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## The name Israel: Summary

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### Meaning

He Retains God

God Is Upright

### Etymology

From (1) the verb שרה (*sara*), to become rigid from the retention of liquidity, and (2) the word אל (*'el*), God.

From (1) the verb ישר (*yashar*), to be upright, and (2) the word אל (*'el*), God.

### Related names

- Via שרה (*sara*): Sarah, Sarai, Serah, Seraiah, Shamsherai, Sharar
- Via ישר (*yashar*): Ahishar, Asarel, Asher, Asherah, Asriel, Asshur, Asshurim, El-Elohe-Israel, Jashar, Asharelah-Jesharelah, Jeshar, Jeshurun, Sharon, Sherebiah, Shiloh, Syria, Telassar
- Via אל (*'el*): See the 'browse by form' menu for a long list of *'el*-names.

## The name Israel in the Bible

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Israel is the name given to **Jacob** during his encounter with the Angel of God at the river **Jabbok** (Genesis 32:28). His older twin brother's name is **Esau**, his parents are **Isaac** and **Rebekah** (Genesis 25), and his grandparents are **Abraham** and Sarah. The nation of Israel came from four matriarchs — **Leah** and her servant **Zilpah**, Leah's sister **Rachel** and her servant **Bilhah** — and their twelve sons would become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel:

- Israel's first born son is **Reuben** (Genesis 29:32). His mother is Leah. Reuben forfeits his station of first-born son when he sleeps with Bilhah, the mother of his two half-brothers **Dan** and **Naphtali** (35:22).
- Israel's second son is **Simeon**, also with Leah (29:33). Simeon forfeits his prominence when he and his brother **Levi** revenge the rape of their sister **Dinah** by **Shechem** the son of **Hamor** the **Hivite** (34:2), by killing every male living in the city of Hamor (34:25).
- Israel's third son is **Levi**, also with Leah (29:34). He also forfeits his prominence, along with his brother Simeon.
- Israel's fourth son is **Judah** (29:35). Due to the crimes of his three older brothers, Judah rises to prominence. The land of Judah is central to Israel, and the capital of Israel, **Jerusalem**, was situated in Judah. King **David** was from Judah, and **Joseph**, the father-by-law of **Jesus** was from Judah as well. By the time of Jesus, the name Judah has been applied to the **Roman** province of **Judea**, and the Israelites who made it out of the **Babylonian** exile became collectively known as **Jews**, meaning those of Judea.
- The fifth son of Israel is **Dan** (30:6). His mother is Bilhah, the servant of Rachel (30:4).

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- Israel's seventh son is **Gad** (30:11). Gad's mother is Zilpah, the servant of Leah (30:9).
- Israel's eighth son is Asher (30:13). Asher's mother is Zilpah as well.
- Israel's ninth son is **Issachar**, Leah's fifth son (30:18).
- Israel's tenth son is **Zebulun**, Leah's sixth son (30:20).
- Israel's eleventh child is a girl. Her name is Dinah and her mother is Leah (30:21).
- Israel's eleventh son is Joseph. His mother is Rachel (30:24). In time, the tribe of Joseph breaches in two sub-tribes, named after Joseph's two sons **Ephraim** and **Manasseh**. Their mother's name is **Asenath** (41:50-52).
- Israel's twelfth son is **Ben-oni** or **Benjamin** (35:18).

The name Israel appears also frequently in the New Testament, 78 times in 12 of the 27 books (all four Gospels, Acts, the **Pauline** epistles and Revelation — [SEE THE FULL NEW TESTAMENT CONCORDANCE](#)). In **Greek**, Israel is spelled Ἰσραηλ, and the ethnonym Israelite in Greek is spelled Ἰσραηλιτης. The latter appears 9 times.

## Etymology of the name Israel

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The meaning of the name Israel is not clear, but yet it's huge. The meaning of Israel is not singular and distinct, but consists of many nuances and facets and bulges with theological significance.

Judging from Genesis 32:28, the form ישראל (Israel) appears to be a compilation of two elements. The final one is the noun אל (**El**), the common abbreviation of **Elohim**, meaning God:

Excerpted from: Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary

אל אלה

In names אל (*'el*) usually refers to אלהים (*'elohim*), that is Elohim, or God, also known as אלה (*'eloah*). In English, the words 'God' and 'god' exclusively refer to the deity but in **Hebrew** the words אל (*'l*) and אלה (*'lh*) are far more common and may express approach and negation, acts of wailing and pointing, and may even mean oak or terebinth.

