

## GLOSSARY

**agora**—an open area in a Greek city, used as a marketplace and a location for public assemblies.

**amphora** (plural, “amphorae”)—an ancient Greek or Roman jar having a tall shape, two handles, and a narrow neck.

**artifact**—any manmade object that provides information about an ancient culture.

**autograph**—the original copy of a manuscript in the author’s own handwriting.

**Black Obelisk**—a dark limestone sculpture inscribed with a record of the deeds of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III, who reigned 860–825 B.C.

**bullae** (plural, “bullae”)—a piece of clay used as a seal to identify ownership and make a document or parcel tamper-proof.

**codex** (plural, “codices”)—an ancient manuscript bound in book form.

**Coptic**—Coptic or Coptic Egyptian is the latest stage of the Egyptian language.

**cuneiform**—an ancient writing system using wedge-shaped characters; an inscription made with such letters. This kind of writing was used in ancient Mesopotamia, Persia, and Ugarit.

**Dead Sea Scrolls**—a collection of documents, including early reproductions of biblical books, discovered in the caves of Qumran.

**Elephantine**—an island between Egypt and Nubia, home to a community of Jews who built a temple to God there about the fifth century B.C.

**eponym**—a person after whom a discovery, invention, or place is named or thought to be named. In Assyria, officials’ names were given to the years. This list was the foundation of the chronology of ancient Assyria. Two parts of this list from Nineveh and other cities are extant, covering the beginning of the second millennium B.C. and the years 858–699 B.C.

**excavation**—the careful process of unearthing and cataloging items at ancient ruins.

**Execration Texts**—Egyptian listings of enemies of the pharaoh. Written on statues, bowls, or blocks of clay or stone, these were ceremonially broken and then buried as a symbol of ill will toward those named.

**fibula** (plural, “fibulae”)—a brooch or clasp.

**frieze**—a wide picture produced by sculpting or painting a scene, usually displayed high on a wall.

**geniza**—a storage area, as in a Jewish synagogue or cemetery, where worn-out written materials are stored until they can be disposed of properly.

**Gnostic, Gnosticism**—from the Greek word γνῶσις (*gnōsis*, “knowledge”), this heretical philosophy involved a claim to special understanding of the spiritual world and the shunning of the material world. The de-emphasis of the physical resulted in a denial that Jesus Christ literally lived in the flesh.

**Habiru** (Hapiru)—probably a social class, rather than an ethnic group, these widespread people existed as early as the twentieth century B.C. and may have included the Israelites. They lived away from their native homes, and some became soldiers or slaves in the service of foreign kings.

**hapax**—from *hapax legomenon* (literally, “to say once”), a term which occurs only once.

**Horites**—the descendants of Seir, who inhabited the land around Mount Seir (the mountain range in which Mount Hor is the highest peak). These people were dispossessed of the land by Esau, whose descendants were the Edomites (Gen. 36:8; Deut. 2:12, 22).

**Hurrians**—Bronze Age, non-Semitic settlers in the region that is now Iraq, Syria, and Turkey; they have been associated with the Hivites and with the Horites, but their identity is uncertain. Their conquests were extensive in Upper Mesopotamia, and they have been credited with introducing the horse and chariot into the ancient world.

**Hyksos**—Canaanite rulers in Egypt about the seventeenth century B.C.

**iconography**—drawings or figures that illustrate a subject; the study of such drawings.

**inscription**—writing on a monument, tablet, or pottery, achieved with a sharp utensil.

**khirbe** (or khirbet)—an ancient ruin; the mound left by one or more civilizations on a particular site; a tell or tel.

**lacuna** (plural, “lacunae”)—a gap or missing portion in a manuscript.

**locus** (plural, “loci”)—an anticipated archaeological site or portion of an active excavation; a center of cultural activity.

**minuscule**—a cursive manuscript.

**mole**—a massive wall, usually stone, constructed in the sea to serve as a breakwater and/or to enclose or protect an anchorage or a harbor; the area enclosed by such a structure.

**Nuzi** (modern-day Yorghhan Tepe in Iraq)—an important excavation site where archaeologists have found tablets and maps from the Hurrians.

**ossuary**—a burial box in which bones were placed about a year after the original burial, once the flesh of the deceased had decayed. Some of the boxes that have been found were elaborately decorated and contained the bones of multiple skeletons.

**ostrakon** (plural, “ostraca”)—a potsherd (“sherd” or “shard”) used as a writing surface.

**P**—refers to a papyrus fragment. Every papyrus is listed in *Nestle- Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, with notations such as P45.

**palimpsest**—a reused writing surface.

**papyrus** (plural, “papyri”)—an early paper; a writing material woven from the pressed fibers of the papyrus plant.

**potsherd**—a broken piece of pottery.

**Q**—stands for “Qumran” and is used in identifying the manuscripts found there; for example, “1QpHab” means Cave 1 at Qumran, a pesher (or commentary) manuscript concerning the Book of Habakkuk.

**Qumran** (Khirbet Qumran)—a place in the Judean desert near the Dead Sea known for its rough terrain and caves; the site associated with an Essene settlement of the second century B.C. and the location where the famous Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

**recension**—a revised edition of a text.

**regnal year**—a year counted from the date of a king’s accession to the throne.

**relief**—a piece of art produced by a technique of molding, carving, or stamping so that the design stands out from the surface.

**seal**—a device for making an impression in a soft surface such as wet clay or wax to indicate ownership or authenticity. Ancient seals were made of bone, ivory, stone, or wood and imprinted names or designs that provide insight into ancient language and culture.

**Sahidic**—a Coptic dialect of Upper Egypt.

**Semites**—ews; the people originating from Shem, the son of Noah; speakers of a Semitic language, such as Arabic, Phoenician, or ancient Hebrew.

**stamp**—a piece of stone, metal, or other material carved to press a single image into clay or wax.

**stele** (or stela)—a stone slab or column bearing an inscription or relief design, sometimes commemorating a victory.

**stoa**—a classical portico or roofed colonnade.

**stratum** (plural, “strata”)—a level or layer in an excavation site, generally from one distinct period of occupancy.

**syncretism**—the blending of religious practices, as the Israelites sometimes tried to incorporate the customs of idol worship in their worship of God.

**tell** (sometimes “tel”)—a mound formed by the accumulated remains of an ancient settlement; an excavation site.

**theophoric name**—a name having the name of God or a pagan god embedded in it. The Scriptures contain personal names with “El” for God used as a suffix, such as “Samuel,” “Daniel,” “Immanuel,” and “Michael.” Theophoric place names include “Bethel.” Personal names honoring pagan gods include “Ethbaal” for Baal and “Demetrius” for Demeter.

**uncial**—(adjective) of a style of writing characterized by rounded capital letters and found especially in Greek and Latin manuscripts of the fourth to the eighth centuries A.D.; (noun) a manuscript written with such letters. Modern capital letters are derived from this writing style.

**wadi**—a ditch, ravine, or other channel that is dry except in the rainy season, when it becomes a river.