

Introduction

Moses depicted Noah's first act upon disembarking as engaging in worship, making a whole burnt offering (Gen 8:20).³⁴³⁰ When the rest-inducing aroma of the sacrifice rose to God, he accepted both the offering and the one who made it.³⁴³¹ The Lord chose to make a covenant with all humanity, stating that he would never again disrupt his creation with such a catastrophic flood (Gen 8:21–22; Gen 9:11).³⁴³²

Noah soothed the Lord's justifiable indignation, even though people's hearts still incline toward evil.³⁴³³ Regular cycles of the seasons and the time of day would characterize the world.³⁴³⁴ Human hearts might be erratic, but nature will not be.³⁴³⁵

As a second Adam,³⁴³⁶ God called Noah to fulfill the original human mandate of Gen 1:28–29 by proliferating and preserving life (Gen 9:1, 7).³⁴³⁷ However, the enmity between people and creatures increased to the point of death (Gen 9:2–5).³⁴³⁸

Before eating an animal, one had to drain its blood. This returned the creature's life force to God, the one who had created it.³⁴³⁹ Even animals' carcasses had to be treated with dignity.³⁴⁴⁰ While people could shed the blood of a creature for sacrifice or in the process of obtaining food, the Lord forbade spilling human blood.³⁴⁴¹ Since God made us in his image, a murderer kills someone who resembles the Lord.³⁴⁴² Therefore, he instituted the death penalty for intentionally killing someone (Gen 9:6).³⁴⁴³ Noah's descendants must produce life, not wantonly take it.³⁴⁴⁴

Referring to the promise which the Lord made before the flood (Gen 6:17–20),³⁴⁴⁵ God established a universal and unilateral covenant with Noah and his descendants.³⁴⁴⁶ Such a deluge will never again cut off all living things. This covenant does not mean that humanity will never face judgment,³⁴⁴⁷ only that it will not come as a flood (Gen 9:8–11).³⁴⁴⁸

Then God ratified his oath with a sign to indicate that his enmity toward humanity had ceased.³⁴⁴⁹ Against the backdrop of clouds—which had previously wrought such great destruction—the Lord placed an upturned bow (Gen 9:12–13).³⁴⁵⁰ Whenever a rainbow emerges through the clouds, it reminds God of his covenant with Noah.³⁴⁵¹ This enables him to temporarily overlook human depravity (Gen 9:14–17).³⁴⁵²

³⁴³⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 307.

³⁴³¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

³⁴³²Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 62.

³⁴³³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142–3.

³⁴³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 191.

³⁴³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 310.

³⁴³⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 313. “Second Adam” is also one of the titles ascribed to Jesus.

³⁴³⁷Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 64.

³⁴³⁸Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 63.

³⁴³⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:4.

³⁴⁴⁰Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 64.

³⁴⁴¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

³⁴⁴²Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 65.

³⁴⁴³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 145.

³⁴⁴⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³⁴⁴⁵Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, 74.

³⁴⁴⁶Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 246.

³⁴⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 316.

³⁴⁴⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 195.

³⁴⁴⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 317.

³⁴⁵⁰Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 67.

³⁴⁵¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 196.

³⁴⁵²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

The Lord’s covenant with Noah is the first of several such pacts which God has made throughout redemptive history. Ultimately, they shall culminate with the purification and renewal of all creation (2 Pet 3:10–13). At that time, the Lord will release everything on earth from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:16–22).³⁴⁵³

The Sons of Noah

1) Gen 9:18–19: These verses represent the final part of the chiasm which recounts the flood (Gen 6:9–9:19). They form the conclusion which mentions Noah and his sons (Cf. Gen 6:9–10).³⁴⁵⁴ Here the focus shifts from Noah to his descendants.³⁴⁵⁵ Moses wrote, “And it happened that the sons of Noah went out from the ark: Shem and Ham and Japheth. And Ham, he [was the] father of Canaan. These three [were] the sons of Noah, and from these scattered all [the people] of the earth.”

