THE CURSE OF CANAAN AND IT'S
RELATIONSHIP TO THE BLACK RACE

By

Rev. William R. Glaze

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Contextual Analysis

Text

Genesis 9:18-27

18 And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Ca-
naan.
19 These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.
20 And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:
21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.
22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.
23 And 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.
24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his young-
er son had done unto him.
25 And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.
26 And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Ca-
naan shall be his servant.
27 God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

Relationship of Genesis 9:18-27 to the Bible

Genesis 9:18-27, however significant in its own right, must be examined in its relation to the entirety of God's Word. Every passage of Scripture contributes some important element of truth to the overall purpose and plan of the Bi-

ble. This reality becomes even more astounding when one
considers the fact that the Bible was written by some forty different writers, who wrote over a period of fifteen hundred years, yet the Bible "is in reality but one book."\(^1\) The late Henry Thiessen stated that it "has one doctrinal viewpoint, one moral standard, one plan of salvation, one program of the ages, one worldview."\(^2\) Thus, it can be concluded that the Word of God also has one central theme, which is "salvation through Jesus Christ."\(^3\) Having this basic definition for the theme of the Bible, it is now necessary to show its relationship to Genesis 9:18-27.

Since the passage under observation is a pivotal point in God's plan of redemption, it becomes vitally important to the Biblical theme of "salvation through Jesus Christ" for two reasons. First, it is important because it reveals the character traits of Noah's three sons in accordance with the blessing and cursing of verses 25-27. Noah's prophetic declaration established distinctive features which were to characterize his sons. Moreover, the seriousness of this oracle is brought to light when it is coupled with the fact that Noah's sons are the respective heads of the three ethnological branches of mankind. Thus, they stood at the


\(^2\)Ibid.

forefront, representing each group, as God initiated His new plan of redemption. Against this setting God instituted a program of "promising blessing to those obedient in faith and cursing to those who rebel." This is the starting point for tracing the ancestry of Shem, Ham, and Japheth through the Bible, and to observe the manner in which God's course of salvation was unveiled via them.

Secondly, it narrows the lineage of the seed promised in Genesis 3:15 down to one race of people. Up until Genesis 9:18-27, the seed who was to "bruise the head of the serpent" was to come through a woman. This means that the much heralded Messiah of the Old Testament could have come from any line of the antediluvian society. But after the Flood, the seed was confined to one of Noah's three sons. Furthermore, in this passage the seed finally became confined to one ethnological group. Verses 26 and 27 teach that God's redeeming seed was to come from the line of Shem, whose descendants are known as Semites. Thus, it is evident that this passage is germane to the central theme of the Bible.

Relationship of Genesis 9:18-27 to the Book of Genesis

This brief narrative on the new beginning of man is a fitting episode in a book characterized by beginnings. Even

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the Hebrew title (יהוהאֱלֹהֵים), translated "in the beginning," tends to set the tone for the Book of Genesis. The Septuagint uses the term ( yap εὐαγγέλιον), which came to the English Bible by way of the Latin Vulgate, being translated "Genesis." This word is used because it describes the beginning or origin of all things. Dr. Henry Morris, the famous creation scientist, makes the following observation: "The word genesis of course means "origin," and the Book of Genesis gives the only true and reliable account of the origin of all basic entities of the universe and of life." 6

Indeed the Book of Genesis is a fitting background for the present passage under consideration. It is here that a renewed beginning is given to sinful man. This is the foundational basis for the development of the new race. Therefore, it is imperative that the correct interpretation of Genesis 9:18-27 be presented, because herein lie the origin and early beginning of the new race. Among this new race is the various ethnic races of mankind. In other words, the relationship between this section of Genesis and the rest of the book cannot be emphasized enough, because from this new beginning "was the whole earth overspread" (v. 19).

The Immediate Context of Genesis 9:18-27

Author


Critics holding to the "Documentary Hypothesis Theory" view these verses as unification of two separate J documents. They advance the idea "that this passage contains two parallel but different traditions of Noah's family." It is argued that verses 18 and 19 form one tradition which supplies information concerning Noah's three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) who are the progenitors of the earth. And verses 20-27 form the other tradition giving the account of Noah's drunkenness which resulted in the subsequent cursing and blessing of his sons (Shem, Japheth, and Canaan). Advocates of this theory believe that verses 18-27, in their present state, have been altered for the sake of cohesion. These scholars assert that the phrases (יִשָּׁבֵל וְיָדֶהוּ וָאָבְנָא מִלָּהוּ) "and Ham is the father of" (v. 18), and (והָאָבָא מִלָּהוּ) "Ham the father of" (v. 22) are the work of a redactor trying to harmonize these two separate traditions "by equating Ham in one with Canaan in the other." In short, those who


8 Gene Rice, "The Curse That Never Was (Genesis 9:18-27)," Journal of Religious Thought 29 (1972): 7. See also his overwhelming list of Biblical scholars who have adopted and defended this tradition. On pages 8 and 9 of his article, Rice lists over 50 men who hold to this parallel tradition of Genesis 9:18-27.

9 Notice the difference between the three sons listed in these two separate traditions.

10 Ibid., p. 8.
espouse this view suggest three different hands involved in writing this passage—two individual writers behind each J document and a redactor who harmonized this passage. They thereby deny Mosaic authorship.

Despite the sophisticated analysis by the higher critics, the fact remains that Moses wrote Genesis 9:18-27. Not only did he write this section, but also the entire book of Genesis. This is verified by the Lord in Luke 24:27 and 44. In these verses, Jesus revealed to the two travelers on the Emmaus Road, and to His disciples in Jerusalem, that He was the fulfillment of all the verses in the Old Testament speaking of the Messiah, beginning at Moses (Genesis) and ending with the Prophets (Malachi). In addition to this confirmation by Christ, the testimony of Jewish tradition and the witness of the church fathers also ascribe the first book of the Pentateuch to Moses.¹¹ So then, the question is not did Moses write Genesis 9:18-27, but how did he write it?

Based on the same conservative principles employed in determining how Genesis was transmitted to Moses, it can be concluded that this passage was given to him in one of three ways: (a) God revealed it directly to him; (b) beginning with Noah or one of his sons, it was passed down

¹⁰Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹Morris, The Genesis Record, p. 25.
orally from generation to generation until it finally came to Moses, and he penned it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; (c) someone, during or shortly after the time of Noah, recorded this event and it came into the possession of Moses who rewrote it as guided by the Spirit of God.\footnote{These theories are based on the same principles used to explain how Moses received and transmitted the book of Genesis. Ibid.}

**Date**

This event took place shortly after the Flood, but since there is so much controversy over the date of the Flood, pinpointing a date for the happenings in Genesis 9:18-27 also becomes difficult. To illustrate this dilemma, consider the fact that suggestions for the date of the Flood range from before 100,000 B.C.\footnote{For an excellent presentation on the material concerning this date, its advocates, and a Biblical refutation against it, see John C. Whitcomb and Henry Morris, The Genesis Flood (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961). pp. 483-489.} to 3835 B.C.\footnote{For a complete discussion on how this date is derived, see ibid., p. 81.} Such able Old Testament scholars as Whitcomb and Morris curtail the time span when they agree that "a careful study of Biblical evidence leads us to the conclusion that the Flood may have occurred as much as three to five thousand years before Abraham."\footnote{Ibid., p. 489. The Biblical evidence is based on the assumption that the genealogies of Genesis 11--which trace the Messianic lineage from Shem to Abraham--cannot be}
Abraham is 2167 B.C. Following this line of reasoning, the earliest possible date for the Flood is 7167 B.C. and the latest possible date is 3835 B.C.

Even though an exact date for the Flood cannot be secured, it is possible however to establish the era in which it and the events of Genesis 9:18-27 took place. The amount of time that elapsed between the departure from the ark and the exploits of this passage are not certain, but it was a long enough spell for Noah to reap the fruits of his vineyard, and to also have a grandson (Canaan). Conjecturably speaking, at least one year had to pass from the time they left the ark until Noah's drunkenness. Therefore, this deed, like the Flood, most likely occurred between the eighth and fourth millenia B.C.

**Place**

According to Genesis 8:4, "The ark rested in the seventh month on the seventeenth day of the month upon the

stretched any more than 5,000 years, when all the gaps are filled in. They suggest to stretch the genealogy even 5,000 years is to go "almost to the breaking point."

16 Ibid., p. 478.

17 See Whitcomb and Morris' evaluation of John Urquhart's theory, they say that Urquart "suggested that since Abram was born near the half-way mark of the period between the birth of Terah's first son and the time of Terah's death, the same situation might have been true, on the average, for the other postdiluvian patriarchs as well. By averaging the two extreme possibilities, he arrived at 1668 years as the probable interval between the Flood and the birth of Abram. . . . Abram was born in 2167 B.C., this would date the Flood at 3835 B.C." Ibid., p. 481.
mountains of Ararat." John Davis identifies the Ararat mountains as being located in ancient Armenia, which is present day Turkey.\textsuperscript{18} A careful look at a map of Asia shows that Mt. Ararat is located about 200 miles north of the Tigris River on the eastern border of Turkey just before entering western Russia.\textsuperscript{19} This is the place where the ark came to rest after the Flood. It is also the place where Noah's family made their grand exit. In all probability, from the time of their departure out of the ark, until the events of Genesis 9:18-27, they probably did not travel very far. This means that somewhere near the Ararat mountains was the setting for the deeds of this passage. It is also interesting to note that according to tradition, Noah's wife's grave and Noah's vineyard are located in the foothills of the Ararat mountains.\textsuperscript{20}

**Background**

Genesis 9:18-27 acts as a connecting bridge between two significant Old Testament expositions. It bridges together the Noahic Covenant and the Table of Nations. The former is the ordinances, regulations, and promises for the new race, while the latter is an outlined dispersion of the


\textsuperscript{20} Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, p. 133.
primogenitors of that new race. Both of these notable passages are connected by this brief but enlightening narrative. Thus, the immediate recipients of the Noahic Covenant are inseparably connected to the Table of Nations by this short historical interlude.

Purpose

Umberto Cassuto, late professor of Bible at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, explains the purpose in this manner.

The purpose of this narrative in its present form is to characterize, from the viewpoint of Israel's Torah, the three branches of mankind that are descended from the three sons of Noah, and to illustrate their attitudes by reference to the personality of their primogenitors.21

Literary Style

The literary character of this passage is quite unique. It is written in two different and distinct styles; verses 18-24 are in narrative form and verses 25-27 are in poetical form. The narrative section is used to develop the action of this historical account while the poetical section is inserted to bring out the severity of Noah's prophetic oracle. The narrative lists the details of Noah's drunkenness and his son's reactions, while the poetical gives the consequences of these deeds. The two compliment each other beautifully. In the former there is suspense and intrigue, but in the latter there is climax and conclusion. The

distinctive forms are cunningly employed in order to lead the reader from the valley of action to the mountain of results.

The difference between styles is readily seen by a quick glance at the Hebrew text of Genesis 9:18-27. Like English, the narrative part of the Hebrew is written in full sentence character—from margin to margin. The poetical section, also like English poetry is indented and written in short lines called stiches. In verses 25-27, the crescendo reaches its climax "in the elevated poetical style of Noah's statement." These verses (25-27) are very significant and their literary style needs to be examined. Translated into English poetry, they look something like this:\(^{23}\)

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And he said,
Cursed be - Canaan; /
A servant - of servants /
Shall he be - unto his brethren. //

And he said,
Blessed be - the Lord/ God - of Shem;
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\(^{23}\) The word order of this poetry basically appears here as it does in the Hebrew text. The dashes between words are used to separate the English words and phrases which corresponds with each individual Hebrew term. The double virgule indicates a major pause which marks the end of a verse, and the single virgule indicates a lessor pause which is used to designate the end of a stich. For a brief but concise discussion on Hebrew poetry, see C. Hassell Bulloch, An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetical Books (Chicago: Moody, 1979), pp. 41-48.
And he shall be - Canaan/ a servant - to him.//

He shall enlarge - God - Japheth,/ and he shall dwell - in the tents - of Shem;/ And he shall be - Canaan/ a servant - to him.// 24

Outline

I. Noah's Sons (9:18-19)
   A. Their prologue (18)
   B. Their purpose (19)

II. Noah's Sin (9:20-24)
   A. The sin (20-21)
   B. The sin's results (22-24)

III. Noah's Sentences (9:25-27)
   A. A sentence to doom--Canaan--(25)
   B. A sentence to deliver--Shem--(26)
   C. A sentence to dwell--Japheth--(27)

Historical Interpretations

Genesis 9:18-27 has been the basis for many demeaning views concerning the black race. In the interpretation of it, three basic elements have been stressed by those who advocate a racial curse: (1) That blacks are doomed to perpetual servitude; (2) That blacks are inherently inferior to all other races; and (3) That blacks are indelibly marked with the darkest color possible. 25

Historically, there seems to have been distinctive periods when the derogatory racial aspects of these verses were greatly magnified. This has resulted in the recent

24 The following is the rhythmical pattern for each verse: 25 (2:2:2), 26 (2:2/2:2), and 27 (3:3/2:2). For support of this pattern see Cassuto, The Book of Genesis, pp. 166-70.

attitudes of segregation present in the United States. For instance, "This Scripture was the favorite text of Southern preachers during the Civil War, as they asserted the right of white men to enslave the Negro." 26 This racial bias led to ideas of white supremacy and black inferiority. Sad to say, this was preached dogmatically for years and accepted as truth. Today, the "Curse of Ham" myth is the unrecognized source of racial segregation even among "earnest, Bible-loving Christians." 27 Though this dogma seems to diminish as time passes by, the aftermath is still present in many fundamental, evangelical churches. In this, the twentieth century, there are Christians who have a difficult time accepting blacks in their worship service. How the Lord must grieve when He observes that the most segregated hour of the American society is 11 o'clock Sunday morning. 28 Just think, this misunderstanding is based partially or wholly on a false interpretation of Genesis 9:18-27.

On the following pages is a brief history of interpretations concerning the "Curse of Ham" myth. This survey examines the uses of Genesis 9:18-27 in light of its theoretical implications regarding black people. The purpose is to show how this passage has been interpreted in the


27 Ibid.

past, in order that it might be helpful in understanding biased attitudes today.

Genesis 9:25

"And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." This verse, in its present state, is void of any racial connotations. Also notice that Canaan is the one cursed and not Ham.  

The Old Testament

The Old Testament is silent in regard to any kind of racial curse stemming from Genesis 9:25. In over two thousand years of written history there is no mention of a curse or a fulfillment of a curse upon the Ethiopians.  

Surely if the Lord placed a curse upon blacks, the Old Testament would have mentioned it again or shown the fulfillment of it, as was done in the case of the Canaanites (Jos. 9:23, 27). The fact that the Scriptures are silent on this subject, means that the curse was free from racial overtones.

Jewish Legends

Perhaps the first known allusion to a racial curse is found in Louis Ginzberg's book, The Legends of the Jews.

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29 This fact becomes more important as the thesis progresses because many who try to justify a racial curse, say that Ham was cursed not Canaan.

30 In most Biblical passages, the word Ethiopia "may be safely considered to mean an African country and people or peoples," Unger's Bible Dictionary, paperback ed., (1983), s.v. "Ethiopia."
He records the following tradition describing the physical traits of those bearing the curse:

The descendants of Ham through Canaan therefore have red eyes, because Ham looked upon the nakedness of his father; they have misshapen lips, because Ham spoke with his lips to his brothers about the unseemly condition of his father; they have twisted curly hair, because Ham turned and twisted his head round to see the nakedness of his father; and they go about naked, because Ham did not cover the nakedness of his father. Thus he was requited, for it is the way of God to mete out punishment measure for measure.31

Just how far back in history this legend is to be traced is not certain, but it is certain that some Jews believed in a curse from Genesis 9:25 carrying racial overtones.

Jewish Midrashim

The Midrash (a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament, collected between 100 B.C. and A.D. 300)32 contains many remarks which suggest racial implications of the curse. Rabbi Huna, in directing Noah's statement to Ham made it read, "You have prevented me from doing something in the dark . . . therefore your seed will be ugly and dark-skinned." Rabbi Hiyya commenting on the deed of Ham and its consequences said, "Ham and the dog copulated in the Ark, therefore Ham came forth black-skinned while the dog


publicly exposes its copulation."  

Slave owners and Christians who accepted these statements and the Biblical concept of "hereditary sin had to conclude that the treatment slaves were getting was about what they deserved." These unfounded conclusions have confirmed the institution of slavery in the hearts of men who are void of "Hebrew learning."  

