

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Genesis 9:20-28: Possible Parallels between the
Fall of Noah and the Fall of Adam

A Pentateuch Exegesis Paper
OTST 565-001 Pentateuch

by
Ingram London
November 2010

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PASSAGE OVERVIEW	2
STRUCTURE AND LITERARY GENRE IDENTIFICATION.....	10
Structural and Thematic Links to the Fall of Adam.....	12
KEY WORD STUDY	17
Key Word Study Links to the Fall of Adam.....	21
HISTORICAL/CULTURAL CONTEXT.....	26
Historical/Cultural Links to the Fall of Adam	27
THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS	28
Great Controversy Implications	29
Atonement Implications.....	29
The Two Seeds Implication	31
Theological Pretext for Canaanite Invasion.....	32
Spiritual Nakedness	33
Summary of Possible Theological Implications	34
CONCLUSION.....	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	36

INTRODUCTION

Upon first glance of the life of Noah, in the biblical narrative, the reader tends to perceive this character as worthy of accolades. His faithfulness to God is idealized on numerous occasions within the Jewish and Christian scriptures. However, a closer reading of Noah's story, in the Genesis account, reveals what appears to be a blemish upon the life record of this pivotal character. This blemish is a curious story about Noah and his sons, post the flood narrative. Noah is depicted as planting a vineyard and partaking of the vintage to excess. Apparently, drunken and uninhibited he strips himself naked and passes out in a drunken stupor within his tent. What seems to be almost haphazardly, Ham, the son of Noah and father of Canaan, catches a glimpse of his father's nakedness and reports it to his brothers. Upon awaking from his stupor, we find Noah calling down curses upon his grandson, Canaan, because Ham "saw the nakedness of his father."

What did the biblical author have in mind when he included this story in the Genesis account, are there parallel narratives in the Pentateuch? How does this affect the general narrative of Genesis and Pentateuch as a whole?

First, this study will analyze Gen 9:20-28 in an effort to understand the meaning of the narrative at face value by taking the reader through each complete thought of the passage consecutively. Second, the author will provide plausible structures for the narrative that may help identify other literary devices used to highlight key concepts and ideas from the passage. From these concepts and ideas, the study will attempt to analyze key words and phrases in the passage.

Fourth, the study will present the plausible historical context of the author who composed the narrative. Each section after the general walkthrough of the passage will also be followed by a sub-section that will attempt to draw connections/parallels between Gen 9:20-28 and Gen 1-3, specifically, the creation account and the fall of Adam and Eve. Finally, possible theological implications, if any, will be presented to the reader, in the event the author of Genesis intentionally wanted to link the two stories of Noah and Adam.

This study will not cover the history of the so-called “Hamitic Curse” in regards to discrimination, racism, and the slavery of African peoples throughout history. Many scholars have composed extensive works on this particular subject including Stephen R. Haynes,¹ Sylvester A. Johnson,² and Thomas Virgil Peterson.³ Thus, the reader is encouraged to pursue these and other works for more information regarding the use of the Hamitic Curse in justification of Anglo oppression of African peoples. Furthermore, this study will only briefly comment on the nature of the sin of Ham occasionally when it is helpful to the purpose of the study.⁴

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Before identifying important key words and structures within Gen 9:20-28, a linear walkthrough of the passage must be conducted. The passage will be presented in dissected

¹ Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

² Sylvester A. Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

³ Thomas Virgil Peterson, *Ham and Japheth, the Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1978).

⁴ Nicholas Oyugi Odhiambo's doctoral dissertation is an excellent specimen of recent scholarship on the identification of the sin of Ham. Odhiambo, Nicholas Oyugi Odhiambo, “Ham's Sin and Noah's Curse: A Critique of Current Views” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2007).

phrases in an attempt to isolate complete thoughts; these will be followed with running commentary by the author of the study.

The narrative begins after a customary, yet short, *tôlēdôt* style, transition in the form of a genealogy found in Gen 9:18, 19.⁵ Interestingly, the genealogy does not extend back to Adam but only includes Noah and his 3 sons. This may be an indication that the author is delimitating the end of the old antediluvian world and the beginning of the post-flood world.⁶

Following the preliminary transition, the passage of this study begins with the phrase, “וַיִּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה”, *and Noah began to be a man of the soil.*⁷ The author of the passage begins the narrative by indicating that Noah took up the profession of being a farmer of some sort. The following phrase will give the reader more detail in regards to at least one type of farming Noah was invested. וַיִּטַּע כַּרְם, indicates that Noah planted a vineyard, כַּרְם. This may be a carrying on of the “first things” motif, found in Gen 1-11, depicting Noah as the first individual to plant a vineyard since the profession does not appear before its occurrence in the present passage.⁸

Next, Gen 9:21 states, “וַיִּשְׂתֵּי מִן־הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר”, *He drank of the wine and became drunk.*” This verse necessitates that Noah either knowingly or unknowingly had learned the art of fermentation to produce alcohol. This phrase sheds more light on why the author identifies that

⁵ David A. Dorsey identifies genealogies denoted by “these are the generations of x” as a common marker for the end and beginning of a literary unit. David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 22.

⁶ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), 128.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted all English translations of the Hebrew text are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

⁸ Gen 1-11 gives the origins of world and other “origins” such as the first farmer, first sin, first birth, etc. Herbert Wolf, *Pentateuch: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 93.

Noah planted a vineyard. It preemptively answers the question of, “Where did Noah’s wine and subsequently his drunkenness come from?” The verse continues, “וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אֹהֶלֶה” and *lay uncovered in his tent.*” The preliminary results of Noah’s drunkenness are now revealed, in that he becomes naked in his tent. It is interesting to note that various translations describe different circumstances for how Noah physically became naked. It is unclear, at this point, what the story is communicating in this respect. Did Noah uncover himself physically and intentionally or was the author of the passage merely stating that Noah was naked and it is unimportant how he became naked (on account of his own intentional actions or another’s). Another point of interest is that Noah is naked or uncovered **inside his tent** and thus he does not appear to be “exposed” completely to the public.

In Gen 9:22, the author of the passage continues by stating,

“וַיֵּרָא הָם אֶבְי כְנַעַן אֶת עֶרְוַת אָבִיו” *And Ham, the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father.*” The phrase, “*Ham, the father of Canaan,*” is used before in Gen 9:18. Why it is repeatedly stated is unclear initially but will be answered later. What does become clear is that Ham “saw” the nakedness of his father. As to what exactly the author wanted to communicate, once again, seems to be unclear from the text itself and there appears to be no general consensus in scholarship about what Ham’s “seeing” indicates,⁹ when taking into account the curses of Gen 9:25-27. Next the story proceeds with Ham publicizing something to his two brothers. The Hebrew, “וַיִּגֵּד לְשְׁנֵי-אָחָיו בַּחוּץ” can be translated “*and told his two brothers outside.*” This phrase does not necessarily explain what exactly Ham told his two brothers. There are at least 2

⁹ Herbert Wolf, *Pentateuch: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 126, 127.

possibilities: (1) It is possible that Ham simply told his two brothers that their father was naked (2) If we are to assume that something more sinister than simply seeing the nakedness of his father is implied by the author it may be possible that Ham told his brothers of the grave offense he had just committed against his father.¹⁰ Furthermore, the text states that Ham told his two brothers **outside**, בַּחֲוָיִת. It is probably safe to assume that בַּחֲוָיִת is in reference to Noah's tent since the reader is not left with any other option within the text. Thus, the last phrase of this verse could be read as "*outside the tent*" or "*outside Noah's tent.*" This adds a level of complexity to the text in regards to where exactly Ham is positioned in relation to Noah when he commits his "crime." The reader, it seems, must interpret this last clause as either meaning (1) Ham committed some indecent act (either visually or physically) outside the tent and then told his brothers who were also outside the tent, or (2) Ham committed some indecent act inside Noah's tent with or too Noah (either visually or physically) and then proceeded to tell his two brothers outside Noah's tent.

