

What is the significance of the land of Shinar in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/land-of-Shinar.html>

The land of Shinar is referenced eight times in the Old Testament (Genesis 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9; Joshua 7:21; Isaiah 11:11; Daniel 1:2; Zechariah 5:11), always in connection to the geographical location of Babylonia. In certain passages, some versions of the Bible translate the word for “Shinar” as “Babylonia” for clarity’s sake. Shinar is significant for these reasons:

Shinar was the location of the Tower of Babel. Genesis 10:10 mentions that Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, built “Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in Shinar.” A plain in Shinar was the site chosen to construct the notorious Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-4). As punishment for the people’s wickedness, God confused their language, and thus the land of Shinar earned the name of “Babel” or “Babylon” (Genesis 11:5-9). Babylon and Babylonia both derive their names from Babel, which means “confusion.”

Shinar was ruled by a king that Abraham fought. During Abraham’s time, four kings, including Amraphel, king of Shinar, fought against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and three other kings (Genesis 14:1-3, 8-9). After overpowering the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, the four kings plundered the cities, carrying away Lot and all he owned (Genesis 14:10-12). To save his nephew, Abraham and 318 of his men routed the raiding party, defeated the four kings, and recovered Lot, his family, and his possessions (Genesis 14:13-17).

Shinar was associated with temptation. After taking Jericho, the Israelites failed in conquering Ai because of sin in the camp (Joshua 7:10-12). Achan had stolen devoted

items from Jericho, which the Lord had specifically commanded against (Joshua 6:18-19). Included in the plundered items was a finely crafted, beautiful robe from Shinar (Joshua 7:21). Because of Achan's sin, about thirty-six people lost their lives during the failed attempt at taking Ai (Joshua 7:4-5). After his sin was discovered, Achan and his family were stoned to death in accordance with God's command (Joshua 7:24-26).

Shinar was associated with Babylon's wickedness. Zechariah the prophet recorded a vision of a basket with a lead cover. The angel guiding Zechariah identified the meaning of the basket: "This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land" (Zechariah 5:6). Then the angel raised the cover of lead, revealing to the prophet that there was a woman in the basket. The angel said, "'This is wickedness,' and he pushed her back into the basket and pushed the lead cover down over its mouth" (Zechariah 5:8). The basket with the woman was then carried through air to the land of Shinar where a temple would be built for it (verse 11). This strange vision pictures the suppression of wickedness and its banishment to Shinar/Babylon. In Shinar, the wickedness would eventually be freed and even worshiped (cf. Revelation 17). Shinar is associated with the wicked worship of false gods, and in the end times, Babylon the Great is the center of wickedness and demon worship (Revelation 18:2-3).

Shinar was the location of Judah's exile. When the nation of Judah was finally taken into exile to Babylonia, Nebuchadnezzar carried off the devoted things of the Lord's temple and placed them in a temple to the god he worshipped (Daniel 1:1-2). Nebuchadnezzar probably placed the precious items into the temple of Marduk, also called Bel, which was the chief god of the Babylonians. Because of disobedience and idol worship, the Jews were exiled from their land to Shinar (2 Chronicles 36:15-21).

Shinar is a place that will contain a faithful remnant of Israel. Isaiah 11 mentions the future millennial kingdom of the “Root of Jesse” who will “stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10). During His reign, Jesus will “recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea” (Isaiah 11:11, ESV). This promise assures us that God’s people will be regathered—even from Shinar—to worship the Lord in His future kingdom.

Shinar is significant in its connection to the world’s historical rebellion against God: everything from the construction of the Tower of Babel to its association with idols, its mistreatment of Israel, and its future association with the Antichrist. Despite the many evils in the land of Shinar, God has preserved His people there. Believing Israelites in Shinar will participate in Jesus’ millennial kingdom in the future, demonstrating God’s grace and redemption.