

enclosures – in which Deut 2:23 says the Avvim lived. At present, however, this is only a possibility.

## 2. Town of Benjamin

A place name or gentilic indicating a people belonging to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh 18:23). It is probably not to be associated with the *ʿAwwīm* of Deut 2:23 or Josh 13:3, where the term refers to the pre-Philistine inhabitants of the south-western littoral of Canaan. Some have associated these Avvim (the term occurs with the definite article, suggesting it is probably a gentilic) with the inhabitants of either Ai or Aiath, hence “the Ai-ites” or “the Aiath-ites,” a tantalizing possibility, since neither is on the town list in Josh 18:23.

**Bibliography:** ■ Boling, R., *Joshua* (Anchor Bible 6; Garden City, N.Y. 1982). [Esp. 338] ■ Gophna, R./L. Singer-Avitz “Iron Age Settlements to the West of Tel Beer-Sheba,” in *Beer-Sheba II* (ed. Z. Herzog; Tel Aviv 1984) 125–31. ■ Weinfeld, M., *Deuteronomy 1–11* (Anchor Bible 5; New York 1991). ■ Nelson, R., *Joshua* (OTL; Louisville, Ky. 1997). [Esp. 166]

R. Mark Shipp

## Avvites

→ Avva, Avvites

## Awan

Third child of Adam and Eve, sister and wife of Cain, and mother of Enoch, according to *Jub.* 4:1, 9.

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## Awe

→ Amazement, Awe

## Awl

The Hebrew word rendered “awl” in most English translations of Exod 21:6 and Deut 15:17 (MT *marṣēaʿ*) refers to a sharp implement used to pierce the ear of Hebrew slaves who forego manumission to become slaves in perpetuity. In contrast to Middle Assyrian laws that stipulate the piercing of the ear of slaves – presumably to be followed by the wearing of some visible marker of their status – as punishment for rebellion, the practice in the biblical texts in question is a voluntary rite of passage. The rite takes place at the entrance to the master’s house, with the slave declaring love for the master, thus signalling permanent acceptance into the household. Deut 15:17 makes it clear that the piercing is made of the ear and the doorpost. There is nothing in these texts that indicates to whose benefit such marking of the slave was intended. The

passages imply that it is for the slave. If so, the piercing was intended as a reminder to the slave that he or she is supposed to “give ear” to the master.

**Bibliography:** ■ Hurowitz, V., “His Master Shall Pierce His Ear with an Awl (Exod 21:6),” *PAAJR* 58 (1992) 47–77.

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## Awlād al-ʿAssāl

→ Sons of al-ʿAssāl

## Awning

The Hebrew term translating as “awning” in Ezek 27:7 (*mēkassēh*) appears three other times in the Bible in reference to the covering of entrails (Lev 9:19), worms covering a corpse (Isa 14:11), and clothing (23:18). The term in Ezekiel is juxtaposed with the “sail” and “ensign” of a ship, thus some sort of covering over the deck, presumably to provide shelter from the sun and rain, a brightly colored awning of “blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah.” That usage seems very similar to the term *mikseh*, with is used for the covering of Noah’s ark (Gen 8:13), which like the ship of Ezek 27, was a nautical vessel, but also the covering of the tabernacle (Exod 26:14; 35:11, etc.). Hence, many scholars repoint *mēkassēk* to read *miksēk*. Whatever the pointing, the meaning of the term seems clear; it refers to a covering over the deck.

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## Axe

The Bible refers to iron axes (MT *garzen*, *qardōm*, *magzērā*, *barzel*; LXX ἄξις/ἄξιν, πέλις) employed in agricultural (e.g., Deut 19:5) and military contexts (e.g., Deut 20:19; Judg 9:48; Ps 74:5). Axes also appear in various ancient Near Eastern iconographic contexts, e.g., being wielded by warrior gods such as Melqart (the Melqart Stele, Breidj, ca. 800 BCE [Aleppo Museum]) and it is clear that they were used as weapons by soldiers of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt.

No distinction is made between axes used in agricultural activities and those used as weapons. Indeed, 1 Sam 13:20–21 highlights these two uses of axes; the account describes axes, along with other agricultural implements, being sharpened in preparation for battle. Even when an axe is mentioned in the context of agriculture, its danger to humans remains in the forefront. Thus, when an iron axe-head (*barzel*, lit., “iron”) slips off the wooden haft, someone is killed (Deut 19:5). Another, less deadly, account of an uncoupled axe appears in 2 Kgs 6:6–7 in which someone entreats Elisha to recover a borrowed axe-head from the Jordan River, the “iron”

having presumably flown off the haft during a swing. Elisha retrieves it by throwing a stick into the water and causing the iron to swim miraculously to the stick. In this context, the loss of the axe-head caused grave concern, no doubt because iron was prohibitively expensive at that time – in the 9th century BCE.