Next, the passage shifts focus from the interactions between Ham and Noah to Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japheth. The text relates the reaction of Shem and Japheth to Ham's communication to them. The reaction is the following:

¹⁰ A Ugarit myth, "The Tale of Aqht", states that "a dutiful son is one who takes (his father) by the hand when he is drunk, [and] carries him when he is sated with wine." This provides insight into the cultural context of the Noah story, presuming that Moses records the story believing that his readers will understand the seriousness of the crime and violation of custom by Ham to reveal his father's nakedness by publicizing it instead of covering it up like his brothers (Boyd V. Seevers, "עֲרֵה", NIDOTTE 3:527-531). Some interpret the nature of the crime of Ham as a castration of his father. Gero, Stephen. "The Legend of the Fourth Son of Noah," *HTR* 73, (1980): 321-330. Other interpretations of Ham's crime include sodomizing his father or having sexual intercourse with his mother. John Sietze Bergsma and Scott Walker Hahn, "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27)," *JBL* 124, (2005): 25-40.

²³Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם וַיִּפֹּת אֶת־הַשְּׂמֹלֶה
וַיִּשְׂימוּ עַל־נַפְשָׁם שְׂנִיָּהֶם וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרָנִית
וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת עֵרוֹת אָבִיהֶם וּפְנֵיהֶם
אַחֲרָנִית וְעֵרוֹת אָבִיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ

As stated before, at this stage Ham disappears from the narrative and the emphasis is upon Shem, Japheth, and Canaan, the son of Ham. The text relates that Shem and Japheth react to Ham's interaction with them by taking a cloth or garment to cover Noah inside his tent. However, unlike their brother, Shem and Japheth do not commit the same offense in seeing Noah's nakedness, but rather they walk backward into Noah's tent with their faces turned away to avoid any infringement. Thus Noah's nakedness is covered and in addition his nakedness is not seen by his two other sons whose behavior is held up in stark contrast with their brother Ham.¹¹

Gen 9:24 shifts the focus of the passage from Noah's role as the one being acted upon, to becoming the main actor as at the beginning of the passage, found in Gen 9:20, 21. The first phrase of Gen 9:24 states "וַיִּקְוֶץ נֹחַ מִיַּיִנוֹ", *when Noah awoke from his wine,*" seems to communicate what has already been stated, Noah fell into unconsciousness sometime between becoming drunk in Gen 9:21 and Gen 9:24 when he awoke, and he becomes an active participant in the narrative once more. Next the text states that, "וַיֵּדַע אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה־לוֹ בְּנוֹ הַקָּטָן", *and knew what his youngest son had done to him.*" It is unclear from the text how Noah derived what Ham had done to him and how much time passed between his "awaking" and "knowing". If sometime passed between his "awaking" and "knowing" it is possible that Ham made a

¹¹ The text creates a clear contrast between the behaviors of the two parties. The text states that Ham **וַיֵּדַע**, saw (literally, and saw), Noah's nakedness while Shem and Japheth **לֹא רָאוּ**, did not see, Noah's nakedness.

confession (repentant or unrepentant) of his crime¹² or some other family member informed him. Otherwise, we must conclude that he discovered what happened to him by divine revelation. In addition, the text states that Ham is the “youngest” son of Noah; however in every case that the sons of Noah are listed it appears that Ham is the middle child and not the youngest. Thus some Bible translations interpret **הַקָּטָן** as “younger” as opposed to “youngest.” However, if the translation of **הַקָּטָן** as “youngest” is correct, it could be pointing to Canaan who is the youngest son of Ham (Gen 10:6) and by extension one of the youngest sons of Noah. This would shed light on the next ironic occurrence within the narrative.

Gen 29:25-27 marks another turning point in the story:

²⁵ he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."

²⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר אָרוּר כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים
יְהִי לְאֶחָיו:

²⁶ He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant."

²⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם וַיְהִי
כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לְמוֹ:

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant."

²⁷ יִפְתָּ אֱלֹהִים לִיִּפֹת וַיִּשְׁכֵן בְּאֶהֱלֵי-
שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לְמוֹ:

In this section of the narrative, Noah begins by prophetically cursing Canaan, the son of Ham, **אָרוּר כְּנָעַן**. Canaan, is mentioned earlier in the text, always connected with his father Ham, but never as an active participant in the story. This raises questions in regards to why Noah curses

¹² It is also possible that Canaan, or some other grandchild of Noah informed him of what had happened.

Canaan and not the apparent malefactor, Ham.¹³ It would be natural to think that the curses would help identify exactly what Ham had done to his father but in this case it adds another level of complexity. Is Canaan, here being implicated as participating in the crime perpetrated by Ham?¹⁴ Sailhamer answers this question by concluding that “It is common in the narratives of Genesis to anticipate the deeds of later generations in the acts of their fathers.” Thus Canaan is cursed because he has already or will take on the characteristics of his father Ham. The next phrase, “עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים יְהִיָּה לְאַחֵיו”, *a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers*” defines the curse of the previous phrase as servitude to his brothers. The word, לְאַחֵיו, can be interpreted as Canaan’s brothers (Gen 10:6) or more likely Ham’s brothers, Shem and Japheth.¹⁵ What follows the cursing of Canaan is what appears to be two blessings on Shem and Japheth. However, from the text “וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם”, it is unclear whether Noah is intending to bless “יהוָה אֱלֹהֵי” (Adonai Elohim) or “שֵׁם” (Shem).¹⁶ Indeed, if Noah actually intended to bless God, it would then stand to reason that the latter part of Gen 9:26, “וַיְהִי כְנֻעַן עֶבֶד לְמֹ”, *and let Canaan be his servant*” could be referring to God instead of Shem as the direct object designated by the possessive pronoun “his.” Gen 9:27 is even more complex, as all 4 parties, God, Shem, Japheth, and Canaan are named in the final stanza of Noah’s oracle. What is clear

¹³ John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis – Leviticus* (Expositor’s Bible Commentary 1; Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2008), 134.

¹⁴ Ibid., 135.

¹⁵ Canaan’s descendants were conquered multiple times by his immediate brothers Mizraim (Egypt) and others. In addition Canaan was conquered by Cush’s descendants Babylon and Assyria. Furthermore they were harassed by the Philistines descendants of Japheth. What is probably intended by the author, as will be examined later, is to give a theological/prophetic reason as to why the descendants of Shem through the children of Israel would one day conquer the land belonging to the Canaanites. Furthermore, there is also an interesting story about the Gibeonites (a subset of the Canaanites, who literally became servants to God and Shem (Israel).

¹⁶ Sailhamer, *Genesis – Leviticus*, 134.

from the text, “יִפְתָּ אֱלֹהִים לְיַפֶּתְךָ, *May God enlarge Japheth*” is that Noah wishes that Japheth be “enlarged” or literally made “spacious, wide, open,” in the sense that he would be given a large inheritance.¹⁷ Next, either God or Japheth is wished to dwell in the tents of Shem, “וַיֵּשְׁכֵן בְּאֶהֱלֵי-שֵׁם”, *and let him dwell in the tents of Shem*”. It is unclear what would be meant by Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem but it may be in reference to some sort of partnership or close connection between the two lines of descendants.¹⁸ Otherwise, the blessing may be turning focus again on Shem, in that God becomes the subject instead of Japheth and thus God will dwell in the tents of Shem, or in other words God will bless Shem’s descendants (Israel) with His presence (Exod 25:8, Deut 23:14). The last phrase of this verse “וַיְהִי כְנַעַן עֶבֶד לְמוֹ”, *and let Canaan be his servant*,” adds another layer of complexity in that it is unclear who the possessive pronoun “his” of the last phrase is referring to. There are at least 3 possible identities for לְמוֹ (his), in this last piece of Noah’s oracle: (1) לְמוֹ could once again be referring to God the original subject of the sentence and is thus a repetition of the last phrase of Gen9:26¹⁹ (2) לְמוֹ could be referring to either the original direct object of the sentence Japheth or (3) Shem the object of the preposition (*in the tents of Shem*).

