

Glossary

Anthropomorphic (anthropomorphism) The attribution of human characteristics to a nonhuman being, usually a deity

Apocrypha - The biblical books received by the early church as part of the Greek version of the Old Testament, but not included in the Hebrew Bible, being excluded by the non-Hellenistic Jews from their canon. In date of writing, the Books of the Apocrypha derive from the period 300 B.C. to A.D. 100 (Cross, The Oxford Dictionary Of The Christian Church).

Aramaic - the Semitic language which was the vernacular in Palestine in the time of Christ, and which he himself almost certainly used

Ark of the covenant The religious symbol of the premonarchic confederation of the twelve tribes of Israel, later installed in the Temple in Jerusalem by Solomon in the tenth century BCE. It formed the footstool for the cherubim throne on which Yahweh was thought to be invisibly seated.

Baal - meaning "lord," Baal, the god worshiped by the Canaanites and Phoenicians, was variously known to them as the son of Dagon and the son of El. He was believed to give fertility to the womb and life-giving rain to the soil

Canaan The name of the Promised Land before the Israelite conquest. **Canon** - denotes a collection or list of books accepted as an authoritative rule of faith and practice. The Christian canon varies according to Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox traditions

Circumcision The ceremonial removal of the foreskin of the penis. According to Genesis 17.9– 14, it is the sign of the **covenant** between God and Abraham and is to be performed on all of Abraham's male descendants on the eighth day after birth.

City of David Another name for Jerusalem, especially the ancient pre-Israelite city that King David captured and made his capital in the early tenth century BCE. In later tradition, it is also used of Bethlehem, David's birthplace.

Covenant - a bond entered into voluntarily by two parties by which each pledges himself or herself to do something for the other. The idea of the covenant between the God of Israel and his people is fundamental to the religion of the Old Testament (Cross, The Oxford Dictionary Of The Christian Church).

Criticisms - various methods of doing biblical exegesis, each having a specific goal and a specific set of questions; biblical "criticism" does not mean "criticizing" the text (i.e. what you don't like or don't agree with), but asking "critical" questions (based on "criteria" that are as clear, careful, and objective as possible).

Dead Sea Scrolls - The name given to mainly parchment and papyrus scrolls written in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, and discovered in 11 caves along the northwestern coast of the Dead Sea between 1947 and 1956, generally dating from 250 B.C. to A.D. 68 and assigned to an Essene community located at the archaeological site known as Khirbet Qumran

Decalogue - Another name for the Ten Commandments, which are the precepts divinely revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai and engraven on two tables of stone

EI - the chief god of the Canaanites; variously known as the father of Baal

Eschatological - the doctrine of the last things. The term connotes the part of systematic theology which deals with the final destiny both of the individual soul and of mankind in general. In the Old Testament eschatological teaching is closely bound up with the Messianic hope

Etiology - a branch of knowledge dealing with causes

Exegesis - the careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning, in other words, an attempt to hear the words of the Bible as the original recipients were to have heard them

Exegesis - careful investigation of the original meaning of a text in its historical and literary contexts; the word comes from a Greek verb meaning "to lead out of" (Greek "ex" = "out"; "ago" = "to lead/go/draw"); the process basically involves asking analytical questions about various aspects of the texts and their contexts; the opposite process is called **Eisegesis**, which means "*reading* [your own opinions] *into*" the text (*not* a good idea in biblical studies!)

Genre: describes a category of literature – or any other work of art. Example – ‘What genre is that? Is it a poem, a letter or a song?’

Legend/Myth/Fable – often used interchangeably to mean a traditional story, frequently passed on by word of mouth. Myths usually deal with supernatural beings, or ancestors, legends with saints or other heroes and heroines, fables with animals, mythical creatures, plants and objects, often given human characteristics.

Levites The priestly tribe, named for Jacob's son Levi, whose primary responsibility was ritual.

Mnemonics – aids to the memory.

Torah Often translated ‘Law’ but more accurately means ‘Teaching’ or Instruction.’ Strictly, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) but also refer to other instructions traditionally given orally to Moses and written down in rabbinic literature during 3rd to 7th centuries. The Greek word is Pentateuch, meaning five scrolls.

Nevi'im - meaning "**Prophets**"; subdivided in Jewish Bibles into the "*Former Prophets*" (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings - which also contain stories of early "prophets" like Elijah, Elisha, Samuel, Nathan, etc.), and the "*Latter Prophets*" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and "The Twelve" Minor Prophets; note that Jews do not include the Book of Daniel among the "Prophets," but in the following category).

Ketuvim (or *Khetuvim*) - meaning "**Writings**"; this "miscellaneous" group includes the books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes (called "*Wisdom Literature*" by Christians), the books of Ruth, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles (considered "*Historical Books*" in Christian Bibles), and the books of Daniel and Lamentations (placed among the "*Prophets*" in Christian Bibles).

Septuagint (LXX) - A collection of up to 53 books of ancient Jewish Scriptures written in Greek, including translations of all 24 books of the Hebrew Bible (Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah are longer in the Greek versions than in the original Hebrew), as well as seven or more additional books (the "Deuterocanonical Books") that are not found in the HB. Several versions of the LXX have been preserved, some of which are slightly larger than others. The LXX was first translated and compiled around 250 BCE, probably in or near Alexandria, Egypt. The name "Septuagint" (meaning "seventy") comes from an ancient Jewish legend that tells how 70 (or 72) scholars translated the whole collection (or at least the Torah) in 70 days. All the books of the LXX were considered "scriptures" by most Greek-speaking Jews and early Christians; thus it became the basis of the Christian "Old Testament."

Synagogue A word of Greek origin meaning "gathering together," used of religious assemblies of Jews and the buildings in which such assemblies took place.

Tabernacle The moveable shrine that served as the Israelites' place of worship after the Exodus from Egypt, described in detail in Exodus 26. Also called the "tent of meeting."

Theodicy A word of Greek origin meaning "divine justice," used with reference to literature that deals with the problem of human suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent.

YHWH The name YHVH or YHWH is written with four consonants only. Hebrew has no vowels. In ancient times, it didn't even have vowel points. These were added much later, and at that time pronouncing the name was already forbidden for generations. So no one knows how the most ancient name of God was pronounced. The vowel points make it sound like Yehova, and later it was anglicized to [Jehovah](#). The name occurs about seven thousand times in the Bible. Most Bible translations substitute 'My Lord, Lord or God' but a few write out this name as Jahweh or Yahweh.

Jews ceased to pronounce the name in the [intertestamental period](#), replacing it with the common noun [Elohim](#), "the God", to demonstrate the universal sovereignty of Israel's deity over all others. At the same time, the divine name was increasingly regarded as too sacred to be uttered, and was replaced in spoken ritual by the word [Adonai](#) ("My Lord"), or with [haShem](#) ("the Name") in everyday speech,^[49] see [Names of God in Judaism](#) for details.

Almost all Christian Bibles substitute the titles "Lord" and "God" wherever the [tetragrammaton](#) appears in the [Hebrew](#); exceptions include the [Jerusalem Bible](#) and [New Jerusalem Bible](#)

Zion A name for Jerusalem, used mostly in poetry.