

# Genesis 9 Commentary

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 cChart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission

Summary Chart of The Book of Genesis								
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Foundation Events</b> (Four Events) (Events Predominant)				<b>Foundation People</b> (Four People) (People Predominant)			
<b>Divisions</b>	Creation (Ge 1-2)	Fall (Ge 3-5)	Flood (Ge 6-9)	Nations (Ge 10-12)	Abraham's Faith (Ge 12-24)	Isaac's Family (Ge 25-26)	Jacob's Conflicts (Ge 27-36)	Joseph's Calamity (Ge 37-50)
<b>Topics</b>	Beginning of the Human Race (Race As A Whole)				Beginning of the Hebrew Race (Family of Abraham)			
	Faithfulness of Mankind (Noah)				Faithfulness of One Man's Family (Abraham)			

	Historical	Biographical
<b>Place</b>	Eastward From Eden to Ur	Westward From Canaan to Egypt
<b>Time</b>	~2000+ Years (20% of Genesis) (~4004-2090BC)	About 300 Years 193 Yr in Canaan, 93 Yr in Egypt (80% of Genesis) (2090-1804BC)
	Primeval History of Humanity	Patriarchal History of Israel
<b>Author</b>	Moses	

## BEGINNINGS

- Ge 1:1-25 - The Universe (Everything)
- Ge 1:26-2:25 - The Human Race
- Ge 3:1-7 - Sin Enters the World
- Ge 3:8-24- God Promises Redemption from Bondage to Sin
- Ge 4:1-15 - Family Life
- Ge 4:16ff - Civilization
- Ge 10:1-11:32 - The Nations of the World
- Ge 12:1ff - The Story of Israel and the Jews

**Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.**

- blessed - Ge 9:7 1:22,28 2:3 8:17 24:60 Ps 112:1 128:3,4 Isa 51:2
- Be - Ge 9:7,19 1:28 8:17 10:32
- Reciprocal: Genesis 5:4 - and he Genesis 10:1 - and unto Genesis 28:3 - and make Exodus 1:7 - fruitful Job 20:4 - man Psalms 107:38 - He blesseth Psalms 115:16 - but the earth Isaiah 45:18 - he created Luke 3:36 - Noe Hebrews 1:1 -
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## A FAMILY BLESSING THEN THREE COMMANDS

**And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.** Now it is time for Renewal – and we start with the renewal of Mankind's commission – echoing the command given to Adam and Eve at the start of human history

**Bob Utley** - "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth**" Notice the three Qal IMPERATIVES: "be fruitful", "multiply", "fill the earth". This is a second beginning for the animals (cf. Ge 1:22) and for mankind (cf. Ge 1:28), but notice (1) that sin has caused a change in the command; "subdue and have dominion" may be left out, (2) the UBS Text Project, p. 15, gives "and multiply in it" a "B" rating (some doubt). The NEB makes an emendation to "and reign over it," which would then parallel Gen. 1:28).

**John Piper:** God is prepared to start over with a new "Adam." But this time the beginning is not in paradise. So the new "Adam" must reckon with three real threats against him and his mission to fill the earth: a threat from animals, a threat from man, and threat from God. So God makes three special provisions to protect the life of man in the new world where sin and corruption will again soon abound. God Gives New Rights over Animals. God Makes Provision to Restrain Murder. God Makes a Covenant with Noah

**Warren Wiersbe** - God had told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth" (Ge 1:28), and He repeated that mandate twice to Noah and his family (Ge 9:1, 7). All of Noah's descendants were important to the plan of God, but especially the line of Shem. From that line Abraham would be born, the man God chose to found the Jewish nation. From that nation would come the Redeemer who would fulfill Ge 3:15 and crush the serpent's head. In Scripture, children are described as a blessing, not a curse, and to have many children and grandchildren was evidence of the favor of God (Ge 24:60; Ps. 127:3–5; Ps 128:3–4). God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as the stars of the sky and the sand of the sea (Ge 15:5; Ge 22:17), and the patriarchs invoked the blessing of fruitfulness on their heirs (Ge 28:3; Ge 35:11; Ge 48:4). The Lord covenanted with Israel to give them many children if the nation would obey His laws (Lev. 26:9; Dt 7:13). Many people today don't seem to have that attitude toward children.

Starting with the Revolutionary War, in nearly 200 years of American history, 1,200,000 military personnel have been killed in nine major wars. But in one year in the United States, 1,600,000 babies are legally aborted.<sup>1</sup> In biblical times, Jewish couples wouldn't have considered aborting a child, no matter how difficult their circumstances or meager their resources. Life was God's gift and children were a heritage from the Lord, treasures to be protected and invested for His glory. (BORROW [Precious in His Sight: Childhood and Children in the Bible](#), by Roy B. Zuck, Baker, 1996, 71. **This book ought to be read by every parent, pastor, children's worker, and teacher of children**).

**ILLUSTRATION** - Computer infected with malware; needs to be cleansed; you need a complete reboot so you can function productively

**Genesis 9:2 "The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.**

- Ge 1:28 2:19 35:5 Lev 26:6,22 Job 5:22,23 Ps 8:4-8 104:20-23 Eze 34:25 Ho 2:18 Jas 3:7
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ANIMALS NOW FEAR MAN

**The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.** - The animals will fear humans from this time forward. Dominion now based more on fear than on harmonious existence, although in the next age, the Millennial Kingdom, there will be another dramatic renewal of the world order and the lion will peacefully lie down with the lamb, but not so in the present evil age (cf age in Gal 1:4, cf Mt 12:32, Eph 1:21).

**Bob Utley** - "**fear. . .terror**" Mankind has a new relationship with the animals, not peace and friendship as in Eden and the eschaton (Isaiah 11), but fear and terror.

**Warren Wiersbe** - Since most animals reproduce rapidly and their young mature quickly, the beasts could easily overrun the human population; so God put the fear of humans into the animals. Cain was a farmer, Abel was a shepherd, but Noah and his sons were now hunters....I once saw a sporting goods store that was named "Rod and Nimrod," suggesting that they sold equipment for both fishermen and hunters

**Into your hand they are given.** - Into your hand means into your power. Man has been given authority over all the animals (yes, even snakes, which I fear!)

**Jack Arnold** - That God gives man rule over the beasts is a gracious act, for if animals were left to multiply without restraint, they could hurt man and eventually exterminate him. NOTE. This provision was made to teach man that he is no longer lord of creation as he was originally created to be, having the animal world in loving, obedient subjection to him.

**Whitcomb and Morris** make an interesting point regarding the difference of Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 9:2 and Genesis 9:5 - Let it be noted that "the fear of you and the dread of you" cannot be understood as the equivalent of "dominion" in Genesis 1:28, because here we are specifically told that beasts will be capable of shedding "the blood of your lives." (Ge 9:5) An illustration of how the shedding of human blood would be required "at the hand of every beast" is found in Exodus 21:28+: "And if an ox gore a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be surely stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten." Such a possibility, of course, cannot be imagined in the case of the first Adam before the Fall or the Last Adam during His earthly ministry! No animal could have harmed them, because God put all things under their feet. ([The Genesis Flood - Whitcomb and Morris](#) BORROW)

**Hand** (03027) **yad** is feminine noun meaning hand and figuratively meaning strength. **The hand symbolized "power" or "strength"** (Deut. 8:17). Deut. 32:36 described Israel's loss of power by saying "their hands were gone." Moses' hand was poignantly used to portray power in the plagues against Egypt (Exodus 10:12-25).

**Genesis 9:3 "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.**

- **Every** - Lev 11:1-47 22:8 De 12:15 14:3-21 Ac 10:12-15 1Ti 4:3-5

- even - Ge 1:29,30 Ps 104:14,15 Ro 14:3,14,17,20 1Co 10:23,25,26,31 Col 2:16,21,22 1Ti 4:3,4
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## WILD GAME NOW "FAIR GAME"

**Fair game** is an idiom which means someone or something that can be chased, attacked, or criticized.

**Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant-** In Ge 1:30 God had give every "green plant for food" and now adds steak to the menu! God will qualify **every moving thing that is alive** when He gives the food laws to Israel in Leviticus 11:2+ stating "These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth." The OT restrictions were reversed In Acts 10:15+ where Peter hears ""What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." The cleansing work of Christ on the cross applied not only to the forgiveness of sins, but even to the distinction between clean and unclean animals (

**Bob Utley** - "**Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you**" Mankind was originally a vegetarian (at least in the garden of Eden) but since the fall and since no crops could be produced for a while, meat was made available. Also notice that there was no distinction between clean and unclean animals as far as consumption was concerned (very different from Leviticus 11), but there was a distinction in acceptable sacrificial animals (i.e., clean and unclean, cf. Gen. 7:2ff).

**Norman Geisler** - [When Critics Ask](#) - Genesis 9:3—**Did God ordain the eating of meat or only plants?**

**PROBLEM:** When God created Adam, He commanded him to eat only "every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth ... to you it shall be for food" (Gen. 1:29). But meat was not given by God to eat. However, when Noah came out of the Ark, he was told, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs" (Gen. 9:3). But this seems to contradict God's earlier command not to eat meat.

**SOLUTION:** This is a good example of progressive revelation where earlier commands are superseded by later ones. In matters that do not involve the change of any intrinsic moral standard (based on the nature of God), God is free to change the commands to His creatures to serve His overall purposes in the progress of redemption. For example, parents at one time will allow small children to eat with their fingers, only to instruct them a little later to eat their potatoes with a spoon. Then, a few years later, the same parent reprimands her older child, "Don't eat your potatoes with your spoon; use your fork!" There is no contradiction here at all. It is a simple matter of progressive revelation adapted to the circumstances and all geared to the ultimate goal. God works in a similar way.

### Genesis 9:4 "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

- **the life** - Lev 3:17 7:26 Lev 17:10-14 19:26 De 12:16,23 14:21 15:23 1Sa 14:34 Ac 15:20,25,29 1Ti 4:4
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Leviticus 17:10-14+ 'And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. 11 'For **the life of the flesh is in the blood**, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' 12 "Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'No person among you may eat blood, nor may any alien who sojourns among you eat blood.' 13 "So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. 14 "For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.'

Acts 15:20+ (NO EATING BLOOD ONE OF 4 "JEWISH" COMMANDS TO NEW GENTILE BELIEVERS) but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is **strangled and from blood**....29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and **from blood** and from things **strangled** (IMPLICATION IS NOT PROPERLY DRAINED OF BLOOD) and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

## EATING BLOOD NOT PERMITTED

**Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood** - In Leviticus 17:11+ we read "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement." God says only blood sacrifices could deal with sin, because they show the pouring out of life that God requires as punishment for sin.

**Hughes:** Humans are not to devour animals the way animals devour one another, while the blood is pulsing in the flesh. The reason for this is respect for life and beyond that the respect for the giver of life. (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing](#))

**Gotquestions** - One reason God prohibited the consumption of animal blood in the Old Testament was to teach respect for the sacredness of life. Blood is viewed as a symbol of life throughout the Bible (see Leviticus 17:11+).

**Bob Utley** - "**you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood**" This prohibition on not consuming blood is unique to Israel. This is the theological foundation for the sacrificial system (cf. Lev. 17:10-16; Deut. 12:16,23; Acts 15:29) and the significance of the death of Christ (Isaiah 53; John 1:29; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). Sin costs a life. Later in Israel's history God would mercifully substitute an animal life (i.e., Leviticus 1-7; 16).

**NET NOTE** - Heb "its life, its blood." The second word is in apposition to the first, explaining what is meant by "its life." Since the blood is equated with life, meat that had the blood in it was not to be eaten. **You must not eat meat with its life ... in it** Because of the carnage produced by the flood, people might conclude that life is cheap and therefore treat it lightly. But God will not permit them to kill or even to eat anything with the lifeblood still in it, serving as a reminder of the sanctity of life.

**Warren Wiersbe** has an interesting quote on the translation of Genesis 9:4 - "*But you must not eat flesh from a still-living animal*" is the way Stephen Mitchell translates Genesis 9:4 in [Genesis: A New Translation of the Classic Biblical Stories \(Borrow\)](#) (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 17. Since the blood is the life, then flesh with blood still in it is considered living flesh. (ED: I

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### **Norman Geisler - [When Cultists Ask](#) - Genesis 9:4—Does this verse prohibit blood transfusions?**

**MISINTERPRETATION:** The Jehovah's Witnesses believe this verse forbids blood transfusions. They argue that a blood transfusion is the same as eating blood because it is so similar to intravenous feeding (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1989, 73).

**CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** While it is true that Genesis 9:4 prohibits the "eating" of blood, a transfusion does not constitute "eating" blood. Though a doctor might give food to a patient intravenously and call this "feeding," it is simply not the case that giving blood intravenously is "feeding." The blood is not received into the body as "food." Eating is the literal taking in of food in the normal manner through the mouth and into the digestive system. Intravenous injections are referred to as "feeding" because the ultimate result is that, through intravenous injection, the body receives the nutrients that it would normally receive by eating. In view of this, Genesis 9:4 and other passages dealing with this prohibition against eating blood cannot be used to support a prohibition of blood transfusions. A transfusion simply replenishes essential, life-sustaining fluid in the body. See also comments on Leviticus 7:26–27; 17:11–12.

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### **[SPECIAL TOPIC: BLOOD](#)**

In the OT blood (BDB 196) denotes the life (cf. Lev. 17:11,14; Gen. 9:4; Deut. 12:23). This life, both animal and human, is a gift from God and belongs to God (i.e., Israelites could not eat or drink blood, cf. Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-16). Murder was characterized as "shedding innocent blood" or "blood guiltiness."

The AB, vol. 1, p. 761, notes that "blood" and "life" are poetical parallels in Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Akkadian (i.e., Gen. 37:21-22; Deut. 12:23).

In the Mosaic sacrificial system sin required a life (cf. Ezek. 18:4,20). God graciously allowed the substitute (cf. Lev. 1:4; 3:2,8,13; 4:4,15,24,29) of an innocent animal's life to atone for the sin of a human. Ultimately the blood that will atone for human rebellion is Jesus, the Messiah's blood/death (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; 14:24; John 1:29; Rom. 3:25; 15:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:2,19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 5:9). An innocent life was given on behalf of the guilty (i.e., Hebrew corporality, cf. Genesis 3; Joshua 7; Rom. 5:12-21; 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

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### **QUESTION - [Why did God prohibit eating meat with blood in it \(Genesis 9:4\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In Genesis 9 Noah receives a [covenant](#) from the Lord. Part of the covenant removed the prior restrictions against eating

meat, allowing Noah and his family to kill animals for food. However, the allowance came with this proviso: “But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it” (Ge 9:4).

One reason God prohibited the consumption of animal blood in the Old Testament was to teach respect for the sacredness of life. Blood is viewed as a symbol of life throughout the Bible (see Leviticus 17:11). The Bible’s first mention of the word *blood* is found in Genesis 4:10 where God asks the murderer Cain, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.” The shedding of blood represents the loss of life. In the New Testament, the “blood of Christ” is a common figure of speech for the “death of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:19).

Under the Law of Moses, certain foods were considered unclean for consumption, including any meat with the blood still in it (Deuteronomy 12:16). The early church urged Gentile believers to abstain from eating bloody meat in order to not offend their Jewish brothers and to distance themselves from the practices of the pagans (Acts 15:20).

Another reason for God’s command not to eat bloody meat undoubtedly concerned the sacrifices. Blood was the only atonement for sin (2 Chronicles 29:24; Hebrews 9:22); therefore, blood was seen as a sacred thing. God wanted to ensure that the blood of the sacrifices was always considered precious. To preserve the people’s appreciation of the sacrifices, God could not allow blood to become a common food.

The humane treatment of animals may have been another reason why God told Noah not to eat meat with the blood still in it. God did not want mankind to act like the carnivorous animals, who caught their prey and began eating it immediately. Instead, they were to drain the blood from the carcass and thus ensure the animal was dead before it was consumed.

Further, some have suggested God may have given this command for health reasons. Blood present in meat means it is not fully cooked, and eating uncooked meat can lead to disease or sickness. We recognize this danger today, as attested by the USDA-mandated warnings found in modern-day menus: “Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness.” In ancient cultures, the risk could have been even higher, given the lower standards for food safety.

In Christ, these food laws are obsolete, and the New Testament gives no blanket instruction for the church concerning food (Romans 14:14; 1 Timothy 4:3). Romans 14:1–4 teaches, “Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” Scripture allows the Christian to have individual freedom regarding the consumption of meat and how it’s cooked.

In summary, God forbade eating bloody meat in the Noahic Covenant and in the Law of Moses. Both spiritual and physical reasons were likely behind this prohibition. In Christ, we have freedom of choice in this matter. However, as with all Christian freedom, we are to use self-restraint to avoid hurting another believer (Romans 14:13–22). Ultimately, eating anything should be done to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### **QUESTION - [What is the significance that life is in the blood \(Leviticus 17:14\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Thousands of years before scientists understood the complex and extraordinary life-sustaining properties of blood, the Bible informed that “the life of every creature is in its blood” (Leviticus 17:14, NLT). In ancient Israel, blood was not only a metaphor or symbol for life; it was equivalent to life itself. In most occurrences where blood was shed in Scripture, it meant that life had ended. To remove the blood is to terminate life.

In Leviticus chapter 17, God gives instructions regarding sacrifices and offerings, particularly on the proper slaughtering of animals. The people of Israel were to bring each animal to the tabernacle entrance for the priest to offer. The [blood of the animal](#) was never to be treated as common food; it belonged to God, who is the giver of life (Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; Psalm 139:13). Thus, the blood of animals had to be drained and offered to God on the altar.

Blood was God’s ordained means of effecting atonement: “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (Leviticus 17:11). Atonement for sin was achieved by sacrificing an animal’s life in substitution for one’s own life. The shedding of blood was the most critical element—it was the blood of the guiltless substitute offered on the altar that served as payment for the people’s sins (Leviticus 16:15).

Through God’s ordained system of sacrifice in the Old Testament, the Lord laid the groundwork for a message that would not be fully grasped until later: “The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship” (Hebrews 10:1NLT).

The full meaning of “the life is in the blood” would only be revealed in Jesus Christ: “That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, ‘You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer’” (Hebrews 10:5NLT). It has always been God’s will for humans to be made right with God by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time (Hebrews 10:10). In the Old Testament, the priests offered animals’ blood over and over again, but this repeated shedding of blood never permanently removed the curse of sin (Hebrews 10:11).

When Jesus came and offered up His life—pouring out His blood on the cross—the perfect sacrifice had finally been made: “Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins” (Hebrews 9:14, NLT).

All those from times past, present, and future who put their faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, are made right with God: “For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus” (Romans 3:25–26NLT). The apostle John saw a future multitude of believers in heaven who “have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.” They have been purified from sin and “clothed in white” (Revelation 7:13–14).

Because of the Old Testament system, Christ’s followers could comprehend what He was doing when He shed His blood on the cross. And today we can better see what His sacrifice means. Just as physical life is in the blood of animals, eternal life is in the blood of Jesus Christ. Physically, our existence depends on blood to sustain life, and, spiritually, our lives depend on the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10; 1 John 1:7; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:22). Through those ancient sacrifices repeatedly offered in the Old Testament, we are led to appreciate that death—the shedding of blood—has always been the cost of securing eternal life for sinful humans.

Believers are cleansed, forgiven, and made right with God by the blood of the Lamb, God’s guiltless substitute. The life that Christ emptied of its blood now pumps everlasting life into our veins. Oh, how astounding it is that God would shed His own blood to pay the penalty for our sins! [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Genesis 9:5 "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man."**

NET Genesis 9:5 For your lifeblood I will surely exact punishment, from every living creature I will exact punishment. From each person I will exact punishment for the life of the individual since the man was his relative.

CSB Genesis 9:5 I will require the life of every animal and every man for your life and your blood. I will require the life of each man's brother for a man's life.

ESV Genesis 9:5 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

NIV Genesis 9:5 And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.

NLT Genesis 9:5 "And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die.

NRS Genesis 9:5 For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.

- every - Ex 21:12,28,29
- and at - Ge 4:9,10 Lev 19:16 Nu 35:31-33 De 21:1-9 Ps 9:12 Mt 23:35
- brother - Ac 17:26
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

**DIVINE PUNISHMENT FOR  
TAKING A MAN'S LIFE**

This passage is the grounds for the institution of capital punishment. It is instituted for protection of mankind. As Paul Apple says "There Should be no debate about Capital Punishment as justly administered by governmental officials – God's Word has spoken; case closed; no room for discussion or debate." To contest capital punishment indicates a low regard for the Word of God and the God of the Word. He said it that should settle it and mankind should accept it. To not accept it is to put yourself in God's place and/or to think you know better than God.

**R Kent Hughes** agrees writing that "to argue against the death penalty on humane grounds is to argue against God's Word. It exists precisely because of God's humane concerns. To ignore it is to despise life. This was, and is, God's word to a violent world. This was meant and is meant to protect human life. To ignore God's teaching is to descend ever more into a society of violence. (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 146](#))

**Paul Apple** reminds us "how the world before the Flood was characterized by violence – probably a lot of human bloodshed; it is a sad commentary on our present society to see how many murders take place each year; the city of Baltimore has become known throughout the world as one that is especially prone to such violence; much of it is associated in one form or another with drug trafficking ... but that does not lessen the sting – it only intensifies the fact that the harsh reality of human depravity is always present with us."

*God had put the fear of humans into the animals,  
but now He had to put the fear of God into the humans lest they destroy one another!*  
-- [Warren Wiersbe](#)

**Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man** - To attack a human being is to attack God which explains the severity of the punishment. This could not be much clearer with 3 "I will" statements by God! Since life is sacred, as represented by the blood in the body, God will require life of an animal or man that takes a man's life (Ex. 21:12, 38). Notice that God takes the taking of human life very seriously, here even to the extent that He holds even animals, as well as men, accountable to Him for the taking of human life!

[Wiersbe](#) - All life is the gift of God, and to take away life means to take the place of God. The Lord gives life and He alone has the right to authorize taking it away (Job 1:21).

**William Wenstrom** - "I will require" is the verb *darash*, which is a judicial term used with reference to both men and animals and expresses the fact God seeks "restitution" for murder by the execution of the murderer or the animal who has taken a human life. ([Genesis Verse by Verse](#))

**NET NOTE** - The verb *דָּרַשׁ* (*darash*) means "to require, to seek, to ask for, to exact." Here it means that God will exact punishment for the taking of a life.

[Jack Arnold](#) -There is a connection between Ge 9:5 and Gd 9:3. Man who is allowed to kill beasts for food might misuse this principle, become indifferent to the shedding of blood, and regard lightly even the life of another man. God erects a warning ahead of time in view of the wide latitude of possibilities in which sinful man could commit abuses. This command is the basis for capital punishment. Government acts as an instrument of God (Rom. 13:1-6) and has the right to take another person's life. It is God who takes human life, when it is done through proper governmental channels, and therefore it is not murder. This command of "a life for a life" deals with premeditated murder and would not include such things as killing in defense of property, self or others, or military killing.

**NET NOTE** on **from every man's brother I will require the life of man**. "from the hand of a man, his brother." The point is that God will require the blood of someone who kills, since the person killed is a relative ("brother") of the killer. The language reflects Noah's situation (after the flood everyone would be part of Noah's extended family), but also supports the concept of the brotherhood of humankind. According to the Genesis account the entire human race descended from Noah.

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**Parunak: Capital offenses (ED: IN THE OLD TESTAMENT) include:**

- murder (Ge 9:5)
- idolatry (Deut 13:10; 17:2-5))
- disrespect for authority (e.g., parents) (Deut 21:18-21; cf. 2 Kings 21:10))
- sexual impurity (Num 5:21; Deut 22:21-24)

**Modes of punishment include:**

- stoning by the congregation (for idolatry, disrespect, impurity—not murder!)
- death at the hand of the avenger of blood (Num 35; Deut 19) (for murder) (note the similarity of Gen 9:6 with Matt 26:52; Rev



13:10. Defines the result but not the mechanism)

death at the hand of the Lord (Num 5:21; cf. the expression "cut off from among his people" throughout the law)

Caveat: required evidence: two or three witnesses: Deut 17:6; Deut 19:5.9

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#### **QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about the death penalty / capital punishment?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The Old Testament law commanded the death penalty for various acts: murder (Exodus 21:12), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), bestiality (Exodus 22:19), adultery (Leviticus 20:10), homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13), being a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:5), prostitution and rape (Deuteronomy 22:24), and several other crimes. However, God often showed mercy when the death penalty was due. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not demand his life be taken (2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17; 2 Samuel 12:13). Ultimately, every sin we commit should result in the death penalty because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Thankfully, God demonstrates His love for us in not condemning us (Romans 5:8).

When the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to Jesus and asked Him if she should be stoned, Jesus replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). This should not be used to indicate that Jesus rejected capital punishment in all instances. Jesus was simply exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into breaking the Old Testament law; they did not truly care about the woman being stoned (where was the man who was caught in adultery?) God is the One who instituted capital punishment: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). Jesus would support capital punishment in some instances. Jesus also demonstrated grace when capital punishment was due (John 8:1-11). The apostle Paul definitely recognized the power of the government to institute capital punishment where appropriate (Romans 13:1-7).

How should a Christian view the death penalty? First, we must remember that God has instituted capital punishment in His Word; therefore, it would be presumptuous of us to think that we could institute a higher standard. God has the highest standard of any being; He is perfect. This standard applies not only to us but to Himself. Therefore, He loves to an infinite degree, and He has mercy to an infinite degree. We also see that He has wrath to an infinite degree, and it is all maintained in a perfect balance.

Second, we must recognize that God has given government the authority to determine when capital punishment is due (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-7). It is unbiblical to claim that God opposes the death penalty in all instances. Christians should never rejoice when the death penalty is employed, but at the same time, Christians should not fight against the government's right to execute the perpetrators of the most evil of crimes. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### **Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."**

NET Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds human blood, by other humans must his blood be shed; for in God's image God has made humankind."

CSB Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood will be shed by man, for God made man in His image.

ESV Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

NIV Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

NLT Genesis 9:6 If anyone takes a human life, that person's life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image.

NRS Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.

NJB Genesis 9:6 He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God was man created.

NAB Genesis 9:6 If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; For in the image of God has man been made.

YLT Genesis 9:6 whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man is his blood shed: for in the image of God hath He made man.

- by - Ex 21:12-14 22:2,3 Lev 17:4 24:17 Nu 35:25 1Ki 2:5,6,28-34 Mt 26:52 Ro 13:4 Rev 13:10
- in - Ge 1:26,27 5:1 Ps 51:4 Jas 3:9
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 35:9-12 (commentary) (**AVENGER OF BLOOD**) - [Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 11 then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, that the manslayer who has killed any person unintentionally may flee there. 12 ‘The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the **avenger**, so that the manslayer will not die until he stands before the congregation for trial.

**COMMENT** - In ancient Israel, it was not left entirely up to the government to avenge a murder. Each extended family had a recognized **blood avenger** who would ensure that one who murdered a family member would likewise be killed. This practice was based upon a correct understanding of Genesis 9:6. This, if properly understood and applied, could be an effective deterrent to murder, yet, the system had a fatal weakness. What if a death was accidental, yet difficult to prove that it was accidental?

### BLOOD FOR BLOOD

**Whoever sheds man's blood** - God is speaking primarily of pre-meditated taking of a life. Note the pronoun **whoever**. There is no exception clause in this statement. The point is that governments may choose to make an exception and not carry out capital punishment. Thus in a sense the laws disobey God's word, but it is still not Biblical and it is clearly against God's will. The society that goes against God's will surely suffer consequences for their disobedience to His Biblical mandate (cf Ge 11:7-8)!

**By man his blood shall be shed** - A life for a life. The hands of good government should never be so tied that they cannot execute good judgment and the wrath of God upon those who do evil. Note God is not saying we should take this judgment into our own hands!

