

# Idea

<p><b>English - Idea</b></p>	<p><b>Hebrew -</b>  <b>#3045 - יָדָא - To Know (yada)</b>  <b>#1844 - דַּעַת - Knowledge (dea)</b></p>
<p>When I first opened this word, I did not know the depth I would encounter in the study of its origin. The word <b>Idea</b> is only a small window to a rich linguistic heritage that gave birth to the Semitic and Indo-European languages. As with many of the words we examine in this study I must limit myself to a small slice of human history. Time does not permit me to engage in a much more profound study. <b>This word, its derivatives and cognates, covers a broad range of application.</b></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>English Meaning</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. any conception existing in the mind as a result of mental understanding, awareness, or activity, to know.</li> <li>2. a thought, conception, or notion: That is an excellent idea.</li> <li>3. an impression: He gave me a general idea of how he plans to run the department.</li> <li>4. an opinion, view, or belief: His ideas on raising children are certainly strange.</li> <li>5. a plan of action; an intention: the idea of becoming an engineer.</li> <li>6. a groundless supposition; fantasy.</li> <li>7. philosophy: a concept developed by the mind; a conception of what is desirable or ought to be ideal.</li> <li>8. a likeness, a mental image.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hebrew Meaning</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>know, learn to know</i>, good and evil Gn 3:22.</li> <li>b. <i>perceive</i> Gn 19:33, 35.</li> <li>c. <i>find out and discern</i> 14:38; 23:22</li> <li>d. <i>discriminate, distinguish</i>, S 19:36.</li> <li>e. <i>know by experience</i>, Jos 23:14.</li> <li>f. <i>recognise, admit, acknowledge, confess</i> Je 3:13; Is 59:12 <math>\psi</math> 51:5.</li> <li>g. <i>consider</i>, Ju 18:14.</li> <li>h. <i>know a person, be acquainted with</i> Gn 29:5, Ex 1:8, Jb 42:11.</li> <li>i. <i>know a person carnally</i>, Gn 4:1, 17, 25; 24:16; 38:26.</li> <li>j. <i>know how to do a thing, be able to do it often</i>.</li> <li>k. <i>have knowledge, be wise</i>, Ec 9:11.</li> <li>m. <i>knowledge, opinion</i>, Jb 32:6.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Semitic Background</b></p>	
<p>From Akkadian Dictionary: <b>idû</b>: to know, to be cognizant, to be acquainted with, to experience, to know sexually.</p> <p>Other Semitic dictionaries: Aramaic יָדָא, (<i>yida</i>), Phoenician יָדָא; Ethiopic (<i>aydä-a</i>), <i>indicate, announce, narrate</i>; Assyrian <i>idû, know</i>.</p> <p>Note how close in pronunciation the Ethopic (<i>aydä-a</i>) is to the modern <b>idea</b>. Also note the Akkadian <i>idû</i> shows the initial sound as the vowel "i", just as in <b>idea</b>.</p> <p>The two Hebrew guttural letters, <b>א</b>, aleph and, <b>א</b>, ayin, fit exactly in the same position in this ancient alphabet list as they do in the modern English. Linguistic scholars universally agree that the modern Western alphabet came through Greece from the Phoenicians. However, I rarely hear a linguistic scholar admit that the Phoenician language was very nearly the Hebrew language except for a few minor dialectically differences. Because of the sacred adherence to the Hebrews as a special people of God, even held by godless scholars, they do not seem able to break down the barrier that shows these two languages so closely related. We know from the biblical accounts that the Hebrew tribes had a close cultural relationship with the Canaanites, who were, again, linguistically and otherwise, so closely associated with the Phoenicians. It would be just as accurate to say that the modern alphabet came from Hebrew. But it would be better to say that the modern alphabet came from a Semitic source common to these different Semitic languages. We do not know the ultimate origin of that Semitic source.</p> <p>As a result of this alphabet coincidence I have asked if the guttural sounds were once pronounced as our modern phonemes, somewhere in the distant past. Then the "i" and "j" of the Hebrew might very well have also followed more closely our pronunciation. Did those two letters, which are now represented in English in the same alphabetic position, sound the same as they do today? Then <i>yohd</i> might be pronounced as "i" instead as "y". In fact, this Hebrew letter until today is pronounced interior to a word as "i", as in English <b>sea</b>. The letter for Hebrew <i>yohd</i> falls in the position of the modern English alphabet "i", just prior to the letter "l". Note that English has both "i" and "j". I am told by the internet source at <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> that</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Yodh</b> (also spelled <b>Yud</b> or <b>Yod</b>) is the tenth letter of many <b>Semitic alphabets</b>, including <b>Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew Yod י</b>, and <b>Syriac and Arabic Yā</b>. Its sound value has an IPA <a href="#">[j]</a> in all languages for which it is used; in many languages, it also serves as a <b>long vowel</b>, representing IPA <a href="#">[iː]</a>.</p> <p>This Semitic letter gave rise to the <b>Greek Iota (I)</b>, <b>Latin I</b>, <b>Cyrillic I</b>, <b>Coptic <i>iauda</i></b>, and <b>Gothic <i>eis</i></b>.</p> <p>From this line of reasoning and evidence the initial "j" of <i>yohd</i> might have been pronounced as "i" to give us <b>idah = to know</b>.</p> <p>Thus we come to the similarity of the Indo-European <b>idea</b> and the Semitic <b>idah</b>, both meaning <b>to know</b>.</p>	
<p><b>Notes On Indo-European Background</b></p>	
<p>The word <b>idea</b> has roots in the Indo-European and Semitic words for <b>knowledge</b> and <b>sight</b>. In the course of time this word evolved out of Greek and Roman use to the form we know today in English. As a result it shows the modifications in pronunciation and meaning that came with its cultural heritage. An idea of this evolution may be summed up by remarks made by John Calorusso of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. In a paper written in a volume entitled <b>Current Trends in Caucasian, East European, and Inner Asian Linguistics: Papers in Honor of Howard I. Aronson</b>, John Benjamins Pub Co (November 2003), for his linguistic colleagues, <i>More Pontic: Further Etymologies Between Indo-European and Northwest Caucasian</i> he said:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The application of Hamp's law . . . explains a split in the behavior of */w-/ in Greek: some reflexes show /hu-/ while others words simply drop */w/. The cases of simple *w-dropping are instances of single initial */w/ in Greek, lost without leaving an aspirated onset, such as in</p>	

