

Classic Biblical Baby Names: Timeless Names for Modern Parents

By Judith Tropea

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The perfect name is one of the first and most important gifts parents can give their children—and often one of the most challenging decisions of parenthood. Expectant parents who want their child's name to be meaningful will find **Classic Biblical Baby Names** a unique and invaluable resource. Drawing from both the Old and New Testaments, here are hundreds of history's most enduring names, carefully selected to appeal to contemporary tastes yet outlast trends. Organized alphabetically by gender, and complete with fascinating background information, each entry includes:

- Scriptural stories surrounding the name
- Meaning and spiritual connotation
- Citation of where the name appears in the Bible
- Proper pronunciation
- Cultural origin
- Alternate spellings, related names, nicknames
- Famous namesakes

From Adam to Zeph and Abigail to Zia, **Classic Biblical Baby Names** will enrich your understanding of familiar names and invite you to discover lesser-known possibilities. Names are an integral part of our identity and this one-of-a-kind guide will help you choose a name that reflects your hopes for the future and instills a sense of self in your child.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

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Introduction

Of all the hundreds of decisions that expectant parents must make, one of the most important is choosing a name for their new baby. “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,” says Proverbs 22:1. For parents wanting to give their child a name with substance, a name that represents strength and tradition, a name whose enduring meaning will outlast the trends of Brittany, Tiffany, and Tyler, here is **Classic Biblical Baby Names: Timeless Names for Modern Parents**.

Names are an integral part of our identity. A child’s name affects his/her self-perception and reflects the parents’ beliefs and culture. A name pays tribute to the individual spirit and is one of the first wonderful gifts you can offer your child. Naming your baby is like naming your hopes for the future; the “right” name will shepherd your child into a life of grace, strength, and integrity.

In the beginning, God gave Adam the sacred task of naming every living thing, and the Bible is replete with stories about assigning names. Moses received his name because Pharaoh’s daughter “drew him out of the water” (Exodus 2:10) and Leah called her son Asher because she was “happy” (Genesis 30:13). Like Adam, you are given the sacred task of choosing a name for your child—a name that will express your beliefs, your history, and your dreams. With the Bible as a guide, you can be certain that your choice will be underscored by a strong spiritual heritage as well.

For example, naming a girl Bethany, after the village near Jerusalem where Lazarus rose from the dead (John 11:38–44), evokes a spiritual awareness that trendier names such as Madison and Mackenzie may be lacking. It offers her a home in a cherished religious tradition and may even invite her to discover more about her namesake by reading the Bible. Likewise, selecting Tamar instead of Taylor opens a young person to choices that are even more profound and will help give your child a unique sense of self.

For those who are searching for a name that is both meaningful and spiritual, Classic Biblical Baby Names offers a myriad of choices. Organized alphabetically by gender, this collection offers hundreds of biblical names culled from both the Old and New Testaments. Each entry includes:

The language/cultural origin of the name

Pronunciation

Concise meaning

Spiritual connotation

Scriptural story surrounding the name

Citation of where the name appears in the Bible

Related names and nicknames

Alternate names with spelling variations

This book is not intended to be comprehensive. Of the 3,300 names in both the Old and New Testaments, nearly 500 have been selected. The names were chosen with the consideration that they should appeal to contemporary tastes. Others, such as Jezebel and Judas, were excluded because of their association with evil, and Jehoshaphat because of its impracticality.

Unlike some exhaustive name dictionaries, which provide only a one- or two-word definition for thousands of names, **Classic Biblical Baby Names** offers a selection of specifically chosen names that are beautiful and powerful, along with the engaging biblical story of each name's origin. Expectant parents can use this guide to give them background on more-common names and to open up new possibilities of lesser-known names that are classic and unique at the same time. In our multicultural society, unusual names are no longer the exception, and the Bible is a rich resource waiting to be mined.

