

BIBLE NAMES

by Roger Waite

Today when babies are born they are usually given names that sound good to their parents without any thought to their meaning and if those names really suit the characteristics of the child they have just brought into the world.

In the Bible names were given to people by their parents, and sometimes by God, that had meaning and described the person in question. The meaning of these names often give us clues to know more about the people we read about in the Bible.

The following table gives a list of all the major figures we read about in the Bible, including many who have become fathers of nations of the world. Most of the meanings of these names I have obtained from Meredith's Book of Bible Lists by J.L.Meredith.

Adam and his family

Adam		Humous, taken from the earth	God formed him out of the dust of the ground (Gen.2:7).
Wife:	Eve	Life	Mother of all living (Gen.3:20).
His sons:	Cain	Gotten, gain, fabrication	First human born (Gen.4:1). Tradition indicates that Cain was black (Book of Enoch 84:5).
	Abel	Meadow	Tradition indicates that Abel was reddish in skin colour (Enoch 84:5).
	Seth	Appointed	Son appointed to Eve for the loss of Abel (Gen.4:25). Both the Bible (Gen.5:3) and tradition (Enoch 84:11) indicate that Seth was white.

Cain's descendants

Enoch	Teacher	
Irada	Wild Ass	
Mehujael	God is combating	
Methushael	Man of God	
Lamech	Overthrower	Slew a "young man", possibly Enoch (Gen.4:23).
Jabal	River	Pioneer of those who dwell in tents and herd cattle (Gen.4:20).
Jubal	Trumpet	Pioneer of all musicians (Gen.4:21).
Tubal-Cain	Flowing forth of Cain	Pioneer of metallurgy (Gen.4:22).

Seth's descendants

Enos	Man is his family
Cainan	Acquisition

Mahalaleel	The praise of God	
Jared	Descending	
Enoch	Teacher	Teacher of God's ways (Jude 14).
Methuselah	When he is dead, it shall be sent	"It" probably refers to the Flood. The oldest man in history died at the time of the Flood.
Lamech	Overthrower	
Noah	Rest	His father felt Noah would comfort them from their toil on earth (Gen.5:29).

Noah's family

Wife:	Namaah	Sweetness	According to tradition, Namaah was the name of Noah's wife which isn't recorded in the Bible.
His sons:	Shem	Name	Father of the white nations of earth.
	Ham	Dark, swarthy	The meaning of Ham disproves the idea that Noah's sons were white and the races were preserved by Ham and Japheth racially intermarrying. God had to have miraculously added the extra genes into Noah and his wife, like He did with Adam and Eve, to preserve the races. Ham is the father of the black nations.
	Japheth	Persuader	Father of the Oriental, Mediterranean and Latin American peoples.

Japheth's descendants

Gomer		Completion	Father of the S.E. Asian peoples
His sons:	Ashkenaz	A fire that spreads	
	Ripath	Enemies	
	Togarmah	Strong	
Magog		Expansion	Father of the Chinese people. In population Magog truly has expanded. Often mentioned with Gog in prophecy, meaning a mountain or kingdom.
Madai		Middle	
Javan		Clay	Father of the swarthy Mediterranean peoples.
His sons:	Elisah	God is saviour	
	Tarshish	Hard	Father of the Spanish and Japanese people.
	Kittim	They that bruise	
	Dodanim	A leader	
Tubal		Worldly	Father of the Russians.
Meshech		Drawing out	
Tiras		Desire of parents	Father of the Red Indians of North and South America.

Ham's descendants

Cush		Black	Father of the Ethiopians and Indians.
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His sons:	Seba Havilah Sabtah Raamah	Old man Circle Breaking through Trembling	His sons were Sheba (seventh) and Dedan (low).
	Sabtechah Nimrod	Surrender Hunter, valiant	A mighty hunter “before”, meaning against God (Gen.10:8). The post-flood world’s first dictator. Possibly was the Sumerian king Lugal-zugassi.
Mizraim		Tribulations	Father of the Egyptians.
His sons:	Ludim Anamin Lehabim Naphtuhim Pathrusim Casluhim	Bending ? Flame ? The south land ?	Father of the Nubians.
Put		Extension	Father of the West and South Africans and Indians.
Canaan		Lowland	
His sons:	Sidon Heth	Fortified Terrible	

Shem’s descendants

Elam Lud Aram		Youth Bending Exalted	Father of the East Europeans Father of the Armenians
His sons:	Uz Hul Gether Mash	Firmness Circle Vale of trial Drawn out	Same meaning as Moses
Asshur		Level plain	Father of the Germanic peoples of Europe. Probably was Sargon the Great, king of the Akkadian empire from which the Assyrians descended from.
Arphaxad		One that releases	According to tradition, Arphaxad and Asshur were twin brothers.

