly be my people, and I will be their God" ([11:20](#); cf. [34:30](#); [36:28](#)). The most significant aspects of the restoration theme include: (1) God's gracious restoration of his people to covenant blessing ([36:20-36](#); [37:23-26](#); [39:25](#)); (2) God's restoration of the nation of Israel to the land ([36:1-15](#), [24](#); [37:14-23](#); [39:27](#)); (3) God's new covenant, giving his Spirit to his people ([36:25-27](#); [37:14](#); [39:29](#)), and his blessing on his people ([36:8-12](#), [29-38](#); [39:9-10](#), [26](#)), assuring them of victory over their enemies ([35:1-15](#); [36:36](#); [37:28](#); [38:1-39:24](#)); (4) God's appointment of a Davidic king, the Messiah, over his people ([37:24-25](#)); and (5) God's temple restored among his people ([37:26-27](#)).

The People of God

The rejection of the exiles did not last forever. Based on the Abrahamic covenant, the Lord promised to bless the faithful remnant and to make of them a new people. The imagery of a valley of dry bones is particularly fitting. The dry bones represent God's people without hope ([37:11](#)). Ezekiel proclaims to them the good news that God will renew and restore them (v [12](#)). The Lord's purpose for his people is that all the nations may honor his holy name through his people ([39:7](#), [25-27](#)).

The Land

The promise also extends to the land, originally given to Abraham and his descendants. The Abrahamic covenant included a messianic element, for through the family of Abraham living in the Promised Land all nations would receive God's blessing ([Gn 12:3](#)). In a vision Ezekiel saw the boundaries and described the division of the land ([Ez 47-48](#)). The royal city of Jerusalem is the central symbol of God's presence among his people; its name will be "The Lord is there" ([48:8-35](#)).

The New Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant is renewed, a gracious covenant that expresses the restored relationship. "Covenant of peace" fittingly describes its nature and benefits. The restless people of God are promised rest from their searching, their enemies, and their toil. The change in relationship is further emphasized by God's sending of his Spirit, who will add a new dimension to the lifestyle of his people. Obedience to God will no longer be constrained, for God's Spirit helps his people to do his will. A new heart, controlled by the Spirit of God, is given to the Lord's people ([36:26-27](#)). The presence of the Spirit also signifies a new life for the people ([37:14](#); see [Jn 3:8](#), [16](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [Rom 8:2-4](#), [15](#)).

The Messiah

The OT hope of a messianic king is crystallized in Ezekiel's message. His rule will be everlasting ([Ez 37:25](#)), over all God's people who have new hearts (vv [15-25](#)).

The Temple

As a priest, Ezekiel remained keenly interested in the temple, priesthood, sacrificial regulations, and festivals. A large section of the prophecy's last division describes the temple's revived worship ([40:1-46:24](#)). His vision of the glory of God, so important in the messages of God's judgment on Jerusalem (chs [1](#), [10-11](#)), now assures the remnant that God did not forsake his people ([43:2-5](#)). He will dwell among them, for the temple is a symbol of God's presence ([37:27](#)). Some interpreters believe that the temple, with its ritual as described in [Ezekiel 40-46](#), will be restored in the messianic era before the last judgment. Others believe the promises about the temple provide a positive symbolic answer to Ezekiel's greatest concern: whether God will return to be with his people ([48:35](#); see [Jn 2:21](#); [Rv 21:22](#)).

There are various interpretations of chapters [34-48](#). As a watchman to Israel, Ezekiel had a message for the exiled Jewish community. Thus the prophecy's fulfillment must have begun with the decree of Cyrus I (538 BC) permitting the Jews to return to their land ([Ezr 1:1-3](#)). Two rival schools of interpretation exist on how the prophecy is fulfilled beyond Israel's restoration to the land. Those who interpret Israel as simply the nation view the modern return of Jewish people to the land of Israel as a continuation of God's prophetic promise. They believe that God's plan for Israel is being fulfilled along with, and in addition to, his plan for the Christian church. The fulfillment of those prophecies will be inaugurated by the

coming of the messianic king, who will give earthly peace to the Jewish people. The temple worship ([Ez 40-48](#)) will be restored in some way during the period of the messianic kingdom. The church will enjoy a small share in all the events centered on the Jews. The promises of Ezekiel's vision are thus limited to the nation of Israel and must be fulfilled before the coming of a new heaven and earth.

Other interpreters believe that Ezekiel wrote for the benefit of spiritual descendants of Abraham who believe, as Abraham did, in God's promises ([Gn 15:6](#); cf. [Rom 4:11-13](#); [Gal 3:6-9, 29](#)). All who have faith like Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles, are regarded as Abraham's offspring ([Gal 3:28-29](#)). Ezekiel's message thus would include all of God's gracious work among Christian Gentiles, who have become the recipients of God's promises and benefits. It is possible, on the basis of [1 Peter 1:10-11](#), to interpret Ezekiel's language as a prophetic expression of how God's grace would come to all those who become reconciled to God through faith in the gospel.

See also Diaspora of the Jews; Ezekiel (Person); Prophecy.

Ezel

Hebrew word designating a stone where Jonathan and David met prior to David's departure from the court of Saul ([1 Sm 20:19](#), nlt mg).