By spreading out across the known world, the descendants of Noah fulfilled the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28; Gen 9:1, 7). This passage introduces the ancestor of the nations whom God commanded Moses’ original readers to displace (Gen 10:15–19; Exod 3:8; Deut 9:5).³⁴⁵⁶ Canaanites practiced polytheism, child sacrifice, and religious prostitution (Lev 18:24–25; Deut 12:29–31).³⁴⁵⁷ The behavior of Noah’s sons foreshadows the relationships between their descendants (Gen 9:20–23; Josh 11:16–20; Josh 16:10; Josh 17:12–13).³⁴⁵⁸

a) Read Gen 9:18–19. How did Noah resemble a second Adam? Why do you think Moses included Canaan in these verses?

Noah Planted a Vineyard

b) Gen 9:20–21: A considerable number of years have elapsed since Noah’s flood, as Ham produced four sons in the interim (Cf. Gen 8:15–18; Gen 10:6). Moses wrote, “Then Noah, a man of the ground (*adamah*), began by planting a vineyard.” He appeared to deliberately link Noah with Adam, the man whom God formed from the ground (Gen 2:7; Gen 3:17–19).³⁴⁵⁹ With Noah, humanity (*adam*) received a fresh start.³⁴⁶⁰

Lamech called his son Noah (*noakh*), saying, “This one shall relieve (*nakh*) us from our work and from the painful toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has put under a curse” (Gen 5:29). He created a play on words between *nuakh*, which means “rest” and a similar sounding term which means “comfort” (*nakh*).³⁴⁶¹

³⁴⁵³Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, 76.

³⁴⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 156.

³⁴⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁴⁵⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁴⁵⁷John Day, “Canaan, Religion of,” *ABD* 1:831–7, 833–5.

³⁴⁵⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 197.

³⁴⁵⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁴⁶⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁶¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

Noah produced a luxury item,³⁴⁶² indicating that rain came in the right amounts to grow lush crops rather than to obliterate life (Cf. Gen 7:17–24).³⁴⁶³ While the wine which Noah produced brought comfort from his toil, it yielded mixed results.³⁴⁶⁴ Hebrew scholars disagree whether Noah was the first person to ferment wine. Some hold that “began” (*khalal*) implies a completely new activity.³⁴⁶⁵ Others note that the same grammar occurs in a verse depicting the onset of the building of the temple after returning from exile (Ezra 3:8).³⁴⁶⁶

According to the Epic of Gilgamesh, winegrowing preceded the flood. The Noah figure Utnapishtim gave the men who built his boat “red wine, oil, and white wine.”³⁴⁶⁷ The earliest archaeological evidence for winemaking comes from the Zagros Mountains in northern Iran. Six nine-liter clay jars containing wine residue date to 5400–5000 BC.³⁴⁶⁸ This area lies close to the Ararat Mountains (Gen 8:4).

Concerning Noah, Moses reported, “And he drank from the wine, and he became drunk, and he uncovered himself inside his tent.” This seems incompatible with the earlier description of Noah as “a righteous man, having integrity in his generation” (Gen 6:9).³⁴⁶⁹ Yet, Moses neither condoned nor censured his behavior.³⁴⁷⁰

Israelites considered wine one of God’s good gifts (Deut 14:26; Ps 104:14–15; Isa 62:8–9). In fact, the Lord compared Israel to a vineyard (Isa 5:1–7; Mark 12:1–12).³⁴⁷¹ Priests offered wine to God twice a day and included it with burnt sacrifices (Exod 29:38–42; Num 15:4–7).³⁴⁷²

Scripture also recognizes the perils of drunkenness (1 Sam 1:12–17; Prov 23:29–35; Hos 4:10–12; Jer 25:15–16, 27–29).³⁴⁷³ Inebriation and holiness cannot coexist.³⁴⁷⁴ God threatened to kill any priest who drank wine before entering the tabernacle (Lev 10:8–11). A key aspect of the Nazirite vow of dedication to God consisted of abstention from alcohol (Num 6:1–4).³⁴⁷⁵

The Lord particularly condemned drunkenness coupled with nakedness, employing this imagery as a sign of judgment (Lam 4:21–22; Hab 2:15–16).³⁴⁷⁶ Two nations which later oppressed and ensnared Israel arose after Lot’s daughters plied him with alcohol (Gen 19:30–38). David tried to cover his adultery by getting Uriah drunk so that he would ignore his sense of honor and go home to sleep with his wife (2 Sam 11:10–13).³⁴⁷⁷

One Ugaritic text describes the chief god, El, as too drunk to walk. It says, “El sits in his *mrzḥ*-shrine. [El] drinks [wi]ne to satiety, liquor, to drunkenness. El goes to his house, proceeds to his court. *Ṭkmn* and *Šnm* carry him.”³⁴⁷⁸ The verb used for “carry” implies that El

³⁴⁶²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁴⁶³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁴⁶⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁴⁶⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 148.

