

GOOD
NEWS
BIBLE

THE BIBLE SOCIETIES/COLLINS

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THE DIVISION OF CANAAN



¹⁰ I also learnt that the temple musicians and other Levites had left Jerusalem and gone back to their farms, because the people had not been giving them enough to live on. ¹¹ I reprimanded the officials for letting the Temple be neglected. And I brought the Levites and musicians back to the Temple and put them to work again.

¹² Then all the people of Israel again started bringing to the temple storerooms their tithes of corn, wine, and olive oil. ¹³ I put the following men in charge of the storerooms: Shelemiah, a priest; Zadok, a scholar of the Law; and Pedaiah, a Levite. Hanan, the son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah, was to be their assistant. I knew I could trust these men to be honest in distributing the supplies to their fellow-workers.

¹⁴ Remember, my God, all these things that I have done for your Temple and its worship.

¹⁵ At that time I saw people in Judah pressing juice from grapes on the Sabbath. Others were loading corn, wine, grapes, figs, and other things on their donkeys and taking them into Jerusalem; I warned them not to sell anything on the Sabbath.

¹⁶ Some people from the city of Tyre were living in Jerusalem, and they brought fish and all kinds of goods into the city to sell to our people on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ I reprimanded the Jewish leaders and said, "Look at the evil you're doing! You're making the Sabbath unholy. ¹⁸ This is exactly why God punished your ancestors when he brought destruction on this city. And yet you insist on bringing more of God's anger down on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

¹⁹ So I gave orders for the city gates to be shut at the beginning of every Sabbath, as soon as evening* began to fall, and not to be opened again until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my men at the gates to make sure that nothing was brought into the city on the Sabbath. ²⁰ Once or twice merchants who sold all kinds of goods spent Friday night outside

the city walls. ²¹ I warned them, "It's no use waiting out there for morning to come. If you try this again, I'll use force against you." From then on they did not come back on the Sabbath. ²² I ordered the Levites to purify themselves and to go and guard the gates to make sure that the Sabbath was kept holy.

Remember me, O God, for this also, and spare me because of your great love.

²³ At that time I also discovered that many of the Jewish men had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ Half their children spoke the language of Ashdod or some other language and didn't know how to speak our language. ²⁵ I reprimanded the men, called down curses on them, beat them, and pulled out their hair. Then I made them take an oath in God's name that never again would they or their children intermarry with foreigners. ²⁶ I said, "It was foreign women that made King Solomon sin. He was a man who was greater than any of the kings of other nations. God loved him and made him king over all Israel, and yet he fell into this sin. ²⁷ Are we then to follow your example and disobey our God by marrying foreign women?"

²⁸ Joiada was the son of Eliashib the High Priest, but one of Joiada's sons married the daughter of Sanballat, from the town of Beth Horon, so I made Joiada leave Jerusalem.

²⁹ Remember, O God, how those people defiled both the office of priest and the covenant you made with the priests and the Levites.

³⁰ I purified the people from everything foreign; I prepared regulations for the priests and the Levites so that each one would know his duty; ³¹ I arranged for the wood used for burning the offerings to be brought at the proper times, and for the people to bring their offerings of the first corn and the first fruits that ripened.

Remember all this, O God, and give me credit for it.

13.19 EVENING: *The Jewish day begins at sunset.*
See also: **13.10:** Deut 12.19 **13.12:** Mal 3.10
13.15: Ex 20.8–10; Deut 5.12–14; Jer 17.21–22

See also: **13.23–25:** Ex 34.11–16; Deut 7.1–5
13.26: 2 Sam 12.24–25; 1 Kgs 11.1–8 **13.28:** Neh 4.1

THE BOOK OF TOBIT

INTRODUCTION

The book of *Tobit*, originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, is a story which tells of miraculous help to God's faithful people and teaches Jewish piety and morality. The book offers a vivid picture of Jewish religion and culture in the period prior to the New Testament.

