

GENESIS 9

GLORY, FALL, AND JUDGMENT

Overview

Genesis 9 contains many parallels comparing Noah to Adam. The chapter begins with God speaking to Noah in a garden. The instruction to multiply and replenish the earth, following God’s blessing, appears in both the story of Noah and in the story of Adam and Eve (see Moses 2:28; Genesis 9:1, 7). Both stories also contain instructions about what the protagonists can and cannot eat. Notably in each case, a covenant is established with ordinances and signs or tokens (see Moses 5:5, 59; Genesis 9:9–17). Both the story of Adam and Eve and the story of Noah prominently feature the theme of nakedness being covered by a garment (see Moses 4:27; Genesis 9:21–22). Noah, like Adam, is called the “lord of the whole earth.”¹ It is no exaggeration to say that Noah is portrayed as a new Adam, “reversing the estrangement” between God and man by means of his atoning sacrifice.² Several close associations can also be found between Noah’s altar and Moses’s altar at Sinai.³

Most of the significant elements of the Garden of Eden are also present in Noah’s garden: a prominent mountain;⁴ fruit, the eating of which leads to important consequences (Genesis 3:1–24; 9:20–27); and a place of holiness where unauthorized entry is forbidden (Noah’s tent sanctuary).

1 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 198.

2 L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012), 197. See also O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 66, *Jubilees* 6:2: “And he made atonement for the land. And he took the kid of a goat, and he made atonement with its blood for all the sins of the land because everything which was on it had been blotted out except those who were in the Ark with Noah.” See also Florentino Garcia Martinez, ed., “Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen),” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 231: “I atoned for the whole earth.”

3 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 335.

4 Ezekiel 28:13–14; Genesis 8:4. Regarding the presence of a cosmic mountain in Eden, see Donald W. Parry, “Garden of Eden:

However, important differences also exist between Adam and Eve’s garden story and Noah’s. Whereas the Garden of Eden was situated in a terrestrial world, Noah’s garden was clearly portrayed as telestial, on the earth as we know it. Noah, not God, planted it. Moreover, the commandments given to Noah have clear signs of being a telestial law. The beasts lived with fear and dread (see Genesis 9:2), for they were the meat of man (see Genesis 9:3). It seems clear that conflict and bloodshed among Noah’s descendants was to be expected because a punishment for murder was given (see Genesis 9:5–6), bringing to mind Cain’s killing Abel (Genesis 4:8). Clearly, Noah’s garden scenes did not take place in an Edenic paradise but instead were set in a fallen world.

Midway through the chapter, we read a puzzling portrayal of a flawed and seemingly drunken Noah, whose behavior seems incongruous with his previous description as a “just man and perfect in his generation” (Moses 8:27). Remarking on this odd inconsistency that immediately follows God’s covenant with Noah, Gordon Wenham wrote, “So striking is the contrast between Noah the saint who survived the Flood and Noah the inebriated vintner that many commentators argue that the two traditions are completely incompatible and must be of independent origin.”⁵

It is difficult to know whether this contradiction is the result of different traditions, textual misunderstanding, or the abbreviated nature of the biblical account. Indeed, some scholars have wondered whether the inconsistency might be part of a deliberate effort to criticize or minimize the character of Noah in Jewish tradition.⁶ What does seem certain is that the author of the account we have today deliberately framed this as a sequel to Noah’s garden story as an echo of the scene of the Fall and consequent judgment in Eden (see Genesis 9:21–27; Moses 4:5–31).

Most often the instigator of this “Fall” is thought to be Noah, who according to the verses, succumbed to the intoxicating influence of wine from his vineyard. However, note that the scriptures omit any hint of wrongdoing by Noah and instead reserve all condemnation for his grandson Canaan, who is likened in the *Zohar* to the “primordial serpent” cursed by God in the Garden of Eden.⁷ Indeed, in the admittedly tentative interpretation we explore in this chapter, Ham’s sin is portrayed as a parallel to Adams and Eve’s transgression.

As we study Genesis 9, we will explore the possibility that Ham’s wrongdoing was approaching the curtains of the “tent of Yahweh” without authorization and looking upon God’s glory as Noah was receiving

Prototype Sanctuary,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1994), 133–137.

5 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198n21.

6 See, for example, Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 306–320.

7 See Daniel C. Matt, trans., *The Zohar, Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 431, Be-Reishit 1:73a; Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2001), 192.

revelation.⁸ Additionally, we will see why Ham’s actions have sometimes been understood as part of an effort to steal Noah’s priesthood garment, thereby undermining Noah’s authority.⁹

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen T. Whitlock, and Book of Mormon Central Staff, “Essay #77: Noah (Moses 8)—Was Noah Drunk or in a Vision? (Genesis 9),” Book of Moses Essays, Interpreter Foundation, October 16, 2021, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/book-of-moses-essays-077/>, and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 296–311.

