

## ~GAMES (529)

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• Early in man's history an interest in diversion and entertainment became manifest. Jubal, in the seventh generation from Adam, is said to be, the founder of all those who handle the harp and the pipe.

• And the name of his brother was Jubal. He proved to be the founder of all those who handle the harp and the pipe. ([Genesis 4:21](#))

• In course of time, at least in the post-Flood period, **games** were also developed.

### • Egypt And Mesopotamia

• In widely scattered locations of Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, archaeologists have unearthed various forms of **gaming** boards, chessmen, dice, and other **game** pieces, some of which date back to times before Abraham.

• A relief from an Egyptian temple gate portrays Ramses III playing a **game** similar to checkers with one of his concubines. Most **games** used dice or throw sticks to determine the moves.

• Egyptian paintings, in addition to depicting dancing and instrument playing, show scenes of Egyptian girls playing with balls, juggling several at a time. Other youthful **games**, such as a kind of tug-of-war, involved team play. Marbles were also popular.

### • Israel

• No direct reference is made in the Bible to **games** among the Hebrews, but there are scattered indications of certain forms of recreation in addition to music, singing, dancing, and conversation.

- And the public squares of the city themselves will be filled with boys and girls **playing** in her public squares. (**Zechariah 8:5**)
- Tells of children playing in the public squares, and the singing and dancing of boys are mentioned at;
- They keep sending out their young boys just like a flock, and their own male children go skipping about. (**Job 21:11**)
- They continue raising their voice with the tambourine and harp, and keep rejoicing at the sound of the pipe. (**Job 21:12**)
- In Jesus time children played at imitating happy and sad occasions.
- With whom shall I compare this generation? It is like young children sitting in the marketplaces who cry out to their playmates. (**Matthew 11:16**)
- Saying; We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we wailed, but you did not beat yourselves in grief. (**Matthew 11:17**)
- Excavations in Palestine have produced children's toys such as rattles, whistles, and miniature pots and chariots.
- Will you play with it as with a bird, or will you tie it for your young girls? (**Job 41:5**)
- May indicate the keeping of tame birds. It appears likely that target shooting with arrows as well as with slings was practiced.
- And as for me, I shall shoot three arrows to one side of it, to send them where I will to a target. (**1 Samuel 20:20**)
- And, look! I shall send the attendant, saying; Go, find the arrows. If I should specifically say to the attendant, Look! The arrows are on this side of you, take them, then you come, for it means peace for you and there is nothing the matter, as Yehowah is living. (**1 Samuel 20:21**)
- But if this is the way I should say to the lad, Look! The arrows are farther away from you, go, for Yehowah has sent you away. (**1 Samuel 20:22**)

- And it came about in the morning that Jonathan made his way out to the field of David's appointed place, and a young attendant was with him. (1 Samuel 20:35)
- And he proceeded to say to his attendant; Run, please, find the arrows that I am shooting. The attendant ran, and he himself shot the arrow to make it pass beyond him. (1 Samuel 20:36)
- When the attendant came as far as the place of the arrow that Jonathan had shot, Jonathan began to call from behind the attendant and say; Is not the arrow farther away from you? (1 Samuel 20:37)
- And Jonathan went on calling from behind the attendant; In haste! Act quickly! Do not stand still! And the attendant of Jonathan went picking up the arrows and then came to his master. (1 Samuel 20:38)
- As for the attendant, he did not know anything, only Jonathan and David themselves knew about the matter. (1 Samuel 20:39)
- After that Jonathan gave his weapons to the attendant that belonged to him and he said to him; Go, take them to the city. (1 Samuel 20:40)
- Out of all this people there were seven hundred chosen men left-handed. Every one of these was a slinger of stones to a hairbreadth and would not miss. (Judges 20:16)
- However, competitive **games** as such do not appear to have been in practice among the Jews until the Hellenic period.
- Riddles and guessing **games** were popular in Israel, as is illustrated by the riddle Samson propounded to the Philistines.
- Then Samson said to them; Let me, please, propound a riddle to you. If you will without fail tell it to me during the seven days of the banquet and you do solve it, I shall in that case have to give you thirty undergarments and thirty outfits of clothing. (Judges 14:12)
- But if you are unable to tell it to me, you yourselves also must give me thirty undergarments and thirty outfits of clothing. At this they said to him; Do propound your riddle, and let us hear it.