Outline of Contents

- Tobit in Nineveh and Sarah in Media suffer
and pray 1.1—3.15
- Their prayers are answered 3.16—11.18
- In answer to their prayers God sends
the angel Raphael 3.16, 17
 - Tobit gives advice to his son, Tobias 4.1—21
 - Raphael travels with Tobias to Media 5.1—7.12
 - Tobias marries Sarah 7.13—9.6
 - Raphael returns with Tobias and Sarah,
and cures Tobit's blindness 10.1—11.18
- The angel Raphael reveals who he is 12.1—22
- Tobit praises God and gives advice to Tobias 13.1—14.15
-

1 I am Tobit and this is the story of my life. My father was Tobiel, my grandfather was Ananiel, and my great-grandfather was Aduel. Aduel's father was Gabael; his grandfather was Raphael; and his great-grandfather was Raguel, who belonged to the clan of Asiel, a part of the tribe of Naphtali. ² During the time that Shalmaneser was emperor of Assyria, I was taken captive in my home town of Thisbe, located in northern Galilee, south of Kadesh in Naphtali, north-west of Hazor, and north of Phogor.

Tobit's Early Life

³ All my life I have been honest and have tried to do what was right. I have often given money to help needy relatives and fellow Jews who were deported with me to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

⁴ When I was young, I lived in northern Israel. All the tribes in Israel were supposed

to offer sacrifices in Jerusalem. It was the one city that God had chosen from among all the Israelite cities as the place where his Temple was to be built for his holy and eternal home. But my entire tribe of Naphtali rejected the city of Jerusalem and the kings descended from David. ⁵ Like everyone else in this tribe, my own family used to go to the city of Dan in the mountains of northern Galilee to offer sacrifices to the gold bull-calf which King Jeroboam of Israel had set up there.

Tobit's Faithfulness to His Religion

⁶ I was the only one in my family who regularly went to Jerusalem to celebrate the religious festivals, as the Law of Moses commands everyone to do. I would hurry off to Jerusalem with the first part of my harvest, the first-born of my animals, a tenth of my cattle, and the freshly clipped wool from my sheep. Then I would stand

before the altar in the Temple, and give these offerings to the priests, the descendants of Aaron. ⁷ I would give a tenth of my grain, wine, olive-oil, pomegranates, figs and other fruits to the Levites who served God in Jerusalem. Every year, except the seventh year when the land was at rest,* I would sell a second tenth of my possessions and spend the money in Jerusalem on the festival meal.

⁸ But every third year, I would give a third tithe* to widows and orphans and to foreigners living among my people, and we would eat the festival meal together. I did this in keeping with the Law of Moses, which Deborah, the mother of my grandfather Ananiel, had taught me to obey. (I had been left an orphan when my father died.)

Tobit's Faithfulness in Exile

⁹ When I grew up, I married Anna, a member of my own tribe. We had a son and named him Tobias. ¹⁰ Later, I was taken captive and deported to Assyria, and that is how I came to live in Nineveh.

While we lived in Nineveh, all my relatives and fellow Jews used to eat the same kind of food as the other people who lived there, ¹¹ but I refused to do so. ¹² Since I took seriously the commands of the Most High God, ¹³ he made Emperor Shalmaneser respect me, and I was placed in charge of purchasing all the emperor's supplies.

¹⁴ Before the emperor died, I made regular visits to the land of Media to buy things for him there. Once, when I was in the city of Rages in Media, I left some bags of money there with Gabael, Gabrias's brother, and asked him to keep them for me. There were more than 300 kilogrammes of silver coins in those bags. ¹⁵ When Shalmaneser died, his son Sennacherib succeeded him as emperor. It soon became so dangerous to travel on the roads in Media that I could no longer go there.

Tobit Buries the Dead

¹⁶ While Shalmaneser was still emperor, I took good care of my fellow Jews whenever they were in need. ¹⁷ If they were hungry, I shared my food with them; if they needed clothes, I gave them some of my own. Whenever I saw that the dead body of one of my people had been thrown outside the city wall, I gave it a decent burial.