Related verses

Genesis 9

Genesis 9:1–2. God Commands Noah to Be Fruitful and Have Dominion

9:1. “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” Leon R. Kass commented:

Two similar injunctions to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 9:1, 7. See also Genesis 8:17) frame the entire legislation. They make absolutely clear the law’s paramount interest in promoting human life. Under the circumstances, no concern is more appropriate or more urgent than the growth and protection of life. After the recent devastation, human and natural, a blessing for fecundity is especially welcome. And for what is to be a post-heroic age, a command to procreate, rather than to obliterate, is especially fitting.¹⁰

8 Yitzak Koler and Frederick E. Greenspahn, as discussed in Walter Vogels, “Cham découvre les limites de son père Noé,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109, no. 4 (1987): 566–567, 567n31. Compare Matt, *Zohar*, 434n700, Be-Reishit 1:73a–b.

9 Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites*, ed. John W. Welch, Darrell L. Matthews, and Stephen R. Callister, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 5 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1988), 168–170; Hugh W. Nibley, “What Is a Temple?,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 4 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 366; Hugh W. Nibley, “Sacred Vestments,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 12 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 128–131; Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 309–311; Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 3:63–65. See also Abu Ishaq Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Tha’labi, *‘Ara’is Al-Majalis Fi Qisas Al-Anbiya’* or “*Lives of the Prophets*,” trans. William M. Brinner (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 190–193, 228–229; Louis Ginzberg, ed., *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols., trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin (1909–1938; repr., Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1:177, 5:199nn78–80; Mordecai M. Noah, ed. *The Book of Jasher*, trans. Moses Samuel (New York, NY: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 15, 72, Jasher 7:24–30, 27:10–12; Marc-Alain Ouaknin and Éric Smilévitch, eds. and trans., *Chapitres de Rabbi Éliézer (Pirqé de Rabbi Éliézer): Midrach sur Genèse, Exode, Nombres, Esther* (Lagrasse, France: Éditions Verdier, 1992), 145–146.

10 Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York City, NY: Free Press, 2003), 175.

Unlike the Mesopotamian flood story of *Atrahasis*, in which overpopulation led the gods to “inflict still-birth, sterility, and spinsterhood on humanity,”¹¹ the Gods in Noah’s story desire humankind to “replenish” (or “fill”) the earth. In contrast to the story of the original Creation, this commandment is given this time only to humankind, not to fish and fowl.

9:2. “the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth.” Leon Kass contrasted the story of Adam and Eve to that of Noah:

Originally, the uniquely human blessing was for rule over—but not exploitation of—the animals (Moses 2:28); here the animals will dread and fear man, into whose hand they are now delivered as food. As in the first story (Moses 2:29, 30. See also 3:16), there is an abundance of food (Genesis 9:3); but whereas in the first creation there was only encouragement of eating and no explicit limitation of human appetite, here the bounty comes with definite restrictions.¹²

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 313–314.

Related verses

Genesis 9:1–2

Genesis 9:3–4. God Allows the Eating of Meat but Disallows the Eating of Blood

9:3. “Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you.” The previous command of vegetarianism is lifted.

9:4. “But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” Nahum Sarna commented, “It might be thought that the eating of blood would be so naturally repulsive as not to require legal proscription, but the history of the subject discredits such a notion. . . . Popular thought had it that one could renew or reinforce one’s vitality through its absorption of blood. For this reason, blood played an important role in the cults of the dead in the ancient world.”¹³

¹¹ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 60.

¹² Kass, *Wisdom*, 175; “not the blood” (Genesis 9:4). Compare Moses 3:17 “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.”

¹³ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 61.

Because blood was a symbol of life, it was reserved for use on “the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). Leviticus 17:11–14 and Deuteronomy 12:23–24 provide “the basis of Jewish dietary laws governing the koshering of meat, the purpose of which is to ensure the maximum extraction of blood from the flesh before cooking.”¹⁴

The Joseph Smith Translation made extensive changes to Genesis 9:4–17. However, the only change made in the second part of the chapter, the story of Noah and his sons, was an addition at the end of Genesis 9:26. To the current verse, OT1 (the first version of the Joseph Smith Translation) adds, “*But the blood of all flesh which I have given you for meat shall be shed upon the ground which taketh life thereof, and the blood, ye shall not eat. And surely blood shall not be shed, only for meat to save your lives and the blood of every beast will I require at your hands.*”¹⁵ Compare Doctrine and Covenants 89:12–13: “Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly; and it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.”