³⁴⁶⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 345–6.

³⁴⁶⁷Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:72, 93,

<https://archive.org/stream/in.gov.ignca.16119/16119#page/n87/mode/2up>.

³⁴⁶⁸University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, “The Origins and Ancient History of Wine,” <http://www.penn.museum/sites/wine/wineneolithic.html>.

³⁴⁶⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁴⁷⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁴⁷¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁷²W. Dommershausen, “יין” (*yayin*), *TDOT* 6:59–64, 63.

³⁴⁷³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 148.

³⁴⁷⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁷⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁴⁷⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁷⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 148.

³⁴⁷⁸Cyrus H. Gordon, “El, Father of Šnm,” *JNES* 35, no. 4 (1 October 1976) 261–2, 261, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/372507>.

could no longer walk.³⁴⁷⁹ Since the Ugaritic religion emphasized fertility rites,³⁴⁸⁰ intoxication and prostitution likely occurred in tandem.³⁴⁸¹

Read Gen 9:20–21. How does the Old Testament depict wine? Why did nudity coupled with drunkenness carry negative associations in Israel? How do you avoid the pitfalls which exist with alcohol consumption?

Ham Dishonors His Father

c) Gen 9:22–23: Concerning the incident with Noah’s vineyard (Gen 9:20–21), Moses focused upon how Noah’s son sinned him, rather than upon what Noah did.³⁴⁸² This account illustrates the moral depravity of the descendants of Ham—Canaanites, Egyptians, and Babylonians—in contrast to the upright conduct of Shem and Japheth’s progeny (Gen 10:6–32).³⁴⁸³ Moses wrote, “And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw (*raah*) the nakedness of his father, and he told his two brothers outside.”

This consisted of attentive observation,³⁴⁸⁴ to the point of voyeurism (Song 1:6; Song 6:11).³⁴⁸⁵ Throughout the Old Testament, God commanded children to render honor to their parents (Exod 21:15, 17; Deut 27:16; Prov 30:17; Mal 1:6).³⁴⁸⁶ This includes the first of the Ten Commandments which apply to relationships between people (Exod 20:12).³⁴⁸⁷ Ham compounded his error by telling his brothers about Noah’s disgraceful state (Prov 17:9).³⁴⁸⁸

According to one Ugaritic tale, the god Baal viewed sons as a blessing who would protect their fathers.³⁴⁸⁹ Baal said, “So shall there be a son in his house...Who smothers the life-force of his detractor...Who takes him by the hand when he’s drunk, carries him when he’s sated with wine.”³⁴⁹⁰

A Mesopotamian man’s last will and testament illustrates the severity of the penalty for dishonor. He wrote, “And now therefore, my two sons...whichever of them shall bring a lawsuit against...or shall abuse...their mother, shall pay 500 shekels of silver to the king; he shall set his cloak upon the door bolt, and shall depart into the street.”³⁴⁹¹ In the Ancient Near East, a parent removing clothing from someone symbolized disinheritance.³⁴⁹²

This interpretation of Ham’s sins makes sense in its cultural context (Isa 51:17–18).

³⁴⁷⁹Gordon, “El, Father of Šnm,” 261, <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/372507>.

³⁴⁸⁰Peter C. Craigie, “The Tablets from Ugarit and Their Importance for Biblical Studies,” *BAR* 9, no. 5 (1 September 1983). http://cojs.org/the_tablets_from_ugarit_and_their_importance_for_biblical_studies-_peter_c_craigie-_bar_9-05-_sep-oct_1983/.

³⁴⁸¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 322.

