

Resource: Biblica Bible Dictionary

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Biblica Bible Dictionary

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Sabbath day

The seventh day of the week for Israelites and Jews. It was a holy day when they rested and didn't work. This included their livestock, their servants and outsiders who lived with them. It was a day to honour how God rested after creating the world. It also honoured the rest God promised the Israelites after freeing them from slavery in Egypt. The Sabbath day was a sign of God's covenant with the Israelites on Mount Sinai. The day was a reminder that God is good and provides what his people need. Later, Jewish religious leaders made many rules about what was allowed on the Sabbath day. These rules didn't always help people honour God. Jesus taught people how to honour God on the Sabbath day. Even though the leaders opposed him, he performed miracles on the Sabbath day.

Sacrifice

Something given to God as an offering. It's one way to worship God. God's instructions in the Law of Moses taught his people to make sacrifices to him. They would offer to God their animals, crops and other things that they owned. They would bring them to the holy tent or the temple. Some sacrifices were sin offerings to pay for people's sins. That is how they would be forgiven and made right with God. Other sacrifices were to thank God for his blessings. In the New Testament, Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice. He gave up his life as a sin offering to pay for people's sins. His sacrifice makes people who believe in him right with God. Jesus' followers show they are thankful for his sacrifice by giving up many things. As they continue Jesus' work on earth, they give up money and things they own. They give up things they hope to do or to have. They may even give up their lives. They offer everything they have to God because they trust him and love him. They make sacrifices to do what is good for others.

Sacrifice animals

A certain way of putting animals to death. This was done in order to worship and honour someone or a god. This practice was common in the times and places recorded in the Bible. Followers of the true God sacrificed animals to show that they were turning away from sin. The animal's death was a sign of the death and harm that sin brings. It was also a sign of the punishment for sins that human beings commit. Animals were killed instead of human beings. In this way animals were sacrificed to pay for people's sins. People who worshiped false gods sacrificed animals for different reasons. They would do this to show how committed they were to their false gods. They would do it to get a blessing. They would do it because they thought the false gods were hungry or were angry.

Sacrifice children

To kill children as a way of worshipping and honouring false gods. People would sacrifice children to show how committed they were to the false gods. They would also do it to get a blessing from the false gods. This practice was common in the times and places recorded in the Old Testament. The true God showed that he wasn't to be worshipped that way. God's laws make it very clear that human beings aren't to be sacrificed. This includes children. Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 talk about this.

Sadducees

The group of Jewish religious leaders with the most authority in Jerusalem. This was during the times of the New Testament. They were in charge of the temple and worked closely with the Roman rulers. They didn't believe in angels or that God raised people from the dead. They didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah God had promised to send. Most Sadducees opposed Jesus and his teachings.

Safe cities

Six cities where Levites lived. Three were on the east side of the River Jordan. Three were on the west side. People who had accidentally killed someone could go there. They would be safe and wouldn't be killed by the dead person's nearest male relative. They could live there until the high priest died. Then they could go back to where they had lived before.

Salvation

When God comes and rescues his people. Over hundreds of years God slowly showed his plan for salvation. The Israelites and Jews had been waiting for God to save them. They waited for him to save them once and for all from their enemies. They thought that their enemies were human armies or people who treated them badly. But God is committed to saving all that he created. He will save it from the power of sin, death and evil. This includes all people who trust in him. This became clear when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. When people believe in Jesus, he rescues them from the power of sin, death and evil. This is the beginning of their salvation. Everyone who believes in Jesus is saved for ever. Salvation will be complete when Jesus returns to earth. (Believe in)

Samaria

The capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. Omri made Samaria the centre of the northern kingdom's government. Ahab made it the centre of the northern kingdom's worship practices. The Assyrians took control of the city and the area around it in 722 BC. They brought other people groups to live there. These people groups mixed with the Israelites who were left in Samaria. Their children became known as Samaritans. In the time of the Romans, Samaria was an area of Israel. It was between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. In Jesus' time, the Samaritans claimed to be from Abraham's family line. Jews and Samaritans usually treated each other like enemies.

Samson

One of the 12 judges of Israel. He was from the tribe of Dan and his father was Manoah. The angel of the Lord appeared to his mother to announce his birth. He was to live as a Nazirite his entire life. God used Samson to free the Israelites from being treated badly by the Philistines.