Ezem

City allotted to Judah's tribe ([Jos 15:29](#)), then later to Simeon's tribe, for an inheritance ([Jos 19:3](#); [1 Chr 4:29](#)). [Joshua 15](#) locates the city in the extreme southern part of Canaan.

Ezer

1. Chieftain of a Horite tribe ([Gn 36:21](#); [1 Chr 1:38](#)).
2. Descendant and probably the son of Ephraim. He was killed while making a raid on the cattle of the Philistines ([1 Chr 7:21](#)).
3. Man of Judah, descended from Hur ([1 Chr 4:4](#)).
4. Gadite who joined David at Ziklag ([1 Chr 12:9](#)).
5. Jeshua's son, who ruled Mizpah and repaired the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 3:19](#)).

6. Priest who took part in the ceremony at the dedication of the Jerusalem wall ([Neh 12:42](#)).

Ezion-Geber

Important port near some significant ruins at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Ezion-geber was one of the stations where the Israelites encamped while on their way to the plains of Moab ([Nm 33:35-36](#); [Dt 2:8](#)). The city is not mentioned again until Solomon's time. From this port Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, carried on a profitable commercial venture. Solomon's products included copper (mined in the Arabah at Timna, 15 miles, or 24.1 kilometers, north of Ezion-geber), olive oil, and possibly products bought from Egypt, such as linen, and chariots ([1 Kgs 10:28-29](#)). The "ships of Tarshish," with the ships of Hiram, made a round trip of three years from Ezion-geber to many ports along the coasts of Africa and Arabia and possibly even as far as India ([1 Kgs 10:22](#)). In exchange the fleet brought back gold from Ophir, along with precious stones, almug wood (vv [11-12](#)), silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks (v [22](#)). Solomon's alliance with the Phoenicians of Tyre gave him a port on the Mediterranean (which he himself did not have). The alliance also gave Hiram and the Phoenicians an outlet at Ezion-geber for trading in the Indian Ocean.

With the division of the kingdom after Solomon, the port was under Judah's control. It was burned and destroyed by Shishak of Egypt in his invasion of Judah in Rehoboam's fifth year (925 BC). A second city was built on the ruins, but there is no mention of a navy. Jehoshaphat was able to restore the fleet to sail once again, but some storm or other disaster wrecked the ships ([1 Kgs 22:48](#)). In subsequent Judean history, Judah was able to use the port when it was strong, but in its times of weakness, other nations did (e.g., Edom, [2 Kgs 8:20-22](#); [16:6](#)). See Exodus, The; Wilderness Wanderings.

Eznite

The King James Version name for the greatest leader of the mighty men of King David ([2 Samuel 23:8](#)). Most scholars consider "Adino the Eznite" the result of a textual corruption or scribal error in the Hebrew text. Most scholars prefer the reading "Jashobeam the Hacmonite." The Berean Standard Bible uses "Josheb-basshebeth the Tahchemonite"

(which is another form of "Jashobeam the Hacmonite").

Ezra (Person)

1. Religious reformer following Israel's return from exile. Ezra's genealogy ([Ezr 7:1-5](#); cf. [1 Chr 6:3-15](#)) places him in the high priestly Aaron-Zadok family line, which accounts for the importance of his scribal and priestly activities. He is called "priest" ([Ezr 10:10, 16](#); [Neh 8:2](#)), "scribe" ([Ezr 7:6](#); [Neh 12:36](#)), and "priest and scribe" ([Ezr 7:11-12](#); [Neh 8:9](#); [12:26](#)). The OT scribe was not a mere copyist, as in Christ's time, but a profound student of God's laws and commandments ([Ezr 7:11-12](#); [Jer 8:8](#)). In the commission of the Persian king Artaxerxes to Ezra, the king described him as "priest" and "scribe" ([Ezr 7:6-11](#)). It was Ezra who began the traditional view of the scribe as a religious leader, a "bookman"; the view lasted until 200 BC. Scribes were qualified to teach and preach the Scriptures as well as interpret them, but by the first century AD, the scribe's function was more specialized.

As "Secretary of State for Jewish Affairs" in the Persian Empire, Ezra visited Jerusalem about 458 BC, and on his return reported his findings. Little was done, however, until Nehemiah went to Jerusalem in 445. Once the city walls had been rebuilt, Ezra instituted a religious reformation in which the ancient Torah (the Law) was made the norm for Jewish life. He also demanded that Jews who had married foreigners must divorce them to maintain the Jewish purity the Torah required. Ezra set an example of piety and dedication through prayer and fasting, and this placed his reforming zeal in proper spiritual perspective. He set the pattern for life in the postexilic Jewish commonwealth, making God's Word and worship central features. The date and place of his death are unknown.

See also Ezra, Book of; Postexilic Period.

2. KJV rendering of Ezrah in [1 Chronicles 4:17](#). *See* Ezrah.

Ezrah

Father of four sons from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 4:17](#)).

Ezrahite

Word occurring only three times in the OT. Twice it is used as a title for Ethan ([1 Kgs 4:31](#); [Ps 89 title](#)) and once as a name given to Heman ([Ps 88 title](#)). It is no longer thought to be a family name, but instead signifies a member of a pre-Israelite family.

Ezri

Son of Kelub and one of the men who supervised the tilling of David's lands ([1 Chr 27:26](#)).