

# The Book of Genesis

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### The Sin of Ham, the Curse of Canaan, and the Promise of Noah

- I. The Sin of Ham (Genesis 19:18-24)
- A. The sons of Noah who were on the ark with him were Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
    - 1. The name Shem means, “Name,” possibly signifying “fame or renown.”
      - a. Shem is always listed first in the order of Noah’s sons.
      - b. This seems to imply that he was the oldest (cf. 10:21).
      - c. Or, perhaps it has to do with his prominence that would be established.
    - 2. The name Ham means, “Submissive one.”
    - 3. The name Japheth means, “Opened, enlarged, or enlargement.”
  - B. From these three men, the earth would be populated after the Flood.
    - 1. Note that this means that Noah had and would have no other children.
    - 2. Also, note that Ham is the father of Canaan, who is his fourth son (10:6).
  - C. Noah labored as a farmer and planted a vineyard.
  - D. One day, after drinking wine, Noah became drunk and uncovered himself in his tent.
  - E. Ham saw the nakedness of his father.
    - 1. This is thought to mean that he looked and beheld with wicked delight.
    - 2. In other words, he took pleasure in his father’s sinful condition.
  - F. Then, he told his other two brothers about what he had seen.
    - 1. This is thought to mean that he did so with malicious intent.
    - 2. Ham wanted to shame or ridicule his father.
    - 3. Perhaps he wanted his brothers to join in his derision.
  - G. His brothers responded with modesty and respect for their father, discreetly covering his nakedness.
  - H. When Noah awoke and found out what had happened, he pronounced a curse upon Canaan, the son of Ham.
- II. A Closer Look at Text (Genesis 19:18-24)
- A. There are some serious questions to be considered from a study of this text.
    - 1. Did the sin of Ham merit a curse upon his son and, apparently, his descendants?
    - 2. If Ham committed this sin, why was Canaan cursed at all?
    - 3. What does it mean that Noah knew what his son “had done unto him”?
  - B. Some have suggested that Ham actually did something to Noah to cause him to be unable to have any more children.
    - 1. They suggest that since Noah could not have a fourth child, he cursed Ham’s fourth son.
    - 2. However, this seems unlikely and unsupported by the text.
  - C. The Hebrew word for “uncovered” is found in other verses and may give insight into the true sin committed by Ham.
    - 1. To uncover one’s nakedness sometimes means just that (cf. Exo. 20:26).
    - 2. However, it is also used to describe inappropriate sexual activity (cf. Lev. 18:6-19 [note vs. 14]; 20:11, 20-21; Deut. 22:30; 27:20; Eze. 22:10).

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- D. It is possible that Ham's sin was committing incest with his mother.
    - 1. The result of that relationship was the birth of Canaan.
    - 2. Note that it is emphasized that "Ham is the father of Canaan."
    - 3. This explains why the curse was placed upon Canaan – not for any personal sin, but the illegitimacy of his birth.
  - E. Why would Ham do this?
    - 1. Why did Absalom take his father's concubines (2 Sam. 16:21-22)?
    - 2. It was a means of establishing dominance and usurping control.
  - F. This eventually leads into the wickedness at the Tower of Babel.
- III. The Curse of Canaan and the Promise of Noah (Genesis 19:25-29)
- A. Canaan would be cursed by becoming a servant of servants to his brethren.
    - 1. This has to do with his descendants, not necessarily him personally.
    - 2. The Canaanites would become servants to Israel, descendants of Shem.
    - 3. Remember, at the time Moses wrote the book of Genesis, Israel was on their way to conquer and inherit the land of Canaan.
    - 4. *{Understand that this curse does not mean that descendants of Canaan were predestined to do evil or could not be saved. In fact, some Canaanites, like Rahab, became followers of Jehovah. Rather, it has to do with their not being the chosen people for the bloodline of the Messiah and their low standing in relation to other nations.}*
  - B. In contrast, Shem would be closely connected to Jehovah.
    - 1. God was to be praised as the God of Shem.
    - 2. Shem was loyal to Jehovah.
    - 3. One of his descendants was Abram, whom God would choose to begin the bloodline of Israel and the Messiah.
    - 4. Canaan would be his servant.
  - C. Japheth would be blessed by God with enlarged space, ample room to grow and prosper.
    - 1. His descendants would enjoy fellowship and communion with those of Shem.
    - 2. Likewise, Canaan would be his servant.
  - D. The chapter ends with the record of Noah's death.
    - 1. He lived for 350 years after the Flood.
    - 2. Noah was 950 years old when he died.