Samuel

An Israelite who served God's people as a prophet, a priest and a judge. In the Hebrew language the name Samuel means to be heard by God. The name can also mean borrowed from God. Samuel was faithful to God his entire life. He was the son of Elkanah and Hannah. He was from the tribe of Levi through the family line of Korah. His sons were Joel and Abijah. Samuel was raised as a Nazirite in the holy tent at Shiloh. He started serving the Israelites as a prophet when he was young. He served as a priest after Eli died. When he served as judge God freed the Israelites from the Philistines. Samuel anointed first Saul and then David as king.

Sanhedrin

A group of 70 religious leaders. They had the most authority in Jewish courts in Jesus' time. The Sanhedrin was also called the Jewish Council. They looked after the temple in Jerusalem and made important decisions for the Jewish people. Both Pharisees and Sadducees served in the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin opposed Jesus. They also opposed the apostles who spread the news about Jesus being raised from the dead.

Sarah

A woman from Mesopotamia who was Abraham's wife. She was the daughter of Terah but from a different mother than Abraham. God changed Sarai's name to Sarah in Genesis chapter 17. In the Hebrew language, Sarai and Sarah both mean princess or noble woman. For many years she was unable to have children. God promised that she would have a son. When she was very old, she gave birth to Isaac.

Sardis

An important city in the Roman territory of Asia. There was a temple to the goddess Artemis there.

Saul

Israel's first king. He was the son of Kish and was from the tribe of Benjamin. He was very tall and handsome. As king, he stopped trusting and obeying God. Because of this, his family line didn't continue to rule in Israel. Saul was controlled by fear and jealousy. He tried very hard to kill David. He died in a battle against the Philistines.

Saviour

God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. He saved them from their enemies many times throughout the Old Testament. He was the only one powerful enough to save them. In these ways he showed himself to be their only Saviour. He also promised to send a Saviour who would live among them. This was Jesus the Messiah. Jesus saves those who believe in him and follow him. He saves them from the power of sin, death and evil.

Sea

Many stories in the Bible describe the sea as something to be feared. It was something people needed God to save them from. This included the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. It included Jonah when he was tossed into the sea. It included Jesus when he calmed the storm on the sea. It included John's vision in Revelation of the beast who came from the sea.

Seal

There are several meanings for the word seal in the Bible. The first meaning is to close something up or shut it. The second is to put into effect an agreement or covenant. The third meaning is a piece of sticky wax. People would put the wax on important scrolls or papers to close them. Only people with permission were supposed to break the seal and open the papers. The last meaning is an official or royal mark that shows who someone is. A seal that was pressed onto papers or other

things left its mark on them. This showed that the person agreed to something or that it belonged to them.

Second death

A way of describing God's final judgement against those who refuse to follow him. They are destroyed and are separated from God for ever. John described the place where the second death took place as a lake of fire. It was also called a lake of burning sulphur. Those who were thrown into it would have no part in God's kingdom on earth.

Servants

Israelites were allowed to work as servants for other Israelites. This was to help them pay off debts they owed. After six years of working, they were given the choice to be set free. If they chose to be set free they were given food and livestock. The servant could also choose to continue working for the same family their entire life. Servants weren't to be treated badly or considered slaves. This was because God had freed them from slavery in Egypt. They were never to be slaves again. Being slaves again was one of the covenant curses.

Set apart

In the Old Testament there were two meanings for being set apart. The first meaning was for people, priests, prophets and things that were set apart. People, priests and prophets could be set apart to serve God in special ways. Things like animals, land and objects could also be set apart for the Lord. This meant that they weren't used in the normal way. They were to be used only in special ways to serve God. The second meaning was when people or things were set apart to be destroyed. This was a way that God brought judgement against people's evil deeds.

Seth

A son of Adam and Eve. He was like Adam in ways that Cain wasn't. He followed God. God chose to work through Seth's family line in his plan for saving the world. Jesus was from Seth's family line.

Seven

The number used in the Bible to talk about things that are complete. It shows that things are finished and perfect.

Shame and honour

In the times and places of the Bible, shame and honour were very important. People wanted to avoid bringing shame to their family, their community and their people group. Everyone in a community understood what ways of speaking and acting were considered proper. Going against those ways was like saying no to their relationship with their community. This brought shame. Then that person wasn't respected. They would often run away or hide. Someone with more authority could bring that person back into the community. This was how the shame was taken away. Instead, people wanted to bring honour to their family, community and people group. Honour came by doing things that were considered proper and worthy of respect. The more honour someone had the more authority they had in the community.

