

Monies, Weights and Measures of the Bible

I. MONIES OF THE BIBLE

Bekah—A weight (about .266 oz.) which was used to weigh valuable metals for exchange. The equivalent of a half shekel. If exchanged in silver, worth about 88¢. (Ex. 38:26). But its value would always depend on the commodity being exchanged.

Didrachma—A Greek silver coin often used for Temple tribute money. Equal in value to two drachmas, denarii, one-half shekel weighed in silver, or 88¢ (Mat. 17:24).

Drachma—Greek silver coin. An imperial coin struck at Antioch. Passed for, or equal to, Roman denarii, half the value of the didrachma (or double-drachma), the coin's worth was approximately 44¢ (Luke 15:8).

Dram—The Persian daric, a coin made of gold which was in wide circulation. Weighed approximately 8,424 grams and was worth \$48. (I Ch. 29:7).

Farthing—Two coins were known as farthings. The Roman coins called “farthing” in the Authorized Version (Mat. 10:29; Luke 12:6) was translated from the Greek word *assarion* and was worth about 4¢.

The Greek coin (Kodrantēs-Mat. 5:26; Mark 12:42), was worth about 2¢.

Gerah—A weight (always 1/20th of a shekel, about 8.71 grains) which was used to weigh for exchange valuable metals. If exchanged in silver, worth about 9¢. But its value would always depend on the commodity being exchanged.

Mite—The smallest of the Greek coins. Made of copper and worth less than one cent (Mark 12:42).

Penny—The Greek word is *denarion* and its translated in the Authorized Version as penny, pence, and pennyworth. Made of silver, the coin was worth approximately 44¢. (Mat. 18:28).

Piece of Money or Stater—A silver coin with the value of about four Greek drachmas or one shekel of silver. Worth about \$1.76. (Mat. 17:27).

Pound—A weight of about 1.6 pounds in the Old Testament which was used to weigh for exchange valuable metals mostly always in gold at a value of \$1408.00 (I Ki. 10:27).

In the New Testament, translated by two Greek words:

1. *Mina* (Luke 19:13) worth about \$49.50.
2. *Litra* (John 12:3) where it is used as a weight of about 12 oz.

Shekel—A weight which was used to weigh for exchange valuable metals a weight of exchange. The Hebrew word is used more than 100 times in the Old Testament. As remarkable as it may seem, there were four shekel weights in wide usage. There was a common shekel, but its weight varied as either heavy or light, and a Royal shekel, heavy and light. These weights varied from .36 oz. to a little more than .72 oz.

Too, the value of the shekel always varied according to the commodity being weighed for exchanged. The shekel was not a coin and of itself was only a weight to balance a scale. Even the most careful study of the contextual usage will not always make it clear as to which shekel was being used on the balance.

As a reasonable measure or money-value for the shekel, the conversions in THE OPEN BIBLE use the shekel weight of .533 oz. Thus, a silver shekel is valued at \$1.76. A gold shekel at \$64.

Silverling—An undetermined amount of silver. Mentioned only once in scripture, (Isa. 7:23).

Talent—A weight which was used to weigh for exchange. Like the shekel, no 100% certain weight can be assigned to a talent, because there was a common talent, both heavy and light, and a Royal talent, heavy and light. Careful contextual study will not always make it clear which weight was being used. The value of what was being weighed by a talent depended upon the commodity being weighed.

For reasonable measure, the conversions in THE OPEN BIBLE use the average weight for the Common (heavy and light) talent, or the use of 100 US pounds to a talent. Therefore, a silver talent is valued at \$5,280, and a gold talent at \$192,000.

Tetradrachma—A New Testament coin equal in value to the Old Testament value of a shekel of silver, or four New Testament drachmas, or four Roman denarii—\$1.76. (Mat. 26:15).

Tribute—An annual tax payable to rulers on individuals, land, and property of various kinds. Tax scales are unknown, but the denarius, drachma, or penny seems to have been the mode of payment. (Mat. 22:17).