"A good name is better than precious ointment," says Ecclesiastes 7:1. Take time to peruse these pages and make a choice that will start your precious one off on a distinctive path that will last a lifetime.

classic biblical baby names

boys' names

The angel of the LORD also said to her:

"You are now with child and you will have a son."

—Genesis 16:11

AARON (EHR-uhn) or (A-ruhn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew/Egyptian

Meaning: Mountain of Strength

Spiritual Connotation: Exalted

Related Names/Nicknames: Aaronas, Aharon, Arand, Arend, Ari, Arnie, Erin, Haroun, Harun, Ron, Ronnie, Ronny

Alternate Names: Aaran, Aaren, Aarron, Aaryn, Arin, Aron, Aronne, Arran, Arron

Background Story: When God commanded Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he sent Aaron—Moses’s brother—to help. Aaron served as his brother’s mouthpiece because Moses was afraid he was too “slow of speech.” Pharaoh wanted proof of God’s power before releasing the Israelites, and Aaron and Moses performed numerous “wonders” before him: They transformed a staff into a snake, turned the waters of the Nile into blood, and brought plagues upon Egypt. It was not until the Lord struck down all the firstborn of Egypt that Pharaoh said, “Rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites!” Aaron was a loyal companion to Moses, but when the Lord was giving Moses the Ten Commandments, Aaron gave in to the demands of the Israelites and built an idol for them at the base of the mountain. Thanks to Moses’s prayer, however, God forgave Aaron and appointed him the first high priest, with his sons to follow (Exodus 4–40).

Of Interest: From 1970 to 2003, Aaron was one of the fifty most popular names for boys in the United States.

Famous Namesakes: Aaron Burr, U.S. vice president; Aaron Copland, composer; Aaron Neville and Aaron Tippin, singers; Hank Aaron, baseball home-run champion.

ABDIEL (AB-dee-ehl)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Servant of God

Spiritual Connotation: Faithful Disciple

Related Names/Nicknames: Abdi, Abe, Diel

Alternate Names: None

Background Story: Abdiel was the son of Guni and a descendant of Gad. His own son, Ahi, was “chief in their clan.” Abdiel’s kin lived in Bashan “and in the pasture lands of Sharon” (1 Chronicles 5:15–16). Abdiel is a name suggesting a man who is true to his beliefs.

Of Interest: Abdiel was the name given to the fictional seraph who withstood Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

ABDON (AB-duhn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Aramaic

Meaning: Servant

Spiritual Connotation: Worshipper

Related Names/Nicknames: Avda, Avdon

Alternate Names: None

Background Story: There are four men named Abdon in the Bible: a judge of Israel who served for eight

years and had forty sons and thirty grandsons (Judges 12:13–14); one of the sons of Shashak, a Benjamite (1 Chronicles 8:23); the firstborn son of Jeiel and Maacah (1 Chronicles 8:29–30); and the son of Micah, sent by King Josiah to the prophetess, Huldah, to determine the fate of his people who had “forsaken” the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:20–28). The name Abdon suggests a man who looks to God for answers.

ABEL (AY-buhl)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Breath

Spiritual Connotation: Sacred Offering

Related Names/Nicknames: Abe, Abele, Abey, Abhel, Abie, Hebel, Hebhel, Hevel

Alternate Names: Abell, Able, Abyl

Background Story: Adam’s son Abel worked as a shepherd, and his older brother Cain tilled the field. One day, each made an offering to the Lord. Cain offered God the “fruit of the ground” while Abel brought him the “firstlings of his flock.” God preferred Abel’s offering, which filled Cain’s heart with rage. He lured Abel into the field and killed him. When God inquired about Abel’s whereabouts, Cain rudely replied, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” God punished Cain by making him “a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth” (Genesis 4:1–12).

Of Interest: In the New Testament, Abel is considered the first martyr, and Jesus refers to the “blood of righteous Abel” (Matthew 23:35).