"spring" [as in season] (PIE \*wes-r-), Greek (*w*)*ear*, (Armenian *garun*, Latin *ver*, Lithuanian *vasara*, Sanskrit *vasantah*), or in

"to do" "work" (PIE \*wer-g-, \*wor-g-), Greek (*w*)*ergon*, (English *work*, Armenian *gorc*, Avestan *verez-*), or in

"to know", "idea" (PIE \*wey-d-, \*woy-d-, Greek *eid-on*, *oid-a*, *id-men*, English *wit*, Sanskrit *veda*, Latin *vid-*, Armenian *git-*).

[I have slightly edited this statement to clarify the points.]

PIE means Proto Indo-European. Eric P. Hamp is an [American](#) linguist, born in 1921, and long associated with the University of Chicago.

The loss of the "v" ("w") created many modern words, including **idea**. Originally this word meant *to know*. Note that English still retains *wit*. We understand *wit* to mean the seat of consciousness, the mind, the faculty of thinking and reasoning, mental capacity, understanding, reasoning, and intellect.

## Sanskrit Influence

The **Sanskrit (Sancrit)** has a complex verb system with many different forms expressing linguistic nuances. It is not my purpose to provide a tutorial in this complex system. I only provide some of the meanings of the words associated with **idea**. We encounter many examples of how the "v" ("w") was dropped in other languages. One can see how easily (**v**)**ideo** becomes **ideo**.

The closest we get directly to **idea** is found here.

**dhii** = imagination, intellect, thought, mental attitude, intelligence, reflection, opinion, notion, intention, knowledge, mind, art, science, wisdom, understanding.