**R Kent Hughes** - Since man is created in the image of God and as such is of immense value, and since the blood (life) of man is God's alone, to take human life is to usurp God's sovereignty over life and death—and thus merits death itself. Precisely because life is so precious, the one who willfully takes another's life must suffer death at the hands of man. Exacting retribution is not a personal matter but a societal obligation. (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 146](#))

[Wiersbe](#) - But how did God arrange to punish murderers and see that justice is done and the law upheld? He established human government on the earth and in so doing shared with mankind the awesome power of taking human life. That's the import of God's mandate in Genesis 9:6. Human government and capital punishment go together, as Paul explains in Romans 13:1–7. Government authorities carry the sword and have the right to use it

**S Lewis Johnson** - when a man raises his hand with a weapon in his hand and slays another man, it's as if he has assaulted the government of God and therefore he lies beyond the protection of the divine will. To murder is to profane the holy creation of God. And while we human beings are -- we have a marred image of God, it is nevertheless the image of God and to slay a man is to slay one who possesses the image of God and to tamper with the laws of God as to seek to be wiser than God himself. We are living in days in which there is an attitude of sentimentality. In fact, the concern often is not so much with the victim or the terribleness of the crime but with the murderer and thus is revealed the sentimentality of humanistic thinking, which has gripped the United States. ([The Universal Covenant](#))

**Bob Utley** - "**By man his blood shall be shed**" This is the first statement of "eye for eye" justice. It shows God's ordaining government the right of capital punishment. In the OT, this was accomplished by the "go'el" (kinsman redeemer). For possible NT references see Acts 25:11 and Rom. 13:4. Ge 9:5 is prose while Gen. 9:6 is printed in poetic parallel lines. There is a possible Hebrew word play which may even affect etymology between blood (dam), man (adam) and In Assyrian the term man (adamu) is related to sanctuary (adman). Therefore, there may be a link between blood-worship-mankind (cf. [Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament](#)).

**William Wenstrom** - Genesis 9:5-6 records the institution of human government where God delegated authority to mankind as His agents in exacting retribution by capital punishment upon those who take a human life indicating as well that this is not a personal matter but a social obligation. Before the Flood, there was no formal arrangement of human government and thus no formal punishment of crime or of crime prevention, even for the capital crime of murder, as evident in the individual histories of Cain and Lamech. The absence of human government and the total depravity of mankind led to a universal state of violence and anarchy,

which resulted in the judgment of the Flood. God established capital punishment and thereby human government in order to prevent the conditions of the antediluvian period from developing again. ([Genesis Verse by Verse](#))

**Ligon Duncan** adds that "capital punishment, even in a post fall world, Moses says, is designed to uphold the sanctity of life and the preciousness of man in the image of God, even though that image is defaced by our fall and decent."

*Capital punishment reflects this high view of life, not a low view of it.*

-- Ligon Duncan

**For** - This is an important term of explanation. What is God explaining? He is in essence giving the justification for capital punishment.

**In the image of God He made man** - This shows the priority of humanity! (cf. Ge 1:26,27; 5:1,3). Human life is very precious to God, and God wants man to understand that men are not to resort to violence to attain their ends. God does not take lightly the distorting and despoiling of His image in man.

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#### Related Resources:

- [Jesus Christ-Our Blood Avenger](#)
- [Kinsman-Redeemer - The Goel](#)
- [BLOOD AVENGER AND KINSMAN REDEEMER](#) - Bob Utley

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#### QUESTION - [Why did God mandate capital punishment for murder \(Genesis 9:6\)?](#)

**ANSWER** - After Noah, his family, and the animals exited the ark, God gave a new command: put to death anyone who murders another person. Genesis 9:6 says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." The severest of penalties is to follow murder, and God Himself gives the reason for it.

God specified that murder was to be punished by death because of the nature of man. Man is created in God's own image ([Genesis 1:27](#)). As murder destroys an image-bearer, it is a direct affront to God Himself. Humans are unique among God's creations—none of the animals are created in God's likeness—and murder is a unique crime.

Another, secondary reason for the mandate is quite practical. The immediate context includes another command given to Noah and his three sons: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Murder, of course, would work against humanity's being fruitful and multiplying. The death penalty for murder thus served as a deterrent to anyone who sought to thwart God's plan to replenish the earth. This was especially important when Noah's family first departed from the ark, at which point only eight people were alive.

Before the Flood, Cain had murdered Abel, and, although Cain was judged by God, he was not put to death (Genesis 4). Lamech, a descendant of Cain, also murdered someone (Genesis 4:23-24). By the time of God's judgment in [Genesis 6](#), it appears that crime was rampant, including the crime of murder. After the Flood, a new standard was raised as part of the recreated earth: God would no longer tolerate murder. Later, murder was condemned in the [Ten Commandments](#) (Exodus 20). The punishment for premeditated murder was death (Numbers 35:30-34).

In the New Testament, Jesus provided a wider application of the Old Testament command against murder. He taught, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:21-22). Murder is wrong, and the attitude behind the action is just as wrong. God sees the heart and its intentions (1 Samuel 16:7).

Murder is consistently listed as a sin throughout the New Testament (e.g., Revelation 22:15). Man still bears the image of God, and God's view of murder has remained the same. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resources:

- C S Lewis' masterful treatment of this subject in his 7 page paper entitled "[The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment.](#)"
- Borrow C S Lewis' book [God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics](#)
- Borrow [On Capital Punishment by William H Baker](#)
- Borrow [The early church on killing : a comprehensive sourcebook on war, abortion, and capital punishment](#)
- Borrow [Christian ethics by Norman Geisler \(capital punishment on page 193-215\)](#) - interesting article from a premier Christian

apologist who begins by discussing the opposing view to capital punishment which is "Rehabilitationism."

- Borrow [Christian ethics in plain language by Kerby J Anderson - page 142 "Crime and Capital Punishment"](#)
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**Henry Morris - Question: "Should capital punishment be abolished?"** (BORROW [The Bible has the answer : practical Biblical discussions of 100 frequent questions](#))

**Answer:** Some duties are thrust upon society, not because they are pleasant, but because they are necessary. Capital punishment is such a duty. It is difficult to imagine anyone enjoying capital punishment; yet that does not mean that it is any less necessary or right. The Christian's final authority in all matters of faith and practice is not public opinion, but the Bible, God's Holy Word.

Moses governed Israel with a set of God-given laws, the most familiar of which are the Ten Commandments. Certain laws, such as dietary, civil and ceremonial prescriptions were meant for the Hebrew nation during a particular part of its history. Among these civil laws, the death penalty was required for a number of offenses, including—in addition to murder—adultery (Leviticus 20:10), rape (Deuteronomy 22:25-26), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), cursing one's parents (Exodus 21:17), witchcraft (Exodus 22:18), teaching false doctrines (Deuteronomy 13:1-10), Sabbath violations (Exodus 35:2), and several others.

The Bible, however, shows that capital punishment for murder is of a different order than that prescribed under the civil law that governed Old Testament Israel. Following the worldwide Flood, God gave a covenant to Noah, graciously promising never again to send His judgment as a mammoth flood. This same covenant reconstituted human government and established safeguards against the prevailing human violence which precipitated God's judgment. Central to these safeguards was the death penalty: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6).

Prior to the Flood, men who lived by depraved consciences made themselves odious before the thrice-holy God. "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth'" (Genesis 6:11-13). No mere coincidence, then, prompted God to institute the death penalty as a restraint on violence.

Murder was differentiated in Scripture from different degrees of manslaughter, and to murder was relegated the most severe penalty. God's commandment required the death penalty because "in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). A murderer not only took the life of his victim, he also assaulted the divine majesty. Taking animal or vegetable life is in no way comparable to taking human life, for though all creation is His handiwork, only man was created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). Nothing else in God's creation was vitalized by God's own breath (Genesis 2:7). No matter how sinful man has deformed God's image, he still bears some likeness of his Creator (James 3:9; 1 Corinthians 11:7).

The death penalty was imposed as a measure of protection for organized society, but purely social considerations fail to give sufficient warrant for the severe punishment. Therefore, God showed the preciousness of human life to be its reflection of His image, and violence against human life constituted rebellion of inestimable magnitude.

The argument that capital punishment only adds a second murder to the first reveals an unfortunate lack of discernment between the violent acts of depraved man and the holy justice of the righteous God. Human government is commissioned to be "a minister of God to you for good.

But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil" (Romans 13:4).

The fact that ignorance and injustice exist in a judicial system is no excuse for abandoning God's commandment. The death penalty is drastic, but it need not be rash. Extreme care should be taken to ascertain true guilt or innocence. No one was subjected to more injustice than Jesus Christ in His trial and crucifixion. Indicted on false charges, tried by frenzied bigots, sentenced by a cowardly judge, executed in unspeakable cruelty—what a perfect opportunity to strike out against the whole practice of capital punishment! Yet, God the Son remained quiet. Miscarriages of justice do not warrant abandoning the pursuit of justice. And justice, by God's standards, includes punitive as well as rehabilitative measures.

God requires that the death penalty be applied to murderers (Genesis 9:5). Changes in cultural mood or in legislation do not alter God's abiding Word. Though the death penalty may at first seem to be "cruel and unusual punishment," the Christian should remember that the God of all mercy entrusted it to human government to prevent a far more destructive and corrupting violence

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#### **Related Resource:**

- [Why wasn't Cain's punishment death \(Genesis 4:14\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Genesis 9:7 "As for you, **be fruitful and multiply; Populate** the earth abundantly and **multiply** in it."

- Ge 9:1,19 1:28 8:17
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

### REPETITION OF CHARGE TO PROPAGATE

**As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate** ([sharats](#)) the earth abundantly and **multiply** in it - It is interesting that God has been giving warnings about taking another man's life and now gives 4 commands to produce life. This command is critical to obey as there are at the time of its writing only 8 human beings left on the entire planet! That's a profound thought! **Populate** in the Septuagint is [pleroo](#) (fill to the brim so to speak).

**THOUGHT**- Have you ever realized that you and I are offspring of Noah, through one of his three sons? Thus we are "brethren." Do we treat each other like "brethren?" Just wondering!

**Paul Apple** - Repetition is such an important technique in these early chapters of Genesis; here we have the closing refrain of the [chiastic structure](#).

**Hughes** comments that "Having given his advice about respecting life, the Lord closed this section of his speech to Noah with the same words with which he began: "And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it" (v. 7). Respect life and multiply!"

**Bob Utley** - "**Populate the earth abundantly**" This is parallel to Gen. 1:22,24,28; 8:17. Chapters 8-9 form a re-initiation of God's expressed will and actions in Genesis 1. This verse has four *Qal* IMPERATIVES, while Gen. 9:1 has three. Rabbinical Midrash says that because of the context of murder (Gen. 9:5-6) those who refuse to have children also violate this command.

**Populate** (swarm, increase greatly) ([08317](#)) [sharats](#) means to swarm, to teem, to breed abundantly. This verb serves as a description of a large number of creatures densely populating a location. Most passages use the animals themselves as the subject of the verb, but some verses speak of land or water swarming with creatures. **Shārats** emphasizes their immense numbers and prolific reproduction. In Exodus 1:1 we see a "swarm" of Israelites and in Ex 8:3 (Ps 105:30) a "swarm" of frogs! This verb is used repeatedly in the context of God's call to Israel to be a holy or set apart people, as exemplified in Lev 11:43-44+ "Do not render yourselves detestable through any of the swarming things that **swarm** ([sharats](#)); and you shall not make yourselves unclean with them so that you become unclean., 'For ([term of explanation](#)) I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy**, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth." (cf NT parallel - 1 Peter 1:13-16+).

**Sharats** - 14x in 14v - breed abundantly(1), increased greatly(1), populate the abundantly(1), swarm(3), swarmed(2), swarms(5), teem(1). Gen. 1:20; Gen. 1:21; Gen. 7:21; Gen. 8:17; Gen. 9:7; Exod. 1:7; Exod. 8:3; Lev. 11:29; Lev. 11:41; Lev. 11:42; Lev. 11:43; Lev. 11:46; Ps. 105:30; Ezek. 47:9

Genesis 9:8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### GOD SPEAKS TO NOAH & SONS

**Then** - Marks progression in the narrative. The previous section Ge 9:1-7 dealt with propagation of life and protection of that life in a post-diluvian world. God had just destroyed a world filled with violence and now desires for man to experience a life not filled with violence! Then marks God's movement to the next word to Noah in this post-diluvian world, and that word would be covenant.

**God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying** - Note that here God speaks again not just to Noah but also to his sons (as in Ge 9:1 = "said to them").

**Genesis 9:9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you;"**

- Ge 9:11,17 6:18 17:7,8 22:17 Isa 54:9,10 Jer 31:35,36 33:20 Ro 1:3
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## GOD HIMSELF ESTABLISHES HIS COVENANT

**Now behold** ([hinneh](#)), **I Myself do establish My covenant** ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) **with you, and with your descendants after you** - Ge 9:8-17 is what is known as the **Noahic Covenant**. NET = "**Look!** I now confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you." **Behold** ([hinneh](#)) introduces this section on covenant to invoke Noah and his sons full attention! Notice the emphasis on **Myself** indicating God is the initiator of this covenant and there are no conditions that need to be kept for it to be valid. God is pledging His faithfulness to carry out the obligations He will describe in this section. Note that since Noah (and man in general) does nothing to merit this covenant, it is another reflection of God's amazing grace, in this case an example of "**common grace**." Note also while the covenant is addressed to Noah, it includes all his descendants and **all successive generations** (Ge 9:12).

**Gotquestions** excerpt on [common grace](#) - The doctrine of [common grace](#) pertains to the sovereign grace of God bestowed upon all of mankind regardless of their [election](#). In other words, God has always bestowed His graciousness on all people in all parts of the earth at all times.

Notice that the phrases **and with your descendants after you** and **with every living creature** (Ge 9:10) indicates this covenant, although often called the Noahic Covenant, is more accurately a covenant with all creation, thus we could accurately designate it as the "Creation Covenant." It is God's promise to preserve the present creation until God's final judgment following the Messianic Kingdom when the present creation will be destroyed by fire not flood (2Pe 3:10+, compare out with the old and in with the new in Rev 20:11+ where "no place was found" for heaven and earth and in with "a new heaven and a new earth" in Rev 21:1+)

**R Kent Hughes** writes that "This grand covenant was/is universal, unilateral, and unconditional. Its **universality** is evident because it encompasses not only every human being (good or evil) but every living creature on the planet. It is **unilateral** in that God alone is the sole initiator (ED: AND BECAUSE ALL THE OBLIGATIONS ARE ON ONE SIDE OF THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP). He twice calls it "**My covenant**" (Ge 9:8, 11). It does not require any assent, action, or ratification from mankind—not even acknowledgment. It is **unconditional** because there will never be another cosmic destruction by water no matter what we earthlings do. The covenant is the Self-motivated promise of an unconditional mercy throughout human history." (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 147](#))

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**Behold** (02009) [hinneh](#) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) [Hinneh](#) generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so [hinneh](#) is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! [Hinneh](#) is a marker used to enliven a narrative, to express a change a scene, to emphasize an idea, to call attention to a detail or an important fact or action that follows (Isa 65:17, Ge 17:20, 41:17). The first use of [hinneh](#) in Ge 1:29 and second in Ge 1:31 - "And God saw all that He had made, and **behold**, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." [Hinneh](#) is often used in the idiom "**Here I am**" in Ge 22:1, 7,11 Ge 27:1,18, Ge 31:11, Ge 46:2 Ex 3:4 1Sa 3:4, 3:16, 12:3, 2Sa 1:7, Isa 52:6, Isa 58:9. [Hinneh](#) is used most often to point out people but also to point out things (Ge 31:41, 17:4). God uses [hinneh](#) to grab man's attention before He brings destruction (Ge 6:13, 17). God uses [hinneh](#) when He establishes covenants (Ge 9:9, 15:12, 17 [when Jehovah cut the Abrahamic covenant], Ge 17:4, cp Ge 28:13, 15), when He provided a sacrificial substitute for Isaac (foreshadowing His giving us His only Son!) (Ge 22:13). [Hinneh](#) marks the "chance ([The Providence of God](#))" arrival of Boaz at the field where Ruth was gleaning (Ru 2:4 [read about this "chance romance" - Indeed, "Behold!"](#)). [Hinneh](#) is used to announce the Lord's sending of a child as a sign and a prophecy of [Immanuel-Emmanuel](#), the Messiah (Isa. 7:14-[note](#)). In fact **W E Vine** says that it is notable that when **behold** ([hinneh](#)) is used in Isaiah, it always introduces something relating to future circumstances.

**Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to

something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**Hinneh** is translated in the Septuagint with the interjection **idou** (strictly speaking a command in the second person [aorist imperative, middle voice](#)) a demonstrative particle (used 1377 times in the Septuagint and NT) which is found especially in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke "and giving a peculiar vivacity to the style by bidding the reader or hearer to attend to what is said: "**Behold! See! Lo!**" (Thayer) The command is calling for urgent attention. Do this now! Don't delay! It could be loosely paraphrased "Pay attention!" or "Listen up!" to arouse attention and introduce a new and extraordinary fact of considerable importance.

**Covenant** (01285) [berit/berith/beriyth](#) means covenant, treaty, compact, agreement between two parties (first use in God's covenant with Noah - Ge 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). **Beriyth** describes a compact made by passing between pieces of flesh. Covenant is a solemn, binding arrangement between two parties and entails a variety of responsibilities, benefits and penalties depending on the specific covenant which is being studied. OT covenants were made between God and man (eg, God with Noah - Ge 6:18, with Abram - Ge 15:18) or between men (Abraham and Abimelech - Ge 21:27, Isaac and Abimelech - Ge 26:28, Jacob and Laban - Ge 31:44) (For summary of covenants see - [Covenant in the Bible](#)).

[Berit/berith/beriyth in the Pentateuch](#) - Gen. 6:18; Gen. 9:9; Gen. 9:11; Gen. 9:12; Gen. 9:13; Gen. 9:15; Gen. 9:16; Gen. 9:17; Gen. 14:13; Gen. 15:18; Gen. 17:2; Gen. 17:4; Gen. 17:7; Gen. 17:9; Gen. 17:10; Gen. 17:11; Gen. 17:13; Gen. 17:14; Gen. 17:19; Gen. 17:21; Gen. 21:27; Gen. 21:32; Gen. 26:28; Gen. 31:44; Exod. 2:24; Exod. 6:4; Exod. 6:5; Exod. 19:5; Exod. 23:32; Exod. 24:7; Exod. 24:8; Exod. 31:16; Exod. 34:10; Exod. 34:12; Exod. 34:15; Exod. 34:27; Exod. 34:28; Lev. 2:13; Lev. 24:8; Lev. 26:9; Lev. 26:15; Lev. 26:25; Lev. 26:42; Lev. 26:44; Lev. 26:45; Num. 10:33; Num. 14:44; Num. 18:19; Num. 25:12; Num. 25:13; Deut. 4:13; Deut. 4:23; Deut. 4:31; Deut. 5:2; Deut. 5:3; Deut. 7:2; Deut. 7:9; Deut. 7:12; Deut. 8:18; Deut. 9:9; Deut. 9:11; Deut. 9:15; Deut. 10:8; Deut. 17:2; Deut. 29:1; Deut. 29:9; Deut. 29:12; Deut. 29:14; Deut. 29:21; Deut. 29:25; Deut. 31:9; Deut. 31:16; Deut. 31:20; Deut. 31:25; Deut. 31:26; Deut. 33:9;

**Andrew Murray**, the gifted nineteenth century writer in **Two Covenants** speaks to the importance of studying covenant writing "Blessed is the man who truly knows God as his God; who knows what the Covenant promises him; what unwavering confidence of expectation it secures, that all its [covenant's] terms will be fulfilled to him; what a claim and hold it gives him on the Covenant-keeping God Himself. **To many a man, who has never thought much of the Covenant, a true and living faith in it would mean the transformation of his whole life.** (ED: GOD'S SPIRIT USED THE TRUTH OF COVENANT TO SAVE MY MARRIAGE!) The full knowledge of what God wants to do for him; the assurance that it will be done by an Almighty Power; the being drawn to God Himself in personal surrender, and dependence, and waiting to have it done; all this would make the Covenant the very gate of heaven. May the Holy Spirit give us some vision of its glory." ([Two Covenants](#))

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**Jack Arnold** - THE PACT (Covenant) WITH NOAH (9:1-17)

1. Meaning of a Covenant. A biblical covenant is where God unconditionally makes a pact with men. God does not reach agreements with sinful men through a bargaining process. Man is no threat to the government of God. God is in control of history and has set down the rules through covenants for men to live by.
2. Source of the Noachic Covenant. The source is God alone (Ge 9:9, 11, 12, 17). There is no covenant unless God makes it and keeps it.
3. Scope of the Noachic Covenant. This covenant was made with all men and all animals (Ge 9:9-10).
4. Purpose of the Noachic Covenant. God make this covenant to guarantee to all men that the world will never again be destroyed by water (Ge 9:11).
5. Duration of the Noachic Covenant. This is an "everlasting covenant" and is for "perpetual generations" (Ge 9:12, 16).
6. Sign Covenant. God gave the rainbow as a sign of the Noachic Covenant. It is a guarantee to fulfill all that God has promised in this covenant (Ge 9:12-13).
7. Design of the Noachic Covenant. The first design of the covenant is to give blessing to all mankind. However, there may be a second design to the covenant and that is to drive home to men that they are sinful and in need of God's grace and mercy. In 8:21, it says "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his

youth." This is a fundamental truth that God is forever seeking to impress upon men. Until man understands that he is basically sinful, he has no need for a Savior.

**NOTE.** Through the Noahic Covenant, God orders life in such a way that man cannot escape exposure to this fundamental revelation that he is basically sinful. Every provision of this covenant made with Noah and the whole human race is designed to impress upon man the helplessness of his evil condition, and thus drive him to the love and grace of God.

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#### QUESTION - [What is the Noahic Covenant?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Noahic Covenant, found in Genesis 9:8-17, is the promise that God made to Noah and his descendants after the flood which destroyed the world. The Noahic Covenant has several distinguishing features. First, it is an unconditional covenant. Second, it was made to Noah and all his descendants as well as "every living creature" and the earth in general (Genesis 9:8-10). Third, it was sealed with a sign, the [rainbow](#).

The Noahic Covenant is an unconditional covenant because it does not depend upon anything Noah or his descendants had to do to fulfill the covenant. The promise is based upon God's faithfulness alone. Because of God's faithfulness to always do what He says He will do, we can know today with certainty that there will never be another worldwide flood as there was in the days of Noah, no matter how wicked mankind becomes. Neither the wickedness nor the righteousness of mankind affects this unconditional covenant. There is no "condition" under which God will renege on His promise. This does not mean that God will never again destroy the earth, however. He has promised to one day destroy the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10, 11; Revelation 20:9, 21:1 ) in the terrible events known as the "day of the Lord."

After the flood God promised that He would never again send a worldwide flood to destroy the earth as an act of His divine judgment for sin. As a sign to remind Noah and his descendants of His covenantal promise, God "set the rainbow in the cloud" (Genesis 9:12-13). Just as circumcision was the sign of the [Abrahamic Covenant](#), the rainbow is the sign of the Noahic Covenant. The lesson to us is that when we see a rainbow we should always be reminded of God's faithfulness and His amazing grace. We should also be reminded that our God is a holy and righteous God who has a holy hatred for sin and who will not allow sin to go unpunished forever. Also, just as God provided a way for Noah and his family to be saved in the ark, He also has provided a way for us to be saved through Jesus Christ. Noah and his family were saved from the wrath of God that came in the flood, just as those who are in Christ are saved from the "wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10). [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Genesis 9:10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.**

- Ge 9:15,16 Ge 8:1 Job 38:1-41 Job 41:1-34 Ps 36:5,6 Ps 145:9 Jonah 4:11
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### **NOAHIC COVENANT APPLIES TO ALL LIVING CREATURES**

**and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark ([tebah](#); Lxx = [kibotos](#)) , even every beast of the earth** - The animal world is included in God's gracious covenant, which emphasizes that God does have concern for all of His creatures.

**Spurgeon** - Happy fowls, and happy cattle, and happy beasts of the earth to be connected with Noah, and go to come under a covenant of preservation and we, — though only worthy to be typified by these creatures which God had preserved in the ark, — are thrice happy to be in the same covenant with him who is our Noah, our rest, our sweet savour unto God.

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**Ark** ([08392](#)) [tebah](#) is a box like structure which is used in only two settings in the OT - a "big box" referring to Noah's Ark (26 times). It is not the word used later for the "ark of the covenant," but it is the word used for the ark of bulrushes in which Moses was hidden as a baby (Ex 2:3; 2:5+). In both situations the occupants were in danger of dying (God's judgment in the flood and Pharaoh's decree to kill the male infants) and in both situations the occupants were rescued from the water. So in both "divine rescues" the result was not just salvation for Noah and Moses, but respectfully the salvation and perpetuation of the human race and the deliverance of the Chose People. (See [Epic of Gilgamesh](#) which is a secular writing that parallels the Biblical account of the flood). **Ronald Youngblood** adds that "Noah's ark as a symbol of salvation is compared to the ordinance of baptism in 1 Peter 3:20f+, and as a symbol of God's protection from external evil, it was frequently sketched by the early Christians on the walls of the



catacombs under the streets of ancient Rome." ([TWOT](#))

**Tebah** - 28x/25v - ark(26), basket(2). - Gen. 6:14; Gen. 6:15; Gen. 6:16; Gen. 6:18; Gen. 6:19; Gen. 7:1; Gen. 7:7; Gen. 7:9; Gen. 7:13; Gen. 7:15; Gen. 7:17; Gen. 7:18; Gen. 7:23; Gen. 8:1; Gen. 8:4; Gen. 8:6; Gen. 8:9; Gen. 8:10; Gen. 8:13; Gen. 8:16; Gen. 8:19; Gen. 9:10; Gen. 9:18; Exod. 2:3; Exod. 2:5

**Ark in the Greek Septuagint** ([2787](#))([kibotos](#)) means box, a wooden box, a coffer, a chest, a sea-faring vessel or boat like the ark (Latin - arca) of Noah (Moffatt says something like a barge) Note that **kibotos** is used for the Ark ([aron](#)) of the Covenant even though that Hebrew word for Ark ([aron](#)) is different than the Hebrew word for Noah's Ark (Mt 24:37-39+, Lk 17:26, 27+; Heb 11:7; 1 Pt 3:20, 4Macc 15:31). The ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies (Heb 9:4; Rev 11:19). **Kibotos - 6v - ark (6)** - Matt. 24:38; Lk. 17:27; Heb. 9:4; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20; Rev. 11:19.

**Genesis 9:11 "I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."**

- And I - Ge 8:21,22 Isa 54:9
- neither shall all - Ge 7:21-23 8:21,22 2Pe 3:7,11
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## **GOD'S COVENANT PROMISE NO MORE GLOBAL FLOODS**

**I establish My covenant** ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) **with you; and all flesh shall never again** ([see note below](#)) **be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood** ([mabbul](#)) **to destroy** ([shachath](#)) **the earth** - In Ge 6:18 the covenant is between God and Noah, but now He adds with the earth, so that it includes all life forms on the planet earth. Did you note God's emphasis? He says never again and then neither...again which places emphasis on this promise. And just for good measure God adds a third "never again" in Ge 9:15! While this might not seem like such a great promise to us, just imagine living in Noah's day and wondering every time it began to pour a heavy rain! Without this covenant promise men might begin to fear "O no, here comes another catastrophic flood and I don't even have an ark prepared!" This covenant relieves any fears men might have when the rain begins!

Note one other repeated aspect in this covenant is that it applies to **'all flesh,'** a phrase which occurs 5x in 4 verses (Ge 9:11, 15, 16, 17). This would be a reminder to Noah and to all of us of God's special concern for animal life.

[Warren Wiersbe](#) makes a very interesting observation about the animals writing that "When the apostle John beheld the throne room of heaven, he saw four unusual "living creatures" worshipping before God's throne, each one having a different face (Rev. 4:6–7+). The first had a face like a lion, the second like a calf, the third like a man, and the fourth like an eagle. These four faces parallel the four kinds of creatures with whom God made this covenant: wild beasts, cattle, humans, and birds (see Gen. 9:9–10). These creatures are represented perpetually before the throne of God, because the Lord is concerned about His creation. They remind us that all creation worships and praises the God who provides for His creatures and rejoices in their worship.

**Spurgeon on I establish My covenant with you** - What a wonderful expression that is! It is similar to that remarkable declaration of Jehovah, recorded in Exo 12:13. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The blood was not to be sprinkled inside the house where the Israelites might be comforted by a sight of it, but outside the house, where only God could see it. It is for our sake that the rainbow is set in the cloud, and we can see it there; yet infinite mercy represents it as being there as a refreshment to the memory of God: "The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it,"

[Bob Utley](#) God's care for the animals is clearly seen in Jonah 4:11 (cf. Ps. 36:6). Animals are also held accountable for their violent actions toward humans (Gen. 9:5). God loves this earth! He will one day restore it to its original purpose (i.e., Ro 8:18-25; Revelation 21-22).