ABIEL (AY-bee-ehl) or (uh-BAI-ehl) or (AB-ee-ehl)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: My Father Is God

Spiritual Connotation: Devoted to the Lord

Related Names/Nicknames: Abi-albon

Alternate Names: Abeel, Abiell, Abyel, Abyell, Ahbiel

Background Story: Two men named Abiel are in the Bible: Kish’s father and Saul’s grandfather (1 Samuel 9:1, 14:51), and one of the “mighty warriors” who helped David become king (1 Chronicles 11:32). Abiel is a name suggesting a strong faith in God.

Of Interest: Abiel was a popular name among the early Puritan settlers.

ABIRAM (uh-BAI-ruhm)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: High Father

Spiritual Connotation: Dignity

Related Names/Nicknames: Avi, Aviram

Alternate Names: Abhiram

Background Story: Both Abirams in the Bible met unhappy ends. Abiram and his brother, Dathan, accused Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves “above the assembly of the Lord.” For questioning God’s will, the brothers and their families were swallowed up by the earth (Numbers 16:1–34). The other Abiram was the victim of his father, Hiel, who rebuilt the walls of Jericho “at the cost of” his firstborn son’s life (1 Kings 16:34).

ABNER (AB-ner)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Father of Light

Spiritual Connotation: Believer of Truth

Related Names/Nicknames: Ab, Abbey, Abbie, Abby, Abnar, Abnor, Avnor, Eb, Ebby

Alternate Names: Avner

Background Story: Abner was the chief commander of King Saul’s army and also his cousin. It was Abner who introduced David to the king’s court following his victory over Goliath. After Saul’s death, Abner went to war with David’s army to secure the throne for Saul’s son, Ishbaal. He lost that fight at the pool of Gibeon and was eventually killed by the commander of David’s army, Joab. David sincerely mourned Abner’s death, saying, “A prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel” (2 Samuel 3:38).

Famous Namesakes: Abner Doubleday was a Civil War general at the Battle of Gettysburg and, as legend has it, the inventor of baseball.

ABRAHAM (AY-bruh-ham)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Father of a Multitude

Spiritual Connotation: Benefactor

Related Names/Nicknames: Abarran, Abe, Abey, Abhiram, Abie, Abrahan, Abram, Abrami, Abramo, Abran, Avi, Avra, Avraham, Avram, Avrom, Avrum, Bram

Alternate Names: Abraham, Abraham, Abraham, Abreham, Abrehem, Abrehym, Abryham, Abryhem, Ebrahim, Ibraheem, Ibrahim

Background Story: Abraham—originally called Abram—lived in Haran with his wife, Sarai, and the rest of his kin. One day, the Lord told Abram to leave his father’s country. “I will make you into a great nation,” God promised (Genesis 12:1–2). Abram and Sarai traveled from place to place for many years, but they had no children. Finally, Sarai persuaded Abram to have a child with her maid, Hagar, and they named the boy Ishmael. When Abram was ninety-nine, God fulfilled his promise at last. He made a covenant with Abram, changing his name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah, and in her old age “Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son” named Isaac (Genesis 21:2). Abraham’s first son, Ishmael, was sent into the wilderness, where he grew up under God’s protection. Then the Lord presented Abraham with his greatest test. He said, “Take your . . . only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering.” As always, Abraham did as the Lord asked. At the exact moment he raised his knife to kill Isaac, an angel appeared and stopped him. Because of Abraham’s faithfulness, God promised to bless him and make his offspring “as numerous as the stars of heaven” (Genesis 22:2–18). At the age of one hundred seventy-five, Abraham died and was buried at Machpelah, where he had also buried his beloved wife Sarah.

Of Interest: God made a covenant with Abraham that he would be the “ancestor of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:5). Through Ishmael, he is considered one of the first prophets of Islam, and through Isaac, he is known as the first patriarch of the Jews. His original name, Abram, means “high father” or “exalted father.”

Famous Namesakes: Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president of the United States.

