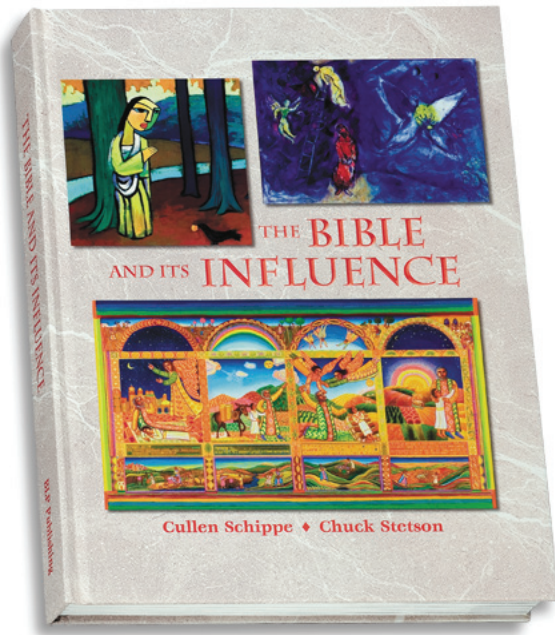


Bible Literacy Project



The Bible Literacy Project has published a new high-school textbook, *The Bible and Its Influence*. It is the first textbook to be fully reviewed by scholars in over 35 years.

The following pages are representative of the quality of the textbook. The final size of the book is a standard 9x12 page size (18x12 spread), hard cover in textbook quality printing and binding. There is a full Teacher's Edition available as well.

This PDF contains the Introduction, Table of Contents, and Chapter 2 of the textbook.

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preface

Dear Student,

The Bible has been and still is one of the most influential books ever published. Its influence is seen in literature, art, music, culture, public policy, and public debate. The first English translations of the Bible helped to fashion the English language itself—so much so that, had the Bible not been translated into English when it was, Shakespeare's plays might never have been written.

Biblical allusions are found in great literature and in the daily newspaper as well. Rock musicians, screenwriters, television producers, and advertisers use the Bible as a source. Politicians use the words and accounts of the Bible to frame their debates.

The Bible is a sacred text to Jews and Christians, and it has the respect of Muslims and the members of other world religions. The very fact that it is a sacred text contributes to the Bible's influence. Still, the Bible has literary and historical merit all its own. It is filled with adventure, with poetry and song, with narratives and letters, with visions and comfort, with warning and advice.

The first part of the Bible—the Hebrew Scriptures—both shaped and was shaped by the identity of the Jewish people. Christians kept those Hebrew Scriptures as part of their own Scriptures and saw in them a foreshadowing of Jesus, whom they believed to be the messiah. The gospels and other writings of the New Testament have at their center Jesus of Nazareth and the development of the Christian churches. The actions, words, and teachings of Jesus and his followers also influenced art, culture, and public discourse.

This textbook is an opportunity for you to become informed about the Bible. In this course you will get a tour of the whole Bible to see how it was written and when. You will learn about the different kinds of writing and the various books that make up the Bible. You will also see the expansive influence of the Bible. Your knowledge of the Bible can be a key to unlocking other subjects for you—especially literature, art, music, and the social sciences. You will learn why every well-educated person needs to have a basic knowledge of the Bible.



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UNIT ONE

CHAPTER 2

DISCOVER

- The organization of the Hebrew Scriptures
- Important themes and literary devices in the Hebrew Scriptures
- The Jewish tradition of Biblical interpretation
- The role of the Tanakh (the Old Testament) in Jewish and in Christian life

CONSIDER

- What do you know about Judaism?
- What are the sources of your information?

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is the source of many treasured narratives and memorable images: the garden of Eden, Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, Joseph's coat of many colors, the crossing of the Red Sea, the ark of the covenant, the tumbling walls of Jericho, David the shepherd king, Solomon and the queen of Sheba, Elijah's fiery chariot, Daniel in the lions' den. Even if you are familiar with many of these, you may never have had the chance to examine them closely, to understand them in context, to see how they are interrelated, and to trace their influence on Western and American culture. Units two through seven of this course focus on the Hebrew Scriptures.