Shechem

A city in Canaan that became an important city in Israel. Abraham and Jacob built altars to God there. Shechem was also the name of the man who raped Dinah. Dinah's brothers killed Shechem and the men in the city because of what Shechem did.

Shem

The second son of Noah. He and his wife were saved from the flood because they were in the ark. He treated his father with respect when Noah got drunk after the flood. Shem followed God. Noah recognised Shem as the leader among his brothers. He spoke a blessing over Shem's family.

Shema

A Jewish prayer that includes Deuteronomy 6:4. In the Hebrew language, the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4 is shema. It means to listen and

to take action based on what was heard. In the Hebrew language, hearing and doing are understood to be the same thing. The Shema explains what God's covenant with the Israelites was about. God is the one and only true God. The Israelites were to obey only God. This was true for each person. It was also true for them as a community. They were to obey the Ten Commandments and all of God's laws. Many things would help them remember who God is and what he commanded. They were to talk about his commands all the time everywhere and with everyone. They were to write them down. They were to place reminders on their clothes, their bodies, their houses and their gates. They were to ask questions about God freely and talk about him with their children. Jesus used the words of the Shema in Mark 12:29.

Shepherd

Someone who takes care of sheep or other livestock. In the Old Testament Abraham and many in his family line were shepherds. They travelled from one place to another to find grass for their flocks. It's also a way to talk about leaders who take care of other people. Israel's leaders were often described as being bad shepherds. God was the good shepherd for his people. In the New Testament, church leaders are to be shepherds of Jesus' followers. Jesus himself is the good shepherd of God's people.

Shiloh

An important Israelite city in the hill country of Ephraim. It was north of Jerusalem. Joshua set up the holy tent there when the Israelites entered Canaan.

Sihon and Og

Two Amorite kings who lived east of the River Jordan. Sihon was the king of Heshbon and Og was the king of Bashan. The Israelites asked for permission to travel through their lands in peace. Sihon and Og attacked them but the Israelites won the battles. Some of the Israelite tribes chose to remain and live in those lands.

Silas

A leader among the believers in Jerusalem. He worked with Paul, Barnabas and Peter. He was a prophet and a Roman citizen. He helped take an important letter from the Jerusalem church to Gentile churches. He also helped Paul and Peter write letters to churches.

Siloam

A place inside the walls of Jerusalem where there was a pool of fresh water. Siloam means sent. The first pool there was built by King Hezekiah. The Babylonians destroyed it but it was rebuilt in Nehemiah's time. Water from the pool was poured on the altar during the Feast of Booths. The pool's water came from the Gihon spring. There was also a tower there that fell during Jesus' time and killed 18 people.

Simon of Cyrene

A man from Cyrene who carried part of Jesus' cross. Roman soldiers made him do this. Cyrene was in the country now called Libya in Africa. Many Jews who spoke the Greek language lived there. They would travel to Jerusalem for Jewish feasts. Simon's sons were named Alexander and Rufus. This Rufus might be the same Rufus Paul talked about in Romans 16:13.

Sin

Thoughts, words, actions or desires that go against what God wants. These are harmful to the person, to others and to the rest of creation. Sin came into the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Sin destroyed the peace between God and human beings. It destroyed the peace between human beings and the peace between everything that God made. Sin brings death. It keeps human beings separated from God. The Bible describes sin as a master and human beings as its slaves. Sin is evil. Jesus is the only one powerful enough to destroy the power of sin. Only Jesus can free humans from it.

Sin offerings

Sacrifices or offerings that God required his people to make when they sinned without meaning to. When people realised that they had sinned, they had to stop. They had to turn back to God and trust him to forgive them. They would show this by making a sin offering. Sacrificing an animal was a way to pay for the sin the person had done. The offering could be bulls, goats, lambs, doves, pigeons or fine flour. God required sin offerings to be made as soon as the sin was noticed. They were also to be made at a certain time of the year. Most sin offerings were eaten by priests inside the courtyard of the holy tent or temple. Other sin offerings were to be burnt completely. Parts of them were burnt on the altar. Other parts were burnt outside the camp or the city. When Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross, he paid for the sins of all people. He was the last sin offering needed.