³⁴⁸²Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁸³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147. The Hebrew word for “Egypt” is “*Mizraim*.”

³⁴⁸⁴H. F. Fuhs, “*רה*” (*raah*), *TDOT* 13:210–42, 223–4.

³⁴⁸⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁴⁸⁶C. J. H. Wright, “Family,” *ABD* 2:761–9, 766.

³⁴⁸⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199.

³⁴⁸⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁴⁸⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 199–200.

³⁴⁹⁰H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “The Tale of Aqhat,” in *ANET*, 1:24–33, 150.

<https://archive.org/stream/in.gov.ignca.16119/16119#page/n139/mode/2up>.

³⁴⁹¹J. J. Finkelstein, trans., “Additional Mesopotamian Legal Documents: (17) Will and Testament,” in *ANET*, 546.

³⁴⁹²Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 30.

Yet, some scholars who don't recognize loyalty to one's parents as a cardinal virtue seek deeper meaning in the text.³⁴⁹³ They allege unwarranted charges of incest with Noah or his wife,³⁴⁹⁴ or even Noah's castration.³⁴⁹⁵ Such topics receive explicit attention elsewhere in the Pentateuch, making it unlikely that Moses avoided lurid details (Cf. Gen 19:4–5; Gen 35:22; Gen 49:1–4).

Furthermore, Shem and Japheth's actions refute such allegations.³⁴⁹⁶ Moses reported, "Shem and Japheth took the outer garment and they put it on two shoulders. And they walked backwards, and they covered [the] nakedness of their father. And their faces [were] backwards, and the nakedness of their father they did not see (*raah*)."

The repetition and detail in this account evoke the great effort expended by Shem and Japheth to avoid seeing their father's nudity. One can imagine them plotting how to manage to clothe Noah without catching a glimpse of him. Perhaps they walked backwards until Noah's toes came into view and then dropped the cloak over him.³⁴⁹⁷

Read Gen 9:22–23. How does this passage reveal the attitudes of Noah's sons? Why do you think Moses included it?

Obedience in the Lord

2) Eph 6:1: Household codes were quite common in the ancient world.³⁴⁹⁸ In the Greco-Roman milieu, they regulated the behavior of women, children, and slaves toward husbands, parents, and masters.³⁴⁹⁹ However, Eph 6:1–4 follows the apostle's exhortation for all Christians to exhibit submission to each other as an expression of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives (Eph 5:15–21).³⁵⁰⁰

Jesus's call to discipleship infringed upon traditional family responsibilities (Mark 3:31–35; Mark 10:28–31; Mark 13:12–13; Luke 8:1–3; Luke 9:59–62). Thus, Paul's guidance regarding these relationships provided stability where entire households had converted to Christianity.³⁵⁰¹ As the apostle typically did, he first discussed the responsibilities of the household member considered subordinate in Greco-Roman society.³⁵⁰²

After finishing his charges to wives and husbands (Eph 5:21–33), Paul wrote, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Significantly, Paul directly addressed Christian children.³⁵⁰³ Therefore, the church in Ephesus likely included them in worship and community instruction.³⁵⁰⁴

Most girls married in their early teens;³⁵⁰⁵ boys came of age at twenty-five.³⁵⁰⁶ Those

³⁴⁹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 200. Wenham is not among them.

³⁴⁹⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 322.

³⁴⁹⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 346.

³⁴⁹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 200.

³⁴⁹⁸John T. Fitzgerald, "Haustafeln," *ABD* 3:80–1, 80.

³⁴⁹⁹Balch, "Household Codes," *ABD* 3:318.

³⁵⁰⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 395.

³⁵⁰¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵⁰²Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 395–6.

³⁵⁰³Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

³⁵⁰⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

³⁵⁰⁵Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 35.