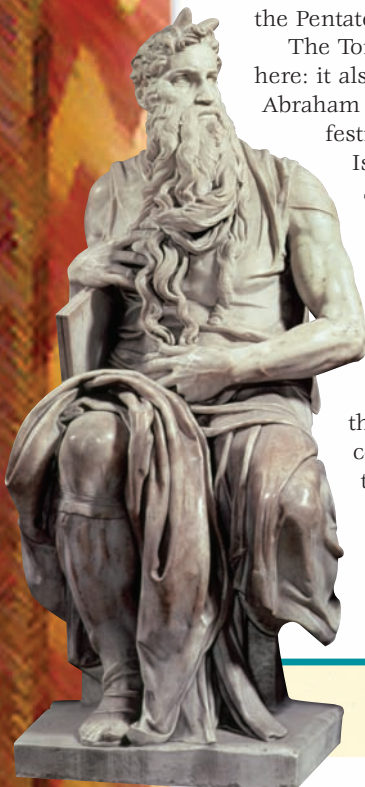
The Jewish organization of the individual books differs from the ordering used in the Christian Old Testament. The books of the Jewish Bible are grouped into three main divisions:

1. **Torah** is the Hebrew word for "Teaching," often mistakenly translated into English as "law." This first section of the Hebrew Scriptures comprises the Bible's first five books (sometimes called the Pentateuch, from the Greek for "five parts," or *humash*, Hebrew for "five").

The Torah does indeed contain the central teachings and laws of Judaism. There is much more here: it also contains humanity's beginnings, the religious history of biblical Israel from the days of Abraham through the death of Moses, and instructions for conducting worship and celebrating the festivals of the Jewish calendar. And there are the genealogies—lists of humanity's and Israel's family trees, sometimes humorously referred to as "the begats" (from the King James Version's archaic English term for "was the ancestor of," as in Genesis 6:10, "And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth").

2. **Nevi'im** is the Hebrew word for "Prophets." This section includes both historical narratives and prophetic messages. The narratives continue the religious history of biblical Israel from the arrival in the Promised Land, through the rise and fall of the kingdom of David and his descendants. Destructive conquests by the Assyrian empire drove most of Israel's twelve tribes into exile. Then, conquests by the Babylonians led to exile for the people of Judah and Jerusalem. The poetic messages are addressed to the people of Israel from their God, alternately reprimanding them for their misdeeds, comforting them in their afflictions, and predicting their future redemption. Linking these two very different literary forms is the presence of the prophets, individuals—often quite unexpected choices—sent by God to guide the people.

3. **Ketuvim** is Hebrew for "Writings," which contains books displaying a wide assortment of themes and literary forms, including prayers, poetry, wise sayings, short narratives, and the continuation of Israel's religious history during and after the Babylonian Exile.



Michelangelo's sculpture of Moses is perhaps the best-known image of this greatest of biblical leaders.

Many Jews refer to the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures as the Bible. Another common title for the Hebrew Scriptures is the acronym **Tanakh**, made up of the initial sounds of the Hebrew words *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim*. Many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures section of this course are quoted from the English edition of the Tanakh published by the Jewish Publication Society.

No matter how the books of the Hebrew Scriptures are grouped, or how diverse they may be in style or genre, they share one consistent theme: the relationship between God and humans, especially the people of biblical Israel. According to the Bible, God has a unique relationship with these “chosen people,” who are set apart to be an example to all the world of God’s justice and God’s mercy. The narrative thread of the Hebrew Scriptures begins at the beginning of time, and follows the people of Israel through their triumphs and tragedies.

