

Awakening in the Word

By Glenn McWilliams of TK TORAH KEEPERS
www.MichaelRoodMinistries.com and www.tktorahkeepers.com

THE OVERVIEW

It is quite clear from the opening story of our portion that the flood did not change the nature of man. Even though Noah and his sons may have been the most righteous and worthy people of their day, clearly the mixed seed of the Garden of Eden is still present in them. Our portion reveals the reality that sin is still part of the nature of man. We see in this opening story of the shortcomings of Noah and the diverse natures of Ham and his brothers the foundation for man's current struggles and behavior. We should also realize that it is from this "mixed seed" that the earth would be repopulated. The rest of the portion focuses on the "generations" of the descendants of Noah as they fulfill the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. We see in these genealogies the origins of Israel as well as the many nations they will interact with both positively and negatively throughout history. As we saw in the opening portions of the Bible, here too the seeds of the rest of the biblical account of history are being planted.

THE OUTLINE

- Genesis 9:18-19 The common origin of the human race is affirmed
- Genesis 9:20-21 The shortcomings of Noah
- Genesis 9:22 The sin of Ham
- Genesis 9:23 The righteousness of Shem and Japheth
- Genesis 9:24-27 The blessings and curses of Noah
- Genesis 9:28-29 The life of Noah summarized
- Genesis 10:1 The generations of the sons of Noah born after the flood
- Genesis 10:2-5 The sons of Japheth
- Genesis 10:6-14 The sons of Ham
- Genesis 10:15-20 The sons of Canaan
- Genesis 10:21-31 The sons of Shem
- Genesis 10:32 The concluding formula

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the phrase "*Noah began to be an husbandman*"?
2. What did Noah do to the earth?
3. What was the sin of Ham?
4. Why does the Torah repeatedly tell us that Ham is the father of Canaan?
5. Why is Canaan cursed and not Ham?
6. Is the curse of Canaan a "generational" curse?
7. What does the name "Canaan" mean?
8. What does it mean to be a servant of servants?
9. Who is blessed by Noah?
10. What is meant by "nakedness"?
11. What does it mean to "uncover someone's nakedness"?
12. What is significant about the genealogies?
13. What is the character of Nimrod?
14. What is the significance of the order of Noah's sons in the genealogy?

THE TEXT

Genesis 9:18-10:32 *And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. ¹⁹These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. ²⁰And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: ²¹and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. ²²And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. ²³And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. ²⁴And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. ²⁵And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. ²⁶And he said, Blessed be YHWH Elohim of Shem; and Canaan shall be His servant. ²⁷Elohim shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. ²⁸And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. ²⁹And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.*

^{10:1}*Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood. ²The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. ³And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. ⁵By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations. ⁶And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan. ⁷And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. ⁸And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before YHWH: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before YHWH. ¹⁰And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah,*

¹²and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city. ¹³And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, ¹⁴and Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim. ¹⁵And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, ¹⁶and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, ¹⁷and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, ¹⁸and the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. ¹⁹And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha. ²⁰These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations. ²¹Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born. ²²The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram. ²³And the children of Aram; Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Mash. ²⁴And Arphaxad begat Salah; and Salah begat Eber. ²⁵And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁶And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah, ²⁷and Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah, ²⁸and Obal, and Abimael, and Sheba, ²⁹and Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab: all these were the sons of Joktan. ³⁰And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar a mount of the east. ³¹These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. ³²These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

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In last week's portion Noah, his wife, his sons, and his sons' wives all disembarked from the ark. The first thing that Noah did when he came off the ark was build an altar and make an offering to YHWH.

Genesis 8:20 *And Noah builded an altar unto YHWH; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

Following this act of devotion, the Holy One entered into covenant with Noah and all of creation by promising never again to destroy the whole of creation by means of a flood.

Genesis 8:21-22 *And YHWH smelled a sweet savour; and YHWH said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. ²² While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

Likewise, the Creator gave Noah and his sons instructions and commandments concerning the establishment of government and the repopulating of the earth.

Genesis 9:1-7 *And Elohim blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. ² And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. ³ Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. ⁴ But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. ⁵ And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. ⁶ Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of Elohim made He man. ⁷ And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.*

This week our narrative continues with the beginning of new life upon the face of the earth. Our portion begins with the affirmation of Noah and his sons as the common origin of all human life upon the recently purged earth.