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Lucy and Linus were looking out the window at a steady downpour. "Boy," said Lucy, "look at it rain. What if it floods the whole world?" "It will never do that," Linus replies confidently. "In the ninth chapter of Genesis, God promised Noah that it would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow." "You've taken a great load off my mind," says Lucy with a relieved smile. "Sound theology," Linus affirms, "has a way of doing that!"

**Genesis 9:12** God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;

- Ge 17:11 Ex 12:13 13:16 Jos 2:12 Mt 26:26-28 1Co 11:23-25
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 17:11 "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and **it shall be the sign of the covenant** between Me and you.

Exodus 12:13 **The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live**, and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

## GOD GIVES A COVENANT SIGN

God said, "This is the sign (['oth](#)) of the covenant ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) which I am making between Me and you (Noah and sons) and every living creature that is with you, for all successive ([olam](#)) generations (all offspring from Noah's sons) - The covenant would extend to include all subsequent generations of all creation, men and animals (fish, etc).

[Wiersbe](#) - To help His people remember His covenants, God would give them a visible sign. His covenant with Abraham was sealed with the sign of circumcision (Gen. 17:11; Rom. 4:9–12), and the Mosaic Covenant at Sinai with the sign of the weekly Sabbath (Ex. 31:16–17). God's covenant with Noah and the animal creation was sealed with the sign of the rainbow. Whenever people saw the rainbow, they would remember God's promise that no future storm would ever become a worldwide flood that would destroy humanity. Mark Twain and his friend William Dean Howells stepped out of church just as a violent rainstorm began. Howells said, "I wonder if it will stop," and Mark Twain replied, "It always has." He was right; it always has! Why? Because God made a covenant and He always keeps His word.

The covenant was unilateral. God took the sole initiative. It was eternal (Ge 9:12, 16). It was universal even including the animals (Ge 9:9-11). It was confirmed by a sign (Ge 9:12-17).

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**Successive** (everlasting, eternal, Forever) ([05769](#)) [olam](#) is a masculine noun which according to some authorities is derived from 'alam (05956) which means to conceal, hide, be hidden, be concealed, be secret (2Ki 4:27, Ps 10:1). (others say the origin is uncertain) Gesenius feels olam refers to that which is hidden, especially "hidden time" the beginning or end of which is either uncertain or undefined = eternity, perpetuity. The most common associations of "everlasting" (olam) ([Complete list](#)) (Based on the NAS) is Everlasting covenant = 15x, Everlasting lovingkindness = 44x.

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#### **James Smith - THE ALTAR AND THE BOW; OR, DEATH AND RESURRECTION GLORY Genesis 8:20–21; 9:12–16**

There is a very close connection between the altar and the bow. The same connection exists between the death and resurrection of Christ. The altar speaks of sacrifice, the bow of promise and assurance. Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

**I. The Altar.** It was an altar builded unto the Lord. It was both a witness and a confession that God had holy and righteous claims that must be acknowledged and met. The first thing that Noah did in coming forth was to recognise that God's place was the first place. "In the beginning God."

1. THE NEED OF AN OFFERING. A new beginning was now to be made. If the life is to be a blessed and fruitful one the favour of God must be secured. In the fulness of time the Son of God stepped forth. A new order of things was about to begin. He made peace by the blood of His Cross. By His offering we are reconciled to God. This is a good start.

2. THE NATURE OF THE OFFERING. "Every clean beast." Every clean beast means the combination of every creature excellency. A perfect offering. When Christ offered Himself a sacrifice unto God it was an offering without spot or blemish. Although the first man failed, God found in the second every heart-satisfying virtue.

3. THE RESULT OF THE OFFERING. God found in it: 1, A savour of rest (v. 21, margin). Precious thought! Every desire of God's heart fully met in the sweet savour of Christ's offering (Eph. 5:2). 2, An assurance of safety. No more curse. There is, therefore, now no judgment. Never come into condemnation. 3, The promise

of unceasing blessing (v. 22). Every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3).

**II. The Bow.** The bow of promise comes after the altar of sacrifice. As all the colours of nature are in the bow, so all the promises of God are in Christ. Every divine perfection is manifested in the resurrection glory of Jesus. Christ as our Sacrifice is seen on the altar of the Cross; Christ as our Intercessor is seen in the bow of His mediatorial glory. The bow is—

1. A TOKEN OF GOD'S GOODNESS. How kind of God to give such a visible expression of His love and favour, such an assurance of heart. If Christ is not risen we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen (1 Cor. 15:17–20).

2. A TOKEN OF GOD'S FULLNESS. There is fulness of colour and beauty in the bow, a fulness that is in sweetest harmony. Think of the fulness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ, in Him for us, and all in perfect harmony with a just and holy God. O the riches of His glorious grace!

3. A TOKEN OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. "I do set My bow for a covenant" (chap. 9:13). The setting of Christ at God's right hand is to us who believe a token of eternal security. He is faithful who hath promised. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35).

**Genesis 9:13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.**

- Eze 1:28 Rev 4:3 Rev 10:1
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## THE SIGN OF COVENANT A RAINBOW IN THE CLOUD

**I set My bow ([qeshet](#)) in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign (['oth](#)) of a covenant ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) between Me and the earth** - **Set** is in the perfect tense emphasizing the certainty of the action. Note God sets up the rainbow even though He uses clouds and water vapor to display His creation. It is God's invention. It is a **sign**, which is something that points to something else. In this case the **bow** is the sign that points to and validates the agreement between God and **the earth**. Initially God made the **covenant** ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) with Noah (Ge 6:18). Then it was between **you** (Noah) **and every living creature that is with you, for all successive ([olam](#)) generations**. The sign of the rainbow is a divine pledge of the assurance of keeping this covenant and stresses that God alone is the one active in this covenant, and thus He alone puts himself under obligation to keep the covenant.

**Borgman on My bow ([qeshet](#))** - When it is applied to God it is a symbol of His wrath; the Lord makes His bow of wrath into a 7 colored rainbow – peace now instead of wrath! (AMAZING GRACE!)

**Calvin on I set My bow ([qeshet](#)) in the cloud** - "From these words certain eminent theologians have been induced to deny that there was any rainbow before the deluge: which is frivolous. For the words of Moses do not signify, that a bow was then formed, which did not previously exist; but that a mark was engraven upon it, which should give a sign of the divine favour towards man"

**Wenham** writes that the bow "has often been suggested that originally this phrase was speaking of God's hanging up his bow and arrows in the heavens as a sign that he would no longer be at war with mankind. The storms of the flood were the "arrows" he had hurled at the earth. Though the Bible sometimes uses imagery like this to describe divine wrath (e.g., Deut 32:23, 42; Hab 3:9–11; Ps 18:15 [14]) there is no reason for taking Gen 9 this way." (BORROW - [Genesis Commentary](#))

**NET NOTE** adds - The Hebrew word [קֶשֶׁת](#) ([qeshet](#)) normally refers to a warrior's bow. Some understand this to mean that God the warrior hangs up his battle bow at the end of the flood, indicating he is now at peace with humankind, but others question the legitimacy of this proposal.

**Steven Cole** - God's sign of the rainbow was both gracious and appropriate. God put the sign in the clouds, where Noah and his family would have looked with fear when the storms came. The same water which destroyed the earth now causes the rainbow. Arising, as it does, from the conjunction of the sun and the storm, it points to God's mercy breaking through even in His judgment. Coming at the end of the storm, it shows that the storm of God's wrath is past.

**Delitzsch** comments: It is indeed a phenomenon that may be accounted for by natural laws; but the laws of nature are truly the appointment of God (Ecclus 43:11ff) and it is just in its conformity to natural law that the rainbow is a pledge that the order of nature

shall continue. And is there not to every law of nature a background pointing to the mysteries of the Divine nature and will? The label of the rainbow is sufficiently legible. Shining upon a dark ground, ... it represents the victory of the light of love over the fiery darkness of wrath. Originating from the effect of the sun upon a dark cloud, it typifies the willingness of the heavenly to penetrate the earthly. Stretched between heaven and earth, it is as a bond of peace between both, and, spanning the horizon, it points to the all-embracing universality of the Divine mercy (BORROW - [A NEW COMMENTARY ON GENESIS - page 288](#)).

### Compare other uses of "bow" or "rainbow"

Ezekiel 1:28+ (EZEKIEL'S VISION OF GOD) As the appearance of the **rainbow** in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

Revelation 4:3+ (JOHN'S DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S THRONE IN HEAVEN) And He (GOD THE FATHER) who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a **rainbow around the throne**, like an emerald in appearance.

Revelation 10:1+ (JOHN SEES ANOTHER RAINBOW) I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and **the rainbow was upon his head**, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

**H Van Dyke Parunak - Application:** God's use of signs reminds us not to fall into either of two errors. He condescends to our weakness by giving us tangible signs of intangible truths. Perhaps the most precious of these are the elements at the [Lord's Supper](#). We ought not to despise such symbols, but treasure them and take advantage of them. At the same time, the sign has no power in itself, but points us back to the underlying word ([see John Calvin](#) comment on Ge 9:15). Some people treat signs as almost magical, a mistake that leads to the [Catholic concept of sacrament](#). In fact, the bow doesn't keep the world from flood. God's covenant does, and the bow is there only to remind us that He remembers His covenant. Amazing that the LGBT community has taken to themselves this rainbow sign. Satan is always in the business of trying to hijack God's signs and corrupt them and obscure their true significance. When we see the rainbow...think of the **faithfulness of the covenant-keeping God**. ([Notes on Gen 8-9](#))

[Warren Wiersbe](#) applies the truth about the rainbow to our life - Let's pursue that thought. If the rainbow reminds us of God's faithfulness and grace, then why do we fret and worry? God hasn't promised that we'll never experience storms, but He has promised that the storms won't destroy us. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you" (Isa. 43:2 nkjv). When the clouds appear and the sun is hidden, we have nothing to fear...Three men in Scripture saw significant rainbows. Noah saw the rainbow after the storm, just as God's people see it today. But the prophet Ezekiel saw the rainbow in the midst of the storm when he had that remarkable vision of the wheels and the throne (Ezek. 1:28). Ezekiel also saw living creatures and each one had four faces! One was like a man, one like a lion, one like an ox, and one like an eagle—the same faces John saw (Rev. 4:6–7). Of course, the apostle John saw the rainbow before the storm of judgment broke loose (Rev 4:3). In fact, John saw a complete rainbow around the throne of God! On earth, we see "in part," but one day in heaven, we will see things fully as they really are (1 Cor. 13:12). **The personal lesson for God's people is simply this: in the storms of life, always look for the rainbow of God's covenant promise.** Like John, you may see the rainbow **before the storm**; like Ezekiel, you may see it **in the midst of the storm**; or like Noah, you may have to wait until **after the storm**. But you will always see the rainbow of God's promise if you look by faith. That's the Old Testament version of Romans 8:28

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**Bow** ([07198](#))(qeshet) normally refers to a literal bow used in warfare or hunting. It denotes the hunter's (Ge 27:3) and warrior's (1Sa 31:3) weapon by which arrows are shot (1Ki 13:15ff.) And figuratively it refers to God's bow, the rainbow set for all time in the heavens (Ge 9:13, 14, 16, cf Ezek 1:28).

**Leonard Coppes** - The **bow**, a common weapon in the ancient Near East, was not too common in early Israel. The Benjamites, however, were noted archers (Judges 20; 1 Chron. 8:40). Jonathan used a bow (1 Samuel 20:20) and later the bow became the weapon of leaders and kings (2 Kings 9:24; Psalm 18:34). Apparently David's lament became a permanent part of training Israel's army, so in 2 Samuel 1:18 the enigmatic qeshet may be the title (or part of the title) of the song so employed (2 Samuel 1:18). By the time of Jeroboam the bow may well have been Israel's national weapon (Hosea 1:5, 7). In later times bows could be mounted with bronze (Psalm 18:34; however, see AI, p. 243), or made of horns (AI, p. 243; B. Couroyer, "Corne et arc," RB 73:510-21). Large battle bows were strung by stepping on one end, hence, dārak qeshet, to bend the bow, i.e. prepare to shoot (Jeremiah 50:14; cf [G. Eager, "Archery," in ISBE, p. 233](#)). The conjoining of "sword" and "bow" often represents all weapons, and even war itself (Genesis 48:22; Joshua 24:12). A "deceitful" bow (with a flaw) always misses the mark (Israel, Psalm 78:57; Hosea 7:16). Man's bow is controlled by God (Genesis 49:24). The arrow finds its mark because of God's guidance (esp. 1 Kings 22:34;

2 Kings 13-16). The broken bow can represent divinely imposed defeat (1 Samuel 2:4), and/or peace (God peaceably "hangs" his bow, Genesis 9; cf. Psalm 76:3], Psalm 46:9; Hosea 2:18). ([TWOT](#))

**Baker** adds that "A bowshot was the distance covered by an arrow shot from a bow (Gen. 21:16). The bow and arrow was commonly used for hunting (Gen. 27:3). The phrase ben-qešet, son of a bow referred to an arrow, a useless weapon against Leviathan (Job 41:28[20]). Judah is described as the Lord's bow (Zech. 9:13). The phrase rišpê-qāšet means the flaming of the bow, its arrows (Ps. 76:3[4]). Hosea speaks of a bow of deception, one that misses its goal, when referring to his people Israel (Hos. 7:16). Job speaks of a bow (20:24). Isaiah 21:17 refers to bowmen, lit., the number of the bow. Men with the bow refers to archers, bowmen (1 Sam. 31:3).([The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament](#))

**Qeshet - 72 verses - archers\*(3), arrows(1), bow(54), bowman\*(1), bowmen(1), bows(13), bowshot\*(1), rainbow(1).** Gen. 9:13; Gen. 9:14; Gen. 9:16; Gen. 21:16; Gen. 27:3; Gen. 48:22; Gen. 49:24; Jos. 24:12; 1 Sam. 2:4; 1 Sam. 18:4; 1 Sam. 31:3; 2 Sam. 1:18; 2 Sam. 1:22; 2 Sam. 22:35; 1 Ki. 22:34; 2 Ki. 6:22; 2 Ki. 9:24; 2 Ki. 13:15; 2 Ki. 13:16; 1 Chr. 5:18; 1 Chr. 8:40; 1 Chr. 10:3; 1 Chr. 12:2; 2 Chr. 14:8; 2 Chr. 17:17; 2 Chr. 18:33; 2 Chr. 26:14; Neh. 4:13; Neh. 4:16; Job 20:24; Job 29:20; Ps. 7:12; Ps. 11:2; Ps. 18:34; Ps. 37:14; Ps. 37:15; Ps. 44:6; Ps. 46:9; Ps. 76:3; Ps. 78:9; Ps. 78:57; Isa. 5:28; Isa. 7:24; Isa. 13:18; Isa. 21:15; Isa. 21:17; Isa. 22:3; Isa. 41:2; Jer. 4:29; Jer. 6:23; Jer. 9:3; Jer. 46:9; Jer. 49:35; Jer. 50:14; Jer. 50:29; Jer. 50:42; Jer. 51:3; Jer. 51:56; Lam. 2:4; Lam. 3:12; Ezek. 1:28; Ezek. 39:3; Ezek. 39:9; Hos. 1:5; Hos. 1:7; Hos. 2:18; Hos. 7:16; Amos 2:15; Hab. 3:9; Zech. 9:10; Zech. 9:13; Zech. 10:4

**Sign (0226) 'oth** means a signal, a mark a miracle and is used to describe amazing events such as God bringing Israel out of Egypt (Ex 4:8, 9, Nu 14:22) or a sign serving to authenticate the message as from God (1Sa 2:34, 10:7, 9) in contrast to the signs from false prophets (Dt 13:1, 2). King Hezekiah received a sign from Jehovah that the He would add fifteen years to his life (Isa 38:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; Gideon - Jdg 6:17-[note](#)) As an aside, while the Bible does record individuals asking for signs of divine approval or affirmation, this process is not to be the norm. In other words, it is usually not best to test God by asking Him for signs! Perhaps better is the prayer of the sick boy's father in Mark (Mk 9:24)!

**R Alden ([TWOT](#))** - This is the general word for "sign," and it covers the entire range of the English term and the Greek word sēmeion. On the pedestrian end of the scale it includes what amounts to a "signboard" or "standard" (Numbers 2:2). It also includes such important concepts as the rainbow "sign" to Noah (Genesis 9:12-13, 17).

1. 'ôt first occurs in Genesis 1:14, where it refers to the luminaries serving as "signs" to distinguish the seasons. In Jeremiah 10:2 it has a similar meaning.
2. According to Genesis 4:15, the Lord set a "mark" on Cain. The meaning of this word is uncertain.
3. A third use of the word is illustrated by Genesis 9:12-13, 17, according to which the rainbow is a "sign" of the covenant. Circumcision is the "sign" in Genesis 17:11. Also, the Sabbath is to be a "sign," according to Exodus 31:13, 17 and Ezekiel 20:12. It is this use of "sign" that is meant when Christians refer to the ordinances as outward "signs" of inward grace.
4. Most of the eighty occurrences of 'ôt refer to "miraculous signs." All the plagues on the Egyptians are called "signs." In these contexts the complementary word mopes (q.v.) meaning "wonders" often occurs (Exodus 7:3; Deut. 4:34; Deut. 6:22; Deut. 7:19; Deut. 26:8; Neh. 9:10; Isaiah 20:3; et al.). This word 'ôt is used in Isaiah's famous prophecy to Ahaz (Isaiah 7:11, 14). The shadow's advance on the palace steps was a "sign" for the ailing king Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:9, Isaiah 38:7). Likewise God showed Gideon a "sign" by igniting the offered food (Judges 6:17).
5. The word 'ôt sometimes means "token." For example, Aaron's rod was to be a "warning to the rebellious" (Numbers 17:25 NAB and Heb, Numbers 17:10 in other English versions). In the same category are the stones in the Jordan (Joshua 4:6), the hammered plates on the altar (Numbers 16:38 [H 17:3]), and the witness pillar in Egypt (Isaiah 19:20).
6. A dreamer or a prophet, true or false, could produce "signs" according to Deut. 13:1ff. The fulfillment of Jeremiah's threat of punishment was a true "sign" (Jeremiah 44:29), while Isaiah speaks of "signs" of liars (Isaiah 44:25).

Naturally, these categories are artificial and overlap. The simple fact that one Hebrew word covers them all is proof of that. The word "sign" either signifies the unusual event itself or in some way points to that unusual event. Or it may point backward to a historical event such as the stones in the Jordan (Joshua 4:6), or even forward to such a promise as a thornless future world (Isaiah 55:13). ([TWOT](#) Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

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## F B Meyer - Genesis 9:13 (Our Daily Homily) My Bow in the Cloud

A **covenant** is a promise or undertaking, resting on certain conditions, with a **sign** or token attached to it.

The rainbow on the rain cloud, the Lord's Supper, the wedding-ring, are signs (**ED: HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AS A SIGN OF THE NEW COVENANT?**) and seals of the respective covenants to which they belong. Whenever we see them we should bethink ourselves of the covenant. Whenever you see a rainbow, recall the covenant into which God has entered with thee; for as He has sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so His kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of His peace be removed. Three things are needed to make a rainbow.

**A cloud.** - When man's sin overshadowed Paradise, the bow of promise shone; and when the thunderclouds gathered about the Saviour's path, the Divine voice assured Him that as He had glorified the Divine Name by His life, He should glorify it much more by His death. When the black clouds of conviction, bereavement, soul-anguish beset thee, look out for the bow: it is always there, though sufferers do not always perceive it.

**Rain.** - There are no rainbows unless there be falling drops to catch and unravel the sunbeams. It may be that all evil is worse in its anticipation than in its endurance; but this is certain, that the big drops of sorrow have to patter on our souls before we can realize all that God is prepared to be to us.

**Sunshine.** - It is only when God comes into our grief that we can' see the treasures of Love and Grace which are stored for us in Him. We never know how great a blessing sorrow may be till we carry it into the light of the King's face. It is the dark canvas on which the artist produces his most marvellous effects.

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## Oswald Chambers - The bow in the cloud

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. Genesis 9:13.

It is the will of God that human beings should get into moral relationship with Him, and His covenants are for this purpose. 'Why does not God save me?' He has saved me, but I have not entered into relationship with Him. "Why does not God do this and that?" He has done it, the point is—Will I step into covenant relationship? All the great blessings of God are finished and complete, but they are not mine until I enter into relationship with Him on the basis of His covenant.

Waiting for God is incarnate unbelief, it means that I have no faith in Him; I wait for Him to do something in me that I may trust in that. God will not do it, because that is not the basis of the God-and-man relationship. Man has to go out of himself in his covenant with God as God goes out of Himself in His covenant with man. It is a question of faith in God—the rarest thing; we have faith only in our feelings. I do not believe God unless He will give me something in my hand whereby I may know I have it, then I say—'Now I believe.' There is no faith there. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved."

When I have really transacted business with God on His covenant and have let go entirely, there is no sense of merit, no human ingredient in it at all, but a complete overwhelming sense of being brought into union with God, and the whole thing is transfigured with peace and joy.

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## G Campbell Morgan - —Gen. 9.13.

Thus God selected one of the already existing and most beautiful of natural phenomena, and made it the abiding sign of the covenant He had made with man. Apart from clouds and rain there can be no bow. But the bow is never seen on the clouds, except when the sun is shining. In view of the instrument of the judgment through which the earth had just passed, that of the rain and the flood, this was an exquisitely fitting symbol of that covenant made with man by the God of mercy and of grace. The context shows us the use to be made of it. Necessarily when seen in the cloud it would speak to man of this covenant, and without any doubt that was within the mind of God. But that is not the purpose for its adoption as a sign which is stated in the story. It is rather that God said: "The bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant" (verses 14, 15); and that is still further emphasized by the words, "The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember" (verse 16). The full value of the bow in the cloud, then, was not so much that when man looked at it he remembered the covenant; but rather that he remembered that God was looking and remembering. That touches a deeper note, and creates a profounder sense of peace. When next we see the rainbow, let us remind ourselves that we are looking at something at which God is looking, and that as He looks He remembers.

I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. —Genesis 9:13

Today's Scripture: Genesis 9:1-17

Do you like to look at rainbows? When you see a rainbow, have you ever thought that God is looking at it too?

The next time that multicolored spectrum of beauty bends over the landscape, take time to view it in the light of God's promise to Noah: "The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature" (Gen. 9:16).

The rainbow was a reminder of God's gracious pledge that He would never again destroy the earth with water. A worse calamity, though, is coming. Peter warned, "The heavens and the earth . . . are reserved for fire until the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 3:7).

The rainbow, seen against the clouds of judgment, spoke of grace. But the rainbow fades when compared to God's grace shown at Calvary. At the cross, God's wrath against sin was placed on Jesus Christ, the believer's substitute. When the Light of the world met the storm clouds of judgment at Calvary, a beautiful bow of promise and forgiveness came into view. And one day believers will gather around God's rainbow-circled throne (Rev. 4:1-3).

So next time you see a rainbow, remember God's abundant mercy and grace. By: Henry G. Bosch (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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## Rainbow Halo

My rainbow . . . will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Genesis 9:13

Today's Scripture & Insight: Genesis 9:12–17

On a hike in the mountains, Adrian found himself above some low-lying clouds. With the sun behind him, Adrian looked down and saw not only his shadow but also a brilliant display known as a Brocken spectre. This phenomenon resembles a rainbow halo, encircling the shadow of the person. It occurs when the sunlight reflects back off the clouds below. Adrian described it as a "magical" moment, one that delighted him immensely.

We can imagine how similarly stunning seeing the first rainbow must have been for Noah. More than just a delight to his eyes, the refracted light and resulting colors came with a promise from God. After a devastating flood, God assured Noah, and all the "living creatures" who've lived since, that "never again [would] the waters become a flood to destroy all life" (Genesis 9:15).

Our earth still experiences floods and other frightening weather that results in tragic loss, but the rainbow is a promise that God will never judge the earth again with a worldwide flood. This promise of His faithfulness can remind us that though we individually will experience personal losses and physical death on this earth—whether by disease, natural disaster, wrongdoing, or advancing age—God bolsters us with His love and presence throughout the difficulties we face. Sunlight reflecting colors through water is a reminder of His faithfulness to fill the earth with those who bear His image and reflect His glory to others. By: Kirsten Holmberg (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

How does God's promise reassure you in the midst of weather-related catastrophes? Who in your life needs your reflection of God's glory?

Thank You, God, for Your faithfulness to protect and provide for me by sustaining the natural laws of Your creation. Help me to reflect Your glory to those around me.

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**RAINBOW - [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery \(page 2334\)](#)** - A rainbow is a strikingly beautiful atmospheric phenomenon. It is an arc of colors, displaying the spectrum, which appears occasionally at the tail end of a rainstorm as the sun breaks through clouds.

The rainbow takes on potent symbolic force in the Bible, beginning with the aftermath of the flood. After the waters recede and Noah and his family once again stand on solid ground, God reaffirms his covenant relationship with them. The rainbow becomes "the sign of the covenant" (Gen 9:12) between God and Noah. As such, it epitomizes the new relationship that exists between human beings and their Creator.

The Hebrew word for rainbow is the same word that is used to refer to the bow as a military weapon (q̄eet). The idea implied in the Genesis passage seems to be that God has taken the weapon that he has used to judge his creatures and hung it in the sky. When humans see a rainbow after a storm, they are to be reassured that "never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life" (Gen 9:15 NIV). In this passage, then, the rainbow becomes an image of God's mercy and peace after the storm of judgment.

Interestingly, the passage itself indicates that the bow is a reminder to God (Gen 9:16). This is best understood as an anthropomorphism, whose actual intention is to calm human fears.

Ezekiel begins his prophecy with a description of an awesome appearance of God, surrounded by radiance “like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day... This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD” (Ezek 1:28 NIV). It is likely that this alludes back to Genesis 9 and indicates that God will exercise his mercy in the context of his judgment of the people for their sins.

The same may be said of the two occurrences of the rainbow image in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 4:3 we have a context very similar to that of the Ezekiel passage, a divine throne theophany. John sees that “a rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne” (NIV). Interestingly—though this point is debated—the occurrence of the phenomenon in Revelation 10:1 is not associated with a divine figure, but with an angelic one. He is described as “robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars” (NIV). Here again, the allusion is to the covenant with Noah and the idea of God’s grace in the midst of his judgment, which is a recurrent theme in the book of Revelation.

See also CLOUD; FLOOD; RAIN; STORM.

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#### QUESTION - [What is the meaning of the rainbow?](#)

**ANSWER** - Biblically speaking, the rainbow is the sign of a covenant that God made with the whole earth: He will never destroy the earth again with a flood. The rainbow is literally correlated to rainfall.

God made this [covenant](#), with the rainbow as the token, after the waters of the flood receded and Noah and his family exited the ark. God said, “I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. . . . This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth” (Genesis 9:11–15).

God made this promise, signified by the rainbow, not only to mankind but to “every living creature . . . the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark . . . every living creature on earth” (Genesis 9:9–10). The covenant is perpetual, enduring to all generations. Never again will there be a worldwide flood.

The colors of the rainbow are sometimes used as a symbol of [gay pride](#).” This began in 1978 when an artist named Gilbert Baker designed and made a flag for the [homosexual](#) community in San Francisco. Baker’s original design had eight colors, and he assigned a meaning to each one: hot pink (sexuality), red (life), orange (healing), yellow (the sun), green (nature), turquoise (art), indigo (harmony), and violet (spirit). Subsequent designs sported seven and then six colors. Rainbow flags and banners, as used by the LGBTQ+ community, represent diversity, hope, and social action.

There are other rainbow flags and banners that have nothing to do with the homosexual culture. For example, the Hawaii Ko Aloha Flag has nine colored stripes representing the islands that were inhabited before Western civilization arrived. Another example is the flag of the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls, a [Masonic organization](#) whose banner represents seven different virtues.

The rainbow is God’s creation. We naturally delight in it. There is something awe-inspiring in the appearance of a rainbow after a storm. It is good and right that we rejoice in the rainbow as a God-ordained symbol of God’s faithfulness and mercy. The attempt of some to co-opt the colors for their own purposes does not diminish the beauty and wonder of what God has made. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Genesis 9:14 "It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud,**

- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### RAINBOW IN THE CLOUD

**It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow([qeshet](#)) will be seen in the cloud** - Notice that God controls the weather including the clouds, water vapor and rainbows. Of course not every cloud brings a rainbow. That’s not what



God is saying. You have to read the next passage to understand that the point God is making is that every time there is a rainbow it reminds God of His covenant.