¹⁸ One day Sennacherib cursed God, the King of Heaven; God punished him, and Sennacherib had to retreat from Judah. On his way back to Media he was so furious that he killed many Israelites. But I secretly removed the bodies and buried them; and when Sennacherib later searched for the bodies, he could not find them.

¹⁹ Then someone from Nineveh told the emperor that I was the one who had been burying his victims. As soon as I realized that the emperor knew all about me and that my life was in danger, I became frightened. So I ran away and hid. ²⁰ Everything I owned was seized and put in the royal treasury. My wife Anna and my son Tobias were all I had left.

Tobit's Nephew Rescues Him

²¹ About six weeks later, two of Sennacherib's sons assassinated him and then escaped to the mountains of Ararat. Another son, Esarhaddon, became emperor and put Ahikar, my brother Anael's son, in charge of all the financial affairs of the empire. ²² This was actually the second time Ahikar was appointed to this position, for when Sennacherib was emperor of Assyria, Ahikar had been wine steward, treasurer, and accountant, and had been in charge of the official seal. Since Ahikar was my nephew, he put in a good word for me with the emperor, and I was allowed to return to Nineveh.

A Family Celebration

2 When I returned home I was reunited with my wife Anna and my son Tobias. At the Harvest Festival, which is also called the Festival of Weeks, I sat down to a

1.7 THE LAND WAS AT REST: See Lev 25.1–7.

1.8 a third tithe; some manuscripts have the money.

See also: **1.17:** Job 31.16–20 **2.1:** Ex 23.16

6 Your teeth are as white as a flock of sheep
that have just been washed.
Not one of them is missing;
they are all perfectly matched.

7 Your cheeks glow behind your veil.

8 Let the king have sixty queens,
eighty concubines,
young women without number!

9 But I love only one,
and she is as lovely as a dove.
She is her mother's only daughter,
her mother's favourite child.
All women look at her and praise her;
queens and concubines sing her praises.

10 Who is this whose glance is like the dawn?
She is beautiful and bright,
as dazzling as the sun or the moon.*

11 I have come down among the almond trees
to see the young plants in the valley,
to see the new leaves on the vines
and the blossoms on the pomegranate trees.

12 I am trembling; you have made me
as eager for love
as a chariot driver is for battle.*

The Women

13 Dance, dance, * girl of Shulam.
Let us watch you as you dance.

The Woman

Why do you want to watch me
as I dance between the rows of onlookers?

The Man

7 What a wonderful woman you are!
How beautiful are your feet in sandals.
The curve of your thighs
is like the work of an artist.

2 A bowl is there,
that never runs out of spiced wine.

A sheaf of wheat is there,
surrounded by lilies.

3 Your breasts are like twin deer,
like two gazelles.

4 Your neck is like a tower of ivory.
Your eyes are like the pools in the city of Heshbon,
near the gate of that great city.
Your nose is as lovely as the tower of Lebanon
that stands guard at Damascus.

5 Your head is held high like Mount Carmel.
Your braided hair shines like the finest satin;
its beauty* could hold a king captive.

6 How pretty you are, how beautiful;
how complete the delights of your love.

7 You are as graceful as a palm tree,
and your breasts are clusters of dates.

8 I will climb the palm tree
and pick its fruit.
To me your breasts are like bunches of grapes,
your breath like the fragrance of apples,

9 and your mouth like the finest wine.

The Woman

Then let the wine flow straight to
my lover,
flowing over his lips and teeth.*

10 I belong to my lover, and he desires me.

11 Come, darling, let's go out to the countryside
and spend the night in the villages.*

6.10 as dazzling as... moon; Hebrew unclear.

6.12 Verse 12 in Hebrew is unclear.

6.13 Dance, dance; or Come back, come back.

7.5 beauty; Hebrew unclear.

7.9 Some ancient translations lips and teeth; Hebrew lips of those who sleep.

7.11 villages; or fields.

12 We will get up early and look at
the vines
to see whether they've started to
grow,
whether the blossoms are
opening
and the pomegranate trees are
in bloom.

There I will give you my love.