ABSALOM (AB-suh-luhm)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Father of Peace

Spiritual Connotation: God’s Mercy

Related Names/Nicknames: Abishalom, Absolon, Acke, Aksel, Akseli, Axel, Axelle

Alternate Names: Avsalom, Avshalom

Background Story: Absalom, the son of Maacah, was David’s third and favorite son. The trouble began when David’s firstborn son, Amnon, violated Absalom’s sister Tamar, who was known for her beauty. Absalom killed Amnon and escaped to Geshur, where he found refuge with his grandfather. David grew despondent over the loss of Absalom and, after three years, he allowed him to return to Jerusalem. Absalom, however, had his eye on David’s throne and began to gather support. He proclaimed himself king of Hebron, and David fled from Jerusalem. A battle ensued, but Absalom and his supporters were no match for David and his army. Absalom died retreating from the battlefield. Despite his son’s rebellious actions, David wept after his death. “O my son Absalom . . . Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33).

Of Interest: Absalom, Absalom!, written by William Faulkner, is a novel about three families in the South during the time of the Civil War.

ACHAICUS (uh-KAY-uh-kuhs)

Language/Cultural Origin: Greek

Meaning: Sorrowing

Spiritual Connotation: Longing for God

Related Names/Nicknames: Achaia

Alternate Names: Achaikos

Background Story: Achaicus, an early Christian convert, was a leader of the church in Corinth. With two other converts, Stephanas and Fortunatus, he visited Paul at Ephesus, where they “refreshed” his “spirit.” Paul urges the Christians at Corinth to serve these leaders and “everyone who works and toils with them” (1 Corinthians 16:15–18).

ACHIM (AY-kihm)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Preparing

Spiritual Connotation: Eager for the Lord

Related Names/Nicknames: Ahim, Jachin, Jehoiachin

Alternate Names: Acheim, Acim

Background Story: Achim appears in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. He is an ancestor of Joseph, the husband of Mary, to whom Jesus was born. The name Achim suggests a man who likes to keep his eye on future possibilities.

Of Interest: Achim is a popular shortened form of the German name Joachim.

Famous Namesakes: Achim Heukemes, German marathon runner, set a new world record for his 4,568-kilometer run through Australia in April of 2005.

ADAM F (AD-uhm)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew/Babylonian

Meaning: Red Earth

Spiritual Connotation: Made in God’s Image

Related Names/Nicknames: Ad, Adamah, Adamina, Adamo, Adams, Adamson, Adan, Adao, Addams, Addie, Addis, Addison, Addy, Ade, Admon, Adnet, Adnon, Adnot, Akamu

Alternate Names: Addam, Addem, Adem, Adham

Background Story: Adam was the first man in the Bible. God created him “from the dust of the ground” and put him in charge of the garden of Eden. The Lord also created Eve as a partner for him, because it was “not good that the man should be alone.” There was only one restriction: The couple were never to eat from the tree of good and evil. But the serpent tempted Eve, who ate from the tree and shared its fruit with Adam. For their disobedience, God threw them out of the garden, and Adam had to “till the ground from which he was taken” (Genesis 2–3). Adam and Eve had many children, but only three are named: Cain, Abel, and Seth.

Of Interest: From 1970 to 2000, Adam was among the top fifty names for boys in the United States.

Famous Namesakes: Adam Clayton Powell Jr., U.S. congressman; Adam Sandler, Adam West, actors; Adam Smith, economist.

ADDI (AD-ee)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: My Witness

Spiritual Connotation: In God’s Family

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: Addai, Addei

Background Story: Addi appears in Luke’s account of the genealogy of Jesus. He was an ancestor of Joseph, Mary’s husband. Addi’s father was Cosam and his son was Melchi (Luke 3:28). Addi is a friendly name, suggesting a man who is outgoing and likable.

ADDON (AD-uhn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Babylonian

Meaning: Strong

Spiritual Connotation: Tenacious

Related Names/Nicknames: Adain

Alternate Names: Addan

Background Story: Addon is a family or place name associated with Jews who returned from captivity in Babylon. Because these people were unable to prove their “ancestral houses or their descent,” they were unable to participate in the priesthood (Nehemiah 7:61–65). The name Addon suggests a man who handles problems well.