**THOUGHT** - That God is reminded of His covenant every time there is a rainbow should also remind us of His faithfulness to always keep His covenants (all of them, most importantly the New Covenant).

[The Defender's Study Bible](#) (BORROW) - The rainbow, requiring small water droplets in the air, could not form in the pre-diluvian world, where the high vapor canopy precluded rain (Genesis 2:5). After the Flood, the very fact that rainfall is now possible makes a worldwide rainstorm impossible, and the rainbow "in the cloud" thereby becomes a perpetual reminder of God's grace, even in judgment.

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[Rainbow - Wikipedia](#) - A **rainbow** is an [optical phenomenon](#) caused by [refraction](#), [internal reflection](#) and [dispersion](#) of light in water droplets resulting in a continuous [spectrum](#) of light appearing in the sky.<sup>[1]</sup> The rainbow takes the form of a multicoloured circular [arc](#).<sup>[2]</sup> Rainbows caused by sunlight always appear in the section of sky directly opposite the Sun. Rainbows can be caused by many forms of airborne water. These include not only rain, but also mist, spray, and airborne [dew](#). Rainbows can be full circles. However, the observer normally sees only an arc formed by illuminated droplets above the ground,<sup>[3]</sup> and centered on a line from the Sun to the observer's eye. In a primary rainbow, the arc shows red on the outer part and violet on the inner side. This rainbow is caused by light being [refracted](#) when entering a droplet of water, then reflected inside on the back of the droplet and refracted again when leaving it. In a double rainbow, a second arc is seen outside the primary arc, and has the order of its colours reversed, with red on the inner side of the arc. This is caused by the light being reflected twice on the inside of the droplet before leaving it. Rainbows can be observed whenever there are water drops in the air and [sunlight](#) shining from behind the observer at a low [altitude angle](#). Because of this, rainbows are usually seen in the western sky during the morning and in the eastern sky during the early evening. The most spectacular rainbow displays happen when half the sky is still dark with raining [clouds](#) and the observer is at a spot with clear sky in the direction of the Sun. The result is a luminous rainbow that contrasts with the darkened background. During such good visibility conditions, the larger but fainter secondary rainbow is often visible. It appears about 10° outside of the primary rainbow, with inverse order of colours.

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#### **C H Spurgeon - Morning and Evening - "The bow shall be seen in the cloud." —Genesis 9:14**

The rainbow, the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord's witness to the people. When may we expect to see the token of the covenant? The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a cloud. When the sinner's conscience is dark with clouds, when he remembers his past sin, and mourneth and lamenteth before God, Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the covenant Rainbow, displaying all the glorious hues of the divine character and betokening peace. To the believer, when his trials and temptations surround him, it is sweet to behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ—to see him bleeding, living, rising, and pleading for us. God's rainbow is hung over the cloud of our sins, our sorrows, and our woes, to prophesy deliverance. Nor does a cloud alone give a rainbow, there must be the crystal drops to reflect the light of the sun. So, our sorrows must not only threaten, but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threatening cloud: punishment must fall in terrible drops upon the Surety. Until there is a real anguish in the sinner's conscience, there is no Christ for him; until the chastisement which he feels becomes grievous, he cannot see Jesus. But there must also be a sun; for clouds and drops of rain make not rainbows unless the sun shineth. Beloved, our God, who is as the sun to us, always shines, but we do not always see him—clouds hide his face; but no matter what drops may be falling, or what clouds may be threatening, if he does but shine there will be a rainbow at once. It is said that when we see the rainbow the shower is over. Certain it is, that when Christ comes, our troubles remove; when we behold Jesus, our sins vanish, and our doubts and fears subside. When Jesus walks the waters of the sea, how profound the calm!

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#### **C H Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook -**

And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud."—Gen. 9:14.

JUST now clouds are plentiful enough, but we are not afraid that the world will be destroyed by a deluge. We see the rainbow often enough to prevent our having any such fears. The covenant which the Lord made with Noah stands fast, and we have no doubts about it. Why, then, should we think that the clouds of trouble, which now darken our sky, will end in our destruction? Let us dismiss such groundless and dishonouring fears.

Faith always sees the bow of covenant promise whenever sense sees the cloud of affliction. God has a bow with which he might shoot out his arrows of destruction; but see! it is turned upward. It is a bow without an arrow or a string; it is a bow hung out for show, no longer used for war. It is a bow of many colours, expressing joy and delight, and not a bow blood-red with slaughter, or black with anger. Let us be of good courage. Never does God so darken our sky as to leave his covenant without a witness; and

even if he did, we would trust him, since he cannot change, or lie, or in any other way fail to keep his covenant of peace. Until the waters go over the earth again, we shall have no reason for doubting our God.

**Genesis 9:15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.**

- remember - Ex 28:12 Lev 26:42-45 De 7:9 1Ki 8:23 Ne 9:32 Ps 106:45 Jer 14:21 Eze 16:60 Lu 1:72
- the waters - Isa 54:8-10
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 28:12+ "You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial. Leviticus 26:42 (Lev 26:42) - [Copy][Go][to List]

Leviticus 26:42-45+ then **I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.** ([ABRAHAMIC COVENANT](#) - NOTE THE LAND BELONGS TO ISRAEL BY COVENANT PROMISE!) 43 'For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them (70 YEARS OF EXILE - SEE 2Ch 36:21+). They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. 44 'Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, **I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them;** for I am the LORD their God. 45 'But **I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors,** whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD."

Exodus 2:24 So God heard their groaning; and **God remembered His covenant** with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis 8:21+ The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will **never again** curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will **never again** destroy every living thing, as I have done.

Genesis 9:11 "I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall **never again** be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."

### GOD'S PROMISE "NEVER AGAIN"

"**Never again**" was the cry of the war weary world in February 11, 1945 at the famous [Joint Statement of Churchill and Stalin at the Yalta Conference](#) that spoke the following words "It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will **NEVER AGAIN** be able to disturb the peace of the world." Here is 'God's version of the "Yalta Conference" and His "NEVER AGAIN!"

**And** - Connects the following promise with when God sees the bow.

**I will remember** ([zakar](#)) **My covenant** ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)), **which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood** ([mabbul](#)) **to destroy** ([shachath](#)) **all flesh** - Recall God remembered Noah at the termination of the flood in Ge 8:1. Now He remembers His covenant. One important thrust of God's promise is the time phrase **never again!** This promise refers to destruction by a global flood, but does not extend to a global fire (2Pe 3:10+). It also does not mean that God will not destroy sinners, because in fact He will for their ultimate destruction will be in the lake of fire.

**R Kent Hughes** - As believers we understand this forbearance (**ED: INHERENT IN THE PHRASE "NEVER AGAIN"**) and wait patiently for all things to be made new (Rev 21:5+). Rainbows remind us that divine wrath gave way to peace and that judgment is God's "strange ... work" (Isaiah 28:21). It reminds us, too, of the ultimate work of the new covenant, when God's wrath was propitiated by his own Son on the cross, so that all who are in Christ find grace instead of wrath (cf. Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2). Christ, the greater Noah, saves his people from the waters of death by his faithful obedience and atoning sacrifice. Praise be to his name!

**Warren Wiersbe** - God promised that He would never send another flood like the one He sent in Noah's day (vv. 8–17). But if the flood was only a local event, God didn't keep His promise! Over the centuries, there have been numerous local floods, some of which brought death and devastation to localities. In 1996 alone, massive flooding in Afghanistan in April left 3,000 people homeless; and in July, flooding in Northern Bangladesh destroyed the homes of over 2 million people. In July and August, the Yellow, Yangtze, and Hai rivers flooded nine provinces in China and left 2,000 people dead. If Noah's flood was a local event like these floods, then God's promise and the covenant sign of the rainbow mean nothing. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Related Resource:**

- [Bruce Waltke, "The Phenomenon of Conditionality Within Unconditional Covenants,"](#) in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, pp. 122-139 (BORROW THIS RESOURCE)

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**Remember** (record, mention) ([02142](#)) [zakar](#) means to recall, call to mind or to be brought to remembrance. The first use of zakar is wonderful for it says "**God remembered Noah**" (Ge 8:1) remembering His covenant (Ge 6:18), declaring later "I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." (Ge 9:15-16) Similarly we see "that God remembered Abraham" and for that reason (based on covenant), He spared Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Ge 19:29). When Israel was in bondage in Egypt "God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Ex 2:24, 6:5, cp Lev 26:42, 45, Ps 98:3 [lovingkindness = covenant term] Ps 105:5, 106:45, 109:16, Ezek 16:60) Moses interceded for Israel asking God to "remember" the Abrahamic covenant and pass over their stubbornness, wickedness and sin (Dt 9:27) Thus we see these many of the early uses of zakar speak of God's good memory (so to speak - for His memory is perfect) is based on the fact that He is in covenant with those He recalls to mind. If you are like me and from time to time think God has forgotten you, recall to mind that you are in covenant with Him (New Covenant) and on that basis He will (forever) remember you! I love Hezekiah's prayer "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly." (2Ki 20:3) King David called on the people - "Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done, His marvels and the judgments from His mouth...Remember His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations." (1Chr 16:12, 15) Nehemiah repeatedly called on God to remember in his prayers (Neh 1:8, 4:14, 5:19, 6:14, 13:14, 13:22, 29, 31). I think Nehemiah gives us a good "template" to imitate when we make petition to the Most High God! I love David's prayer to God not to remember and then to remember (Ps 25:6-7). Korah gives us a great pattern to imitate when we are downcast in Ps 42:4, 6. Many of the psalms (see 49 uses below) speak of either men remembering God (often in form of a prayer) or of God remembering men (e.g., Ps 78:35, 39) Ps 78:42 is a warning to all believers = "They did not remember His power, The day when He redeemed them from the adversary." Have you been saved? Then you have experienced His power! And doubtless there are countless other instances we could all remember (if we chose to!) in which His great power has been palpably present to enable or deliver us! Lord, give us ready recall of Your past power in our life that we might apply it to our present circumstances. Amen

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**Steven Cole** - God's promise in Christ: To deliver all who trust in Him.

Just as God destroyed the world through the flood, and the only ones saved were those in the ark, so He has said that He will yet destroy the world through fire and only those who are in Christ will be saved (2 Pet. 3:4–7, 10). Jesus instituted the New Covenant in His blood, through which He promised to deliver all who trust in Him.

(1) It is unilateral. It stems completely from God. He initiated it, He laid down the stipulations of it. It's not up for debate if you don't like it. It stems from God's grace toward those who deserve His wrath. God owes us nothing. The only merit is the merit of Christ. Many people miss God's offer of salvation because they insist on coming to God on their own merit. But we can't come to God until we realize that He has done it all. We can only receive as a gift what He has done. We can't bargain with God based on our good works.

(2) It is eternal. The author to the Hebrews argues that Christ's blood obtained "eternal redemption" (Heb. 5:9; 9:12). We don't have to fear that God will change the terms of the covenant at some point in the future. When Jesus from the cross said, "It is finished," He meant that His work of redemption completely paid the penalty for our sins. There is nothing to be added to what He did there. It is accomplished and established forever.

(3) It is universal. That is, it is available to all who will believe in Jesus Christ. It excludes no race; Christ purchased for God with His blood those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev. 5:9). Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37). None will be excluded from God's covenant because their sin was too great (1 Tim. 1:15–16).

(4) It is conditioned on faith in Jesus Christ. God's covenant with Noah applies to everyone, apart from their faith. It even applies to all the animals. But God's new covenant in Christ applies only to those who put their trust in Him as Savior. Jesus said, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40). John writes, "... whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition of the new covenant.

Perhaps you're wondering, "I don't have faith in Christ. How do I get it?" Faith is not something we work up. If it were, we could boast in our faith. Faith is something God imparts to the seeking heart as you hear the truth about God as revealed in His Word. Faith doesn't focus on itself, but on God who is totally dependable. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Since Jesus is both the author and perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:2), ask Him to give you the faith you need for salvation.

(5) Its sign is the Lord's Supper. When the Lord, on the night He was betrayed, offered the bread and the wine, He said that the cup was the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20). Just as Noah could look at the rainbow and know that God's judgment was past, so we can contemplate the emblems of the Lord's Supper and know that His judgment for us is past. The storm is over; Christ bore the flood of God's wrath for us, and gave us a sign to assure us. If you wrestle with recurring guilt over past sins, come often to the Lord's Table. It is the sign God has given to us in Christ that there will be no more judgment.

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**Genesis 9:16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."**

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- **everlasting** - Ge 9:9-11 8:21,22 17:13,19 2Sa 23:5 Ps 89:3,4 Isa 54:8-10 55:3 Jer 32:40 Heb 13:20
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## **THE SIGN OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**

**When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting([olam](#)) covenant ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth**- God is repeating what He has just stated in Ge 9:14-15. It follows that you can mark it down with a diamond stylus that God always remembers His covenant! Noah may be unfaithful. We may be unfaithful. But God is ever faithful to keep His covenant. Not just the one with Noah but far better the one with us, the New Covenant in His blood.

**Spurgeon** - So, when my eye of faith is dim, and I cannot see the covenant sign, I will remember that there is an eye which never can be dim, which always sees the covenant token; and so I shall still be secure notwithstanding the dimness of my spiritual vision. For our comfort, we must see it; but for our safety, blessed be God, **it is only needful that He should see it**

[The Defender's Study Bible](#) (BORROW) - This is the first of sixteen references to an "everlasting covenant" made by God, and therefore to an unconditional, unbreakable promise. This first such everlasting covenant was made with "all flesh," and the second was with Abraham's seed (Genesis 17:7). The last was with all who are redeemed with the blood of Christ (Hebrews 13:20).

**EVERLASTING COVENANT** - 16v - Gen. 9:16; Gen. 17:7 (ABRAHAMIC COVENANT); Gen. 17:13; Gen. 17:19; Lev. 24:8; Num. 18:19; 2 Sam. 23:5; 1 Chr. 16:17; Ps. 105:10; Isa. 24:5; Isa. 55:3; Isa. 61:8; Jer. 32:40 (NEW COVENANT); Jer. 50:5; Ezek. 16:60 (NEW COVENANT); Ezek. 37:26

Hebrews 13:20 HAS "ETERNAL" - Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the **eternal covenant**, even Jesus our Lord,

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**C H McIntosh** - The whole creation rests, as to its exemption from a second deluge, on the eternal stability of God's covenant, of which the bow is the token; and it is happy to bear in mind, that when the bow appears, the eye of God rests upon it; and man is cast, not upon his own imperfect and most uncertain memory, but upon God's. "I," says God, "will remember." How sweet to think of what God will, and what He will not, remember! He will remember His own covenant, but He will not remember His people's sins. The cross, which ratifies the former, puts away the latter.

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Excerpt from **Spurgeon's sermon on Genesis 9:16** - [THE RAINBOW](#)

THE story of Noah's preservation in the ark, is a suggestive representation of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, we think, especially intended to depict that part of our salvation which lies in the washing of regeneration. In the same way as baptism is the

outward symbol of regeneration, so also is the ark, "wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." The ark was immersed in those dreadful rains and awful cataracts which deluged the earth, and Noah's family were buried in that ark to all the world; but by this burial they were floated out of the old condemned world, into the new world of life and grace. Death to the world, and burial in the ark, were the means of their safety. "The like figure whereunto," saith the apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:21), "even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism is a most significant picture of regeneration, but it is in no sense the cause of the new birth; and the blunder of the Puseyites lies in considering the outward manifestation of an accomplished fact, as though it were the means of creating that fact. Baptism saves no one, except, as Peter says, in figure; but as a figure, it is eminently full of divine teaching, for it sets forth the great truth that the believer, standing to-day in the old world, is buried to that world, "buried with Jesus Christ by baptism into death;" and his rising from the liquid tomb, is the figure of his resurrection in Christ, into a new world, as a new man, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4.) Would to God that we thought more of being dead with Christ, buried with him and risen with him. Brethren, let Noah in his ark preach the work of righteousness within the heart to all of us this morning.

Do you not think, dear friends, that the history of Noah, when he left the ark, in all its items, may be viewed as typical and instructive? Noah came out of the ark—no longer cooped up and penned within its narrow limits, he walked abroad, and the whole world was before him where to choose. Was not that a picture of the freedom of the believer who has been "buried with Christ," and enjoys the possession of God's free Spirit? For him there is no spirit of bondage, he is free as a child in his father's house; all things are his, by gift of God, to use and to enjoy; he has learned the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free, and if the Son make us free, we are free indeed. When Noah slew the bullock and the other clean beasts, and offered them upon the altar, did he not show forth the believer's, employment? for we also offer acceptable sacrifices of prayer and praise unto God, and we ourselves are living sacrifices unto God. Did he not as much as say to all generations of saints, "You being thus delivered from a death which you deserve, are to spend your lives as priests unto your God?" When the Lord was pleased on that day to bless Noah and his family, bidding them be fruitful, did he not therein set forth the fruitfulness which belongeth unto believers, so that, abiding in Christ, they "bring forth much fruit?" May not that benediction teach us how earnestly we should seek to be spiritually the parents of immortal souls, travelling in birth till Christ be formed in them? When the Divine Father gave them dominion over the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and over all cattle, did not this pourtray the power which believers have over lust, and sin, and evil, and did it not prophesy the subjugation of all things by the power of their faith, so that they who become "priests" in sacrifice become also "kings," by virtue of the charter of dominion which the heavenly Father bestows upon them? What think ye, brethren? When he enlarged the grant of food, and permitted them to eat flesh, did he not set forth that food on which true believers feed, who now eat his flesh and drink his blood who has become the spiritual food of our souls? Is it straining the allegory, is it carrying it too far, if I close these spiritualizings by observing that the very same security which God then gave to Noah and his descendants is that security under which we stand. He gave them a covenant—a covenant embellished with a divine symbol, and ratified with his own signature written out in all the colours of beauty; we too stand under a covenant which has its own faithful witness in heaven, more transcendently illustrious and beautiful than the rainbow—the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Leaving, however, all those points, which I have only started to excite thought among you, we come to this. We have scriptural reason for asserting, that this venerable covenant, that the world shall no more be destroyed by a flood, is typical of a yet more ancient compact, which God made with Christ, that he would be unto his people a God, and they should be his chosen ones, world without end. In the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah we find such language as this: "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." The covenant of Noah, then, is typical of the great covenant made with Christ on the behalf of his people; and the rainbow, as the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord's witness to the people. You read in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, in the third verse, "there was a rainbow round about the throne;" showing that the bow is not a temporary symbol for earth only, but is a symbol of everlasting and heavenly things; and in the tenth chapter of the book of Revelation, if I mistake not, in the first verse, you will find that the mighty angel with the book in his right hand, who shall put one foot upon the sea, and another upon the land, is described as having his head crowned with a rainbow. In this place our Lord Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, wears the symbol of the covenant about his brow; and in the other passage our Lord, as King, is represented as sitting upon the throne, surrounded with the insignia of the covenant of grace which encompasses the throne, so that there are no goings forth of his majesty and his power and his grace, except in a covenant way and after a covenant sort, since the rainbow must be passed, before the bright rays of his power and love can reach the sons of men.

This brings us now into the centre of our discourse. We have to talk of two things—first, the tenor of the covenant, and secondly, the token of it—running a parallel all the way through between the two covenants. The tenor of Noah's covenant is the tenor of the covenant of grace—just as the rainbow represents, and in some sense is, the token of the covenant of grace also.

## I. First, then, the covenant itself: WHAT IS ITS TENOR?

We reply, that it is a covenant of pure grace. There was nothing in Noah why God should make a covenant with him. He was a sinner—and proved himself to be so in a most shocking manner within a few days; he needed a sacrifice, for he afterwards became drunken. He was one of the best of men; but the best of men are but men at the best, and can have no claim upon the favour of God. He was saved by faith as the rest of us must be, and faith we all know is inconsistent with any claim of merit. (See full sermon [THE RAINBOW](#))

**Genesis 9:17 And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."**

- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### GOD POINTS NOAH TO THE SIGN

**And God said to Noah, "This is the sign (['oth](#)) of the covenant ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."** - God seals the covenant promise by repeating the sign which guarantees He will keep the promises of the covenant.

[Steven Cole](#) on **This is the sign** - God binds Himself by His covenant and lays down the terms of His relationship to man. It is for us simply to receive it and act upon it. Notice how repeatedly God emphasizes to Noah that it is He, God, who is making the covenant: "I Myself do establish My covenant with you" (Ge 9:9); "And I establish My covenant with you" (Ge 9:11); "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you" (Ge 9:12); "... My bow ... shall be for a sign of a covenant" (Ge9:13); "I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you" (Ge 9:15); "I will look upon it [the rainbow], to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature" (Ge 9:16); "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh" (Ge 9:17). Over and over God drives home the point so that Noah can be assured, not based on his feelings, but on God's sure word. And yet God wanted Noah to get beyond the intellectual level to the feeling level, so that, based on his faith, Noah would know in his heart that God's judgment was past. Noah's trust in God would have been strengthened from these words repeated by God. God wants us to know that we have eternal life if we have believed in Christ. It is not based on our feelings, but on the sure word of the Lord, who has said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27–30).

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#### Brian Borgman: The Covenant with Noah

Opportunity for Noah to start over; but if you could make a fresh start would it actually make a difference? The world gets a fresh start; God reboots the whole thing; starts with one righteous family; very repetitive text; tenses of verbs change as text progresses

(Ge 9:1-7) **The Old and the New Laws for the New World** See the new world emerging; New Adam in the person of Noah; Ge 9:1 and Ge 9:7 are bookend commands echoing Gen 1; New world is not completely new; sin still present

Certain changes made to the world; Man's dominion based now on fear largely instead of harmony; Expanded menu – now we eat steak

Death penalty instituted; emphasizes the value of human life; punishment must fit the crime;

- Life Promoted
- Life Protected
- Life Promoted

(Ge 9:8-11) **God Confirms His Covenant** "I, myself" – emphatic

God initiating, sustaining, completing the covenant (difference in verb tenses) Not the typical language for making a covenant which would be cut a covenant; not inaugurating something entirely new but a reinstatement and upholding of a covenant initiated at creation; Parties of the Covenant: Noah and his descendants; all flesh on the earth; every living creature; Really a covenant with all of creation; God's concern and commitment for the preservation of this world and the life in it; Content of the Covenant: vs. 11 – God's judgment is called God's strange work; not the work He delights in (which is showing mercy, grace, love);

(Ge 9:12-17) **Sign of the Covenant Given** – serves as God's bond not to destroy the earth again thru a flood – bookends in this section

Signs of various covenants: Abraham – circumcision Israel – Passover; Sabbath Church – bread and cup

"My bow" = sign of this covenant – one of the last things you would want to see rolling in = clouds; connection to God's presence and majesty;

Ge 9:17 – ends the flood narrative; inclusio; Promise to preserve the earth until Jesus comes back; How are we doing in promoting and protecting life?

Fresh start is not enough to solve problem of sin. The problems of the old world will become immediately the problems of the new world because of sinfulness of man; You are still you; Adam sins by eating; Noah sins by drinking; Bigger plan of God: to preserve the world until He can rescue and deliver and redeem it through the last Adam, Jesus Christ

**Genesis 9:18 Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan.**

- **Shem** - Ge 9:23 10:1 1Ch 1:4
- **Ham** - Ge 10:1,6
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### THE SONS WHO EXITED THE ARK

**Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark**([tebah](#); Lxx = [kibotos](#)) **were Shem and Ham and Japheth** - (See naming of Noah's sons in Ge 5:32, 6:10, 7:13) These three would father the three great families of mankind. Note that the sons are not listed in order of birth (Japheth was the eldest). Presumably **Shem** is mentioned first because he was the one who worshipped God and through whom God would carry out His plan of redemption by sending the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world.

**and Ham was the father of Canaan** - Was [Canaan](#) already born at this time? We cannot say for sure, but possibly Canaan was born for recall that they had been on the Ark over a year and Ham's wife may have become pregnant on the Ark.

**NET NOTE** - The concluding disjunctive clause is parenthetical (Ge 9:18NET = *(Now Ham was the father of Canaan.)*). It anticipates the following story, which explains that the Canaanites, Ham's descendants through Canaan, were cursed because they shared the same moral abandonment that their ancestor displayed.

**Bob Utley** on **Canaan**-- He is mentioned for possibly two reasons (1) Noah's drunkenness and resulting curse will affect Canaan (2) the Canaanites became Israel's major theological problem in later years (i.e., Moses' lifetime) SEE [PRE-ISRAELITE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE](#)

**Gotquestions** has a good summary of the ages of Noah's 3 sons -**Japheth** was born when Noah was 500 years old, and the flood came 100 years later (Genesis 7:6–7). Since **Shem** was 100 two years after the flood (Genesis 11:10), he must have been born when Noah was 502 years old. There is no record of when **Ham** was born other than the fact that he was born sometime after Shem (Genesis 9:24 - for he was "the youngest son" of Noah).

**Canaan** - The fourth son of Ham, (Ge 10:6; 1Ch 1:8 Ge 9:18, 22, 25-27,) the progenitor of the Phoenicians, and of the various nations who before the Israelite conquest people the seacoast of Palestine, and generally the country westward of the Jordan. (Genesis 10:13; 1 Chronicles 1:13) Descendants of Canaan (Ge 10:15; 1Ch 1:13). Eleven nations, descended from Canaan (Ge 10:15-19; Dt. 7:1; 1Ch 1:13-16).

#### QUESTION - [Who was Shem in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Shem was one of the three [sons of Noah](#). Before the great flood that God used to judge the inhabitants of the earth for their great wickedness (Genesis 6:5–7), God instructed the righteous Noah to build a great ark to save Noah and his wife, along with their sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. The Lord brought two of every kind of unclean animal and seven of every kind of clean animal and shut them up in the ark before the flood waters covered the earth (Genesis 7:14–16). The families and animals were in the ark for about 370 days: 40 days and 40 nights during the rains, and then the remainder of the time waiting for the flood waters to recede (see Genesis 7:1–8:19).

Shem is always mentioned first among the sons of Noah, possibly because he was of primary importance to Moses' audience, the Hebrews. Shem was their ancestor. In the birth order of Noah's sons, Shem was the middle child, as calculated below:

- according to Genesis 5:32, Noah began having children when he was 500 years old.
- according to Genesis 7:11, Noah was 600 years old when the flood began (making his oldest child 100 years old)
- according to Genesis 11:10, Shem had a child when he was 100 years old, *two years after the flood* (making him 98 years old at the time of the flood)
- since we know that Ham was not the oldest (according to Genesis 9:24), the 100-year-old son at the time of the flood must have been Japheth

Shem, along with his brothers and their wives, fulfilled God's command to begin repopulating the earth (Genesis 9:7). Shem's line produced the Assyrians, [Chaldeans](#), Elamites, [Arameans](#), [Moabites](#), [Ammonites](#), Edomites, Arabs, and [Hebrews](#). Shem's name is the origin of the word *Semitic*; Shem's great-grandson Eber was the father of those who were eventually called "Hebrews," including Abram and the Jews (see Genesis 10 and 11 for more on Shem's line).

There is only one other story that deals with Shem, son of Noah. After the flood, Noah became something of a farmer and grew a vineyard (Genesis 9:20). He became drunk on the wine one day and passed out naked in his tent (verse 21). Noah's son [Ham](#) found him thus, but instead of covering his father or helping him in any way, he reported the incident to his brothers outside (verse 22). Shem and Japheth brought some sort of garment into the tent, and, walking backward so they would not see their father's nakedness, they covered Noah with the garment (verse 23). When Noah woke, he was angry with Ham for his neglect and cursed him, but he blessed both Shem and Japheth for the respect they showed (verses 24–27).

After Shem had fathered many children, he passed away at the old age of 600 (Genesis 11:10–11). Shem is mentioned in the New Testament as an ancestor of Jesus (Luke 3:36). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Ham in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Ham was one of the three sons of Noah. Ham and his wife, along with the rest of Noah's family, were saved from the [great flood](#) God sent to judge the earth, which had grown increasingly wicked. Once the flood waters had receded, God commanded Noah's family, specifically his sons and their wives, to multiply and repopulate the earth. Ham himself became the father of the Canaanites, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians, the Cushites, and the Egyptians (Genesis 10:6–20).