³⁵⁰⁶Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, 282.

of Jewish background recognized that a shift of allegiance occurred when they married (Gen 2:23–24; Eph 5:25–31).³⁵⁰⁷ However, in the Roman world, the requirement of obedience lasted until one’s father died.³⁵⁰⁸

Paul commanded wives to submit (*hypotassō*) to their husbands (Eph 5:22).³⁵⁰⁹ That leaves open the possibility of respectful disagreement.³⁵¹⁰ He ordered children to go a step further and obey (*hypakouō*) their parents.³⁵¹¹ This connotes compliance free of objections.³⁵¹²

The phrase “in the Lord” (*en kuriō*) generates much controversy. It does not appear in some ancient manuscripts, including some dating back to the fourth century.³⁵¹³ However, it does occur in other equally old documents. Therefore, one manuscript (P⁴⁶) dated to ca. 200 makes the determination to include these words.³⁵¹⁴

Another issue concerns exactly what “in the Lord” means. Some scholars assert that the command to obey applies only to Christian parents.³⁵¹⁵ Others claim that children must comply to their parents’ expectations only when their orders do not conflict with God’s.³⁵¹⁶ In Ephesians Paul typically argues for behavior based upon what Jesus has done (Luke 2:41–52; Eph 1:3–14).³⁵¹⁷ However, the most likely possibility takes the context of the other household codes into consideration (Eph 5:18–22; Eph 6:5–7).³⁵¹⁸

One aspect of following the Lord consists of obeying one’s parents. In fact, the Spirit enables children to obey.³⁵¹⁹ Elsewhere, Paul equated disobedience to one’s parents with failure to honor God as Lord (Rom 1:28–32; 2 Tim 3:1–6).³⁵²⁰ He claimed that such behavior is “right” (*dikaïos*). This noun refers to action which conforms to God’s laws.³⁵²¹

In the Greco-Roman world, people widely recognized the call to such obedience.³⁵²² A first century BC Roman historian wrote of the authority granted to fathers in that society: “These, then, are the excellent laws which Romulus enacted... Those he established with respect to reverence and dutifulness of children toward their parents, to the end that they should honor and obey them in all things, both in their words and actions, were still more august and of greater dignity and vastly superior to our laws. For those who established the Greek constitutions set a very short time for sons to be under the rule of their fathers, some till the expiration of the third year after they reached manhood, others as long as they continued unmarried, and some till their names were entered in the public registers... “The punishments, also, which they ordered for disobedience in children toward their parents were not grievous: for they permitted fathers to turn their sons out of doors and to disinherit

³⁵⁰⁷Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

³⁵⁰⁸Gottlob Schrenk, “πατήρ” (*patēr*), *TDNT* 5:945–59, 951.

³⁵⁰⁹Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 321.

³⁵¹⁰Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 335–6.

³⁵¹¹Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 335–6.

³⁵¹²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

³⁵¹³Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd. Ed., 341–2.

³⁵¹⁴Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, 28. revidierte Auflage, 601.

³⁵¹⁵Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

³⁵¹⁶Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 397.

³⁵¹⁷Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 395.

³⁵¹⁸Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 321.

³⁵¹⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415–6.

³⁵²⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵²¹Gottlob Schrenk, “δικαίος” (*dikaïos*), *TDNT* 2:182–91, 191.

³⁵²²Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

them, but nothing further. But mild punishments are not sufficient to restrain the folly of youth and its stubborn ways or to give self-control to those who have been heedless of all that is honorable; and accordingly, among the Greeks many unseemly deeds are committed by children against their parents.

“But the law giver of the Romans gave virtually full power to the father over his son, even during his whole life, whether he thought proper to imprison him, to scourge him, to put him in chains and keep him at work in the fields, or to put him to death, and this even though the son were already engaged in public affairs, though he were numbered among the highest magistrates, and though he were celebrated for his zeal for the commonwealth.”³⁵²³

Notably, Paul placed restraints upon fathers regarding how they treated their children (Eph 6:4). Although people commonly expected children to obey their parents, Paul contended that those who belong to Christ should live in a way which pleases the Lord (Col 1:9–10; Col 3:20; Eph 4:1–3).³⁵²⁴ This precludes obeying orders which contradict God’s commands.

a) Read Eph 6:1. How did Paul alter the format of Greco-Roman household codes? To whom does this apply? Why did Paul command children to obey their parents? What does such conformity signify?

Life-long Honor

b) Eph 6:2–3: After directing children who were still growing up to obey their parents (Eph 6:1), Paul quoted part of the fifth commandment.³⁵²⁵ He wrote, “Honor your father and your mother, which is the first command with a promise, in order that good to you it may be, and you will be long-lived on the earth.”