Genesis 9:18-19 *And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.*

In this verse we see the hope-filled sentiment of Noah and his sons as they fulfill their calling to be fruitful and multiply. So it is that we see life beginning to return to normal. This is further substantiated by the next verse concerning Noah.

Genesis 9:20 *And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard.*

Once again we see the very beginning of civilization with the planting of a vineyard and the cultivation of food. In many ways we may see this verse as an allegory of human civilization. Just as Noah planted

seed and cultivated a vineyard, our portion teaches about the “seed” of Noah and the reestablishing or cultivating of civilization. What quickly becomes evident in this story is the reality that from the time of the fall of Adam and Chava, the “seed” of man has been mixed seed. One of the dominant themes of this portion is the revelation of the mixed seed sown by Noah and the fruit it eventually brings forth.

We also realize that the “seed” of man is mixed because the nature of man is mixed. We have already discussed in previous portions the spiritual nature and the animal nature of man. Adam was created to live in a specific order. The spirit of man was to have dominion over the soul, while the soul was to exercise dominion over the flesh. To reverse this order is to live contrary to the will of the Creator. Let us for a moment revisit this topic as it was demonstrated in the names and birth order of the sons of Noah.

While the listing of the sons of Noah in a consistent order may simply be an expression of their birth order, I believe that their names in this particular order reveal the reason why the sons of Noah were chosen to join their father on the ark. To understand this, we need to understand the names and their significance.

The name Shem (*shin, mem*) means “name.” The name Ham – “Cham” (*chet, mem*) in Hebrew – means “heat.” The name Japheth – “Yaphet” (*yud, fay, tav*) in Hebrew – means “open” or “beauty.”

We should remember that “naming” the animals, thereby exercising dominion over the animal realm, was the means by which Adam manifested the image of Elohim.

Genesis 1:26-27 *And Elohim said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them.*

Genesis 2:19-20 *And out of the ground YHWH Elohim formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. ²⁰And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.*

We witnessed YHWH exercising this same dominion in the naming of Adam.

Genesis 5:1-2 *This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that Elohim created man, in the likeness of Elohim made He him; ²male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.*

We may associate Shem or “name” with the act of exercising dominion, which is a manifestation of the image of the Creator.

The name Ham or “heat” may be associated with one’s emotions, such as anger, agitation, lust, and passion.

Esther 1:12 *But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.*

Lamentations 2:3 *He hath cut off in His fierce anger all the horn of Israel: He hath drawn back His right hand from before the enemy, and He burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about.*

1 Corinthians 7:9 *But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.*

Luke 24:32 *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?*

In this regard Ham may be associated with the soul, the seat of one's intellect and emotions.

The name Japheth means "open," but it is also related to the Hebrew word *yapheh* (*yud, fey, hey*), which means "fair" or "beauty." This name suggests the outward appearance; therefore, it may be associated with the flesh and the senses.

Genesis 3:6 *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

Genesis 6:2 *That the sons of Elohim saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.*

2 Samuel 11:2 *And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.*

1 Kings 1:3 *So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.*

In these three names we see the three aspects of man: spirit, soul, and body. It is important for us not only to recognize the significance of these names but also the consistent order in which they are listed. Shem, which represents the spirit and dominion, is always listed in the head position. Ham, which represents the soul or emotions, is always immediately beneath Shem, the spirit. Japheth, the body of man, is always listed last and immediately under Ham, the soul. This order of the spirit exercising dominion over the soul and the soul exercising dominion over the flesh is the order man was created to live in. In the original relationship between the Creator and Adam, the Spirit of the Holy One spoke to the spirit of Adam; the spirit of Adam informed the soul of Adam how to feel and think; and the soul informed the body of Adam how to interact with the world around him.

We may recall that the "fall" of Adam and Chava was precipitated by their choice to live in the mixture of knowledge gained by their senses and the revelation knowledge of YHWH.¹ This mixture is the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Instead of exercising dominion over their lower animal nature, which lives by the senses, Adam and Chava allowed their souls to be drawn to the flesh instead of the spirit, thus becoming carnal beings. By listing the names of the sons of Noah consistently in this sequence, the Torah is telling us that the descendants of Noah were living in the proper order; therefore, like their father, they were fitting vessels for the Creator's restoration project.