The Babylonian Talmud

The Talmud (c. 200-500) continued to carry these rabbinic expressions dealing with the interpretation of this passage in Genesis 9. The Babylonian Talmud identified blacks as descending from Ham, who "was cursed with blackness because he had castrated his father, or because he had sexual relations on the Ark, in violation of God's command."  

Islamic Era

After the sixth century, these Jewish legends began to die out, but another group began to capitalize on the "Curse

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33 H. Freedman, trans., The Midrash Rabbah, "Genesis" (New York: Soncino, 1977), I, p. 239.


35 Ibid.

of Ham" myth. Before these rabbinic expressions were completely defunct, "Pre-Islamic Arabs may have already begun to equate blacks with slavery and debasement."\(^{37}\) There is a passage in the Koran which seems to allude to the post-Flood events concerning Noah and his family. It says:

> And it was said, 'Earth, swallow thy waters; and heaven, abate!' And the waters subsided, the affair was accomplished, and the Ark settled on El Judi, and it, was said: 'Away with the people of the evil doers!' And Noah called unto his Lord, and said 'O my Lord, my son is of my family; and Thy promise is surely the truth. Thou art the justest of those that judge.' Said He, 'Noah, he is not of thy family; it is a deed not of righteousness . . .'\(^{38}\)

Clearly this passage, in itself, is free of ethnic prejudice, but coupled with the Biblical account of the "Curse of Canaan," it led Muslims to become the first group to convert slavery to a racial institution.\(^{39}\)

Muslims characterized blacks as shiftless, lazy, and sub-human. They made remarks such as:

> The only people who accept slavery are the Negroes, owing to their low degree of humanity and their proximity to the animal stage. . . . Many have seen that the ape is more capable of being trained than the Negro, and more intelligent.\(^{40}\)

These types of remarks seemed to typify the attitudes of

\(^{37}\)See Evans, History of Slavery, p. 27 for more information and references concerning this subject.


\(^{39}\)Evans, History of Slavery, p. 28.

\(^{40}\)Ibid.
Muslims during that era. These views were definitely linked with the "Curse of Ham" myth when Tabari, a Persian historian, identified Ham as the father of the black man. He said, "Ham begot all blacks and people with curly hair ... Noah put a curse on Ham, according to which the hair of his descendants would not extend over their ears and they would be enslaved wherever they were encountered."\(^{41}\)

**Fifteenth Century**

As the exploration of new lands increased, so did the need for slaves. By the fifteenth century, Negro slave trade began to flourish; countries such as Portugal, Spain, and England became seriously involved.\(^{42}\) During this era, slavery was not only recognized as a civil law, but also as according to divine law.\(^{43}\) Foreign slave traders developed many myths about the black man in order to promote the cause of slavery. Once again, they cashed in on the opportunity to use Genesis 9:18-27 as a proof text. Richard Jobson, a European slave trader, took advantage of the myth to comment on the origin of the so-called "huge sex organ" of the black male. He remarked, "The enormous size of the Virile Member among the 'Negro' was infallible proof that they are sprung from Canaan, who, for uncovering his father's nakedness, had

\(^{41}\) Ibid.


a curse laid upon that part."\textsuperscript{44}

On another occasion during the fifteenth century, as slave trade continued to grow, a Portuguese chronicler made a report to Prince Henry the Navigator concerning a slave deal. He told of a wealthy Moor (North African) who was captured on the Saharan coast. The Moor, with the aid of an interpreter, propositioned that if he was set free, a ransom would be paid in "black Moors." At this point in the report, the chronicler stopped and noted:

These blacks were Moors like the others, though their slaves, in accordance with ancient custom, which I believe to have been because of the curse which, after the Deluge, Noah laid upon his son Cain [sic], cursing him in this way—that his race should be subject to all other races of the world.\textsuperscript{45}

As can be seen, the curse was extensively used to promote the cause of slavery during this time. Many times neither the reference nor the characters (see Cain used for Canaan in the preceding quote) are certain to those using the myth, but it is unquestionably stated that blacks are cursed.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

During the early part of the eighteenth century, the "Curse of Ham" myth was popularized in America.\textsuperscript{46} This was

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45}Evans, History of Slavery, p. 39.

\textsuperscript{46}Thomas Virgil Peterson, Ham and Japheth the Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1978), p. 44.
mainly due to the fact that large numbers of slaves were needed to help the early "Christian" settlers break in their new land, and this myth was handy for them to use in justifying slavery from a Christian perspective.

Josiah Priest, a New York harness maker went to great extremes to prove that blacks were under the curse of Genesis 9:25. He has written a composition which is over 400 pages in length, and in this work he is guilty of much faulty exegesis. Priest's version of Noah's conversation with Ham goes as follows:

It is determined by the Creator that you and your people are to occupy the lowest conditions of all the families among mankind, and even be enslaved, as brute beasts, going down in the scale of human society, beyond and below the ordinary exigencies of mortal existence, arising out of war, revolutions and conflicts, for you will and must be both in times of peace and war, a despised, a degraded, and an oppressed race.47

With his unwarranted views concerning the curse and blacks, Priest set the background for all classes of people to utilize the myth for their own personal gain in America. Politicians, historians, writers, and Bible commentators were numbered among those cashing in on the curse. Mark Twain, writing in the late nineteenth century, used the "Curse of Ham" myth to climax a key scene in his novel Pudd'nhead Wilson. The book centers around two boys: Tom, the illegitimate offspring of a white master and his slave Roxana (who

was one-sixteenth black), and Chambers, the legitimate son of the white slave master. One day while these infants were in their cribs, Roxana seized an opportune moment to switch them. As a result of this Chambers, the rightful son, grew up as a slave and was treated as an inferior citizen, while Tom, the illegitimate son, enjoyed the good life. He ate the finest food, went to the best schools, and was taught that he was superior to blacks. But one day Tom experienced a culture shock: he found out that he was really black. After this his entire lifestyle was changed. He began to feel inferior and his actions reflected his feelings. One day as he brooded over his loathsome predicament, "he said to himself that the curse of Ham was upon him." 48 Twain's easy reference to the curse without hesitation or comment reveals that it must have been a "part of his readers cultural vocabulary." 49

Phillip Schaff, the great Church historian, also held to the view that blacks were under a curse and subjected to servitude. He said, "The curse . . . has affected nearly the whole posterity of Ham . . . It is simply a fact which no one can deny that the negro to this day is a servant in our own midst." 50


49 Peterson, Ham and Japheth, p. 46.

One politician used the curse myth to promote a bill for capturing and returning escaped slaves to their masters. In 1818, William Smith, a senator from South Carolina, lobbied on the grounds that the "African race are the descendants of Canaan [sic] and have been the slaves of various nations, and are still expiating, in bondage, the curse upon themselves and their progenitors."  

Listed above are just a few adherents of the "Curse of Ham" myth; to be quite frank the list is inexhaustible. There were many men during this era from all walks of life who advocated this fable.  

Bible Commentators

Many Bible commentators have also fallen into the same arena of false interpretations of Genesis 9:18-27 as have the individuals mentioned previously. When commentators make this mistake it becomes a serious problem, because laymen put a great deal of faith and trust in them for correct interpretations. Any information they give relating to Biblical evidence for a curse upon blacks raises "the issue of Negro slavery from the area of interpretive judgement to the area of validation for the trustworthiness of Scripture itself."  

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51 Peterson, Ham and Japheth, pp. 193-94.
52 For a list of men, their occupations, and their denominations who were exponents of the "Ham Myth" during this era, see ibid., p. 102.
Keil and Delitzsch believe that the curse can be seen first in the Canaanites because they were captured and exposed to the worst forms of slavery. They also believe that the curse can be further seen in the other descendants of Ham who "either shared the fate [as the Canaanites], or still sigh, like the Negro, for example and other African tribes, beneath the yoke of the most crushing slavery."\textsuperscript{54} 

Pink reinforces the position of Keil and Delitzsch. He proposes that the range of Genesis 9:25 goes far beyond Canaan and his descendants. He maintains that, "The whole of Africa was peopled by the descendants of Ham," and by following the history of that nation one can see that "for many centuries the greater part of that continent lay under the dominion of the Romans, Saracens, and Turks."\textsuperscript{55} He concludes with: "As is well known, the Negroes who were for so long slaves of Europeans and Americans, also claim Ham as their progenitor."\textsuperscript{56}

Excell also represents this viewpoint by advancing that the offsprings of Ham dwelt in Africa, and "have lived and still live in the most degraded state of subjugation."\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{55}Arthur N. Pink, Gleanings in Genesis (Chicago: Moody, 1950), p. 126.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57}Joseph S. Excell, The Bible Illustrator: Genesis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), I, p. 405. For other commentators who interpret the curse racially see Bradley, "The
Since Africa was labeled as a slave nation by several European nations, Excell believes that this is proof of the fulfillment of Noah's prophecy. 58

Rice candidly identifies blacks as the recipients of Noah's curse. His initial statement on the subject at hand leaves a bit of ambiguity in the mind of the reader as to his position when he says, "We are not told that the curse of Canaan was on the other descendants of Ham." 59 However, in his following comment all uncertainty is removed: "We do not know that it [the curse] was to continue for many generations as a racial matter. It does seem that in the history of the world certain races of men have more often been subjected to others." 60

Mormons

For many years the black man had been banned from obtaining the priesthood in the Mormon church. In the early 1970's, an article was published which reaffirmed the Mormon's ban on blacks in the priesthood. In this article, David McKay, a former Mormon president, stated the reason why blacks were banned from the priesthood. The reason is


58 Ibid.


60 Ibid.
found in the "Book of Abraham" which is located in The Pearl of Great Price, (i.e., a compilation of translated hieroglyphics by Joseph Smith). The reference is about Pharoah, the King of Egypt and a descendant of Ham. It says:

21. Now this King of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

22. From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

23. The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden.

24. When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.62

The following verses praise Pharaoh, the grandson of Ham, for establishing the first government, for being a righteous man, and for judging the people in a wise manner. Nevertheless, Pharaoh was assured that because he was a descendant of Ham, he was cursed "as pertaining to the Priesthood" (v. 26). In verse 27, the reason is restated why Pharaoh could not be in the Priesthood: "Now, Pharaoh being of that [Ham's] lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood." McKay acknowledges that the preceding verses are clear references to banning blacks from the Priesthood.


62 Joseph Smith, The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1921), Abraham 1:21-27.
due to the "Curse of Ham." 63

Recent Views

To find strong vocal adherents of this myth today is the exception more than the rule. But sad to say, there are still some around. From personal conversations, this writer has come into contact with several individuals who know Christians that still hold firmly to this myth. For example, while talking to a student at Liberty Baptist College from South Africa, the author learned that this myth is still widely accepted among white Christians in Africa. 64 Also a conversation with an American student revealed that he still had some close friends who believed blacks were cursed according to Genesis 9:25. 65

Though the myth is not greatly used today to promote black inferiority or servitude, it still has influenced the attitudes of racial segregation. Segregated neighborhoods, clubs, schools, and churches are not unknown in the 1980's. Also, attitudes of superiority even among Christians are still prevalent in today's society. It all stems from the curse myth. Francisco aptly states that the curse fable "is the unrecognized source of the common saying, 'A Negro is all right in his place,' by which is meant that his


64 Rick Van Der Weisthuizen, personal correspondence at Liberty Baptist College, Lynchburg, VA., October 1982.

65 Steven Suders, personal correspondence at Liberty Baptist College, Lynchburg, VA., November 1983.
proper position is secondary to that of the white man."^{66}

CHAPTER II

EXEGESIS OF GENESIS 9:18-27

Noah's Sons (9:18-19)

Their Prologue

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

The chronological listing for Noah's sons

This passage begins with a reference to the sons of Noah. His sons are always listed in the order of "Shem, Ham, and Japheth" (Gen. 5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; and 10:1). There have been three basic conjectures presented to explain the purpose behind using this chronological order.

The first theory states that the order is based on birthright inheritance. Bush represents this viewpoint by advancing that even though Japheth was undeniably the oldest, "Shem is usually mentioned first because the birthright was conferred upon him." ¹

The next view maintains that the order of mention corresponds with the ages of Noah's three sons. Leupold holds to this view, he says: "There can hardly be any doubt about

¹George Bush, Notes on Genesis (Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1976), I, p. 159.
it that these are mentioned in the order of their age, Shem being the oldest."\(^2\) While either of these may be correct, the safest theory and the one which the present writer accepts, is that "it is not certain as to what chronological order actually applies to them."\(^3\) This argument is based on silence. Quite often in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen. 25:24; 29:32-30:24; 49:1-28; Hos. 1:1-9) the order of mention is stated in the text. Since the Bible nowhere states the formula underlying the present listing for Noah's sons, any answer given is just speculatory.

The meaning of the names

Frequently in the Bible the names given to individuals revealed "some personal characteristic, some incident connected with the birth, some hope or wish or prayer of the parent."\(^4\) As a result of this, the child often personified the name "and for the parents' sake felt it like a personal vow, and made his life an effort to realize it."\(^5\)

Thus, the names of each one of Noah's sons had a special affiliation to it's bearer. The Hebrew word for Shem is בּ,  


\(^4\)Unger's *Bible Dictionary*. s.v. "Name."

\(^5\)Ibid.
literally, "name." Bush notes that Sher's name "doubtless points to the circumstances of his superior distinction over his brethren, especially from his being the progenitor of Him who inherits a name that is above every name." Japheth (נָפֶת, Naphat) means "wide-faced, extensive, spacious." He was given this name because his seed inhabited "much of the earth." The meaning of Ham's name has been the subject of no little controversy. Advocates of the "Curse of Ham" myth say that the word Ham (חָנָם, Hanem) means "black." Josiah Priest states that the word "not only signifies black in its literal sense, but pointed to the very disposition of the mind." Yet statements such as this cannot be supported by Hebrew lexicography; notice the following meanings for the word Ham: "warm, hot"; "warm"; "hot." Therefore,

6Bush, Notes on Genesis, p. 159.
7Ibid.
9Bush, Notes on Genesis, p. 159.
10Priest, Bible Defense of Slavery, p. 40.
in lexicons taking a scholarly approach to word analysis, the word "Ham" can never be found to mean "black." Most likely the word is used to signify Ham's quick temper.

Ham the father of Canaan

It was shown earlier that many scholars believe the phrase "and Ham, the father of" (ןֵּגָם הַיָּמָן) is an insertion by a redactor. They theorize that the redactor amended the text by making Ham emerge as the offender rather than the one who committed the deed (i.e. Canaan). Those who espouse this belief say that the narrative should read Shem, Japheth and Canaan. But in order to accept this view one would have to explain away the passages of Scripture (i.e. Gen. 5:23; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; and 10:1) which clearly identify the three sons of Noah. Also, if "Ham the father of" is the work of a redactor's trying to synchronize the sin of Ham with the curse of Canaan, he could have done it "more effectively without leaving such a rough trace."

The significance of this phrase is better understood when it is first viewed as a "preliminary announcement" introducing Ham's son to the narrative for the purpose of

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14 See pp. 5-6 above.


identifying him, to the reader, in conjunction with the story that is to follow.\textsuperscript{17} Second, it should be viewed as a reference to the relationship of the character qualities between Ham, Canaan, and the Canaanites. Cassuto supports this as he briefly states that Ham's "actions merely symbolized the practices of the children of Canaan."\textsuperscript{18} Ross, also reasoning along this same line states, "The reference to Canaan would call to the Israelite mind a number of unfavorable images about these people they knew, for anyone familiar with the Canaanites would see the same tendencies in their ancestor from the decisive beginning."\textsuperscript{19} Outside of these two views, this phrase (the father of Canaan) can have no other meaning.\textsuperscript{20}

Their Purpose

These are the three sons of Noah, and of them was the whole earth overspread. (19)

Shem, Ham, and Japheth populated the earth.