This matches the beginning of the Greek translation of Exod 20:12.³⁵²⁶ To honor (*timaō*) someone consists of rendering esteem, dignity, and proper recognition to that person.³⁵²⁷ In Judaism, honoring one’s parents paralleled the reverence accorded to the Lord (Lev 19:1–4).³⁵²⁸ Unlike the command to obey, this mandate applies to adults (Gen 2:23–24; Eph 5:25–31; Matt 19:16–19).³⁵²⁹ It includes supporting parents with financial needs (Matt 15:3–6; 1 Tim 5:3–6).³⁵³⁰

The Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) asserted:
“And so [the aged], living in a tranquility worthy of their time of life, enjoy all abundance, and pass their old age in luxury; while their children make light of all the hardships they

³⁵²³Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities* (trans. Earnest Cary; LCL; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1960), 2.26.1–4, 387–9, <https://archive.org/stream/L319DionysiusOfHalicarnassusTheRomanAntiquitiesI12pdf/L319-Dionysius%20of%20Halicarnassus%20The%20Roman%20Antiquities%20I%3A1-2pdf#page/n437>.

³⁵²⁴Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 321.

³⁵²⁵Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336.

³⁵²⁶Brannan et. al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Exod 20:12.

³⁵²⁷Johannes Schneider, “τιμάω” (*timaō*), *TDNT* 8:169–80, 174.

³⁵²⁸Frank S. Thielman, “Ephesians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 829.

³⁵²⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 416.

³⁵³⁰Schneider, “τιμάω” (*timaō*), *TDNT* 8:169–80, 178–9.

undergo to furnish them with the means of support, under the influence both of piety and also of the expectation that they also in their old age will receive the same treatment from their descendants; and so they now discharge the indispensable debt which they owe their parents, knowing that in proper time, they will themselves receive what they are now bestowing.

“And there are also others who are unable to support themselves, for children are no more able to do so at the commencement of their existence, than their parents are at the end of their lives. On which account the children, having while young been fed in accordance with the spontaneous promptings of nature, now with joy do in return support the old age of their parents.

“Is it not right, then, after these examples, that men who neglect their parents should cover their faces from shame, and reproach themselves for disregarding those things... For the children have nothing of their own which does not belong to the parents, who have either bestowed it upon them from their own substance or have enabled them to acquire it by supplying them with the means.”³⁵³¹

Within the Ten Commandments, this is the first with an explicit promise for adhering to it.³⁵³² Although Exod 20:4–6 does contain a pledge, it refers to keeping all the Lord’s mandates.³⁵³³ Paul likely omitted “in the land which the Lord you God gives you” because it pertained to Israel.³⁵³⁴ For gentiles living in Asia Minor, that was irrelevant.³⁵³⁵ However, he did retain God’s vow for a good, long life (Deut 5:33).³⁵³⁶ This refers to temporal—not eternal—benefits.³⁵³⁷

Nevertheless, we cannot universally apply this assurance. A one-to-one correlation between people who honor their parents and those who enjoy prosperity while reaching an advanced age does not exist.³⁵³⁸ The Lord does not make such guarantees (1 Ki 14:11–13).³⁵³⁹

Read Eph 6:2–3. How does honoring parents differ from obeying them? Where did Ham go wrong (Gen 9:20–23)? How can you best honor your father and mother?

Nurturing and Feeding

c) Eph 6:4: In a society where men wielded life-long power over whether their children lived or died, Paul recognized that fathers needed instruction concerning behavior toward their children.³⁵⁴⁰ As with husbands and slave owners, he commanded fathers not to abuse their authoritative position (Eph 5:25–28; Col 3:19; Eph 6:1–3, 9).³⁵⁴¹ Such reciprocity in

³⁵³¹Philo, “A Treatise Concerning the Ten Commandments Which Are the Heads of the Law,” in *The Works of Ohilo Judaeus, Vol. 3*, (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 23, 162–3, <https://archive.org/stream/workphilojudaeu03philuoft#page/162>.

³⁵³²Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 396.