**dhiiti** = thought

An apparent connection with the concept that an **idea** has birth in a flash of mental light is found in this word:

**indh** = To kindle, light, set on fire, to be lighted, to blaze, flame.

On the other hand **vid** now appears strongly.

**vaidyutaanala** = fire of lightning

**vidyut** = lightning

**vidyuddiipa** = light

**vidyullataa** = lightning-flash

**vid** (with its many verb inflections)

= to know, understand, perceive, learn, become or be acquainted with, be conscious of, have a correct notion of, with **infinitive** = to know how to).

= to know or regard or consider as, take for, declare to be, call.

= to mind, notice, observe, remember.

= to experience, feel.

= to wish to know, inquire about, to make known, announce, report, tell.

= to teach, explain.

= to recognize or regard as.

= to feel, experience

= knowing, understanding, a knower.

= knowledge, understanding.

When the "v" is dropped from this root we have remaining the "id" of **idea**.

## Greek Background

Late Latin **idea** (in Platonic sense), and Greek *look, semblance, form, appearance, configuration, shape, figure, species, kind, class, sort, nature*, (in Platonic philosophy). A general or ideal *form, type, model*, from the root: **to see** meaning **to know**, the word being thus analogous in derivation and original sense to Latin **species**: *to see, perceive, behold, sight, look, view*.

Following are illustrations of the use of the Greek word, and its many inflections and conceptual patterns.

**ideos**: = that which is seen, *form, shape, figure kind, sort, nature*:

The look of a thing, as opposed to its reality, *gnômên exapatôs' ideai*, outward appearances cheat the mind, from **Theognis**: Greek elegiac poet, 5th century.

*ephronon diphiasias ideas*, they conceived two *modes* of acting; *ta orgi' esti tin' idean echonta*, what is their *nature* or *fashion*, from **Herodotus**: Greek author, 484-430/420BC.

kainas **ideas** eispherein, to bring in new *fashions*, from **Euripides**: Greek playwright, c. 480-406 BC.

pasa **idea** thanatou, every *form* of death, from **Thucydides**: Ancient Greek historians and author, 460-404 BC.

**Homer**: **eidōs** aristos, etc.

= a form, sort, particular kind or nature, **Herodotus**, etc.

= a particular state of things or course of action, **Thucydides**.

= a class, kind, sort, whether genus or species, **Plato**, etc.

1. to see, perceive, behold, **Homer**, etc.; after a noun, *thauma idesthai*, a marvel to behold, *oiktros idein*, **Aeschylus**.

2. to look at, *eis ōpa idesthai*, to look him in the face.

3. to look so and so, *achreion idōn*, looking helpless.

4. to see mentally, *idesthai en phresin* "to see in his mind's eye," **Homer**.

**eidomai**:

1. Latin **videor**, to be seen, appear, *eidetai astra* = they are visible, appear. (Note the result if the "v" of the Latin video is dropped = **ideo**.)

2. To appear or seem to be, *touto moi kalliston eidetai einai*; also with infinitive omitted, *toge kerdion eisato*; also, **eisat'** imen, he made a show of going.

3. In strictly middle sense, *eisato phthongēn Politēi*, she made herself like **Polites** in voice.

\***eidō**: = see, to be seen: but **oida**, in present sense, *to know*.

**idon**: = see, perceive, behold, *ophthalmoisi* or *en ophthalmoisi idesthai*, see before the eyes.

= look, **idein es**, look at or towards; *eis ōpa idesthai*, look him in the face.

= see mentally, perceive, *idesthai en phresin*, 'to see in his mind's eye.

**oida**: = I see with the mind's eye, i.e. I know,

= *hēmeis idmen*, the first we know of,

= *eu or sapha, eu tod' isthi*, know well, be assured of this,

= *agria oide*, has fierceness in his heart,

= *athemistia eidē*, had lawlessness in his heart,

= *ei moi ēpia eideiē*, if he were kindly disposed towards me,

= *charin eidenai tini*, acknowledge a debt to another, thank him,

= *iduiēisi prapidessi*, with knowing mind.

