

לב

Meaning:

- The heart
- Used figuratively for the feelings, the will and even the intellect
- The centre of anything

Noun, masculine (although conceptually neutral, being used for both men and women). Occurs nearly 600 times in the Old Testament.

Range of Meaning in the Bible

Occasionally used for the physical organ of the heart, for example “Nabal’s heart died within him” ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_big1 Samuel 25:37

Hebrew וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר בַּצֹּאת הַלַּיִל מִנְבֶּל וַתִּגַּד לוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיָּמָת לִבּוֹ בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְהוּא הָיָה לְאֶבֶן ESV In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. NIV Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone.

καὶ πρῶτος ἐξένηψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴνου ἀπήγγειλ...).

Often used to describe the inner Person or mind, the seat of thought, reflection, and understanding. Hebrew anthropology sees thinking as occurring in the heart (rather than the brain). For example, “The LORD saw that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” ([Genesis 6:5](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigGenesis 6:5

Hebrew וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל יִצְרָ מַחְשַׁבַת לִבּוֹ רָק רָע כָּל הַיּוֹם ESV The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. NIV The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

ἰδὼν δὲ κύριος ὅθεός τι ἐπληθύνθησαν αἰκακίαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς...).

The word also describes a person's will or intention, that is, the centre of a person's decisions and moral choices. For example, “Pharaoh hardened his heart” ([Exodus 8:15](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 8:5

Hebrew וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְפָרְעֹה הַתְּפָאֵר עָלַי לְמַתִּי אֶעֱתִיר לָךְ וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ וְלַעֲמָדְךָ לְהַכְרִית הַצִּפְרָדִּיעִים מִמֶּךָּ וּמִבְתֵּיךָ רָק בִּיָּאֵר וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אָהֳרֹן תִּשְׁאָרְנָה ESV And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!’” NIV δὲ κύριος πρὸς τῷ Ἀδελφῷ σου ἔκτεινον τῇ χειρὶ τὴν ῥάβδον σου ἐπὶ τοὺς ποταμοὺς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς ἀνάγαγε τοὺς βατ...), meaning he made a deliberate choice.

The לב is also the source of feelings—joy, fear, courage, or sorrow. For example, “Take heart, all you who hope in the LORD” ([Psalm 31:24](#)).

And sometimes the word refers to one's sense of right and wrong, for example, “David’s heart struck

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַנְשֵׁי דָוִד אֵלָיו הֲלֹה הַיּוֹם אָמַר יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי נָתַן אֶת אִיבֶיךָ וְאִיבֶךָ בְּיָדְךָ וְעַשִּׂיתָ לוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר Hebrew
ESV And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe. NIV Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for
having cut off a corner of his robe. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἐπάταξεν καρ...), or in other words, his conscience
troubled him.

The לב represents the core of human identity—thought, feeling, and will united.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל אַל תִּבְטֹ אֶל מְרֹאֵהוּ וְאֶל גְּבוֹהַּ קוֹמָתוֹ כִּי מֵאַסְתִּיהוּ כִּי לֹא אֶשְׁרֹ יִרְאֶה הָאָדָם כִּי הָאָדָם Hebrew
ESV But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on
the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks
on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.
(καὶ κύριος πρὸς μὴ ἐπιβλέψῃς ἐπὶ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ...).

Hebrew **עֵקֶב הַלֵּב מְרֵץ וְאֵינָּהּ יֵדְעֶנּוּ** מי ידענו? ESV The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? NIV The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? NLT “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? βαθεῖα ἡ καρδιά παρὰ πάντα καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐστὶν καὶ τίς αὐτόν... and [Deuteronomy 10:16](#)plugin-autotooltip default plugin-autotooltip bigDeuteronomy 10:16

The Shema ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)plugin-autotooltip default plugin-autotooltip bigDeuteronomy 6:5

Hebrew וְאָהַבְתָּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ ESV You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. NIV Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου...) commands love for God “with all your heart” - this means with your entire inner being, your mind, will, and emotion.

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