How Jews Read the Hebrew Scriptures

In the United States, Judaism is usually practiced according to one of four general traditions. Orthodox Judaism is the most rigorous in its adherence to the Mosaic Law, and the least assimilated into non-Jewish society. Reform Judaism is a more liberal practice, emphasizing innovation as well as tradition. Conservative Judaism follows the Mosaic Law but often acknowledges more than one acceptable interpretation of that law; and Reconstructionist Judaism, a relatively new movement, emphasizes community life over particular traditions. Many American Jews do not follow any of these religious traditions entirely, considering themselves secular, cultural, or ethical Jews who claim various aspects of Jewish identity. Judaism has traditionally fostered a “multiple-lens” approach to reading the Bible. Jews of any background may draw on any or all of these ways of understanding the Bible at any given time:

- A **plain sense** reading (in Hebrew, *peshat*) looks to the surface, though not necessarily literal, meaning of the text, drawing on knowledge of word meanings, grammar, syntax, and context.
- An **inquiring** reading (in Hebrew, *derash*) looks for further layers of meaning. This kind of interpretive reading is what a rabbi or minister does when giving a sermon or homily on a biblical text, using story and example to add understanding. *Midrash*, the Jewish tradition of interpreting the Scriptures through creative storytelling, derives from this way of reading.
- An **allegorical** reading (in Hebrew, *remez*) looks for parallels between the scriptural text and more abstract concepts. This kind of reading sees biblical characters, events, and literary compositions as standing for other truths.
- A **mystical** reading (in Hebrew, *sod*) looks at the biblical text as a symbolic code, which with piety and effort will yield hidden wisdom and personal connection with the divine. The Jewish mystical tradition known as *Kabbalah* relies on complex symbolic interpretation of each individual letter of the biblical text.

These ways of reading the Bible for Jews are meant to be complementary, not mutually exclusive. Jewish reading of Scripture is not overly concerned with establishing one “correct” reading, and many of the greatest scholars of the tradition have been content to entertain several seemingly opposed interpretations of a single passage. The English translation of the Tanakh from the Jewish Publication Society honors this tradition by footnoting alternate readings or translations of particular passages.

The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, included among the *Ketuvim* or Writings in the Hebrew Scriptures, are traditionally attributed to the Israelite King Solomon, who was gifted by God with great wisdom. This illustration from a fourteenth century British manuscript shows Solomon dictating the Book of Proverbs to his court scribes.



Christians and the Hebrew Scriptures

Judaism and Christianity share much of the same narrative in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, the ordering of the books is different. In addition, Christians use quite a different lens when they read the Hebrew Scriptures. In that lens, Christians see the Hebrew Scriptures as pointing toward Jesus Christ and a new covenant established and recorded in the New Testament. Western art and literature draw on the common narrative, although frequently from the Christian perspective.

Christians commonly refer to the Hebrew Scriptures as the Old Testament, which further reflects the Christian perspective. Nonetheless, there is a growing trend in Christianity to refer to these books as the Hebrew Scriptures in order to respect and recognize the common heritage of the two traditions. The second part of this book will have more to say about the Christian perspective of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Characteristics of Hebrew Literature

To read and understand the Hebrew Scriptures, you will need to know a few things about Hebrew language and literature.

- **The importance of the word.** The Hebrew alphabet is one of the oldest in the world, and its early development reflects the importance that ancient Hebrew-speaking peoples gave to spoken and written language. In the Hebrew account of creation, for example, the entire universe comes into being at God's spoken command.
- **Symbolic word choices.** In many biblical passages, personal and place names have symbolic meanings drawn from Hebrew etymologies.
- **Parallelism and repetition.** Most of the Hebrew Scriptures originated in oral tradition, and they bear the marks of narratives told and retold, poetry chanted to musical rhythms, and laws memorized and recited by heart. Both parallelism (setting two accounts or ideas side by side for comparison or contrast) and repetition make it easier to commit oral material to memory and transmit it to new generations. These devices remain important even when the texts are set down in writing. Hebrew poetry, for example, relies almost entirely on parallelism for its structure, as it does not use rhyme or standardized meters.
- **Figures of speech.** The Hebrew respect for language allows dazzling displays of creative wordplay. Pay particular attention to simile, metaphor, exaggeration, irony, and personification, all of which assist in capturing the ineffable experience of the divine within the limitations of human language.

During the Middle Ages, Hebrew Bibles were illuminated. But in contrast to Christian illuminators, Jewish artists like Joseph Asarfati, who decorated this page, avoided realistic depictions of people in deference to their interpretation of the biblical commandment that prohibits "graven images." This artist pushes the envelope by including figures that are human from the waist up, but have the bodies of fish below.



