

(biblical) one of the twelve precious stones in the High Priest's breast plate ; aquamarine תַּרְשִׁישׁ

<http://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%AA%D6%B7%D6%BC%D7%A8%D6%B0%D7%A9%D6%B4%D7%81%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%81>

Tarshish (Hebrew, “pearl”)—in *The Zohar*, the eponymous chief of the order of tarshishim (i.e., virtues). Other chiefs of the order include Haniel and Sabriel. [See Tarshishim.]

Tarshishim (“brilliant ones”)—an angelic order in Jewish lore, the term said to derive from Daniel 16:6 and, in the cabala, answering to the 7th sefira (firmness). In de Vigny’s poem “Eloa,” the order is called splendors.

Tarsisim [Tarshishim]

Gustav Davidson. *A Dictionary of Angels: Including the Fallen Angels*. New York: The Free Press. 1967. Page 158.

Tarshish

Tarshish (Hebrew: תַּרְשִׁישׁ) occurs in the Hebrew Bible with several uncertain meanings. One of the most recurring is that Tarshish is a place, probably a city or country, that is far from the Land of Israel by sea where trade occurs with Israel and Phoenicia. The Septuagint, the Vulgate and the Targum of Jonathan render this as Carthage. But other biblical commentators read it as Tartessos in ancient Hispania (Iberian Peninsula).^[1] W.F. Albright (1941) and F.M. Cross (1972) suggested Tarshish was Sardinia because of the discovery of the Nora Stone or Nora Fragment. The Phoenician inscription on the Nora Stone has been combined with metallic evidence from Phoenicia and ancient documentary sources (biblical, classical and Assyrian) to indicate that the Tarshish which the biblical tradition remembers as a supplier of silver to King Solomon, was a large island in the western Mediterranean Sea (Thompson and Skaggs 2013) - the biblical passages and commentaries that understand Tarshish as a location in Africa, at Tarsus or as far afield as the Tamilakkam in Southern India and Ceylon appear to be confused readings of the earlier textual sources. Tartessos in Spain was eventually equated with Tarshish in later antiquity, but Thompson and Skaggs show that Solomon's Tarshish was a large island (Sardinia), and not a hinterland (Tartessos).

Hebrew Bible

Tarshish also occurs 24 times in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible with various meanings:

- Genesis 10:4 lists among the descendants of Japhet the son of Noah as "The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim." This is restated verbatim in 1 Chronicles 1:7.
 - 1 Kings (1Kings 10:22 ^[2]) notes that King Solomon had "a fleet of ships of Tarshish" at sea with the fleet of his ally King Hiram of Tyre. And that "Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks." (repeated in 2 Chronicles 2Chronicles 9:21 ^[3]), while 1 Kings 22:48 states that "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber." This is repeated in 2 Chronicles 20:37 preceded by the information that the ships were actually built at Ezion-geber, and emphasizing the prophecy of the otherwise unknown Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah against Jehoshaphat that "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish. This may be referenced in Psalm 48:7 which records "By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish." From these verses commentators consider that "Ships of Tarshish" was used to denote any large trading ships intended for long voyages whatever their destination, and some Bible translations, including the NIV, go as far as to translate the phrase *ship(s) of Tarshish* as "trading ship(s)."
 - Psalm 72 (Psa 72:10 ^[4]), a Psalm often interpreted as Messianic in Jewish and Christian tradition, has "May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!" This verse is the source text of the liturgical antiphon *Reges Tharsis* in Christian Cathedral music. In 2013, Thompson and Skaggs recognized that this passage is composed formulaically with a chain of scaled correlates that indicate Tarshish was a large island.
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 - Jeremiah only mentions Tarshish in passing as a source of silver; 10:9 "Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz."
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- Ezekiel contains two prophecies describing Israel's trading relations with Tarshish. The first is retrospective in 27:12 "Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of every kind; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares." and 27:25 "The ships of Tarshish traveled for you with your merchandise. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas." The second in Ezekiel 38:13 is forward looking where "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all its leaders will say to you, 'Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hosts to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil?'"
- Jonah 1:3 (Jonah 1:3 ^[5]), 4:2 mentions Tarshish as a distant place: "But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish." Jonah's fleeing to Tarshish may need to be taken as "a place very far away" rather than a precise geographical term. It may however refer to Tarsus in Cilicia where Saul, later Paul hailed from.^[6] The term *tarshish* may also be derived from the Greek *tarsos* which is the name for an oar used in ancient ships. On the Mediterranean Sea, ships that used only sails were often left stranded without wind while ships with oars could continue their voyage. Therefore, trading ships most likely would have used oarsmen rather than sails. Jonah also attempted to sail to Tarshish. His rebellion against the Hebrew God YHWH led to his being tossed overboard by sailors, swallowed by a large fish (sometimes called the "whale"), and vomited out onto dry land by God's command. He then made his way to Nineveh, now known as Mosul, in Iraq.