II. DISTANCES OR LENGTH MEASUREMENTS

Acre—The amount of land a yoke of oxen could plow in a day. (I Sam. 14:14).

Cubit—A most important measure in the Bible, but used in two ways

Cubit (Normal)—The length of the arm from the elbow to the end of the middle finger—18 inches.

Cubit and a Handbreadth (or Ezekiel's cubit) - The normal 18 inch cubit, plus the handbreadth, 3 inches, thus 21 inches.

Fathom—The length of the outstretched arms about six feet. (Acts 27:28).

Finger or Digit—Equal to the breadth of a man's finger or about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. (Jer. 52:21).

Furlong—A measurement of the Greeks and adopted by the Jews. Equal to 660 feet.

Handbreadth—The width of four fingers pressed together, 3 inches. (Ex. 25:25).

Measuring Reed—A reed made of cane used for measuring width. Length— $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet. (Jer. 52:21).

Mile—Equal to eight furlongs or one mile.

Pace—One step or 3 feet. (2 Sam. 6:13).

Span—9 inches. The width from the end of the thumb to little finger when these are spread apart.

Sabbath's Day Journey—Equal to $\frac{3}{5}$ of a mile

III. LIQUID MEASURES

Bath—About eighth and one-half gallons. 10 baths equal one kor, and a kor is equal to a homer.

Cab—Equal to two quarts. Four logs make a cab, three cabs make a hin.

Firkin—Nearly 9 gallons. (John 2:6).

Hin—Equal to one and a half gallons (6 quarts or 12 pints). Six hin equals one bath. (Ex. 29:40).

Homer—Approximately 85 gallons. (Ezek. 45:11).

Kor—Equal to 85 gallons and the same capacity of a homer.

Log—Approximately one pint. (Lev. 14:10). Four logs equal one cab.

IV. DRY MEASURES

Cab—A measure of about two quarts. (2 Ki. 6:25). (Later also used as a liquid measure) $1\frac{1}{5}$ cabs = 1 omer

Choinix—Equal one and a half pints. (Rev. 6:6).

Ephah—Equal to 74.93 pints, or about 1.1 bushels—close to 8.5 gallons $4\frac{1}{2}$ pecks.

Homer—Equal to 11.1 bushels. Same as a kor and equal to 10 ephahs or 85 gallons.

Half-Homer—A dry measure equal to 5 ephahs or about $5\frac{1}{2}$ bushels. (Hos. 3:2).

Kor(Cor)—Equal to 11.1 bushels Also reckoned as 85 gallons; 10 baths; a homer; or about 10 ephahs.

Lethech—About $5\frac{1}{2}$ bushels (Hos. 3:2). Same as half homer.

Log—Equal to about one pint. (Lev. 14:10). (Used as both a dry and liquid measure) Four logs = one cab

Omer—Equal to 7.48 pints. (Ex. 16:16). Same as the "tenth deal" $\frac{1}{10}$ of an ephah.

Seah—24.94 pints (Gen 18:6). Translated by the word "measure" in the Authorized Version. Equal to $3\frac{1}{3}$ omers, or 1.2 pecks.

Gerah—A weight of approximately 8.71 grains. but always weighed as $\frac{1}{20}$ of a shekel. Used as a balance for scales. (Ex. 30:13).

Pound—Used in the Old Testament as a weight about 1.6 pounds (1 Ki. 10:17) Translated in the New Testament by the Greek word *litra* (John 12:3) where it is used as a weight of about 12 oz.

Seat— $2\frac{1}{2}$ gallons. (Mat. 13:33; Luke 13:21).

Tenth Deal—Same as a omer. About 7.5 pints.

V. WEIGHT MEASURES

Bekah—A weight of approximately .266 oz. used to balance scales. Equal to half a shekel.

Shekel—The most common of all Old Testament weights. THE OPEN BIBLE places the weight of a shekel at .533 oz.

Talent—There are four different talents in the Bible to contend with—the common and the Royal (heavy and light). THE OPEN BIBLE places the weight of a talent at 100 U.S. pounds.