

Comments on Genesis 9

Note the numerous JST alterations on the first half of this chapter. Most deal with spelling out the covenant made here as being accessory to the covenants made with Enoch formerly detailed in PofGP Moses 7.

1 AND God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth [upon] the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. 3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

4 But flesh with the life thereof, [which is] the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. 5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. 7 And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 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. 11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. 12 And God said, This [is] the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that [is] with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. 14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: 15 And I will remember my covenant, which [is] between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that [is] upon the earth. 17 And God said unto Noah, This [is] the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that [is] upon the earth.

v1-17 The terms of the Noachide covenant, which all mankind is bound by, Israel and Gentile alike as all are descended from Noah (v. 9). Such an action would re-order human society after

the flood as well as emphasize that life is still sacred even after such a massive destruction of life.

The covenant blessings are the promise to never repeat the Deluge (v. 11, and 8:21-22), posterity (v. 1, 7), dominion over animals and license to eat them (v. 2-3, ct. Gen. 1:29). The covenant requirements are that man may not partake of the blood of the animals which they eat, symbolizing their life (v. 4), and murder of humans is prohibited altogether (v. 5-6). Verse 5 particularly emphasizes that murder is a crime that God himself will hold the murderer accountable for, note the double repeat for emphasis of "require" (Heb: deresh), which reiterates the substance of 4:10. In addition to those explicitly spelled out in the text, rabbinical tradition includes a number of others "commandments" associated with the Noachide covenant by context such as prohibitions on idolatry and sexual immorality.

The text of this covenant is divided into two distinct portions of v. 1-7 and v. 9-17. Verses 1-7 present the substance of the covenant and v. 9-17 present the tokens of the covenant. Verses 1-7 can be arranged in a parallelism, as follows:

- A - (v. 1) Be fruitful and multiply
- B - (v. 2) All living things delivered into your hands
- C - (v. 3) May eat the flesh of animals
- C - (v. 4) May not eat the blood (i.e. life) of animals
- B - (v. 5-6) Human life not delivered into your hands
- A - (v. 7) Be fruitful and multiply

The form emphasizes that by observing the B's and C's they may enjoy the A's. Verses 9-17 form a loose synthetical parallelism where the material in v. 9-11 is repeated in its entirety in v. 12-17 for emphasis with the addition of the token. The JST on these verses explains what the token of the rainbow means.

v13-16 "bow", the symbol of the rainbow is obscure to the Western reader. Shedding light on the symbolism is Nahum Sarna in Understanding Genesis (pages 58-59), as follows:

The motif of the bow is not uncommon in ancient Near Eastern mythology. In *Enuma Elish*, Marduk suspended in the sky his victorious bow with which he had

defeated Tiamat and set it as a constellation. Elsewhere in Babylonian astronomy we find that a number of stars grouped together in the shape of a bow were mythologically identified with the accoutrements of the war goddess. A magic bow is also a prominent feature of Canaanite myth dealing with the relationship of the youth Aqhat to the bellicose goddess Anath. The Bible itself, in several poetic texts, makes mention of God's bow. Always, the [Hebrew] word *queshet* designates a weapon of war. Only in the context of the divine covenant [with Noah] does this word acquire a meaning of "rainbow", and here alone of all Near Eastern symbolism the divine bow does not have astral significance.

The rainbow episode was thus another Israelite break with contemporary notions. It is not impossible that the numerous biblical references to a divine bow and arrow are echoes of some ancient Hebrew epic. The Flood story, however, has identified the bow with the rainbow rather than a constellation, because the former is closely associated with rain and readily lends itself to a connection with the Deluge. More important is the fact that the symbol of divine bellicosity and hostility has been transformed into a token of eternal reconciliation between God and man.

Thus, the symbol of the rainbow is one that is connected to rain which is what initiated the Deluge, but also serves as an anti-Canaanite polemic.

In a practical sense, the symbol of seeing a rainbow necessarily implies you have survived the storm. If a rainstorm passes and you see the rainbow afterwards, then you survived and are seeing it afterwards, as did Noah. If the Lord were still using Floods to destroy the wicked, then the storms would come and the wicked would never survive to see the rainbow.

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. 19 These [are] the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.