The traditional position among Bible scholars has been that every person born after the Flood is a descendant of either Shem, Ham, or Japheth. But since liberal scholars deny a universal flood, they advance the theory that there were individuals which endured the Flood, who did not stem

\textsuperscript{17} Cassuto, The Book of Genesis, p. 148.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 154-55.
\textsuperscript{20} Cassuto, The Book of Genesis, p. 155.
Noah's Sin (9:20-24)

The Sin

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard; And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. (20-21)

Noah the righteous man

Noah was a man who found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8). He kept himself pure in a society of wickedness and perversion. On the basis of Noah's righteousness, God used him to preserve the seed of the human race. Unfortunately, this passage indicates a drastic change in Noah's behavior. This has moved some commentators to suggest that someone other than Noah is under scrutiny in this segment of the passage.25 On the contrary, this was the same spiritual giant who triumphed over evil before the Flood. Francisco makes the following statement concerning Noah's post-flood actions: "The man who had weathered the ridicule of his neighbors and every storm of the flood could not meet the challenge of the time of peace."26

Noah the husbandman

In verse 20 the Hebrew phrase (יִשָּׁר יָעַר יַעֲרָן בֶּן נָחָה) has caused translators to produce a variety of different translations. The KJV and ASV say, "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard." This translation

25 Skinner, Commentary on Genesis, p. 181.
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25 Skinner, Commentary on Genesis, p. 181.
is clearly understood by the English reader. It simply means that after the Flood, Noah took up the occupation of farming, and he planted a vineyard. But the translators in the RSV opt for a completely different translation which totally changes the complexion of the meaning. It says, "Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard." These translators view Noah as the first man to make farming an occupation. Ryle maintains this viewpoint also; he bases it on a primaeval tradition which represents Noah as the first farmer and vinedresser.

Cassuto, laboring along the same line as Ryle, only recognizes Noah as the first dresser of the vine in his translation: "Noah, the man of the earth, was the first [literally, began] to plant a vineyard (Nahmanides)." He argues that the verb "he began" can never be followed by a noun and especially a noun which has the definite article attached, as is the case in this verse (וַיָּרָא לוֹ "the man of the earth").

Those who believe Noah was the first farmer have a difficult time trying to justify their position in light of

27 Ibid.


30 Ibid., pp. 158-59.
Genesis 2:15 and 4:2 which state that Adam was the "dresser of the garden" and Cain was a "tiller of the ground" respectively. If this phrase actually means Noah was the first farmer, it is a blatant contradiction to the passages mentioned above.

Also, scholars, such as Cassuto, who maintain that the Hebrew language only permits the translation making Noah the founder of vine cultivation are mistaken. The verb הָלְבָּה "he began" quite often is used redundantly and applies to a person "who continues or repeats an action begun before." This is illustrated in Genesis 6:1 where the same verb is used, "when men began [לִבָּה] to multiply." The command to multiply was first given in Genesis 1:28; therefore the observation in 6:1 is the continuation of the earlier command. The word "began" is simply employed to reinforce this idea. Applying this principle to Noah's case readily reveals that he only began to be a farmer and amidst other farming projects "he planted a vineyard." With all of the evidence put forth, it can be concluded that Noah was neither the first husbandman nor the first vinedresser. The Hebrew phrase הָלְבָּה וַּעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הָלְבָּה affirms that Noah was the first member of the antediluvian society to resubjugate the soil (cf. Gen. 5:29; 8:21). Any other meaning teaches contrary to the Scriptures.

31Bush, Notes on Genesis, p. 160.
32Ibid.
Noah's drunkenness

When Noah planted his vineyard, he had no idea of the fatal results which it would bring forth. Some have tried to excuse Noah by suggesting a deterioration in the atmospheric conditions after the Flood which allowed infrared rays from the sun to speed up the aging process and caused the wine to ferment faster. Therefore, Noah was unaware of the intoxicating effects of his wine. 33

This conjecture is shown to be a bit awkward in light of Matthew 24:38 "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking." The reference to drinking is an allusion to drinking wine (cf. Isa. 22:13; Jn. 11:18, 19). The society which existed before the Flood was highly advanced (Gen. 4), but it was also very corrupt (Gen. 6). The combination of these two elements naturally would have led these individuals to discover that fermented wine would appease their lustful desires. Therefore, Noah was not unsuspectedly overpowered by the evils of wine; he full-well knew it's potential from past observations, namely, people who drank wine before the Flood and got drunk.

Mideaval Jews tried to remove the blame from Noah by stating that he did it to "understand sin in a better way and thus be able to warn the world of its effects." 34 This

33 J. R. Rice, In the Beginning, p. 238.
solution to Naoh's situation is not plausible when analyzed within the context of the Bible. Passage after passage warns the reader to steer clear of evil (e.g., Ps. 34:14; 37:27; Prov. 3:7; James 4:7; etc.). The train of thought in this view is contrary to Bible logic and must be abandoned.

Still another theory is offered which tries to excuse Noah for his drunkenness. Cohen associates drunkenness with sexuality and insists that Noah was adhering to the command of Genesis 9:1 to "Be fruitful and multiply." He claims Noah was conforming to the motif of wine and sex in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 19:30-38; II Sam. 11:12, 13).\(^\text{35}\) Ross challenges Cohen's theory and labels it as "a highly speculative interpretation" because it is not based on "clear evidence."\(^\text{36}\) Ross reveals the absurdity of Cohen's theory when he speaks of later Biblical references which "show drunkenness and nakedness to be shameful weaknesses."\(^\text{37}\)

Why did Noah allow himself to become susceptible to the damaging effects of "liquid devil"? The answer to his plight is easily seen. Noah was a righteous man (Gen. 6:9) and his intention was not to become intoxicated. Most

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\(^\text{37}\) Ibid.
likely, he started out moderately drinking the fruit of his labor, but somewhere along the line "he sinned in drinking to excess."\textsuperscript{38} Noah's intention was not to over indulge, but he did, and the consequences of his over indulgence were fatal.

The validity of Noah's oracle

Over the years some confusion has surfaced over the validity of Noah's oracle. Many contend that because he was drunk, God would not use him to deliver such an overwhelming prophecy. Tilson's viewpoint is illustrative of those who accept this teaching; he says:

> The deliverer of the curse is not God but Noah. And Noah pronounces it sometimes, it seems, before his return to complete sobriety . . . Is it not a rather precarious business to hold God responsible for the curse of any man? Should we not be even more reluctant to hold God responsible for the curse of a drunken man?\textsuperscript{39}

The same basic argument is offered by Rose: "It was Noah not God, who cursed Ham. And Noah after his disgusting drunkenness, was in no position to pronounce a righteous curse on anyone."\textsuperscript{40}

Viewing this dilemma from an objective perspective might compel one to ask the question: "Was Noah's prophecy

\textsuperscript{38}Bush, Notes on Genesis, p. 160.


\textsuperscript{40}Ben Lacy Rose, Racial Segregation in the Church (Richmond: Outlook Publishers, 1957), p. 4.
valid in light of the circumstances?" This is a fair question to ask, regardless whether he was sober or drunk when the declaration was given.

In answer to the previous question; Yes, Noah's prophecy was valid. The text does not supply proof supporting that Noah was still drunk or even that he uttered the prophecy on this occasion. Furthermore, he was not a drunkard; his life was not characterized by inebriation. Most likely this was the first time he had ever been drunk. Noah was not accustomed to drinking fermented beverages, for if he were, surely he would have taken more precautionary measures than he did. Since he was not a drunkard but a righteous man, he was able to speak for the Lord.

Another fact which needs to be interjected here is quite frequently godly men were used even after they violated God's moral laws. For example, Abraham lied to save his life; David committed adultery to fulfill his sexual desires; Jonah rebelled against God's will for his own convenience; Peter denied Christ three times because he feared those around him. Yet these men were greatly used by God after their sin. Noah was no different; he regretted his past action and repented of it. God reinstated him to full fellowship and validated his work. In conclusion, there is no reason to question the validity of Noah or his prophetic utterance.

The Results of the Sin

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the
nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And 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. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. (22-24)

Ham's viewing of Noah's nakedness

As the wine began to take its toll on Noah, he evidently started to get warm, proceeded to disrobe, and "lay uncovered in his tent" (v. 21). Unfortunately for Ham, who is again identified as the father of Canaan, he happened to walk into Noah's tent and see "the nakedness of his father." For some reason the Bible does not go into much detail concerning the nature of Ham's sin. This lack of information has given rise to a variety of unethical opinions which will be contended with later on in this chapter.

Ham told his brethren without

Ham was so overwhelmed by what he saw in Noah's tent that he "told his brethren outside [חָלָה]." The word for outside literally means "in the open air." Ham took a thing which should have been kept in secret behind closed doors and boldly proclaimed it in the streets for all to hear. Many commentators suggest he did this with great delight. Since Ham held very little esteem for his father,

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42 Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, p. 346, says Ham "told it with delight." Morris, The Genesis Record, p. 235,
he handled the situation in a tactless manner. This was an occasion in which his true feelings for Noah surfaced; because at a time when Ham's trust and confidence were needed the most, he joyfully announced the scene he observed.

Shem and Japheth's reverence

Shem and Japheth did not rejoice in the words of their brother. Their reverential attitude toward Noah was manifested in their actions. The deportment of these two was in direct contrast to that of Ham. Whereas the latter walked in forward and looked upon the nakedness, the former turned their faces away from the nudity of Noah and backed into the tent. Shem and Japheth took a garment and "covered" (יִתָּן) their father's nakedness.43 Maybe Noah was covered at one time and some how the covering came off. By covering his nakedness they hid his shame and degradation, while also safeguarding against anyone else who would come in and do the same thing Ham did. Nowhere does it say they verbally rebuked Ham for his irreverence, "but their actions were a stronger rebuke than anything they could have said."44

Noah's knowledge

states, "the text means he told with delight."

43The Hebrew verb יִתָּן is generally used in the Peil stem and means "to cover"—perhaps the idea here is to "recover" (cf. v. 21).

After awaking out of his drunken stupor, Noah came to his senses, and "he knew what his younger son had done to him." How he came to know what Ham did to him is uncertain. It could have been by supernatural revelation or by personal inquiry as some contend.\(^{45}\)

Noah's younger son

The phrase יֵלְדוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל "younger son" has caused commentators a great deal of trouble. It is disputed whether to interpret the expression comparatively "the younger son" or superlatively "the youngest son."\(^{46}\) Davidson insists that the present grammatical construction indicates the superlative usage because of the simple adjective (יֵלְדֹּת) with the article (ה). For proof he cites I Samuel 17:14, "and David was the youngest [יֵלְדֹּת]."\(^{47}\) Leupold agrees with Davidson that the "adjective with the article may indicate the superlative," but he also stresses this is not a steadfast rule (cf. Gen. 1:16, בִּפְנֵי ה' "the greater," and יֵלְדוֹת "the lessor")\(^{48}\) At this point one must agree with Keil and Delitzsch's observation: "neither grammar nor usage of the language will enable us to

\(^{45}\)See discussion in Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, p. 348, make special note of his definition for the term יֵלְדוֹת "he knew." Also see Morris, The Genesis Record, p. 236. For a more thorough analysis of what Noah knew, see pp. 45-49 below.

\(^{46}\)Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, p. 156.


\(^{48}\)Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, p. 348.
decide.\textsuperscript{49}

Since Hebrew grammar and language on this subject is a bit ambiguous, it is necessary to consider the area of Biblical hermeneutics. In order to understand the meaning of the phrase "younger son," there must first be a brief analysis of other verses which list the three sons of Noah. In Genesis 5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; and 10:1 they are listed in the order of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the above order of mention can be either by age or by birthright.\textsuperscript{50} The Bible is not clear on which it is, but whichever one is correct, Ham appears in the second position. Also in Genesis 10 (verses 2, 6, and 21), Ham is listed in the middle (e.g., Japheth, Ham, and Shem) and in light of verse 21, this listing could be referring to age.\textsuperscript{51} Nevertheless, the important point is that everywhere the sons of Noah are mentioned, "Ham" is "sandwiched" between the other two. Since Japheth or Shem was Noah's "youngest son," it can be concluded that the reference in verse 24 is to Ham as the "younger son."

A final and somewhat strange interpretation is that the

\textsuperscript{49}Keil and Delitzsch, \textit{The Pentateuch}, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{50}See pp. 28-29 above.

\textsuperscript{51}Scholars are divided as to who "the elder" is in Genesis 10:21. See Keil and Delitzsch, \textit{The Pentateuch}, p. 156, verses Cassuto, \textit{The Book of Genesis}, p. 165, for the arguments. Shem for the former and Japheth for the latter.
reference to the "younger son" is not to Ham at all but to Canaan. This is founded on the idea of "younger son" being able to represent the word grandson. Some who advocate this viewpoint say the literal translation of 9:24 is "When Noah knew what his little son, or grandson had done unto him." A translation such as the previous one must be immediately discarded, because verse 22 reveals Ham as the perpetrator of the deed thereby showing that he was the "younger son." Also, the phrase deals with Ham's relationship to Shem and Japheth; it is not an issue of Ham verses Canaan.

The deed of Ham

Now the all-important question must be addressed: "What did Ham do to Noah?" What kind of dastardly deed could Ham have done that called for such drastic measures? Two Jewish commentators believed it was some type of gross sexual violation. Rabbi Berekiah concluded that Ham's sin prohibited Noah from procreating.

Noah grieved very much in the Ark that he had no young son to wait on him, and declared, 'When I go out I will beget a young son to do this for me.' But when Ham acted thus to him, he exclaimed, 'you have prevented me from begetting a young son to

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serve me, therefore that man [your son] will be a servant to his brethren.\textsuperscript{54}

Rabbi Hiyya does not believe Ham's offense was against Noah but that Ham committed some kind of sexual act with a dog. As a result of this hideous union, Ham came out of the ark "black-skinned while the dog publicly exposes its copulation."\textsuperscript{55} Needless to say, these rabbinic views are difficult to accept.

Rice pleads Ham's innocence and Canaan's guilt by advancing that Genesis 9:18-27 "contains two parallel but different traditions of Noah's family"; one source supplies information concerning the three ancestors of the human race (Ham included), and the other source speaks of Noah's sons who were involved in the aftermath of his drunkenness (Canaan included).\textsuperscript{56} But this theory does not solve the problem of the sin of Ham and curse of Canaan; it only raises another question: "If the parts of the story were from irreconcilable traditions, what caused them to be united?"\textsuperscript{57} To say that Genesis 9:18-27 is two separate traditions of Noah's family, is to do a great injustice "to the final, fixed form

\textsuperscript{54}Freedman, The Midrash Rabbah, "Genesis," p. 239.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56}G. Rice, "The Curse that Never Was," p. 7. Also for a more fuller discussion of this theory see pp. 31-32 above.

\textsuperscript{57}Ross, "The Curse of Canaan," p. 228.
of the text." Therefore, Ham cannot be excused so easily. Bassett asserts that Ham's transgression against Noah was an incestuous relationship with his mother, and the fruit of this union was Canaan. Bassett believes his theory absolves two problems: (1) the nature of Ham's offense, and (2) the reason for cursing Canaan. Bassett's entire case rests on the expression in verse 22 "saw the nakedness of his father." According to him, this phrase is an idiom which refers to "sexual intercourse" of a "heterosexual" nature. Bassett backs his theory up by using Leviticus 18:6-19 to show that seeing the nakedness of the father is to actually "have sexual relations with his wife." The evidence stacked against this viewpoint is massive. (1) Genesis 9:21 says Noah "was uncovered" within his tent. The Hebrew verb for "was uncovered" is in the Hithpael stem which denotes a reflexive action. This gives the idea that Noah uncovered himself. Based on Bassett's theory of Leviticus 18, if Ham had intercourse with his mother, this verse should say, "Ham uncovered his father's nakedness." (2) According to Genesis 9:22, after Ham saw the nakedness of Noah, he "told his two brethren without." Surely, if

58 Ibid., pp. 228-229.


60 Ibid., p. 235.

Ham had engaged in some sort of sexual relation with his mother, he would not have declared it openly to his brothers.\textsuperscript{62} (3) Since all that was needed to cover Noah's nakedness was a garment, Ham's offense could be no more serious than seeing his father uncovered.\textsuperscript{63} (4) Finally, if incest was Ham's sin, it would have been impossible for Noah to pronounce doom on Canaan by name before he was born, and pass over Ham and his mother.\textsuperscript{64}

Luther says Ham "was deeply offended at the falling of his father and regarded himself as much more holy, righteous, and pious than he."\textsuperscript{65} Thus, Ham's sin went far beyond incest or some immoral act; it points to the very disposition of his heart. Since Noah was a righteous man (Gen. 6:9), he trained his sons according to the laws of God. When it came time to make a decision based on that training, Shem and Japheth did that which was right. Their righteous attitudes were manifested in their actions. But Ham on the other hand despised the teachings of his father and likewise his action reflected that. Ham's demeanor not only revealed his attitude toward his father, but it was also indicative of his relationship with God. Here, he was in clear violation of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62}G. Rice, "The Curse that Never Was," p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{63}Cassuto, The Book of Genesis, p. 151.
\item \textsuperscript{64}G. Rice, "The Curse that Never Was," pp. 12-13.
\item \textsuperscript{65}Martin Luther, Luther's Commentary on Genesis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), I., p. 173.
\end{itemize}
the "Fourth and Sixth Commandments." If he had a good attitude and relationship with God, he would have done the proper thing without hesitation. Indirectly speaking, Ham did not reject Noah but he rejected God, and God was the one who ultimately issued the curse.

