

From Aaron to Zipporah

Biblical NAMES

and their
MEANINGS

 ROSE
PUBLISHING

Ματθαίο

Aaron (Bright/Light-bringer?)

אַהֲרֹן ah-hah-ROHN

The name of Moses's brother and Israel's first high priest has an uncertain origin and meaning, but one possibility associates it with the Hebrew word for "light" (*or*).

Ex. 4:14; 6:13; 7:7–12; 30:30; 32:1–5

Abel (Vapor/Breath)

הֶבֶל HEH-vehl

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the name of Adam and Eve's second son is also used as a term describing the transitory, brief nature of life. This meaning connects well with Abel's early, tragic death at the hands of his brother, Cain. Gen. 4:1–10, 25

Abigail (My father's joy)

אַבִּיגַיִל ah-vee-GAH-yeel

One of King David's sisters and one of his wives have this name, which is based on two Hebrew words—one meaning "father" (*av*) and the other "to rejoice" (*gil*).

1 Sam. 25:3–42; 27:3; 2 Sam. 2:2–3; 3:2–3; 1 Chron. 2:13–17

Abraham (Father of a multitude)

אַבְרָהָם ahv-rah-HAHM

Although alternate views exist, the traditional view is that according to God's promise to make Abram ("exalted father") the "father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5), God changed his name to Abraham ("father of a multitude"). Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1–6; 17:1–8; 18:1–33; 22:1–14

Adam (Man)

אָדָם ah-DAHM

Adam's name fittingly describes how God created him: It is related to the word meaning "red/ruddy," like the color of skin or dirt, and is derived from *adamah* ("ground"). Another related word, *dam*, means "blood." Gen. 2:20–4:2, 25; 5:1–5

Amos (Burdensome/Burden-bearer)

עָמוֹס ah-MOHS

The verb related to this name (*amas*) means "to carry/bear a load." The word is common, but only the prophet Amos carries this name in the Old Testament. He carried the burden of God's contempt for the Northern Kingdom's sins.

Amos 1:1; 7:10–15; 8:1–2

Andrew (Manly/Courageous)

Ἀνδρέας an-DRAY-as

Āner ("man") is the Greek root word for this name of one of Jesus's courageous disciples. Matt. 4:18–20; Mark 13:3–4; John 1:40–42; 6:8; 12:20–22

Asher (Happy/Fortunate)

אַשֶׁר ah-SHAYR

This name aptly describes the joy Asher's birth brought to Jacob's wife Leah. She hoped that bearing another son for Jacob (through her servant, Zilpah) would increase his affection toward her.

Gen. 30:12–13; 35:26; 49:1, 20; Deut. 33:1, 24–25; Josh. 19:24–31

Barnabas

(Son of encouragement)

Βαρναβᾶς bar-nah-BAS

This Aramaic nickname of one of Paul's coworkers (originally called Joseph) literally means "one of the prophets/son of the prophets." Since prophecy can function as a means of encouragement, it is an apt description of Barnabas's ability to encourage and exhort others. Acts 4:32–37; 11:19–30; 13:1–3; 15:36–40

Bartholomew (Son of Talmi)

Βαρθολομαῖος bar-tho-lo-MAI-os

The name of this disciple is an Aramaic patronymic, meaning it is derived from a father or ancestor whose name in Hebrew means "plowman." It could be Bartholomew's surname, since many scholars believe he is the same man as the apostle Nathanael, who is mentioned only in the Gospel of John, where Bartholomew is not listed as an apostle. Matt. 10:2–3; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:12–16; Acts 1:12–13

Bathsheba

(Daughter of an oath/seven)

בַּת-שֶׁבַע baht-SHEH-vah

In Hebrew, "oath" is related to the word for "seven" (*sheva*), offering parallel meanings for the name of the wife of Uriah and later King David. The number seven symbolizes perfection/completeness, which relates to an oath as a complete and binding commitment. 2 Sam. 11:1–12:25; 1 Kings 1:11–31

Benjamin (Son of my right hand)

בְּנִימִן bean-yah-MEEN

After a difficult delivery, Rachel named her second son Ben-Oni ("son of my sorrow") right before she died; but Jacob renamed him Benjamin ("son of my right hand"). The right hand was a symbol of strength, skill, authority, and favor. Gen. 35:16–18; 42:1–43:34; 49:1, 27; Deut. 33:1, 12; Josh. 18:11–28

Boaz (In strength)

בֹּעַז BOH-ahz

As a wealthy, righteous landowner, Boaz led with moral strength and generously blessed those around him. King Solomon, a descendant of Boaz, used this name for the north pillar that supported the temple. Ruth 2:1–3:15; 4:1–13, 18–22; 1 Kings 7:21

Cain (Possession)

קַיִן KAH-yeen

At Cain's birth, Eve announced she had brought forth, or acquired, a man with the Lord's help. His name is a play on the word *qanah* ("to possess/acquire"). Gen. 4:1–17

Caleb (Dog)

כָּלֵב kah-LAYV

From the word for "dog," *kelev*. Characteristic of a dog's temperament, this name often represents faithfulness, wholeheartedness, and strength. Unlike most of Israel, Caleb wholeheartedly trusted God's promise that the Israelites could conquer the giants living in the promised land. Num. 13:1–14:38; 32:11–13; 34:16–19; Josh. 14:6–14; 15:13–19