While Noah and his sons may have indeed been fitting vessels for the Creator's restoration project, it is important that we understand that they had the same potential to fall as the rest of us. In our portion we will witness the dangers of this dual nature.

Once again, the Hebrew language helps us to understand what is being taught in this narrative. In English, our text states:

Genesis 9:20 *And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard.*

But the literal Hebrew text gives us further understanding.

¹ See my portion Y1 P2 6008 Bereshit 2:4-3:24

Bereshit 9:20 *Vy'yachel Noah ish ha'adamah vy'yitta karem.*

"And defiled, Noah the man of the adamah, and planted a vineyard."

The Hebrew word *yachel* comes from the root word *chalal* (*chet, lammed, lammed*), which can mean to "pierce," "defile," "desecrate," "profane," "pollute," "pollute oneself ritually or sexually," or possibly "begin."² We may think of Noah breaking up the "virgin" soil of the earth in order to plant his vineyard; but in another sense of the word we may understand that because of the vineyard and the wine it produced, Noah eventually defiled himself. In such a context Noah is called a "man of the *adamah*."³ Likewise, we may remember here that Cain was a tiller of the *adamah*.⁴ We may also remember that Adam was made from *adamah*. *Adamah* is the "flesh" of man. While man is made of *adamah*, he is not to live as *adamah*. Man was endowed with the very Spirit of the Holy One; therefore, man is to live in the upper realm as a man of the spirit. Man is to sanctify the lowly *adamah* by utilizing it to fulfill his holy calling to be the image of Elohim. While planting a vineyard is fine, Noah's drunkenness leads to the profaning of his nature, which brings him down to the level of the *adamah*.

Genesis 9:21 *And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.*

While clearly not forbidding wine or strong drink, the Scriptures do warn of the dangers of overindulgence. Drunkenness is seen to be the "fruit of the flesh," or better said, the "fruit of the *adamah*."

Proverbs 20:1 *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*

Proverbs 21:17 *He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.*

Proverbs 23:29-32 *Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? ³⁰They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. ³¹Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. ³²At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*

Galatians 5:21 *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of Elohim.*

We may remember that Cain's rejected offering was also the "fruit of the *adamah*."

Genesis 4:3 *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground (adamah) an offering unto YHWH.*

Genesis 4:5 *But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell.*

Perhaps what is more telling than the statement of Noah's drunkenness, however, is the description of Noah being "uncovered." The Hebrew word translated as "uncovered" is from the root word *galah* (*gimmel, lammed, hey*), which can mean "uncover," "remove," "exile," "disclose," "nakedness," and

² The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words, James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., Thomas Nelson Publishers, Pg. 469

³ Compare Genesis 2:7. The flesh nature of Adam is made from the *adamah*.

⁴ Genesis 4:2

“reveal.” *Galah* is part of the root of the name “Galilee.” In some sense we may say that by his drunkenness, Noah “exiled” or “removed” himself from YHWH’S covering presence. In his weakness and drunkenness the righteous one, Noah, was exposed to be but a mere man like all others.

There are numerous lessons to be learned from Noah’s stumbling. Primarily, we should realize that no matter how righteous or holy we think we are, we are always vulnerable to falling to our lower nature; therefore, we must learn to walk out our faith carefully and humbly.

Proverbs 3:7 *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear YHWH, and depart from evil.*

Proverbs 24:16 *For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*

Proverbs 28:10 *Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.*

Psalms 37:23-24 *The steps of a good man are ordered by YHWH: and He delighteth in his way. ²⁴Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for YHWH upholdeth him with His hand.*

Psalms 82:6-7 *I have said, Ye are elohim; and all of you are children of the most High. ⁷But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.*

James 1:14 *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

1 Corinthians 10:12 *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

Proverbs 11:2 *When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.*

Proverbs 29:23 *A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.*

Proverbs 16:18 *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

While I do not mean to imply that Noah was acting in a haughty or prideful manner, he nonetheless demonstrates for us the vulnerability of the righteous.