The Name of God

In Hebrew tradition, names carry enormous power. The personal name of God, as revealed to Moses in the Book of Exodus 3:15, is the most powerful and sacred word of all. This name (which Christian translators have vocalized *Yahweh*) consists of four Hebrew letters, known in Greek as the **Tetragrammaton**. Because the name of God could only be spoken within the holy of holies, the inner sanctuary of the temple, a substitution is made when reading the Hebrew Scriptures aloud. Readers say *Adonai* (usually translated in English as Lord) instead. The name *Jehovah*, given by some Christian traditions as God's name, is based on a non-Hebrew-speaker's error, using the vowel sounds for *Adonai* with the consonants for *Yahweh*.

In everyday practice, many Jews avoid even *Adonai*, preferring other euphemisms such as *Ha-Shem* ("the Name"). Documents containing the name of God are treated with the utmost respect. English-speaking

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

This chart will give you an overview of how the Hebrew Scriptures have been assembled for the two major traditions using these books. Notice that there is a difference in contents not only between Jews and Christians, but also among the major divisions of Christianity.

The Tanakh

Torah (The Five Books of Moses)

Genesis (*Breshit*)
Exodus (*Shemot*)
Leviticus (*Wayikra*)
Numbers (*Bamidbar*)
Deuteronomy (*Devarim*)

Nevi'im (The Prophets)

Joshua (*Yehoshua*)
Judges (*Shof'tim*)
1 Samuel (*Shmuel Aleph*)
2 Samuel (*Shmuel Beth*)
1 Kings (*Melakhim Aleph*)
2 Kings (*Melakhim Beth*)

The Major Prophets

Isaiah (*Yishayahu*)
Jeremiah (*Yirmiyahu*)
Ezekiel (*Yekezel*)

The Twelve Minor Prophets

Hosea (*Hoshea*)
Joel (*Yoel*)
Amos (*Amos*)
Obadiah (*Ovadyah*)
Jonah (*Yonah*)
Micah (*Mikah*)
Nahum (*Nakhum*)
Habakkuk (*Habakuk*)
Zephaniah (*Zefanyah*)
Haggai (*Haggai*)
Zechariah (*Zekharyah*)
Malachi (*Malachi*)

Ketuvim (The Writings)

Psalms (*Tehillim*)
Proverbs (*Mishlei*)
Job (*Iyov*)
The Song of Songs* (*Shir ha-Shirim*)
Ruth* (*Rut*)
Lamentations* (*Eikhah*)
Ecclesiastes* (*Kohelet*)
Esther* (*Ester*)
Daniel (*Danyel*)
Ezra (*Ezra*)
Nehemiah (*Nehemyah*)
1 Chronicles (*Divrei Hayamim Aleph*)
2 Chronicles (*Divrei Hayamim Beth*)
*The Five Megillot (Scrolls)

The Christian Old Testament

Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Greek Orthodox

Pentateuch (The Books of Moses)

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

The Historical Books

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel (1 Kingdoms in Greek)
2 Samuel (2 Kingdoms in Greek)
1 Kings (3 Kingdoms in Greek)
2 Kings (4 Kingdoms in Greek)
1 Chronicles (1 Paralipomenon in Greek)
2 Chronicles (2 Paralipomenon in Greek)
Ezra
Nehemiah (Ezra and Nehemiah are called 2 Esdras in Greek)
Esther

Wisdom Literature

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon

The Prophets

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

The Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical Books

Books and additions found in the Roman Catholic (RC) and/or the Orthodox (O) Bibles

In both RC and O

Tobit
Judith
The Wisdom of Solomon
Ecclesiasticus (or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach)

Baruch

The Letter of Jeremiah

1 Macabees
2 Macabees

Only in O

1 Esdras
3 Macabees
4 Macabees (an appendix in the Greek Bible)



Abraham Messer's painting *Talmudists* captures the communal process of discussion and debate through which Jewish commentaries on the Bible were produced and continue to be studied.