Finally we come to the conclusion of the narrative in Gen 9:27, 28 in which the author informs the reader that Noah lived for an additional 350 years after the flood, totaling to a 950

¹⁷ The entire poetic sequence seems to be of a jussive nature in a wishful sense. See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, “פְּתָחָה” *BDB*, 834.

¹⁸ Sailhamer, *Genesis – Leviticus*, 134.

¹⁹ See footnote 15.

year lifespan. The author then proceeds in Gen 10:1 to close the narrative as it opened with another “tôlêdôt” genealogical transition.

STRUCTURE AND LITERARY GENRE IDENTIFICATION

With a general understanding of what is contained on the surface of the text, the study will now attempt to identify the style of literature and structure that the author uses in the passage.²⁰

The bulk of the passage appears to be a composition of easily definable sections of narrative and poetry with an attached epilogue, framed by two “tôlêdôt” genealogical transitions which are a well-known literary device used by the author of Genesis.²¹ The structure of which can be seen below:

Tôlêdôt Transition	Narrative	Poetry	Epilogue	Tôlêdôt Transition
Gen 9:18, 19	Gen 9:20-24	Gen 9:25-27	Gen 9:28	Gen 10:1

Structure A

David Dorsey calls Gen 9:18-29 a “sin story” that follows the same literary pattern of previous sin stories exhibiting the following elements: “(1) setting, (2) sin, (3) discovery of sin (the center and turning point of the story), and (4) curse.”²² In addition Dorsey proposes a semi-chiastic structure that incorporates the sin story elements mentioned previously. The representation of which can be seen below.²³

²⁰ Note that some structural propositions later observations in the study will help clarify some of the ambiguities of the text such as “Who is it that is actually blessed in Gen 9:26, Shem or God?”

²¹ Note that the second tôlêdôt appears to serve primarily as the beginning literary unit marker of the table of nations in Gen 10.

²² Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 52.

²³ Ibid.

- a Noah becomes drunk and falls asleep (9:20-21)
 - b Ham, Canaan's father, acts shamefully (9:22)
 - c Shem and Japheth act righteously (in contrast to Ham) (9:23)
 - d **CENTER:** Noah discovers what has happened (9:24)
 - b' Canaan, Ham's son, is cursed (9:25)
 - c' Shem and Japheth are blessed (in contrast to Ham's son) (9:26-27)
- a' Noah dies (9:28-29)

Structure B

Though this study acknowledges that there may be many more strategies²⁴ to employ in structuring the passage, one more linear arrangement from Dorsey will suffice for this study's purposes.²⁵

- a flood story: reversal of creation; new beginning, divine blessing (6:9-9:19)
 - b sin of Ham: nakedness seeing/covering nakedness; curse (9:20-29)
 - c descendants of younger righteous son Japheth (10:1-5)
 - d descendants of sinful son Ham (10:6-20)
 - e descendants of chosen son Shem
 - f divine judgment on human attempt to stay together (11:1-9)
 - g brief introduction of Abram, through whom God will bless humankind (11:10-26)

Structure C

Any parallels between these different structures and their structural counterparts in Gen 1-3 will be presented later in the study.²⁶

Examining Structure B reveals that the central theme of Gen 9:20-28 is the revelation or discovery of sin through an experience. In this case, Noah becomes drunk and nude in his tent and subsequently his person or honor is violated in some way by Ham. Then, as the structure highlights, Noah discovers what happened to him. This is where Noah regains consciousness and becomes an active character again. Dorsey views this point as the climax or turning point of the

²⁴ Another strategy is very closely related to the sin story structure proposed by Dorsey. It may be possible to arrange Noah's story in Gen. 9:20-28 linearly as (1) sinful action (2) unconscious of results of sinful action (3) consciousness of sinful action (4) judgment and hope.

²⁵ Only a portion of the structure proposed by Dorsey is presented in this section of the study. The full 14 point structure will be shown later. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 55.

²⁶ Though the basic form of these structures will be used later in the study, to ascertain, portray, and clarify any parallels between Noah and Adam, the author of the study will take liberty in modifying certain elements of structures borrowed from other sources.

narrative.²⁷ What can be gathered from this? This study proposes that Noah's nakedness and Ham's irreverence, though closely connected to the main thrust of the story, are actually pointers to the true theological center identified by Dorsey. It is common to read the narrative with a focus on Ham; however this study suggests that the emphasis should rather be placed upon Noah as the main protagonist. The narrative begins with Noah, ends with Noah, and as can be seen from Structure B Noah is also at the heart of the narrative, specifically Noah's **knowing** or **knowledge** of events that have transpired.²⁸ This will become critically important in an attempt to find parallels and connections to Gen 1-3.

In regards to how this story is connected to the greater narrative of the book of Genesis it serves as a linking story.²⁹ Gen 29:20-28 links the mass annihilation of sin and sinners in the flood cataclysm and the reappearance of mass apostasy within mankind who are descended from the holy line of Seth. This portion of the book of Genesis serves as a two pronged literary and theological driver carrying the reader from the flood to the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel incident. Both of these thrusts will be examined later in the study.

Structural and Thematic Links to the Fall of Adam

The structure and flow of events in Gen 9:20-28 is nearly identical to the first three chapters of Genesis.³⁰ The author of Genesis seems to want to communicate that Noah is a new Adam or a new start for the human family. Thus, the author seems to intentionally and repeatedly use similar language and themes to remind the reader of Adam.

²⁷ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 53.

²⁸ This study maintains that it is the knowledge of Noah's nakedness that is at the heart of the story, his understanding that his nakedness has been exposed and publicized.

²⁹ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 129.

³⁰ Sailhamer, *Genesis-Leviticus*, 1:134, 135

There are many interesting parallels between the flood story and the creation story as well as, the fall of Adam and the fall of Noah.³¹ Adam and Noah are both commanded to be fruitful and multiply before their respective falls according to Gen 1:28 and Gen 9:1. In addition, one can see a reaffirming of man being made in the image of God in Gen 9:6 which seems to echo Gen 2:27. Noah is a new beginning for mankind.³²

As already stated, the fall of Noah seems to be a linking story that is used to connect the narrative of the flood and the Tower of Babel stories. Without this link, the reader may be left to wonder why things are as they are since it appears that God destroyed sin with the great flood. In other words, why does sin still exist if sinners (with sin) were eradicated by a worldwide deluge leaving only righteous Noah and his presumably righteous family? The “Fall of Noah” narrative may have been an attempt to preemptively answer this question by showing the reader that the sin problem is still present in the human family. Without this story, the Tower of Babel would be a mystery just as the wickedness of Lamech, or the murder of Abel would be mysterious stories without the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. John Sailhamer picks up on this and states that the author of Genesis uses stand-alone stories such as the fall of Noah as transitional episodes to drive the larger narrative of Genesis forward.³³

Sailhamer continues to pick up on the thematic links between Adam and Noah: (1) God plants a garden and Noah plants a vineyard; (2) Both Adam and Noah partake from the fruit of their respective gardens; (3) Both Adam and Noah become naked as a result; (4) Both Adam and Noah’s children are infected with sin.³⁴ Another interesting parallel is how the issue of nakedness is dealt with in each story. For Adam and Eve, their nakedness does not seem to be

³¹ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 126.