ADIN F (AY-dihn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Slender

Spiritual Connotation: Promise to God

Related Names/Nicknames: Adena, Adina, Adinu, Aidan, Aiden

Alternate Names: Aden, Adhin

Background Story: Adin was the ancestor of a clan that “returned to Jerusalem and Judah, all to their own towns” after years of captivity in Babylon (Ezra 2:15). The clan numbered in the hundreds and its leaders were among those who signed Nehemiah’s covenant with the Lord (Nehemiah 10:16).

Famous Namesakes: Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz has published fifty-eight books on the Talmud, religious thought, sociology, and philosophy.

ADINO (uh-DEE-no)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Spear

Spiritual Connotation: Defender

Related Names/Nicknames: Dean, Dino

Alternate Names: Adhino

Background Story: Adino the Eznite—also known as Jashobeam—was a “chief among the captains” of David’s “mighty men,” an elite group of warriors who safeguarded their king. He rose to that high position as a result of killing “eight hundred men at one time” (2 Samuel 23:8). The name Adino suggests a strong, protective man.

ADLAI (AD-lay) or (AD-lai)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: God Is Just

Spiritual Connotation: Truthful

Related Names/Nicknames: Ad, Adaliah, Addey, Addie, Addy

Alternate Names: Adlae, Adlay, Adley

Background Story: Adlai was the father of Shaphat, one of David's overseers, who watched "over the herds in the valleys" (1 Chronicles 27:29). The name Adlai suggests a man who is honest and fair in everything he does.

Famous Namesakes: Adlai Stevenson was a U.S. vice president; his grandson, Adlai Ewing Stevenson II, was twice the Democratic candidate for U.S. president; and his great-grandson, Adlai Ewing Stevenson III, was a U.S. senator from Illinois.

ADONAI (AH-do-nai)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: My Lord

Spiritual Connotation: God's Spirit

Related Names/Nicknames: Adonis

Alternate Names: Adhonay, Adoni

Background Story: Adonai is the name for God in the Hebrew Bible, where it appears over six thousand times. It is written in place of "YHVH" or "Jehovah," a name that many Hebrews believed was too sacred to be spoken aloud. Adonai is an excellent name for a boy whose parents wish to instill the spirit of the Lord in him.

Of Interest: "YHVH" is still pronounced Adonai by Jewish people today, while most English-language Bibles translate it as "Lord."

ADRIEL (AY-dree-ehl)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Of God's Flock

Spiritual Connotation: Nurtured by God

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: Adriell, Adriyel

Background Story: Adriel was married to Saul's daughter, Merab, whom Saul had promised to David for battling the Philistines. Saul used Merab as a "snare . . . that the hand of the Philistines may be against" David. When his plans failed, he gave her to Adriel as a wife (1 Samuel 18:17–19). Later, Adriel and Merab's five sons were killed by the Gibeonites in retribution for Saul's mistreatment of them (2 Samuel 21:1–9).

Of Interest: In one Native American language, Adriel is the word for "beaver" and suggests a person of skill.

Famous Namesakes: Adriel Hampton, journalist; Adriel Heisey, aerial photographer.

AENEAS (uh-NEE-uhs)

Language/Cultural Origin: Greek

Meaning: Praiseworthy

Spiritual Connotation: Honorable

Related Names/Nicknames: Aengus, Angus, Enne

Alternate Names: Aeneas, Aineas, Ainneas, Aneas, Eneas, Enneas, Enneis, Enneiss

Background Story: Aeneas, a man from Lydda, “had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed.” When Peter discovered him he said, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!” With those words, the man was healed. As soon as the people in his town saw him, they embraced the Lord (Acts 9:32–35).

Of Interest: Aeneas—a Trojan hero of Greek and Roman legend—is a character in Homer’s epic poem The Iliad. He is also the hero of Virgil’s Aeneid, which tells the story of his journey from Troy to the city that would one day become Rome.

