

**Personal Names in *The Sacred Harp***  
**By Hill Grimmett**  
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One of our members asked recently, “What’s up with these peculiar names in *The Sacred Harp*?”

There are quite a few names to be found in *The Sacred Harp* which strike us as unusual. I went poking around, looking at both some of the unusual-but-familiar ones and a few of the names I didn’t recognize; what follows is of what I found.

First, recognize that during the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, most people, at least in the English-speaking world, were named with biblical names. Obviously, some of these bore family significance as well, but the first “John” in your family tree was probably named for the evangelist.

This is still true – only many such names have become so “standard” that we don’t even recognize them as biblical until we stop to think: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (of course), Paul, Mary, Martha, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Ruth, Aaron, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ezra, David, Daniel, Solomon and many more.

If you read a list of the books of the Bible, you’ll find some of the names you see in *The Sacred Harp*. Here is a short list of a few of the less common ones. We might also take note of *Daniel Read*, *Abraham Maxim*, *Sarah Lancaster*, *Jacob Kimball* and others you can find for yourself.

<b>Bible Book</b>	<b><i>Sacred Harp</i> Name</b>	<b>Tune(s)</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Ezra	Ezra Goff	Stratfield	142
Nehemiah	Nehemiah Shumway	Schenectady Ballstown	192 217
Jeremiah	Jeremiah Ingalls	New Jerusalem Northfield Christian Song	299 155 240
Amos	Amos Munson	Newburgh	182

Another important source of English names (although not heavily represented in *The Sacred Harp*) was from the “virtues” – this was a common naming convention for the Puritans, both in England and later in the American colonies. Examples include: Faith, Hope, Amity, Prudence, Charity, Chastity, Increase (as in Increase Mather, Cotton Mather’s brother). Supply Belcher (“the Lord will supply”) is a *Sacred Harp* example of this type. If you want a really mind-blowing list of such names, have a look at <http://www.namenerds.com/uucn/virtue.html>

But what about the other names, the ones we don’t usually see and which jump out at us if we flip through the song book? Most of them are biblical, but simply not the name of one of the books of the Bible. Here are a few that caught my eye, and some notes about where they came from:

Jezeanah Sumner – “Ode to Science”, p. 242

*Jaazaniah* is the source of this name, and appears in three books of the Bible: 2 Kings 25:23; Jeremiah 35:3 and 40:8; and Ezekiel 8:11 and 11:1. In Jeremiah, Jaazaniah and his family, although not Jews, are held up as examples of obedience. In verse 14, God points out that this family was obedient to an ancestor about refraining from wine, and then says “But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.”

Amariah Hall – “All Saints New” p. 444

Someone named Amariah is mentioned several times in 1 Chronicles (6:7, 11, & 52; 23:19 and 24:23); once in 2 Chronicles (19:11); Ezra (7:3 and 10:42) and Nehemiah (10:3). In 1 Chronicles, Amariah is listed in some of the long genealogies, and in 2 Chronicles, Amariah is

listed in the genealogy of Levi, and hence as an ancestor of the hereditary priesthood of the Temple in Jerusalem. In Ezra 7:3 an Amariah is named as Ezra's great-great-great-great grandfather.

Hezekiah Moors, Pittsford p. 351; Swanton p. 352

Hezekiah was a king of Israel, the son of Ahaz, and is first mentioned in 2 Kings 16:20. In 2 Kings 18, Hezekiah is said to have reigned 27 years, and to have

*...returned to trust in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. 6 He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. 7 And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8 From watchtower to fortified city, he defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory. (2 Kings 18:5-8, New International Version)*

According to 2 Kings, it was during Hezekiah's reign that Sennacherib, King of Assyria first came against Jerusalem in an unsuccessful siege (in c. 701 BCE). There are also stories in 2 Kings of Isaiah making prophecies in Hezekiah's palace, and mention of the tunnel and pool he made in the city to help it withstand a siege. His son Manasseh ruled after him.

An interesting historical note: there has been a lot of archeological work done on the long tunnel under the old City of David in Jerusalem traditionally ascribed to Hezekiah. In the Sept 11, 2003 issue of *Nature*, three scientists (from Jerusalem and England) published a report of radiometric dating of the tunnel, finding it to be about 700 years BCE, and hence confirming (at least according to their findings) that it was from the time of Hezekiah.

Ananias Davisson – "Idumea" p. 47b

There are at least three people with this name in Acts, but the one for whom someone would likely be named is the Ananias of Acts 9:10 ff., who came to Saul of Tarsus (Paul) who was blind and unwell after his vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus. Ananias laid hands on him and healed his sight, and Acts then goes on to talk about the early days of Paul's ministry -- so Ananias is given credit as the Lord's instrument for Paul's healing immediately following his conversion. (The other two people by this name were a man who sinned and fell dead in Acts 5, and the high priest in Acts 22 and 23 who was partly responsible for Paul's imprisonment. Neither of those was probably the intended namesake!))

### **Do It Yourself**

If you would like to look up Biblical names and related passages online, there are several good resources. First, look up a name. Then, click on the links listing the passages or use the passage-lookup feature to find the relevant scriptural reference. Here are two good ones, and between them they access many of the usual modern translations of the Bible, as well as the King James version.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/>  
<http://www.biblelookup.com/>