

Azazel is attested in earlier apocryphal and mystical/magical texts (1 *Enoch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and 3 *Enoch*) and in later kabbalistic sources. Especially important is the prominent role accorded Azazel in the medieval anthology, *Sefer ha-Zohar*, as the personification of the force of the Other Side (*sitra aḥra*), the demonic realm that parallels the divine. Following an older tradition (PRE, ch. 48), in the zoharic context Azazel is also associated with Samael, the archon of Esau, a metaphorical trope for Christianity.

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III. Islam

There is no reference to the name Azazel or an equivalent in the Qurʾān, but Muslim commentators mention it in the form ʿAzāzīl as the name of the devil before his fall.

The major commentators al-Ṭabarī (d. 935) and al-Qurṭubī (d. 1272) both cite a tradition to this effect from the early commentator ʿAbdallāh Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 687–88) on S2:34, the story of the creation of Adam. When God commands the angels to prostrate to the newly formed Adam they all obey except Iblīs: “He refused and was haughty; he was of those who reject faith.” According to al-Ṭabarī, Ibn ʿAbbās says that Iblīs, whose original name was ʿAzāzīl, had been one of the most active and knowledgeable of the angels. He lived on the earth, and it was this that attracted him to haughtiness. Al-Qurṭubī adds that he had been one of the “four flanking angels,” and that his name had also been al-Ḥārith (Arab. “the collector of property”). Nowhere do they offer an explanation of the meaning of the name.

The intention behind these explanations is clearly to emphasize the devil’s fall from the highest position in God’s favour to that of a renegade. His names after his rebellion are *Shayṭān rajīm*, “rejected (literally ‘stoned’) evil one” (S3:36, cf. 15:34), and Iblīs, “hopeless one,” (e.g., S7:11; 27:95), which is explained within the Islamic tradition as a derivation from the passive verb form *ubliṣa*, “he was rendered without hope” (but is almost certainly a contraction of the Greek διάβολος). He is no longer known by his own name ʿAzāzīl, and it is barely remembered.

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David Thomas

See also → Atonement; → Expiation; → Goat;
→ Scapegoat

Azaziah

The name Azaziah (MT ʿĀzazyāhū) probably means “YHWH is strong,” and there are three individuals who bear this name.

1. The Lyrst

Azaziah was a Levitical lyrst who accompanied the procession when David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:21; LXX Οζζιας) from the house of Obed-edom.

2. Father of Hoshea

Azaziah was the father of Hoshea, who was chief officer over the Ephraimites during David’s rule (1 Chr 27:20; LXX Οζζιας).

3. The Overseer

Azaziah was one of 10 men appointed by King Hezekiah and Azariah, his chief officer of the temple, to assist the Levites Conaniah and his brother Shimei in overseeing the contributions, tithes, and dedicated things (2 Chr 31:13; LXX Οζζιας).

J. P. Kang

Azbuk

The meaning of the name Azbuk (MT ʿAzḇūq; LXX Αζαβουq) is uncertain, although some scholars suggest “(the god) Buq is strong.” However, Buq is otherwise unattested as a divine name.

In Neh 3:16, Azbuk is the father of Nehemiah (not to be confused with the eponymous character of the book), who was ruler of one-half of the *pelek* (district or work group) of Beth-Zur, and responsible for rebuilding part of the wall of Jerusalem following the Babylonian exile.

David Janzen

Azekah

Azekah (MT ʿzq = “dug ground”) is a biblical place in the lowland hills of Judah (the Shephelah) identified with Tell Zakariyeh (map reference 143.123). The site commands the northwest approach to the Vale of Elah and sits atop the peak of a ridge that extends southward, terminating at Tell el-Judeideh, near Beit Jibrin/Eleutheropolis. This ridge effectively creates a north-south passage that interconnects the Aijalon Valley in the north with the Vale of Elah and the Wadi Jibrin in the south. The site holds a prominent view over the lowland hills, and it is possible to see the central highlands of Judah along the eastern horizon as well as the plain of Philistia to the west.

