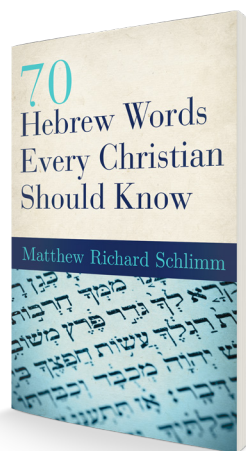


This is one example of a Hebrew word and its explanation from *70 Hebrew Words Every Christian Should Know* by Matthew Richard Schlimm.



The 70 Hebrew words presented in this book appear more than thirty thousand times in the Bible. They show up in nearly fifteen thousand verses. More than 60 percent of the verses in the Old Testament contain at least one of the seventy words included in this book. Learning these words help readers experience scripture in new and broader ways.

**Find out more and read the introduction at:
AbingdonPress.com/70HebrewWords.**

Babbling at Babel

In Genesis 11, readers learn of people's attempt to stay in one place and become famous by building a huge tower. The name of their city is usually translated "Babel," which matches the Hebrew fairly well:

	English	Hebrew	Hebrew Transliteration
3.	Babel, Babylon	בָּבֶל	<i>babel</i>

Losing Hebrew Sounds

This word appears over 250 times in the Bible. Aside from Genesis 10:10 and 11:9, it's always translated "Babylon." That's the name of the kingdom that conquered Jerusalem in 587 BCE and scattered segments of its population into exile where they were forced to learn new languages. Babylon was also home to a massive towering temple to the god Marduk.²²

When readers know the Hebrew, the connection between this story and Babylon is hard to miss: it presents God as scattering the very people who scattered Israel (See **Mocking Babylon**.)

Mocking Babylon

“In Babylonian eyes, Babylon is invincible and eternal because it was founded by the gods, for their own purposes. In contrast, the biblical story quashes this notion and presents the city’s construction as the result of human action, with no divine corroboration; and many have interpreted the builders’ words, to ‘make a name for ourselves,’ as a kind of rebellion against God. . . .

“Babylon is famously characterized as a political monolith: they oppress and dominate their subjects—their ‘language’ is enforced upon everyone. This portrait of Babylon is undermined by the biblical portrait of Babylon’s founding: rather than unite humanity under its own language and beliefs, Babylon is the source of universal dispersion and divergence.”²³

—Jonathan Grossman

The Hebrew *bavel* sounds similar to this Hebrew word:²⁴

	English	Hebrew	Hebrew Transliteration
4.	mix up, confuse	בלל	<i>balal</i>

In Genesis 11:7, God uses this verb to talk about confusing the people of *bavel*. For that reason, 11:9 reads as follows: “Therefore it was called Babel [*bavel*], because there the LORD confused [*balal*] the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (NRSV). The NRSV contains a footnote on the word “confused” explaining the wordplay taking place here. Footnotes, however, never receive as much attention as the main text. What’s most striking about this verse in the Hebrew only con-stitutes a footnote in English.

In fact, in this particular passage, the text as a whole builds to the moment when the name *bavel* and word *babel* are used: in only nine verses, the text con-tains twenty-two appearances of a Hebrew letter that can be pronounced as “B” or “V,” as well as thirty-seven appearances of the Hebrew letter pronounced “L.” The earliest audiences of this text would have heard a chorus of “B,” “V,” and “L” sounds growing until the passage’s last verse when they learned that the place was named Babel because there God “babbled” the people’s languages.²⁵ This artful construction of sounds does not appear in English renderings of the story.

We hope you enjoyed this sample.

70 Words Every Christian Should Know

is available wherever fine books are sold.

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