The *garzen*, most often rendered “axe” in modern translations, refers to a range of iron implements such as mattocks, adzes, and pickaxes. 1 Kings 6:7 describes the *garzen* as a tool for shaping stones for the temple in Jerusalem. Likewise, the 8th-century BCE Siloam Inscription lists the *garzen* as a tool used for removing stone and dirt in the building of Hezekiah’s tunnel (cf. Hallo: 28).

Two gospel texts describe the preaching of John the Baptizer, in which John likens the judgment of God to an axe poised at the root of a tree that does not bear good fruit (Matt 3:10; Luke 3:9). This image of the axe as an instrument of God’s judgment persists in Christian iconography and is commonly associated with John the Baptizer. For example, on the ivory polyptych of John Grandisson (London: British Museum; MLA 1861 4–16 2), John the Baptizer appears in the center of a pane flanked by two small trees, one of which has an axe lying at its root. Another example is found in the 13th-century nave of the cathedral of Notre Dame at Reims, with its sculpture of John the Baptizer pointing to the axe at the base of a barren tree.

Irenaeus’ mode of allegorical interpretation allowed for an integral connection between the preaching of John the Baptizer and the miracle of the floating axe-head (2 Kgs 6:6). Irenaeus understood the axe-head to be the “Word of God” on the basis of Jer 23:29, where LXX renders MT *paṭṭîš* (“hammer”) as *πέλυξ* (“axe”): “Are not my words like a burning fire, says the Lord, and like an axe cutting the rock?” Thus, speaking of Elisha’s miracle, Irenaeus writes: “By this action the prophet pointed out that the sure word of God [i.e., the axe head], which we had negligently lost by means of a tree, and were not in the way of finding again, we should receive anew by the dispensation of a tree” (*Haer.* 5.17.4 [ANFa 1: 545]). The “tree” to which Irenaeus twice refers is a remarkably complex image, referring first to the axe haft and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and then to the stick thrown in the water and the cross of Christ.

**Bibliography:** ■ Bonnet, C., “Melqart,” in *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden). [Forthcoming] ■ Fretz, M. J., “Weapons and Instruments of Warfare,” ABD 6 (New York 1992) 893–95. ■ Hallo, W. W. (ed.), COS 2 (Leiden et al. 2000). [Esp. 28]

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## Axial Age

The Axial Age (*die Achsenzeit*) is the label Karl Jaspers conferred upon the period of unprecedented hu-

man creativity from 800 to 200 BCE, when the philosophical and spiritual groundwork was laid for the world’s major civilizations and religious traditions, including those from which the HB and NT originated. China produced Confucius and Laozi, and the philosophical schools of Mozi, Zhuangzi, and Liezi. In India, the Upaniṣads were formed, the Buddha Gautama and Mahāvīra appeared, and the *Bhagavadgītā* was written. In Greece lived the philosophers Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the great tragic dramatists, the historian Thucydides, and the mathematician Archimedes. And in the Near East, foreshadowed by Elijah and Elisha (9th cent. BCE), the Latter Prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah (8th cent. BCE), through Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah (7th–6th cent. BCE), imprinted upon Hebrew religion a monotheistic stamp of ethical obligation that determined the subsequent development of Judaism, without which Christianity and Islam later would have been inconceivable. (Although Jaspers assumed that the Persian Zoroaster [Zarathushtra] lived within the Axial Age, more recent scholarship seems to indicate that he predated it.)

From the perspective of biblical studies, the Axial Age is significant not only as a pivotal historical concurrence of civilizational-cultural “break-throughs” around the world that allow the origination of the Bible (“a product of the Axial Age” [Armstrong: 38]) to be retrospectively construed in a “global,” comparative context, but also as the basis for John Hick’s philosophical-theological ascription of the “great” revelatory, prophetic experiences recorded in the Bible to the same single supernatural source that, according to Hick, also effected all those other contemporaneous shifts in cultures elsewhere around the world (excepting the cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt, northern Europe, and Mesoamerica).

Jaspers was not the first to recognize this worldwide simultaneity of civilizational transformations, all of which in one form or another involved a discovery of the “transcendent,” accompanied by “the perception of a sharp disjunction between the mundane and transmundane worlds” (Eisenstadt 1986: 3), and exhibiting a “soteriological” orientation (e.g., Hick 1989: ch. 2). In the previous century, Ernst von Lasaulx and Victor von Strauss had noted and tried to explain the same historical phenomenon. Lasaulx (115) averred that such a concurrence “could only be rooted in the inner unity of substance in the life of mankind and the life of peoples, on a vibration of the total life of humanity which passed through all peoples.” Strauss (lxiv) opined that it “probably [had] its roots ... in the total organism of mankind,” while it “presupposes the influence of a higher spiritual power.”

The period leading up to and encompassing World War II, and the subsequent onset of the Cold