Noah's Sentences (9:25-27)

A Sentence to Doom (Canaan)

And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. (25)

Why curse Canaan instead of Ham?

Many explanations have been presented to account for cursing Canaan for the deed of his father. Some do away with the MT reading of מַהְרָתָם literally "Cursed be Canaan" and adopt the reading of some Septuagint manuscripts which read Επικαπατωσ Χαμ, being translated "cursed be Ham." Also there is an Arabic version which reads, "cursed Ham." Priest has tried to justify this Arabic rendering by claiming that it is written in "a language of equal authority with the Hebrew, and originally the very same reads, 'cursed Ham,'... it has been understood by all commentators, in


69 Priest, Bible Defense of Slavery, p. 91-92.
every age, on the sacred writing."\textsuperscript{70}

These contradictions are very significant. For if the reading is "cursed be Canaan," the curse would be limited to Canaan and his descendants only. On the other hand, if the phrase "cursed Ham" is to be accepted, the curse would include all of Ham's posterity including the black race. Surely, if Ham was the object of the curse, all those who advocate a racial curse would have a better argument. Even Ezell would be correct in stating, "the Negro race has descended from Ham. The curse that was placed upon the descendants of Ham ... still rests upon this race."\textsuperscript{71}

In determining which reading should be adopted between a given variant involving the MT and LXX, Ernst Würthwein suggests two tests for reliability: (1) Which text is more consistent in its testimony, and (2) How should the LXX be evaluated as a translation?\textsuperscript{72} Addressing the first question, Würthwein points out the "unevenness" of the Septuagint's "textual tradition." He develops this thought by stating: "Whereas the consonantal text of \textsuperscript{77} [the Masoretic Text] has remained remarkably constant since the second century, the Septuagint manuscripts even centuries later have widely

\textsuperscript{70}Ibid.


divergent texts." Furthermore some of the older Septuagint MSS (e.g., A, D, and L) refer to Canaan as receiving the curse and not Ham.

In evaluating the Septuagint as a translation, Würthwein encourages the readers to consider the motives which influenced the translators. He strongly believes that the Septuagint was influenced by "Jewish traditions as formulated in the Talmud and Midrash." Considering this, it must be kept in mind that it was with these same Talmudic and Midrashic writers that the "Curse of Ham" myth took on racial connotations. Thus, in conclusion, it is probably best to discard those early manuscripts with the reading "cursed be Ham."

Priest's observation, cited above, about accepting the Arabic rendition that curses Ham cannot be accepted either. Consider this; as Islam spread so did the Arabic language, and this caused a great many Arabic versions of the Old Testament to come into existence. There were a number of versions that came into existence "mainly independent and concerned primarily for interpretation." With the Islamic

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73 Ibid., p. 64.


76 See pp. 14-16 above.

77 Ibid., p. 100.
belief that blacks were under a curse, their interpretation would absolutely call for a curse on Ham. Therefore, very little reliability can be placed in the accurateness of the Arabic text. Also, the Arabic version is a translation from the MT which is several centuries removed from it. Thus, it is necessary to accept the MT over the Arabic version used by Priest which reads "cursed Ham."

With all the evidence put forth, it can be readily seen that the most reliable reading is "cursed be Canaan." Those who try to reconcile the curse of Canaan for the sin of Ham by adopting the reading "cursed be Ham" or "cursed Ham" do a great injustice to this portion of Scripture.

Seagraves accounts for the cursing of Canaan on the basis of a Jewish custom found in the Old Testament. He uses I Samuel 17:55ff to support his theory. After David defeated Goliath, Saul asked who was his father? Seagraves believes that Saul wanted to honor David for his victory by blessing his dad. He says, "Blessings go back one generation--and this would be equally true of a curse." He concludes with the idea that Noah could not have cursed Ham

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78 See pp. 16-18 above.


80 Kelly L. Seagraves, Jesus Christ Creator (San Diego: Creation Science Research Center, 1973), p. 70.

81 Ibid., p. 71.
without cursing himself.82

Another view concerning why Canaan was cursed is based on Genesis 9:1. In this verse, "God blessed the sons of Noah and his sons." The term means "to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc."83 It should also be pointed out that is often used as an antonym of "to curse."84 Since God blessed all of Noah's sons in this verse, including Ham, then no man can curse it. Adherents of this viewpoint contend that Noah was aware of the previous blessing by God so he cursed Canaan instead of Ham.85 But one must side with Rice as he challenges this view by stating, "Equally valid is the principle that the innocent should not be cursed for the misdeed of the guilty."86

Luther holds to a very strange belief about Canaan's cursing. He sees Noah as an instrument of the Holy Spirit. He says that the third person of the Trinity was so much displeased and angry with Ham's offense "that he did not

82 Ibid.
83 John N. Oswalt, "" in Harris, Archer, and Waltke, eds., Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p. 132.
84 Victor P. Hamilton, "" in Harris, Archer, and Waltke, eds., Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p. 75.
even care to mention his name but called him by his son's name Canaan." 87 But it is very unlikely that any personage of the Godhead would act in such a rash manner.

Still others believe Canaan was cursed because he was Ham's youngest son as Ham was Noah's youngest son. And because of this relationship, Ham is reproved in the offspring who had the same kinship "to him as he had to Noah." 88 But nowhere in the Bible does it say Ham was Noah's youngest son nor does it say Canaan was Ham's youngest son. 89 Also, there is no other type of Biblical support for the type of principle "where the guilty father is passed over and his son punished in his stead." 90

Wood presents the most accurate view in trying to solve this enigma. He is very logical and very precise in relating the direct cause for cursing Canaan instead of Ham. He emphasizes that Canaan probably bore the most likeness to his father Ham in the area of attitude and "sensuality." As a result of this, the curse had to placed upon Canaan. Another reason for cursing Canaan is because if Ham was cursed, then would all the rest of his sons be cursed also. Wood says:

87 Luther, Commentary on Genesis, p. 174.
88 Vos, Biblical Theology, pp. 56-57.
89 Ibid.
Ham had three sons besides Canaan; they were Phut, Cush, and Mizraim (Gen. 10:6). It may be that they were not like their father, and God in this way prevented the effects of the curse coming on them through Ham, but only on Canaan.  

Vos also accepts this view when he says, "Ham was punished in one of his sons because he had sinned against his father, and he was punished in that particular son, because Canaan most strongly reproduced Ham's sensual character." Vos further notes "that not all of the descendants of Ham are cursed . . . the others receive neither curse nor blessing." The use of כָּרָה is present "sixty-three times in the OT, most of which are in the Qal stem (fifty-four)." Its appearance in Genesis 9:25 is by far the most popular form usage in the Qal stem; also this verb is "used twelve times as an antonym of bărak "to bless" (Gen. 9:25-26; 12:3; 27:29, etc.)."

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92 Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 57.
93 Ibid.
94 Hamilton, "כָּרָה", p. 75.
95 Ibid. p. 75.
Hamilton points out that the greater part of the curses using the word יִבְרָע come under "one of three" classes: "(1) the declaration of punishments (Gen. 3:14, 17); (2) the utterance of threats (Jer. 11:3; 17:5; Mal. 1:4); (3) the proclamation of laws (Deut. 27:15-26; 28:16-19)."\(^96\) In the case of Canaan, the first type of יִבְרָע curse was applicable.

He was to be punished for the seriousness of his father's offense. Ham failed to show respect for Noah, God, and God's first institution, i.e., the family.\(^97\) Consequently, punishment must follow and it does in the form of a curse. The Hebrew term יִבְרָע has no special "power" in itself, but on this occasion Noah correctly used it and then it was left up to the Lord to carry out the curse.\(^98\)

The type of servant role Canaan was to fulfill

Unfortunately, in the past many have interpreted the role of "servant of servants" to be one which had condemned blacks to abject slavery. Bible exegetes of all ages agree that the phrase יִבְרָע יִבְרָע is to be taken as a superlative genitive, which means it is to be understood in the most extreme sense.

Despite agreement by scholars on the preceding issue, they disagree as to whether the superlative genitive here

\(^{96}\)Ibid.


\(^{98}\)Ibid.
means the highest form of servanthood or the lowest form of slavery. Seagreaves maintains that the expression "means the highest of all servants, not a slave."99 He notes other Biblical references where this is the case; Revelation 19:16 "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS," which according to Seagreaves means "the highest King of all Kings . . . the highest Lord of all Lords."100 He also refers to Philippians 3:5 where Paul calls himself a "Hebrew of Hebrews" which Paul said "because he was of the tribe of Benjamin, one of the two tribes of the southern Kingdom who remained true to Jerusalem and did not revolt."101

Ross agrees with the usage of the superlative genitive but he contends that the reference is to the idea of "the most abject slavery."102 Looking ahead to the fact that this prophecy was fulfilled in the Canaanite people, this understanding of the phrase is probably correct. In Joshua 9:23 and 27, the Israelites enslaved the Canaanites and made them "hewers of wood and drawers of water." Thus, Ross' idea of "servant of servants" is right and can be proved from the Bible.

It can also be interjected here that the servant's role which was placed upon Canaan was not with respect to race.

99Seagreaves, Jesus Christ Creator, p. 71.
100Ibid.
101Ibid.
Noah did not curse a race to servitude but a nation. In fact, it was not until the sixth century that racial overtones were even connected between the curse and slavery.\textsuperscript{103} The Scriptures speak of people in terms of nations and not races.\textsuperscript{104} It should be clearly understood that it was the nation of Canaan that was cursed not the race of Ham.

Canaan's servant role to his brethren

According to verse 25, Canaan was to be a servant "unto his brethren." This is a reference to Canaanite enslavement "by brother Hamites."\textsuperscript{105} The other sons of Ham were Mizraim, Phut, and Cush who was the progenitor of the black man. This indicates that blacks were not doomed to servitude but they were to enjoy the services of Canaanite servitude along with their uncles (vv. 26, 27) and other brothers (v. 25). Brow explains the fulfillment of Canaanite servitude to the other Hamitic tribes when he says, "In the fifteenth century B. C. Canaanite states were under the domination of Egypt." He also affirms that from the mid-ninth century B. C. to the seventh century B. C. "Canaanites of Phoenicia" were frequently ruled by "Akkadian Kings," dwelling in the land of

\textsuperscript{103}See pp. 16-18 above.

\textsuperscript{104}Seagraves, \textit{Jesus Christ Creator}, p. 72.

Assyria. Consequently, as foretold by Jeremiah (27:3, 6) and Ezekiel (26-28), "the Phoenicians" fell under the rule of "Akkadians from Babylon."\textsuperscript{107}

Ham's Omission

Many solutions can be offered for Ham's omission from this prophecy, but the most feasible answer is that he was neither cursed nor blessed, so there was no need to mention him here. Noah chose to bless Shem and Japheth because of their respectful attitudes. Because of Ham's unhonorable actions, it was impossible for Noah to pronounce a blessing upon him. Perhaps if Ham had acted in a proper manner, his name would have been included in the blessing. Noah had the responsibility of choosing whom to bless and he chose not to bless Ham. Also, since Canaan was singled-out to be cursed, there was no need to mention Ham's name at all. It might be added here that Ham was punished for his sin. This curse was upon Canaan's activities which brought shame to Ham as he had shamed Noah. Even though Noah forgave Ham, there still was a reminder around to him of his own sinful character.

The fate of the other Hamites

The question has often been asked, "What happened to the rest of Ham's sons?" Sarcastically but true, the answer

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107}Ibid. See also Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Tyre."
is: "The same thing that happened to the sons of Shem and Japheth. Nothing." Canaan was the only one of Ham's sons accountable for the sin. The other sons were free to live their lives without a curse upon them. Since they were not indicted in this case, there was no need to mention them, just as there was no need to mention their father. Their absence from the text is no indication of a cover-all curse upon the sons of Ham. On the contrary, the very fact that Canaan's name alone was mentioned is evidence showing that Cush, Phut, and Mizraim were not cursed. God's plan for them was the same as it was for the sons of Shem and Japheth; they had to come to God by faith (cf. Hab. 2:4; Heb. 10:38).

A Sentence to Deliver (Shem)

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. (26)

The blessing of Shem and Japheth

In the past, some exegetes have used verses 26 and 27 to teach racial segregation. Ezell says the "Negro race has descended from Ham . . . God has clearly segregated the descendants of Ham from the other races."\(^{108}\) In addition, he believes any attempts to integrate the descendants of Ham with those of Shem and Japheth will do serious injury "to the Negro race as well as the other races."\(^{109}\) But Ezell's belief must be contended with, the purpose of these verses

\(^{108}\) Ezell, Racial Segregation, p. 15.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.
was not to promote racial segregation but to reveal the blessings given to Shem and Japheth.

Blessed be the God of Shem

Because Shem realized it was from Yahweh where all blessings came, he served Him with an attitude of respect and reverence. Since Noah was a man who walked with God, he perceived that Shem did the same also. This moved Noah to cry out the praise, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem." It is not certain if Noah fully knew the magnitude of his words, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he utters an expression which only scratches the surface of the redemptive blessedness which was to come through the seed of his son. Shem was greatly rewarded for his reverence of God and his father; his reward afforded him the privilege of being the head of the people to whom the Messiah was born. The very thought that God would send His Son to die for the sins of the world should compel men everywhere to cry out the praise of Noah: "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem."

Canaan's servant role to Shem

First Canaan was to be a servant to his brothers, and now it says he was to be a servant of Shem. The visible fulfillment of this prophecy can be seen on two occasions. The first time was when the children of Israel finished their wilderness experience and came into the land of Canaan. Under the leadership of Joshua they overcame the Canaanites and made them 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' (Jos.
9:23, 27). The second time was when Solomon subjugated the remaining tribes of the Canaanites and either killed them or levied upon them "a tribute of bond service" (I Kings 9:20, 21).

A Sentence to Dwell (Japheth)

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. (27)

Japheth's enlargement

The expression "God shall enlarge Japheth" is a play on words. This Hebrew phrase is גַּדָּה יַפְתָּ הַדָּבָר, which when translated literally reads thus; "God shall enlarge the enlarged one [Japheth]." Vos points out that the precise meaning of Japheth's enlargement is not certain. He says it can be taken "locally or metaphorically."\footnote{Vos, \textit{Biblical Theology}, p. 58} The local meaning would refer to land expansion while the metaphorical meaning would refer to material prosperity. Vos also brings forth another uncertainty directly linked to the preceding controversy, namely, "who is the subject of the clause 'let him dwell.' Is this meant of God or of Japheth?"\footnote{Ibid.} If Japheth is the subject of "let him dwell," then this enlargement refers to land expansion. But if Yahweh is the subject, then the "contrast is drawn between the objective gifts bestowed upon the Japhethites, and the personal self-communication of..."
God upon the Shemites."\textsuperscript{112}

Vos settles for the idea that Japheth is the subject of "he shall dwell," therefore his interpretation of Japheth's enlargement is in reference to land expansion. He bases his argument on the usage of דָּעַם rather than נָבִי, in this verse. He argues that the use of "Elohim favors it since it is not of Elohim but Jehovah that such a gracious indwelling is predicated."\textsuperscript{113} In essence he believes that if the reference was to God dwelling in the tents of Shem, the term נָבִי would have been used rather than דָּעַם. So he surmises that the enlargement is speaking of territorial acquisition.