³² *Ibid.*, 128.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

problematic before sin since the text says that they were unashamed and that all of God's creation including Adam and Eve's "nakedness" was pronounced "good." It is interesting to note that the nakedness of Noah is not clearly called into judgment by the text, which focuses more on the "seeing of Noah's nakedness" by others. Noah's solitary nakedness in his tent (unpublicized nakedness) may be an allusion to a pre-fall innocent nakedness. The author clearly states that Noah was naked **in his tent** and thus even though he was naked, his nakedness was not necessarily a cause of shame since it was not yet seen or publicized. In addition, it appears that Noah is unconscious and therefore "unashamed" of his nudity since the text mentions that he later "awoke from his wine." This is significant in that this could also allude to a type of pre-fall innocence since Adam and Eve were also naked and unashamed before their "eyes were opened." Furthermore, upon sinning, Adam and Eve then realize that they were naked and become ashamed. They attempt to cover themselves with fig leaves and later God clothes them with skins to cover their nakedness after it has been publicized through inquiry, interrogation and public confession. This is similar to the Noah story in that after his nakedness is publicized by his son Ham, his other sons, come to cover the nakedness of their father.

Finally, both stories exhibit prophetic poetry as a result of a fall. Both sets of poetry include blessings intermingled with curses. Also exhibited in these poetical prophecies, is the idea of one "divine" pronouncement simultaneously fulfilling the role of a curse and a blessing. Though the serpent is cursed in Gen 3, a part of his curse is the promise of a Seed which is a blessing for mankind. Similarly, in the Noah narrative, the curse of Canaan's servitude becomes a blessing to Shem and his descendants. According to Sailhamer, there are messianic prophecies

contained in both sets of curses, which seems once again, to tie the two narratives together.³⁵ The major thematic allusions and parallels mentioned are summarized in the table below.

Parallels			
Noah		Adam	
Gen 8, 9	Fall takes place in a newly created world. (Post Flood)	Gen 1-3	Fall takes place in a newly created world. (Post Creation of Eden)
Gen 10	Becomes father of the human race (post flood)	Gen 4:1, 2, 25; 5	Father of the human race
Gen 9:20	Noah is said literally to be “a man of the ground”	Gen 1:26	Adam is derived from the ground
Gen 9:20	Noah is a tiller of the ground	Gen 3:19	Adam is cursed to be a tiller of the ground
Gen 9:18-28	Noah has 3 sons: two are righteous (Shem and Japheth) and one is wicked (Ham)	Gen 4:1, 2, 25	Adam has 3 (named) sons: two are righteous (Abel and Seth) and one is wicked (Cain)
Gen 9:21	Partaking of vintage (fruit) to excess	Gen 3:6	Partaking of fruit from the Tree of Knowledge
Gen 9:24	Noah awakes from his wine and knows...	Gen 3:7	Adam’s eyes are opened knows he is naked
Gen 9:21	Partaking of fruit led to the uncovering of Noah’s nakedness	Gen 3:7	Partaking of forbidden fruit led to the discovery of shame due to nakedness
Gen 9:22	Noah’s nakedness is made public by announcement	Gen 3:10	Adam’s nakedness is made public by a confession
Gen 9:21	Noah “covers” his nakedness inadequately by being in his tent	Gen 3:7	Adam “covers” his nakedness inadequately with fig leaves
Gen 9:23	Noah’s nakedness is covered by his two sons	Gen 3:21	Adam’s nakedness is covered by God
Gen 9:25-27	Noah curses Canaan, and blesses Shem and Japheth	Gen 3:14-19	God curses Adam, Eve, the serpent, and the ground, but also promises a “blessing”
Gen 7:1-7	Noah escapes annihilation	Gen 2:17; 3	Adam escapes annihilation
Gilgamesh Epic	Utnapishtim (Noah) “acquires” godlike attribute of divinity	Gen 3:22	Adam acquires godlike knowledge
Gen 9:18; 11, 12:1-3	Progenitor of the Seed of Gen 3:15 by way of Shem	Gen 5	Progenitor of the Seed of Gen 3:15 by way of Seth

Table 1

³⁵ Sailhamer, *Genesis – Leviticus*, 90-91, 134 -135.

As was shared before, Dorsey presents a structure that links Noah and Adam.³⁶ This provides further evidence of an intentional linkage by the author of Genesis. The full structure is shown below with modifications:

Section 1: Genesis 1:1-6:8

a creation story: first beginning, divine blessing (1:1-2:3)

b sin of Adam: nakedness, seeing/covering nakedness; curse (2:4-3:24)

c younger righteous son Abel murdered (no descendants) (4:1-16)

d descendants of sinful son Cain (4:17-26)

e descendants of chosen son Seth (5:1-32)

f divine judgment on unlawful unions (6:1-4)

g brief introduction of Noah, through whom God will bless human kind (6:5-8)

Section 2: Genesis 6:9-11:26

a flood story: reversal of creation; new beginning, divine blessing (6:9-9:19)

b sin of Noah/Ham³⁷: nakedness seeing/covering nakedness; curse (9:20-29)

c descendants of younger righteous son Japheth (10:1-5)

d descendants of sinful son Ham (10:6-20)

e descendants of chosen son Shem

f divine judgment on human attempt to stay together (11:1-9)

g brief introduction of Abram, through whom God will bless humankind (11:10-26)

Structure D

One more structure will suffice to show the reader a possible connection between the fall of Noah and Adam using the narrative, poetry, epilogue structure.

Tôlédôt Transition	Narrative	Poetry	Epilogue	Tôlédôt Transition
Noah's genealogy Gen 9:18, 19	Noah's drunkenness and Ham's paternal dishonor Gen 9:20-24	Noah's oracle of judgment and blessings Gen 9:25-27	Noah's death Gen 9:28	Noah's sons Gen 10:1
Genealogy of the earth Gen 2:4	Creation and the fall Gen 2:4-3:13	God's pronouncements of judgment and blessings Gen 3:14-19	Death of animals in the place of Adam and Eve & fleeing the garden Gen 3:21	Adam's sons Gen 4:1, 2

Structure E

³⁶ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 52.

³⁷ As stated previously, it is not the purpose of this study to determine whether alcohol consumption in and of itself is sinful, however, drunkenness does appear to be prohibited by the Hebrew Bible. Thus, Noah as a second Adam seems to also be guilty of some sin as well as Ham. Dorsey's structure has therefore been modified for the purpose of this study.

KEY WORD STUDY

Though there may be several key words and phrases within the passage³⁸ this study will specifically examine the meaning of nakedness for the purpose of finding links between Gen 1-3 and possible theological implications. This study has chosen to examine the use of the words that relate to the nakedness of Noah as this seems to be especially important for the author of the passage to emphasize, due to its frequency of repetition in the narrative, leading to the climax of Noah's "knowing." The author uses nakedness or alludes to it at least four times in the passage. These have been highlighted in the text and chart below along with other key words and phrases.³⁹

²⁰ Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.

וַיִּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטַּע כֶּרֶם:

²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay **uncovered** in his tent.

וַיִּשְׂתֵּי מִזֶּה־הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אֹהֶל־הָאֵלֶּה:

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, **saw** the **nakedness** of his father and told his two brothers outside.

וַיֵּרֶא חָם אֲבִי כְנַעַן אֶת עֲרוֹת אָבִיו וַיַּגִּד לְשְׁנֵי־אָחָיו בְּחוּץ:

²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and **covered** the **nakedness** of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they **did not see** their father's **nakedness**.

וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם וַיִּפֹּת אֶת־הַשְּׂמֹלָה וַיִּשְׂימוּ עַל־שִׁכְמָם שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרָנִית וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת עֲרוֹת אָבִיהֶם וַפְּנֵיהֶם אַחֲרָנִית וְעֲרוֹת אָבִיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ:

²⁴ When **Noah awoke from his wine and knew** what his youngest son had done to him

וַיִּיקָץ נֹחַ מִיַּיְנו וַיֵּדַע אֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה־לוֹ בְּנוֹ הַקָּטָן:

³⁸ Nakedness, awoke, know, Ham the father of Canaan, etc.