20 And Noah began [to be] an 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 younger 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 Canaan shall be his servant. 27 God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

28 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. 29 And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.

v18-27 The text now shifts to a completely different subject. We have an incident where Noah plants a vineyard, ostensibly he was naive about the intoxicating effects of fermented wine as this viticulture appears to be a novelty, and subsequently becomes drunk. Noah then uncovers himself "within his tent". While drunk, the youngest son Ham "saw the nakedness of his father". Ham goes and tells his two brothers, who refuse to look, but rather cover up the "nakedness of his father" by walking backwards and draping it. When Noah learns of what Ham has done he curses him through his posterity with a severe curse.

In order to determine what is happening here we need to pay close attention to some of the subtleties in the text. First, In v. 22 we learn that Ham saw "the nakedness of his father". Are we to interpret this literally or figuratively? The safest interpretation is the one delivered by the Scriptures themselves.

In Lev. 18:7 we learn that the "nakedness of your father" is in fact the nakedness of your mother:

The nakedness of thy father,
or the nakedness of thy mother,
shalt thou not uncover:
she is thy mother;
thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

And in Deut. 27:20 a similar statement is made, but is inclusive of your father's wife, which may or may not be the mother:

Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife;
because he uncovereth his father's skirt.

And in Ezek. 22:9-11 we have the men of Israel being indicted for various acts of lasciviousness, some associated with idolatry, including adultery, fornications, and incest:

And in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for [menstruation]. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

This clearly categorizes "discovering [i.e., uncovering] their father's nakedness" an act of sexual immorality.

To lend further credence to this reading, we should note in v. 21 when it says "he was uncovered within his tent", the "his" in the Hebrew is in fact gender ambiguous and can just as fairly be translated "her" as "his". The "his" is simply a traditional translation. Taking all of this together with the statements of Abr. 1:21-27 which suggest incest with his own daughter, or possibly grand-daughter, Egyptus, we can safely conclude the issue Ham was cursed over was that of lust for Noah's wife. The text does not indicate that he had relations with her, only that he "saw" her. Now, Noah's wife at this point may or may not be Ham's mother, so the lust may or may not have been incestuous. Moses 8:12 suggest that Noah had his three sons by two different women, but by the time of the Flood, Noah only has one wife (cf. 7:7). It is unclear as to whether Noah had two wives at one point and one died, or if he had one and later remarried as a widower previous to the Deluge. So, it is possible that if the first case is true, then Ham would be lusting after a woman who was not his mother.

After this Canaan is cursed. But why Canaan instead of Ham? The following fragment from the Dead Sea Scrolls offers an explanation:

And Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan, the lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers." And he did not curse Ham. But rather his son, because God had already blessed the sons of Noah. [The Dead Sea Scrolls., Wise, Abegg and Cook, Harper Collins, 1996, page 273]

This agrees with the statement in Abr. 1:26 concerning the blessings and cursing dealt out to Ham:

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him [via his lineage] with the blessings of the earth.

Thus Noah curses Canaan, son of Ham. This type of lineage-based curse is common to the Bible as it is plain that children tend to walk in the footsteps of their parents, so as long as the bad example of a parent persists to influence their offspring they are cursed (cf. Exod. 20:5, it is worth noting here that these types of lineage-based inter-generational curses answer the sins of the children upon the heads of the rebellious parent, cf. 2 Ne. 4:6, D&C 68:25, Moses 7:37).

But then we have to wonder why the curse on Ham via Canaan is so severe. There are plenty of acts of incest abounding without these harsh curses being applied. Lets take a look at Moses 8:27-30. Here we learn that previous to the Great Flood Noah and all three sons including Ham "walked with God". Thus, previous to the Deluge, Ham was a righteous man. Then the earth became corrupt and wicked, and Ham appears to have gone with it. We have an extremely righteous man being persuaded by the world and ultimately being corrupted by it. From what I can gather, going from this level of righteousness to the extreme level of wickedness Ham was in would certainly make Ham eligible for distinction as "Perdition", although text does not explicitly label him as such.

Now if we compare Noah to Adam in the original and now new father of humanity context and take a look at the sets of three sons, both of them had three sons as far as we know and both of them had one that went sour despite having two good parents. In the case of Adam, Cain was definitely Perdition, and in the case of Noah, Ham is certainly eligible for that title. And in both cases, these bad fathers ended up spinning off decadent societies as a result of their influence upon their offspring, in the case of Cain it was the people living in valley called Canaan (the Hebr:canaan translates literally to "lowland") and

in the case of Ham it was the lineage of the man called Canaan.

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