What happened between Noah and Ham during this low moment is left in an ambiguous fog. It is possible that the offense of Ham was so great and so vile that the Torah refused to record it. This ambiguity should not prevent us from seeking some measure of understanding on this matter. Let us first look at the text and then speculate as to its meaning.

Genesis 9:21-24 *And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. ²²And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. ²³And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. ²⁴And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.*

At the *pshat*⁵ level or plain understanding of the text, the offense is grounded on the fact that Ham entered his father’s tent, saw his father’s nakedness, and did nothing to cover him. Instead, Ham went out and broadcast to his two brothers what he had seen. What is puzzling in this story is the fact that

⁵ *Pshat* refers to the plain meaning of the text.

Ham's son Canaan is cursed, not Ham. This puzzle has led many to speculate concerning the reason for this peculiar behavior on the part of Noah.

If it is true that Canaan was cursed for Ham's behavior, it would seem to contradict the very words of YHWH as declared through the prophets.

Ezekiel 18:2-4 *What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? ³As I live, saith Adonai YHWH, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. ⁴Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

Ezekiel 18:19-20 *Yet say ye, Why? Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all My statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. ²⁰The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

Jeremiah 31:29-30 *In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ³⁰But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.*

This has led some to consider the curse upon Canaan as a generational curse, as is mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures.

Exodus 34:7 *Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*

Lamentations 5:7 *Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.*

It would appear that these texts contradict themselves; therefore, let us understand the very nature of a generational curse. YHWH is not fickle. We should understand very clearly that the one who sins bears the burden of his sin. The children are not punished for the father's sin. However, we are also given clear testimony in the Scriptures of the fathers teaching their children to sin. In other words, the father sets the example of what is acceptable for the children. Therefore, if a father lives contrary to the covenant of YHWH, then most likely the children, following the father's example, will do so and more. The books of Kings repeatedly emphasizes this theme.

1 Kings 15:11 *And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of YHWH, as did David his father.*

1 Kings 15:26 *And he did evil in the sight of YHWH, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.*

1 Kings 22:52-53 *And he did evil in the sight of YHWH, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: ⁵³for he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger YHWH Elohim of Israel, according to all that his father had done.*

2 Kings 14:3 *And he did that which was right in the sight of YHWH, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did.*

2 Kings 15:3 *And he did that which was right in the sight of YHWH, according to all that his father Amaziah had done.*

2 Kings 15:34 *And he did that which was right in the sight of YHWH: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.*

2 Kings 21:21 *And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them.*

The sons were punished because they, like their fathers, sinned and did evil in the eyes of the Sovereign Creator.

Concerning Canaan and Ham, we should note in our text that twice in the opening verses of the narrative we are told that Ham is the father of Canaan. We have already noted that following these events, it is Canaan, not Ham, who is cursed.

Genesis 9:18 *And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan.*

Genesis 9:22 *And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.*

Genesis 9:25 *And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*

Some teach that it was Canaan who was cursed instead of Ham because YHWH had already blessed Ham along with his father and brothers as they came off the ark; therefore, Noah could not curse him. We witness a very similar sentiment in the words of Balaam to king Balak, who sought to have the prophet curse the children of Israel. Balaam responds:

Numbers 22:12 *And Elohim said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.*

Numbers 23:8 *How shall I curse, whom Elohim hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom YHWH hath not defied?*

Numbers 23:20 *Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.*

While this logic may be enough to cause Noah not to curse Ham, it does not explain why he would place a curse on Canaan. To curse the son for the father's sin would be a clear violation of the Scriptures.

Ezekiel 18:4 *Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

Ezekiel 18:24 *But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.*

I find it unbelievable that YHWH would punish Canaan for Ham's sins. This has led others to reason that it must have been Canaan who committed the sin. Pointing to the fact that the text twice mentions that Canaan is the son of Ham, some of the rabbis teach that Canaan was already born when the offense occurred.