— See the full Dictionary article —

The second part of our name appears to be related to the verb שרה I (*sara*):

Excerpted from: Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary

שרר

Root שרר (*sharar*) has to do with rigidity resulting from the absorption and retention of liquids (called turgor in plants), liquidity in economy, or data in IT and so on — and the ultimate effects thereof. The promise of **Jesus'**, that streams of living water would emerge from within (John 7:38), tells of a curing of social lymphedema, when pools of stagnant wealth (whether fat, cash or data) are re-released into society to benefit all (for more on this, see our article on the noun δουλος, *doulos*).

Noun שר (*sar*) means chief or ruler (someone in whom a society's wealth is concentrated). Its feminine form, שרה (*sara*), denotes a princess, noble lady or perhaps a ruling class collectively. The denominative verb שרר (*sarar*) means to be a chief.

This article is the formally copyrighted property of Abarim Publications (Library of Congress/ US umbilical cord and noun שרה (*shera*) to a bracelet of some sort. Noun שריר (*sharir*) apparently denotes a sinew or muscle.

Mystery verb שרה (*sara*) is used only to describe what **Jacob** did with the Angel (Genesis 32:29 and Hosea 12:4). It's traditionally been translated as "to wrestle," but it obviously metaphorizes Israel's formation into a political unity based on the retention of knowledge and skills. Derived noun משרה (*misra*) literally means "place or agent of שרה (*sara*)." It occurs only in the famous prediction that "the *misra* will be upon his shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6).

Verb שרה (*shara*) means to fill and release. Noun משרה (*mishra*) denotes the juice of grapes. Noun שריה (*shirya*) denotes a kind of weapon and noun שריון (*shiryon*) or שרין (*shiryan*) describes body armor — the link between physical, political and intellectual rigidity is obvious (see Ephesians 6:14).

— See the full Dictionary article —

However, even though Genesis 32:28 uses the enigmatic verb שרה — which is assumed to mean to struggle but which might something else entirely — it's by no means certain that this verb is etymologically linked to our name Israel. When we say, "we named him Bob because that seemed like a good idea," we certainly don't mean to say that the name Bob means "good idea".

The first part of the name Israel looks a lot like the verb שרה that explains this name, but this apparent link is possibly a mere case of word-play. In fact, the name Israel may have more to do with the verb ישר (*yashar*), meaning to be upright. Note that the difference between the letter ש (*sin*) as found in the name ישראל (Israel) and the letter ש (*shin*) as found in the verb ישר (*yashar*) didn't exist in Biblical times and as it was invented more than a thousand years after the Bible was written:

Excerpted from: Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary

## ישר אשר

Verb ישר (*yashar*) means to be straight or level. Adjective ישר (*yashar*) means right or upright. Nouns ישר (*yosher*), ישרה (*yeshara*) and מישר (*meshar*) mean uprightness or straightness. Noun מישור (*mishor*) describes a level place or plain.

Verb אשר (*'ashar*) covers a decisive progression or a setting right, and is often applied to describe happiness and prosperity (*right on!*). This is not due to a curious coincidence but to the obvious correlation of righteousness and efficiency. Righteousness in the Biblical sense describes a solid grasp of natural law, which leads to high levels of technology, social liquidity and thus peace and prosperity.

Nouns אשר (*'asher*), אשר (*'ashar*) and אשר (*'osher*) mean happiness or blessedness. Nouns אשר (*ashur*) and אשר (*ashur*) mean a step, a walk or a going. The noun תאשור (*te'ashur*) refers to a kind of tree (a happy tree? a progressing tree?).

The relative particle אשר (*asher*) means who or which, and may or may not be related to the previous (but probably does).

— See the full Dictionary article —

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Alfred Jones figures that the mysterious verb שרה might very well mean "to be princely," and assumes that the name Israel consists of a future form of this verb, which hence would mean to become princely. And so Jones interprets the name Israel with **He Will Be Prince With God**.

Here at [Abarim Publications](#), our contention is that the mystery verb שרה doesn't mean struggle at all, but rather reflects an ability to retain what normally is fluidic.

The history of Israel is of course not the religious history of some elite race but rather the history of information technology within the larger history of science. It tells of the world-wide effort to understand the natural world ([ROMANS 1:20](#), 1 Kings 4:33) and to store data in symbols, starting with nouns and names (Genesis 2:19; see our article on the noun ονομα, *onoma*). The latter effort in turn culminated in the development of the [Aramaic Hebraic](#) alphabet, which in the Bible is told as the building of the "Temple of YHWH" by [Solomon](#) and [Hiram](#). In the New Testament this Temple became known as the Word in the Flesh, "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" ([COLOSSIANS 2:3](#)).

Our guess: Israel means **He Retains God**, or slightly more elaborate: **He Has Become A Receptacle In Which God Can Be Received And Retained**. This most primary Biblical concept was obviously revisited in the story of the manger in which the Word was received.

Pretty awesome name.

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