Arphaxad’s descendants

Salah Eber Peleg		Offshoot A shoot Division	Father of the Hebrews. In his day the earth was divided (Gen. 10:25), probably referring to the scattering of the peoples at the Tower of Babel. His brother was Joktan meaning little.
Reu		Friend	

Serug	Firmness	
Nahor	Snorer	What a lovely name!
Terah	Wandering	
His sons:	Abram	Father of height
	Nahor	Snorer
	Haran	Enlightened
Job	He that weeps	When tested by God, he had a very hard life.

Abraham and his family

Abraham	Father of nations	God changed his name from Abram (Gen.17:5)
Wife: Sarah	Queen	Originally her name was Sarai, meaning princess (Gen.17:15).
Concubine: Hagar	Fugitive	She had to flee when Sarah chased her away.
His sons:	Ishmael	God hears
	Isaac	Laughing one
		God heard the affliction of Hagar by promising Ishmael would be a father of a great multitude of people known to us as the Arabs(Gen.16:10-11). Sarah laughed at the promise given her age and then laughed for joy at his birth (Gen.17:19).
Abraham's nephew:	Lot	Concealed
Lot's sons:	Moab	Desire
	Ben-Ammi	Son of my people
		Father of Moabites
		Father of Ammonites

Isaac's family

Wife:	Rebekah	Captivating
His sons:	Esau	Hairy
	Jacob	Supplanter
		Father of the Turkish people and Palestinians.
		God changed his name to Israel meaning "overcomer with God". We are all to become spiritual Israelites – overcomers with God.
		The church is called the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

Jacob or Israel's family

Wives:	Leah	Wearied
	Rachel	Ewe
His sons:	Reuben	Behold a son
	Simeon	Hears and obeys
	Levi	Joined
	Judah	Praise of the Lord
	Zebulun	Dwelling
	Isaachar	Reward
	Dan	He that judges
	Gad	Good fortune
		Father of the French.
		Scattered throughout the Israelite peoples.
		Scattered throughout the Israelite peoples.
		Father of the Jews. We are to become spiritual Jews – "praised of God" (Rom.2:29).
		Father of the Dutch.
		Father of the Fins.
		Father of the Irish.
		Father of the French speaking Swiss.

Asher	Happiness	Father of the Belgians.
Naphtali	Obtained by wrestling	Father of the Swedes.
Benjamin	Son of the right hand	Originally called Ben-oni meaning “son of my sorrow”. Father of the Norwegians.
Joseph	May God add	Father of the English-speaking peoples.

Joseph’s sons:

Ephraim	Doubly fruitful	Father of British, Australian and New Zealand people. Doubly fruitful in that Joseph’s sons had the double blessing of the birthright and the British Empire was the greatest of all time.
Manasseh	Causing forgetfulness	Father of the American people. His birth made Joseph forget his ordeal in prison where he was wrongfully prisoned for alleged rape.

Moses and some figures in the Exodus story

Moses	Drawn from	Drawn from the Nile River by the pharaoh’s daughter. He may have been called Hapi-moses “drawn from Hapi(Nile god)”, later dropping the Hapi. Moses is an Egyptian name seen in the names of the pharaohs such as Ra-moses(Ramses – drawn from Ra) and Thutmoses(Drawn from Thoth).
Aaron	Enlightened	Moses’ brother and first High Priest of Israel.
Miriam	Bitterness	Moses’ sister. Her name means the same as Mary, the mother of Jesus.
Joshua	Jehovah is salvation	Successor to Moses. Saviour in the sense he was a type of Christ leading Israel to the promised land.
Caleb	Bold	He and Joshua were the bold spies who urged the people to take the land with God’s help.
Pharaoh	The destroyer	The name for rulers of Egypt
Agag	Warlike	King of Amalek. Amalek means “dweller in the vale” reminding us of the ambush they made on Israel near Mt. Sinai
Balam	Lord of the people	Soothsayer hired by Balak. Worshipper of Baal, a Mesopotamian god who’s name means Lord.
Balak	Waster	King of Moab

The Judges of Israel

Othniel	Lion of God	Led Israel to victory against the king of Mesopotamia (Jud.3:10).
Ehud	Strong	Killed Eglon and delivered Israel from Moab (Jud.3:15-30).
Shamgar	Cupbearer	Delivered Israel from the Philistines (Jud.3:31).
Deborah	Bee	Helped lead Israel against Canaan (Jud.4)
Barak	Thunder	Helped Deborah fight against Canaan.
Gideon	Great warrior	Led Israel to victory against the Midianites (Jud.6-8)

Abimelech	Father of the king	
Tola	Scarlet	
Jair	Jehovah arouses	
Jephthah	He sets free	Set Israel free from the Ammonites(Jud.11).
Ibzan	Active	
Elon	Strong	
Abdon	Cloud of judgment	
Samson	Strong	Strongest man ever. Delivered Israel from the Philistines (Jud.13-16).
Eli	My God	
Samuel	Asked of God	His birth was an answer to a prayer of his mother Hannah (1 Sam.1:12-20).