Famous Namesakes: Aeneas Williams, a professional football player for the St. Louis Rams, has appeared in the Pro Bowl eight times.

ALEXANDER (al-ihg-ZAN-der)

Language/Cultural Origin: Greek

Meaning: Defender of Mankind

Spiritual Connotation: Protector

Related Names/Nicknames: Al, Alastair, Alaster, Alcander, Alcinder, Alcindor, Alec, Alek, Alessandro, Alex, Alexan, Alexandra, Alexandros, Alexi, Alexie, Alexis, Alic, Alick, Alik, Alistair, Alix, Allie, Lex, Sacha, Sander, Sandie, Sandro, Sandy, Sascha, Sasha, Saunder, Saunders, Xan, Xander, Zander, Zandro, Zandros

Alternate Names: Aleksander, Aleksandr, Alessandre, Alexandre, Alisander, Alissander, Alissandre, Alixandre

Background Story: There are four Alexanders in the New Testament: the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus’s cross (Mark 15:21); a relative of Annas, present when the high priest questioned Peter and John (Acts 4:5–7); a man who “suffered shipwreck in the faith” and was excommunicated (1 Timothy 1:19–20); and a Jew in Ephesus, where Paul was converting people. A group of artisans who made shrines for pagan gods feared their trade would “come into disrepute” and incited the crowd against Paul. Alexander

“tried to make a defense” for Paul although the crowd refused to listen (Acts 19:24–34).

Of Interest: In 2004 Alexander was the fifteenth most popular name for boys.

Famous Namesakes: Alexander Graham Bell, inventor; Alec Baldwin, Sir Alec Guinness, actors; Alexandre Dumas, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, authors; Alexander Haig, U.S. secretary of state; Alexander Hamilton, U.S. secretary of the treasury; Alexander Pope, poet; Alexander Popov, Olympic gold medalist in swimming.

ALLON (AL-ehn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Oak Tree

Spiritual Connotation: Tower of Strength

Related Names/Nicknames: Alan, Alona

Alternate Names: Alon

Background Story: Allon was the son of Jedaiah and the father of Shiphi. He was a leader of a Simeonite clan who lived in the valley of Gedor, “where they found rich, good pasture, and the land was very broad, quiet, and peaceful” (1 Chronicles 4:37–40).

Of Interest: Allon-bachuth, or “the oak of weeping,” was a famous tree near Bethel, under which Rebekah’s nurse, Deborah, was buried (Genesis 35:8).

ALPHAЕUS (AL-fee-uhs)

Language/Cultural Origin: Greek

Meaning: Changing

Spiritual Connotation: Open-minded

Related Names/Nicknames: Al, Alfie

Alternate Names: Alfaeus, Alfeos, Alfeus, Alfio, Alphaios, Alpheus, Alpheus

Background Story: There are two men named Alphaeus in the Bible: the father of James whom Jesus chose as one of his apostles (Matthew 10:3), and the father of Levi, a tax collector with whom Jesus and his disciples dined (Mark 2:14–17). The name Alphaeus is a reminder of the need to be open to change in life.

ALVAN (AL-van)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Sublime

Spiritual Connotation: Noble

Related Names/Nicknames: Al, Aliah, Alian, Alva, Alvah, Alvie, Alvina, Alwan

Alternate Names: Alven, Alvin, Alvyn, Elvin

Background Story: Alvan was Shobal's firstborn son. His brothers were Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. They were the grandchildren of Seir the Horite (Genesis 36:23). The name Alvan suggests a man who always rises to the occasion.

Famous Namesakes: Alvan Adams, basketball player; Alvan Clark, astronomer and maker of astronomical lenses; Thomas Alva Edison, inventor.