Kaiser's position on the type of enlargement Japheth was to receive is not clear, but he adamantly disagrees with Vos' viewpoint on the subject of "he shall dwell." After concurring with eight reliable sources, Kaiser comes up with four reasons why God is the subject. They are: (1) When the subject of a clause is not stated, as is the case here, the subject of the preceding clause is to be adopted; (2) The immediate context of the passage does not warrant "the use of the indirect object of the previous line as subject"; (3) Shem is designated "as the first in honor of blessings" in the framework of the following chapters; (4) Since Japheth had already been blessed with "enlargement," it is irrational to assume that he received a second blessing of

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid. Also see his further discussion.
of dwelling in the tents of Shem.\footnote{Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward an Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 82.}

The debate as to whether God or Japheth is the subject of "he shall dwell" can go on and on. Some scholars, trying to stand on a middle ground, even see a twofold interpretation of the subject.\footnote{George Bush maintains that the language is designedly ambiguous so both names might apply. He also lists extensive evidence to support his theory. See Notes on Genesis, p. 166.} In all fairness, it must be concluded that the subject of this phrase is not clear, and in all reality it is not important. Moreover, the most important reality of this phrase is that spiritually speaking, all Gentile believers are Japhethites, dwelling in the tents of Shem.\footnote{Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, p. 160.}

Canaan's servant role to Japheth

According to Brow, the Canaanites were enslaved by the Japhethites when Alexander the Great (a Greek Japhethite) subjugated "the people of Tyre and Sidon, who were the only Canaanites who still retained a national identity."\footnote{Brow, "The Curse of Ham--Capsule of Ancient History," p. 10.} Brow believes this prophecy was fulfilled in its entirety when the "Canaanites of the Phoenician colonies," were destroyed by "the Japhethite Romans."\footnote{Ibid.}
The transmission of the curse and blessing

Noah's oracle of cursing and blessing was primarily concerned with the fate of the nations as a whole more than the fate of his sons and grandsons.\textsuperscript{119} However, the eternal doom or security of a individual emanating out of a particular nation is not guaranteed by the cursing and blessing of Noah. The decision to choose and serve God has always been left up to the individual's freewill. This prophecy no more seals an unchangeable condemnation upon every Canaanite, than it assures every Shemite an abundance of spiritual blessings regardless of his actions.\textsuperscript{120} In other words, while a Canaanite woman was used by the Lord to hide two Israelite spies (Jos. 2) and she was later mentioned for her great faith (Heb. 11:31), three-thousand Shemites were slain because they worshipped a golden calf and decided to stand against the Lord (Ex. 32:1-29).

\textsuperscript{119}Keil and Delitzsch, \textit{The Pentateuch}, p. 160.

\textsuperscript{120}Ibid.
CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS OF GENESIS 9:18-27

Immediate Implications

According to Genesis 9:25, Canaan was the lone recipient of the curse. He was singled-out by Noah to bear the fatal consequences of his father's mischievous deed. Although Canaan is the sole object of the curse, the Bible reveals that the outworking of this prophecy has also been manifested in his descendants. A brief study of Biblical Canaanite history supports the preceding statement by revealing two facts about the Canaanite relationship to the events of Genesis 9:18-27.¹ First, this history shows that not only were the Canaanites physical offsprings of Ham, but also his sensual character was "fully" realized in them "with its

¹This brief Biblical history of the Canaanites is in no way meant to be a comprehensive investigation into their history. The purpose of the section is to reveal the manifestations of the curse as it was obviously seen in the Canaanites at certain times in Biblical narratives. For a more detailed non-Biblical approach to Canaanite history see Charles F. Pfeiffer, ed., "Canaanites" in The Biblical World (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), pp. 159-62. In these pages the author studies Canaanite history by dividing it into three ages: I. Earliest History, II. Middle Bronze Age, and III. Late Bronze Age. Also see H. H. Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 1-108.
disastrous results."\textsuperscript{2} Second, this history shows that at certain times in the past, Canaanite tribes were enslaved by other nations, coinciding with the "servant of servants" role attached to the curse. Unger believes the purpose of verse 25 is "to show the origin of the Canaanites and to set forth the source of their moral pollution, which centuries later was to lead to their . . . enslavement by Israel."\textsuperscript{3}

A Brief History of the Canaanites

The first mention of the Canaanites in regard to their inherited Ham-like nature is found in Genesis 15. In this chapter the Lord told Abraham that his seed would go into captivity for 400 years, and afterward they would "come out with great substance" (v. 14), but it would not be until the fourth generation that his seed would come again to the land of Canaan, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (v. 16). The Amorite name was used at times to speak of the Canaanites collectively (e.g. Josh. 24:8).\textsuperscript{4} Genesis 15:16 can be used to verify the fact that by the time of Abraham, the Canaanites had already begun to show forth the same character as their progenitor. In this verse, it was revealed to Abraham that the Israelites would inherit the

\textsuperscript{2}Merrill F. Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), p. 74.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Amorites."
land of the Canaanites when God could no longer stand their wickedness. At this time their evil deeds would come to a climax and "the inquity of the Amorites would be full." Hughes sees this expression as proof that "Ham's sin was developing in the life of the descendants of one of his sons at an alarming rate."^5

The second Biblical appearance of the Canaanites in which they showed forth a connection with the events of Genesis 9:18-27 is found in Genesis 19. This chapter records the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. These Canaanite cities had become so wicked that the Lord rained upon them with "brimstone and fire" (v. 24). Sodom and Gomorrah was occupied by Canaanites (Gen. 10:19), and the "predominant sin in the life of these people bears a fearful resemblance to Ham's embryonic sin which provoked the pronouncement of the curse on Canaan."^6

The next relative Biblical mention of the Canaanites was in the days of Moses. In Leviticus 18-20, the Lord gave to Moses some laws which were to regulate the conduct of the people. In 18:3, the Lord commanded them not to do the things which were done by the Canaanites and not to "walk in their ordinances." The sins that the children of Israel were to abstain from in these three chapters were: unnatural sexual relationships (18), idolatry (19:1-4), defiled offerings

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^6 Ibid., p. 103.
(19:5-8), mistreatment of the unfortunate (19:9-14), appearances of evil (19:15-37), human sacrifices (20:1-5), spiritism (20:6, 27), and immorality (20:7-26). The above list of offenses can be precisely ascribed to the Canaanites; this is why the Lord charged the Israelites: "And after the doings of the land of Canaan, to which I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their ordinances" (Gen. 18:3).

These sins, of which the Canaanites were guilty, have been verified by twentieth century archaeological discoveries at Ras Shamra. Archaeologists have uncovered thousands of clay tablets, dating back to the "early fourteenth century." These ancient documents unmask "a remarkable picture of the gods and goddesses, the temple and religious rituals, the hymns, prayers, and myths of the Canaanites." These documents also reveal the Canaanite culture in its degraded and sin-sick light. They were polytheistic in belief. Their fertility cults maintained practices which were more wretched than any of "the ancient world."

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7Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Canaanites."


10Ibid., p. 84.

11Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Canaanites."
prostitutes (male and female) who practiced all sorts of degenerate sexual acts. Human sacrifices were so prominent in their culture that no other nation equalled them in the violent and lewd nature with which they paid homage to their gods. They worshipped the god El, "who dethroned his own father, murdered his favorite son and decapitated his own daughter." El was also the father of Baal, "the widely revered Canaanite deity." After studying these findings at Ras Shamra showing the sinfulness of the Canaanite culture, it is no wonder God commanded the Hebrews not to follow after the ways of the Canaanites nor walk in their ordinances. Thus, in the day of Moses the iniquity of the Amorites was full and Genesis 15:16 was about to be fulfilled.

In the day of Joshua the iniquity of the Amorites had culminated and their time had come. The sinful and idolatrous Canaanites had dwelt in the land long enough. It was time for a change and the "Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature-worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel." After being delivered out of

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12 Thompson, The Bible and Archaeology, p. 84.
13 See Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament, p. 75.
14 Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Canaanites."
15 Ibid.
Egypt and wandering in the wilderness, the nation of Israel proceeded to conquer the Canaanites. Led by Joshua, they victoriously battled through the transjordan and one of their conquests was the Gibeonites (a branch of the Canaanites). After this defeat, these Gibeonites were on the verge of extermination when they "successfully deceived Joshua and his elders into making a covenant with them to keep them alive."\(^{17}\) Even though this group of Canaanites was spared, it still became enslaved to the Israelites. Thus, here the curse takes on its first visible role in the form of servanthood because the Gibeonites were made to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Josh. 9:23, 27).\(^{18}\) As the children of Israel began to overtake the land of Canaan, they did one of three things to the Canaanite inhabitants: (1) expelled them from the land (Josh. 24:11-12), (2) killed them (Josh. 10:38-43), or (3) subdued them (Josh. 9:23).

Years later, during the reign of Solomon, the Canaanites once again manifested the outworking of the curse. This happened when Solomon enslaved the remaining tribes of the Canaanites. "And all the people who were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites ... whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, of

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\(^{18}\) Even though Canaan was the first to receive the servant's role, the Bible nowhere shows how he fulfilled it. So, this makes Joshua 9 the first visible reference to the fulfillment of the curse.
those did Solomon levy a tribute of bondservice" (I Kings 9:20, 21). Solomon enslaved these Canaanites to help him in his building endeavors.

Once again, the physical manifestation of the curse working out in the Canaanites can be seen when "the people of Tyre and Sidon, who were the only Canaanites who still retained a national identity, were subjugated by Greeks under Alexander the Great." 19

Eventually the final enslavement of this people was in 202 B.C. when the Romans overcame the Phoenician colony of Carthage. 20 At this time the depraved nature of Ham was fully manifested in the Canaanites; they were so far steeped into evil that the Romans were shocked "by the depth of their depravity." 21 Consequently the city of Carthage was completely destroyed in 146 B.C. 22

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21 Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, p. 350. On the basis of this depraved character that was consistently seen in the Canaanites, some have held that the curse was a religious curse; see Merrill F. Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament, pp. 75-77, and W. F. Albright Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1942), pp. 68-94. Unger says, "That Canaan's curse was basically religious has been amply demonstrated by archaeology." Unger refers to Albright for support of his theory that the curse was religious. But to say that the curse was religious is to border "on accusing God of tempting men to evil, which He is unable to do according to James 1:13." Figart, The Race Problem, p. 61.

Since the second century B.C. seems to be the last clear reference to the Canaanites, this raises the question: "Was the curse terminal or permanent?" If the curse were meant to be permanent, then those advocating a curse on blacks would have a more stable case, even though they would still have to justify Ham as being the recipient of the curse. If, however, the curse is terminal, then all Hamitic peoples (blacks included) would be free from the curse of Genesis 9:25.

The Bible mentions three types of curses with respect to duration: (1) an eternal curse, which is one that remains eternally upon the unrepentant sinner: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41b), (2) a terminal curse, which is one terminated upon the death of the individual, as in Genesis 3:17-19 where God condemned man to work the ground and eat bread by the sweat of his brow "all the days of thy life" (v. 17), and (3) an individually applicable curse, which is one that is activated in the life of an individual only when certain conditions are present. This is the type of curse Canaan and his people were under.

Since the curse placed upon Canaan and the Canaanites was an individually applicable one, it was only effective when they chose to follow the rebellious ways of their

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24 Ibid., pp. 99-100.
progenitor Ham, as many of them did. Some of the Canaanites were righteous and did those things which pleased the Lord, (e.g. Josh. 2). Therefore, it is not the business of God to hold a righteous man accountable for the evil deed of another. This situation can be likened to that of the Ninevites. God told Jonah, He was going to destroy the people of Ninevah unless they repented of their evil. When Jonah preached, the city repented and God withheld judgement. Likewise, the Canaanites could choose to go the way of Ham and abide under the curse, or they could choose to go the way of Shem by serving Yahweh and escape the wrath of the curse. The duration of the curse is not specified, but it is certain that it was only applicable for those individuals who chose to follow the way of Ham. Sad to say, the nation of Canaan as a whole was involved in gross depravity; therefore, many times they fell subject to nations around them, hence fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 9:25.

This brings up the next point, namely "Is the curse in effect today?" The answer to this question is an emphatic NO! The curse was directly placed upon Canaan, but indirectly it was placed upon every Canaanite that reproduced Ham's sensual character. Thus, since all Canaanites, ethnologically speaking, have ceased to exist, there are no true grounds for believing that the curse is in existence today. Hughes says:

In the strictest ethnological sense, there are no Canaanites today. Many have perished; others have been absorbed by intermarriage into various racial
stocks. It is contrary to evidence to consider the specific curse of Canaan operative today. Thus, again, the curse which Noah pronounced in relation to Canaan should be classified as a terminated curse.25

Unger, in his discussion on the Canaanites, lists the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Gergashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, and Hamathites.26 Commenting on Unger's discussion of the Canaanites, Figart concludes that they "are known only by the mounds and monuments left behind."27 Brow says the Canaanites "had ceased to be a nation by New Testament times."28 Thus, arguments attempting to justify a curse upon blacks are as obsolete as the Canaanites.

**Ethnological Implications**

**The Origin of the Black Man**

The Bible clearly conveys the fact that everyone born into the world is a physical descendant of Adam. And even more specifically, Genesis 9:18 definitely makes known that everyone born after the Flood is an offspring of either Shem, Ham, or Japheth. Those attempting to promote black servitude as a result of the curse, eagerly assume that blacks are from the stock of Ham. This assumption has been taken for granted; accordingly, a brief investigation follows for the

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25 Ibid., p. 106.
purpose of deciding whether or not blacks have descended from Ham.

Hughes proposes the following formula to determine "whether or not the Negro is a descendant of Ham":

1. What is the ethnological status of the black man?
2. Where were the early settlements of Ham’s descendants?
3. Where were the earliest appearances of the black man?

In determining if Hamitic lineage should be ascribed to the black man, he must first be distinguished in a way which differentiates him "from other stocks of mankind." The following outline will prove to be helpful in the study which is about to be undertaken:

Skin: Skin color ranges from light brown in the Hamitic speaking peoples of northeast Africa to brown-black in west central Africa.

Hair: The color is uniformly dark brown to brown-black; the form is wavy, to curly, to frizzy or wooly, to tightly spiraled "peppercorn."

Lips: They are everted and relatively pigmented. Often a ridge or "lip seam" separates upper mucous lip from skin.

Head: The head is long, ovoid, moderately high, with rounded forehead, protruding occiput, and plateau-like sagittal contour.

A careful observation of "The Table of Nations" in Genesis 10, and the location of each descendant of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, will clearly illustrate that most of the

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30 Ibid. 31 Ibid.

descendants of Shem settled in Asia; most of the descendants of Ham in Africa; and most of the descendants of Japheth in Europe.\footnote{For an excellent discussion on the dispersion of Shem, Ham, and Japheth's descendants, see Charles F. Pfeiffer, Baker's Bible Atlas (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961), pp. 36-44.} By focusing in on Ham's descendants, it can be understood that for the most part they settled on the continent of Africa and around the eastern and southern borders of the Mediterranean Sea.\footnote{Ibid., p. 36.}

In order to tie together the two preceding subjects (the ethnological status of the black man and the early settlements of Ham's descendants), and arrive at a logical conclusion about blacks descending from Ham, this thesis must now establish where the earliest appearances of blacks occurred. Some of the earliest sightings of people possessing the ethnological traits of the black man are found in the writings of Herodotus, an ancient historian. He describes a group of people who had "black skin and wooly hair."\footnote{George Rawlinson, "Herodotus" in Francis R. B. Godolphin ed., The Greek Historians (New York: Random House Inc., 1942), II: 104.} Herodotus refers to these people as Egyptians which, according to Hughes, "may or may not be a mistake."\footnote{Hughes, "\ SER in Genesis 9:18-27," p. 86.} Whether or not they were Egyptians is not significant, but the point to be emphasized is that these "black skin and wooly hair" people
were sighted in an area where the descendants of Ham had migrated. Further, there were also drawings and writings of people fitting the ethnological description of blacks which were found "in the paintings of Thebes,"\textsuperscript{37} a city on the Nile River located in the upper regions of Egypt. From this it can be concluded that some of the early recorded sightings of blacks were in the same areas where the descendants of Ham migrated. Thus, piecing these bits of evidence together (i.e., the ethnological status of blacks, the settlement of Ham’s descendants, and the early appearances of Blacks), shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the black man has descended from Ham.

The Black Man in Relation to the Sons of Ham

Since one of Ham’s sons was cursed, and since the black man descended from one of Ham’s sons, it is necessary to take this process one step further to reveal which one of Ham’s sons was the progenitor of the black man. This must be done to determine "whether or not the Negro is included within the compass of the curse."\textsuperscript{38} According to Genesis 10:6, Ham had four sons: Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. One of these four men stands as the ethnological head of the black race.

Mizraim was Ham’s second son. His Hebrew name (מִצְרַיִם) is the term used for the proper name of Egypt. The word is

\textsuperscript{37}Rawlinson, "Herodotus," II: 147.