³⁹ Allusions to nakedness are in red bold text. Descriptors of nakedness are marked in green bold text. The climactic phrase of the passage is marked in blue.

- a Noah becomes **naked** (not apparent if Noah is conscious) Gen 9:21
- b Noah's **nakedness** is **seen** and **publicized** (Noah is unconscious) Gen 9:22
- c Noah **nakedness** is **covered** (Noah is unconscious) Gen 9:23
- d Noah's **nakedness not seen** (Noah is unconscious) Gen 9:23
- e **Noah awakes (becomes conscious) and knows** Gen 9:24

Beginning with Gen 9:21 we see that the first reference to the nakedness of Noah is

נִתְגַל. The word appears to be an imperfect form of the root consonants, גלג or גלה, denoting an incomplete action, usually translated in the future tense.⁴⁰ However the verb is prefixed by ׀ which denotes a consecutive, conversive, imperfect, form of the verb. Thus the imperfect form is changed into a complete action. The word also exhibits an imperfect hitpael prefix of תִּי making the verb reflexive to the actor or subject. The root verb, גִּלָּה, גִּלְהָה, or גִּלְתָּה, means to reveal, uncover, display, become clear, etc. Thus the text appears to communicate that the actor “reveals/uncovers/displays” oneself which seems to suggest that Noah was indeed uncovered and **made himself** naked through his own actions, intentionally or unintentionally.⁴¹ This word is possibly related to the root verb, עָרָה, which is the source of the other occurrences of “naked” or “nakedness” in the passage.⁴²

This previous reference to nakedness and its various forms are used multiple times in scripture (at least 27 times), of which most of these occurrences in the Pentateuch are concentrated in the book of Leviticus. The usage can be grouped into two categories. 25 usages

⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all basic definitions in the Word Study section of this paper are from Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008).

⁴¹ Wurzburg Niehr has also identified the form of the verb as reflexive thus denoting “uncovering” as an action being done to the actor by the actor. Niehr, “עָרָה,” *TDOT* 11:346.

⁴² *Ibid.*

appear to be injunctions against sexual advances/relations with close relatives. One injunction appears to prohibit the high priest of God from having his head “uncovered.” The use of the word in Gen 9:21 is rather unclear, but since the occurrence is in the reflexive form, it is more probable that it is a simple reference to indecent exposure of oneself and not denoting any sexual connotation despite the weight of evidence to the contrary. Thus the last two occurrences of the word examined in the Pentateuch seem to indicate a non-sexual indecent exposure of the body. The categories and their occurrences are summarized in the table below:

גָּלָה, גָּלָה, אָגַלָה x27	
Indecent Sexual Advances x25	Indecent Exposure of Oneself x2
Lev 18:6-19 x17	Gen 9:21 x1
Lev 20:11-21 x7	Lev 21:10 x1
Deut 27:20 x1	

Table 2

Gen 9:22 contains the next occurrence of nakedness, the noun, עֲרוֹת, which is a construct form of the word עָרְוָה. In this use the word can mean shame, nakedness, and the revealing of pudenda specifically the exposure of the genitals implying a shameful exposure. This use of the word is connected with Ham in that he saw עֲרוֹת, the nakedness of his father. Gen 9:23 uses the same word for nakedness an additional two more times except that the last use has a ו conjunction prefix denoting “and nakedness.” The last two references in Gen 9:23 are connected with the covering of Noah’s nakedness and Noah’s sons, Shem and Japheth, not seeing his nakedness.

According to Würzburg H. Niehr, the noun for nakedness in the passage, עֲרוֹת, is derived from the verb עָרָה which means “be naked” or “empty.”⁴³ It can also mean to “lay bear,” or “pour out.”⁴⁴ Niehr also suggests that the reflexive verb for nakedness, וַיִּתְגַּל, which was identified earlier, may be connected to עָרָה, which denotes a frenzied stripping of oneself bare. In addition, Niehr also agrees that the nakedness described in Genesis 9:20-24 is of a non-sexual nature.⁴⁵ Other uses of עָרָה, as a noun, suggested by Niehr, include euphemisms for captivity (Isa 47:3), adultery (Hos 2:11), divorce (Deut 24:1), topography (Gen 42:9, 12), etc. Most occurrences however appear in Lev 18, 20 describing indecent sexual relations.

Other occurrences of derivatives of the word, עָרָה, appear as adjectives or the attribute of an individual, עִירוֹם, עִירָם, and עָרוֹם, all of which denote “nakedness.” עִירוֹם and עִירָם carry with them a connotation of judgment and shame,⁴⁶ while עָרוֹם denotes innocence.⁴⁷ Carl Schultz defines עִירוֹם, as a word that designates “spiritual and moral nakedness” and an awareness of guilt before God as is the case in Gen 3:7, 10, 11.⁴⁸ In Gen 2:25 we see an example of the of the word עָרוֹם denoting innocence.

⁴³ Ibid., 11:344.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 346.

⁴⁶ B. Seevers, “עָרוֹם,” 3:532.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ C. Schultz, “*êrôm, Naked, nakedness,*” TWOT 2:656

The difference in terms used to describe Noah's nakedness in the passage could be simply an issue of the first occurrence (נִתְגַל) being a verb while the latter three occurrences (עֲרוֹת) are being used as attributes of Noah. However, the study, will later attempt to derive any other meaning from this use of nakedness by examining the connotations of these two references when connected with the fall of Adam.

The connections between these words used in the Gen 1-3 narrative and Gen 9:20-28 will be examined later in the study. A summary of the uses of עָרָה, and its derivatives, in the Pentateuch, are listed below:

עָרָה x70							
עָרוֹם & עָרָם x1	עִירָם x4		עֲרוֹת & עֲרוֹהָ x38			גָּלָה, גִּלָּה, גִּלְתָּא x27	
Innocence x1	Naked (Judgment & Shame) x3	Naked (Destitute of Possessions) x1	Naked (Shameful Exposure) x4	Weakness (Shame and devoid of defense) x2	Indecent Sexual advances and unions x32	Indecent Sexual Advances x25	Indecent Exposure of Oneself x2
Gen 2:25 x1	Gen 3:7-11 x3	Deut 28:48 x1	Gen 9:22-23 x3 Exod 20:26 x1	Gen 42:9, 12 x2	Lev 18:6-19 x24 ⁴⁹ Lev 20:11, 20:11, 17-21 x8	Lev 18:6-19 x17 Lev 20:11-21 x7 Deut 27:20 x1	Gen 9:21 x1 Lev 21:10 x1

Table 3

Key Word Study Links to the Fall of Adam

Gen 9:20-28 and Gen 2-3 seem to present conflicts between sin (immorality) and obedience (purity). As discovered earlier, one of the central elements of this conflict seems to be

⁴⁹ Derivatives of גָּלָה and עֲרוֹהָ often occur in the same passage. גָּלָה is commonly used as the verb while עֲרוֹהָ is used as an attribute of an individual as is the case found in Deut 27:20.

an issue involving “nakedness.” However, nakedness itself apparently is not the problem, and not even the awareness of nakedness necessarily, but rather knowing ones nakedness is publicized which leads to shame and judgment. This is hinted at by John Sailhamer, stating that there is a difference between pre-fall and post-fall nakedness, thus the appearance of two different words, chosen by the author, to describe each state. He submits the idea that the self-awareness of nakedness is not necessarily the emphasis of the fall of Adam (though it is a result of sin) but rather the emphasis is on the sense of nakedness that comes from “being under the judgment of God.”⁵⁰ This can be seen in the author’s emphasis in the Noah story, in that his sons, Shem and Japheth, did not see the nakedness of their father. In other words they would not be able to bear witness and report/publicize the nakedness of their father (cause him to be shamed or judged) since they had not seen it with their own eyes. In the narrative, Noah’s nakedness is referred to repeatedly as, עָרְוֹת, which we have seen has a negative connotation. This term is used 38 times in the Pentateuch and never in a positive sense. It has already been shown that the context of each occurrence can be classified in three categories. The vast majority of references seem to be related to sin (breaking of a legal code), shame, and/or judgment.⁵¹ This is the sense of the word used to describe Noah’s nakedness after his initial “innocent” nakedness.