Consistent with the spirit of the instructions in the Joseph Smith Translation and the Doctrine and Covenants, Leon R. Kass noted that the use of animals “is restricted only for certain ends, that is, to meet necessity, or in other words, for food; only up to a certain point; only without cruelty; and only without disdain for the animals used. Bloodshed is tolerated, blood lust is not.” He further commented:

This passage . . . refutes—or at least challenges—both those who blame and those who credit the Bible for allegedly giving man the unqualified authority to use animals in any way he likes, for his own benefit or pleasure. True, precisely *how* the Noahide attitude of respect for life might function in specific situations—say, regarding the use of animals in scientific research—will remain an open question. So, too, the legitimate *ends* for which animals may be properly used for a being such as man, whose desires are both notoriously elastic and psychically come to be experienced as needs. But man’s right to exploit and destroy is not unlimited, and the attitude that holds animal life in contempt is clearly proscribed.¹⁶

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 314–315.

Related verses

Genesis 9:3–4

¹⁴ Sarna, *Genesis*, 61.

¹⁵ Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 116.

¹⁶ Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 180, 180n11.

Genesis 9:5–7. God Forbids Human Bloodshed

9:5. “*your blood of your lives will I require.*” Or, in other words, “for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning.”¹⁷ The threefold repetition of “require” is for emphasis: “God insists on requiring this reckoning with the utmost rigor.”¹⁸ Leon R. Kass observed,

Utterly novel in the present story, without precedent in the first, are the demand for retribution for bloodshed and the human obligation to exact it (Genesis 9:5–6); the *new* world order, though it seeks to deter homicide, assumes that it cannot be avoided. Yet while expecting less of [human beings’] nature, it demands more of [their] choice, requiring [them] to live by law and to enforce it. Indeed, the first story’s celebrated “image of God” description of [humankind] (Moses 2:26–27) here becomes the basis for a legal responsibility to execute justice (Genesis 9:5–60). Whereas order had been originally created out of chaos through separation and distinction, here order is prevented from dissolving back into chaos through law and punishment. When, at the end of the blessing of Noah and his sons, the command to be fruitful and multiply is repeated (Genesis 9:7), it will be newly heard, and it must be newly understood, in the awesome light of the intervening requirements of law and justice. The natural good of life is now bound up with the legal good of right and the legal obligation to defend it.¹⁹

Importantly, though the verse required capital punishment in Jewish society, in later practice the rabbis were reluctant to administer such punishment. Instead of hastening to apply the maximum penalty available, they “explored and took advantage of every mitigating factor in the laws of evidence in order to avoid a death sentence.”²⁰

9:5. “*at the hand of every beast will I require it.*” See also Exodus 21:28. “The killing of a human being by a beast is a disturbance of the divinely ordered structure of relationships laid down in verse 2. The act itself, like murder, constitutes the destruction of the image of God. The creature must therefore be put to death.”²¹

9:5. “*every man’s brother.*” The scope of this prohibition is not confined to the murder of a male sibling. Alluding to the story of Cain and Abel,²² the verse seeks to teach unequivocally that all “homicide is fratricide.”²³

17 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 61.

18 Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes Press, 1997), 127.

19 Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 174.

20 Sarna, *Genesis*, 61.

21 Sarna, *Genesis*, 61.

22 See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 193.

23 Sarna, *Genesis*, 61.

9:6. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” The Joseph Smith Translation expands on this commandment and renders it as a first-person statement by God Himself: “*And whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for man shall not shed the blood of man. For a commandment I give that every man’s brother shall preserve the life of man, for in mine own image have I made man.*”²⁴

9:6. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” The thought is phrased as a chiasmus “which repeats in the second member of the sentence every word of the first in reverse order, as though reflecting the principle of measure for measure.”²⁵

9:7. “And you.” The Joseph Smith Translation reads, “*And a commandment I give unto you.*” The repetition of the instruction already given in verse 1 and the explicit use of the word “commandment” underscores the seriousness with which this instruction must be undertaken.

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 315–316.

Related verses

Genesis 9:5–7

Genesis 9:8–11. God Covenants with Noah

9:9. “I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.” The Joseph Smith Translation gives this verse as follows: “*I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto your father Enoch concerning your seed after you.*”²⁶

Note that there are two major changes to Genesis 9:9–17 in the Joseph Smith Translation: the first reiterates that God’s covenant with Noah was the same one that He had previously made with Enoch (Genesis 9:9, 11, 16), and the second modifies the tense of God’s words to Noah so as to make clear the temporal relationship between the making of the covenant and the introduction of the token (Genesis 9:9–13).

²⁴ Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 116, 630.

²⁵ Cassuto, *From Noah to Abraham*, 127.

²⁶ Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 116, 630.

9:9. “establish.” Victor Hamilton pointed out that this form of the Hebrew verb *qûm* in the Old Testament often refers “not to a new situation, but to the implementation of a previous word, or promise, or action. In these instances, the verb does not mean ‘to institute’ but ‘to fulfill, carry out, keep.’ Perhaps then 9:8ff. is to be seen as the fulfillment of the promise first made to Noah in 6:18”²⁷—or, in agreement with the Joseph Smith Translation, as the fulfillment of the covenant previously made with Enoch.