\textsuperscript{38}Hughes, "תִּירָן in Genesis 9:18-27," p. 87.
written in the "Hebrew dual form" and Jacob says that it "indicates the two parts into which the land [Egypt] was divided." 39 Unger believes that one part is "Upper Egypt (above Memphis) and the other part is Lower Egypt (the Delta)." 40 Hence, Mizraim settled in Egypt and was the forefather of the Egyptians.

Racially, the Egyptians cannot be linked with the black race because of their different ethnological traits. Most Egyptian babies, and those Egyptians which are never exposed to much sun, are as white as any Caucasian. Also, their hair is straight and black. 41 These ethnological dissimilarities clearly prove that the black man and the Egyptian are from totally different backgrounds. And despite the early appearances of blacks in Egypt, there is no concrete evidence which indicates they were offsprings of Mizraim.

Phut was the third son of Ham (Gen. 10:6). There is very little known about him and one reason is because his offsprings are not listed in Genesis 10. Much of the early information recorded about Phut's homeland has been the subject of some uncertainty. For instance, Aalders says that the word Phut can also be used to refer to "the Kingdom of


40 Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament, p. 84.

Phut."\(^{42}\) He locates this kingdom "in the coastal areas of Abyssina on the Red Sea, opposite the southwest point of Arabia, extending as far as Somaliland."\(^{43}\) Unger, on the contrary, makes the following statement concerning the location of the Kingdom of Phut: "Phut occurs as Put (a) in the inscriptions of the Persian Monarch Darius I the Great (522-486 B. C.), and its location in Cyrenaica, the region about Cyrene in North Africa west of Egypt, is now certain."\(^{44}\) Josephus confirms Unger's position when he equated the land of Phut with modern day Libya.\(^{45}\)

Since it has been established that Phut was the forefather of the Libyans, it must now be seen whether or not they can be ethnologically related to blacks. Sayce observes that Libyans are identified as, "Tahonnu or 'white' men in the Egyptian inscriptions . . . they have a good deal of hair on the face, the eyebrows are well-defined, and the nose is straight . . . the forehead is high, the lips thin, and the jaws orthognathous."\(^ {46}\) As it can be obviously seen, Libyans differ from blacks racially. They belong to the Caucasian


\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament, p. 84.


\(^{46}\) Sayce, The Races of the Old Testament, pp. 150-51.
race and blacks belong to the Negroid race. Hence, regardless of geographical similarities, blacks cannot be identified with the Libyans; thus they are not descendants of Phut.

Canaan, the one who received the curse, was Ham's youngest son (Gen. 10:6). His people basically settled in the area of "Palestine west of the Jordan." The Canaanites were located in an area that "furnished a bridge between Egypt and the great Semitic empires."

There were many branches of the Canaanites but they all possessed the same ethnological features. Sayce describes one group of Canaanites as being "members of the white race," with "black eyes, and light brown hair." Hughes talks about groups of Canaanites who had "black hair and blue eyes; others have blond hair." The previous descriptions of the Canaanites identifies them in such a manner as to distinguish them from the black race. Based on these sharp contrasts in ethnological traits, it can be concluded that these two groups do not share the same racial lineage nor the curse of Genesis 9:25.

Since Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan have been eliminated from the list of possible black progenitors, the only one

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47 Pfeiffer, Baker's Bible Atlas, p. 20.
48 Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament, p. 84.
49 Sayce, The Races of the Old Testament, p. 103.
left is Cush, the oldest son of Ham (Gen. 10:6). Early de-
scendants of Cush settled in Babylon "on the lower Tigris and
Euphrates, where Nimrod raised them to great power." 51 There
is archaeological evidence attesting to the fact that the
Cushites had an early connection with the ancient city-
kingsdom of Kish, a city "in lower Mesopotamia." 52 From this
location they migrated to Arabia, and eventually crossed the
Red Sea into Africa. 53 The final resting place of Cush's
descendants was most-likely the country of Ethiopia, "a
country extending South of Egypt from the first cataract of
the Nile indefinitely, including Nubia, Sudan and northern
if not southern modern Ethiopia." 54

Regarding the ethnological classification of Cush, Lu-
ther says he "belonged to the Negro race." 55 Herodotus re-
ferred to a large number of Ethiopians with woolly hair. 56
Jeremiah 13:23 states: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin
... ?" The preceding reference is to the black skinned
Cushites that were called Ethiopians. Later on in the
book of Jeremiah, an incident is recorded in which an Ethio-
pian saved the life of Jeremiah. Sayce believes that he

51 Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament, p. 83.
52 Ibid. 53 Ibid.
54 The New Compact Bible Dictionary, 1976 ed., s.v. "E-
thiopia."
55 Luther, Luther's Commentary on Genesis, p. 82.
56 Rawlinson, "Herodotus," VII: 70.
was a "Negro." Thus, a careful comparison between the ethnological traits of the Cushites and the black race reveals that blacks have descended from Cush, who was free from the curse during his time; likewise, so are his descendants today.

The Origin of the Black Man's Color

There have been many false theories put forth trying to explain the origin of the black man's color. However, the main theory which has been espoused is the ever-present "Curse of Ham" myth. Those who argue that the curse was the cause of black skin, base their argument on two false assumptions: (1) that Ham was cursed, and (2) that the Hebrew word for Ham means black. From this they conclude that Ham was cursed with "blackness." Augustine Calmet, a French Benedictine Abbot of Senone, definitely saw a connection between the black man's color and the curse. He wrote:

Noah having cursed Ham and Canaan, the effect was, that not only their posterity became subject to their brethren, and was born, as we may say, in slavery, but likewise that the colour of their skin suddenly became black . . .

Priest agrees with Calmet but he reasons that God used divine foresight and saw that Ham would be defiled so He cursed him from birth. He says:

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58 See Peterson, Ham and Japheth, p. 44.
GOD, who made all things, and endowed all animated nature with the strange and unexplained power of propagation, superintended the formation of two of the sons of NOAH, in the womb of their mother, in an extraordinary and supernatural manner, giving to these children such forms of bodies, constitutions of natures, and complexions of skin as suited his will. Those two sons were JAPHETH and HAM. Japheth He caused to be born white, differing from the color of his parents, while He caused Ham to be born black, a color still farther removed from the red hue of his parents than was white, events and products wholly contrary to nature, in the particular of animal generation, as relates to the human race. It was, therefore, by the miraculous intervention of the Divine power that the black and white man have been produced, equally as much as was the creation of the color of the first man, the Creator giving him a complexion, arbitrarily, that pleased the Divine will.59

This erroneous way of thinking has been the foundation of many views that have been offered to explain the origin of the black man's color. Besides the Ham myth, there are basically three other false theories for the origin of black skin.

The mark of Cain

In Genesis 4, the first murder in human history is recorded. While in a jealous rage, Cain murdered his brother Abel. As a result of that deed, Cain was cursed and condemned to be a fugitive for the rest of his days (v. 12). Cain complained about his plight to the Lord saying, "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (v. 13). God dealt with his lament by setting "a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (v. 15). Some have interpreted

59 Priest, Bible Defense of Slavery, p. 33.
this mark as his skin being turned black. One writer not only believed that Cain was turned black by the mark, but also that Ham married one of his offsprings, thus Canaan was the recipient of a double curse.60

The location of blacks in hotter regions of the earth

Since blacks were more frequently seen in the hotter regions of the earth, some have maintained that this has darkened their skin. One author suggested that even a white man was darkened by hardly any exposure to the sun. Therefore, blacks were quite a bit more scorched by the sun because of their long exposure to it.61 A slightly varied view along this line is that at the tower of Babel, God created the different races at the same time He confounded the languages and scattered men abroad upon the face of the earth.62 Thus, it was believed that the skin colors of the various races were "preadapted to the lands of their ultimate habitation."63

Their descendance from a sub-human species

This theory argues that blacks did not descend from the human race, but they are offsprings of another species and

62 See Buswell, Slavery, Segregation, and Scripture, p. 20.
63 Ibid.
this is why their skin is black. Ariel, the pen name of B. H. Payne, believed blacks did not come from man, but that they were beasts created on the sixth day of creation. He made the following distinction between the different species of beings in God's creation: "Birds, Fowls, Creeping things, Cattle, Beasts, and Adam and Eve." He listed blacks under the category of a beast, which included all two-footed animals such as the ape. Ariel also claimed that "the tempter in the garden of Eden . . . was a beast, a talking beast . . . the Negro." Thus, according to this viewpoint, blacks descended from a beast and this is why they have black skin.64

To arrive at the right solution to this situation, one must start from the beginning, and the beginning of man starts with Adam. Every human being that has ever been born except for Christ, has inherited two things from Adam: (1) a sin nature, and (2) a skin nature. When Adam transgressed against the Lord, he took upon himself a sin nature, and passed that nature on to every man (Rom. 5:12). Likewise, he also passed on to all men the various skin colors, since he possessed the genetical makeup to do so. This can be readily verified because if he did not have this capability, then every man physically as well as racially "would look

like Adam."\(^{65}\) Hughes says

If a potential for descendants of varied sizes and shapes existed within Adam and Eve, it is logical to assume that a potential for descendants of a variety of colors existed within them . . . God placed within Adam and Eve a variety potential for their descendants and this potential might have included a certain number of basic skin colors from which miceneration, not climate, could produce other colors.\(^{66}\)

Most geneticists believe that the "difference between black and white pigmentation in human beings is due to two pairs of genes."\(^{67}\) On a genetical scale, one pair of these genes stands at the highest degree of blackness and the other pair of these genes at the highest degree of whiteness. Both Adam and Eve had these two pairs of genes and they could reproduce every shade of color, from the darkest black to the lightest white. This can be seen by the following illustration. Assume that Adam and Eve's genealogical structure was AaBb. The A and B represents the black genes while the a and b represents the white genes. As Adam and Eve reproduced, their offsprings became the color of the genes that were dominant in that offsprings's body. As Adam and Eve's offsprings reproduced, their progeny manifested the color which was most dominant in them. Thus, a person with a AABB genotype would be a member of the black race and a person

\(^{65}\) Hughes, "777215 in Genesis 9:18-27, p. 96.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., p. 97.

with a aabb genotype would be a member of the white race.

Gary E. Parker, a Research Associate in Bio-science at the Institute for Creation Research, has done extensive research in the area of skin color variation. In his article, "Creation, Mutation, and Variation," Parker, gives the following discussion and illustrative chart on the various skin colors.

How long would it take AaBb parents to have children with all the variations in skin color we see today? Answer: one generation. Just one generation. As shown in the genetic square, one in 16 of the children of AaBb parents would likely have the lightest skin color (aabb); less than half (6/16) would be medium skinned like their parents (any two "capital letter" genes); and one-quarter (4/16) would be a shade darker (3 capital letter genes) and a shade lighter (1 capital letter). 68

Since Noah stands as the head of the human race after


69 This diagram was taken from Ibid.
the Flood, it must be concluded that he had a genotype very close to, if not exactly, AaBb. These genes were transmitted to his sons and certain ones became more dominant in the bodies of each individual son. In the case under observation, what happened was that Noah passed down strong melanin pigments to Ham, and Ham passed down even stronger pigments to Cush. Therefore as great numbers of Cushites migrated to the same regions, the AABB genotype was constantly being reproduced in their offsprings, hence the color of black skin was originated and preserved in Cush and his descendants.

The Institution of Black Slavery

According to James Oliver Buswell, there have been four Biblical arguments put forth by those who advocate slavery. They are: (a) it was ordained by God, and was in the best interest of the slave, (b) there were examples of slavery in the Bible, (c) the servant role spoken of in the New Testament, and (d) the "Curse of Ham" myth. Out of these four arguments, the last one gained the most prominence. Buswell confirms this when he says that the "Curse of Ham" myth was believed by "most of the advocates of slavery . . . ."

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70 The protein melanin is a "skin coloring agent," see Ibid.
71 Buswell, Slavery, Segregation, and Scripture, p. 12.
72 Ibid. 73 Ibid., p. 16.
Even clergymen were numbered among those who saw the curse as being grounds for black slavery. Humphrey, a Southern minister, said the "Negro race has descended from Ham. The curse that was placed upon the descendants of Ham, that they were to be servants to Shem and Japheth, still rests upon this race." Dagg, a Baptist minister, theologian, and educator in Georgia, speaking on black servitude said: "As the sons of Adam are bound to submit patiently to the curse which requires them to earn their bread in the sweat of their face, so the sons of Ham are bound to submit patiently to the curse which has doomed them to bondage." Many who advocated slavery felt that God designed black servitude "to be perpetuated throughout all time, and intended to cement and compact the whole human family . . . and to sustain the great chain of subordination essential to the divine, as well as human governments." As a result of this frequent use of the curse by clergymen, the way became clear for people of all walks of life to do likewise. And quite often, the Biblical "location of the passage is unknown" to those using it.

74 Ezell, Racial Segregation, p. 15.
75 John Leadley Dagg, The Elements of Moral Science, p. 244, as cited in Peterson, Ham and Japheth, p. 42.
76 Buswell, Slavery, Segregation, and Scripture, p. 17.
77 For a list of advocates of the "Curse of Ham" myth and their various occupations see Peterson, Ham and Japheth, p. 102.
Those who supported a racial curse in Genesis 9:25, which condemned blacks to servanthood, took for granted that five elemental conjectures were true.

1. That it was a racial curse.
2. That the curse was biologically transferable.
3. That Ham was the original victim of the curse.
4. That the children of the original victim of the curse were slaves.
5. That the original victim of the curse was a member of the Negro race.\footnote{Tilson, Segregation and the Bible, p. 23. Conjecture 1 is the present author's insertion, conjectures 2-5 are taken from Tilson verbatim.}

By refuting these conjectures with factual data, it can be proven that there were never any justifiable grounds for using Genesis 9:25 as a proof-text for slavery. First, Noah did not pronounce a racial curse. There is no decisive evidence to prove that blacks ever existed before the curse was pronounced. Thus, Noah could not have had the concept of a racial curse on his mind. The first Biblical mention of black men is found in Genesis 10 where Cush and his sons are listed. This would have been some time after the declaration of the curse. Also, according to Herodotus, a secular historian, one of the earliest sightings of a black person was in Egypt.\footnote{Rawlinson, "Herodotus," II: 104.} Egypt, which gets its name from Mizraim a son of Ham, was not in existence at the time of the curse because Mizraim had not yet been born. Thus, the early sighting of blacks in Egypt would have been some time after the curse also. Therefore, the curse could not have been a racial one.
because there were no blacks around to curse. It might also be mentioned here again, the curse did not cause the black man to become black because it was placed upon Canaan, a white man, who had white descendants.

Second, the curse was not biologically transferrable. It was only applicable to Canaan and the Canaanites, and then only if they followed the wicked way of Ham. Ham's other sons (Cush, Phut, and Mizraim) were not encompassed within the range of the curse, and as Everett Tilson says, "they have no reason to regard themselves as heirs of Canaan's curse."[^81]

Third, Canaan was the original victim of the curse and not Ham. The Hebrew text reads: "כְּרָע פֶּן כִּי בִשְׁכֵּבָה יִבְרָע הָאָרֶץ כְּרָע בֵּית קָנָאָן." There is no need to amend the text or to adopt another reading. Lange, in his commentary on the book of Genesis, stresses that there is not enough sufficient textual support which warrants changing the text from the reading "cursed be Canaan" to "cursed is Ham."[^82]

Fourth, the descendants of the original victim of the curse did become slaves, but they were the Canaanites not the Cushites. Since Canaan was the lone object of the curse, no one should be guilty of misreading Genesis 9:25 by reckoning "the Hamitic peoples in general to be doomed to

[^81]: Tilson, Segregation and the Bible, p. 23.

[^82]: Lange, "Genesis," p. 337.
inferiority" when "the subjugation of the Canaanites to Israel fulfilled the oracle sufficiently."\textsuperscript{83}

Fifth, the original victim of the curse was not a member of the Negro race. Canaan, the original recipient of the curse, was not black. Hughes says:

\begin{quote}
The description of other Canaanite groups vary. Some have black hair and blue eyes; others have blond hair. But they are uniformly described in such a way as to make it certain that they belong to the white race. It is quite clear that the Negro is not a descendant of Canaan, the son of Ham.\textsuperscript{84}
\end{quote}

In conclusion, Genesis 9:25 cannot be used as a proof text to justify the American institution of slavery. Those who have done this, were either faulty exegetes, prejudiced racists, or gain-seeking slave owners. Sad but true, this eighteenth and nineteenth century institution has continued to affect the thinking of the American society even until these present days.