According to Rashi and others it was Canaan, the son of Ham, who saw Noah's nakedness and ran to tell his father; or perhaps he committed an even worse offense.⁶

According to Sforno, Ham gazed at, but did not protest—the indignity that Canaan had perpetuated upon Noah (For according to Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, Canaan castrated Noah). Others maintain that it was Ham who did so.⁷

The idea that Canaan or Ham castrated Noah largely comes from the fact that Noah had no other children after the flood, although he lived for another 350 years. Here we may compare the pattern of genealogy found in Genesis chapter 5.

Genesis 5:6-17 *And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos:⁷ and Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters:⁸ and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.⁹ And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan:¹⁰ and Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters:¹¹ and all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died.¹² And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel:¹³ and Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters:¹⁴ and all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died.¹⁵ And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared:¹⁶ and Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters:¹⁷ and all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died.*

In this earlier passage there is a pattern of the father begetting a named, firstborn son through whom the line continues and then begetting other nameless sons and daughters prior to his death. With Noah, however, we see this pattern broken. Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth prior to the flood. After the flood Noah is told to be fruitful and multiply, and yet, there is no mention of other children being fathered by Noah after the flood. It is this breaking of the pattern that caused some to believe that either Ham or Canaan had castrated Noah. While this would indeed explain why Noah had no other children and why he would curse Canaan, there is no real evidence of such a barbaric act in the text itself. Therefore, I would like to suggest yet another possible explanation.

The narrative tells us that Noah was in his tent, drunk and uncovered, and that Ham saw his father's nakedness.

Genesis 9:22 *And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.*

The question we might ask is, was Noah alone in his tent? We know that Noah was married and that his wife came off the ark with him. I would suggest that Noah's wife was in the tent with him. It is possible that she participated with Noah in sharing the fruit of his labor. If this is so, then it is possible that Ham saw something more than Noah's nakedness. It is possible that he saw Noah's wife's nakedness; in fact, I will go so far as to suggest that Ham did something more than just look.

Let us look further in the Torah to see if there is any support for this possible solution to the puzzle of Canaan being cursed by Noah.

Leviticus 18:6-19 *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their **nakedness**: I am YHWH. ⁷The **nakedness** of thy father, or the **nakedness** of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her*

⁶ The Schottenstein Edition Interlinear Chumash Volume 1: Bereishis / Genesis, Mesorah Publication, Pg.48

⁷ Ibid.

nakedness. ⁸*The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.* ⁹*The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.* ¹⁰*The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness.* ¹¹*The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.* ¹²*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman.* ¹³*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman.* ¹⁴*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt.* ¹⁵*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.* ¹⁶*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness.* ¹⁷*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness.* ¹⁸*Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.* ¹⁹*Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness.*

Deuteronomy 22:30 *A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.*

Deuteronomy 27:20 *Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.*

In these passages we clearly see that a wife is considered to be the “nakedness” of her husband. Based on this understanding, I would suggest that Ham entered Noah’s tent, saw his father drunk and possibly passed out, and had intercourse with Noah’s wife, thereby “**uncovering his father’s nakedness**” as described in Leviticus 18. I would further suggest that Canaan is the child born from this incestuous coupling of Ham and Noah’s wife. We have already seen the emphasis that the Torah places on the fact that Ham is the father of Canaan. This emphasis may have been necessary to explain that Noah was not the father of the child born to his wife. This child from an incestuous relationship would be considered an illegitimate child and would, therefore, be cursed.

Deuteronomy 23:2 *A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of YHWH; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of YHWH.*

We may also note that after this incident the name of Ham is not mentioned again in this particular narrative. Instead, he is referred to as Noah’s “younger son.” The literal Hebrew, however, refers to Ham as the *katan* (*kof, tet, nun*) – the “little” or “least” son. We may also take note that while Canaan clearly seems to be Ham’s firstborn, being the only child mentioned in this narrative, he is listed last in the list of Ham’s descendants.

Genesis 10:6 *And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.*

We witness a similar pattern in the later list of Simeon’s descendants.

Genesis 46:10 *And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman.*

Some have speculated that the “Canaanitish woman” is Jacob’s daughter Dinah, who was widowed when Simeon and Levi killed Shechem when they rescued their sister.⁸ Shaul is said to be the son born after Shechem raped Dinah. Whoever this child is, it is clear that his diminished status is reflected in his being listed last.