9:10. “And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.” The Joseph Smith Translation modifies this verse to read as follows: “And it shall come to pass that every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, and of the cattle, and of the beast of the earth that is with you, which shall go out of the ark, shall not altogether perish.”²⁸

9:11. “And I will establish my covenant with you.” The Joseph Smith Translation moves this phrase to the end of the verse.²⁹

9:11. “to destroy the earth.” The Joseph Smith Translation adds, “And I will establish my covenant with you which I made unto Enoch concerning the remnants of your posterity.”³⁰

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 316–17.

Related verses

Genesis 9:8–11

Genesis 9:12–15. The Rainbow Becomes the Token of the Covenant

9:12. “And God said, This is the token of the covenant.” The Joseph Smith Translation reads, “And God made a covenant with Noah and said, This shall be the token.”³¹ The word “token” corresponds

27 Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 316.

28 Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Original Manuscripts*, 116, 630.

29 Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Original Manuscripts*, 116, 630.

30 Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Original Manuscripts*, 116, 630.

31 Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004, 116–117), 630.

to the Hebrew *’ot*, a “distinctive, visible object that immediately calls to mind a particular message.”³² In other versions of the Bible, it is often translated as “sign,” though “symbol” is probably a better translation in modern English.³³ Leon R. Kass commented:

All covenants . . . “require a [token] since all covenants must be remembered. Their being is in their being remembered because they lack sufficient natural foundation. Memory is such an integral part of a covenant that even God must have a [token], because without a [token] there is no covenant.”

According to the text, God does indeed say that the rainbow will remind *Him* of His everlasting promise. . . . But it is far more important that Noah and other human beings both remember what God said and continue to believe it. It is we who need to be reminded of this story, of this covenant, and in particular, of God’s speech about the rainbow.³⁴

9:13. “I do set my bow in the cloud.” The Joseph Smith Translation gives this as “And I *will* set my bow.”³⁵ The Hebrew word for “bow” used here (*qesheth*) refers more often to a weapon of war than it does to the symbolic equivalent of the rainbow. Regarding the symbolism of God’s action in “setting his bow in the cloud,” Ellen van Wolde wrote:

The powerful deity transports his weapon of attack into the clouds over the earth as a sign of his covenant with the human beings and the other living beings on earth, as a sign of his abdication of his weapon of attack and a transfer of power. With the handing over of his mighty weapon he demonstrates that he will never again attack and destroy all living beings on earth. He will never again use a flood to exercise power. From now on, the descendants of Noah, the human race and the living beings with them, are made responsible for the dominion over the earth.³⁶

9:13. “my bow.” Ellen van Wolde finds no support for the idea that the rainbow of Genesis 9 was a symbol of God’s bow.³⁷ However, Joseph Smith, in agreement with most scholars, associated the visible token of God’s covenant with Noah as a rainbow: “So long as we see the bow in the cloud, seed-time and harvest shall continue. [But in] that year when the bow shall cease, then shall come famine, wars, etc. after which the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen in heaven.”³⁸

32 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 62. Compare the token of the “covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17:10–11; the blood of the paschal lamb in Exodus 12–13; the *tefillin* in Exodus 13:9, 16; Deuteronomy 6:8, 11:18; and the Sabbath in Exodus 31:12, 17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20” (Sarna, *Genesis*, 357).

33 For more on the meaning and use of signs and tokens in conjunction with covenant making, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 39–41.

34 Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 189–190.

35 Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Original Manuscripts*, 117, 630.

36 Ellen van Wolde, “One Bow or Another? A Study of the Bow in Genesis 9:8–17,” *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013): 147–148.

37 Ellen van Wolde, “One Bow or Another?,” 147–148.

38 Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 335; style modernized.

Hugh Nibley reminded us that Genesis 9 makes no claim that this was the first rainbow, only that it is used here for the first time as a token of God’s covenant.³⁹ According to Pseudo-Philo, the rainbow as a sign or token of a covenant of higher priesthood blessings was said by God to fulfill a similar function to that of Moses’s staff or, later, the sword—namely, functioning as a symbol of kingship.⁴⁰

9:13. “which I have established.” Victor P. Hamilton observed, “We note . . . the two subunits within v. 1–17: what man must and must not do (Genesis 9:1–7); what God will do (Genesis 9:8–17). Had this sequence been reversed and vv. 1–7 followed vv. 8–17, the obligations placed on man could only have been read as covenantal stipulations. . . . This is precisely the sequence in, for example, Exodus 19 (what God has done) and Exodus 20ff. (what the people must do). The present order preserves the emphasis on the unilaterality of the post-Flood situation. No ‘you shall’ follows ‘I will.’”⁴¹

9:13. “me and all flesh that is upon the earth.” The Joseph Smith Translation reads, “Me and *thee* for all flesh that *shall be* upon the earth.”⁴²

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 317–389.