Noah’s initial stripping of himself, if done **in his tent**, does not appear to be automatically considered shameful, since he would not be literally exposing himself to the public

⁵⁰ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 103.

⁵¹ Two occurrences of the word do not seem to be connected to these categories and are located in Gen 42:9, 12. When Joseph’s brothers, on account of a famine in Canaan, come to Egypt to buy food, Joseph encounters them and decides to pretend not to recognize them and treat them harshly. “And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye *are* spies; to see the **nakedness** of the land ye are come” (Gen 42:9, KJV). This reference is also connected to shame as in the sense of an exposure of a “weakness” or an “unprotected area.” This can be deduced from other translations of the text such as the NASB which renders it as “undefended parts.” Thus, this use of the word could also be viewed as a cause for shame in the sense of a “weakness exposed” or even “judgment,” if spies are viewed as judges, investigators, or examiners.

domain.⁵² In other words, he would still be “covered” by his tent even though “uncovered” from his clothing. In addition, Noah’s state of consciousness is not clear in the passage to detect whether he intentionally knew what he was doing when he stripped himself and neither is his initial nakedness condemned by the text. As we have seen above, the awareness of being naked in impending judgment before God and the results of experiencing shame seem to be foci of both passages in Gen 2-3 and Gen 9:20-28. Thus the author of Genesis uses a different word, **וַיִּתְגַּל**, to denote Noah’s “innocent” state before his nakedness is discovered.⁵³

4 References to Noah’s Nakedness (Gen 9:20-28)	
עָרָה	
Attributive	Verbal
עָרוֹת & עָרוֹהָ x3	גָּלָה, גָּלָה, גָּלָה x1
“Corruption”	“Innocence”
Naked (Shameful Exposure) x3	Exposure of Oneself x1
Gen 9:22-23 x3	Gen 9:21 x1

Table 4

Similarly, in the fall of Adam and Eve, “nakedness” seems to be a central issue in the narrative. The author of the Pentateuch uses a different word to describe Adam’s nakedness than what is used in Gen 9. However, the author uses the same literary technique by switching the words for nakedness after shame and judgment are introduced into the story. The word for Adam’s story describing his (and Eve’s) innocence is, **עָרוֹמִים**, the plural form of **עָרוֹם** or **עָרֵם**, which was shown earlier to infer innocence in the context of Gen 2:25.⁵⁴ However, upon sinning, the author uses a different word to denote the change in circumstances. The word now

⁵² The text clearly states that Noah was in his tent when he uncovered himself and when Ham dishonored him (Gen 9:21, 22).

⁵³ In addition it is probably also necessary for the author to use a verb instead of a noun to describe how Noah became naked since we have already seen that he was most likely the actor that caused his nakedness.

⁵⁴ The text states that the couple was naked and “unashamed, **וַיִּתְבַּשְׂשׂוּ**.”

used after the eyes of Adam and Eve are opened is עִירָם (Gen 3:7) and has a different meaning than עָרָם (Gen 2:25).⁵⁵ עִירָם, exclusively denotes negative connotations such as: to lay bare, uncover, expose nakedness, to empty, demolish, leave destitute, discover, empty, make naked, pour, pour out.⁵⁶ Thus both Adam and Noah are “made bare” or their nakedness is revealed. This revealing of nakedness also carries with it strong connotations of shame for both nouns and attributive derivations of the root verbs. Thus in the narratives, it is shameful to be naked or more accurately it is shameful to be naked before God and to have one’s nakedness be publicized, proclaimed, examined, judged etc. Throughout the Pentateuch, only one reference to “naked” or “nakedness” seems to escape the previous definitions, which is the first reference to “nakedness,” before the fall of Adam in Gen 2:25.⁵⁷ Würzburg H. Niehr comments on this word stating that one of its meanings can be defined as nakedness in a sense of “vulnerability.”⁵⁸ Later after partaking of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve went to great lengths to cover their nakedness, first by manufacturing fig leaf aprons for themselves and ultimately attempting to hide from God so that their nakedness, or more specifically their shame, would not be revealed. Let the reader consider the following chart to gain a summary perspective of the nakedness of Adam.

⁵⁵ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 103.

⁵⁶ R. Allen, “עָרָה,” *TWOT* 2:695.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Niehr, “עָרוֹם,” 11:349-354. This is interesting because it could be that the author was using word play and intended to contrast the vulnerability of Adam and Eve, עָרָם, with the “craftiness” of the serpent, עָרוֹם. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 102.

עָרָה x4	
Adam's positive nakedness	Adam negative nakedness
עָרוֹם & עָרָם x1	עֵירוֹם x3
Innocence & Vulnerability x1	Naked (Judgment & Shame) x3
Gen 2:25 x1	Gen 3:7-11 x3

Table 5

It is also interesting to note that there seems to be no mention of “naked” or “nakedness” in any of the narratives between the fall of Adam and Gen 9:20-28. Also, it is interesting to note, that one of the accepted definitions of עָרָה found in the Noah narrative and in every reference to Adam’s nakedness after sin is “discovery.” This view of the terms “naked” or “nakedness” serves as another valid lens to view the falls of both pre-Abrahamic patriarchs as Dorsey’s chart (Structure B) points out.⁵⁹ Each sin story climaxes in the discovery of shame. Adam’s “eyes were opened” and he sees his shame, while Noah “awoke from his wine and knew” that he had been shamed.⁶⁰ He is the first recorded man to grow a vineyard, ferment grape juice, and experience drunkenness and his experience with the vice of drunkenness brings shame upon him through the publicizing of his nakedness. This ties nicely to Adam’s story in that he partakes of forbidden fruit and this causes him to experience shame.

Hopefully it has been shown that a pattern exists in both narratives’ use of various words for nakedness which possibly links the two stories together. It appears that in each narrative the initial “nakedness” is innocuous but after the protagonist commits some kind of transgression or is exposed to shame, nakedness takes on a negative connotation. Each narrative includes one

⁵⁹ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 52.

⁶⁰ It is debatable whether Noah actually sinned in the text by consuming alcohol. However, it is not the purpose of this study to determine whether the consummation of alcoholic beverages is considered sinful in the Hebrew Bible but the reader should note that drunkenness does seem to be condemned or at the very least strongly discouraged by the Pentateuch and the Wisdom literature (see Lev 10:9, Deut 21:10, 29:6, Prov 20:1; 23:21, 29-32).

reference to “nakedness” that has a connotation of innocence or hidden nakedness. Each narrative contains three negative references to nakedness related to shame and judgment.

4 References to nakedness in Noah’s “Fall”		4 References to nakedness in Adam’s Fall	
Noah’s “positive” nakedness	Noah’s “negative” nakedness	Adam’s positive nakedness	Adam negative nakedness
גְּלָהּ, גְּלָהּ, גְּלָהּ x1	עֲרוֹת & עֲרוֹהָ x3	עָרוֹם & עָרוֹם x1	עֵירֹם x3
Indecent Exposure of Oneself x1	Naked (Shameful Exposure) x3	Innocence x1	Naked (Judgment & Shame) x3
Gen 9:21 x1	Gen 9:22-23 x3	Gen 2:25 x1	Gen 3:7-11 x3

Table 6

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL CONTEXT

Looking at the historical context of the fall of Noah through the eyes of the perceived author, Moses, and the world views prevalent at his time,⁶¹ we find an eclectic mix of cultural perspectives surrounding drunkenness and nudity. According to Würzburg Niehr, there are at least three cultural/historical contexts that should be taken into consideration: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite.⁶²

Looking once again at the prominence of “nakedness” in Gen 9:20-28, we see that Egyptian culture would have viewed nakedness in a variety of ways. Niehr quotes E. Hornung, suggesting that “Nakedness” was thought to be an absence of status (slavery).⁶³ Another definition is the absence of children (as in barrenness).⁶⁴ Furthermore, in pictorial representations, “nakedness” would be looked upon as “youthfulness” or in some cases

⁶¹ This study assumes that the Exodus took place during the 18th Dynasty of Egypt (approximately 1447 BC) according to the “high” or “early” date proposed by scholars (see e.g. Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 1998], 179).

