

Biblical Weights and Measures

Biblical	American	Metric
LENGTH		
cubit	18 inches	0.5 meter
span	9 inches	23 centimeters
handbreadth	3 inches	8 centimeters
WEIGHT		
talent (3000 shekels)	1200 ounces (75 pounds)	34 kilograms
mina (50 shekels)	20 ounces	0.6 kilogram
shekel (2 bekas)	2/5 ounce	11.5 grams
pim (2/3 shekel)	1/3 ounce	7.6 grams
beka (1/2 shekel)	1/5 ounce	5.5 grams
Gerah (1/20 shekel)	1/50 ounce	0.6 gram
DRY CAPACITY		
cor (homer) (10 ephahs)	6 bushels (210 quarts)	220 liters
letheq (5 ephahs)	3 bushels (105 quarts)	110 liters
ephah (10 omers)	3/5 bushel (21 quarts)	22 liters
seah (1/3 ephah)	7 quarts	7.3 liters
omer (1/10 ephah)	2 quarts	2 liters
cab (1/18 ephah)	1 quart	1 liter
LIQUID CAPACITY		
bath (1 ephah)	6 or 10 gallons	22 or 40 liters
hin (1/6 bath)	4 quarts (1 gallon)	4 liters
log (1/72 bath)	1/3 quart (.08 gallon)	0.3 liter

Note: These are rough approximations taken from ancient sources. Rabbinical definitions sometimes vary from other sources, as in the liquid capacity of a bath. In 1 Kings 7:23, the basin could contain either 12,000 gallons (rabbinical) or 20,000 gallons (other sources). Quarts and liters are not equal by today's standards, but neither one is exactly equal to the ancient measure; so the relative value between them today is irrelevant.

Money Chart

The value of money varies with time. And so, trying to convert Hebrew, Greek, and Latin monetary terms to an amount we can appreciate is problematic. That's why the original terms have been retained. To convert them to today's money, depending on where and when you live, requires a conversion factor. We will take a known amount in NT times, the denarius, and use that to determine the other amounts. We know that a denarius was worth about a day's wages for a skilled worker (Matt. 20:2). That is still a relative amount, so let's use the average wage as our factor. For example, the average annual income for an individual American in 2002 was roughly \$25,000. Dividing by 2000 hours per year (40 hrs x 50 weeks), we get \$12.50 per hour as the average hourly wage. That makes a day's wages about 100 dollars (8 x 12.50).

To determine the value of 1 talent using the chart below, simply multiply a current day's wages by 6000. In our example (2002), it would be \$600,000. A lepton, or widow's mite, would be 78 cents (\$100 / 128).

Biblical Term	Equivalent Value	Source Passage
Talent	= 6,000 denarii	Mt. 18:24; 25:15-28
Mina	= 100 denarii	Lk. 19:13-25
Argurion	= 4 denarii	Mt. 26:15; 27:3-9, Acts 19:19
Stater, shekel	= 4 denarii	Mt. 17:27
Didrachma	= 2 denarii	Mt. 17:24
Drachma	= 1 denarius	Lk. 15:8-9
Denarius	= 1 day's wages	Mt. 18:28; 20:2-13; 22:19, Mk. 6:37; 12:15; 14:5, Lk. 7:41; 10:35; 20:24; Jn. 6:7; 12:5; Rev. 6:6
Assarion	= 1/16 denarius	Mt. 10:29, Lk. 12:6
Kodrantes, Quadrans	= 1/64 denarius	Mt. 5:26, Mk. 12:42
Lepton	= 1/128 denarius	Mk. 12:42, Lk. 12:59, Lk. 21:2