Related verses

Genesis 9:12–15

Genesis 9:16–17. God Explains the Covenant and the Token

9:16. “between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” The Joseph Smith Translation reads as follows:

39 Hugh W. Nibley, “Before Adam,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, and Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 1 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 66. See also Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 138.

40 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, and Ronan J. Head, “The Investiture Panel at Mari and Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 38–39, for a brief summary of the symbolism of the staff, and Bruce N. Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story, and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 276–281, for Pseudo-Philo’s identification of the staff with the rainbow.

41 Fisk, *Do You Not Remember?*, 319.

42 Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Original Manuscripts*, 117, 631.

Which I made unto thy father Enoch that, when men should keep all my commandments Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up to myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant that I establish with you that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the Firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch. And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will establish my covenant unto thee, which I have made between me and thee, for every living creature of all flesh that shall be upon the earth.

And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and thee; for all flesh that shall be upon the earth.⁴³

The “church of the Firstborn” is mentioned in several other places in scripture.⁴⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 93:21–22 defines the term as those who are spiritually begotten through the Lord—in other words, those who are born again in the ultimate sense of the word. “And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn.”⁴⁵

Val D. Greenwood commented on the significance of the Joseph Smith Translation change to this verse: “It has widely been understood that the rainbow was set in the heavens as a token from God that He would never again send a flood to destroy the inhabitants of the earth. However the Joseph Smith Translation makes it clear that the rainbow was a token of the covenant Jehovah made with Enoch relevant to the return of the City of Zion. Though Jehovah did indeed promise that He would never again destroy the earth’s inhabitants with water, the rainbow was not a token of that promise.”⁴⁶

9:17. “this is the token.” “The concluding emphasis is not on the covenant but on the [token] of the covenant. This emphasis is caught in the rhyming of the first two words of the speech, *zo’t ’ot*, “This is the [token].”⁴⁷

43 Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 117, 631. Compare Moses 7:62–63.

44 Hebrews 12:23; Doctrine and Covenants 76:54, 67, 71, 94, 102; 77:11; 78:21; 88:5; 93:22; 107:19. See also Joseph Smith Jr., June 27, 1839, and May 4, 1844, in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 151, 237.

45 For more on this, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 29.

46 Val D. Greenwood, *How Often Would I Have Gathered You* (Brigham City, UT: Brigham Distributing, 2007), 10.

47 Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Publishing, 1990), 319.

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 318–319.

Related verses

Genesis 9:16–17

Genesis 9:18–19. The Sons of Noah

9:18. “*and the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan.*” The name of Canaan is introduced in this verse, anticipating Canaan’s appearance in verses 22 and 25.

In Moses 8:13, the three sons of Noah are described as sons of God, a description that refers to individuals who have received the fullness of the priesthood and have had their calling and election made sure, as defined in Doctrine and Covenants 76:56–60.⁴⁸ The birth order of the three sons is in doubt, which is an important matter because birth order in the ancient world normally determined patriarchal priesthood lineage and birthright. Genesis 6:10 reads, “Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” In OT1 and OT2 for Genesis 6:10, the King James Version’s sense of the verse was left unchanged, consistent with the idea that Shem was the oldest son. However, sometime between 1831 and the Prophet’s death in 1844, the OT2 wording of this verse was crossed out, and a revision corresponding to the current version of Moses 8:12 was pinned to the manuscript. This revision unambiguously describes Japheth as the oldest son. It is not known whether Joseph Smith authorized this change. Inexplicably, the King James Version of Genesis 10:22, which reads “Japheth the elder,” was changed in the Joseph Smith Translation to read “Shem . . . which was the elder.”

Some Jewish sources specifically name Japheth as the oldest son. Japheth is listed first in the table of the nations in Genesis 10:2–5, though there is some ambiguity in the Hebrew. However, Shem is listed first in Genesis 5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10:1; 1 Chronicles 1:4; and Moses 8:27—a difference that may reflect his importance to the Israelites as their ancestor.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books), 84; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 53–65.

⁴⁹ Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 159.

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Genesis 9:18–19

Genesis 9:20–21. Noah Has a Vision in the Tent Sanctuary of the Lord

9:21. “he drank of the wine.” Some scholars see this account as part of a deliberate effort to denigrate or minimize Noah’s character in Jewish tradition.⁵⁰ Alternative accounts of the event from the Second Temple period attest to competing interpretations that describe Noah’s preparation of the wine as part of his ritual duties.