1. Archaeology. Tell Zakariyeh was excavated as part of a regional study by F.J. Bliss and R.A.S. Macalister at the end of the 19th century (Bliss/Macalister; Stern: 124). The excavators distinguished four main periods, which have since been revised (Albright: 30–31; Stern: 124). Among the small-finds from the Late Bronze Age (the excavator’s “Late Pre-Israelite”) are two scarab seals, with the names Thutmose III and Amenhotep II respec-

tively. The principle architectural remains consist of a rectangular fortress, which dates to the Iron Age ("Jewish period"), as well as rock-cut tombs and several towers that the excavators dated to the late Roman and Byzantine periods. The fortress, which is built with six towers (with one at each corner), was dated by the excavators to the time of Rehoboam on the basis of 2 Chr 11:9. The architectural plan, however, more closely follows Iron IIC fortification plans, such as those of Arad and Kadesh-Barnea (Stern: 124). The presence of *lmlk* ("belonging to the king") seal impressions in periods B and C of the fortress suggest a *terminus ad quem* of 701 BCE. The series of three towers that flanked the southwestern periphery of the tell might also date to the Iron Age. Bliss and Macalister excavated the foundations of the towers (averaging 6–6.5 m in length) and assigned them to the Byzantine period due to surface remains. The vestige of a retaining wall that connected the towers, however, may indicate that the "Byzantine towers" were in fact a revetment wall similar to the architectural feature found on the northwest corner of Tell ed-Duweir (Lachish) that dates to Lachish Level III (Monson: 141–42). The theories regarding the date of the ruins will remain speculative until further archaeological work is conducted on the site.

2. Biblical and Extra-Biblical Sources. Azekah first appears in the Bible in Josh 10, where it is mentioned in the description of the retreating Amorite kings. The five defeated kings were routed on the ascent of Beth-horon and fled (via the Aijalon Valley) "as far as Azekah and Makkedah" (Josh 10:10). Azekah also appears in the tribal city-list of Judah, where it is found in the second district along with Jarmuth, Adullam and Socoh (Josh 15:35; see Aharoni et al.: 105). All of these settlements are located in or near the Vale of Elah. In 1 Sam 17:1, both Azekah and Socoh are mentioned in the description of the Philistine and Israelite war camps in the Vale of Elah (Rainey/Notley: 147). According to the Chronicler, Rehoboam fortified Azekah along with several other cities in Judah (2 Chr 11:9). Because archaeological remains of defensive works from the time of Rehoboam are lacking at Tell Zakariyeh, some scholars date this list to Hezekiah (Na'aman 1986). This historical interpretation is uncertain (cf. Rainey/Notley: 169–70), however epigraphic remains from the site lend support to an 8th-century BCE date (Stern). These remains, 18 seal impressions that read *lmlk* ("belonging to the king"), are related to the reign of Hezekiah (Vaughn: 191). Additionally, an Assyrian text that describes the siege and capture of Azekah (*A-za-qa-a* in Akkadian) should be attributed to Sennacherib and his 701 BCE invasion (Zukerman and Shai), offering further insight into the settlement during the reign of Hezekiah (Hallo: 2.119D). A little over a century later, Jeremiah describes Azekah and La-

chish as among the last remaining cities of Judah during the Babylonian conquest (Jer 34:7). A Hebrew ostraca found at Lachish and dated to the end of the monarchy (ca. 586) offers a parallel to the passage in Jeremiah, as it records military reconnaissance regarding the two cities ("Lachish Letter 4"; see Hallo: 3.42C). This letter reports that signal fires were observed at Lachish, but not at Azekah.

In the Persian period, Azekah is mentioned as a settlement where the people of Yehud dwelt (Neh 11:30). Archaeological remains attest to the continued existence of the settlement in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. During the Byzantine period, Eusebius places Azekah between Eleutheropolis and Jerusalem (*Onom.* 18:10). The Madaba Map, however, does not depict Azekah, but shows the town of Beth Zakariyeh in the general vicinity of Azekah, representing the shift of the settlement from the tell to nearby Khirbet al-'Almi in later antiquity (Stern: 124).

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Azel

The name Azekah (MT אֶזֶקָה; LXX Εσηλ) occurs six times in the Bible, all in 1 Chr 8–9, and refers to a descendant of Saul through his son Jonathan. The name may mean "noble," as in the noun אֶזֶל. In the Talmud (*bPes* 62b), the name Azekah appears twice ("Between Azekah and Azek"), in reference to the text of 1 Chr 8:38–9:44, which he describes as "laden with four camel loads of exegetical interpretation," perhaps a reference to the popularity of allegorical interpretations of biblical genealogies in late antiquity.

In 1 Chr 8:29–38 and 9:35–44, a genealogy linking Saul and Jonathan to Azekah appears twice, in the first instance connecting Saul's genealogy to Gibeon and to the tribe of Benjamin and in the second providing a transition into chapter 10 and its account of Saul's death. In both genealogies, the sons of Azekah belong to the last named generation, suggesting the genealogy was composed during their lifetimes, likely during the 6th century BCE near the beginning of the Babylonian exile.