Ham was involved in a sordid family incident. As Noah's family worked to reestablish civilization after the flood, Noah became "a man of the soil" and grew a vineyard (Genesis 9:20). One day, he became [drunk](#) after imbibing some of the wine he had produced. Ham entered Noah's tent and found his father there, passed out and naked. Ham told his brothers of their father's condition, and Shem and Japheth walked backward into the tent, their faces turned respectfully away, and covered their father with a garment (verses 22–23). When Noah awoke, he realized "what his youngest son had done to him" (verse 24). Noah blessed Shem and Japheth for their action, but he omitted Ham from the blessing. In addition, Noah cursed Ham and Ham's son, Canaan, who it seems had also been involved in the matter somehow (verse 25).

The exact reason for [Noah's curse](#) on Ham and Canaan is unknown, because the Bible does not give any detail as to Ham's specific actions in the tent. The curse may have been due to an *inaction* on Ham's part—that is, Ham did not afford Noah the same respect and courtesy Shem and Japheth had shown him. Some speculate that Ham actively violated his father somehow, and rabbinic tradition states that Ham castrated Noah. Whatever happened, Noah was greatly displeased and cursed Ham's and his line through Canaan: "Cursed be Canaan! / The lowest of slaves / will he be to his brothers" (Genesis 9:25).

The Bible does not relate exactly how Ham's son Canaan served Japheth and Shem. Much later, however, Canaan's line did indeed experience enslavement at the hands of Shem's descendants. The Canaanites were destroyed or subjugated by Israel (who are Shemites) during the conquest of the Promised Land. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Japheth in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Japheth was one of three sons of [Noah](#), the righteous man whose family God saved from the great flood.

Hundreds of years after God created the world, man had fallen into such a state of depravity that "the Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled" (Genesis 6:6). There was one righteous man named Noah, and the Lord commanded him to build an ark so his family would be saved. After bringing two of every unclean animal and seven of every clean animal to the ark, the Lord shut the door and sent the rains (Genesis 7:13–16). Noah; his wife; his sons, [Shem](#), [Ham](#), and Japheth; and their wives were saved.



When the flood waters subsided and Noah's family exited the ark, God commanded them to repopulate the earth. Noah began to tend the ground and grow a vineyard, but there is not much more said about Shem, Ham, or Japheth except in the account of Noah's drunkenness in Genesis 9:20–27. This passage describes a day Noah became drunk on the wine from his vineyard and passed out naked in his tent. Ham found Noah in that shameful condition and told Shem and Japheth what he had seen (Ge 9:22). Shem and Japheth brought in a garment and, walking backward so they wouldn't shame their father by looking at his nakedness, covered Noah with the garment (Ge 9:23). When Noah woke, he [cursed Ham](#) but blessed Shem and Japheth (Ge 9:24–27). Japheth's blessing took the form of these words: "May God extend Japheth's territory; / may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, / and may Canaan [Ham's son] be the slave of Japheth" (Ge 9:27).

After the flood, Japheth and his brothers did indeed multiply and repopulate the earth. Japheth himself fathered seven sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras (Genesis 10:2).

The descendants of Japheth included various maritime peoples (Ge 10:5) as well as the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Scythians, and Macedonians. Japheth's descendants spread out over much of Asia and Europe and, through colonization, North America, thus fulfilling Noah's prediction of "expansion" for Japheth.[GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### QUESTION - [What is the biblical account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth?](#)

**ANSWER** - [Shem](#), [Ham](#), and [Japheth](#) were the three [sons of Noah](#) who along with their wives were carried in the ark during the great flood. Their descendants went on to re-populate the world (Genesis 10:1). Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth after he was 500 years old (Genesis 5:32). If Noah had any other children, they are not mentioned in the biblical account. Only Shem, Ham, and Japheth are mentioned.

The Israelites came from the line of Shem; in fact, the word *Semite* comes from the name of Shem. Other descendants of Shem include the [Assyrians](#), [Chaldeans](#), Elamites, [Arameans](#), [Moabites](#), [Ammonites](#), and [Edomites](#). Japheth's line produced the [Persians](#), Romans, Scythians, and Macedonians. Ham's line produced the [Canaanites](#), the [Babylonians](#), the Phoenicians, the [Cushites](#), and the Egyptians. Each of the races and people-groups that exist today can trace their lineage back to one of these three brothers.

There is only one biblical story recorded that concerns Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After the flood waters receded, Noah was "a man of the soil" and grew a vineyard (Genesis 9:20). One day, after drinking too much wine, Noah passed out in his tent and lay there naked and exposed. Ham "saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside" (Genesis 9:22). Some have suggested that Ham—or possibly his son Canaan—performed an inappropriate sexual act on his drunken father, but that is nothing more than speculation. Whatever the extent of Ham's sin, Shem and Japheth refused to join him in dishonoring their father; instead, they walked into the tent backward without looking at Noah and lay a blanket over him to cover him (Genesis 9:23). When Noah woke up and found out what Ham had done, he cursed Ham's child, Canaan, saying, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Genesis 9:25). Noah then blessed his other two sons and reiterated Canaan's servitude to both Shem and Japheth (verses 26–27).

Noah's curse on Canaan was not an empty threat. In fact, it could be seen as a prophecy of events to unfold in the lives of the Canaanites. In Genesis 10, the descendants of Canaan are listed. They include the Sidonians, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 10:15–19). Noah's curse/prophecy came true during the time of Joshua. The Canaanites, descendants of Ham and Canaan, were conquered by the Israelites, descendants of Shem. True to God's Word, some of the Canaanites became slaves (Joshua 9:27; 17:12–13). It's important to note that Noah's three sons were blessed (Genesis 9:1) and, out of Ham's descendants, only the line of Canaan was cursed (Genesis 9:25). The historical record supports the fact of Noah's curse on Canaan and is powerful evidence of the accuracy of Scripture.[GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### QUESTION - [Who were the sons of Noah, and what happened to them and their descendants?](#)

**ANSWER** - [Noah](#) had three sons born to him, [Shem](#), [Ham](#), and [Japheth](#), before God sent a [flood](#) to destroy the world (Genesis 5:32). Whenever the names of Noah's three sons are recorded, Shem is always mentioned first (e.g., Genesis 9:18; 10:2, 21), even though Shem was the second-born (the Bible often lists people according to prominence rather than age). Japheth was the oldest (Genesis 10:21), and Ham was the youngest (Genesis 9:24).

Japheth was born when Noah was 500 years old, and the flood came 100 years later (Genesis 7:6–7). Since Shem was 100 two years after the flood (Genesis 11:10), he must have been born when Noah was 502 years old. There is no record of when Ham was born other than the fact that he was born sometime after Shem (Genesis 9:24).

"Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber" (Genesis 10:21), and this is important because the word *Eber* is the origin of the Hebrew word for "Hebrew." The word *Shem* means "name," which implies that Noah expected this son's name to become great. He

was right—the modern words *Semitic* and *Semite* are derived from Shem's name. The Bible records that Shem had five sons: Elam, Ashur, Arphaxad, Lud, and [Aram](#) (Genesis 10:22). Shem lived to be 600 years of age (Genesis 11:10–11) and became the ancestor of the Semitic peoples (Genesis 10:1, 21–31). Abraham, a descendant of Shem, is the first person in the Bible who is referred to as a “Hebrew” (Genesis 14:13).

Noah blessed Shem above his brothers (Genesis 9:26–27), and it was through Shem that the [promised seed](#) destined to crush Satan came (Genesis 3:15). That seed is traced back to Adam's son Seth (Genesis 5:1–32), through Shem, and on to Abraham, Judah, and David, leading all the way to Christ (Luke 3:36).

Shem's son Elam was the father of the Elamites, who later settled east of Mesopotamia. Shem's son Ashur, whose name is related to the word *Assyria*, is most likely is the father of those who settled the ancient region of Assyria (Genesis 2:14). Arphaxad is thought by many scholars to be a compound form of the Hebrew word for “Chaldea,” which was a region in southern Mesopotamia (Genesis 11:10–13). It was through Arphaxad that Eber came. Scholars believe that the descendants of Shem's son Lud became known as the Lydians of Asia Minor. And Aram is identified by Bible scholars with the area northeast of the Promised Land, known today as Syria (cf. 2 Kings 16:6). The sons of Aram are listed in Genesis 10:23. Of Aram's sons, Uz is later referred to in the book of Job (Job 1:1).

Noah's firstborn son, [Japheth](#), is listed as the father of Gomer, [Magog](#), Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras (Genesis 10:2). Their descendants became the people who lived to the north and west of Israel and, after Babel, spoke what today are classified as Indo-European languages.

In blessing his son Japheth, Noah said, “May God extend Japheth's territory; / may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, / and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth” (Genesis 9:27). There are two schools of thought regarding what this prophecy about Japheth means.

Some scholars are of the opinion that the enlargement of Japheth's territory refers to a great numerical increase of his descendants. The comment “may Japheth live in the tents of Shem” means that Japheth will share in the blessings of Shem. According to this view, there was to be a time when God worked primarily with Shem (the people of Israel), but later Japheth would be brought into connection with the faith of Israel to share Israel's blessings. A similar prophecy is evident in the [Abrahamic Covenant](#), when God promises to bless all nations through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3). The fulfillment is found in Christ and in the gospel coming to the Gentiles at the inception of the church (Acts 15:7; Romans 15:16; Galatians 2:2). Other scholars are of the opinion that the extension of Japheth's territory refers to territorial enlargement, and living “in the tents of Shem” is the conquest of the [Semites'](#) territory by Japhethites. According to this view, the fulfillment was the Greek and Roman conquests of Israel.

[Ham](#), the youngest of Noah's three sons, had four sons: Cush, Mizraim (Hebrew for “Egypt”), Put, and Canaan (Genesis 10:6; 1 Chronicles 1:8). Egypt was later called the “land of Ham” (Psalm 78:51; 105:23; 106:22). The Hamitic peoples are shown in Genesis 10:6–20 as becoming a godless and worldly power. It was the land of Israel that was assigned to Ham's son, Canaan, and for centuries it was under the control of the Egyptians. Ham is the father of the Arabians, Canaanites, and Africans, including the Egyptians. Due to Ham's sin against his father (Genesis 9:20–25), Noah [cursed Canaan](#), saying Canaan would be a servant to Shem (Genesis 9:26). This was fulfilled centuries later when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan and subdued the inhabitants of that land (1 Kings 9:20–21). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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## **Brian Borgman: Sin, Curse and Blessing**

(Ge 9::18-19) **Prologue** Possible title for this sermon = Don't be a ham! Think of great hopes Noah would have had for his family and for this new world;

### **(Ge 9::20-23) Sin of Noah and Ham**

Sordid story – (apart from expository, consecutive preaching we would skip this story) Noah is a man of Adam, of the ground; takes up that agricultural calling in direct connection to Adam; Plants a vineyard; not a new thing – people were drinking wine before the flood and getting drunk; Noah is subduing the earth; making it productive; doing what God had called him to do; Abuse of God's gift = fruit of vine; don't excuse Noah here; decides to hang out disrobed; Connection between shame of drunkenness and nakedness – cf. Adam sinning and knowing that he was naked; No clear evidence that Ham did any more than see the nakedness of his father;

### **(Ge 9::24-27) Prophetic Oracles given by Noah**

How did Noah know? Came out of his drunken state; maybe someone told him; maybe God revealed it to him; He begins to speak a curse and blessing; not pronouncing some type of magical words like a hex; but giving prophetic oracles from God; These are the only recorded words of Noah in the bible; Wouldn't you expect him to curse Ham ... but instead Canaan; message of doom; bible does not teach generational sins and curses; sons won't be put to death for the sins of their fathers; Cf. Ezek. 18 – the soul that sins

shall surely die; not based on your father; Later generations may repeat the sins of their fathers; the one who has been abused often times becomes an abuser; A bad day for Noah and his family; Noah saw same traits in Canaan as in his father;

(Ge 9:28-29) **Epilogue**

Picking back up text from chap. 5. Not mainly a passage railing against drunkenness; Circumstances may have provided opportunity for sin; but Ham still morally culpable; can't blame the sin of his father; Sons of Noah got on ark because they exhibited some degree of righteousness like their father; Ham acting under the power of the serpent; think of outcome if Ham had been successful; Sin and rebellion leads to slavery and bondage

**Genesis 9:19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.**

- **These** - Ge 5:32
- **and** - Ge 8:17 10:2-32 1Ch 1:4-28
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Genesis 8:17 **"Bring out** with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and **be fruitful** and **multiply** on the earth."

Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, **"Be fruitful** and **multiply**, and **fill** the earth.

Genesis 9:7 "As for you, **be fruitful** and **multiply**; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."

### **SOURCE OF EVERY PEOPLE GROUP ON EARTH**

**These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated**([naphats/napas](#)) - The Hebrew verb [naphats/napas](#) translated **populated** is translated in the Septuagint with [diaspeiro](#) meaning to disperse throughout or scatter abroad. So the picture of **populated** is of the offspring of Noah's three sons being dispersed or scattered throughout the earth, a phenomenon which is further described in Genesis 10 and Genesis 11. Shem, Ham and Japheth (the 3 gene sources for the entire world) obeyed God's repeated commands to **be fruitful** and **multiply**.

**Bob Utley** on **whole earth was populated** - This was the repeatedly stated purpose of God (i.e., fill the earth). The tower of Babel was in direct defiance to this. It is interesting that modern mitochondrial DNA studies have concluded that the original humans came from north Africa, while modern philology has determined that all human languages started in northern India. Notice how geographically near this is to the biblical account. Apparently all the different races of humans are direct descendants of these three brothers. Modern DNA research has shown that humans of all races are genetically the same!

**The Defender's Study Bible** (BORROW) - This plain declaration (see also Genesis 10:32) leaves **no possibility that any other people survived the worldwide Flood**. All the world's present peoples are descendants of Noah's three sons and their wives. The gene pool from these six individuals (all originally from Adam and Eve, of course)(**ED**: INCLUDING THE "GENE" FROM Ro 5:12+) provided far more than enough genetic variational potential to account for the wide range in national and tribal characteristics which have surfaced since the Flood. The world's present population of approximately six billion people likewise could easily have been developed in, say, 4000 years. An average annual growth rate of ½% (only one-fourth the present rate), or an average family size of only 2.5 children per family, could easily accomplish this.

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**Populated** ([05310](#))([naphats/napas](#)) has two meanings (1) to shatter, to break, to smash. It describes the action of shattering or breaking something: pitchers (Judg. 7:19; Jer. 22:28; 48:12); Used of persons, the word can indicate their dispersal, scattering (Isa. 11:12). (2) spread out, to disperse, to scatter. It indicates the dispersal of peoples across the earth (Ge 9:19); of persons drifting away because of losing interest (1 Sam. 13:11); of loading logs, dividing them onto rafts or possibly cutting timber into smaller pieces (1 Ki. 5:9)

**Gilbrant** - It is debatable whether nāphats should be considered one primary root or two. Brown-Driver-Briggs lists it as two forms, one meaning "to shatter" and the other meaning "to scatter." The Theological Wordbook of

the Old Testament prefers to see one form which can cover both shades of meaning—shattering something naturally leads to scattering of the pieces. The meaning "to shatter" is attested in Jewish Aramaic, Arabic and Mandaean, while the meaning "to scatter" is attested in Akkadian and Arabic.

Nāphats was used of the action of Gideon's men who shattered the pitchers that concealed their torches (Judg. 7:19), and Jeremiah employed the verb figuratively to describe Coniah as a clay jar shattered by God's judgment (Jer. 22:28). In Dan. 12:7, versions disagree whether to translate it as a prediction of "scattering" the power of the holy people (KJV) or "shattering" it (NASB).

In the Piel stem, nāphats appears in Ps. 137:9 in a hope that someone would smash the infants of Babylon against a rock to repay the Babylonians for similar atrocities in nations like Judah. In Jer. 51:20-23, the Lord declares nine times that He will use Babylon as his club to shatter all those who are the objects of his judgment. A similar prophecy in Jer. 13:14 pictures God slamming the wicked Jews against each other. Psalm 2:9 warns the nations who oppose God that He will shatter them like an earthenware pot. Jeremiah 48:12 uses the word once again to describe judgment on Moab. Isaiah promised that Israel's sin would be forgiven when the shrines of idols were destroyed, so that the stones of the altars would be smashed or pulverized like chalk (Isa. 27:9). Each use implies a violent smashing into small pieces, and virtually every passage uses nāphats to describe judgment by God.

Other passages clearly use the verb for the idea of scattering. Genesis 9:19 records that after Noah's flood, the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth repopulated the entire earth, scattering across the globe. This process is amplified in Gen. 10. King Saul protested to Samuel that he had been forced into offering a sacrifice, because his troops were starting to scatter and drift away from the battle (1 Sam. 13:11). Second Samuel 18:8 describes the battle between the armies of David and Absalom as being dispersed all over the countryside. The prophet Isaiah pictured the nations who opposed God dispersing as soon as the Lord rose up to fight against them (Isa. 33:3). Yet God will reverse the flow when He comes to deliver his people; Isa. 11:12 portrays the Lord gathering the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

**Naphats/napas** - Gen. 9:19; Jdg. 7:19; 1 Sam. 13:11; 1 Ki. 5:9; Ps. 2:9; Ps. 137:9; Isa. 11:12; Isa. 27:9; Isa. 33:3; Jer. 13:14; Jer. 22:28; Jer. 48:12; Jer. 51:20; Jer. 51:21; Jer. 51:22; Jer. 51:23; Dan. 12:7

### Genesis 9:20 Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.

- **farming** - Ge 3:18,19,23 4:2 5:29 Pr 10:11 12:11 Ec 5:9 Isa 28:24-26
- **planted** - De 20:6 28:30 Pr 24:30 Song 1:6 1Co 9:7

### A SIGNIFICANT TIME PHRASE

**Then** - This time phrase marking progression is a strategic signpost which will lead to unrighteous behavior.

**Noah began farming and planted a vineyard** - **Farming** is literally "The man of the land" or "man of the soil." So far, so good, like the say. There was no sin in **farming** and planting a **vineyard**, but as the story unfolds (unravels) there was a "seed" of sin that would soon bloom into a sinful act and yield corrupt fruit and a curse.

### Genesis 9:21 He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

- and was - Ge 6:9 19:32-36 Pr 20:1 23:31,32 Ec 7:20 Lu 22:3,4 Ro 13:13 1Co 10:12 Ga 5:21 Tit 2:2
- and he - Hab 2:15,16 Rev 3:18

#### Related Passages:

Habakkuk 2:15 (**DRUNKENNESS AND NAKEDNESS!!!**) "Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, Who mix in your venom even to **make them drunk So as to look on their nakedness!**

Lamentations 4:21 (**DRUNKENNESS AND NAKEDNESS!!!**) Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, Who dwells in the land of Uz; But the cup will come around to you as well, **You will become drunk and make yourself naked.**

Genesis 19:30–38 Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters. 31 Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth. 32 **"Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father."** 33 So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 34 On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father." 35 So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. 37 The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. 38 As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.

### **NOAH'S DRUNKENNESS AND NAKEDNESS: A NEW WORLD BUT SIN ALIVE AND WELL!**

Note that Moses' record of events in Genesis moves forward in time, for it would take some time to plant grape vines that produce grapes which would then need to be fermented. One internet source says "Generally speaking, a grape vine growing in your backyard could take three years to produce a good crop of viable grapes." And by this time Noah would surely have had several grandsons if Shem, Ham and Japheth had obeyed God's command to be fruitful and multiply.

**Nahum M. Sarna** in his [The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis](#) explains that "The narrative is also separated from the account of the Flood by a time lapse equivalent to the years it takes for a newly planted vine to yield its grape harvest. This span of time is clearly indicated by the fact that Noah by now has a grown grandson. Nevertheless, a sense of continuity with the foregoing is conveyed by the connectives of verses 18–19, as by the unstated but pertinent historical fact that the vine and viticulture were highly developed in the region of Armenia, where the ark grounded."

**R Kent Hughes** adds that "this event was some time after the flood because it takes years for a vineyard to produce, not to mention that he now had numerous grandsons because Ham's son Canaan was the youngest of four (cf. Ge 10:6+). He was a seasoned man of the soil, and he knew what wine could do. He was no helpless victim. He passed out because his drinking had gone out of control. Noah had wrought his own degradation. The Hebrew "lay uncovered" is reflexive, which emphasizes that he "uncovered himself"...He was so utterly inebriated that he stripped himself naked and passed out. Having uncovered himself, he therefore had covered himself with shame and disgrace (cf. Habakkuk 2:15; Lamentations 4:21)." (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 150](#))

**He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered ([galah](#); Lxx = gumnoo) himself inside his tent** - Don't read by this too fast (especially if you like to imbibe "spirits") for here is picture of what any righteous man or woman can sadly imitate - righteous, rescued Noah passed out in a drunken stupor on the floor of his tent! What a sad sight, one that would prove especially sad for the sight of Ham! The verbs **drank**, **drunk** and **uncovered**, shows the downward spiral that can occur when alcohol is imbibed in excess. **Uncovered** is in the Hebrew stem [hithpael](#) which is reflexive (subject carries out action on himself = "Noah uncovered himself in his drunken stupor!" Where is Mrs. Noah???) Note also that the verb **uncovered ([galah](#))** is translated in the Lxx by the rarely used verb gumnoo/gymnoo (no uses in NT) which means to be stripped naked, laid bare (and is in the passive/middle voice = reflexive)! Alcohol can dull (that's being kind and euphemistic) one's inhibitions to the point that the person's behavior is out of character and out of control as was righteous Noah's unrighteous act of stripping himself naked which opened the way for Ham's heinous sin (whatever it was)!

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, we need to learn not only from Noah's faith but also from his unfaithfulness. This section shows how one of the greatest saints in the Old Testament gave in to the lusts of his flesh and sinned against God. And sadly the sin of the father produce the rotten fruit of consequences for his son and grandson! Woe!

Some commentators have tried to soften the blow to Noah's righteous character. And so [Keil and Delitzsch](#) wrote that "In ignorance of the fiery nature of wine, Noah drank and was drunken, and uncovered himself in his tent." They [cut Noah some slack!](#) Interesting!

[Wiersbe](#) - Noah didn't plan to get drunk and shamelessly expose himself, but it happened just the same. The Japanese have an appropriate proverb: "First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man."

As **Spurgeon** said, "God never allows His children to sin successfully." There's always a price to pay.

[John Calvin](#) - we are to learn from the drunkenness of Noah, what a filthy and detestable crime drunkenness is. The holy patriarch, though he had hitherto been a rare example of frugality and temperance, losing all self-possession, did, in a base and shameful manner, prostrate himself naked on the ground, so as to become a laughingstock to all. Therefore, with what care ought we to cultivate sobriety, lest anything like this, or even worse, should happen to us? Formerly, the heathen philosopher said, that wine is the blood of the earth; and, therefore, when men intemperately pour it down their throats, they are justly punished by their mother. Let us, however, rather remember, that when men, by shameful abuse, profane this noble and most precious gift of God, He himself becomes the Avenger. And let us know, that Noah, by the judgement of Gods has been set forth as a spectacle to be a warning to others, that they should not become intoxicated by excessive drinking. Some excuse might certainly be made for the holy man; who, having completed his labor, and being exhilarated with wine, imagines that he is but taking his just reward. But God brands him with an eternal mark of disgrace. What then, do we suppose, will happen to those idle-bellies and insatiable gluttons whose sole object of contention is who shall consume the greatest quantity of wine? And although this kind of correction was severe, yet it was profitable to the servant of God; since he was recalled to sobriety, lest by proceeding in the indulgence of a vice to which he had once yielded, he should ruin himself; just as we see drunkards become at length brutalized by continued intemperance.

**Graeme Goldsworthy** rightly says "The flood did not purge the earth of wickedness and we cannot suppose that such was its purpose." (BORROW [According to Plan - page 140](#)) To which Hughes adds "Indeed, if God wanted to eradicate evil, he would have had to eradicate the entire human race. But this God would not do—because he had promised that the offspring of Eve would one day crush the head of Satan (cf. Genesis 3:15+)."

*The virulence of sin is astounding!*

-- R Kent Hughes

**R Kent Hughes** has a sobering comment (ESPECIALLY FOR US OLDER FOLKS - I CAN DEFINITELY IDENTIFY WITH THIS WARNING) - Nonetheless, the virulence of sin is astounding. Noah was the one righteous man on the face of the earth. His righteousness was not self-generated, but God-given imputed righteousness that came by faith. His blameless life had been a thing of wonder in the depraved pre-diluvian world. But sin at that moment had conquered him. This helpless drunk, fallen unconscious in his tent, is as significant a warning to us as the flood. Noah could not make it on his own. He was terribly flawed (**ED: CAN I ECHO AN AMEN TO MY STATE!**). He needed help from beyond himself. He needed God's grace (**ED: I ADD THAT WE DESPERATELY NEED THE ENABLING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - Romans 8:13+**). Noah's folly is recorded to make us wise. **His pathetic example demonstrates that people in their prime, and even in their old age, are sometimes overtaken by sensualities that they before had avoided.** (**ED: DEAR OLDER SAINT - PERHAPS YOU MIGHT WANT TO READ THAT SENTENCE IN BOLD AGAIN! I NEED TO READ IT AGAIN EVEN IF YOU DO NOT!**) I have known this because it has been told to me for years. But now I can feel it—the tendency to allow myself indulgences that I avoided when younger, be they visual or mental or physical, with the dismissive line that "I'm too old for these things to harm me." (**ED: WOE!**) The tendency is to ease up when the conflicts lessen (**ED: WHICH THEY DO -- I AM 77 AND CONFLICTS ARE STILL PRESENT BUT DEFINITELY FAR FEWER**). When all the world was against Noah, he faced scorn and violence straight-up. But in his vineyard among his own who needed no proof of his virtue, he relaxed (**ED: READ THAT WORD AGAIN "HE RELAXED!" BEWARE WHEN YOU "RELAX" AND LET DOWN YOUR GUARD, BELOVED! REMEMBER THE AXIOMATIC TRUTH THAT SIN IS EVER CROUCHING AT THE DOOR AND IT'S DESIRE IS FOR YOU/ME! MEDITATE ON Ge 4:7+. SEE ALSO PAUL'S WARNING IN 1Cor 10:12+. FINALLY READ JESUS' CHARGE IN Mt 26:41+**) Marcus Dods observed, "Noah is not the only man who has walked uprightly and kept his garment unspotted (Jas 1:27+) from the world so long as the eye of man was on him, but who has lain uncovered on his own tent floor." ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)) **We can become so careless in our home life that we forgo spiritual disciplines around those we trust. All too often the walls of our homes witness irritabilities and anger and slanderous words and laziness and sensualities that—if the walls could speak—would take our gray hairs down to Sheol....**Noah's failure stands as a witness to the dangers that await the faithful with the passing of years. His sorry lassitude is a call to vigilance. But even more, the Scriptures here record Noah's fall in order to instruct us that this great pre-diluvian who had so honored God was a flawed man—a sinner—and thus in need of continual grace. Sin came with him into the new world. The human predicament survived intact. This was the painful new-world reality. (BORROW [Genesis - Beginning and Blessing, page 150](#))

**"Let Me Get Home Before Dark"**

Robertson McQuilkin

It's sundown, Lord.

The shadows of my life stretch back  
into the dimness of the years long spent.

I fear not death, for that grim foe betrays himself at last,  
thrusting me forever into life:

Life with You, unsoiled and free.  
But I do fear.  
I fear the Dark Spectre may come too soon  
- or do I mean, too late?  
That I should end before I finish or  
finish, but not well.  
That I should stain Your honor, shame Your name,  
grieve Your loving heart.

**Few, they tell me, finish well . . .  
Lord, let me get home before dark.**

The darkness of a spirit  
grown mean and small,  
fruit shriveled on the vine,  
bitter to the taste of my companions,  
burden to be borne by those brave few  
who love me still.  
No, Lord. Let the fruit grow lush and sweet,  
A joy to all who taste;  
Spirit-sign of God at work,  
stronger, fuller, brighter at the end.  
Lord, let me get home before dark.

The darkness of tattered gifts,  
rust-locked, half-spent or ill-spent,  
A life that once was used of God  
now set aside.  
Grief for glories gone or  
Fretting for a task God never gave.  
Mourning in the hollow chambers of memory,  
Gazing on the faded banners of victories long gone.  
Cannot I run well unto the end?  
Lord, let me get home before dark.

The outer me decays -  
I do not fret or ask reprieve.  
The ebbing strength but weans me from mother earth  
and grows me up for heaven.  
I do not cling to shadows cast by immortality.  
I do not patch the scaffold lent to build the real, eternal me.  
I do not clutch about me my cocoon,  
vainly struggling to hold hostage  
a free spirit pressing to be born.