Sacramental wine drinking was an element of the highest ordinances of the priesthood in ancient times. For example, five chapters after the end of the Genesis Flood story, we read that Melchizedek “brought forth bread and wine” to Abraham as part of the ordinance that made him a king and a priest after Melchizedek’s holy order (Genesis 14:18).⁵¹ Just as Melchizedek then blessed the “most high God, which had delivered thine enemies into thine hand” (Genesis 14:20), so Noah, in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, after partaking of the wine with his family, blessed “the God Most High, who had delivered us from the destruction.”⁵² *Jubilees* likewise suggests that Noah’s drinking wine should be seen in a ritual context and not merely as a spontaneous indulgence that occurred at the end of a particularly wearying day. Indeed, we are specifically told in *Jubilees* that Noah “guarded” the wine until the time of the fifth New Year festival, the “first day on the first of the first month,” when he “made a feast with rejoicing. And he made a burnt offering to the Lord.”⁵³

9:21. “drunken.” The Bible offers no evidence of censure for Noah’s supposed drunkenness, nor does scripture give any hint of an accusation of self-righteous hypocrisy when Noah pronounces judgment upon his grandson Canaan. Joseph Smith likewise refrained from any criticism of Noah—indeed, he

50 See, for example, Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 306–320.

51 Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:25–40. Compare Genesis 14:17–24. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 53–58.

52 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ed., *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20): A Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Rome, Italy: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2004), 87.

53 James C. VanderKam, ed. and trans., *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1989), 43, *Jubilees* 7:2; O. S. Wintermute, “*Jubilees*,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 69, *Jubilees* 7:2. Compare Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 87.

asserted unequivocally that Noah “retained all the power of his priesthood” after the incident.⁵⁴ Moreover, in a presumably later statement attributed to the Prophet Joseph, Noah “was not drunk, but in a vision.”⁵⁵

This interpretation agrees with the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which immediately after describing Noah and his family ritually drinking wine, devotes nearly three columns to a divine dream vision that revealed to Noah the fate of his posterity.⁵⁶ From their study of the story, Yitzak Koler and Frederick E. Greenspahn also concurred that Noah was in a vision while in the tent, commenting, “This explains why Shem and [Japheth] refrained from looking at Noah even after they had covered him, [and] significantly ‘*ahorannît* [Hebrew “backward”] occurs elsewhere with regard to avoidance of looking directly at God in the course of revelation.”⁵⁷

9:21. “uncovered.” How do we make sense of Noah’s being “uncovered” during the vision? Perhaps the closest Old Testament parallel to this practice is when Saul, like the prophets who were with him, “stripped off his clothes . . . and prophesied before Samuel . . . and lay down naked all that day and all that night” (1 Samuel 19:24). Robert Jamieson and his colleagues clarified that “lay down naked” in this instance means only that Saul was “divested of his armor and outer robes.”⁵⁸ In a similar sense, when we read in John 21:7 that Peter was naked as he was fishing, it simply means that “he had laid off his outer garment and had on only his inner garment or tunic.”⁵⁹

9:21. “his tent.” Although the English translation says, “his tent,” the Hebrew text features a feminine possessive that normally would mean “her tent.” Rabbi Shim’on in the *Zohar* took the Hebrew letter *he* in the feminine possessive to mean “the tent of that vineyard,’ namely, the tent of *Shekhinah*.”⁶⁰ *Shekhinah* is the Hebrew term for the divine feminine that was used to describe the presence of *Yahweh* in Israelite temples. The idea of Noah’s having erected a sacred “tent of meeting” (Leviticus 16:16) is consistent with the previous report that he built an altar (Genesis 8:20) and established a covenant with the Lord

54 Joseph Smith Jr., November 7, 1841, in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 193.

55 Joseph Smith Jr., as reported by William Allen to Charles Lowell Walker (A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. [Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1980], 2:554).

56 Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 89–93.

57 Yitzak Koler and Frederick E. Greenspahn, quoted in Walter Vogels, “Cham découvre les limites de son père Noé,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109, no. 4 (1987): 556n31.

58 Robert Jamieson, Andrew Robert Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1967), 219–220n24. See also David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 499.

59 Edward Robinson, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible for General Use in the Study of the Scriptures with Engravings, Maps, and Tables* (New York, NY: American Tract Society, 1859), s.v. “naked,” accessed July 28, 2012, http://books.google.com/books/about/A_Dictionary_of_the_Holy_Bible.html?id=fMgRAAAAYAAJ.

60 Daniel C. Matt, trans., *The Zohar, Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 434n700, Be-Reishit 1:73a–b.

(Genesis 9:9–17). Indeed, in a variant of the same theme, at least one set of modern commentators take the letter *he* in the Hebrew text of Genesis as referring to *Yahweh*, hence reading the term “the tent of *Yahweh*,” the divine sanctuary.⁶¹

In light of all the considerations mentioned above, we might conjecturally modify the verse to read, “And [*as part of the ordinance*] he drank of the wine, and was [*in a vision*]; and he was [*divested of his outer clothing*] within [*the tent of Yahweh*].”

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen T. Whitlock, and Book of Mormon Central Staff, “Essay #77: Noah (Moses 8)—Was Noah Drunk or in a Vision? (Genesis 9),” Book of Moses Essays, Interpreter Foundation, October 16, 2021, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/book-of-moses-essays-077/>, and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, 2 vols. (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 298–303, 319–321.