The important concept behind this word is that one sees with the mind, not with the eyes. We can trace linguistic history, and the many people who used this word and its derivatives: (*W*)*eidomai*, *Weidos*, Latin *videre* with Greek (*W*)*oida*, compare Sanskrit *vēda*, Gothic *wait*, OE *wāt* = 'know'. Sanskrit root *vid-*, *vēda*, = know; *vindāmi* = find; cf. *vēdas*, sacred book; Greek root *id*, *Wid-*, in *eidon* = saw; **oida** = know; German *wissen*; English *wit*, *wot*. See also Latin: inf. *viderier*, *vidē*, *to see, perceive*, with the eyes.

## Latin Background

The word **idea** is found in Latin, together with no dropped "v" as in **video**.

**idea**, feminine, = *idea*, a (Platonic) idea, archetype.

**idoneus**, adjective [Sanskrit root **indh-**, **idh-**, *to kindle*; properly *bright, conspicuous*].

**idiota**, masculine, = **idiôtēs**, an uneducated, ignorant, inexperienced, common person: *quidni et tu idem illitteratum me atque idiotam diceres?* Titus **Lucretius** Carus (ca. 99 BC- ca. 55 BC)

**idiotae**, the common throng, the fickle mass, **Quintus Tullius** Cicero (102 BC - 43 BC).

**ideo**, adverb, [this for this]. An appearance in sleep, vision, apparition. A likeness, image, statue.

**iduo**, according to **Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius**, a Roman grammarian and Neoplatonist philosopher who flourished during the reigns of **Honorius** and **Arcadius** (395–423) stated that this was an Etruscan word, **dividere**, from the root **vid**; whence **viduus** and **divido**.

Here we see the first example of a tie to the root, **vid**.

**videns**, masculine, a seer, prophet (ecclesiastical Latin): *eamus ad videntem*, Vulgate 1 Reg. 9, 9 : Samuel **videns**, id. 1 Par. 9, 22: Gad **videns** et Nathan propheta, id. 2 Par. 29, 25 et saep.

**videō vidī, visus, vidēre** [VID-], to see, discern, perceive.

Note how these approximate the Greek words if the "v" is removed.

*et casūs abies visura marinos*, i. e. to experience, V.--To see, look at, observe, note.

*quin tu me vides?* see what I have done! i. e. is not this creditable?

*me vide*, look at me, i. e. take courage from me.

Figurative: of the mind, to see, perceive, mark, observe, discern, understand, comprehend, be aware.

1. To look at, look to, consider, to think or reflect upon (cf.: *reputo, considero*): *duae condiciones sunt: utram tu accipias, vide, Plaut. Bacch. 4, 9, 118.*

2. To look out for, see to, care for, provide: *atque idem (sapiens) ita acrem in omnis partis aciem intendit, ut semper videat sedem sibi ac locum sine molestiā vivendi, Cic. Tusc. 4, 17, 38.*

3. To take care, see to it, make sure, with final clause: *navem idoneam ut habeas, diligenter videbis, Cic. Fam. 16, 1, 2.*

4. To see, i. e. reach, attain, obtain, enjoy.

From these examples we see how the Latin word emphasized the mental capacity *to understand, to see* with the mind.

### From Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

This root, occurring a total of 944 times, is used in every stem and expresses a multitude of shades of knowledge gained by the senses. Its closest synonyms are bîn "to discern" and n'kar "to recognize." The root is found in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and the Qumran materials. In addition to "know," the KJV uses the archaic forms "wot" and "wist."

y'd is used of God's knowledge of man (Gen 18:19; Deut 34:10) and his ways (Isa 48:8; Ps 1:6; 37:18), which knowledge begins even before birth (Jer 1:5). God also knows the fowl (Ps 50:11).

y'd is also used for man's knowledge and for that of animals (Isa 1:3).

The participle occurs in phrases describing skill in hunting (Gen 25:27), learning (Isa 29:11-13), lamentation (Amos 5:16), sailing the sea (2 Chron 8:18), and playing an instrument (1 Sam 16:16).