**(Judges 14:13)**

- So he said to them; Out of the eater something to eat came forth, and out of the strong something sweet came forth. And they proved unable to tell the riddle for three days. (**Judges 14:14**)

## **.. Greece**

- At about the time that Isaiah began to prophesy in Judah, the Greeks began their famous Olympic **athletic contests** in honor of Zeus, in the year **776 B.C.E.**
- While the **games** at Olympia remained the most famous, three other Greek towns became important centers of the contests. On the Isthmus near Corinth were held the **Isthmian Games**, consecrated as sacred to Poseidon. Delphi featured the **Pythian Games**, while the **Nemean Games**, also in honor of Zeus, were held near Nemea.
- The **Olympic Games** were celebrated every four years and were of profound religious significance. Religious sacrifices and the worship of the Olympic fire were prominent features of the festival. The Isthmian Games near Corinth were held every two years.
- The basic program in all the contests included foot racing, wrestling, boxing, discus and javelin throwing, chariot racing, and other events.
- Participants took a vow to keep the rigid ten-month training schedule, which occupied most of their time. The training schedule was strictly supervised by judges who lived with the participants.
- The trainees often performed under conditions more difficult than the actual contest, runners training with weights on their feet and boxers training while wearing heavy uniforms.
- Years were often spent in developing the needed qualities for becoming a victor at the **games**. The prize consisted of a simple garland, or crown of leaves, wild olive being used at the Olympian **Games**, pine leaves at the Isthmian Games, laurel at the Pythian **Games**, and wild celery at the Nemean contests.

- The prize was often displayed at the finish line alongside the umpire, inspiring participants in the footraces to exert themselves to the utmost as they kept their eye on the prize.
- Failure to keep the rules, however, resulted in disqualification. The games were the topic of conversation by all before, during, and after the event. Victorious athletes were eulogized, idolized, lavished with gifts, and feted. Corinth gave the winning athletes a life pension.

## • Rome

- The Roman **games** differed greatly from the Greek games, having as their prime features **gladiatorial fighting and other exhibitions of extreme brutality**.
- The gladiatorial contests originally began in the **Third Century B.C.E.** as a religious service at funerals and may have had close relationship with ancient pagan rites whereby worshipers lacerated themselves, allowing blood to flow in honor of their gods or in honor of their dead.
- And they began calling at the top of their voice and cutting themselves according to their custom with daggers and with lances, until they caused blood to flow out upon them. (**1 Kings 18:28**)
- Prohibition of such practices to Israel at;
- And you must not make cuts in your flesh for a deceased soul, and you must not put tattoo marking upon yourselves. I am Yehowah. (**Leviticus 19:28**)
- The Roman **games** were later dedicated to the god Saturn. Nothing exceeded them for **sheer brutality and callousness**. Emperor Trajan once staged **games** featuring 10,000 gladiators, most of whom fought to the death before the end of the spectacle.
- Even some senators, some noble women, and one emperor, Commodus, entered the gladiatorial arena. From Nero's time onward large numbers of Christians were slaughtered in these events.

## • Pagan Games Introduced Into Palestine

- During the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes in the **Second Century B.C.E**, Hellenizing Jews introduced Greek culture and athletic contests into Israel, and a gymnasium was set up in Jerusalem, according to the first chapter of the Apocryphal book of First Maccabees.
- It is stated at [2 Maccabees 4:12-15] that even the priests neglected their duties to engage in the **games**. Others, however, strongly objected to such adoption of pagan customs.
- In the **First Century B.C.E**, Herod the Great built a theater at Jerusalem, an amphitheater in the plain, also a theater and amphitheater at Caesarea, and he instituted the celebration of **games** every five years in honor of Caesar.
- In addition to wrestling, chariot racing, and other contests, he introduced features from the Roman games, arranging fights between wild animals or pitting men condemned to death against such beasts. According to Josephus, all of this resulted in an abortive conspiracy by offended Jews to assassinate Herod. [Jewish Antiquities, XV, 267-291 (viii, 1-4] XV, 331-341 [ix, 6]