Related verses

Genesis 9:20–21

Genesis 9:22–23. Ham Takes the Garment

9:22. “*saw the nakedness of his father.*” As with Noah’s wine drinking, some readers see Noah’s “nakedness” as shameful and interpret this verse as an explanation for later guidelines in the Mosaic code designed to prevent anyone from seeing the nakedness of the temple priests.⁶²

Instead, however, this phrase might be interpreted to mean that the misdeed of Ham was in intrusively entering the tent of *Yahweh* and seeing Noah in the presence of God while “in the course of revelation.”⁶³ This idea also fits well with what Ronald Hendel and others have identified as an underlying theme throughout Genesis 1–11, namely “transgressions of boundaries”⁶⁴ that had been set up in the beginning

61 Koler and Greenspahn, as discussed in Vogels, “Cham découvre,” 566–567.

62 See Exodus 20:26, 28:42. Compare, for example, Brad Embry, “The ‘Naked Narrative’ from Noah to Leviticus: Reassessing Voyeurism in the Account of Noah’s Nakedness in Genesis 9:22–24,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 35, no. 4 (2011): 431–432.

63 Yitzak Koler and Frederick E. Greenspahn, quoted in Walter Vogels, “Cham découvre les limites de son père Noé,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109, no. 4 (1987): 567n31.

64 Ronald S. Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 23.

to separate the general run of humankind from the dwelling place of divinity. Noah, the righteous, was in a position to speak with God face-to-face; however, Ham was neither qualified nor authorized to see (let alone to enter) a place of divine glory.

Other scholars have seen additional interpretive possibilities in the account. Foremost among these is Hugh Nibley,⁶⁵ whose arguments draw from the interpretations of some ancient readers.⁶⁶ The crux of these arguments is that the Hebrew term for “nakedness” in this verse, *’erwat*, may be better rendered as “skins,” *’orot*—in other words, an animal-skin garment corresponding in this instance to the “coats of skins” [*kuttonet ’or*] given to Adam and Eve for their protection after the Fall (Genesis 3:21). The two Hebrew words *’erwat* and *’orot* would have looked nearly identical in their original forms without vowels. After tracing the traditions concerning the coat of skins that Adam wore, Louis Ginzberg asserted that it “served to the former generations [for example, to those who lived before the time of Moses] as priestly garments.”⁶⁷ Indeed, *Midrash Rabbah* specifically asserts that the garment of Adam had been handed down to Noah, who wore it when he offered sacrifice.⁶⁸ Some ancient readers went further, stating that Ham not only saw but also took the “skin garment” of his father, intending to usurp his priesthood authority.⁶⁹

In the current context, the possibility signaled by Michael Morales that “the ‘covering [*mikseh*] of the Ark’ (Genesis 8:13) establishes a link to the [skin] ‘covering of the Tabernacle’ (Exodus 40:19)” is significant.⁷⁰ The idea that not only the ark and the tabernacle but also Noah himself might have been covered in a priestly garment of skins is intriguing when we consider Marc Philonenko’s observation that “the temple is [itself] considered as a person and the veil of the temple as a garment that is worn, as a personification

65 Hugh W. Nibley, “A Twilight World,” in *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites*, ed. John W. Welch, Darrell L. Matthews, and Stephen R. Callister, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 5, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1988), 169–170.

66 See, for example, Marc-Alain Ouaknin and Éric Smilévitch, eds. and trans., *Chapitres de Rabbi Éliézer (Pirqé de Rabbi Éliézer): Midrach sur Genèse, Exode, Nombres, Esther* (Lagrasse, France: Verdier, 1992), 145–146.

67 Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 5:199n79. For discussions of Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, and Christian traditions surrounding the leather garment, see H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 3rd ed., 10 vols. (London, England: Soncino Press, 1983), 101–103, Bamidbar 4:8 (Numbers 3:45); John T. Townsend, ed. and trans., *Midrash Tanhuma*, 3 vols. (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing, 1989–2003), 1:16–17. See Hugh W. Nibley, “Sacred Vestments,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 12 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 100–102, 124–126; Stephen D. Ricks, “The Garment of Adam in Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Tradition,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1994), 710–714; John A. Tvedtnes, “Priestly Clothing in Bible Times,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1994), 649–662.

68 Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 101–102, 4:8 (Numbers 3:45).

69 For example, Ouaknin and Smilévitch, *Chapitres de Rabbi Éliézer*, 145–146.

70 L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012), 157. Morales notes that “the Ark [is] the only exception to the term’s otherwise exclusive usage in reference to the tent of meeting.”

of the sanctuary itself.”⁷¹ Could it be that just as Noah “removed the [skin] covering of the ark” in Genesis 8:13, he subsequently removed his own ritual covering of skins? Noah took off this “garment of repentance”⁷² (which in those times was worn as outer rather than inner clothing) in preparation for his being “clothed upon with glory” (Moses 7:3).