⁶² Niehr, “עָרוֹם,” 11:349-354.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Seevers, “עָרוֹהָ,” 3:527-531.

“divinity”, especially in the sense of fertility gods.⁶⁵ There are two possible links between Noah’s nakedness and the culture of the ancient Egyptians. There is an interesting piece of evidence of Noah having been perceived as a god by later generations. In the Gilgamesh epic the story of the character Utnapishtim (which some scholars believe is the source or corruption of Noah in the flood narrative in the Bible) tells of a man who survived a flood designed to eradicate mankind, by building a large ark and thereafter becoming a god.⁶⁶

In Mesopotamia, it was customary to strip individuals guilty of misconduct to symbolize a loss of power but in some instances it was connected with purity as was the case when priestesses performed religious duties such as officiating over religious ceremonies partially or completely nude.⁶⁷ However, in Syria and Canaan “nakedness” was considered a sign of godhood and power more similar to the Egyptian view. This nudity was usually attributed to feminine power.⁶⁸

Historical/Cultural Links to the Fall of Adam

Looking once again at the prominence of “nakedness” in both Adam’s and Noah’s fall stories we have already seen that Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and other Ancient Near East cultures would have viewed nakedness as absence of status,⁶⁹ absence of children,⁷⁰ youthfulness, divinity, fertility,⁷¹ and purity when connected with priestly duties.⁷² It is interesting to note that the events of Adam’s fall correspond closely with previously mentioned cultural perspectives

⁶⁵ Niehr, “עָרוֹם,” 11:349-354.

⁶⁶ Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 192-196.

⁶⁷ Niehr, “עָרוֹם,” *TDOT* 11:349-354.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Seevers, “עֵרָה,” 3:527-531.

⁷¹ Niehr, “עָרוֹם,” 11:349-354.

⁷² *Ibid.*

including, being made in the image of God (divinity), created naked and unashamed (purity), and told to be fruitful and multiply (fertility). When Adam sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge it appears that he and Eve had hopes of attaining more godlike attributes than what they were created with (divinity). After eating from the Tree, the narrative declares again that they were naked, however this time their nakedness is coupled with shame (absence of status and purity resulting in slavery and shame). Furthermore, God himself declares that after Adam and Eve ate from the tree, that they were now “like one of us (divine).” As stated before, there may be a link between Noah’s nakedness and some type of bestowed or perceived “divinity” by way of the Gilgamesh epic’s protagonist character, Utnapishtim.⁷³ Again, Noah like Adam, is also told to be fruitful and multiply (fertility) in Gen 9:1. In addition, Noah’s loss of innocence whether symbolically or literally, by the shame of having his nakedness publicized or violated by Ham in Gen 9:20-24 is similar to Adam’s experience.

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has endeavored to analyze the passage of Gen 9:20-28, depicting the fall of Noah, and then draw possible parallels between that particular narrative and the fall of Adam in Gen 1-3. Assuming that the author of the Pentateuch intentionally crafted the parallels previously discussed, this study will now attempt to identify possible theological implications as a result of these plausible connections. This portion of the study will begin by examining what appears to be macro-theological implications while progressively fine tuning the lens to eventually arrive at micro contextual theological implications.

⁷³ Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 192-196.

Great Controversy Implications

Borrowing some of the overarching theological themes of scripture as proposed by Richard Davidson⁷⁴ this study will try to distill any holistic theological viewpoints from the text. From a Great Controversy (war between good and evil) perspective we see that the war started in Heaven shifted to Earth in Rev 12 by the fall of Adam. If Noah is to be viewed as a counterpart to Adam we should see another shift in this war, though not geographically since both individuals lived their lives in the same location, Earth. Instead of the shift being topographical it is circumstantial. The flood, in the broader Noah narrative served as an annihilation of the antediluvian world. Obviously, the world of Gen 9:20-28 is a new world, a post-flood environment; one in which Satan and mankind must acknowledge that evil will not be tolerated forever and that grace towards sin is limited. God's show of force in the flood narrative served as a warning that God would ultimately be the victor over evil.

Atonement Implications

Springing from the Great Controversy theme, the atonement perspective should best be analyzed by considering structural patterns. The reader should be aware of the poetic seams that glue the narratives of the Pentateuch together and also the presence of the seed in these poems which attracts the attention of the reader to what some scholars believe is the main message of the Pentateuch.⁷⁵ This message will be referred to in this study as the "Follow the Seed" motif. This motif is first communicated in Gen 3:15, known as the Proto-Evangelium. This was the first promise of the Seed, singular, who would crush the serpent's head, a type for Satan, sin, and evil. Through the Pentateuch's various poetical seams, the identity of the Seed is expounded upon

⁷⁴ Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Conflict," in *Christ, Salvation and the Eschaton* (ed. Daniel Henz and Jiří Moskala and Peter M. van Bemmelen; Berrien Springs, Mich: Andrews University Press, 2010), 7-29.

⁷⁵ Sailhamer, *Genesis – Leviticus*, 150-156.

calling the reader to “Follow the Seed” through clues carefully arranged in the document. One of these clues is found in Gen 9:25-27. What is found appears to be a double blessing of Shem and by extension his descendants (the Seed and Canaan’s servitude). Later in Genesis we find that Shem is the progenitor of Abraham who is also given a messianic blessing in Gen 12:1-3. The apostle Paul identifies this Seed as Jesus Christ in the New Testament.⁷⁶ Why was it important to include a messianic prophecy and thus an atonement prophecy in Gen 9:20-28? It may be helpful to look at the overall Genesis narrative from the perspective of how the book of Genesis would read without the story. Gen 9:20-28 is a narrative linking two worlds. In the first world, God decides to destroy mankind for his depravity but decides to save one man, Noah, who is exclaimed to be “perfect.” The next narrative, after Gen 9:20-28, is the Tower of Babel incident of Gen 11 which shows a massive influx of unity in rebellion against God’s will, similar to what is found in the events leading up to the flood. This condition then begs the question, “If Noah was perfect, and his family was apparently righteous in that they accompanied him on the ark, how then does mankind fall again into apostasy against God at the Tower of Babel?” Noah’s narrative in Gen. 9:20-28 accompanied by the Table of Nations prose in Gen 10 explains that the seed of the serpent (moral corruption in man) is still present in the human race even though Noah is declared perfect by God. In other words, Noah and his descendants are still carrying the seed of rebellion against God and thus the author of the Pentateuch shows that the destruction by the flood was a mitigation of the sin problem not the final solution which would come through the Seed. Out of the total depravity of Man’s condition, the Seed produced by Noah’s descendants through Shem is the only hope for the eradication of evil in man. Both scenarios, Adam’s and Noah’s fall, would be stories without hope if not for the shadowy promises of atonement through

⁷⁶ Gal 3:15, 16.

the Seed. Thus when the individual fails to fulfill God's requirements, it must be remembered that the Seed is what saves mankind not his/her own works.