## •• The Christian Viewpoint

- Tertullian, who was a writer of the **Second and Third Centuries C.E**, set forth the position of early Christians toward the entertainment common among the Romans by saying that Christians have nothing to do, in speech, sight or hearing, with the madness of the circus, the shamelessness of the theatre, the savagery of the arena, the vanity of the gymnasium.
- He added; Why should we offend you, if we assume the existence of other pleasures? We reject what pleases you. What pleases us gives you no delight. [Apology, XXXVIII, 4,5]
- With regard to bodily training or discipline as a whole, the apostle Paul sums up the Christian attitude in his counsel to Timothy at,
- But turn down the false stories which violate what is holy and which old women tell. On the other hand, be training yourself with godly devotion as your aim. (1 Timothy 4:7)
- For bodily training is beneficial for a little, but godly devotion is beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come. (1 Timothy 4:8)

- Faithful and deserving of full acceptance is that statement. (**1 Timothy 4:9**)
- For to this end we are working hard and exerting ourselves, because we have rested our hope on a living God, who is a Savior of all sorts of men, especially of faithful ones. (**1 Timothy 4:10**)

## · Illustrative Use

- Features of some of the **games** were aptly used by Paul and Peter to illustrate points of teaching. In contrast with the prize sought by contestants in Greek **games**, the crown for which an anointed Christian strives was shown to be, not a fading garland of leaves, but the reward of immortal life.
- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for according to his great mercy he gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (**1 Peter 1:3**)
- To an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is reserved in the heavens for you. (**1 Peter 1:4**)
- And when the chief shepherd has been made manifest, you will receive the unfadable crown of glory. (**1 Peter 5:4**)
- He was to run with the determination of winning the prize and must keep his eyes fixed on it, looking back would be disastrous.
- Do you not know that the runners in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may attain it. (**1 Corinthians 9:24**)
- Brothers, I do not yet consider myself as having laid hold on it, but there is one thing about it. Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead. (**Philippians 3:13**)
- I am pursuing down toward the goal for the **prize** of the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus. (**Philippians 3:14**)
- He should contend according to the rules of a moral life so as not to become disqualified.

- Moreover, if anyone contends even in the **games**, he is not crowned unless he has contended according to the rules. (**2 Timothy 2:5**)
- Self-control, self-discipline, and training are all essential.
- Moreover, every man taking part in a contest exercises self-control in all things. Now they, of course, do it that they may get a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. (**1 Corinthians 9:25**)
- But, after you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved kindness, who called you to his everlasting glory in union with Christ, will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong. (**1 Peter 5:10**)
- The Christians efforts were to be well aimed, with victory in mind, just as the well-trained boxers blows count without wasted energy, though the objects of the Christians blows were, not some other human, but things, including those within himself, that could lead him to failure.
- Therefore, the way I am running is not uncertainly, the way I am directing my blows is so as not to be striking the air. (**1 Corinthians 9:26**)
- But I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow. (**1 Corinthians 9:27**)
- Fight the fine fight of the faith, get a firm hold on the everlasting life for which you were called and you offered the fine public declaration in front of many witnesses. (**1 Timothy 6:12**)
- All hindering weights and the entangling sin of lack of faith were to be put off, even as the contestants in the races stripped themselves of cumbersome clothing. The Christian runner was to be prepared for a race requiring endurance, not a short burst of speed.
- So, then, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (**Hebrews 12:1**)



- **As we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfector of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ([Hebrews 12:2](#))**
- **It is to be noted that at;**
- **So, then, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. ([Hebrews 12:1](#))**
- **Paul speaks of a great, cloud of witnesses, *Greek, mar-ty'ron* surrounding us. That he is not referring to a mere crowd of observers is made clear by the contents of the preceding chapter to which Paul refers by saying; So, then;**
- **Hence, Paul is encouraging Christians to move onward in the race by pointing, not to mere onlookers, but to the fine example of others who were also runners, and particularly urging Christians to look intently at the one who had already come off the victor and who was now their Judge, Christ Jesus.**
- **The illustration at;**
- **For it seems to me that God has put us the apostles last on exhibition as men appointed to death, because we have become a theatrical spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. ([1 Corinthians 4:9](#))**
- **May be drawn from the Roman contests, with Paul and his fellow apostles here likened to those in the last event on the bill at the arena for the most gory event was usually saved till last, and those reserved for it were certain of death.**
- **However, keep on remembering the former days in which, after you were enlightened, you endured a great contest under sufferings. ([Hebrews 10:32](#))**
- **Sometimes while you were being exposed as in a theater both to reproaches and tribulations, and sometimes while you became sharers with those who were having such an experience. ([Hebrews 10:33](#))**