But will I reach the gate  
in lingering pain, body distorted, grotesque?  
Or will it be a mind  
wandering untethered among light phantasies or grim terrors?

Of Your grace, Father, I humbly ask. . .  
Let me get home before dark.

The poem above is from the book [Make it home before dark : God's call to holiness in our walk with Him](#) (BORROW)

[The Defender's Study Bible](#) (BORROW) - This is the first mention of wine (**ED**: AND "DRUNK") in Scripture, but there is no reason to doubt that the antediluvians used wine and intoxicating beverages (**ED**: SEE Ge 6:5+). Christ said they were characterized by much "eating and drinking" (Matthew 24:38+). Although the vapor canopy filtered much of the harmful radiation from space, fermentation as a decay process had probably been controlled and utilized by man since soon after the Fall.

**Bob Utley** - "became drunk" Drunkenness is deplored over and over again in Scripture (cf. Pr. 23:29-35). Yet wine is not the problem, but mankind's misuse of it (cf. Dt. 14:26; Ps. 104:15; Pr 31:6-7). SEE UTLEY'S INTERESTING ARTICLE - [BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOL ABUSE](#)

**Warren Wiersbe** - I'm an incurable reader of biographies and autobiographies, and I've often regretted turning the page of a book and discovering a grinning skeleton lurking in the closet of someone I've admired. American columnist Russell Baker said, "The biographer's problem is that he never knows enough. The autobiographer's problem is that he knows too much." But when God writes the story, He knows everything about everybody and always tells the truth, and He does it for our own good. The history of Noah and his family now moves from rainbows to shadows, and we behold the shameful sins of a great man of faith. Dr. William Culbertson, for many years president of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, often closed his public prayers with, "**And, Lord, help us to end well.**" God answered that prayer for Dr. Culbertson, but not every believer now in heaven ended the race hearing God's **Well done!**" However, let's be charitable and remember Paul's warning, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12 nkjv). After all, Noah didn't think it would happen to him!

**Steven Cole** writes that "It's always shocking and sad when a good man sins. When I hear of a Christian leader who has fallen, my initial response is usually, "I can't believe it! How could it happen?" Somehow I want to believe that if a man has walked with God for years, he builds up an immunity against sin. I want to hope that if I walk with God long enough, the day will come when temptation automatically glances off me. But it just ain't so! After walking closely with God for years, George Muller used to pray, "Lord, don't let me become a wicked old man." When I first read that years ago, I thought, "There's not a chance!" But I've come to understand his prayer. There isn't one of us, I don't care how long you've been a Christian, who doesn't face the constant struggle against sin. You never become invulnerable. Noah is "Exhibit A." He had walked with God for over 600 years! In a wicked world, Noah stood alone for God. He was the only man on earth whom God saw fit to save from the judgment of the flood. The opportunity to launch a new beginning for the human race stood before him. And what happened? He got drunk and uncovered himself within his tent. Shocking! Disgraceful! Unbelievable! Is this the same Noah?...If you condemn Noah, saying to yourself, "How could he do that?" you don't know your own heart. When it comes to godliness, Noah was top of the line. He was the most righteous man on the earth before the flood. Centuries later, through Ezekiel, God listed Noah, Daniel, and Job as three of the most righteous men in history (Ezek. 14:20)! And yet Noah got drunk and lay naked in his tent. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Past godliness doesn't guarantee future godliness. You don't build up an immunity toward sin. Neither age nor maturity provide protection against temptation. We must walk in dependence upon the Lord daily. Noah's sin also teaches us that we are often the most vulnerable when the pressure is off. When he was surrounded by wickedness, Noah lived righteously. But when the storm was over and he and his family were the only ones on earth, Noah fell into sin. When the pressure is off, our guard comes down. Constant vigilance is the price of victory over sin. Those who live righteously before God know their own propensity toward sin and live in constant dependence upon the Lord.

**Here is the practical question aged Noah's sin brings to mind...**

## **WILL YOU (I) FINISH WELL?**

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**Uncovered** (revealed, shamelessly uncovered) ([01540](#)) ([galah](#)) means to uncover (sadly the first use = Noah uncovering himself after becoming drunk! - Ge 9:21), to reveal (God revealed Himself to Jacob at Bethel, and thus the name El-Bethel - Ge 35:7. 2Sa 2:27), expose (Ex 20:26), open (God opened the eyes of Balaam to see the Angel of the LORD - Nu 22:31), reveal (Dt 29:29). Galah is used of not yet revealing the Word of the LORD to Samuel (1Sa 3:7) and of revealing Himself to Samuel (1Sa 3:21).

**Galah** is used in Leviticus 18:6+ "None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to **uncover** (galah) nakedness; I am the LORD." The NET Bible translates it "No man is to approach any close relative **to have sexual intercourse** with her. I am the LORD." (Lev 18:6NET)

**NET NOTE** - Heb "to uncover [her] nakedness" (cf. KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV), which is clearly euphemistic for sexual intercourse (see J. E. Hartley, Leviticus [WBC], 282, and B. A. Levine, Leviticus [JPSTC], 119). This expression occurs a number of times in the following context and is generally translated "have sexual intercourse with [someone]," although in the case of the father mentioned in the following verse the expression may be connected to the shame or disgrace that would belong to the father whose wife's sexuality is violated by his son.

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**QUESTION** - [Why did Noah get drunk after the flood?](#)

**ANSWER** - According to Genesis 9:20–21, at some point after the flood, Noah planted a vineyard, produced wine, and became [drunk](#). Not only did he become drunk, but he was naked inside his tent. What followed was the [sin of Ham](#) (and possibly



Canaan). This is an uncomfortable episode in [Noah's life](#), but it serves as a reminder that even those saved by the grace of God are prone to sin (Genesis 8:21). It's also a powerful warning about how just one careless decision can destroy the reputation of even the most godly man or woman. That's especially true when it comes to drinking. Although the Bible says that wine is good for cheer (Psalm 104:15), it also warns that it can be dangerous, especially for those in positions of authority (Proverbs 31:4).

What the Bible doesn't specify is "why" Noah became drunk. There are several possibilities, although none of them change the responsibilities of the people involved. Noah was responsible for his own actions, as were his sons. This includes Ham, who seems to have reacted with ridicule instead of compassion toward his inebriated father (Genesis 9:22).

One possibility is that Noah was haunted by his experiences during the flood and chose to over-consume wine and get drunk in order to ease his pain. Attempting to avoid negative feelings is one of the major reasons people abuse [alcohol](#) today. The strain of trying to rebuild a shattered world, on top of the horrific loss of human life, would doubtless have been a heavy burden to bear.

Another potential answer is that Noah's drunkenness was inadvertent and caused by old age. That is, Noah might have become drunk accidentally. After the [flood](#), mankind began aging much more rapidly. It's possible that Noah was feeling his age more than he knew and wasn't able to hold as much wine as he once did. This is a key danger of alcohol—it takes judgment to know when to stop, but good judgment is exactly what alcohol tends to erode.

Another option is that Noah became drunk because he wasn't experienced with large quantities of alcohol. Grapes existed before the flood, so man would have had the ability to press grapes before Noah entered the ark. But, according to the Bible, Noah was the first to plant a vineyard (Genesis 9:20). Common sense suggests that a cultivated vineyard will produce significantly more fruit, juice, and wine than wild vines. Noah may well have had access to more wine than he'd ever had before. Possibly, he carelessly consumed more than he had in the past, resulting in his drunken state.

Ultimately, we can't say for sure exactly why Noah became drunk. Scripture often leaves out details that are ultimately irrelevant to our relationship to God. The exact sequence of events leading to Noah's stumble isn't given in the Scriptures. What we do see is enough for us to understand the history of Noah's sons and to be warned about the power of what we put into our bodies. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### QUESTION - [Is getting drunk a sin?](#)

**ANSWER** - Becoming drunk by alcohol is clearly prohibited in the Bible (Proverbs 20:1; Pr 23:20, 29–32; Isaiah 5:22; Ephesians 5:18). There are many commands in Scripture about behaviors to avoid, such as drunkenness, sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18), and lying (Proverbs 6:16–17). But the Bible is far more than a definitive list of "sins." When we approach it as such, we are missing the point. God does not want us to check off a list and consider everything else acceptable. The Pharisees did that, and Jesus was not pleased with them (Luke 11:42; Matthew 23:23). God desires obedience that arises from a loving heart that wants to be like Him (1 Peter 1:15).

Getting drunk is a sin, but what about drinking in moderation? Drinking alcohol has been the subject of debate within the church for centuries. Years ago the majority of Christians considered drinking alcohol in any amount to be sinful. Today there is a much greater acceptance for moderate consumption of alcohol among Christians. In Bible times, anyone [set apart for God](#) was to totally abstain from any fruit of the vine during the time of his consecration (Judges 13:4; Leviticus 10:9; Numbers 6:3; Luke 1:15). Wine was sometimes symbolic of worldly contamination (Revelation 18:3), and those called into priestly service were to abstain from it when ministering in the tabernacle (Leviticus 10:9). **Such warnings have led many followers of Christ to forgo alcohol altogether, deeming any use of it unwise. Although drinking in moderation is not condemned in Scripture, losing self-control is, and there are many warnings about alcohol's destructive nature** (Proverbs 20:1; 31:4).

*Any master we obey other than the Lord is an idol, and idolatry is sin*

Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." Two elements are being compared: alcohol and the Holy Spirit. Each has the power to take control of a person's mind and behavior—with vastly different results. Getting drunk leads to a loss of self-control; being filled with the Spirit leads to more self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). We cannot be controlled by both alcoholic spirits and the Holy Spirit at the same time. When we choose to ingest mind-altering substances, we are effectively choosing to give ourselves over to the control of something other than the Holy Spirit. Anything that takes control of our mind, will, and emotions is a false god. Any master we obey other than the Lord is an idol, and idolatry is sin (1 Corinthians 10:14).

*When we get drunk with alcohol or high on drugs,  
we are serving a master other than the Lord.*

Getting drunk is a sin. Whether it be alcohol, drugs, or some other addictive behavior, Jesus said, "You cannot serve two masters"

(Matthew 6:24). When we get drunk with alcohol or high on drugs, we are serving a master other than the Lord. **Choosing to follow Jesus means choosing against our old sinful patterns and lifestyle. We cannot follow Jesus and also follow drunkenness, immorality, or worldly thinking** (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:1–6). They are going in opposite directions. 1 Corinthians 6:10 lists drunkards among those who “will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

**When we choose to be defined by our sin, we cannot also be a Christ-follower**(Galatians 5:19–21).

**When we choose drunkenness in spite of God’s command against it, we are choosing disobedience and cannot, in that state, be in fellowship with a holy God who condemns it** (Luke 14:26–27; Matthew 10:37–38). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Genesis 9:22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.**

- Ham - Ge 9:25 10:6,15-19 1Ch 1:8,13-16
- told - 2Sa 1:19,20 Ps 35:20,21 40:15 70:3 Pr 25:9 30:17 Ob 1:12,13 Mt 18:15 1Co 13:6 Ga 6:1
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## HAM SEES NOAH UNCOVERED

**Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside-** The text only speaks of Ham’s unfortunate sighting of his father without clothes. Nothing untoward could be discerned from this text. He could have accidentally glanced and saw his father’s nakedness. As the story unfolds clearly more is involved than just an accidental glance. And since the text says saw, it would appear that this was the essence of his sin and not that he carried out a perverted act on his father (see NET NOTE below).

**Borgman:** He dishonors his father – looks on his father’s disgrace with sense of perversity; goes out and tells his brothers; delighting in his father’s shameful and disgraceful position = the focal point. Warranted the death penalty – Ex. 20:12+ – honoring father and mother very important; Ex. 21:15ff; Deut. 21:18-21. We don’t understand significance of this in our culture. Compare God covering Adam and Eve (**ED: CONTRAST "LOIN COVERINGS" IN Ge 3:7+ AND Ge 3:21+ "THE LORD GOD MADE GARMENTS OF SKIN"**).

**Bob Utley** - In a theological sense, this section shows the continuing downward pull of the fall. Noah drunk! Ham intensely enjoying both his father’s folly and nakedness! This propensity towards irreverence and abuse of sexuality becomes so evident in Canaan’s descendants! The tendencies must have been evident to Noah who curses Canaan, not Ham. As a postscript, this episode has nothing, nothing to do with a biblical depreciation of the black race. Africans surely came from Ham but Canaanites were not black (i.e., wall pictures in Egypt)! (See [RACISM](#))

*In the ancient world, especially in a patriarchal society, seeing another’s nakedness was a major offense.*

**NET NOTE** - Some would translate **saw the nakedness of** as “had sexual relations with,” arguing that Ham committed a homosexual act with his drunken father for which he was cursed. However, the expression “**see nakedness**” usually refers to observation of another’s nakedness, not a sexual act (see Ge 42:9, 12 where “**nakedness**” is used metaphorically to convey the idea of “weakness” or “vulnerability”; Dt 23:14 where “nakedness” refers to excrement; Isa 47:3; Ezek 16:37; Lam 1:8). The following verse (Ge 9:23) clearly indicates that **visual** observation, **not** a homosexual act, is in view here. In Lev 20:17 the expression “**see nakedness**” does appear to be a euphemism for sexual intercourse, but the context there, unlike that of Gen 9:22, clearly indicates that in that passage sexual contact is in view. The expression “**see nakedness**” does not in itself suggest a sexual connotation. Some relate Ge 9:22 to Lev 18:6–11, 15–19, where the expression “**uncover [another’s] nakedness**” (the Piel form of גָּלַח, galah) (**ED: SEE NOTE ABOVE ON Lev 18:6**) refers euphemistically to sexual intercourse. However, Ge 9:22 does not say Ham “**uncovered**” the nakedness of his father. According to the text, **Noah uncovered himself; Ham merely saw his father naked**. The point of the text is that Ham had no respect for his father. Rather than covering his father up, he told his brothers. Noah then gave an oracle that Ham’s descendants, who would be characterized by the same moral abandonment, would be cursed. Leviticus 18 describes that greater evil of the Canaanites (see Lev 18:24–28). **Saw the nakedness**. It is hard for modern people to appreciate why seeing another’s nakedness was such an abomination, because nakedness is so prevalent today. In the ancient world, especially in a patriarchal society, seeing another’s nakedness was a major offense. ([See the account in Herodotus, Histories 1.8–13 below](#), where a general saw the nakedness of his master’s wife, and one of the two had to be put to death.) Besides, Ham was not a little boy wandering into his father’s bedroom; he was over a hundred years old by this time. For fuller discussion see A. P. Ross, “The Curse of Canaan,” BSac 137 (1980): 223–40 ([See excerpt below](#)).

**Herodotus, Histories 1.8–13** This Candaules, then, fell in love with his own wife, so much so that he believed her to be by far the most beautiful woman in the world; and believing this, he praised her beauty beyond measure to Gyges son of Dascylus, who was his favorite among his bodyguard; for it was to Gyges that he entrusted all his most important secrets. [2] After a little while, Candaules, doomed to misfortune, spoke to Gyges thus: “Gyges, I do not think that you believe what I say about the beauty of my wife; men trust their ears less than their eyes: so you must see her naked.” Gyges protested loudly at this. [3] “Master,” he said, “what an unsound suggestion, that I should see my mistress naked! When a woman's clothes come off, she dispenses with her modesty, too. [4] Men have long ago made wise rules from which one ought to learn; one of these is that one should mind one's own business. As for me, I believe that your queen is the most beautiful of all women, and I ask you not to ask of me what is lawless.” **9.**

Speaking thus, Gyges resisted: for he was afraid that some evil would come of it for him. But this was Candaules' answer: “Courage, Gyges! Do not be afraid of me, that I say this to test you, or of my wife, that you will have any harm from her. I will arrange it so that she shall never know that you have seen her. [2] I will bring you into the chamber where she and I lie and conceal you behind the open door; and after I have entered, my wife too will come to bed. There is a chair standing near the entrance of the room: on this she will lay each article of her clothing as she takes it off, and you will be able to look upon her at your leisure. [3] Then, when she moves from the chair to the bed, turning her back on you, be careful she does not see you going out through the doorway.” **10.**

As Gyges could not escape, he consented. Candaules, when he judged it to be time for bed, brought Gyges into the chamber; his wife followed presently, and when she had come in and was laying aside her garments, Gyges saw her; [2] when she turned her back upon him to go to bed, he slipped from the room. The woman glimpsed him as he went out, and perceived what her husband had done. But though shamed, she did not cry out or let it be seen that she had perceived anything, for she meant to punish Candaules; [3] **since among the Lydians and most of the foreign peoples it is felt as a great shame that even a man be seen naked.** **11.**

For the present she made no sign and kept quiet. But as soon as it was day, she prepared those of her household whom she saw were most faithful to her, and called Gyges. He, supposing that she knew nothing of what had been done, answered the summons; for he was used to attending the queen whenever she summoned him. [2] When Gyges came, the lady addressed him thus: “Now, Gyges, you have two ways before you; decide which you will follow. You must either kill Candaules and take me and the throne of [Lydia](#) for your own, or be killed yourself now without more ado; that will prevent you from obeying all Candaules' commands in the future and **seeing what you should not see.** [3] One of you must die: either he, the contriver of this plot, or you, who have **outraged all custom by looking on me uncovered.**” Gyges stood awhile astonished at this; presently, he begged her not to compel him to such a choice. [4] But when he could not deter her, and saw that dire necessity was truly upon him either to kill his master or himself be killed by others, he chose his own life. Then he asked: “Since you force me against my will to kill my master, I would like to know how we are to lay our hands on him.” [5] She replied, “You shall come at him from the same place where he made you view me naked: attack him in his sleep.” **12.**

When they had prepared this plot, and night had fallen, Gyges followed the woman into the chamber (for Gyges was not released, nor was there any means of deliverance, but either he or Candaules must die). She gave him a dagger and hid him behind the same door; [2] and presently he stole out and killed Candaules as he slept. Thus he made himself master of the king's wife and sovereignty. He is mentioned in the iambic verses of Archilochus of Parus who lived about the same time. **13.**

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#### QUESTION - [What is the biblical account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth?](#)

**ANSWER** - [Shem](#), [Ham](#), and [Japheth](#) were the three [sons of Noah](#) who along with their wives were carried in the ark during the great flood. Their descendants went on to re-populate the world (Genesis 10:1). Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth after he was 500 years old (Genesis 5:32). If Noah had any other children, they are not mentioned in the biblical account. Only Shem, Ham, and Japheth are mentioned.

The Israelites came from the line of Shem; in fact, the word *Semite* comes from the name of Shem. Other descendants of Shem include the [Assyrians](#), [Chaldeans](#), Elamites, [Arameans](#), [Moabites](#), [Ammonites](#), and [Edomites](#). Japheth's line produced the [Persians](#), Romans, Scythians, and Macedonians. Ham's line produced the [Canaanites](#), the [Babylonians](#), the Phoenicians, the [Cushites](#), and the Egyptians. Each of the races and people-groups that exist today can trace their lineage back to one of these three brothers.

There is only one biblical story recorded that concerns Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After the flood waters receded, Noah was “a man

of the soil” and grew a vineyard (Genesis 9:20). One day, after drinking too much wine, Noah passed out in his tent and lay there naked and exposed. Ham “saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside” (Genesis 9:22). Some have suggested that Ham—or possibly his son Canaan—performed an inappropriate sexual act on his drunken father, but that is nothing more than speculation. Whatever the extent of Ham’s sin, Shem and Japheth refused to join him in dishonoring their father; instead, they walked into the tent backward without looking at Noah and lay a blanket over him to cover him (Genesis 9:23). When Noah woke up and found out what Ham had done, he cursed Ham’s child, Canaan, saying, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers” (Genesis 9:25). Noah then blessed his other two sons and reiterated Canaan’s servitude to both Shem and Japheth (Ge 9:26–27).

Noah’s curse on Canaan was not an empty threat. In fact, it could be seen as a prophecy of events to unfold in the lives of the Canaanites. In Genesis 10, the descendants of Canaan are listed. They include the Sidonians, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 10:15–19). Noah’s curse/prophecy came true during the time of Joshua. The Canaanites, descendants of Ham and Canaan, were conquered by the Israelites, descendants of Shem. True to God’s Word, some of the Canaanites became slaves (Joshua 9:27; 17:12–13). It’s important to note that Noah’s three sons were blessed (Genesis 9:1) and, out of Ham’s descendants, only the line of Canaan was cursed (Genesis 9:25). The historical record supports the fact of Noah’s curse on Canaan and is powerful evidence of the accuracy of Scripture. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### QUESTION - [What does it mean to uncover nakedness in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Before the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve lived without clothing in a perfectly natural state (Genesis 2:25). But after the fall, nakedness became a source of shame (Genesis 3:6–7). In fact, shame at their own nakedness was the first felt consequence of Adam and Eve’s sin. Since then, nakedness has been linked with sexuality, privacy, and vulnerability. When the Bible speaks of “uncovering nakedness,” it is usually referring to some type of sexual sin, perversion, or dishonor.

The first reference to uncovering someone’s nakedness is in Genesis 9, which continues the story of Noah after the floodwaters receded. Noah and his sons and their spouses had established a new life as the only human beings left to repopulate the earth. As time went by, Noah planted a vineyard and made wine from the grapes. He then drank the wine, became drunk, and passed out naked in his tent (Genesis 9:20–21). His son Ham entered the tent, saw his father’s nakedness, and went to tell his brothers (Genesis 9:22). Scholars debate what may have transpired in this scene. The sin may have been more than merely mocking his father’s naked body. Ham (or his son Canaan) may have engaged in some kind of sexual activity or dishonor of Noah’s private parts.

**Whatever he did by uncovering his father’s nakedness was wicked enough to invite Noah’s wrath when he sobered up. Noah then pronounced a strong [curse](#) on Canaan** (Genesis 9:24).

The phrase **uncover nakedness** almost always refers to [sexual sin](#). In most newer versions of the Bible, the phrase *uncover nakedness* is usually reworded as “have sexual relations with” (e.g., Leviticus 18:6, 17, 19). Other passages, such as Deuteronomy 22:30, forbade a man to sleep with his stepmother because doing so would “uncover his father’s nakedness” (ESV). By entering into intimacy with the same woman who had slept with his father, a man disgraced his father (Deuteronomy 27:20; Leviticus 18:8; Ezekiel 22:10). This was one reason the sin of Absalom, David’s son, was so great (2 Samuel 16:22). As the ultimate act of disrespect, Absalom let it be known publicly that he was having sex with his father’s concubines. He not only violated his father’s bedroom, he violated God’s written law: “Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father’s wife, for he dishonors his father’s bed” (Deuteronomy 27:20).

As our world’s morals continue to spiral downward, **uncovering nakedness** in one way or another has become a favorite pastime. Culture has glorified nakedness and worked to numb our natural modesty by parading nakedness before our eyes. Even children’s clothing is sexualized, and media outlets praise nakedness as “bold,” “brave,” and “liberating.” We watch actors uncovering each other’s nakedness publicly on the big screen. The [pornography industry](#) has made a fortune by **uncovering nakedness** in every possible way, mocking biblical moral standards as archaic and restrictive.

We’ve lost the concept of honor for one’s sexuality, treating the sex drive as just another need to be met the way we treat hunger and thirst. Uncovering nakedness is no longer a source of shame in a culture that has been trained to expect and applaud it. Ironically, in a world that celebrates the uncovering of nakedness, sexual dysfunctions, abuses, and even infertility are skyrocketing. God created the human body, and sexuality is His idea; He therefore knows best how we function. 1 Corinthians 6:13 says, “You say, ‘Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.’ The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”

God intended the uncovering of nakedness to be done only within His prescribed boundaries of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:2–5).

Christians can help reclaim the sanctity of marital relations and modesty by refusing to deaden our consciences through sexually graphic TV programs, movies, and magazines. We can guard our eyes against pornographic images by installing filters on our internet devices. And we can honor our bodies by refusing to uncover our own nakedness in the way we dress, talk, or behave (1 Corinthians 6:18). Nakedness is no longer innocent as it was in the Garden of Eden, and wise people do not uncover it in dishonoring ways. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Genesis 9:23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.**

- Ex 20:12 Lev 19:32 Ro 13:7 Ga 6:1 1Ti 5:1,17,19 1Pe 2:17 4:8
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## SHEM AND JAPHETH IMPEDE THEIR VIEW OF NOAH

**But** - This is a strong term of contrast marking an "about face" (pun intended) or change of direction from the direction taken by Ham.

**Wenham** - Cassuto (BORROW [Genesis Commentary](#)) points out: "If the covering was an adequate remedy, it follows that the misdemeanor was confined to seeing." The elaborate efforts Shem and Japheth made to avoid looking at their father demonstrate that this was all Ham did in the tent. (BORROW [Genesis - page 200](#))

**Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered** ([kasah](#); Lxx - sugkalupto = cover up completely, keep from being known by concealing) **the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that** (term of purpose) **they did not see their father's nakedness** - Notice the emphasis on the fact that Shem and Japheth went to great lengths to not see Noah's nakedness. Here we see they display actions that indicate they understood there was a moral or ethical code which said one should never look at another's nakedness (their wives of course were excluded!). In the following centuries, the ethical code of the ancient world considered the act of seeing another person's uncovered state as an abominable deed. ([Read the record by the historian Herodotus](#) to give you as sense of the gravity of what Ham did by looking at Noah's nude body.).

The action of Shem and Japheth brings to mind the words of Peter "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love covers a multitude of sins.**" (1Pe 4:8+). These two sons demonstrated their love for their father!

**Warren Wiersbe** adds "Instead of laughing with Ham and going to see the humiliating sight, Shem and Japheth showed their love for their father by practicing Proverbs 10:12, "Love covers all sins" (nkjv; see 1 Peter 4:8). The brothers stood together and held a garment behind them, backed into the tent with their eyes averted, and covered Noah's naked body. "He who covers a transgression seeks love" (Prov. 17:9 nkjv), and "a prudent man covers shame" (Pr 12:16 nkjv)

**R Kent Hughes** comments that "Here we must take careful note that the sons' covering of Noah's nakedness bears monumental spiritual implications, because their actions unwittingly imitated God. Remember that when Adam and Eve sinned, "The LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them" (Ge 3:21). Noah's sons now covered his sin and nakedness. The sons of Noah—Ham on the one hand, and Shem and Japheth on the other—are representative of two groups of mankind: those like Adam and Eve who with God's help have their nakedness covered, and those like Ham who make no attempt to cover their nakedness, even shamelessly exposing it. To one group, the line of Shem, there will be blessing; but to the others, the Canaanites, there will only be a curse. So right here we learn of the great demarcation that divides all humanity into those who are blessed in that their sins have been covered and those who are cursed because their sins lay uncovered. The then-future beatitude of King David voices the divine reality: "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is **covered** ([kasah](#) - same verb used in Ge 9:23!)" (Psalm 32:1)." (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 152](#))

**NET NOTE** - The word translated "**garment**" has the Hebrew definite article on it. The article may simply indicate that the garment is definite and vivid in the mind of the narrator, but it could refer instead to Noah's garment. Did Ham bring it out when he told his brothers?

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**Covered** (concealed) ([03680](#)) [kacah/kasah](#) means literally to cover as the frogs **covered** Egypt (Ex 8:6), the Shekinah glory cloud the cloud of God's glory **covered** Mount Sinai or the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex 24:15 Nu 9:16), the waters of the Red Sea **covered** the Egyptians (Ex 15:5). In its figurative sense **kacah** can describe dishonor or shame covering the guilty (Ps 69:7; Jer.

3:25) or the Israelites' covering the altar with tears (Mal 2:13). **Kasah** can mean keep to oneself, not respond with knowledge, i.e., keep information from others, though known and understood by oneself (Pr 12:16, 23). Cover for clothing or secrecy as in Ge 9:23. In a metaphorical sense, **kasah** describes shame covering the guilty (Ps. 69:7; Jer. 3:25; Hab. 2:17), the Israelites' covering the altar with tears (Mal. 2:13), the concealing of Joseph's blood to hide his brothers' guilt and sin (Ge 37:26). In contrast David the psalmist found reconciliation with God by not concealing his sin but confessing it (Ps 32:5; Pr 10:11).

Genesis 7:19 The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were **covered**.

Genesis 7:20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were **covered**.