Orthodox and Conservative Jews often use the formation *G-d* when writing, so as not to spell out—and possibly subject to desecration—the holy name.

Both Jewish and Christian printed Bibles often observe the custom of separating God's name from ordinary text by setting the words *God* or *Lord* in capitals, when the words refer to the one God of Israel.

The Talmud and *Midrash*

In addition to individual reading and interpretation, Jews since the time of the Second Temple have been able to rely on a communal tradition of scholarly commentary on the Scriptures. Most Jewish traditions hold that along with the written law of the Torah, the Jews have also passed down through the centuries oral teachings that explicate the Torah and help Jews apply it to their daily lives. This “oral Torah” was eventually itself committed to writing around the year 200 and is known as the *Mishnah*.

For three centuries after the compilation of the *Mishnah*, rabbis in Jerusalem and Babylon (the major Jewish communities of the day) analyzed and discussed its teachings. Their interpretations were collected under the name *Gemara*. The *Gemara* also includes Biblical expositions, ethical reflections, and stories elaborating on and illustrating various interpretations of biblical narratives. The Talmud comprises both the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*, both oral law and later elaborations and commentaries.

To those unfamiliar with the tradition, engaging with the Talmud can be a baffling experience. Sections are organized according to subject matter, not according to biblical sequence, and include many different viewpoints, all of which are meant to be resolved through ongoing study and discussion. There are two general types of commentary: *halakhah*, or “rulings on points of law” and Talmudic literature, and *aggadah*, or “narrative.” *Midrash*, “creative interpretation and extrapolation,” also weaves its way through the Talmud and other ancient rabbinic works. But since the fall of the Temple, the dual tradition of *Torah* and creative interpretation has given Judaism its central identity and preserved it as a living faith through centuries of persecution.

Hebrew Scriptures in Jewish and Christian Life

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4–9 (NJPS)

These words, from Moses' farewell address to the Israelites, sum up the centrality of the Hebrew Scriptures in Jewish identity, faith, and daily life. The Tanakh both



The importance of the priestly tradition of temple worship in the formation of the Hebrew Bible is reflected in *Aaron with the Scroll of the Law* by Abraham Solomon, which depicts a rabbi carrying a Torah scroll; the rabbi is robed as Aaron, the brother of Moses and Israel's first High Priest. Aaron's service predated the use of scrolls and the ritual life of the temple, but this image weaves together the priestly, scribal, and rabbinic traditions of Judaism.



THE BIBLE IN Literature

The Jewish tradition of *Midrash*, free and creative commentary on the Scriptures, uses storytelling to illustrate a point of teaching. Learned rabbis would suggest possible interpretations of biblical texts by inventing their own narratives, describing what might have happened, often drawing on clues they perceived hidden in the biblical texts' wording. Below is an example of *midrash* describing the creation of the trees.

The main creation of the third day was the realm of plants, the terrestrial plants as well as the plants of Paradise. First of all the cedars of Lebanon and the other great trees were made. In their pride at having been put first, they shot up high in the air. They considered themselves the favored among plants. Then God spake, "I hate arrogance and pride, for I alone am exalted, and none beside," and He created iron on the same day, the substance with which trees are felled. The trees began to weep, and when God asked the reason of their tears, they said:

"We cry because Thou hast created the iron to uproot us therewith. All the while we had thought ourselves the highest of the earth, and now the iron, our destroyer, has been called into existence." God replied: "You yourselves will furnish the axe with a handle. Without your assistance the iron will not be able to do aught against you."

From *The Legends of the Jews*, Louis Ginzberg
(The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909)

grew out of and helped shape Jewish religious celebrations, ethical practices, and cultural expressions. For Jews, the Torah contains hundreds of commandments, or *mitzvot* (which can be loosely translated as "blessed obligations"), which touch on every aspect of human experience. The complete Torah and substantial portions of the prophetic books are proclaimed in an annual cycle of weekly readings in the synagogue. Feasts and festivals are celebrated according to biblical instructions and include more readings from the Scriptures.