- **May similarly have the Roman **games** as its background. Actually, Paul himself may have been exposed to the perils of the Roman games in view of his reference at**
- **If, like men, I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, of what good is it to me? If the dead are not to be raised up, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die. (1 Corinthians 15:32)**
- **To fighting wild beasts at Ephesus. Some view it as unlikely that a Roman citizen would be put before wild beasts in the arena, and they suggest that this expression is used figuratively to refer to beastlike opposers in Ephesus. However, Paul's statement at;**
- **For we do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, about the tribulation that happened to us in the district of Asia, that we were under extreme pressure beyond our strength, so that we were very uncertain even of our lives. (2 Corinthians 1:8)**
- **In fact, we felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death. This was that we might have our trust, not in ourselves, but in the God who raises up the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:9)**
- **From such a great thing as death he did rescue us and will rescue us, and our hope is in him that he will also rescue us further. (2 Corinthians 1:10)**
- **Concerning the very grave danger experienced in the district of Asia, where Ephesus was located, and of God's rescuing him from, such a great thing as death, would certainly fit an experience with literal wild beasts in the arena much more aptly than it would the human opposition Paul encountered at Ephesus.**
- **At that particular time there arose no little disturbance concerning The Way. (Acts of Apostles 19:23)**
- **For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, by making silver shrines of Artemis furnished the craftsmen no little gain. (Acts of Apostles 19:24)**
- **And he gathered them and those who worked at such things and said; Men, you well know that from this business we have our prosperity. (Acts of Apostles 19:25)**

- Also, you behold and hear how not only in Ephesus but in nearly all the district of Asia this Paul has persuaded a considerable crowd and turned them to another opinion, saying that the ones that are made by hands are not gods. ([Acts of Apostles 19:26](#))
- Moreover, the danger exists not only that this occupation of ours will come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be esteemed as nothing and even her magnificence which the whole district of Asia and the inhabited earth worships is about to be brought down to nothing. ([Acts of Apostles 19:27](#))
- Hearing this and becoming full of anger, the men began crying out, saying; Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! ([Acts of Apostles 19:28](#))
- So the city became filled with confusion, and with one accord they rushed into the theater, taking forcibly along with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, traveling companions of Paul. ([Acts of Apostles 19:29](#))
- For his part, Paul was willing to go inside to the people, but the disciples would not permit him. ([Acts of Apostles 19:30](#))
- Even some of the commissioners of festivals and **games**, who were friendly to him, sent to him and began pleading for him not to risk himself in the theater. ([Acts of Apostles 19:31](#))
- The fact is, some were crying out one thing and others another, for the assembly was in confusion, and the majority of them did not know the reason why they had come together. ([Acts of Apostles 19:32](#))
- So together they brought Alexander out of the crowd, the Jews thrusting him up front, and Alexander motioned with his hand and was wanting to make his defense to the people. ([Acts of Apostles 19:33](#))
- But when they recognized that he was a Jew, one cry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours; Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! ([Acts of Apostles 19:34](#))
- When, finally, the city recorder had quieted the crowd, he said; Men of Ephesus, who really is there of mankind that does not

know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis and of the image that fell from heaven? (**Acts of Apostles 19:35**)

- Therefore since these things are indisputable, it is becoming for you to keep calm and not act rashly. (**Acts of Apostles 19:36**)
- For you have brought these men who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. (**Acts of Apostles 19:37**)
- Therefore if Demetrius and the craftsmen with him do have a case against someone, court days are held and there are proconsuls, let them bring charges against one another. (**Acts of Apostles 19:38**)
- If, though, you are searching for anything beyond that, it must be decided in a regular assembly. (**Acts of Apostles 19:39**)
- For we are really in danger of being charged with sedition over today's affair, no single cause existing that will permit us to render a reason for this disorderly mob. (**Acts of Apostles 19:40**)
- And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly. (**Acts of Apostles 19:41**)
- It may thus have been one of the several near-deaths Paul underwent in his ministry.
- Are they ministers of Christ? I reply like a madman, I am more outstandingly one. In labors more plentifully, in prisons more plentifully, in blows to an excess, in near-deaths often. (**2 Corinthians 11:23**)

**See Also AMUSEMENTS**

**See Also THEATER**