**Genesis 9:24 When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.**

- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## THE YOUNGEST SON'S DESPICABLE DOING

**When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him** - **Awoke from his wine** refers to the drunken stupor the wine had produced. This is an enigmatic passage, specifically the verb **done**. The Septuagint translates **done** (asah) with [poieo](#), which means "done" and is in the active voice which signifies a volitional action. In other words, Ham committed this act/action (at least of looking) as a choice of his will, imply also that he had a choice to quickly look away! What he did was not an accident. To say it another way, Ham's sighting of nude Noah would not seem to be an accidental, unavoidable, non-volitional glance. **He knew** indicates that Noah knew this was Ham, not Shem or Japheth. How did he know? I can only surmise that the 2 older brothers told their father what Ham had done (or told them they covered his nude body). In any event, as the following passage shows, we can discern that what Ham had done was deserving of a curse from his father, so clearly it would have been something sinful. And as alluded to looking at another's nude body was considered an abomination in the ancient world. .

[The Defender's Study Bible](#) (BORROW) - Though Noah was guilty of the sin of carelessness and drunkenness, the sin of Ham was much more serious, revealing a hitherto suppressed carnal and rebellious nature (**ED: THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE FACTUAL IN VIEW OF THE CONSEQUENCE**), a resentment against his father (**ED: THIS COULD BE CORRECT BUT IS SOMEWHAT SPECULATIVE**) and, probably, against God (**ASSUMING HAM SINNED THEN YES HE SINNED AGAINST GOD - Ge 39:9b**). Shem and Japheth, on the other hand, sought to cover and restore their father.

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**Dr. John Whitcomb: What the Flood Did Not Solve** - Human sin problem – had to be dealt with on the cross of Calvary; Noah was an amazing man; only one to believe God; yet sad record here; Something deficient in the way that Ham handled this crisis; Other sons showed deep respect for their father; Hab. 2:15 – degrading a fellow human who is made in image of God – makes a human act like an animal; Shem was ancestor of Jesus – people of Israel; Doesn't mean that every Canaanite was cursed; "fear of you" – Rahab -- hid the Israelite spies – Josh. 2:9ff – testimony of Canaanite woman Matt. 15:21 – Jesus approached a Canaanite woman – she is persistent and respectful; acknowledges how unworthy she is to receive blessing; "your faith is great"

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**Dr. Drew Conley: Human Failure, Faithful God** We are indebted to God's longsuffering and mercy;

Record of human failure; but also displays faithfulness of God in both judgment and blessing;

### I. The Reality of Human Failure

#### A. The Blunders of a Righteous Man

Noah knew he was a rescued sinner; first act when he stepped out of ark was to construct altar and worship God; God blessed his farming efforts with fruitfulness; True survivalist mode; nowhere else to turn for resources; Took God's good gift and abused it; Served well in his prime; now becomes indulgent in his older age; You can derail at any point;

#### B. The Wicked Son – dishonoring his father

Wicked heart revels in exposing the faults of others; arrogant spirit not recognizing own need for forgiveness and grace;

### II. Demonstration of Faithfulness of God

#### A. Judgment on a Wicked World (Corrupt People) - Ham

Canaan is only 1 of Ham's 4 sons; why does the curse fall on him? The text does not say;

## **B. Closeness of a Covenant God -- Shem**

Blessing pronounced on YHWH, the God of Shem; the glory of God's people is God Himself; everything that makes our life joyful and purposeful has to do with God and His faithfulness to us and His relationship to us

## **C. Enlargement from a Gracious God -- Japheth**

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[Steven Cole](#) on allegations that Ham in some way abused Noah sexually - The problem with these views is, the text says that Noah uncovered himself, but when the Bible talks of sexual violation, it uses the phrase to uncover someone else's nakedness (see Leviticus 18 & 20). So the most likely answer to the question, "What did Ham do?" is that he looked upon his father's nakedness, either with lust or with delight and amusement. He went and told his brothers, not in a spirit of grief and concern, but with the attitude, "Hey, do you guys want to see something funny?" The text gives great detail of how the other two brothers carefully walked backward so as not to gaze on their father's nakedness as they covered him (9:23). This accentuates their sensitivity and reverence in contrast to the brazenness of their brother....I used to paint houses, and after a few hours, I couldn't smell the paint. Surrounded by the stench of sin, after a while we don't notice it. The only way to grow more sensitive to sin is to be in the Word daily and to avoid exposing yourself needlessly to the evil around us (Rom. 16:19). Ham's sin shows us that sins which don't seem big at the time can have far-reaching consequences, not only for ourselves, but for our descendants. A trickle of sin in a parent can become a flood in his descendants. Noah's drunkenness and impropriety led to Ham's irreverence. Ham's sin led eventually to the corruption of the Canaanites, who practiced orgiastic, sensual worship, cult prostitution, and homosexuality....

Let me move from explanation to application:

**1. Be careful not to allow a family member's sin to trigger sin in you!** Noah's sin triggered Ham's sin, which triggered Canaan's sin, which can be traced to a corrupt nation centuries later. Sin is a lot like a nuclear chain reaction. One person's sin leads to the next person's sin, etc., until there is a trail of devastation. Perhaps you had an alcoholic parent or abusive parents. It's easy for you to react to their sin by sinning yourself. Or if your mate is self-centered and treats you poorly, it's easy to counter by being self-centered, rather than to respond with the love of Christ. Whenever you're wronged, whether in the home, on the job, or in the church, it's easy to retaliate rather than to obey God. So be careful not to continue the chain reaction of sin.

**2. If you're from a godly home, be careful not to trifle with spiritual things!** Ham had probably helped his father build the ark while the neighbors laughed. Outwardly, he went along with the program. But in his heart, he hated his father's righteousness. His heart was really with the world, not with his father. Even though he saw the horrors of God's judgment through the flood, he was delighted when he finally saw his father sin. It gave him reason to justify his own sinful desires.

If you're from a Christian home, you need to make sure that your faith in God is yours, not just the faith of your parents. Your parents' faith won't do for you. You need to trust in and obey the Lord because you fear Him and want His blessing, not just because Dad and Mom are Christians. If one or both of your parents fall into sin, you must be careful not to react with more sin of your own. You will stand before God all by yourself some day. You won't be able to hide under your parents' faith or to blame them for your own disobedience.

**3. It is important to honor your parents, even if they've failed.** The fifth commandment, to honor our fathers and mothers, is repeated by Paul (Eph. 6:1-3), along with his reminder that it is the first command with a promise, "that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." This command does not just apply to children living at home. Ham was married with at least four sons when he despised his father and brought this curse on his descendants. Respect for parents, even for sinful parents (which includes all!), is at the core of well-being both for individuals and for society. Like Shem and Japheth, we may have to cover some of our parents' sins, but we bring God's curse on ourselves and our grandchildren if we disrespect our parents.

But, perhaps you're wondering, What about the consequences of Noah's sin for himself? He pronounces a curse on Canaan, but nothing seems to happen to Noah. But the epilogue is a rather sad conclusion to a great life. After the flood and Noah's sin, **nothing else is recorded of his life. He lived 350 more years and died.** During those remaining years, he had to live with the knowledge that one of his sons was not walking with God and that his grandson would inherit a curse stemming from his own drunken behavior. Noah himself is set forth as a warning to everyone about the dangers of drunkenness.

**4. Beware of the dangers of alcohol!** This is the first mention of wine in the Bible, and it's not a pretty picture. A godly man like Noah was trapped by its subtle but potent influence. Getting drunk didn't result in a good time, but in shame, a curse, and slavery (which is still often the case!). While the Bible does not prohibit a careful use of wine, it repeatedly warns of the dangers of drinking and it condemns drunkenness as a deed of the flesh, warning that the one who practices it will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). Because drunkenness (= "alcoholism") is such a widespread problem in our country, I urge you not to drink at all. You can't

become an alcoholic if you don't drink! If a Christian who is tempted by alcohol is led back into drinking by seeing you drink, you have caused him to stumble and have sinned against Christ (Romans 14).

Thus Noah's sin shows us that even the godly are prone to sin. Ham's sin and the curse on Canaan show us how easily calloused toward sin we all become.

The bottom line for each of us is: Though we are prone to sin, we can obey the Lord and experience His blessing.

Ask yourself, "Do I want God's blessing in my life and for my children and grandchildren?" I don't know how anybody in his right mind could answer any way but "Yes!" The way we experience God's blessing is through obedience to Him. "That's the problem!" you say. "I'm so weak I have trouble obeying."

But the first step toward obedience is to recognize that you are not strong, you're weak. You are prone to sin. Recognizing that drives you to depend on the Lord, who is able to free you from sin. We need to realize that if we know Christ, we can obey Him.

A pastor told of how a man came to him to discuss a chronic sin problem in his life. He revealed the whole sad story in detail—how long it had been going on, how he fell into it, and all the things he tried to do about it. He had been to many counselors who had explained many things to him, but nothing had worked.

He finally asked the pastor, "What do you think I ought to do?" The pastor replied, "I think you ought to stop doing it." This shocked him. "That's amazing," he said. "Stop doing it, huh? How about that!" What impressed the man was that the pastor thought he could obey God on the matter. (Told by John Blattner, *Pastoral Renewal* [Nov., 1985], p. 54.)

Christ came to free us from sin; so if you know Him, you can stop sinning! My guess is that some here need to do that. You've been messing around with sin, and you need to deal with it. Senator Phil Gramm says, "Balancing the budget is like going to heaven. Everybody wants to do it. They just don't want to do what you have to do to make the trip." Obedience to the Lord is like that, too! We're all for it, but we don't want to pay the price. But if we want God's blessing for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren, we've got to get serious about obedience and get tough on our sin.

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**Gleason Archer** - [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - In Genesis 9:24–28 why did Noah curse his youngest son and say that Canaan should be a slave? Was this the beginning of slavery? Was slavery all right in the sight of God?

The reason Noah cursed his son Ham was that he had derided and dishonored his father after he found him naked, sleeping off a drunken stupor. Ham should have treated him respectfully, even though his father (who had apparently never tasted liquor before) had made a fool of himself. But it should be carefully noted that only one of the sons of Ham, namely Canaan, was singled out for suffering the effects of Ham's curse. Genesis 9:25 quotes Noah as saying, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants [or 'slave of slaves'—Heb. 'eḇed 'aḇādīm] he shall be to his brothers" (NASB).

Ham had three sons besides Canaan, namely Cush, Mizraim, and Put (Gen. 10:6); but the penalty was announced only for Canaan, the ancestor of the Canaanites of Palestine, rather than for Cush and Put, who were probably the ancestors of the Ethiopians and the black peoples of Africa. The fulfillment of this curse came about in Joshua's conquest (ca. 1400 B.C.), and also in the conquest of Phoenicia and other Canaanites by the Persian Empire, since the Persians were descended, in all probability, from Japheth through Madai. This does seem to be the earliest occurrence of 'eḇed in the sense of "slave" that can be found in Scripture.

As to the moral status of slavery in ancient times, it must be recognized that it was practiced by every ancient people of which we have any historical record: Egyptians, Sumerian, Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Greeks, Romans, and all the rest. Slavery was as integral a part of ancient culture as commerce, taxation, or temple service. Not until the more exalted concept of man and his innate dignity as a person created in the image of God had permeated the world as a product of Bible teaching did a strong sentiment arise in Christendom in criticism of slavery and a questioning of its right to exist. No equivalent movement toward abolition is discernible in any non-Christian civilization of which we have any knowledge.

In Genesis 9:25, 'eḇed is used in the sense of being politically in subjection to a foreign power. Hebrew slaves were required under the Mosaic Law to be set free after six years of service; they could not be made to serve out their entire lives as slaves unless they willingly chose to remain so, out of love for their masters (Exod. 21:2–7). In some cases slaves were held in great honor; that is to say, the nobles were generally called "servants" ('aḇādīm) of their king—a title of honor, something like Paul's reference to himself as a "bondslave of Jesus Christ."

In New Testament times slaves who became Christians were regarded as true brothers of the Christian free men and fellow heirs of the kingdom of God. They were bidden to serve their masters faithfully, respectfully, and with a right good will, as if they were serving the Lord Himself (Eph. 6:5–8)—even though they should seek to earn or purchase their freedom whenever possible (1 Cor. 7:21).



Yet there was inherent in the biblical concept of man as a person fashioned in the image of God and a candidate for heaven (on condition of repentance, faith, and commitment to the Lord) a dynamic principle that undermined slavery. This principle found expression first in the Christian world and then in other religions and cultures, which were shamed by the Christian example into abolishing slavery within their own domains. Thus God's ultimate purpose was brought to fruition.

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### Walter Kaiser - [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#) - Genesis 9:24–25 What Was the Curse on Canaan?

One of the saddest moments in the history of interpretation was when advocates of slavery decided to use this text as a justification for their inhuman treatment of dark-skinned people. It was asserted that this divine prophecy given by Noah after the flood legitimized slavery for a group of people who had been cursed perpetually. Supporters of slavery argued that the Arabic version of Genesis 9:25 reads "Cursed be the father of Canaan" instead of "Cursed be Canaan." A vehement allegiance to the misapplication of this text has continued among some groups to the present day.

But the oppression of blacks by whites cannot be justified from this story. What happened is that Noah, a righteous and blameless man, had been drinking wine (Gen 9:21). That in itself was not the issue here, for in Scripture wine is viewed as one of God's gifts to humankind (Ps 104:15). Every burnt offering and peace offering was accompanied by a libation of wine (Num 15:5–10), and the drinking of wine at festivals was acknowledged (Deut 14:26). One of the symbols for Israel was the vine (Is 5:1–7; Mk 12:1–11).

But the Bible also warns about the dangers of wine. Nazirites were to abstain from all alcohol and wine (Num 6:3–4), and priests were forbidden to drink prior to officiating in the sanctuary lest they die (Lev 10:9). The laity were also warned that drinking too much wine was dangerous to people and offensive to God (Prov 21:17; 23:20–21, 29–35; Is 5:22). Drunkenness was especially reprehensible when it led to self-exposure (Hab 2:15; Lam 4:21). The exposure of one's nakedness was not only publicly demeaning but also incompatible with the presence of the living God (Ex 20:26; Deut 23:12–14).

Because Noah drank to excess, he became drunk. The heat generated by the alcohol in his bloodstream led the patriarch to thrust off his covering involuntarily as he lay in his tent. The reflexive form of the verb makes it clear that he uncovered himself (Gen 9:21).

Noah's youngest son, Ham, entered the tent, and there he was confronted with the situation I have just described (Gen 9:22). Apparently his gaze was not a mere harmless notice or an accidental glance. The verb used here has such force that some say it means "he gazed with satisfaction."

What exactly Ham did has been the subject of much speculation. The most bizarre of all suggestions is that Ham castrated his father in a struggle for family power. But there is no evidence to support this idea other than the precedent of some Greek and Semitic stories with the motif of paternal castration. A second suggestion is that the expression "to see a man's nakedness" is an idiomatic phrase for sexual intercourse with that man's wife. But this expression is quite different from the idiom "to uncover the nakedness" of Leviticus 18 and 20. Leviticus 20:17 is the only place where the verb "to see" is used, but it is not in a parallel construction with "uncover." The view that Ham had an incestuous relationship with his mother is an impossible explanation. Even if Ham had committed incest with his mother, he would hardly have told his brothers!

Thus, Ham could be faulted simply for this: he failed to cover up his father's nakedness and chose rather to make fun of his father to his brothers. Such an act was serious enough to prompt Noah to utter his curse on Ham's descendants, who would be guilty of the kinds of sexual perversions that many suspected Ham of carrying out. To lie exposed meant that one was unprotected, dishonored and at risk of exploitation. Ham had transgressed a natural and sacred barrier. His disgusting ridicule of his father before his brothers aggravated the act and perhaps betrayed a moral weakness that had established itself in his personality.

Who, then, was Canaan? And why was he cursed if Ham was the culprit? Since the law of God insists that God deals with all people justly, this curse of Canaan is all the more puzzling.

Genesis 10:6 lists the sons of Ham as Cush (basically Ethiopia), Mizraim (Egypt), Put (generally taken to be one of the North African countries) and Canaan (of the country of Palestine/Canaan). We are not talking about Africans or blacks here, but the Canaanite peoples who inhabited ancient Palestine.

Canaan was not singled out for the curse because he was the youngest son of Ham, nor was it a random selection. Apparently Noah saw in the youngest son of Ham the same tendencies and perversions that had been evidenced in Ham. When Noah had fully recovered from the effects of his drunkenness, he uttered this curse against Canaan. Noah could not have cursed his son, for he and his brothers, along with Noah, had been the objects of a blessing in Genesis 9:1. Neither Noah nor anyone else could reverse such a blessing with a curse. Balaam the son of Beor learned this the hard way in Numbers 22–24.

Still, there may well have been an element of "mirroring" punishment here, especially if Canaan was to exhibit the outworkings of the tendencies already present in Ham's failure to cover Noah's nakedness. Finally, it is a matter of historical record that the Canaanites

were notoriously deviant in their sexual behavior. Almost everywhere the archaeologist's spade has dug in that part of the world there have been fertility symbols accompanying texts explicit enough to make many a modern pornographic dealer seem a mere beginner in the trade of deviant sexuality. Sodom left its name for the vice these people practiced. Even the Romans, so depraved in their own practices, were shocked by the behavior of the Phoenicians at the colony of Carthage (the last vestige of the Canaanite race).

Why was this story included in the biblical narrative? It tells the reader that unless there was some moral change in the Canaanites, they were slated for removal from their land. That God is long-suffering and slow to anger is attested by the fact that this judgment did not fall on that group of descendants until the time of Joshua's conquest of Canaan. It is impossible to date Noah's times, but it is known that Joshua lived around 1400 B.C. At a minimum this would mean that the grace of God was extended to the Canaanites for several millennia. Surely God was most generous with these people, giving more than adequate time for sinners to repent.

**Genesis 9:25 So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers."**

- **Cursed** - Ge 9:22 3:14 4:11 49:7 De 27:16 28:18 Mt 25:41 Joh 8:34
- **a servant** - Jos 9:23,27 Jud 1:28-30 1Ki 9:20,21 2Ch 8:7,8 Joh 8:34
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Noah's 3 Sons

## CANAAN'S CURSE

**So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers-** It is striking that these are the first and only words by Noah that are recorded in Scripture. Imagine that -- the first word out of Noah's mouth was **cursed!** The reader is somewhat surprised here that Noah curses Canaan's youngest son Ham (whether born yet or not we do not know) and not Canaan himself. Note that Ham had been **blessed by God** (Genesis 9:1), and Noah refused to curse someone whom the God Himself had blessed! Obviously the Lord's blessing on Ham did not "automatically" pass on to his sons. Though many fulfillments of Shem's dominance over Canaan can be seen, it is more difficult to know when Canaan was subject to Japheth.

**NET NOTE - Cursed be Canaan.** The curse is pronounced on Canaan, not Ham. Noah sees a problem in Ham's character, and on the basis of that he delivers a prophecy about the future descendants who will live in slavery to such things and then be controlled by others. (For more on the idea of slavery in general, see [E. M. Yamauchi, "Slaves of God." BETS 9 \[1966\]: 31-49](#) - ED: INTERESTING ARTICLE). In a similar way Jacob pronounced oracles about his sons based on their revealed character (see Gen 49).

**R Kent Hughes** - His curse on Ham's son Canaan and his blessing on Shem and Japheth are in effect his last will and testament because the next verses report his death, bringing an end to ancient Sethite lineage. (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 152](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** has an interesting note - These words are Noah's only recorded speech found in Scripture. It's too bad that this brief speech has been misunderstood and labeled a "**curse**," because what Noah said is more like a father's prophecy concerning his children and grandchildren. The word "curse" is used only once, but it's directed at Ham's youngest son Canaan and not at Ham himself. **This suggests that Noah was describing the future of his sons and one grandson on the basis of what he saw in their character, not unlike what Jacob did before he died** (Gen. 49). If Noah had wanted to pronounce a curse, it would have been directed at Ham, the son who had sinned against his father, but instead, he named Canaan three times. Looking down the centuries, Noah predicted three times that the descendants of Canaan would become the lowest of servants.<sup>3 T</sup>

**Drew Conley:** the sins of a father do influence his children; the seed we sow will produce a harvest; children make their own choices; not all of Noah's sons responded the same way; not all of Ham's sons are cursed; the way of sin is the way of slavery --we think we are exercising freedom when we reject the dominion of God -- actually bondage (ED: WHICH IS WHY Ro 6:6+ IS SO POWERFUL AND LIBERATING!).

**Bob Utley** - "**So he said**" Remember the Hebrew concept of the power of the spoken word, Genesis 1 (cf. Isa. 55:9-11), as well as the importance of the parental blessing, Genesis 49. Notice that this is not a curse by God but by an alcohol abusing Noah! It is obvious from Israel's later history that Canaanites are viewed as evil idolatrous people that must be totally destroyed (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). It is in their lands that the giants still live. It is their fertility worship that is forbidden in the book of Leviticus.

**NET NOTE** - Heb “a servant of servants” (עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים, 'eved 'avadim), an example of the superlative genitive. It means Canaan will become the most abject of slaves.

**The Defender's Study Bible** (BORROW) - Noah's curse was spoken concerning Canaan instead of Ham for possibly one or more of the following (SPECULATIVE) reasons: (1) As Ham was his youngest son, so Canaan was Ham's youngest son, and Noah wished to emphasize that the prophecy extended through Ham to all his seed, even his youngest; (2) Noah could gladly bless his two faithful sons, but could not bear to pronounce the prophetic curse directly on his other son, whom he also loved dearly; (3) He knew his grandsons well enough to recognize in the sons of Ham the same rebellious attitudes that were in Ham, and he knew that they would actually experience the resultant effects of his sin even more than would Ham himself. The phrase "**servant of servants**" is never used elsewhere in Scripture. If it means "**slave of slaves**," then the prophecy has failed, for neither the Hamitic nations in general nor the Canaanitic nations in particular have ever been such. The Hamites have included such great empires as Sumeria, Phoenicia, Egypt, Ethiopia, etc., and quite possibly the great Asian nations (China, Japan, etc.) as well. The word "**servant**," however, is more often used in the sense of "steward," so the prophecy more likely speaks of Ham's descendants as superlative stewards. That is, all men were stewards of God's created world, in the sense of exercising dominion over its resources; and Ham, with his physical and materialistic bent, would be especially effective in subduing the world and developing its resources. Since the ground had been cursed, however, this meant Ham's lot would be uniquely associated with the physical world, thus itself becoming a curse. Noah's statement, it should be remembered, was a prophecy and not an imprecation, given under divine inspiration and on the basis of Noah's own insight into the developing characters of his sons and grandsons and, therefore, of their descendants. As a prophecy, this interpretation is fitting, since the Hamitic nations have, indeed, been the great explorers, cultivators, builders, navigators, tradesmen, inventors and warriors of mankind. **To his brothers** - It is obvious that his prophecy applies not only to Canaan but also to all of Ham's descendants, for the following reasons: (1) its scope is obviously intended to be symmetrical, worldwide and age-long, with all the progeny of the three sons of Noah included; (2) if taken as applicable only to Canaan specifically, then it must also apply specifically only to Canaan's brethren, who were Cush, Mizraim and Phut. Their descendants included the nations of Ethiopia, Egypt and Libya. Not only would such a judgment be unfair (it was Ham who sinned, not Canaan), but it was never fulfilled, since the Canaanites were never servants of the Libyans or Ethiopians, and only briefly of the Egyptians; (3) as a matter of fact, the descendants of Canaan, who included the Phoenicians and Hittites, were prominent nations through most of their history, not slave nations.

In his [Genesis commentary](#) **Henry Morris** adds that "Descendants of Ham included the Egyptians and Sumerians, who founded the first two great empires of antiquity, as well as other great nations such as the Phoenicians, Hittites, and Canaanites. The modern African tribes and the Mongol tribes (including today the Chinese and Japanese), as well as the American Indians and the South Sea Islanders, are probably dominantly Hamitic in origin. Among the many ways in which the Hamites have been the great "servants" of mankind are the following:

- (1) They were the original explorers and settlers of practically all parts of the world, following the dispersion at Babel.
- (2) They were the first cultivators of most of the basic food staples of the world, such as potatoes, corn, beans, cereals, and others, as well as the first ones to domesticate most animals.
- (3) They developed most of the basic types of structural forms and building tools and materials.
- (4) They were the first to develop most of the usual fabrics for clothing and the various sewing and weaving devices.
- (5) They discovered and invented a wide variety of medicines and surgical practices and instruments.
- (6) They invented most of the concepts of basic practical mathematics, as well as surveying and navigation.
- (7) The machinery of commerce and trade—money, banks, postal systems, and so forth—was developed by them.
- (8) They developed paper, ink, block printing, movable type, and other accouterments of writing and communication.

If one traces back far enough, he will find that practically every other basic device or system needed for man's physical sustenance or convenience originated with one of the Hamitic peoples.<sup>1</sup> Truly they have been the "servants" of mankind in a most amazing way.

([The Genesis Record - page 240](#) - Borrow)

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**R Kent Hughes** Why did the curse fall on Canaan? First, because Noah likely detected in Canaan the evil traits he had seen in his father. Canaan was a bad apple who did not fall far from the tree. He was already walking in his father's footsteps.

Second, this curse was a prophetic oracle. [Delitzsch](#) writes: *Noah, through the Spirit and power of that God with whom he walked, discerned in the moral nature of his sons, and the different tendencies which they already displayed, the germinal commencement of the future course of their posterity, and uttered words of blessing and of curse, which were prophetic of the history of the tribes that*

*descended from them.*" Such curses had no power in themselves, unless the Lord fulfilled them. God would bring this curse about only if it was his desire to do so—which it was.

Third, Canaan was the father of the Canaanites, the depraved nemesis of Israel. Therefore the curse fell on Israel's future enemies. The Canaanites were a sensually depraved people. Everything the pagan Canaanites did was an extrapolation of Ham's lurid sensuality. From the moment Abram entered the land, the Canaanites were there spreading corruption (cf. Genesis 13, 15, 18, 19, 38). Leviticus 18 describes the degenerate practices of the Canaanites with a litany of euphemisms so as not to offend the reader, employing "nakedness" twenty-four times (cf. vv. 7–23, RSV and NASB). (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 152](#))

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**Jack Arnold** - This curse was pronounced on Canaan, the youngest son of Ham, and his progeny, not on Ham himself (Gen. 10:15-19). Canaan would be placed under the greatest possible servitude and would be a slave to Shem and Japheth. This is a prophetic curse and has its fulfillment in history.

**1. Did God Curse Canaan?** It was Ham who sinned and not Canaan. Why then does God curse Canaan? There is no easy solution to this problem but there are several suggestions. First, perhaps Canaan was involved in this sexual perversion with Ham even though it is not recorded. Second, some have thought that God cursed the youngest son of Ham because Ham was the youngest son of Noah, but this makes God arbitrarily putting a curse on Canaan without Canaan being involved. Third, and perhaps the more satisfactory explanation is that the licentious ways of Ham were also obvious traits in his son Canaan, Noah knew that Ham's tolerance of perversion, his delight in it, was also in seed form in Canaan. Thus, guided by divine wisdom he unerringly curses Canaan. **NOTE:** The saying, "Like father, like son," becomes apparent in Ham and Canaan. Sexual perversion in this case was definitely related with parental influence and perhaps there is a genetic connection.

**2. How Was This Curse Fulfilled in History?** According to Genesis 10:15-19, the Canaanites settled in the area which is now Palestine. These Canaanite tribes were all conquered when Israel entered the land, **bringing fulfillment of the curse.** In that sense, Canaan finally became the servant of Shem as predicted in Ge 9:26. Furthermore, the Phoenicians, who were descendants of Canaan through Sidon, were ultimately overcome by the Japhetic Greeks and Romans. This curse was temporary and fulfilled thousands of years ago. **NOTE.** Archeological discoveries have definitely shown that the Canaanite religions were debauched and corrupt. Their idolatry was a worship of the gods El and Baal; they practiced human sacrifice and all their religion was centered around sexual perversion, which had its origin with Ham and Canaan.

**3. Why Was the Case of Canaan's Curse Recorded?** At the time God gave this revelation to Moses, the children of Israel were wandering in the desert preparing someday to go into the Promised Land, which at that time was the land of the Canaanites. What an encouragement this must have been to the Israelites to know that Canaan's descendants would be their slaves,

**4. Is the Curse Related to the Negro Race?** Absolutely not! This curse fell on Canaan, not Ham. Three of Ham's other sons were absolutely free of the curse and none of their offspring settled in Africa. The Canaanites settled in what is now the area of Palestine. Archeology has shown that 94% of the Hamites were white and 6% black. **NOTE:** People who think that the Hamites are to be slaves are filled with race hatred and are guilty of very poor exegesis of Scripture.

