

# Bethel

## Facts and information

### Bethel Meaning (Hebrew: ביתֵאֵל)

*House of God*

### Also known as

*Luz*

## Location



## Major Events that occur at Bethel

### The time of the Patriarchs

**Jacob dreams of a stairway, names the place Bethel**  
Jacob flees his brother Esau, heading to Harran. On the way, Jacob stops for a rest. He uses a stone for a pillow and while sleeping has a vision of a stairway reaching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending upon it. When he awakes he proclaims that place as the house of God (Bethel) and sets up his pillow stone as a pillar anointing it with oil in remembrance, and dedicating himself to the Lord.

[Genesis 28:10-22](#)

**God commands Jacob to settle at Bethel and build Him an Altar**

God commands Jacob to leave where he has pitched his tents (just outside Shechem), and settle in Bethel instead. He obeys.

[Genesis 35:1-7](#)

**God changes Jacob's name to Israel**

God appears to Jacob again at Bethel, blesses him, and tells him he will now be known as Israel. He repeats his promise to make him a great nation. Jacob sets up and anoints another stone pillar.

[Genesis 35:1-7](#)

### The time of the start of the conquest of the Promised Land

**Israelites takes over territory east of the Jordan**

The Israelites defeat many kings take over their land. This includes Bethel and its king.

[Joshua 12](#)

### The time of the Judges

**The tribes of Joseph attack and conquer Bethel**

The tribes of Joseph attacked Bethel, and the Lord was with them. They sent men to spy it out, and met a man coming out of the city. He showed them how to get into the city in order to spare him and his family. They then put the city to the sword.

[Judges 1:22-26](#)

**The Israelites enquire of the Lord about attacking the Benjamites inhabiting Gibeah**

After a horrifying incident in which a Levite stays overnight in Gibeah and allows his concubine to be raped until she dies of the abuse, the rest of the Israelites seek to punish the Benjamites living there and the clan of Benjamin as a whole for their part in it. After an initial failed attack the Israelites enquire of the Lord about which tribe should attack first in the new campaign.

[Judges 19-20](#)

**The Israelites grieve before the Lord over the incident at Gibeah**

When this conflict is finished, the other tribes of Israel gather at Bethel, raising their voices and weeping to the Lord over the violent conflict that occurred at Gibeah. They enquire as to why this horrible tragedy has occurred.

[Judges 21:1-2](#)

### The time of the Kings

**Samuel visited Bethel as part of a judging circuit**

After being used by the Lord to save Israel from the Israelites, Samuel goes on a regular circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel as he does.

[1 Samuel 7](#)

**King Jeroboam sets up a golden calf at Bethel**

In an attempt to keep the loyalty of his kingdom, King Jeroboam has two golden calves made, so the people of Israel could worship their gods without going to Jerusalem. One is set up in Dan, the other in Bethel. They are set up complete with priests and an altar.

[1 Kings 12:26-29](#)

**King Jeroboam institutes a festival at Bethel**

On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, Jeroboam offers sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel, instituting a festival for the Israelites.

[1 Kings 12:32-33](#)

**The Lord pronounces judgement on the altar at Bethel**

While Jeroboam is sacrificing on the altar, a prophet who came from Judah pronounces judgement against the altar and Jeroboam. Jeroboam orders the prophet be seized but his hand withers as he does so. Jeroboam pleads with the prophet to be healed, the man of God intercedes with the Lord, and the king's hand is restored.

[1 Kings 13:1-10](#)

**The prophet who pronounced judgement on Jeroboam is mauled to death by a lion**

The prophet heads back home from the altar at Bethel, only to be intercepted by another man of God who tricks him into eating with him, contrary to the command he had received from the Lord. The second man of God then pronounces judgement on the prophet for his disobedience. When the prophet leaves he is attacked and killed by a lion.

[1 Kings 13:11-33](#)

**King Abijah of Judah conquers part of Israel including the towns of Bethel**

King Jeroboam of Israel and King Abijah of Judah, who in war. Due to their faith in the Lord, he grants Judah victory in Israel. Includes taking possession of the towns and surrounding villages of Bethel.

[2 Chronicles 13](#)

**A man from Bethel rebuilds Jericho**

While Ahab was king of Israel, a man named Hiel, from Bethel, rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the prophecy of the Lord spoken by Joshua when Jericho was originally conquered and destroyed.

[1 Kings 16:34](#)

**Elijah travels to Bethel as part of his journey before he is taken to heaven by the Lord**

Shortly before he is taken to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah travels to Bethel and then Jericho with Elisha.

[2 Kings 2:1-12](#)

**Elisha is taunted by a group of boys at Bethel**

Early into his ministry Elisha travels to Bethel where he jeered at by a large group of boys. He calls down a curse on them in the name of the Lord which results in forty two of the boys being mauled by two bears.

[2 Kings 2:23-25](#)

### The time of the Assyrian exile

**An Israelite prophet is appointed by the king of Assyria to serve at Bethel**

The king of Assyria brings people from across his kingdom to settle in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They take over Samaria and live in its towns. When they first settle there, they do not worship the Lord; so he sends lions among them which kill some of the people. The king of Assyria hears about this and orders a captive Israelite priest to be appointed to teach the people what the Lord requires. He is stationed in Bethel.

[2 Kings 17:24-28](#)

**King Josiah has the burned ashes of idols sent to Bethel**

As part of his attempt to purge Judah of idol worship and lead the kingdom in a recommitment to worship of the one true Lord, Josiah commands all of the articles made for false gods that have been put in the temple of the Lord are burned, and their ashes taken to Bethel.

[2 Kings 23:4](#)

**King Josiah has the altar set up for idol worship located at Bethel destroyed**

As part of his attempt to purge Judah of idol worship and establish a recommitment to the Lord, King Josiah destroys the golden calf set up by Jeroboam.

[2 Kings 23:15](#)

### The time of return from exile

**The descendants of the Benjamites from Geba resettle in Bethel**

After King Artaxerxes decree allowing Nehemiah to rebuild the temple, those who were committed to returning to the land of Israel, and to worshipping the Lord resettle in Israel. The descendants of the Benjamites from Geba resettle throughout several parts of the land, including Bethel.

[Nehemiah 11](#)

**The Lord declares judgement on Bethel**

Throughout the years, the Lord declares that Bethel will be destroyed because of its part in corrupting the people of Israel and being a place where they engaged in serious idol worship.

[Hosea, Amos](#)

## Times mentioned in the Bible\*

### Old Testament

68

### New Testament

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\*These are all the explicit references mentioning the word Bethel

## In summary

Bethel was originally a place of great blessing, where God met with Jacob several times, and made a covenant with him to make him a great nation and bless him and his offspring.

However, due to the sin of Israel it became a place associated with idol worship and great sin against the Lord, leading to his pronouncement of judgement against it.