

Who was Hur in the Bible?

There are three separate men named Hur mentioned in the Bible, all in the Old Testament. The least-known of the three is simply mentioned by name in Nehemiah 3:9. He was the father of Rephaiah, one of the rulers of Jerusalem who repaired a section of the walls of Jerusalem when Nehemiah was overseeing the rebuilding process (see the book of Nehemiah for more about the reconstruction of the Jerusalem walls after the Israelites returned from their exile in Babylon and Persia).

Another Hur in the Bible was one of the five rulers of Midian in the time of Moses. When this Hur appears in Scripture, the Israelites were wandering in the desert as God's punishment for their lack of trust and obedience concerning taking possession of the Promised Land (Numbers 14). While God's people were in the land of Shittim, the Midianites there deceived them, leading them into sexual immorality and idolatry. So God commanded Moses to take revenge on the Midianites and their chiefs: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba. Every Midianite man was killed, including all five chiefs (Numbers 31:7-8). This battle was the last that Moses led before his death (verse 1).

The most well-known Hur appears in the book of Exodus. He is described as being from the tribe of Judah. As Hur is most often mentioned in conjunction with Aaron, Moses' brother and high priest of the Israelites, it is likely that Hur also had a place of authority among the people. Hur is one of the two men who held up Moses' arms during the Israelites' battle against the Amalekites. When the Amalekites attacked the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land, Moses stood on a hill overlooking the battle, staff in hand, and raised his arms in a position of prayer (Exodus 17:8-9). As long as Moses' arms were raised, the Israelites prevailed, but, when he lowered his hands, the Amalekites began to overtake the Israelites (verse 11). So, when Moses' arms grew tired,

he sat on a stone and Aaron and Hur stood beside him to hold up his arms. Due to Aaron and Hur's support, “[Moses’] hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword” (Exodus 17:12-13).

Previously, when Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he left Aaron and Hur in charge of the people. They did a poor job, for, when Moses returned, he found that the people had created a golden calf to worship in place of the Lord. Aaron himself cast the idol (Exodus 32:2-4). While Hur’s involvement in the idolatry is unclear, it is likely that, as a leader in Israel, Hur was either complicit or complacent in the matter.

The last piece of information the Bible gives us of Hur of the tribe of Judah is that he was grandfather to Bezalel (Exodus 31:2), the craftsman who was filled with God’s Spirit to oversee the construction of the tabernacle and the Ark of God. According to one Jewish tradition, Hur was married to Moses’ sister, Miriam. Another tradition says that Hur was Miriam’s son. Yet another Jewish tradition has Hur standing up to the idolaters at Mt. Sinai and being murdered by them—after which Aaron was much more compliant with the crowd’s demands. Such speculations are interesting but cannot be confirmed in Scripture.

The name “Hur” is also known due to the character “Judah Ben-Hur” in the movie Ben-Hur. However, the character in the movie is not based on any of the men named “Hur” in the Bible.