AMAL (ah-MAHL)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Industrious

Spiritual Connotation: Idealist

Related Names/Nicknames: Amali, Amalio, Amel, Amelia, Emil

Alternate Names: Amaal, Amahl

Background Story: Amal, the son of Helem, was from the tribe of Asher. He and his brothers—Zophah, Imna, and Shelesh—were all “heads of their ancestral houses, select mighty warriors, and chief of the princes” (1 Chronicles 7:35–40). Amahl is a quiet but powerful name, suggesting a man who knows how to turn his dreams into reality.

Of Interest: Amahl is the name of the young boy in the opera Amahl and the Night Visitors by Gian Carlo Menotti.

AMARIAH (am-uh-RAI-uh)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: The Lord Promises

Spiritual Connotation: Covenant

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: Amaria, Amariya, Amariyah, Amarya, Amaryah

Background Story: Amariah was a popular name in the Bible, especially among the Levites. The more prominent were: a Levite from the lineage of Moses whom David assigned to work “in the house of the Lord” (1 Chronicles 23:4, 19); the chief priest who settled religious disputes under Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 19:11); one of Hezekiah’s priests who distributed the free-will offering (2 Chronicles 31:15); and the prophet Zephaniah’s great- grandfather (Zephaniah 1:1). The name Amariah suggests someone who takes his relationship with God seriously.

AMASA (uh-MAY-suh) or (AM-uh-suh)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Bearing a Burden

Spiritual Connotation: Responsible Leader

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: None

Background Story: The name Amasa appears twice in the Bible. The first was the son of Abigail, David’s sister. David’s son Absalom “appointed Amasa over the army” when he rebelled against his father. After Absalom was killed in battle, David made peace with Amasa by appointing him commander of his army. But David’s former commander, Joab, soon retaliated by killing Amasa and regaining his post (2 Samuel 17, 19–20). Amasa was also an Ephraimite chief who “stood up against” making slaves of Judeans captured in battle. Instead, he clothed and fed them—and set them free (2 Chronicles 28:12–13).

Famous Namesakes: Amasa Holcomb, pioneer telescope maker; Francis Amasa Walker, former president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

AMASAI (ay-MA-sai) or (ay-MAY-sai)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Strong

Spiritual Connotation: Moved by God’s Spirit

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: Amasay

Background Story: There are three men named Amasai in the Bible: a Levite priest responsible for the “service of song” in the temple (1 Chronicles 6:31–35); one of Saul’s warrior chiefs, who was overcome by the “spirit” and defected to David (1 Chronicles 12:18); and a priest appointed by David “to blow the trumpets before the ark of God” (1 Chronicles 15:24). The name Amasai is mindful of a spirited man who is unafraid to “sing out” God’s praises.

AMITTAI (uh-MIHT-ai)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: True

Spiritual Connotation: Faithful

Related Names/Nicknames: Amitan, Tai

Alternate Names: Amitai, Amitay, Amitei, Amittay

Background Story: Amittai was the father of the prophet Jonah and lived in the town of Gath-hepher in Zebulun (2 Kings 14:25). His son, Jonah, prophesied the expansion of Israel by Jeroboam. The name Amittai suggests a man who always stands by his friends.

AMMIEL (AM-ee-uhl)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: God of My People

Spiritual Connotation: Belonging to God

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: Ameiel, Amiel, Amyel

Background Story: Ammiel is the name of four men in the Bible: one of twelve men Moses sent to “spy out the land of Canaan” before he gave it to the Israelites (Numbers 13:1, 12); the father of Machir, who gave aid to David’s army during Absalom’s rebellion (2 Samuel 17:27); the father of Bathsheba, who was David’s wife and Solomon’s mother (1 Chronicles 3:5); and a gatekeeper of the tabernacle for David (1 Chronicles 26:5).

Famous Namesakes: Ammiel Alcalay is a poet, critic, essayist, and translator.

AMNON (AM-nuhn) or (AM-nawn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: Faithful and True

Spiritual Connotation: Devoted

Related Names/Nicknames: Aminon, Ammon, Amon

Alternate Names: None

Background Story: A prominent Amnon in the Bible is the son of David and his wife Ahinoam, who “fell in

love” with his beautiful half-sister Tamar, a virgin. He tricked her into coming to his house by pretending to be ill and, in spite of her protests, he forced himself on her, then cast her out. Although Tamar was desolate, David refused to punish Amnon, who was his firstborn son. Tamar’s brother, Absalom, later had Amnon killed for what he had done to his sister (2 Samuel 13:1–29).