The Hebrew Scriptures play a similarly important role in the lives of Christians. Jesus was a Jew, as were his first followers. The Hebrew Scriptures were the Bible of the early Christian community. Traditional Jewish respect for the word carried over into Christian religious practice, which followed the structure of the synagogue service. Most Christian **liturgies**, or structured public worship, include readings from the Hebrew Scriptures and often a sung portion of a psalm. Christians honor the Ten Commandments and some of the Mosaic laws. Like Jews, Christians read the Bible as their own spiritual history.

projects

Choose one of these research projects to learn more about the Jewish traditions of reading and studying the Hebrew Scriptures.

1. Write a biographical sketch of one of the Jewish scholars listed below. Be sure to include how the Hebrew Scriptures affected his life and work.
 - a. Rashi (1040–1105)
 - b. Maimonides (1135–1204)
 - c. Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786)
2. Write a description of one major Jewish festival. Include the following in your description.
 - a. The origin of the festival
 - b. How the Hebrew Scriptures are used
 - c. When it is celebrated
 - d. What family traditions are associated with it

*Unit Feature***Biblical Allusions**

Everybody uses allusions. Allusions, simply stated, are bits of shorthand that aid communications. In your daily conversation, you no doubt refer to the music you are listening to, the celebrities from movies or television, the computer games you play as points of reference in your conversation. If you hear the question, "Who does she think she is, Oprah Winfrey?" You factor everything that you know about Oprah into your understanding of what was asked. "The next time he does that, we are voting him off the island." That sentence reminds you of a popular reality program that pitted people against one another in a contrived survival game.

Down through the centuries, the Bible has proven a very important source of allusions. These allusions are sprinkled liberally throughout literature, art, music, and even the daily news. If you were reading Robert Penn Warren's book *All the King's Men*, you would find a reference to Saul on the road to Damascus. If you didn't know that account, you would miss the author's meaning. (A Jewish student might be wondering what the first King of the Jewish people was doing on that road.) You might recognize the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But do you know that Adam and Eve's son Cain was the one who asked the question?

A RICHER UNDERSTANDING OF LITERATURE

Biblical allusions can signal an interpretive framework for either an entire work or a specific aspect of it. In composing *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare developed his plot by constantly reminding us of parallel actions in the Bible, including Jezebel's urging, planning, and helping to execute a crime to gain something for her husband, of Pilate's futilely washing his hands in false innocence, of King Herod's slaughter of the innocents, of King Saul, a doomed king near death consulting a witch. Shakespeare sets the play in a world reminiscent of the narratives of Hebrew Scriptures where evil could taint the whole nation and of pictures of moral and natural collapse in the Book of Revelation. Macbeth's famous "Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow" soliloquy is a mosaic of biblical allusions.

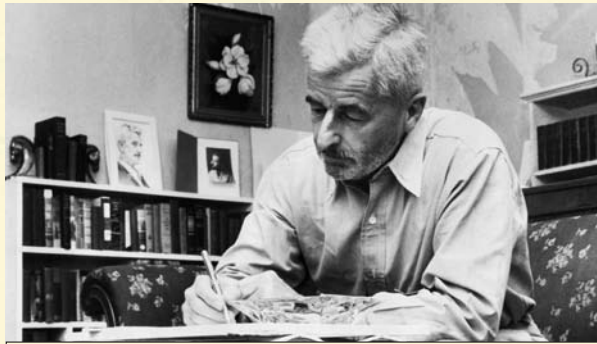
When William Faulkner wrote a novel about the death of a person's dreams set in the culture of the Deep South, he entitled the book *Absalom, Absalom!* By alluding to King David's fatherly lament over the loss of his son in a saga of death, violence, and tragic betrayal, Faulkner draws attention to the nature of his own narrative. The scholar Robert Alter called the novel "a story of primal sin, the tainting of an inheritance, the loss of a promised land, the violent twisting of the fraternal bone."

Allusions can be either straightforward and simple or hidden and more complex. In the more straightforward form, we see the seventeenth-century English poet John Donne began a sonnet "At the round earth's imagined corners, blow / Your trumpets, angels." What trumpets and angels are in view? The statement remains a mystery until we link it with the apocalyptic visions in the Book of Revelation where we read about "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth" (*Revelation 7.1 [NRSV]*) and about seven angels with trumpets who announce events in the end times (*Revelation 8*).