The Intellectual Capacities of the Black Man

Throughout the years, many have asserted that blacks were inherently intellectually inferior to whites. This assertion has its roots in the "Curse of Ham" myth, whether it is realized or not. It was during the era of American slavery when exponents of the myth began to advance the theory that black skin was a physical manifestation of the


\textsuperscript{84}Hughes, "getContext" in Genesis 9:18-27," p. 88.
inferior intellectual status of the black man. One supporter of this theory said, "Ham's posterity are either black or dark colored, and thus bear upon their countenance the mark of inferiority which God put upon the progenitor."\(^85\) Thomas Jefferson, though not alluding directly to the "Curse of Ham" myth, advanced "as a suspicion only that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites in the endowments both of body and mind."\(^86\)

Priest made a physiological distinction between the sizes of the brains in black men and white men; he said: "It is a physiological fact that the brain of all Negroes is less in size and weight than the brain of white men by more than one-eighth."\(^87\) Another citation along the line of black intellectual inferiority was by Thornton Stringfellow, he said:

The age twenty-one, which gives bodily maturity to both races develops moral and intellectual manhood in the white race, while the African remains at the

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\(^85\)James A. Sloan, The Great Question Answered; or Is Slavery a Sin in Itself (Per Se?) Answered According to the Teaching of the Scriptures, p. 78, cited by Peterson, Ham and Japheth, p. 73.


\(^87\)Priest, Bible Defense of Slavery, p. 254.
end of time, a mere child in intellectual and moral development, perfectly incapable of performing the great function of social life. 88

In recent times, the views and opinions expressed by Jensen have kept alive the issue of black "intellectual inferiority." A few years back, he wrote a very lengthy article for the Harvard Education Review entitled: "How Much Can We Boost I. Q. and Scholastic Achievement?" In this article, Jensen launched a massive attack against black intelligence. His research supposedly proved that since blacks scored 15 points below the white average on I. Q. tests, they were inferior to whites intellectually. Jensen concludes his article with the idea that even if sophisticated teaching methods or devices of compensatory education are employed, the level of black intelligence can only be raised a little. Jensen bases his conclusion on the theory that blacks have inherited genes, which affects their brain structure and limits their intellect. 89

In addressing this whole issue of black intellectual inferiority, it must first be made clear that there is not a shred of evidence anywhere to substantiate the theory that blacks have smaller brains than whites. On the contrary,


anthropologists have confirmed that the brains of blacks and whites are equal in size.\textsuperscript{90} And even if there was a difference between the sizes of the brains, it would still have to be proven that a smaller brain means a lesser intellectual capacity.

Second, before blacks were brought to America as slaves, they already had highly developed levels of civilization. Meroe, which was thought to be the ancient capitol of Ethiopia, was a "great" African metropolis.\textsuperscript{91} The Romans recognized the intellectual inventiveness of Africans; they had a proverb that stated: "Ex Africa semper aliquid," which can be understood to mean that Africa was continuously coming up with some new discovery.\textsuperscript{92} Furthermore, Africans were also quite active in Roman theater and amphitheater.\textsuperscript{93} "Accord- ing to some accounts," Aesop, one of the greatest literary writers ever, was an African.\textsuperscript{94} Africans have also shown skillful ingenuity in the area of medicine. Caesarean operations were extraordinarily performed by Africans in cases of

\textsuperscript{90}Buswell, \textit{Slavery, Segregation, and Scriptures}, pp. 80-81.


\textsuperscript{93}Snowden, \textit{Blacks in Antiquity}, pp. 156-168.

\textsuperscript{94}Ibid., p. 188.
emergency, before whites had successfully done them. All of the afore mentioned observations can be used to show that many remarks made during the era of slavery about the intellect of blacks were unfounded and unjustified. What had happened was that blacks were taken out of their cultural environment, placed in new and adverse surroundings, and expected to perform mentally comparable to whites. Then when blacks failed to measure up to the intellectual criterion of the white man's society, he was falsely deemed to be unintelligent. This inferiority was not due to a hereditary curse but to a change in environment. Surely if an American had been taken captive and enslaved by the Africans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he would have suffered the same fate as the Africans did in America.

Finally, recent intelligence quotient tests, which have results proving that blacks are inferior to whites, are racially biased. Most intelligence tests of this nature are geared to test the intellect of the white middle-class society in America. A child's intelligence is greatly influenced by his environment within the first five years of his life. The average black child, because of his parent's financial limitations, is forced to grow up in an environment

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which is not conducive to learning. This limited environment of learning is further reinforced during his school years. For example, in predominantly black and lower-class school districts, teachers have to decrease the pace of teaching to meet what they assume to be the intellectual ability of the student. Consequently, when this student is given a standard intelligence test which is geared to test the intelligence of a white middle-class student, he scores 15% lower than the average. Therefore, I. Q. tests are not a fair and accurate measure of intelligence.

The fact that I. Q. tests are culturally biased is seen in other instances also. Kroeber, an anthropologist, has arrived at some interesting observations by studying the results of certain intelligence tests. He observed that the Northern black does far better than the Southern black on intelligence tests. They (Northern blacks) score considerably higher and they have less in the lower ranges of the scale. Kroeber concludes: "Evidently the difference is due to increased schooling, improved earning of capacity, larger opportunity and incentive."⁹⁷ Even white lower-class children fair poorly when compared with white middle and upper-class children. The white "lower-class mothers spend less time face-to-face mutual vocalization and smiling with their infants: they do not regard the child's maturational

progress, and they do not enter into long periods of play with the child." 98 Hence, this results in lower I. Q.'s even among white children.

In conclusion, this whole issue of the intellectual inferiority of the black man rests upon an unstable foundation. God has not placed a curse on the intellect of the black man nor has He created him intellectually inferior. This would be against God's character and Word (Eph. 6:9). Blacks have never been inferior to whites in the endowments of the mind; any intellectual differences which may happen to surface are not due to inferiority, but to culture and/or environment.

CHAPTER IV

SOTERIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GENESIS 9:18-27

The Soullessness of the Black Man

In times past, the "Curse of Ham" myth has been the underlying factor for spiritual restrictions placed upon the black man. At first, some of the advocates of a racial curse believed that blacks did not have souls. According to Hughes, "Many people in this generation were once taught by older relatives who came through the Civil War that the Negro has no soul."¹ The curse myth paved the way for many writers to present various theories regarding the "soullessness" of the black man. "Ariel thought that the black man was a created beast which had no soul. He believed there were only eight human souls saved at the time of the Flood, and none of those survivors were black. He says that the black man went on the ark as one of the animals and had "no soul to be saved."² Another advocate of this theory believed that Cain's wife was a "soulless" black, and their descendants were black and "soulless."³ The Koran, which also contains

¹Hughes, "יִפְּדֶנָּם," in Genesis 9:18-27, p. 82.

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its own account of Noah and Ham's post-Flood activities, has a statement which alludes to black-skinned people being condemned to Hell. The basic concept of the statement is "that hell-fire blackens the skin." The "soullessness" of the black man theory is not strongly advocated by Mormons today, however, they still do believe that certain spiritual restrictions have been placed upon the black man. The Pearl of Great Price, a Mormon text book valued as equal in authority with the Bible by Mormons, records an incident in which Ham and his descendants were cursed. This record has been the source of reference for Mormon officials in banning blacks from the priesthood, and by doing this, Mormons have placed a spiritual restriction upon the black man.

In light of the preceding theories, the spiritual status of blacks must be studied in its Biblical context. God has always had a redemptive plan for all of mankind, and this plan is revealed in His Word. Throughout the Bible, God has made covenants with his patriarchs and saints regarding His spiritual plan for the nations. Thus, it is important to study these covenants and see how they relate to the black race. This is necessary because many have believed that blacks were spiritually restricted from the Lord's salvation

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7See "Ban on Negroes in Priesthood," p. 14. Also see Carl T. Rowan, "How Racists Use Science to Degrade
and service. A brief study of major Bible covenants will demonstrate that the Lord has always had a spiritual plan and purpose for the black man.

The Black Man in Relation to Bible Covenants

The Word Covenant Defined

The Hebrew word for covenant is נְקַנְתָּה and designates "a treaty or agreement between nations or individuals and should be understood on the basis of whether the parties are equal or one is superior to the other." The type of covenants to be discussed in this section are to be understood as being established between Yahweh and His chosen people. It should also be understood that they were instituted by Yahweh for the spiritual welfare of the human race. They can be divided into two categories: (1) a conditional covenant, in which God's blessing is dependent upon man's faithfulness to the terms of the agreement, and (2) an unconditional covenant, in which God's blessing was unconditionally guaranteed based on His faithfulness. Each of the following covenants will be defined and significantly related to the New Testament believers, blacks in particular.

Noahic Covenant

In Genesis 9:1-17, the features of the Noahic Covenant are stated. One feature of this covenant is that "God


8Elmer B. Smick, "נְקַנְתָּה" in Harris, Archer, and Waltke,
blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (v. 1). In this segment of the covenant, there are three noteworthy considerations which are relevant to the subject under discussion.

God blessed Noah

God's blessing to Noah was that, "In him [Noah], ... the race of man is to begin anew." Since Noah, a righteous man, was spared for the purpose of preserving the human race, it was only fitting that the Lord bless him as he ventured out to begin a righteous civilization. Noah was to establish a pattern of righteousness for all generations to follow. Therefore, God's blessing upon Noah was in part to show His satisfaction with Noah, and to enable him to continue to be a godly example to all people.

God blessed Noah's sons

In Genesis 9:1, all of Noah's sons were blessed, including Ham. God had just cleansed the earth of evil by destroying it with water. The Flood killed everyone except for Noah and his family. It pleased the Lord to bless Noah and his sons since they survived the Flood and were to be the ones who would spread righteousness throughout the earth.

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eds., Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p. 128.
In this light, it can be said that the ark was a type of salvation (cf. I Pet. 3:18-22). Each one of Noah's sons was spared by the ark, and each received a spiritual blessing to help them in the new world. This blessing was visibly and verbally confirmed in Genesis 9:1. Despite Ham's ungodly character, he still received a blessing from the Lord. This blessing was also passed on to all of his sons. It should be interjected here that the cursing and blessing of verses 25-27 did in no way alter the blessing of the Noahic Covenant. The cursing and blessing of verses 25-27 were in addition to the blessing of verse 1. In the Noahic Covenant, Shem, Ham, and Japheth were blessed. In the latter verses of Genesis 9, Canaan was cursed while Shem and Japheth received an additional blessing each. Even though Canaan was cursed to servitude (v. 25), if he chose to follow God he could still receive the blessing of the Noahic Covenant. Shem's additional blessing was having the Lord as his God, and Japheth's additional blessing was enlargement. Ham had the blessing of Genesis 9:1 and no additional blessing in this chapter. Thus, all nations and races were blessed in the Noahic Covenant, and this blessing was not affected by the cursing and blessing of Genesis 9:25-27.

God commanded Noah's sons to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth

After blessing Noah's sons, the Lord desired for them to fill the earth with righteousness, since He had just cleansed the earth of evil. This is seen in the Lord's
three-fold command to them: (1) "to be fruitful" which meant "to bear young,"\(^{10}\) (2) "to multiply" which meant "to become much or many,"\(^{11}\) (3) "to replenish the earth" which meant to fill the earth.\(^{12}\) In essence, Shem, Ham, and Japheth were to multiply and fill the earth with righteous offsprings. Since they were the progenitors of the various races, it must be understood that there was no restriction placed upon any race which denied or limited the carrying out of this command. The command of the Noahic Covenant was for people of all races to reproduce righteous descendants in the earth. Since God's covenant with Noah is an everlasting covenant (v. 16), the Lord moved Noah to make a special promise to Shem, which makes sure that a righteous seed will always be preserved in the earth. The Lord was so concerned about keeping His covenant with Noah that He promised Shem the blessing of being the father of the one who would help all men to live righteously. Through Shem would come the Messiah and He would be the seed promised to the woman in Genesis 3:15 that would redeem the fallen man. Therefore, although this covenant was made with Noah, it was in actuality a covenant with all men in all generations. God's command to Noah and his sons is still going out today. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" with


\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 282. \(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 350.
righteousness.

Abrahamic Covenant

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 12:2, 3)

In this covenant, God promises Abraham three types of blessings: (1) National blessings (a great nation); (2) Personal blessings (a great name); and (3) Universal blessings (all families of the earth would be blessed).

In the "Universal blessings" section of the covenant, God promised to the Gentiles two special blessings: (1) a special blessing to those Gentiles who blessed the Jews, and (2) a salvation blessing to all Gentiles.

Special blessing

First, the covenant promised a blessing to those Gentiles who blessed the Jews. In this section of the covenant, God unconditionally promised to bless all who blessed Abraham and his descendants. Aalders says, "What God declared is that His attitude toward Abram's fellow men would be determined by their attitudes towards Abram. Those who acted favorably toward Abram would win the favor of God."\(^{13}\) This principle can be seen working in the life of a black man in the book of Jeremiah. When Jeremiah, the Hebrew prophet, was

\(^{13}\) Aalders, Genesis, p. 269.
falsely accused and cast into prison, his innocence was pleaded to King Zedekiah by Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian. As a result of the Lord's using this black man to speak in the prophet's behalf, the king allowed a group of men led by Ebedmelech to draw the Hebrew prophet out of that terrible prison. And as Von Orelli states, this was all carried "out with loving care." On account of his faithful service, Ebedmelech received a special blessing. The Lord promised this black man the blessing of deliverance because he had been a blessing to a son of Abraham, and also because he had put his trust in the Lord.

But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord (Jer. 39:17-18).

Salvation blessing

"All families of the earth" were to be blessed in Abraham. The Hebrew term used for families in Genesis 12:3 is אב, and it is used in a much broader sense than the English word for family. Often it is used to designate "a subdivision of a larger group such as a tribe or nation."  

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16 Ibid.
Also note that the reference says "all families of the earth." The Hebrew word לְאֹת, translated "all," when used in its "genitive relation," as is the case here, signifies "the whole of something."¹⁷ Thus, the blessing promised to all families of the earth was the Messiah, who would make salvation available to all races, nations, and people. The fact that this blessing encompassed blacks can be seen in the prophecy of Psalms 68:31 which states: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." Joseph Alexander says the phrase "soon stretch out" is a translation of "the original expression, which means strictly, make its hands to run, and may perhaps denote the eagerness with which the action is performed."¹⁸ In this verse, the Psalmist has revealed a prophecy in which the black man would see the need to reach out to God, then eagerly do so, and receive the blessing of salvation promised to all nations in the Abrahamic Covenant.

The expression "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" is a great salvation promise. This promise was fulfilled in Christ who was a seed of Abraham: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). This promise was also fulfilled in New Testament believers who were seeds of Abraham:

¹⁷ John N. Oswalt, "לְאֹת" in Ibid., p. 441.
Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Rom. 4:16).

Also, Galatians 3:29 states, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Therefore, the Abrahamic Covenant not only "reveals the sovereign purpose of God to fulfill through Abraham His program for Israel," but it also provides "in Christ the Savior for all who believe."  

Davidic Covenant

Kaiser suggests that the Lord's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7 may be divided into four promises. He observes that they are:

1. **A House (v. 13).** The word usually translated "house" means "dynasty" in this verse. Dynasty "was most fitting, and especially since the expression 'your house and your kingdom will be made forever' (v. 16) could only mean that David's "dynasty would rule forever."

2. **A Seed (v. 12).** This word was used collectively and stood for David's "posterity even as it did in Genesis 3:15; 12:7; 13:15." Hence, "David's 'seed' would build the proposed temple (2 Sam. 7:13)" and "at the same time, the eternally enduring house would never lack a descendant to sit on the throne of David."

3. **A Kingdom (v. 16).** For all practical purposes, David's Kingdom and the Lord's Kingdom were synonymous. These two kingdoms were so closely related "that the Davidic throne and kingdom were later on called the Lord's own," (see 1 Chron. 28:5; 2 Chron. 9:8; 13:8). "By virtue of their special place in the covenant," the two kingdoms "were regarded as one. They were so inseparably linked together that in the future their destiny was identical."

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4. A Son of God (v. 14). This was the promise of "divine sonship" to David's seed. This sonship was more than Near Eastern titulary of divine sonship: 'son of god-x'; it was a divine gift, not a proud boast." Furthermore, the sonship which was promised to David and his seed was a particularization of the old word given to Israel (viz., His "firstborn") which now would be addressed to David's seed (Ps. 89:27)." David, in an unparalleled manner, "could now call Him 'my Father!' (v. 26)."20

Even though this covenant was given to David and the Jewish nation as a whole, there are several passages in the New Testament which indicate that these promises were fulfilled in Christ. In Matthew 1:1 Jesus is said to be of the house and seed "of David." According to Luke 1:32-33, He is the ruler on "the throne of his father David, . . . and of his kingdom there shall be no end." He is called "the Son of the Highest" in Luke 1:32. Finally, in Revelation 19:16, He has the name "King of Kings" written "on his vesture and on his thigh."