13 You can smell the scent of
mandrakes,
and all the pleasant fruits are
near our door.

Darling, I have kept for you
the old delights and the new.

8 I wish that you were my brother,
that my mother had nursed you
at her breast.

Then, if I met you in the street,
I could kiss you and no one
would mind.

2 I would take you to my mother's
house,
where you could teach me love.
I would give you spiced wine,
my pomegranate wine to drink.

3 Your left hand is under my head,
and your right hand caresses
me.

4 Promise me, women of Jerusalem,
that you will not interrupt our
love.

The Sixth Song

The Women

5 Who is this coming from the desert,
arm in arm with her lover?

The Woman

Under the apple tree I woke you,
in the place where you were born.

6 Close your heart to every love but
mine;
hold no one in your arms but me.
Love is as powerful as death;
passion is as strong as death itself.

It bursts into flame
and burns like a raging fire.

7 Water cannot put it out;
no flood can drown it.
But if anyone tried to buy love with
wealth,
contempt is all they would get.

The Woman's Brothers

8 We have a young sister,
and her breasts are still small.
What will we do for her
when a young man comes
courting?

9 If she is a wall,
we will build her a silver tower.
But if she is a gate,
we will protect her with panels
of cedar.

The Woman

10 I am a wall,
and my breasts are its towers.
My lover knows that with him
I find contentment and peace.

The Man

11 Solomon has a vineyard
in a place called Baal Hamon.
There are farmers who rent it from
him;
each one pays a thousand silver
coins.

12 Solomon is welcome to his
thousand coins,
and the farmers to two hundred
as their share;
I have a vineyard of my own!

13 Let me hear your voice from the
garden, my love;
my companions are waiting to
hear you speak.

The Woman

14 Come to me, my lover, like a
gazelle,
like a young stag on the
mountains where spices grow.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

INTRODUCTION

This book was originally written in Greek by an unknown Jewish author. The book makes use of traditional Jewish material, as well as ideas borrowed from Greek philosophy, in order to teach that God rewards those who are faithful to him.

Outline of Contents

Immortality for the righteous and punishment for the wicked 1.1—5.23

In praise of wisdom 6.1—9.18

Wisdom's protection of God's people and punishment of enemies 10.1—12.27

The foolishness of idolatry 13.1—15.13

Blessing and punishment when the Israelites left Egypt 15.14—19.22

The Search for Justice

1 Love justice, you rulers of the world. Set your minds sincerely on the Lord, and look for him with all honesty. ² Those who do not try to test him will find him; he will show himself to those who trust him. ³ Dishonest thoughts separate people from God, and if we are foolish enough to test him, his power will put us to shame. ⁴ Wisdom will never be at home with anyone who is deceitful or who is a slave of sin. ⁵ Everyone who is holy has learnt to stay away from deceitful people. He will not stay around when foolish thoughts are being expressed; he will not feel comfortable when injustice is done.

God Is Aware of What We Say

⁶ Wisdom is a spirit that is friendly to people, but she will not forgive anyone who speaks against God, for God knows our feelings and thoughts, and hears our every word. ⁷ Since the Lord's spirit fills the entire world, and holds everything in

it together, she knows every word that people say. ⁸ No one who speaks wickedly will escape notice; sooner or later he will receive just punishment. ⁹ The intentions of ungodly people will be closely examined; their words will be reported to the Lord, and then they will get the punishment that their wickedness deserves. ¹⁰ God will tolerate no challenge, and since he hears everything, you cannot hide your complaining from him. ¹¹ So be sure that you do not go about complaining — it does no good — and don't engage in bitter talk. The most secret things you say will have their consequences, and lying will destroy your soul.

God Did Not Create Death

¹² Do not bring on your own death by sinful actions. ¹³ God did not invent death, and when living creatures die, it gives him no pleasure. ¹⁴ He created everything so that it might continue to exist, and everything he created is wholesome and good. There is no deadly poison in it. No, death

does not rule this world, ¹⁵ for God's justice does not die.