The Kings of Israel (United Kingdom)

Saul	Demanded	He was the king God gave Israel when they demanded to have a king like the other nations.
David	Beloved	The man after God's own heart.
Solomon	Peace	In his day Israel enjoyed great peace and Prosperity.

Well-known kings of Judah

Rehoboam	Freer of the people	He had the chance to free his people from the tax burden imposed on Israel by his father but listened to bad counsel and made it heavier thus resulting in the split of Israel into two nations.
Asa	Physician	Grandson of Rehoboam and good king.
Jehoshaphat	Jehovah is judge	Son of Asa and another good king.
Uzziah	Strength of the Lord	A good king until struck by God with leprosy for burning incense which only the priests could do.
Hezekiah	Jehovah is strength	A good king.
Josiah	Fire of the Lord	Had a fire to do God's will.

Well-known kings of Israel

Jeroboam	Enlarges	First king of the ten-tribed Kingdom of Israel
Ahab	Father's brother	Bad king and husband of Jezebel.

Post Exile figures of the Jewish people

Esther	A star
Nehemiah	Jehovah has consoled
Ezra	Help
Zerubbabel	An offspring of Babel

Gentile rulers

Tiglath-pileser	Binds	Assyrian king also known as Pul (strong).
Shalmaneser	Peace taken away	Assyrian king and conqueror.
Sargon	The constituted king	Assyrian king
Sennacherib	The moon god	Assyrian king
Esarhaddon	Victorious	Assyrian king

Nebuchadnezzar	Defend the boundary	Defended and expanded the Neo-Babylonian Empire
Evil-marduk	Man of the god Marduk	Babylonian king
Belshazzar	The Lord's leader	Babylonian king
Cyrus	An heir	Persian king
Darius	He that informs himself	Persian king
Artaxerxes	Possessor of an exalted kingdom	Persian king
Caesar	One cut out	Meaning refers to Julius Caesar's birth by Caesarian section. Following Roman Emperors took the title Caesar from which the names Tsar and Kaiser are derived from.
Herod	Son of the Hero	
Pilate	One armed with a dart	
Agrippa	One who at birth causes pain	

The Prophets

Isaiah	Salvation is of the Lord	
Jeremiah	Exalted of God	
Ezekiel	God is strong	
Daniel	God is my judge	
Hosea	Salvation	
Joel	Jehovah is God	
Amos	One with a burden	His prophecies about the punishments to fall upon various nations are called burdens.
Obadiah	Worshipper of Jehovah	
Jonah	A dove	
Micah	Who is like Jehovah	
Nahum	Compassionate	
Habakkuk	Love's embrace	
Zephaniah	God hides	
Haggai	Festive	
Zechariah	Jehovah remembers	
Malachi	Messenger of Jehovah	Prophecied of the messenger of the Lord to prepare the way for Christ.
Jesus Christ	Saviour and Anointed One	Son of God, Saviour of all mankind and anointed King of kings of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

The Original Disciples (Apostles except Judas)

Peter	A stone	Later became a rock of stability and leadership for the church.
James(Two of them)	Supplanter	
John	Jehovah has been gracious	
Andrew	Manliness	
Philip	Warrior	
Thomas	Honoured of God	Despite being known as "Doubting Thomas"

Bartholomew	Son of Tolmai	
Matthew	Gift of Jehovah	
Simon	Hearing	
Thaddaeus	Breast	
Judas	Praise of the Lord	His actions became very unpraiseworthy when he betrayed Christ.

Other Apostles mentioned in the Bible

Matthias (Acts 1:26)	Gift of God	Took over Judas' role as one of the original twelve.
Paul (Rom.11:13)	Little	Apparently short in stature but also humble and little in spirit. Apostle to the Gentiles.
Barnabas (Acts 14:14)	Son of encouragement	
Andronicus (Rom.16:7)	Conqueror	
Junia (Rom.16:7)	Belonging to Juno	
James(Jesus' brother)(Gal.1:19)	Supplanter	
Silvanus (1 Thes. 1:1, 2.6)	Lover of words	
Timothy (1 Thes. 1:1, 2.6)	Honoured of God	