

BIBLICAL COLORS

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In "Touch Blue", Maxey Brooke is not quite fair to the writers of the Bible by attributing to them a measure of color-blindness for never mentioning that the sky is blue. To begin with, he asserts that the sky is mentioned more than 400 times in the Bible when in fact the word "sky" or "skies" appears only eleven times. More common (and undoubtedly what he had in mind) is "heaven". However, this word in its Biblical usage usually connotes a realm -- the abode of God or of the souls of the faithful departed -- rather than a canopy over the earth, and hence would have no color.

We can be sure that the Hebrews recognized the color blue and that it was not simply a synonym for purple by the fact that in several instances persons are described as wearing clothing of blue and purple, e.g. Jer. 10:9. In fact, all of the Biblical uses of the word "blue" refer to clothing or the adornment of clothing.

Interestingly, in two instances the sky is described as red (Matt 16:2,3) and it is evident that the folk wisdom on which the adage "red skies in the morning, sailors take warning / red skies at night, sailors' delight" is based is at least as old as Biblical times.

Actually, many colors are mentioned in the Bible. A (King James Version) count of those which come readily to mind is listed below. Particularly interesting is the variation of hue implied by the use of red, crimson and scarlet. Lest anyone think that the translators of the KJV simply tired of writing red and sought to vary their style by employing seventeenth-century synonyms not found in the ancient tongues, we can note that Hebrew used *ādhōm* for red, *karmīl* for crimson, and *shānī* for scarlet.

blue 17	blueness 1
green 26	Red Sea 21
purple 25	reddish 5
red 24	white (verb) 1
crimson 5	whiter 2
scarlet 41	whited 2
white 54	green tree 15
yellow 4	greenish 2
orange 0	greenness 1
violet 0	