Other ancient and classical era sources

- Esarhaddon, Aššur Babylon E (AsBbE) (=K18096 and EŞ6262 in the British Museum and Istanbul Archaeological Museum, respectively) preserves "All the kings from the lands surrounded by sea- from the country Iadanana (Cyprus) and Iaman, as far as Tarshish, bowed to my feet." Here, Tarshish is certainly an island, and cannot be confused with Tarsus (Thompson and Skaggs 2013).
- Flavius Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicae* i. 6, § 1) of the 1st century AD reads "Tarshush", identifying it as the city of Tarsus in southern Asia Minor, which was referred to in Assyrian records from the reign of Esarhaddon as Tarsisi. Prior to this time, the Assyrians referred to Tarsus as Tarzi. Modern research has shown that the metals the Old Testament associates with Tarshish existed in the Taurus Mountains north of Tarsus. Wikipedia:Citation needed In addition, Phoenician inscriptions have been found at Karatepe in Cilicia. Bunsen and Sayce ^[7] follow Josephus.
- The Septuagint and the Vulgate in several passages translate it with Carthage, apparently following a Jewish tradition found in the Targum of Jonathan ("Afriki", i.e., Carthage).
- The Hebrew term also has a homonym, *tarshish*, occurring seven times and translated beryl in older English versions^[8] Some interpretations give that in the Torah (Exodus 28:20 ^[9]), it is also the name of a gem-stone associated with the Tribe of Asher that has been identified by the Septuagint and by Josephus as the "gold stone" χρυσόλιθος (whose identification remains in dispute, possibly topaz, probably not modern Chrysolite), and later as aquamarine. It is the first stone on the fourth row of the priestly breastplate.

Identifications and interpretations

- Rufus Festus Avienus the Latin writer of the 4th century AD, identified Tarshish as Cadiz.^[10]
- Bochart the French reverend (in his *Phaleg* 1646) suggested, followed by later authors like Hertz (1936), Tarshish as the city of Tartessos in Southern Spain. In the Oracle against Tyre, the prophet Ezekiel (27:12 ^[11]) mentions that silver, iron, lead and tin came to Tyre from Tarshish (Trsys). They were stored in Tyre and resold, probably to Mesopotamia. The editors of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* suggest that Tarshish is either Tartessos or Sardinia.^[12]
- However Bochart also suggested eastern localities for the ports of Ophir and Tarshish during King Solomon's reign, specifically the Tamilakkam continent (present day South India and Northern Ceylon) where the

Dravidians were well known for their gold, pearls, ivory and peacock trade. He fixed on "Tarshish" being the site of Kudiramalai, a possible corruption of Thiruketheeswaram.^{[13][14]}

- Sir Peter le Page Renouf^[15] thought that "Tarshish" means a coast, and, as the word occurs frequently in connection with Tyre, the Phoenician coast is to be understood. Some have read Psalm 72 as an indication that Tarshish was a coastland, but the reference there can and seems to mean 'island'.
- Cheyne^[16] thought that "Tarshish" of Gen 10:4^[17] and "Tiras" of Gen 10:2^[18], are really two names of one nation derived from two different sources, and might indicate the Tyrsenians or Etruscans. Thus the name may denote Italy or the European coasts west of Greece.
- Around 1665, the followers of Shabbatai Zvi in İzmir interpreted the *ships of Tarshish* as Dutch ships that would transport them to the Holy Land.
- Irish politician and traveler James Emerson Tennent suggested that Galle, a southern city in Sri Lanka, was the ancient seaport of Tarshish from which King Solomon is said to have drawn ivory, peacocks and other valuables.
- Some 19th Century commentators believed the Tarshish power to be Britain and possibly related to an Eastern Tarshish, namely India.^{[19][20]} Some, looking for the 2nd coming of Jesus and the Kingdom of God based round the land of Israel, believe that the prophecies regarding the Tarshish power have their latter day fulfilment in modern times. This was particularly current in the 19th Century, and taken up by some Christian denominations such as the early Christadelphians, although there are differing opinions on this today among their members.
- Another theory is by Fr. Francisco Collin SJ. He claims that the Filipino people were descendants of Tarshish.
- In Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*, Father Mapple gives a sermon on the story of Jonah. Father Mapple identifies the Tarshish to which Jonah flees with the port of Cádiz in Spain, "as far by water, from Joppa, as Jonah could possibly have sailed in those ancient days, when the Atlantic was an almost unknown sea" (Chapter 9, "The Sermon").
- Jewish liturgy mentions "Tarshishim," commonly translated into English as "fiery angels." Wikipedia:Citation needed
- It has now been recognized that the inscriptions of Esarhaddon (AsBbE) indicate that Tarshish was an island (not a coastland) far to the west of the Levant (Thompson and Skaggs, 2013).