In light of these conjectural readings, we might render verse 22 as, “And Ham, the father of Canaan, *took the skin garment of his father while Noah was beholding the glory of God.*”

Source

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Related verses

Genesis 9:22–23

Genesis 9:24–25. Noah Curses Canaan

9:24. “*younger.*” OT2 of the Joseph Smith Translation changes this to “youngest.”⁷³

9:25. “*Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*” Emerging from the tent, Noah cursed Canaan and his posterity. These are the first words he utters in scripture.

In the *Zohar*, Canaan is likened to the “primordial serpent” that was cursed by God in Eden.⁷⁴ Elaborating on rabbinic commentary about similarities in the nature of the curse itself, Daniel Matt noted that “the curse uttered against Canaan parallels the curse pronounced upon the serpent in the Garden. As the

⁷¹ Quoted in Hugh W. Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 12 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1992), 81.

⁷² Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” 126.

⁷³ Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 632. See Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 163.

⁷⁴ Daniel C. Matt, trans., *The Zohar, Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 431, Be-Reishit 1:73a.

serpent is more cursed than all other animals, who are themselves enslaved to humanity, so Canaan is doomed to be a ‘slave of slaves.’”⁷⁵

9:25. “his brethren.” This is not meant to be taken literally as referring to Shem and Japheth; rather, “it expresses comprehensiveness,”⁷⁶ meaning, in other words, “all men.” Compare Genesis 16:12; 27:29, 37.

Source

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Related verses

Genesis 9:24–25

Genesis 9:26–27. Noah Blesses Shem and Japheth

9:26. “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem.” This is Hebrew wordplay since “Shem means ‘name,’ and the word frequently evokes the divine name YHWH or the Divine Presence.”⁷⁷ In explaining why the blessing was directed toward the “Lord God of Shem” rather than to Shem himself, Umberto Cassuto gives the following reading: “Thanksgiving and praise be to YHWH who guided Shem in the good way and taught him to conduct himself with decency and all other good virtues.”⁷⁸

In a blessing that befits what seems to have been a show of respect by Shem for Noah when he was in a visionary state, *Targum Neofiti* and most other ancient Hebrew sources assert that the specific blessing

⁷⁵ Matt, *Zohar*, 435n708, Be-Reishit 1:73b; see Genesis 9:25. For more discussion on the curse of slavery, see David M. Goldenberg, “What Did Ham Do to Noah?,” in *The Words of a Wise Man’s Mouth Are Gracious* (*Qoh. 10:12*), ed. Mauro Perani (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 257–267. For a broad survey of the way in which Genesis 9:25 and other biblical texts were tragically appropriated to justify the practice of American slavery, see Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷⁶ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 67.

⁷⁷ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 67.

⁷⁸ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 166.

Noah gave to his birthright son, Shem, is the immediate presence of the Lord to be with him and with his posterity:⁷⁹ “May the Glory of his *Shekhinah* dwell in the midst of the tents of Shem.”⁸⁰ Rashi further clarified that the dwelling place of God’s presence eventually came to be in the First Temple, built by Solomon, who was of the sons of Shem.⁸¹

9:26. “Canaan shall be his servant.” The Joseph Smith Translation adds, “And a veil of darkness shall cover him that he shall be known among all men.”⁸² Elsewhere in scripture the “veil of darkness” symbolizes the loss of direct communication with heaven.⁸³

9:27. “God shall enlarge Japheth.” This is also a wordplay on the name Japheth, signifying “the enlargement of his territorial boundaries. . . . A subtle point is the use here of the general term *’elohim*, ‘God,’ with Japheth, in contrast to the sacred name YHWH, which is exclusive to Shem and later to Israel, his descendants.”⁸⁴ The expansion of Japheth’s territorial boundaries is reflected in Genesis 10 by the widespread habitations of Japheth’s descendants, making up “the geographical horizon of the [Table of Nations], the outer fringe of the known world, a kind of ‘third world’ over against the nations of Ham (Canaan) and Shem.”⁸⁵

Source

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Related verses

Genesis 9:24–25

79 Martin McNamara, ed., *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 80–81.

80 This interpretation relies on taking the subject of “he shall dwell” in verse 27 to be God rather than Japheth. See the discussion in Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 326.

81 Meir Zlotowitz, *Bereishis/Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1986), 1:306. See also Babylonian Talmud, The William Davidson Edition, *Yoma* 10a, <https://sefaria.org/Yoma.10a.2?lang=bi>: “the Divine Presence rests only in the tents of Shem, in the First Temple.”

82 Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 118, 632. See also Moses 5:39–40.

83 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel* (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 157.

84 Sarna, *Genesis*, 67.

85 John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 99–100.

Genesis 9:28–29. The Death of Noah

9:29. “*And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.*” Noah’s death at age 950 is reported in scripture with no comment.

Source

Genesis Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Genesis 9:28–29

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