In certain contexts it means "to distinguish." "To know good and evil" (Gen 3:5,22) is the result of disobeying God. To distinguish between these is necessary for the king (2 Sam 19:36). A child cannot distinguish between the left and right hands (Jonah 4:11) nor between good and evil (Deut 1:39; Isa 7:15). The context of the latter passage and the similar statement in Isa 8:4 may indicate that the reference is to a child's not being able to distinguish what is beneficial and harmful. While ordinarily gained by experience, knowledge is also the contemplative perception possessed by the wise man (Prov 1:4; 2:6; 5:2; Eccl 1:18).

y'd is used to express acquaintance with a person in such statements as "do you know Laban?" (Gen 29:5; Ex 1:8; 2 Sam 3:25). The Pual participle designates kinfolk (2 Kings 10:11; etc.) and acquaintances (Job 19:14; Ruth 2:1; etc.). y'd is also used for the most intimate acquaintance. God knows Moses by name and face to face (Ex 33:17; Deut 34:10). He knows the Psalmist's sitting and arising (Ps 139:2).

y'd is also used for sexual intercourse on the part of both men and women in the well-known euphemism "Adam knew Eve his wife" and its parallels (Gen 4:1; 19:8; Num 31:17,35; Judg 11:39; 21:11; 1 Kings 1:4; 1 Sam 1:19). It is used to describe sexual perversions such as sodomy (Gen 19:5; Judg 19:22) and rape (Judg 19:25).

In addition to knowledge of secular matters y'd is also used of one's relation to the divine, whether acquaintance with other gods (Deut 13:3,7,14) or with Jehovah (1 Sam 2:12; 3:7). The heathen do not know God (Jer 10:25) and neither does Israel, according to the prophets (Jer 4:22). The plagues of Egypt were sent so that the Egyptians might know that Jehovah is God (Ex 10:2; etc.). He will destroy (Ezek 6:7) and restore Israel so that they may know that he is God (Isa 60:16). The prophet Ezekiel, in particular, uses the phrase "that you may know" in his threats (Ezek 6:7,10,13,14; 7:4,9,27 etc.).

d'a. **Knowledge**. This feminine noun is translated gnōsis in the LXX, and scientia in the Vulgate. The Lord is a God of all knowledge (Job 36:4; 1 Sam 2:3). The wicked question his knowledge (Ps 73:11). He is the object of man's knowledge, and Isaiah envisions an earth full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa 11:9). The prophet preaches knowledge (Isa 28:9) and the ideal ruler rules by it (Jer 3:15). The noun may be only another form of da'at (see below). The masculine noun dç'a is quite similar.

da'at. **Knowledge, cunning (ASV and RSV Similar)**. This feminine noun is from the root y'd "to know." The root expresses knowledge gained in various ways by the senses. The noun occurs ninety-three times in the Old Testament, most frequently in the wisdom literature, with forty-one instances in Prov, ten in Job, and nine in Eccl. It is used forty-two times in the Qumran materials and is also used in Ugaritic and Akkadian.

da'at is a general term for knowledge, particularly that which is of a personal, experimental nature (Prov 24:5). It is also used for technical knowledge or ability such as that needed for building the tabernacle and temple (Ex 31:3; 35:31; 1 Kings 7:14). da'at is also used for discernment (Ps 119:66). Both deeds committed unintentionally (Deut 4:42; 19:4; Josh 20:3,5; b@lî da'at) and mistaken opinions are "without knowledge" (loç da'at, Prov 19:2).

da'at is possessed by God (Job 10:7; Ps 139:6; Prov 3:20), from whom nothing can be hidden (Ps 139:1-18). He teaches it to man (Ps 94:10; 119:66; Prov 2:6). It appears parallel with wisdom (mçkmâ) and understanding (t@bûnâ), instruction (mûs'r), and law (tôrâ). Wisdom is used in series with "science" (madd<sup>1±</sup>, Dan 1:4) and is the opposite of "folly" (iwwet, Prov 12:23; 13:16; 14:18; 15:2). Hence da'at is the contemplative perception of the wise man (Prov 1:4; 2:6; 5:2; Eccl 1:18).

da'at is also used for moral cognition. Thus the tree in the Garden of Eden was a tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:9,17). By eating its fruit man came to know in a way comparable to the knowledge of God (see above). This important reference may also be taken as the figure of speech known as merism to indicate objective awareness of all things both good and bad. In this sense the sinful pain did become like God (Gen 3:22). Cassuto says, "Before they ate of the tree of knowledge, the man and his wife were like small children who know nought of what exists around them" (U. Cassuto, Genesis, vol. I, p. 112).