Other

- 1 Chronicles 7:10 forms part of a genealogy mentioning in passing a Jewish man named Tarshish as a son of a certain Bilhan.
- Esther 1:14 mentions in passing a Persian prince named Tarshish among the seven princes of Persia.
- Tarshish (Lebanon) is the name of a village in Lebanon. The village is located in the Baabda Kadaa at an elevation of 1400m and is 50 km away from Beirut.
- Tarshish is a family name found among Jews of Ashkenazic descent. A variation on the name, Tarshishi, is found among Arabs of Lebanese descent, and likely indicates a family connection to the Lebanese village Tarshish.
- Tarshish was also the name of a short-lived political party Wikipedia:Citation needed founded by would-be assassin of Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dwek.
- The Greek form of the name, Tharsis, was given by Giovanni Schiaparelli to a region on Mars.
- The classic short story "Ship of Tarshish" by John Buchan refers to the book of Jonah.

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- [3] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=2Chronicles&verse=9:21&src=>
- [4] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Psa&verse=72:10&src=>
- [5] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Jonah&verse=1:3&src=>
- [6] <http://scriptures.lds.org/en/bd/p/14>
- [7] *Expository Times*, Christian Charles Josias Bunsen and Sayce, 1902, p. 179
- [8] tarshish/beryl (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=H8658&t=KJV>)
- [9] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Exodus&verse=28:20&src=>
- [10] William Parkin - 1837 "Festus Avinus says expressly that Cadiz was Tarshish. This agrees perfectly with the statement of Ibn Hankal, who no doubt reports the opinion of the Arabian geographers, that Phoenicia maintained a direct intercourse with Britain in later ..."
- [11] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Ezekiel&verse=27:12&src=>
- [12] Metzger, Bruce M. and Roland E. Murphy, eds. (1991), *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, annotation on Jeremiah 10:9.
- [13] Richard Leslie Brohier (1934). *Ancient irrigation works in Ceylon*, Volumes 1-3. pp. 36
- [14] *A dictionary of the Bible* by Sir William Smith published in 1863 notes how the Hebrew word for peacock is *Thukki*, derived from the Classical Tamil for peacock *Thogkai*: Ramaswami, Sastri, *The Tamils and their culture*, Annamalai University, 1967, pp. 16, Gregory, James, *Tamil lexicography*, M. Niemeyer, 1991, pp. 10, Fernandes, Edna, *The last Jews of Kerala*, Portobello, 2008, pp. 98, Smith, William, *A dictionary of the Bible*, Hurd and Houghton, 1863 (1870), pp. 1441
- [15] *Procedures of the Society for Biblical Archaeology*, xvi. 104 et seq., Le Page Renouf
- [16] *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*, iii. 151, Cheyne
- [17] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Gen&verse=10:4&src=>
- [18] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Gen&verse=10:2&src=>
- [19] J. P. Weethee *The Eastern Question in Its Various Phases* Page 293 "The expression is this — "the merchants of Tarshish, with the young lions of Tarshish." Assuming, what we have proved, that England was the ancient Tarshish, and that Great Britain is the Tarshish of Eze. xxxviii. 13, or the chief of both the ..."
- [20] Sacred Annals; Or, Researches Into the History and Religion of ... - Page 557 George Smith - 1856 "Heercn fully confirms this view ; shows from Strabo, that the Phenicians not only traded with Spain and Britain, but actually conducted mining operations in the former country ; and is so fully satisfied of the identity of Tarshish and Spain, that he ..."
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3 Identifications and interpretations

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- Around 1665, the followers of **Shabbatai Zvi** in **İzmir** interpreted the *ships of Tarshish* as Dutch ships that would transport them to the **Holy Land**.

