

# **“Why is Satan Mentioned Little in the Old Testament?”**

One of my religion professors brought this up when we were discussing Judaism.

She said that in the Old Testament there was no belief in Satan or the devil. I asked her about the book of Job. She then said that the Hebrew word used in Job that was translated as Satan is actually a word simply meaning adversary. So I looked up the original meaning of the word and sure enough, there it was. The word appears in many other places of the Old Testament but was never translated as Satan into the current English Bible. The word is even used to describe the Angel blocking Balaam's path in Numbers 22.

Mostly this just causes me to wonder why there seems to be so little mentioned of Satan (at least obviously and directly) in the Old Testament when compared to the New. Surely Satan was just as much a problem then as he is now.

Your professor is correct in that the “adversary” of the OT is just that.

Theologians often talk about “progressive revelation” regarding the unfolding of truth in scripture. Those living during OT times didn't know exactly how God was going to provide salvation for his people through the sacrifice of His Son, but they did understand the concept of blood sacrifice and the need for atonement. Those living under the law had small glimpses of Satan's work, but it took the added information of revelation in the NT to give a more complete picture. It might also be noted that many of the concepts about Satan revealed by Jesus through the NT writers can be found in literature outside the Bible during the first century. As time goes forward revelation gives us a clearer

concept of a fallen angel who leads a rebellion against God's reign and works to disrupt the work of the church.

Bible.org has quite a few files on the person and work of Satan that might be of interest to you. You can find this material at: [www.bible.org/topic.php?topic\\_id=12](http://www.bible.org/topic.php?topic_id=12). Here is a good article on Satan in the OT from that site: [Satan's Part in God's Perfect Plan](#). I hope that you find this helpful.

Don Closson

Editor's Note: See also the section "Angels in the Old Testament" in our [Angel Quiz: Origin and Background of the Angels and Demons](#).

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