⁸ Genesis 34:1-26

Likewise, Canaan is listed last due to his diminished status among the descendants of Ham. I would suggest that this is due not only to the curse but also to the circumstances surrounding his very conception.

It is interesting to note the nature of the curse or declaration that Noah makes over Canaan.

Genesis 9:25 *And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*

Canaan is to be a servant of servants. On the *pshat* level of understanding, this simply means that Canaan would be the lowest of the low. But if we remember the nature of man as described earlier in the order of the names of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, we shall come to yet a deeper understanding of this statement. Ham, the father of Canaan, represents the soul of man, which is to be submitted to or be servant to the spirit of man (Shem). Instead, Ham (the soul) was led by his flesh nature and committed fornication with the wife of Noah, the fruit of which was Canaan. Since Ham (the soul) served the flesh (Japheth), Canaan would learn from his father and become a servant of servants or a servant to his flesh. The curse is that Canaan would not be a man of the spirit living in the proper order; rather, he would be a man of the flesh living his life out of order and, therefore, under the judgment of the Sovereign Creator.

It is interesting to note in the genealogy that the descendants of Ham and Canaan are often shown to be sexually immoral and perverse people. It was Pharaoh who kidnapped Sarah.⁹ Likewise, Abimelech the Canaanite lusted after Sarah.¹⁰ The Sodomites also are descended from Ham.¹¹ It was Shechem who raped Dinah.¹² Likewise, both of Judah's sons with the Canaanite woman were perverse.¹³ Finally, we may recall that it was the Egyptian wife of Potiphar who attempted to seduce Joseph.¹⁴ It is because of this sexual perversity that the Torah later warns the descendants of Shem not to learn the ways of the Egyptians or the Canaanites.

Leviticus 18:3 *After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwell, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.*

Leviticus 18:24-25 *Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: ²⁵and the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.*

Leviticus 20:23 *And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.*

So we see that the descendants of Ham walk after the flesh instead of the spirit.

We should note that all those who would be driven out of the land of Israel for their wickedness were, in fact, descendants of Ham and Canaan.

We should also note that after Noah declares a "curse" over Canaan, he offers a blessing.

⁹ Genesis 12:10-20

¹⁰ Genesis 20

¹¹ Genesis 19:5

¹² Genesis 34:1-2

¹³ Genesis 38:1-30

¹⁴ Genesis 39:1-23

Genesis 9:26-27 *And he said, Blessed be YHWH Elohim of Shem; and Canaan shall be His servant. ²⁷Elohim shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.*

Here we must note that Noah does not directly bless Shem; instead, he blesses the Elohim of Shem! Noah then goes on to declare that Canaan shall be “His” servant. The pronoun here can only refer to the Elohim of Shem. Thus, we see in this blessing a prophetic statement that ultimately even Canaan shall come to bow before YHWH, the Elohim of Shem.

Zechariah 14:16 *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

We see that all will eventually come to worship in the tents or tabernacle of Shem and serve the Elohim of Shem.

The rest of our portion contains the genealogy of the nations that will set the stage for all that is yet to come in the Torah. Most notably in this portion is the rise of Nimrod as a tyrant and king upon the earth.

Genesis 10:8-10 *And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before YHWH: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before YHWH. ¹⁰And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.*

We should remember that all of the people on the earth are related. All of the people inhabiting the earth are equally descendants of Noah and his sons. But here, with the rise of Nimrod, we see one who exalts himself above all others to become a ruler over men. It is ultimately Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, who will lead the effort to overthrow even the authority and sovereignty of YHWH upon the earth.

Seventy nations and people groups will be born from the three sons of Noah. From these seventy people groups one line shall emerge as the promised “seed” that will be called upon to restore the image of YHWH among men. However, at present, the garden we look at upon the purged earth is clearly planted with mixed seed bearing mixed fruit. We may be reminded of Yeshua’s parable:

Matthew 13:24-30 *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: ²⁵but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. ²⁶But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. ²⁷So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? ²⁸He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? ²⁹But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

Until the harvest comes, the wheat and the tares, the righteous and the wicked, and the spirit and the flesh all contend one with another for advantage. Again, as Yeshua taught, the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. But from the remnant of the seventy nations will come the seed of promise who shall reign over the just and the unjust alike.

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