- Irish politician and traveler **James Emerson Tennent** suggested that **Galle**, a southern city in Sri Lanka, was the ancient seaport of Tarshish from which King Solomon is said to have drawn ivory, peacocks and other valuables.
- Some 19th Century commentators believed the Tarshish power to be **Britain** and possibly related to an Eastern Tarshish, namely **India**.^{[13][14]} Some, looking for the 2nd coming of Jesus and the **Kingdom of God** based round the land of Israel, believe that the prophecies regarding the Tarshish power have their latter day fulfilment in modern times. This was particularly current in the 19th Century, and taken up by some Christian denominations such as the early **Christadelphians**, although there are differing opinions on this today among their members.
- Another theory is by Fr. **Francisco Collin SJ**. He claims that the Filipino people were descendants of Tarshish.
- In Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*, **Father Mapple** gives a sermon on the story of **Jonah**. **Father Mapple** identifies the Tarshish to which **Jonah** flees with the port of **Cádiz** in **Spain**, “as far by water, from **Joppa**, as **Jonah** could possibly have sailed in those ancient days, when the Atlantic was an almost unknown sea” (Chapter 9, “The Sermon”).
- Jewish liturgy mentions “Tarshishim,” commonly translated into English as “fiery angels.”
- It has now been recognized that the inscriptions of **Esarhaddon** (AsBbE) indicate that Tarshish was an island (not a coastland) far to the west of the Levant (Thompson and Skaggs, 2013).

4 Other

- 1 Chronicles 7:10 forms part of a genealogy mentioning in passing a Jewish man named Tarshish as a son of a certain **Bilhan**.
- **Esther 1:14** mentions in passing a Persian prince named Tarshish among the seven princes of Persia.
- **Tarshish (Lebanon)** is the name of a village in **Lebanon**. The village is located in the **Baabda Kadaa** at an elevation of 1400m and is 50 km away from **Beirut**.
- **Tarshish** is a family name found among Jews of Ashkenazic descent. A variation on the name, **Tarshishi**, is found among Arabs of Lebanese descent, and likely indicates a family connection to the Lebanese village **Tarshish**.

- **Tarshish** was also the name of a short-lived political party founded by would-be assassin of Israeli Prime Minister **David Ben-Gurion**, **Moshe Dwek**.
- The Greek form of the name, **Tharsis**, was given by **Giovanni Schiaparelli** to a region on **Mars**.
- The classic short story “Ship of Tarshish” by **John Buchan** refers to the book of **Jonah**.

5 See also

- **Sons of Noah**
- **Javan**
- **Elishah**
- **Kittim**
- **Dodanim**

6 References

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- [5] *Expository Times*, **Christian Charles Josias Bunsen** and **Sayce**, 1902, p. 179
- [6] tarshish/beryl
- [7] **William Parkin** - 1837 “**Festus Avinus** says expressly that **Cadiz** was **Tarshish**. This agrees perfectly with the statement of **Ibn Hankal**, who no doubt reports the opinion of the Arabian geographers, that **Phoenicia** maintained a direct intercourse with **Britain** in later ...”
- [8] **Metzger, Bruce M.** and **Roland E. Murphy**, eds. (1991), *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, annotation on **Jeremiah 10:9**.
- [9] **Richard Leslie Brohier** (1934). *Ancient irrigation works in Ceylon*, Volumes 1-3. pp. 36
- [10] *A dictionary of the Bible* by **Sir William Smith** published in 1863 notes how the Hebrew word for peacock is *Thukki*, derived from the Classical Tamil for peacock *Thogkai*: **Ramaswami, Sastri**, *The Tamils and their culture*, Annamalai University, 1967, pp. 16, **Gregory, James**, *Tamil lexicography*, **M. Niemeyer**, 1991, pp. 10, **Fernandes, Edna**, *The last Jews of Kerala*, Portobello, 2008, pp. 98, **Smith, William**, *A dictionary of the Bible*, **Hurd and Houghton**, 1863 (1870), pp. 1441

- [11] *Procedures of the Society for Biblical Archaeology*, xvi. 104 et seq., Le Page Renouf
- [12] *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*, iii. 151, Cheyne
- [13] J. P. Weetsee *The Eastern Question in Its Various Phases* Page 293 “The expression is this — “the merchants of Tarshish, with the young lions of Tarshish.” Assuming, what we have proved, that England was the ancient Tarshish, and that Great Britain is the Tarshish of Eze. xxxviii. 13, or the chief of both the ...”
- [14] Sacred Annals; Or, Researches Into the History and Religion of ... - Page 557 George Smith - 1856 “Heeren fully confirms this view ; shows from Strabo, that the Phenicians not only traded with Spain and Britain, but actually conducted mining operations in the former country ; and is so fully satisfied of the identity of Tarshish and Spain, that he ...”
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