

"OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

by Mario Seiglie

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GENESIS 9-11 THE TABLE OF NATIONS; THE TOWER OF BABEL

After the Flood, Noah and his family descended from Mt. Ararat to the plain below. They eventually followed the Euphrates river down to southern Mesopotamia, the land called "Shinar" and the area where they had previously lived (Gen. 11:2).

Why was Canaan cursed?

As they began to multiply, there is one incident in the Bible that has left many people perplexed—why was Canaan cursed and not his father, and why was this mentioned? It is mentioned because in the Bible, God is careful to record not only the righteous acts of the men and women of faith, but also some of their weaknesses or sins, so people will not idolize them. In the Scriptures, only Jesus Christ is without sin. Here, even righteous Noah, who "walked with God and was blameless," is shown to have sinned by becoming drunk.

In regard to Canaan's sin, the Bible records, "And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. So Noah awoke from his vine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said: 'Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.' And he said: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem; and may Canaan be his servant'" (Gen. 9:20-27). Why was Canaan cursed when it seems Ham was the guilty one?

In the Hebrew, it is hard to determine who was directly involved in this sin. The most probable explanation is that Ham only witnessed what his son Canaan had done. The term "uncovered" can mean to undress for an immoral sexual purpose, as in Leviticus 18:19-20; 20:11, 17-21. The key to understanding it was not Ham who committed the incestuous act with his father is found in vs. 24. When Noah awoke and knew what his "younger" son had done to him. The word "younger" in Hebrew can also be translated as "youngest." Ham was not Noah's youngest son, but Japheth. Canaan,

though, was Ham's youngest son (Gen. 10:6). Apparently, Canaan was cursed because he took advantage of Noah's stupor to commit a homosexual act. Ham only saw his father's nakedness and reported it to his brothers. Shem and Japheth walked backwards to cover their father out of respect for him and because they didn't want to see the evidence of what had happened to him. It is unfortunate that Canaan had this lascivious streak in him, for he would be the father of the Canaanites, and as it happens in many nations, the populace of a country generally follows the tendencies of their forefathers. Sadly, many of Canaan's descendants followed his sexual tendencies, such as those of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Merril Unger states: "The Canaanites were enslaved by one of the most terrible and degrading forms of idolatry, which encouraged their immorality. Discovered in 1929-1937, Canaanite religious literature from Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit in North Syria) reveals the worship of the immoral gods El and Baal and the sacred courtesans Anath, Asherah and Astarte. This literature *fully corroborates* the OT notices of the religious debauchery and moral degradation of the Canaanites. Cult objects, figurines and literature combine to show how sex-centered was Canaanite religion, with *human sacrifices*, cult of serpents, sacred courtesans and *eunuch priests* excessively common. The sordid depths of social degradation to which the erotic aspects of Canaanite cults led can scarcely be imagined" (*Bible Handbook*, p. 31).

The origins of the races

Next, the Bible reveals the origins of the different races and their basic geographical area, that to a large extent, still remain the same even today. In chapter 10, there are 70 families of nations described here, and they include the three primary colors of the races--black, white, and yellow, and from where the different mixtures and tones appear.

Byron Nelson notes, "An interesting side-light is cast by Mendelism (genetics) upon the geographical distribution of mankind. The different shades and colors of the human skin, as well as all other features of his body, are now known to be due to factors that follow Mendel's hereditary laws. The presence of the dark-skinned members of our race in the hot climates is not, therefore, to be explained

on the evolutionary basis of inheritance of acquired characters, as due to the effects through many generations of burning sunlight upon the skin, but as due to the fact that after the Flood dark-skinned specimens of humanity drifted south into the lands of the burning sun, while light-skinned variations of humanity drifted north into climates more suitable for them. Africans are not dark because they came to Africa. They came to Africa because they were dark. The darkest races of mankind are those which live where the sunlight is strongest and the skies clear; the fairest races live where the sun's rays are less intense and the skies are often overcast" (*After its Kind*, p. 120).

This chapter 10, that records the 70 nations, is unique in ancient literature. Archaeologist William Albright mentions, "The tenth chapter of Genesis...stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks...Many of the names of peoples and countries mentioned in this chapter have been discovered on the monuments for the first time...The Table of Nations remains ***an astonishingly accurate document***" (*Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible*, p. 30).

From what we can presently gather, here are the different nations, and where they are today:

<u>SHEM</u>	<u>HAM</u>	<u>JAPHETH</u>
<u>Elam</u> - southern Iran	<u>Cush</u> (eastern) Southern India	<u>Gomer</u> (eastern) Tartars, north
<u>Asshur</u> -Asiria & later Germany	<u>Sri Lanka</u> (western)	and central China
<u>Arphaxad</u> - Sala	<u>Somalia</u> ,	Vietnam, Laos
<u>Eber</u> -Hebrews	<u>Ethiopia</u>	(western)
<u>Peleg</u> - <u>Abram</u>	<u>Seba</u> -Sabeans	<u>Armenia</u> (white)
<u>Joktan</u> -13 Arab Tribes	<u>Havilah</u> - Central Arabia	<u>Magog</u> (eastern)
<u>Lud</u> – Lidia, (Semite part)	<u>Nimrod</u> Sumerians	Mongolia
<u>Aram</u> - Arameans	<u>Mizraim</u> -Egypt	(western) Slavs, Russia
West Turkey, Irak	<u>Put</u> (oriental) N. India	<u>Madai</u> - Medes
	(western) Libia	<u>Javan</u> (eastern)
	<u>Canaan</u> - area of ancient	Southern China
		(western) Greece
		<u>Tarsis</u> - Spain
		<u>Tubal</u> – Tibet,
		<u>Meshech</u> -
Moscow	Canaan	