Famous Namesakes: Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces; Amnon Rubinstein, Israeli politician and scholar; Amnon Wolman, composer.

AMON (AY-mahn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Egyptian/Hebrew

Meaning: Trustworthy

Spiritual Connotation: Reliable

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: Ammon, Amun

Background Story: In the Bible, Amon is a name associated with three men: a governor of Samaria who was ordered by King Ahab to put the prophet Micaiah in prison (1 Kings 22:26); a king of Judah whose servants “conspired against him” and killed him (2 Kings 21:19–26); and a servant of Solomon and his descendants who returned from captivity in Babylon (Nehemiah 7:59).

Famous Namesakes: Amon G. Carter, Texas newspaper publisher and philanthropist; Amon Gordon, football player for the Cleveland Browns.

AMOS (AY-muhs)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: One Who Is Burdened

Spiritual Connotation: Responsibility

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: Amoss

Background Story: Amos is one of the twelve minor prophets of the Bible. A simple shepherd from the town of Tekoa, he described himself as “no prophet, nor prophet’s son; but . . . a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees” whom the Lord sent to prophesy to the Israelites. During the reign of Jeroboam, Israel reached its height of wealth and power, and the people grew indifferent to God. Amos’s prophecies revealed God’s anger at their pride and arrogance—and a promise of punishment if they did not repent. He wrote about God’s promise to “shake the house of Israel” as if with a sieve, eliminating its sinners. In the end, however, he would “raise up its ruins and rebuild it,” and the fortunes of Israel would be restored (Book of

Amos).

Of Interest: The Book of Amos is the oldest prophetic book in the Bible.

Famous Namesakes: Amos Bronson Alcott, educator and father of Louisa May Alcott; Amos Eaton, naturalist; Amos Meller, composer/conductor; Amos Oz, writer.

AMZI (AM-zee)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew

Meaning: My Strength

Spiritual Connotation: Zeal

Related Names/Nicknames: None

Alternate Names: None

Background Story: Amzi is the name of two men in the Bible: one of the Levites David “put in charge of the service of song” in the tabernacle after the ark of the covenant was brought there (1 Chronicles 6:31, 46), and a priest who agreed to live in Jerusalem while Nehemiah was governor (Nehemiah 11:12). The name Amzi suggests a man who goes through life with spirit and enthusiasm.

ANAN (AY-nuhn)

Language/Cultural Origin: Hebrew/Arabic

Meaning: Cloud

Spiritual Connotation: Covenant with God

Related Names/Nicknames: Anani

Alternate Names: Aenon, Hanan

Background Story: Anan was one of the men who signed the written covenant with the Lord created by Nehemiah after the return from Babylonian captivity (Nehemiah 10:26). The name Anan is a reminder that new doors can open when the past is left behind.

ANANIAS (an-uh-NAI-uhs)

Language/Cultural Origin: Greek

Meaning: Gift of the Lord

Spiritual Connotation: Grace

Related Names/Nicknames: Ananiah, Annas, Hananiah

Alternate Names: None

Background Story: Of the three men called Ananias in the Bible, the devout disciple who lived in Damascus is especially notable. In a vision, God commanded Ananias to heal a man named Saul, whom the Lord had blinded on the road to Damascus. Ananias knew that Saul had come to persecute Christ's followers and was afraid. But the Lord told him that Saul was an "instrument" who would bring Christ's message to the world. Ananias went to Saul, laid his hands on him, and said, "Regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Saul's vision returned and Ananias baptized him. Saul went on to become the great missionary of the early Church known as Paul (Acts 9:10–19).

Of Interest: Ananias is recognized as a saint in the Catholic Church.

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