¹⁶ Ungodly people have brought death on themselves by the things they have said and done. They yearn for death as if it were a lover. They have gone into partnership with death, and it is just what they deserve.

Wicked Thinking

2 Wicked people are wrong when they say to themselves, "Our life is short and full of sorrow, and when its end comes, there is no escape. No one has ever been known to come back from the world of the dead. ² We were born by chance, and after life is over, we will be as if we had never been born at all. Our breath is no more than a puff of smoke; our mind is nothing more than a spark thrown off by the beating of our heart. ³ When that spark dies, our body will crumble into ashes, and our breath will become part of the empty air. ⁴ In time, no one will remember anything we ever did, and even our names will be forgotten. Our lives will pass away like traces of clouds and vanish like mist in the heat of the sun. ⁵ Our time on earth is like a passing shadow. There is no escape from the day of our death; it is fixed, and no one can postpone it."

⁶ The wicked say, "Come on, then, let's enjoy the good things of life, and live in this world just as we did when we were young and free of care! ⁷ Let's drink the most expensive wines and use the finest perfumes. Let's not miss a single flower in the springtime! ⁸ Before the roses wither, let's pick them and wear them in our hair! ⁹ Let's all join in and leave signs everywhere of our carefree revelry! Life owes us that much!

¹⁰ "We'll oppress the poor, even if they are righteous. We'll show no respect for widows or old people. ¹¹ We'll call ourselves right if we are strong enough to get what we want. No one ever got anywhere by being weak! ¹² Righteous people are nothing but a nuisance, so let's look for chances to get rid of them. They are

against what we do; they accuse us of breaking the Law of Moses and violating the traditions of our ancestors. ¹³ They claim to know God, and they call themselves the Lord's children. ¹⁴ We can't stand the sight of people like that; what they are contradicts our whole way of thinking. ¹⁵ They are not like other people; they have strange ways. ¹⁶ They think that our moral standards are so corrupt that everything we do should be avoided. They boast of having God for their Father, and believe that only the righteous will die happy. ¹⁷ But we'll see if that's true! Let's see what will happen when it's time for them to die! ¹⁸ If the righteous really are God's children, God will save them from their enemies. ¹⁹ So let's put them to the test. We'll be cruel to them, and torment them; then we'll find out how calm and reasonable they are! We'll find out just how much they can stand! ²⁰ We'll condemn them to a shameful death. After all, they say that God will protect them."

²¹ That is how evil people think, but they are wrong. They are blinded by their own wickedness. ²² They have never known God's secrets, never hoped for the rewards of a holy and blameless life. ²³ When God created us, he did not intend that we should die; he made us like himself. ²⁴ It was the Devil's jealousy that brought death into the world, and those who belong to the Devil are the ones who will die.

The Destiny of the Righteous

3 But righteous people are protected by God and will never suffer torment. ² It is a foolish mistake to think that righteous people die and that their death is a terrible evil. ³ They leave us, but it is not a disaster. In fact, the righteous are at peace. ⁴ It might appear that they have suffered punishment, but they have the confident hope of immortality. ⁵⁻⁶ Their

See also: 2.23: Gen 1.26-27

3.9 *Some manuscripts add* and he protects his own people (see 4.15).

3.10 what was right; or righteous people.

See also: 3.2: Wis 4.17 3.5-6: Rom 8.18; 2 Cor 4.17

1.16: Prov 8.36; Is 28.15; Sir 14.12

2.6: Is 22.13; 1 Cor 15.32

New Testament Passages Quoted or Paraphrased from the Septuagint

The writers of the New Testament generally quoted or paraphrased the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly known as the Septuagint Version (LXX), made some two hundred years before the time of Christ. In a number of instances this version differs significantly in meaning from the Masoretic Hebrew text, and as a special help to the reader such occurrences of LXX quotations, paraphrases, or evident allusions are listed here. The following translations of the LXX passages reflect in general the wording of Today's English Version of the New Testament. When, however, a LXX quotation occurs several times in the New Testament, the TEV wording of the translation may vary because of evident differences in meaning or emphasis reflected in the different contexts. Chapter and verse numbers are those of the English Bible.