Although parts of the Davidic Covenant will not be fully recognized until the time when Christ returns to rule on the earth, the king and kingdom promises to David have a special relation to this age and the New Testament believer. As King, Jesus offered the Jews the Davidic Kingdom and they rejected it (Jn. 1:11). Since the Jews refused to accept the kingdom which was rightfully theirs, the King in turn offered it to anyone who would receive it (see Matt. 22:1-14; Jn. 1:12). When the nation of Israel rejected the outward kingdom as covenanted to David, Jesus offered the kingdom of

heaven to everyone (Jew as well as Gentile). Matthew 13, which presents seven parables concerning the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, sheds much light on this subject. The object of these seven parables is to reveal God's plan for the kingdom after it had been presented to and refused by the Jews. The parables show God's program for the nations from this present age through the Tribulation. 21 Tasker states: "The inauguration of the kingdom by Jesus the Messiah has already taken place, but the outward signs of its presence are as yet very few." 22

Passage after passage in the New Testament makes reference to the kingdom. The kingdom is "at hand" (Matt. 3:2), to be sought (Matt. 6:33), suffering "violence" (Matt. 11:12), being preached (Mk. 1:14), and "within" (Lk. 17:21). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus enunciated the laws which are to govern the kingdom (see Matt. 5-7 making special note of 5:3, 10, 19, 20, 6:33). Jesus and his disciples "went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God" (Lk. 8:1). "Many prophets and righteous men desired to see" the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:17). The believer has been translated "from the power of darkness, . . . into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).


It should be made clear that the kingdom of heaven and the Church are not the same thing. McGee sternly asserts: "The kingdom of heaven today is all Christendom (the portion of the world which Christianity is predominant can be considered as Christendom). Obviously, the church is in Christendom, but is not all of it by any means."\(^{23}\)

In conclusion, the Davidic kingdom was offered to the Jews and they rejected it. God has now opened the doors of the kingdom to all nations, yet God's Covenant with David will not be totally fulfilled until Christ is physically seated on His earthly throne.

**New Covenant**

At Mt Sinai, God gave to Moses the laws which were to govern the children of Israel. These laws are commonly known as the Mosaic Law or Covenant. This covenant was conditional and the special relationship between Yahweh and His chosen people was based solely on their obedience to the laws of this covenant. The Lord spoke to Moses in Exodus 19:5 and told him to tell the people that "if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine." Unfortunately, the nation of Israel was unable to keep their part of the covenant. The prophet Hosea cried: "Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed

\(^{23}\)McGee, Matthew, p. 166.
my covenant, and transgressed against my law" (8:1). Isaiah was also moved to say, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof: because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (24:5).

Since Israel was unfaithful to the Mosaic Covenant, the Lord said in Jeremiah 31 that He would "make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (v. 31). The Lord said this new covenant was not going to be like the covenant that was "made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (v. 32). Israel would not have to worry about missing out on the blessings promised in this covenant, because it was unconditional and based on the faithfulness of God. Much of it was similar to the Mosaic Covenant but the keeping power of it was in the hands of God. Like the Mosaic Covenant, the New Covenant would be written down, not on tablets of clay but in the hearts of men (v. 33). Also, the conditional promise to Israel that they would be the Lord's "peculiar treasure ... above all people," was unconditionally promised in the New Covenant: The Lord said He will "be their God, and they shall be my people" (v. 33). Additionally the Lord said, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (v. 34).

The New Covenant spoken of in Jeremiah has been fully manifested in this present age in the personage of Jesus Christ. In Luke 22:20, Jesus alluded to His fulfillment of
my covenant, and transgressed against my law" (8:1). Isaiah was also moved to say, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof: because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (24:5).

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The New Covenant spoken of in Jeremiah has been fully manifested in this present age in the personage of Jesus Christ. In Luke 22:20, Jesus alluded to His fulfillment of
it when He instated the Lord's Supper. He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (ASV). In Hebrews 8:8-12, the writer records the New Covenant spoken of by Jeremiah and encompasses it with a vivid explanation of its relationship to Christ and the New Testament believer. Hebrews 8-10 accurately explains how Christ is performing the Mosaic function of priest in the life of the believer. He is the high priest (8:1-5), his covenant is far superior to the Mosaic, (8:6; 9:16-22), and his sacrifice excels all sacrifices of the former covenant (10:1-18).

Thus, Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant has been fulfilled in Christ. In this covenant Christ has written the law in the heart of the believer (Jn. 14:26), Christ has made it possible for all believers to become God's people (Jn. 1:12), and Christ has made it possible for believers to have forgiveness of sin (Heb. 10:1-18). It can therefore be said that the black man is included in the New Covenant. On the day of Pentecost, shortly after the New Covenant went into effect, people from many different nations were present. Among those present were people from "parts of Libya about Cyrene" (Acts 2:10). After Peter preached his sermon, he gave an invitation and exhorted his listeners to "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). This resulted in the admission of three thousand souls into the New Covenant, some of which were no doubt from the "parts of Libya about Cyrene,"
who took the good news back to their homeland (cf. Acts 11:20).  

The Black Man in Relation to the Great Commission

In order to understand and see God's plan for the black man during the present age, this study will now evaluate the Great Commission in light of its relationship to the black race.

The Great Commission Defined

After Christ arose from the dead, He appeared to the disciples and commanded them to carry the life-changing power of the gospel to all the world. This command is so important, that the Lord found it necessary to record it five times in the New Testament (e.g. Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:46-49; Jn. 20:21-23; and Acts 1:4-5, 8). Peters suggests that each of the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) records the Great Commission as it was significant in his own mind. He observed:

Matthew - the authority, the all-inclusive goal and the time-extension of the work
Mark - the method and geographical scope of the work
Luke - the message and universality of the work

24 It can be argued whether these people from "parts of Libya about Cyrene" were blacks or Jews. But since this reference is to an area in northern Africa, the present writer is going on the assumption that there were a few if not many blacks present.

John - the spiritual equipment and spiritual nature of the work

Peters notes that "while each of the evangelists presents it from his own point of view and with his own emphasis, together they supplement each other, making a complete whole . . . "

The Great Commission as found in Matthew and Mark called for the disciples to "Go." Jesus said in Matthew 28, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . " (v. 19). He also said in Mark 16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (v. 15). The Great Commission as found in Luke, John, and Acts implies that they were to "Go." "And ye are witnesses of these things" (Lk. 24:48); " . . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (Jn. 20:20); " . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . " (Acts 1:8).

With the command for them to "Go," they were to teach, baptize, disciple, preach the gospel, and be witnesses to all nations. The very idea that this was to be done to all people everywhere verifies the fact that the gospel was to be taken to blacks. It is important to note: in all of the Scriptures where the Great Commission appears, the disciples were commanded to go to all nations. Matthew says "all nations"; Mark records "all the world" and "every creature"; Luke pens "all nations" and "the uttermost part of the earth"; and John writes "whosoever." Thus, the Gospel was

26 Ibid., p. 370. 27 Ibid.
to be taken to every person everywhere, from the most refined civilization of the world to the most remote and darkest part of the jungle.

The Great Commission and the Black Man

The Bible does bear witness to the fact that the Great Commission encompassed the black man. There are several records in the Scriptures which warrant the attention of this thesis.

The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

With all this talk about the "soullessness" of the black man, it is interesting to note that the first Gentile convert to Christianity was a black man; he was the unnamed Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8. In this chapter the evangelist Phillip was ministering in Samaria (v. 5-25), when "the angel of the Lord" told him to go south "to Gaza" (v. 26). On his way there, he met "a man of Ethiopia" who came "to Jerusalem to worship" (v. 27). He was "sitting in his chariot" reading the book of Isaiah when the Spirit bade Phillip to "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (v. 28-29). Phillip ran over to the chariot and asked the Ethiopian man if he could understand what he was reading, the eunuch's reply was: "How can I, except some man should guide me" (v. 30-31). The eunuch had the Scriptures opened to Isaiah 53 and Phillip explained to him that this was speaking about the death of Jesus (v. 32-35). Phillip took this occasion to preach the gospel to this black man, and he made a profession of faith;
"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (v. 37). At this point, they got off of the chariot and Phillip baptized the eunuch (v. 38).

The record of the Ethiopian's conversion, "like the baptism of Cornelius by St. Peter . . . marked an important stage in the question of admission of the Gentiles to the Christian Church." It demonstrates that all racial barriers have been torn down and all are "baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13).

Many of the church fathers have attested to the significance of the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion to Christianity.

Irenaeus

In his work Against Heresis, Irenaeus refers to the eunuch as the first missionary "sent into the regions of Ethiopia, to preach what he himself believed, that there was one God preached by the prophets, but that the Son of this [God] had already made [His] appearance," And this son "had been led as a sheep to slaughter."^{29}


Eusebius

Eusebius of Caesarea said this eunuch was "the first-fruit of believers throughout the world." He believed the Ethiopian's conversion was a fulfillment of the prophecy "Ethiopia stretcheth out her hand unto God."  

Jerome

Jerome, the great Bible scholar and translator of the Latin Vulgate, said: "the Ethiopian eunuch, who in spite of the prophet changed his skin and whilst he read the old testament found the fountain of the gospel."  

Simon of Cyrene

Jesus said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mk. 8:3). Simon of Cyrene, whom many believe to be a black man, not only did this spiritually but physically also. He physically took up the cross of Jesus, when the Savior collapsed beneath his weight.  

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32 The theory that Simon of Cyrene was not a black man has been advanced by A. M. Ross, "Simon" in Merrill Tenney ed., The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), V., p. 441. But this theory must be discarded since this same Simon is called Niger in Acts 13:1. Niger, is Latin for "black, here used as a nickname. It apparently describes the dark complexion of Simeon and suggests that he was of African origin." (Pfeiffer and Harrison eds., The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1146).
the weight of His cross on the day He was crucified (Mk. 15:21). It is possible that this physical cross-bearing experience led to his spiritual cross-bearing experience, i.e., his salvation. This can be verified by Acts 13:1 where "we meet the same name [Simon] with a slightly different spelling [Symeon]." In this verse, Simon not only appears as a convert to Christianity, but also an outstanding prophet and Bible teacher. Thus, Simon, whom this writer assumes to be a black man, was a prominent figure in the Church at Antioch, and in essence "his cross-bearing led to his crown wearing." 

Rufus

Rufus was the son of Simon of Cyrene, this is seen in Mark 15:21 which says that Simon was "the father of Alexander and Rufus." Mark is referring to Rufus in order to identify his father Simon. "That Simon would be identifiable by the name of his son Rufus must mean that the son was a man of some reknown." The only other place in the Bible where the name Rufus appears is in Romans 16:13. In Paul's

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34 Ibid.
greetings to the saints at the church in Rome, he sends greetings to "Rufus, chosen in the Lord." Many scholars agree that Simon's son Rufus and the Rufus in the Roman church are the same person.\textsuperscript{36}

Alexander was also a son of Simon of Cyrene (cf. Mark 15:21), but there is no other clear reference to him in the New Testament. Some have said that Acts 19:33 is a reference to this Alexander, but this person is clearly identified as a Jew (cf. v. 34).

With all of the evidence put forth regarding the black man in relation to the Great Commission, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the disciples were obedient to the Lord's command because they carried the gospel to all nations. Second, blacks were certainly included within the scope of all nations of the Great Commission.

\textsuperscript{36}For two brief but excellent discussions on the equation of these two men, see S. F. Hunter, "Rufus" in James Orr, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), IV., p. 2625 and A. R. Fausset, Bible Encyclopedia and Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 612.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

When the Lord decided to send a flood to destroy the wicked people upon the face of the earth, He found one man who was righteous amidst a society given over to perversion. That man was Noah. God was so pleased with Noah's life that He chose to preserve the human race through him. Thus, God instructed Noah to build an ark, which provided salvation for him and his family. But after Noah stemmed the Flood, he committed a grave offense which was costly to one of his family members. He planted a vineyard and made the mistake of over indulging in the fruits of his labor. As a result of his over indulgence, Noah became inebriated and lay uncovered within his tent. Ham walked in on his father and instead of reverencing him, he began to make his father's condition known to his brethren. When Shem and Japheth heard about their father's condition, they went into Noah's tent and covered his nakedness. When Noah awoke from his drunkenness and realized what Ham had done to him, he cursed Ham's son Canaan.

Throughout the years, this curse has been grossly misinterpreted. Early Jewish commentators believed that the
curse involved turning Ham's skin black. Muslims used the curse to promote racial slavery. Early Americans also capitalized on the curse to justify the American institution of slavery. The list of Americans who used the curse myth is inexhaustible. Today, the aftermath of the curse is still plaguing the American society in the form of segregation and racially biased attitudes.

A careful study of the text under discussion reveals that, those who use this passage to support personal prejudiced beliefs, are the victims of faulty exegesis. Anyone applying the proper hermeneutical principles to this passage will be able to draw the correct conclusions from it. This passage reveals nine important interpretive truths which are directly related to the subject under discussion. They are:

1. that Ham committed the offense against Noah and not Canaan;
2. that the word "Ham" does not mean "black";
3. that Ham was not a Black man;
4. that Canaan was cursed and not Ham;
5. that the curse was not a permanent one;
6. that the curse was not a racial curse;
7. that the curse was individually applicable;
8. that the servitude aspect of the curse was not the same type of servitude that blacks experienced;
9. that the Canaanites were prophesied to be servants of their brothers, the Cushites.

Based on the preceding exegetical truths of this passage, it can be seen that the American institution of slavery and related derogatory theories about the black man have been unjustified.

First, since Canaan alone was cursed, it must be assumed that the curse was limited to him and his seed. History
shows that the Canaanites, as a nation, became extinct about the second century B.C. So in the strictest ethnological sense, there are no Canaanites living today. Thus, the curse ceased to exist along with the Canaanites.

Second, blacks did not descend from Canaan. Even though the black man has come from Ham, he does not have a filial relationship with Canaan. All evidence points toward Cush being the progenitor of the black man, and Cush is not included within the scope of the curse. Since blacks have not descended from Canaan, who was the sole object of the curse, there is no scriptural basis for believing the black man to be cursed.

Third, the curse has no bearing whatsoever on the origin of the black man's color. There is no evidence from the text that Ham was a black man or that the curse caused his skin to turn black. Further, there is excellent lexical support which reveals that the Hebrew word for Ham does not mean black. Thus, the only logical answer for the color of the black man is found in the area of genetics. Adam and Eve contained all of the needed genes to reproduce the various colors. Genes needed to reproduce the color black came through the descendants of Adam and Eve, and became dominant in the body of Cush and his offsprings. Any other suggestions regarding the origin of the Black man's color should be lightly considered.

Fourth, blacks are not intellectually inferior to other races as a result of genes that have been passed down from
Ham. Any intellectual differences between blacks and whites are due to environment and not heredity. There is therefore no relation between the curse and the intellectual capacities of the black man.

Fifth, this passage is in no way meant to be understood as a proof text for slavery. There are no examples of racial slavery in the Bible, and any attempts to prove otherwise are unjustified. Even though blacks were subjected to abject slavery, it was not scriptural and it did not coincide with the servant's role pronounced in Genesis 9:25.

Finally, the Lord has not placed spiritual restrictions upon blacks or any other race. On the contrary, God's plan has always been to provide salvation for every man and this is ultimately seen in the sacrifice of His son.

**Conclusion**

Many exegetical works have interacted with this passage; however, these works have failed to give a comprehensive discussion on the relationship of the text to the black race. These works take for granted that the issues relating to this subject are already settled in the mind of the reader. Thus, they fail to interact with the subject in a detailed manner. Most just briefly identify the problem and cite a pro or con position.

The basic purpose of this thesis has been to thoroughly discuss every aspect of the "Curse of Canaan" as it relates to the black race. Basically, this work has taken an apologetical approach in attempting to demonstrate that there is
positively no relationship between the "Curse of Canaan" and the black race.

In conclusion, while this passage has been used to promote unjustified views about blacks, it is in reality a blessed passage of Scripture. It once again shows that all men have descended from one man (Noah), therefore they should strive to live in harmony with one another.
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