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**Allen Ross** - Excerpt from the Introduction of Ross' article "**The Curse of Canaan**" ([Click here for entire article](#))

The bizarre little story in Genesis 9:18–27 about Noah's drunkenness and exposure along with the resultant cursing of Canaan has perplexed students of Genesis for some time. Why does Noah, the spiritual giant of the Flood, appear in such a bad light? What exactly did Ham do to Noah? Who is Canaan and why should he be cursed for something he did not do? Although problems like these preoccupy much of the study of this passage, their solutions are tied to the more basic question of the purpose of the account in the theological argument of Genesis.

Genesis, the book of beginnings, is primarily concerned with tracing the development of God's program of blessing. The blessing is pronounced on God's creation, but sin (with its subsequent curse) brought deterioration and decay. After the Flood there is a new beginning with a renewal of the decrees of blessing, but once again corruption and rebellion leave the human race alienated and scattered across the face of the earth. Against this backdrop God began His program of blessing again, promising blessing to those obedient in faith and cursing to those who rebel. The rest of the book explains how this blessing developed: God's chosen people would become a great nation and inherit the land of Canaan. So throughout Genesis the motifs of blessing and cursing occur again and again in connection with those who are chosen and those who are not.

An important foundation for these motifs is found in the oracle of Noah. Ham's impropriety toward the nakedness of his father prompted an oracle with far-reaching implications. Canaan was cursed; but Shem, the ancestor of Israel, and Japheth were blessed. It seems almost incredible that a relatively minor event would have such major repercussions. But consistently in the narratives of Genesis, one finds that the fate of both men and nations is determined by occurrences that seem trivial and commonplace. The main

characters of these stories acted on natural impulse in their own interests, but the narrator is concerned with the greater significance of their actions. Thus it becomes evident that out of the virtues and vices of Noah's sons come the virtues and vices of the families of the world. (**NOTE 1** - Lange, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Genesis p. 336.)

The purpose of this section in Genesis, then, is to portray the characteristics of the three branches of the human race in relation to blessing and cursing. In pronouncing the oracle, Noah discerned the traits of his sons and, in a moment of insight, determined that the attributes of their descendants were embodied in their personalities. (**NOTE 2:** Arthur C. Custance attempts to classify the characteristics of the major races in connection with this oracle [Noah's Three Sons](#) [borrow] p. 43). It seems to this writer that much of the discussion goes beyond the evidence.) Because these sons were primogenitors of the families of the earth, the narrator is more interested in the greater meaning of the oracle with respect to tribes and nations in his day than with the children of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (**NOTE 3:** The second oracle in Genesis based on the character traits of sons comes at the end of the patriarchal material -Gen. 49)

Shem, the ancestor of the Shemites to whom the Hebrews belonged, acted in good taste and was blessed with the possession of the knowledge of the true God, Yahweh. Japheth, the ancestor of the far-flung northern tribes which include the Hellenic peoples, (**NOTE 4:** David Neiman, "The Date and Circumstances of the Cursing of Canaan," in [Biblical Motifs](#) [borrow], ed. Alexander Altmann, p. 125.) also acted properly and thus shared in the blessing of Shem and was promised geographical expansion. In contrast, Ham, represented most clearly to Israel by the Egyptians and Canaanites, acted wrongly in violating sexual customs regarded as sacred and as a result had one line of his descendants cursed with subjugation. (**NOTE 5:** Umberto Cassuto, [From Noah to Abraham](#) [borrow], p. 149.

So the oracle of Noah, far from being concerned simply with the fortunes of the immediate family, actually pertains to vast movements of ancient peoples. (**NOTE 6:** Robert Brow, "[The Curse of Ham—Capsule of Ancient History.](#)" Christianity Today, October 26, 1973, p. 10.) Portraying their tendencies as originating in individual ancestors, the book of beginnings anticipates the expected destinies of these tribes and nations. Vos fittingly notes that it occurred at a time when no event could fail to influence history. (**NOTE 7:** Gerhardus Vos, [Old and New Testament Biblical Theology](#) - borrow).

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#### **QUESTION - [Why did Noah curse Canaan instead of Ham? WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

**ANSWER** - The unbiblical idea that Noah cursed Ham, and thereby all of Ham's descendants, was used to justify the African slave trade, and is still used by some today to justify racism, prejudice, and discrimination against people of color. Let it be clearly said. **Noah did not curse Ham.** Noah did not curse all of Ham's descendants. (ED: SEE UTLEY'S ARTICLE [RACISM](#)) **Rather, Noah only cursed Canaan, one of Ham's sons, and through Canaan, all of Canaan's descendants.** Why and to what end? Please continue reading.

***What is abundantly clear, however, is that this account in Genesis 9 regarding Noah, Ham, and Canaan does not, in any way, support slavery or racism in any form.***

After the flood, "God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth'" (Genesis 9:1). The men and their wives, under God's blessing, began to do just that. Sometime later, Scripture relates an unhappy episode in Noah's life involving Noah and [his three sons](#). In the fallout of that incident, Noah's grandson Canaan is said to be "cursed" (Genesis 9:25).

It all started when Noah planted a vineyard and used the grapes to make wine. He drank the wine, [became drunk](#), and shamefully lay naked in his tent (Genesis 9:20–21). Noah's youngest son [Ham](#), identified as "the father of Canaan" in verse 22, saw his father's condition and the fact that Noah was naked in his tent. Rather than keep the matter quiet or attempt to help his father, Ham told his two brothers the salacious news (Genesis 9:22). Ham's response to his father's sin shows somewhat of Ham's character and disrespect for his father.

Shem and Japheth acted more nobly. They "took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked" (Genesis 9:23).

Later, Noah sobered up. He made some inquiries and "found out what his youngest son had done to him" (Genesis 9:24). This wording suggests that Ham did more than just see Noah's nakedness. He did something, but just what is unknown. **It's useless to speculate.** In any case, upon hearing the facts, Noah said something surprising: "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Genesis 9:25). He also praised the Lord at that time and pronounced a patriarchal, prophetic blessing on Shem and Japheth (verses 26–27). Twice more in that blessing, Noah declared that Canaan would be a slave to Shem and Japheth.

**Of note is the fact that Noah did not curse Ham.** The curse is pronounced on Canaan, Ham's son, but nowhere does Noah

directly curse Ham. It is significant, though, that the other two of Noah's sons receive a blessing, but Ham does not. That omission resulted in the [patriarchal blessing](#) passing Ham by. This was no doubt intentional, given Ham's behavior.

So, why did Noah curse *Canaan* when it was clearly *Ham* who acted inappropriately? Several theories have been put forward:

- There is an ellipsis in the text. When Genesis 9 speaks of Canaan, it is really "the father of Canaan" that is meant—the words *the father of* being understood. This theory relies on an insupportable assumption about the text.
- Canaan and Ham were both involved in the sin against Noah. This means that Canaan was present when Ham observed Noah's nakedness. This theory adds to Scripture, however; the text never mentions Canaan's whereabouts, but it does specify that it was Ham, Noah's youngest son, who "had done [something] to him" (Genesis 9:24).
- **Ham had been blessed by God** (Genesis 9:1), and Noah refused to curse someone whom the Lord had blessed. In the same way, the prophet Balaam could not curse the Israelites. God had told [Balaam](#), "You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed" (Numbers 22:12; cf. Numbers 23:20). So, Noah pronounces a curse on some of Ham's descendants. Ham's sin against his father brought a punishment through his son. Not all of Ham's descendants were cursed; only those through Canaan. It's possible that Canaan was chosen to bear the imprecation because he was already showing evidence that he shared his father's character.
- **The "curse" on Canaan is more of a prophecy.** Noah learned of Ham's sin and gave him the bad news that one line of his posterity would suffer. As a prophet of God, Noah foresaw that the [Canaanites](#), in their wickedness, would deserve their fate (see Leviticus 18 for a list of future Canaanite sins). Ham's punishment was to lack a fatherly blessing and to know that he was the ancestor of a doomed people group.

In Genesis 10, the descendants of Canaan are listed. They include the Sidonians, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 10:15–19). Noah's curse/prophecy came true during the time of Joshua. The Canaanites, descendants of Ham, were conquered by the Israelites, descendants of Shem. True to God's Word, some of the Canaanites became slaves (Joshua 9:27; 17:12–13).

The inclusion of this sordid incident in the life of Noah is interesting. Out of all that Noah did after the flood, why is this episode the only one recorded? The answer lies in the events surrounding the writing of Genesis. Moses, the author of Genesis, was leading the Israelites toward the [land of Canaan](#) to take possession of it. The story of how Canaan came to be cursed was one justification of the conquest. God had pronounced doom upon these people long ago, and it was time for that prophecy to be fulfilled. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resource:

- [Who were the Canaanites? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Genesis 9:26 He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant.**

- Blessed - De 33:26 Ps 144:15 Ro 9:5
- the Lord - Ge 10:10-26 Gen 12:1-3 Lu 3:23-36
- Shem - Heb 11:16
- his servant - or, servant to them, Ge 27:37,40
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 12:1-3+ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Galatians 3:29+ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Colossians 3:11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

## THE SHEMITES ASSOCIATED ESPECIALLY WITH GOD

He also said, "Blessed ([barak](#)) be the LORD ([Jehovah](#)), The God ([Elohim](#)) of [Shem](#) - Noah clearly associates Shem with [Jehovah](#) and says He is the **God of Shem**, the implication being that Shem had an intimate, personal relationship with the LORD. While Noah blessed God in this passage, in effect the words he spoke to Shem were not just empty words but words which conveyed prophetic meaning and would be fulfilled in the life of Shem's line. In that sense one might look on them as a blessing. Of course ultimately from the line of Shem would come the ultimate blessing, the Messiah.

[Jack Arnold](#) - The Shemites, whether Jews or Arabs, are very religious people. It is interesting to note that the three great religions of the world are from the Semitic family: Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

[Derek Kidner](#) points out that "Of the three oracles, only that on Shem uses God's personal name Yahweh (the Lord); the significance of the fact begins to emerge at Genesis 12:1, and will dominate the Old Testament (cf. Dt. 4:35). Since Shem means 'Name', there may well be a play on words here; cf. on Ge 9:27. The traditional text, *Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem* (RV, cf. AV), suggests that Shem is himself already in covenant with Yahweh and that his blessing is wholly found in his Lord. RSV (Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem) could be right in revocalizing the same consonants to make Shem the direct recipient of the blessing; but this simpler, less pregnant construction is unsupported by the ancient versions." (BORROW [Genesis: an introduction and commentary - Page 104](#))

[Wiersbe](#) - Shem was Noah's second-born son (Gen. 9:24; 10:21), but wherever the three sons are listed, Shem's name is first (Ge 5:32; 6:10; 9:18; 10:1; 1 Chron. 1:4). It's another instance in Genesis of the grace of God elevating the second-born to the place of the firstborn. God chose Abel instead of Cain (Gen. 4:4–5), Isaac instead of Ishmael (Ge 17:15–22), and Jacob instead of Esau (Ge 25:19–23). Paul discusses this profound theological truth in Romans 9.

[R Kent Hughes](#) adds that "This special relationship with God is indeed the highest and greatest blessing anyone can experience. The way had been prophetically paved for Abram through the line of Seth to establish a people in special covenant relationship with Yahweh. (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 154](#))

[Bob Utley](#) on "**Blessed ([barak](#)) be the LORD ([Jehovah/YHWH](#))** -"YHWH" seems to be the special use of the covenant name (see note at Gen. 2:4) to recognize [Shem](#) as the Messianic line (cf. Luke 3:36+ = "the son of Shem, the son of Noah").

[Parunak](#): Note the shift from YHWH in v.26 to "God" in v.27. It is in the line of Shem that the Lord makes himself known as the covenant-keeping God. Japheth knows him only in his character as creator.

[Bob Utley](#) has an interesting note - [Shem](#) means "name" and may be a play on God's special name, YHWH. The line of Shem is the Messianic line. This is in opposition of Genesis 11:4+ ("let us make for ourselves a name")!

**And let Canaan be** (jussive ~ a command) **his servant** - Note that Noah does not say Ham is to be Shem's **servant** but speaks it of Ham's son. This prophecy was literally fulfilled when Joshua and the Israelite armies conquered Canaan and its tribes, making that area the home of the Jews.

[The Defender's Study Bible](#) (BORROW) - Noah associated Shem especially with the worship of Jehovah, recognizing the dominantly spiritual motivations of Shem and thus implying that God's promised Deliverer (THE MESSIAH) would ultimately come from Shem. The Semitic nations have included the Hebrews, Arabs (**ED: VIA ABRAHAM'S SON ISHMAEL**), Assyrians, Persians, Syrians and other strongly religious-minded peoples.

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### QUESTION - [Why was a father's blessing so highly valued in the Old Testament?](#)

**ANSWER** - The book of Genesis emphasizes the blessing of a father to his sons. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all gave formal blessings to their children—and, in Jacob's case, to some grandchildren. Receiving a blessing from one's father was a high honor, and losing a blessing was tantamount to a curse.

An Old Testament blessing of a father to his sons included words of encouragement, details regarding each son's inheritance, and prophetic words concerning the future. For example, Isaac's blessing on Jacob (which was meant for Esau) gave him the earth's bounty and authority over his brother (Genesis 27:28-29). It also promised that those who blessed Jacob would be blessed, and those who cursed him would receive a curse—words that echo God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

When Esau discovered that Jacob had deceived his father and had received the blessing meant for Esau, he was distraught and asked, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" (Genesis 27:36). Isaac's words to Esau reinforced Jacob's superiority but also prophesied that Esau would one day rebel against Jacob's rule (Ge 27:39-40).

When Jacob blessed his twelve sons, he also made predictions regarding their future (Genesis 49). The Bible records the direct fulfillment of many of these predictions, revealing the supernatural ability given to Jacob as the father of the [twelve tribes](#).

In one of his blessings, Jacob said, “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you” (Genesis 49:8). The blessing also included a prediction that kings would come from Judah and that one King would eventually receive “the obedience of the nations” (Ge 49:10). Judah’s descendants later became the tribe from which King David came and in whose land Jerusalem was located. Jesus Christ would also come from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:3).

Another example of a supernatural prediction in Jacob’s blessing is found in his words to Issachar: “He saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant” (Genesis 49:15). Issachar’s family would later inherit lower Galilee, including the Valley of Jezreel, which included rich, productive farmland.

Jacob’s youngest son also received a prophecy that was later fulfilled: “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil” (Genesis 49:27). The tribe of Benjamin would produce many military leaders in Israel, including Ehud, King Saul, and Saul’s son Jonathan, revealing a strong, warlike personality (Judges 5:14; 20:16; 1 Chronicles 8:40; 2 Chronicles 14:8; 17:17).

A patriarch’s final blessing was important in biblical times as a practical matter of inheritance rights. In addition, some final blessings included prophetic statements that reveal God’s supernatural power at work through the men of His choosing. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Related Resources:

- [What is the difference between a blessing and a birthright \(Genesis 25\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why is the birthright so emphasized in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Genesis 9:27 "May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant."

- **dwell** - Isa 11:10 Ho 2:14 Mal 1:11 Ac 17:14 Ro 11:12 15:12 Eph 2:13,14,19 Eph 3:6,13 Heb 11:9,10
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### PRAYER FOR JAPHETH

**May God enlarge Japheth** - This is in the form of a prayer by Noah for his son Japheth. Actions have consequences and Japheth (along with Shem) had sought to honor his father. The consequence is that he would be rewarded. [Japheth's name](#) means expansion, enlargement or wide spreading and how wonderfully have his boundaries been enlarged; for not only Europe, but Asia Minor, part of Armenia, Iberia, the whole of the vast regions of Asia north of Taurus, and probably America, fell to the share of his posterity.

**NET NOTE** - Heb “may God enlarge Japheth.” The words “territory and numbers” are supplied in the translation for clarity. **There is a wordplay (paronomasia = PUN) on the name Japheth.** The verb יָפַת (yaft, “may he enlarge”) sounds like the name יָפֶת (yefet, “Japheth”). The name itself suggested the idea. The blessing for Japheth extends beyond the son to the descendants. Their numbers and their territories will be enlarged, so much so that they will share in Shem’s territories. Again, in this oracle, Noah is looking beyond his immediate family to future generations. For a helpful study of this passage and the next chapter, see T. O. Figart, [A Biblical Perspective on the Race Problem \(BORROW\)](#), 55–58.

**Parunak:** As we shall see in more detail in chapter 10, Ham’s descendants moved south to populate Africa. From them come the Egyptians and the tribes Israel found in Palestine. Japheth’s descendants moved north to populate Europe and Asia. **We are all mainly Japhethites.** Shem’s descendants (the “shemitic” or “semitic” people) remained near the center, in Mesopotamia and the Arabian peninsula. From them God chose Abraham and his descendants. ([Notes on Gen 8-9](#))

**Derek Kidner** points out that “The word **enlarge** (make space for) is the parent verb of the name **Japheth** (cf. comment on Shem, Ge 9:26); the oracle evidently confirms the prayer made at his birth. The fulfilment of the words let him dwell in (or among) the tents of Shem (RV, RSV) is sought almost in vain in the Old Testament, but leaps to the eye in the New Testament in the ingathering of the Gentiles (Eph. 3:6), predominantly from the west. The fact that this reading of the oracle makes it a prediction of great events, instead of a pious retrojection of twelfth-century politics, will disturb only the resolutely sceptical..” (BORROW [Genesis: an](#)



[GotQuestions.org](#) adds that "The descendants of **Japheth** included various maritime peoples (Ge 10:5+) as well as the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Scythians, and Macedonians. Japheth's descendants spread out over much of Asia and Europe and, through colonization, North America, thus fulfilling Noah's prediction of "expansion" for Japheth."

**And let him dwell** (jussive ~ functions like a command) **in the tents of Shem** - NET has "May he live...." These words may mean either that God or that Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem (see [NET NOTE](#) below). In either sense the prophecy has been literally fulfilled.

[Bob Utley](#) - "let him dwell in the tents of Shem" Some see this (1) in a political sense like the domination of Roman or European culture (2) in a spiritual sense of the inclusion of the Gentiles with the blessings of the Jews, which was also part of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 12:3; Eph. 2:11-3:13)

**R Kent Hughes** explains it this way - A glance at the table of nations in Genesis 10:2-4 indicates that the Japhethites are what we would call Indo-Europeans, encompassing vast territories extending to whole continents. Noah's wish that "Japheth ... dwell in the tents of Shem" involves the sharing of the blessings of Shem. But while the Israelites and Hamitic people from Egypt and Indo-Europeans from Asia Minor did regularly subjugate the Canaanites, there is no substantial evidence in the Old Testament of these Japhethite Gentiles living in the tents of the Shemites so as to share their blessings. But the New Testament reveals otherwise! Through Christ, the Gentiles (both Hamitic and Japhethite) came to be the true seed of Abraham. "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29). (BORROW Genesis - [Beginning and Blessing, page 154](#))

[John Calvin](#) adds "Also the Gentiles, the progeny of Japheth, who had long been wanderers and fugitives were received into the same tabernacle. For God, by a new adoption, has formed a people out of those who were separated, and has confirmed a fraternal union between alienated parties. This is done by the sweet and gentle voice of God, which he has uttered in the gospel; and this prophecy is still daily receiving its fulfillment, since God invites the scattered sheep to join his flock, and collects on every side, those who shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven (**ED: YES, BUT FIRST IN THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM!**). It is truly no common support of our faith, that the calling of the Gentiles is declared by the mouth of the Patriarch Noah; lest we should think it to have happened suddenly, or by chance, that the inheritance of eternal life was offered generally to all."

**NET NOTE** on the identity of "he" in the phrase "**May he live...**" - There is some debate over whether God or Japheth is the subject. On the one hand, the brothers acted together and the refrain ending Ge 9:26, 27 is the same, which suggests that Ge 9:26 is about Shem and Ge 9:27 is about Japheth. **But it is not clear what it would mean for Japheth to live in Shem's tents.** A similar phrase occurs in Ps 78:55 where it means for Israel to occupy Canaan, but there is no reason in this context to expect Japheth to be blessed at the expense of Shem and occupy his territory. If this applies to Japheth, it would make more sense for it to mean that Japheth would participate in the blessings of Shem, but that is not clear for this phrase. On the other hand it is typical to keep the same subject if a new one is not explicitly introduced, suggesting that God is the subject here (see W. Kaiser, [The Messiah in the Old Testament \[borrow\]](#), 44-46). In addition, the phrase שָׁכַן (shakhan b..., "to dwell in/among" is often used of the LORD dwelling among Israel, in Zion, making His name dwell there, or the Tabernacle dwelling among them. Referring to the "tents" (plural) of Shem looks ahead to tents of his descendants, not to the Tabernacle, though the Tabernacle being in the middle of the camp would seem to be a realization of the statement, as would Jesus' presence among Israel.

#### **And let Canaan be his servant**

[The Defender's Study Bible](#) (BORROW) - The enlargement of Japheth was not to be primarily geographical (Hamitic and Semitic nations have been enlarged geographically as much as the Japhethites) but intellectual. The Japhetic peoples (Greeks, Romans, Aryans, Europeans) have largely supplied the philosophers and scientists of mankind. The tripartite nature of man (body, mind, spirit) is shared by every man and every nation. However, each man (and each nation) reflects one of these as a predominant characteristic. Noah recognized that Ham, Japheth and Shem were dominated, respectively, by physical, intellectual and spiritual considerations, and so could see prophetically that these attributes would likewise be emphasized in the nations descending from them. Thus, every nation would contribute its own part to the corporate life of mankind as a whole. **tents of Shem.** Japheth was peculiarly God's steward in the intellectual analysis and utilization of earth's resources, and Shem was peculiarly His steward with respect to the propagation of God's will and plan for mankind, especially the transmission of His saving Word. Both services would require an adequate physical base from which to operate, and thus would require the stewardship of Ham in the physical world. Thus, Ham was steward to Shem and Japheth in their stewardship—in this sense also, he would be a servant of servants.

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**Dr. Richard Gamble:** [The Greatest Promise - A Sermon on Genesis 9](#)

God is powerful, and he is the Lord. The Lord God is just and punishes sin. But he is also gracious: he enters into

covenants/promises with men, and he reveals himself to us in his names and by his works. This is progressive revelation.

He also reveals the gospel in the Old Testament. When we look through Christian glasses, we see it quite clearly in different ways. First, we recognize that it was always God's plan to enlarge the church beyond the tents or dwellings of his son Shem (Abraham's family) to the dwellings of his son Japheth (the Gentiles). Second, although it may appear that Shem got all the good promises, in fact Japheth was included in them too. While Noah did not know the precise manner in which God would bring the prophecy to fulfillment, the Japhethites did actually conquer the Shemites. This happened in history when the Greeks and Romans took over Palestine. It also happened when Christians were engrafted into the tents of the Shemites (Israel; compare Rom. 11). Israel was the church in the Old Testament. They were blessed and saved not because Shem was a better son than Japheth, but because of God's sovereign plan. This was not an issue of sin. It was God's sovereign choice (compare Rom. 9).

We are all Japhethites living in the tents of Shem. Unless we have been born of Jewish parents, then this is true of us quite literally. Because of our sin we all deserve to be like Japheth, outside the good promises of God made to Shem.

At the same time, we are also Shemites calling the Japhethites to live in our tents, to live in the church of Jesus Christ, the place of blessing. We are to call the scattered people of the world to join our voices in the proclamation: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem!" "Sing, burst into song and shout for joy — for your maker is your husband — the Lord Almighty is His name — the Holy one of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth" (Isa. 54:1,5).

As inhabitants of the tents of Shem, the promise is true for us: "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet God's unfailing love for us will not be shaken nor his covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on us." (Isaiah 54:10)

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### **Robert Hawker - Poor Man's Evening Portion -**

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.—Genesis 9:27.

None but God himself could do either. Who but God could enlarge the one, or persuade and overrule the other? Of Japheth came the Gentiles, (Gen. 10:5;) and Shem is the father of Israel. But 'Jesus, and Jesus only, can bring both Jew and Gentile into one fold, under one shepherd. And when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be completed, then shall all Israel be saved. Then will the deliverer arise out of Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. My soul! art thou, night by night, and morning by morning, besieging a throne of grace that the Lord would hasten the latter-day of glory? Surely, if thou feelest due concern for the Redeemer's glory, this must form a part in thy daily petition. Who, indeed, can be indifferent to the interests of Christ's kingdom? "In the multitude of the people," saith Solomon, "is the king's honour;" (Prov. 14:28;) and in the multitude of redeemed souls, is the glory of Christ Jesus. Lord! I would pray, fulfil this blessed promise. Enlarge Japheth, and cause him to dwell in the tents of Shem. Let the heathen be given to our God and Saviour for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession. "Oh! that the salvation were given unto Israel out of Zion! Oh! that the Lord would deliver his people out of captivity! then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad!"

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**Gleason Archer - [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) -** What was meant by Noah's prophecy that Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem (Gen. 9:27)?

The full statement by Noah was as follows: "May God enlarge Japheth,/And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;/And let Canaan be his servant" (Gen. 9:27, NASB). This follows right on the heels of v.26, which indicates that the descendants of Canaan will serve as bondservants of both the Semites and the Indo-Europeans. This was fulfilled, in all probability, when in the 330s B.C. Alexander the Great subdued the entire territory of the Persian Empire and added it to his extensive European domains. As conqueror of the Phoenicians, Samaritans, Assyrians, and Babylonians, Alexander took over the reins of government through his special deputies and settled his veteran troops in various camps throughout the conquered territory. The empire he established endured for well over three centuries. In that sense, then, Japheth (ancestor of Javan or the Greeks) did "dwell in the tents of Shem."

Prior to Alexander's conquest, of course, Canaan had been invaded and taken over by the armies of Joshua around 1400 B.C. In that sense, then, Canaan became the servant of Shem as well as of Japheth (in the time of the Alexandrian conquest). But if the antecedent of the ambiguous pronoun "his" in "And let Canaan be his servant" is "Japheth"—as seems more likely—then this points forward particularly to the subjugation of the entire area of Canaan, or Palestine, by the Greeks and Macedonians of Alexander's army. Thus Canaan became the "servant" of Japheth.

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**Genesis 9:28 Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.**

- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

ADAM 930 years (Gen. 5:5)

SETH 912 years (Gen. 5:8)

ENOSH 905 years (Gen. 5:11)

ENOCH 365 years (Gen. 5:23)

METHUSELAH 969 years (Gen. 5:27)

LAMECH 777 years (Gen. 5:31)

NOAH 950 years (Gen. 9:29)

#### The Flood

SHEM 600 years (Gen. 11:10, 11)

EBER 464 years (Gen. 11:16, 17)

TERAH 205 years (Gen. 11:32)

ABRAHAM 175 years (Gen. 25:7)

ISAAC 180 years (Gen. 35:28)

JACOB 147 years (Gen. 47:28)

JOSEPH 110 years (Gen. 50:26)

## NOAH'S LONG LIFE POST FLOOD

**Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood ([mabbul](#))** - So even though the lifespans in the post-diluvian world were shortened compared to antediluvian lifespans, Noah still lived a long life typical of the antediluvian peoples. The patriarchs who lived before the Flood had an average lifespan of about 900 years (Gen. 5). The ages of post-Flood patriarchs dropped rapidly and gradually leveled off (Gen. 11). Some suggest that this is due to major environmental changes brought about by the Flood.

**Genesis 9:29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.**

- nine - Ge 5:5,20,27,32 11:11-25 Ps 90:10
- [Genesis 9 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Psalm 90:10+ (MOSES RECORDS A MORE TYPICAL LIFESPAN) - As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away (WOE! WHAT HAVE YOU SENT AHEAD OF YOU TO HEAVEN? SEE Mt 6:19-21+).

[Click to enlarge and make more legible](#)

## NOAH DIED AT A RIPE OLD AGE

**So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died**- Noah fades off the pages of Genesis and ends the times of men experiencing lives lasting many centuries, Noah actually having lived longer than any of his ancestors except Jared (962) and Methuselah (969). So even after the flood flushing the depraved world down the sink, sin still reigned and thus men still died.

**AND HE DIED** - The repeated refrain of Genesis 5 - Gen. 5:5; Gen. 5:8; Gen. 5:11; Gen. 5:14; Gen. 5:17; Gen. 5:20; Gen. 5:27; Gen. 5:31; Gen. 9:29