Matthew 1.23 (Isaiah 7.14)

A virgin will become pregnant and have a son.

Matthew 3.3 (Isaiah 40.3)

Someone is shouting in the desert, "Prepare a road for the Lord; make a straight path for our God to travel!"

Matthew 12.21 (Isaiah 42.4)

And on him all peoples will put their hope.

Matthew 13.14-15 (Isaiah 6.9-10)

This people will listen and listen, but not understand; they will look and look, but not see, because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears, and have closed their eyes. Otherwise, their eyes would see, their ears would hear, their minds would understand, and they would turn to me, says God, and I would heal them.

Matthew 15.8-9 (Isaiah 29.13)

These people, says God...honour me with their words, but their heart is really far away from me. It is no use for them to worship me, because they teach human rules and laws.

Matthew 21.16 (Psalm 8.2)

You have trained children and babies to offer perfect praise.

Mark 1.3 (Isaiah 40.3)

Someone is shouting in the desert, "Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for our God to travel!"

Mark 4.12 (Isaiah 6.9-10)

This people will listen and listen, but not understand; they will look and look, but not see...; for if they did...they would turn to me, says God, and I would heal them.

Mark 7.6-7 (Isaiah 29.13)

These people, says God...honour me with their words, but their heart is really far away from me. It is no use for them to worship me, because they teach man-made rules and laws.

Luke 3.4-6 (Isaiah 40.3-5)

Someone is shouting in the desert: "Get the road ready for the Lord, make a straight path for our God to travel! Every valley must be filled up, every hill and mountain levelled off. All the winding roads must be made straight, and the rough paths made smooth... All mankind will see God's salvation!"

Luke 4.18 (Isaiah 61.1)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me...to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.

Luke 8.10 (Isaiah 6.9)

You will listen and listen, but not understand; you will look and look, but not see.

John 1.23 (Isaiah 40.3)

The voice of someone shouting in the desert... "Make a straight path for our God to travel!"

John 12.38 (Isaiah 53.1)

Lord, who believed the message we told?

John 12.40 (Isaiah 6.10)

This people's minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears, and have closed their eyes. Otherwise, their eyes would see, and their ears would hear, their minds would understand, and they would turn to me, says God, for me to heal them.

Acts 2.19-20 (Joel 2.30-31)

There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke; the sun will be darkened, and the moon will turn red as blood, before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes.

Acts 2.25-28 (Psalm 16.8-11)

I saw the Lord before me at all times. He is near me, and I will not be troubled. And so I am filled with gladness, and my words are full of joy. And I, mortal though I am, will rest assured in hope, because you will not abandon me in the world of the dead; you will not allow your faithful servant to rot in the grave. You have shown me the paths that lead to life, and by your presence you will fill me with joy.

Acts 3.22 (Deuteronomy 18.15)

You are to obey him in all things.

Acts 4.25-26 (Psalm 2.1-2)

Why were the Gentiles furious; why did the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth prepared themselves, and the rulers met together.

Acts 7.14 (Genesis 46.27)

Seventy-five people.

Acts 7.42-43 (Amos 5.25-27)

People of Israel! It was not to me that you slaughtered and sacrificed animals for forty years in the desert. It was the tent of the god Molech that

Word list

Abib The first month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-March to about mid-April. This month is also called Nisan.

Abys The place in the depths of the earth where, according to ancient Jewish teaching, the demons were imprisoned until their final punishment.

Acacia A flowering tree with hard and durable wood.

Adar The twelfth month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-February to about mid-March.

Agate A semi-precious stone of different colours, but usually white and brown.

Alabaster A soft stone, usually of light creamy colour, from which vases and jars were made.

Aloes A sweet-smelling liquid, produced from a plant. It was used as medicine and as a perfume.

Amen A Hebrew word which means "it is so" or "may it be so". It can also be translated "certainly", "truly", or "surely". In Revelation 3.14 it is used as a name for Christ.