Slaves

Many people worked as slaves in the times and places recorded in the Bible. The way of life of many people groups depended on the work done by slaves. Slaves could do nearly every job in a household. Writers of the Bible didn't teach people to have slaves. Old Testament writers taught how slaves and masters were to treat one another. This was based on the Law of Moses. All slaves among the people of Israel were allowed to rest on the Sabbath day. They were allowed to worship God along with free people. They weren't required to stay slaves until they died. God's people weren't to be sold as slaves. New Testament writers taught that slaves and masters were equal members of God's family. They were to serve Jesus and to serve one another. There is also a spiritual meaning for slavery in the Bible. Writers of the Bible described human beings as being slaves to sin. This means that sin rules over all human beings and controls them. Jesus frees people from being slaves to sin.

Smyrna

An important city in the Roman territory of Asia. It was on the coast of the Aegean Sea. It's part of the city Izmir in the country now known as Turkey.

Sodom and Gomorrah

Two cities in Canaan. The people who lived there were known for doing evil things. Abraham's nephew Lot lived in Sodom. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah but saved Lot. God destroyed these cities because of their evil ways.

Solomon

The son of David and Bathsheba who became king of Israel. God gave him the name Jedidiah. In the Hebrew language Jedidiah means loved by the Lord. This name showed that God had chosen Solomon to be king after David. Solomon was the king when the temple was built in Jerusalem. He was very wise and very rich. He wrote many proverbs and songs. Later in his rule Solomon stopped being faithful to God. This led to the nation of Israel separating into two kingdoms.

Son of David

A name used for Jesus to show that he was Israel's true King and Messiah. God had promised King David that his kingdom would last for ever. This would happen because someone from his family line would be the messiah. Jesus was the promised ruler from David's family. (David 1 Samuel 16:1 – 17:58.)

Son of God

A way that Psalm 2 described Israel's kings. It showed that they were chosen by God to rule and were worthy of honour. It showed that they were to follow God's example for ruling. In New Testament times, Roman emperors were called son of god. This was because they believed that the Roman gods gave Caesar his power. The name was used in a special way to talk about Jesus. It means that the one, true, mighty God is Jesus' Father. Using this name for Jesus made Jews who didn't accept him very angry. It also made the Roman government angry because it challenged Caesar's authority.

Son of Man

A way to talk about a person or human being. It's also the name of someone in a vision Daniel had (Daniel 7:13–14). In the vision, the son of man saved Israel from their enemies. Jesus called himself the Son of Man. This was a way to talk about how he is human and has God's authority. Jesus explained that as the Son of Man he would suffer. Then he would win victory over God's enemies. Those enemies are sin, death and evil. Jesus would do this for all human beings.

Sons of God

It isn't known for sure who the sons of God were. It's thought that they were spiritual beings that turned against God. It's thought that they came to earth with bodies and married human women. This went against God's plan for human beings to marry only human beings.

Southern kingdom

The land and tribes of Israel ruled over by kings from David's family line. It was also called Judah. It included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and some Israelites from other tribes. Important cities in the southern kingdom were Hebron, Lachish and Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the capital city. The southern kingdom began when Rehoboam lost authority over ten of the tribes. It ended in 586 BC when Babylon took control of Jerusalem. Some people from the southern kingdom returned after being exiled in Babylon. Prophets to the southern kingdom included Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Ezekiel. The kings were Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah (queen), Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Only a few of these kings were faithful to the Mount Sinai covenant. This included Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah.

Spain

A country in the western area of the lands ruled by the Roman government. Today it's still called Spain. Paul wanted to share the good news there. It's the area furthest west that is mentioned in the Bible.

Speak other languages

When people speak out loud in a language they didn't know before. The Holy Spirit has given some believers the ability to do this. Others listening to them may or may not speak the language. Unless someone can explain the message, believers with this gift should speak only with God. Doing this will help them be close to God through prayer. (Explain other languages)

Special water

Water was used in many practices to help the Israelites worship God. Priests washed their hands and feet with water when they served God at the altar. This water was held in a large bronze bowl. People and things that were considered unclean became clean after being washed in water. It was considered special when priests added ashes from a young cow to water. This special water was sprinkled on people or things after being near a dead body. Using water in these ways meant more than cleaning off dirt. It was a sign that people or things were considered spiritually clean and pure. Only people or things that were considered clean and pure could be close to God.