The Two Seeds Implication

Another possible theological implication is a combination of the Great Controversy theme and Atonement. This hybrid is a view that examines Gen 9:20-28 in search of the "two seeds," the seed of the serpent, and the Seed of the woman. This perspective could also be viewed from the context of Gen 4:16-6:5 specifically the identification of two lines of mankind. One line is righteous Shem/Seth while the other line is wicked Ham/Cain. From Adam, the Bible only names three sons, of these three we have already seen that two were righteous and one was wicked. The same situation can be seen in the Noah narrative in that Noah's righteous sons Shem and Japheth are contrasted with the conduct of Noah's wicked son, Ham. This quite possibly shows that the battle between the two lines, the children of God (collective seed of the woman) and the children of men (the collective seed of the serpent),⁷⁷ is still raging even after the flood. As already noted, the end to this conflict is shown to be caused by the singular Seed of the woman who is identified as Christ. This is important in that the lineage of the Seed is clear before the flood as a descendant of Seth. After the flood however, it would be unclear as to which of the three patriarchs of the human race would become the new progenitor of the Seed since all were now descendants of Seth. Thus the author of Genesis clearly depicts which line will be righteous and serve as the conduit for the Seed and which line or lines would be wicked. Shem would become the ancestor of Abraham while Ham's descendants would lead out in a mass apostasy against God in Gen 11. It seems that the relationship that Shem and Ham have

⁷⁷ This study assumes the identity of the "Sons of God" and the "Daughters of Men" in Gen 6 as the male descendants of Seth and the female descendants of Cain.

with their earthly father Noah, is the same treatment they will have with their Heavenly Father and thus it is with the Christian and his/her respect for authority especially filial authority.

Another aspect of atonement is that the author of Genesis is beginning to emphasize to the reader the lack of a human being who can fulfill the qualifications to be the Seed or to become what Paul calls the last or second Adam (1 Cor 15:22-45). Essentially, Adam, a perfect man in an imperfect environment was not able to maintain atonement with God. Furthermore, Noah, fails at this task as well, as a perfect man and his children, in a newly recreated yet imperfect world could not maintain the atonement.⁷⁸ The implication then is that God himself must actively change imperfect mankind, in an imperfect environment in order to create lasting atonement. In other words, God must make mankind perfect and keep him perfect since mankind is apparently unable to do this in his own strength.

Theological Pretext for Canaanite Invasion

While considering the audience of the author of the Pentateuch, the Israelite people would probably have been curious as to why God had chosen them to be the inheritors of Canaan's land. The reader will notice that Canaan is cursed due to the indecent behavior of his father Ham because he does not show natural filial affection for Noah. This act of indecency whatever it may have been seems to disqualify not only Ham but his son as well as being the progenitors of the Seed. In addition, Canaan is apparently cursed to become a servant of Shem, which probably gave the Israelites the pretext needed to pursue war against the Canaanites and possess their land.⁷⁹ This Israelite "manifest destiny" is developed further in the Abrahamic narrative through repeated promises made by God to give Abraham's descendants the land of

⁷⁸ Among many definitions, Kenneth D. Mulzac defines "atonement" as reconciliation. Kenneth D. Mulzac, "Atonement," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* 127-128.

⁷⁹ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 52.

Canaan (Gen 12). Some scholars also see Ham's sin in Gen 9:20-28 as foreshadowing the sinful deeds his descendants, through Canaan, would practice.⁸⁰ These practices include sodomy and other sexual crimes seen in the Pentateuch narrative (Gen 19). God would then remove the Canaanites from their land and give it to Israel due to these practices. Thus were provided the two pretexts for the Israelite's holy war against them (1) the acquiring of land and (2) to execute judgment on God's enemies which was only partially obeyed according to the book of Judges. Essentially the conquest of Canaan is more than a divine land grant and one may do well to see blessings from God as coupled with high and holy responsibilities.

Spiritual Nakedness

The final theological conclusion of this study emphasizes the nakedness of the two narratives. Both narratives begin with a kind of nakedness that denotes innocence of some sort while the last three references to nakedness are given in a negative connotation. The common elements include (1) Innocent nakedness; (2) Eyes are opened or awakened to one's nakedness leading to shame and judgment (3) nakedness is publicized by gossip or confession (4) nakedness is covered. The innocence of both narratives seems to suggest that there is a type of nakedness or transparency and vulnerability before God that is not condemned which is reminiscent of the Psalmist's words "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;" (Ps 139:23). Another example would be Christ's declaration of himself, "for the ruler of this world cometh, and he has nothing in Me." (John 14:30).

Both narratives also exhibit an awakening or eyes being opened to the sense of shame and guilt, produced by sin. The passages also show the main protagonists either confessing their shame or in the case of Noah, knowing what happened to him while he was asleep. Finally, both

⁸⁰ Wolf, *Pentateuch: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 127.

stories depict a resolution of shame in that Noah's and Adam's nakedness were covered only after unsuccessfully trying to cover themselves.⁸¹ These narratives show the reader that sin causes guilt and shame from a type of spiritual nakedness but if man allows God to cloth him with himself, he no longer needs to be ashamed.

This has great theological implications in regards to the plan of salvation. It is possible to conclude that the author of Genesis gave two scenarios using true stories that showed that God was willing to save any type of sinner, no matter whether they became spiritually naked willfully in the case of Adam or what appears to be inducement in the case of Noah. God is willing to clothe the sinner with his own righteousness to restore a covenant relationship, examples of which can be found in Matt 22:1-14; Luke 15:11-32; Rev 3.

Summary of Possible Theological Implications

A summary of all of the possible theological implications discussed are as follows: (1) a continuing of the Great Controversy theme under new circumstances; (2) atonement through the promised seed is shown to be the only effective means of eradicating sin as opposed to annihilation; (3) an ensuring that Noah is not mistaken for the Seed or the final Adam, therefore the author of the Pentateuch depicts Noah as failing under similar circumstances as the first Adam; (4) a historical and theological pretext for the Israelites execution of what appears to be genocidal warfare against the Canaanites for their inherited depravity; (6) prophetic type depicting the work of the anti-typical Seed, Jesus Christ, who acknowledges the spiritual depravity or nakedness in mankind and covers it with his own character of righteousness so that man no longer needs to fear God, be ashamed, or condemned in judgment.

⁸¹ Adam's attempt to cover himself by fig leaves and Noah's by becoming naked in his tent as opposed to stripping in an uncovered area.

CONCLUSION

Gen 9:20-28 though rich in its own thematic elements, structure, and poetry is probably best understood when read in the light of Gen 1-3. This study has attempted to show that there are credible thematic, structural, textual, and literary links between the passages as well as links inherent within the historical context of the passages' authorship. Thus reading these two passages together possibly provides the best insights and way markers for the exegete in his/her attempt to derive the meaning of Gen 9:20-28 as intended by the author and its possible theological implications for today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bassett, Frederick W. "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan, a Case of Incest?" *Vetus Testamentum* 21, (1971): 232-237.
- Bergsma, John Sietze, and Scott Walker Hahn. "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27)." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, (2005): 25-40.
- Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. 13 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A Briggs, ed. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008.
- Davidson, Richard M. "Cosmic Conflict." Pages 7-29 in *Christ, Salvation and the Eschaton*. Edited by Daniel Henz, Jiří Moskala and Peter M. van Bemmelen. Berrien Springs, Mich: Andrews University Press, 2010.
- Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker, 1999.
- Gero, Stephen. "The Legend of the Fourth Son of Noah." *The Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 321-330.
- Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
- Haynes, Stephen R. *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Hoerth, Alfred J. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 1998.
- Johnson, Sylvester A. *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Mulzac, Kenneth D. "Atonement." Pages 127-128 of *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Odhiambo, Nicholas Oyugi. "Ham's Sin and Noah's Curse: A Critique of Current Views." PhD Diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2007.
- Peterson, Thomas Virgil. *Ham and Japheth, the Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1978.
- Sailhamer, John H. *Genesis – Leviticus*. Vol. 1 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2008.

VanGemenen, Willem A., ed. *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1997.

Wolf, Herbert. *Pentateuch: An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1991.