Particularly distinctive is the prophetic concept of "knowledge of God" (da'at'elohîm) which is particularly prominent in Hosea (Hos 4:1,6; 6:6; cf. Prov 2:5). Knowledge of God is derived from those outstanding historical events in which God has evidenced and has revealed himself to chosen individuals such as Abraham and Moses. These revelations are to be taught to others, "Knowledge of God" appears in

parallel with "fear of the Lord" (yir'at YHWH Isa 11:2; cf. Isa 58:2; Jer 22:16) as a description of true religion. The man who has a right relation with God confesses. him and obeys him. To do justice and righteousness and to judge the cause of the poor and the needy is to know God (Jer 22:15-16). On the other hand where there is no knowledge of God there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery and destruction upon a people (Hos 4:6; cf. Isa 5:13). Knowledge of God is more pleasing to him than sacrifice (Hos 6:6). The prophetic view of the messianic age is of a time in which the knowledge of God covers the earth as water covers the sea (Hab 2:14; cf. Isa 11:9).

yidd-œnî. **Wizard (KJV and some modern translations); fortune-teller (Berkeley Version, AR); familiar spirit (JPS, NEB); spirit (NEB, NAB); magician (JB); and sorcerer (JB),** Since the root of yidd@œnî is the verb y'd "to know," implied in the title, therefore, is esoteric knowledge not available to the ordinary person.

yidd-œnî always occurs parallel to **ôb (witch, q.v.). It may be a description of an ôb or it may be the masculine counterpart. (Similarly, "witch" and "wizard" are a feminine and masculine pair in English.) As the Hebrew word yidd@œnî is related to knowledge, so the English word "wizard" is related to wisdom.**

God forbade his people to consult the yidd-œnî (Lev 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut 18:11) as well as other diviners. Despite the fact that Saul outlawed them, he still consulted an ôb "spirit" according to 1 Sam 28. How the Israelite kings dealt with these spiritists was a significant factor in characterizing the king as good or evil (2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; 2 Chron 33:6). Isaiah spoke of them with utter scorn (Isa 8:19; 19:3).

mœda: Kinsman. The LXX follows the Kethib, rendering this feminine noun as gnœrismos "acquaintance," from a Piel participial form. The Vulgate and English versions follow the context where Boaz is a kinsman (Ruth 2:1; cf. Ruth 2:20; 3:2,12; 4:3). mœda± is used figuratively in Prov 7:4, paralleling sister, to describe wisdom.

mœda'at. **Kindred, kinsman.** The LXX renders this feminine noun as gnœrismos "acquaintance," but the Vulgate translates propinquus "kindred." The English versions follow the Vulgate and context (Ruth 3:2; cf. 2:20; 4:3). For the Levirate marriage custom, see Gen 38; Deut 25:5; Matt 22:23, and cf. y'bam.

madda: Knowledge, science, thought. This masculine noun is used in contexts with wisdom knowledge (2 Chron 1:10-12). The Hebrew children surpassed others in knowledge (Dan 1:4,7; KJV and ASV, "science"; RSV, "learning"). It is paralleled with that done in secret, hence "thought" (Eccl 10:20). It also occurs in Sir 3:13; Sir 13:8. **J.P.L.**

maddûa: **Why? wherefore? on what account? (ASV and RSV are similar.)** BDB and KB suggest that it is a contraction of mâ yadûa±what being known," i.e. "from what motive." It is variously translated in the LXX by tís, dia tí, hína tí, hína tí toûto, tí hotí, hês tí. Hence, this interrogative adverb is used to inquire about a motive (cf. Gen 26:27), as an indirect question (cf. Ex 3:3), or as a rhetorical device, as in Isa 5:4ff, "When I looked for good grapes, why did it only yield bad?" (NIV).