Spiritual

Something that has to do with the spirit of a human being or a spiritual being. Throughout the Bible there are many meanings for the word spirit. One meaning is God's Spirit or the Holy Spirit. Another meaning is spiritual beings. Another meaning is the spirit of a person. When God created human beings he breathed life into them. This life from God is each person's spirit. It's the part of each person that exists as more than a body. It will exist for ever. Things that happen in a person's spirit or to their spirit are described as spiritual. A person's spirit is often understood to be like their heart or their soul.

Spiritual armour

Tools that God gives his people to protect them from evil. These tools can't be held in people's hands. They are spiritual. They are described as armour or weapons because believers use them in

spiritual fights. Truth, godliness, peace, faith, salvation, God's word and prayer are kinds of spiritual armour. These tools help believers to be strong in their faith. They help them to follow Jesus faithfully and to say no to evil.

Spiritual beings

Beings that don't have bodies like the bodies of humans or other creatures on earth. They are also called heavenly beings. They can look like humans even though they don't have human bodies. God is a spiritual being. He created all other spiritual beings. (Angel)

Spiritual blessings

Ways that God blesses his people spiritually. These blessings aren't something that people can hold in their hands. They are the riches in heaven that Jesus talked about (Matthew 6:19-21). There are many kinds of spiritual blessings. Wisdom, understanding, grace, hope and love are spiritual blessings. Being forgiven for sin and having eternal life are also spiritual blessings. People don't earn spiritual blessings. God gives them freely.

Spiritual fight

The battle of the devil and all evil spiritual beings against God. They want to stop God's plan for the world. One way they do this is by trying to make people turn against God. The fight occurs in the heavenly world. Humans are part of the fight through the choices they make. They make choices about who to worship and how to treat others. Worshipping God and acting according to his plan is how they fight against evil.

Stephen

One of the seven leaders chosen by the believers in Jerusalem to be a deacon. He made sure all the believers had enough food. Many Jews were angry that he preached about Jesus. They killed him by throwing stones at him. He was the first of Jesus' followers to be killed for being faithful to Jesus.

Stoics

A group of thinkers who followed the teachings of the Greek thinker Zeno of Citium. They believed that people should live according to natural laws called the logos. The logos was understood to be the force of reason that made the world work. Paul shared the good news about Jesus with Stoics in Athens.

Stone tablets

Pieces of stone that Moses carved out of rock. God wrote on them the words of the Ten Commandments and the covenant law. They were the written copy of the covenant agreement between God and the Israelites. Moses broke the first set of tablets. He broke them when the Israelites worshipped the metal statue of the calf. Later God wrote the covenant agreement on two new tablets. These were kept in the ark of the covenant.

Stories

It was very important to the Israelites to remember stories and teachings. They told the stories of what happened among their people from long ago. They told the stories about God's mighty works. They also told the stories about the laws and teachings they had received from God. Older people told these things to younger people. In this way everyone learnt the stories and teachings that were important to the community.

Stubborn

A way to describe people who refuse to listen to God or obey him. The Bible gives examples of people who choose to be this way. It also talks about God making people stubborn. This happened with Pharaoh during the exodus. It also happened when the Canaanites attacked Joshua's army. This doesn't mean that God causes certain people not to believe in him. Pharaoh and the Canaanite armies had shown that they refused to believe in God. They were determined to stop what God wanted done. But God made sure that what he wanted to be done was done. He used how stubborn they were as a way of accomplishing his purposes and plans.

Super-apostle

What Paul called certain Jewish leaders. These leaders opposed his work in the churches he helped start. Compared to Paul, they seemed strong, successful, healthy and rich. They told lies about Paul and claimed that he was always causing trouble. They took advantage of new believers and didn't serve people with love. They pretended to serve God but were really serving Satan by doing evil.

Susa

One of the capital cities of the Persian government. It was located east of the River Tigris in the country now called Iran.

Sword

A sharp weapon used for fighting. Writers in the Bible said the words people speak are like swords. This showed how people can cause harm with their words. Writers in the Bible also said God's word is like a sword. This showed that God's word uncovers what is inside people's hearts. It also showed that God's word strengthens and protects believers when they struggle against evil. In a special way, the words from Jesus' mouth were described as a sword. This was a picture of how Jesus is God's word. Everything he speaks is the truth about God. Speaking truth about God is how he destroys the devil's lies about God.

Synagogue

Places where Jews in New Testament times would gather to worship God. They would read out loud from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Then Jewish teachers called rabbis would teach the people. This would happen on the Sabbath day. There were synagogues throughout the lands controlled by the Roman government.