Amethyst A semi-precious stone, usually purple or violet in colour.

Anoint To pour or rub olive oil on someone in order to honour him or to appoint him to some special work. The Israelite kings were anointed when they took office, and so the king could be called "the anointed one". Christ, the Greek word for "The Anointed One", is the title of the one whom God chose and appointed as Saviour and Lord.

Apostle Usually one of the group of twelve men whom Jesus chose to be his special followers and helpers. It is also used in the New Testament to refer to Paul and other Christian workers. The word means "messenger".

Areopagus A hill in Athens where the city council used to meet. For this reason the council itself was called Areopagus, even after it no longer met on the hill.

Artemis The Greek name of an ancient goddess of fertility, worshipped especially in Asia Minor.

Asherah A goddess of fertility worshipped by the Canaanites; her male counterpart was Baal. After the Hebrews invaded Canaan, many of them began worshipping these two gods.

Astarte A goddess of fertility and war who was widely worshipped in the ancient Near East.

Atonement, Day of The most important of Israel's holy days, when the High Priest would offer sacrifice for the sins of the people of Israel (Leviticus 16). It was held on the 10th day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar (about 1 October). The Jewish name for this day is Yom Kippur.

Baal The god of fertility worshipped by the Canaanites; his female counterpart was Asherah. After the Hebrews invaded Canaan, many of them began worshipping these two gods.

Baal-of-the-Covenant A name by which the god Baal was known by the people of Shechem.

Balsam A tree from which sweet-smelling resin was obtained; the resin was used for perfume and medicine.

Barley A cultivated grain similar to wheat, grown as a food crop.

Bear: Great Bear and Little Bear Two groups of stars which can be seen north of the equator in the northern sky. The star at the end of the "tail" of the Little Bear is Polaris, the Pole Star.

Beelzebul A New Testament name given to the Devil as the chief of the evil spirits.

Beryl A semi-precious stone, usually green or bluish green in colour.

Breastplate Part of a soldier's armour, made of leather or metal; it covered the chest and sometimes the back, to protect him against arrows and the blows of a sword.

Bul The eighth month of the Hebrew calendar. It runs from about mid-October to about mid-November.

Burnt offering A kind of sacrifice in which all the parts of the animal were completely burnt on the altar; in other sacrifices only certain parts of the animal were burnt.

Calamus A sweet-smelling plant, like a reed.

Capital The top part of a pillar holding up a roof.

Carnelian A semi-precious stone, usually red in colour.

Cassia A spice made from the bark of a tree; it is very like cinnamon.

Chalcedony A semi-precious stone, usually milky or grey in colour.

Christ At first it was a title, the Greek word for the Hebrew "Messiah". It means "the anointed one". Jesus was called the Christ because he was the one whom God chose and sent as Saviour and Lord.

Circumcise To cut off the foreskin of the penis. As a sign of God's covenant with his people Israelite boys were circumcised eight days after they were born (Genesis 17.9-14).

City of refuge When the people of Israel moved into the land of Canaan they were told to name certain towns as cities of refuge. If anyone accidentally killed someone, he could escape to one of those cities and be safe from revenge (see Numbers 35.9-34; Deuteronomy 4.41-43; 19.1-13; Joshua 20.1-9).

Concubine A servant woman who, although not a wife, had sexual relations with her master. She had important legal rights, and her master was referred to as her husband.

Coral A brightly-coloured stony substance found in the sea; it was used as jewellery.

Council The highest religious court of the Jews. It was made up of seventy leaders of the Jewish people. Its president was the High Priest.

Covenant An agreement, either between people, or between God and a person or a group of people. God made a covenant with Noah (Genesis 9.8-17) and with Abraham (Genesis 17.1-8), but in the Old Testament the term usually refers to the covenant made between God and the people of Israel at the time of Moses (Exodus 24.4-8).

Covenant Box A wooden chest covered with gold. The two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them were kept in it. It is often called "the Ark of the Covenant".

cush The term "Crush" in the Old Testament Hebrew text normally designates the territory extending south