A more complex allusion goes beyond making a connection between the passage and its biblical text. In one of his sonnets, the seventeenth-century English poet John Milton spoke of his blindness as "one talent which is death to hide." Milton's talent was his poetic ability. He linked himself to the unprofitable servant with only one talent in Jesus' parable of the talents



If you come from a non-Western country or have a non-Western faith and you speak English, you still need to know the Bible. Look at Caravaggio's painting *David and Goliath* for example. If you hear "It was a contest as between David and Goliath," and you don't know who David and Goliath were, then you won't get the impact of what was said.



William Faulkner, the Nobel Prize-winning American writer (1897–1962), based the title of his 1936 novel *Absalom, Absalom!* on 2 Samuel 13–18, in which King David’s eldest son, Amnon, has incestual relations with his sister Tamar. In retribution, their brother Absalom kills Amnon. The title alludes specifically to 2 Samuel 18, in which David learns of Absalom’s death at the hand of Joab. A basic understanding of the plots in Second Samuel gives a reader a deeper understanding of Faulkner’s work.

(*Matthew 25:14–30*). By doing so, Milton expressed the depth of his despair and fear over the inactivity forced on him by his blindness. Yet, Milton did not make a simple equation between himself and the slothful servant of the parable, a story that is used to illustrate a

spiritual truth. Milton was only partly like the wicked servant. The servant chose to be unprofitable, while Milton’s blindness forced him to be inactive. Milton bent the allusion in the very next lines of his poem: “though *my* soul more bent / To serve therewith my Maker.”

You will stumble across biblical allusions everywhere. William Butler Yeats began one of his poems “I will arise and go now,” echoing the moment of the Prodigal Son’s resolve to go home in what is perhaps Jesus’ most widely known parable (*Luke 15:18*). When T. S. Eliot’s unfortunate J. Alfred Prufrock mused to himself what it might have been like to break out of his world of phony social trivialities, he imagined that it would have been like saying “I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all.” This is a double allusion—to the narrative of Lazarus coming back from the dead (*John 11:38–44*) and to the parable of another Lazarus in which a rich man who is suffering after death begged Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his brothers about the consequences of an uncaring life (*Luke 16:19–31*). You will also find these biblical allusions in movies such as *Apocalypse Now* and *The Matrix*, which drew heavily on biblical imagery.

*Adapted from Leland Ryken,
“The Literary Influence of the Bible,”
in A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*

BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN THE ENGLISH AP EXAM

A book designed to prepare students for the Advanced Placement Literature and Composition Exam lists “a profusion of allusions” that students should know. Sixty percent of the allusions listed are biblical and each is defined in the book’s glossary.

Abraham and Isaac	Eye for an eye	Joseph in Egypt	Noah and the flood
Absalom	Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse	Judas Iscariot	Pharisees
Armageddon	Garden of Gethsemane	Know them by their fruits	Philistines
Blind leading the blind	Good Samaritan	Lamb to the slaughter	Pontius Pilate
Burning bush	Grail or Holy Grail	Last Supper	Prodigal Son
By bread alone	Heap coals of fire	Lazarus	Rachel and Leah
Cain and Abel	Herod	Lilies of the field	Ruth
Camel through a needle’s eye	House has many mansions	Lion lies down with the lamb	Salome
Cast the first stone	Isaac	Loaves and fishes	Sermon on the Mount
Cast bread upon the waters	Jacob	Lot	Sodom and Gomorrah
Conversion of Saul	Jacob and Esau	Lot’s wife	Solomon
Crucifixion	Jacob’s ladder	Magi	Swords into ploughshares
Daniel	Jephthah’s daughter	Mammon	Thirty pieces of silver
David and Bathsheba	John the Baptist	Mary Magdalene	Through a glass darkly
David and Goliath	Jonah	Mary the Virgin	Tower of Babel
Divide the sheep from the goats	Joseph and his brothers	Massacre of the innocents	
	Joseph and Potiphar’s wife	Moses	
		Nebuchadnezzar’s dream	

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