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How to Use a Bible Dictionary To Enhance your Bible Study

A Bible Dictionary can be a useful tool when attempting to interpret a difficult passage. In English, there are many Bible Dictionaries which have been published, such as Baker's Encyclopedia of the Bible. French has a quality Bible Dictionary available too, produced by our partners at DEQ.

Let's take a look at Psalm 120, using a Bible Dictionary for further insights:

A Song of Ascents.

- 1 In my trouble I cried to the LORD,
And He answered me.
- 2 Deliver my soul, O LORD,
from lying lips,
From a deceitful tongue.
- 3 What shall be given to you, and
what more shall be done to you,
You deceitful tongue?
- 4 Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With the *burning* coals of the
broom tree.
- 5 Woe is me, for I sojourn in
Meshech,
For I dwell among the tents of
Kedar!

- 6 Too long has my soul had its dwelling
With those who hate peace.
- 7 I am *for* peace, but when I speak,
They are for war. (NASB)

The psalm starts as a simple prayer, but as you get to verses 4 and 5, there are a few references that are unfamiliar to the modern ear. Looking up key words in a Bible Dictionary can help with interpreting the passage.

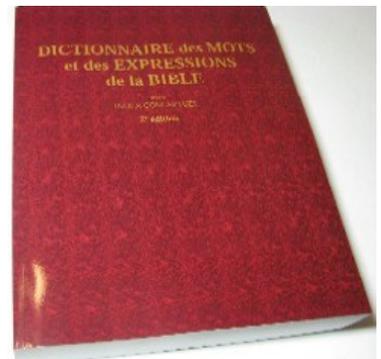
The first thing that tripped me up was "**Burning coals of the broom tree**". I looked up "coal" in Baker's Encyclopedia, and learned that mineral coal does not exist in Palestine, but rather they make coal from embers of wood. I looked for "Broom Tree" and found an entry for "Broom", with a cross reference to "Plants" with more information. From here I discovered that charcoal was often made from the white wood of a broom tree. Now the phrase from the Psalm made sense to me.

With the context of arrows in Verse 4, I wondered if the coals of a broom tree was used as a weapon, perhaps hurled by some sort of catapult. I searched my Bible Dictionary and found the article on weapons and warfare. I discovered

In this letter:

- > How to Use a Bible Dictionary to enhance your Bible Study
- > "Can I keep my Gospel of John?"

French Bible Dictionary available from DEQ (www.deq.ca)



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Continued: →

“Can I keep my Gospel of John?”

A patient was admitted to the psychiatric ward of the Edmunston, NB hospital late one night for drug related issues.

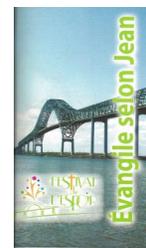
The policy of the hospital is to search personal belongings for drugs or hidden weapons. For that night, they felt he

should only have his pajamas.

As the nurse searched his backpack, she found a Gospel of John. When the patient saw what she found, he asked “Can I please, please be allowed to keep my Gospel of John along with

my pajamas?. I just got it today on my door handle and I really want to read it.”

The nurse was a Christian, in fact, the wife of one of the leaders on the teams out distributing Gospels of John. She let



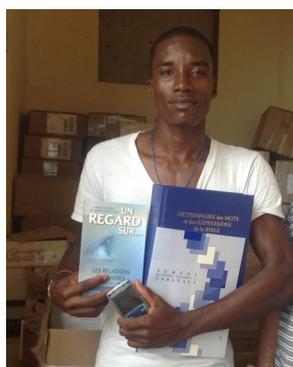
him keep the precious scripture.

BLF Canada provided 42,000 mini-Bibles and 500 New Testaments for the evangelism campaign in New Brunswick. See <http://espoiracadien.com/>

Bible Dictionaries (continued from page 1)

that in the time of ancient Israel, they used slingers and archers, but there was no mention of burning coals. Perhaps the key term from the verse was the burning, with the coals simply adding to the metaphor.

There were also entries for **Meshech and Kedar**. Apparently the people of Meshech lived North of Assyria. The people of Kedar were a nomadic people who lived South East of Israel. That the two locations were nowhere near each other helped me realize what the Psalm wasn't saying. The Psalmist wasn't actually in a foreign nation. It's as if an American commented about living in Canada and Mexico at the same time. As for what the poet meant, I'll leave for you to ponder, but thanks to a Bible Dictionary, we're at least heading in the right direction to fully



A Haitian pastor shows off his new books, including a Bible Dictionary

understand the Psalm.

BLF Canada exists to provide quality Christian literature to support the needs of evangelism and discipleship among the French world. A Bible Dictionary is a key tool for a pastor to have in his library. In January 2013, BLF Canada sent some French Bible Dictionaries to pastors in Haiti. They want more! Cargo containers leave for the mission station in Haiti at the end of every September. Donations for Bible Dictionaries can be made at our website or mailed to the field office. [IQ](#)

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