In the Table of Nations, there is one person that stands out—Nimrod, who "began to be a mighty one on the earth" (Genesis 10:8). He erected the

first empire around the southern Mesopotamia area. "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Caneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Niniveh..." (Gen. 10:10-11). Shinar is the most ancient reference to the land of Babylon. When it says he was a mighty hunter "before" the Lord, it is not a complement, but rather a criticism, for his might defied God and His way of life. He began the project to build a huge tower in defiance of God.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, says about Nimrod: "Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah—a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means that they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book 1, section 4).

It is generally attributed to Nimrod the beginning of the Babylonian Mystery religion that posed as a counterfeit system, with many cleverly devised imitations of God's true system to deceive the world. It was from Babel that all the corrupt religious systems were originally based, and afterwards, were adapted by the different cultures.

In this regard, Ralph Woodrow mentions: "Not only was Nimrod against the true God, he was also a priest of devil-worship and of heathenism of the worse kind...After Nimrod's death, his wife, Queen Semiramis, claimed that he was now the Sun-god. And later, when this adulterous and idolatrous woman gave birth to an illegitimate son, she claimed that this son, Tammuz by name, was Nimrod reborn. Now the queen-Mother of Tammuz had no doubt heard the prophecy of the coming Messiah to be born of a woman, for this truth was known from the earliest times (See Gen. 3:15). Satan had first seduced a woman, Eve; but later through a woman was to come the savior—our Lord Jesus Christ. Satan, the great counterfeiter, also

knew much about the Divine Plan. Thus, he began to set up counterfeits of the true plan centuries before Jesus came...This system of idolatry spread from Babylon to the nations, for it was from this location that men were scattered over the face of the earth. As they went from Babylon, they took their worship of the Babylonian family and its various mystery symbols with them. And so, to this day, we find evidence of the religion of Babylon—in one form or another—in all the false religions of the world! Truly Babylon was the “Mother”—the originator—of false religion and the idolatry that has spread throughout the earth. As the scriptures declare, “All nations drank from her cup of false doctrine” (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 18:3).

The tower of Babel was impressive and the technology was reaching a dangerous level. God decided to confound the common language of the people, and in that way, stopped further construction. In frustration, each tribal family that had the same language departed to establish its own form of civilization. They truly were scattered “abroad over the face of all the earth” (Gen. 11:9).

What happened to this fabled tower? The Babylonians, or the inhabitants of Babel who remained in the area, apparently were very proud of this tower, for they built many more, called *ziggurats*, of which there are 35 ruins of towers found in the area. They had seven levels, and became a pattern for the first Egyptian pyramids.

The New Bible Dictionary explains, “Babel, or ‘the gate of God’, called also Babylon. The name of one of the chief cities founded by Nimrod in the land of Shinar (Sumer), ancient Babylon. According to Babylonian tradition, the tower was founded by the god Marduk and destroyed by Sargon in 2350 BC...Sharkalisharri, king of Agade (c. 2250 BC) mentions the restoration of the temple-tower at Babylon, implying the existence on an earlier sacred city on the site...After Sharkalisharri, the earliest reference to the ziggurat at Babylon is to its restoration by Esarhaddon in 681-665 BC. This was named in Sumerian ‘Etemenanki’—‘the Building of the Foundation’ whose top reaches to heaven.’ It is very probable that such a sacred edifice followed an earlier plan. The tower was severely damaged in the war of 652-648 BC but restored again by Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC). It was this building, part of which was recovered by Koldewey in 1899, which was described by Herodotus on his

visit in 460 BC and is discussed in a cuneiform tablet dated 229 BC. These enable an approximate picture of the later tower to be given. The base stage measured 90 x 90 m and was 33 m high. Above this were built five platforms, each 6-8 m high but of diminishing area. The whole was crowned by a temple where the god was thought to descend for intercourse with mankind...The *ziggurat* at Babylon was demolished by Xerxes in 472 BC, and though Alexander cleared the rubble prior to its restoration, this was thwarted by his death. The bricks were subsequently removed by the local inhabitants, and today the site of Etemenanki is a pit as deep as the original construction was high” (p. 110). So the Tower of Babel was not a myth, but a true account.

Is there any evidence that the different languages started at one time? Yes there is. Linguists admit they have no feasible explanation for how or why we have so many languages. Dr. Mario Pei, a world-famous linguist and author, states, “If there is one thing on which all linguists are fully agreed, it is that the problem of the origin of human speech is still unresolved” (*Story of Language*, p. 14).

Presently, there are some 5,000 different languages, with seven main branches, which are spoken around the world. About a 1,000 are doomed to disappear within two decades, due in large part to the major languages extending their cultural and economic dominion. It is interesting to note that the more advanced a culture becomes, the simpler the language gets, since people tend to simplify and abbreviate their concepts and words. In contrast, the most primitive tribes have the most complex language, many, such as Swahili, with 26 noun classes! This shows language has not “evolved” but “devolved” from a very sophisticated primitive system. This diversity and complexity of the language is another proof that God, and not humans, is the author of the present languages.

In the next study, we begin with the life of Abraham, the father of the faith.