³⁵³³Thielman, “Ephesians,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 830.

³⁵³⁴Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵³⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵³⁶Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵³⁷Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 336–7.

³⁵³⁸Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵³⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵⁴⁰Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁴¹Fitzgerald, “Haustafeln,” *ABD* 3:80.

household codes was unheard of in the Greco-Roman milieu. Typically, they regulated the behavior of women, children, and slaves toward husbands, parents, and masters.³⁵⁴²

The apostle wrote, “And fathers, do not provoke to anger your children but nurture them in the training and instruction of the Lord.” “Fathers” (*patēres*) occasionally refers to both parents (Cf. Heb 11:23).³⁵⁴³ However, in Greco-Roman society, the training and instruction of children remained their father’s responsibility, which is likely why he mentions only men here.³⁵⁴⁴ In contrast, Paul employed the generic word for “parent” (*goneus*) in Eph 6:1.³⁵⁴⁵

The verb he used for “provoke to anger” (*parorgizō*) occurs only twice in the New Testament (NT) (Rom 10:19) and only three times in Greek classics. However, it appears twenty-eight times in the Greek Old Testament books accepted by Protestants (Deut 4:25; Judg 2:11–12; Jer 7:18–19).³⁵⁴⁶ Paul also employed the related noun *parorgismos* in Eph 4:26, which is the only time it occurs in the NT.³⁵⁴⁷

Yet, his meaning remains clear. Fathers must evaluate the effect of their words and deeds upon their children before interacting with them (Col 3:21).³⁵⁴⁸ Driving children to exasperation or bitterness contradicts God’s plan for families.³⁵⁴⁹ This prohibits extreme or arbitrary demands, cruel discipline, biased treatment, sarcasm, and humiliation.³⁵⁵⁰ Men must practice consideration and sensitivity to their children’s feelings (Eph 4:29–32).³⁵⁵¹

Since fathers in the Greco-Roman world reigned supreme, people assumed they would treat their children harshly.³⁵⁵² In fact, the original recipients of this letter likely expected Paul to command juveniles to not provoke their parents. No comparable admonition exists in Greco-Roman literature.³⁵⁵³ Although Greco-Romans universally viewed children as the property of their parents—as noted in Obedience in the Lord (Eph 6:1)—a few authors did recommend moderation in raising them.³⁵⁵⁴

For example, Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) advised:

“It is, I assure you, of the greatest service to boys that they should be soundly brought up, yet to regulate their education is difficult, because it is our duty to be careful neither to cherish a habit of anger in them, nor to blunt the edge of their spirit... A boy's spirit is increased by freedom and depressed by slavery: it rises when praised and is led to conceive great expectations of itself: yet this same treatment produces arrogance and quickness of temper: we must therefore guide him between these two extremes, using the curb at one time and the spur at another.

“He must undergo no servile or degrading treatment; he never must beg abjectly for anything, nor must he gain anything by begging; let him rather receive it for his own sake, for his past good behavior, or for his promises of future good conduct. In contests with his comrades, we

³⁵⁴²Balch, “Household Codes,” *ABD* 3:318.

³⁵⁴³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵⁴⁴Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 337.

³⁵⁴⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵⁴⁶Result of Logos 7 word study on “παροργίζω” (*parorgizō*).

³⁵⁴⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “παροργισμός” (*parorgismos*), *BDAG*, 780.

³⁵⁴⁸Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

³⁵⁴⁹Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁵⁰Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁵¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417–8.

³⁵⁵²Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵⁵³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

³⁵⁵⁴Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

ought not to allow him to become sulky or fly into a passion...we should allow him to enjoy his victory, but not to rush into transports of delight: for joy leads to exultation, and exultation leads to swaggering and excessive self-esteem.

“We ought to allow him some relaxation, yet not yield him up to laziness and sloth, and we ought to keep him far beyond the reach of luxury, for nothing makes children more prone to anger than a soft and fond bringing-up, so that the more only children are indulged, and the more liberty is given to orphans, the more they are corrupted.

“He to whom nothing is ever denied, will not be able to endure a rebuff, whose anxious mother always wipes away his tears, whose [servant who escorts him to school] is made to pay for his short-comings. Do you not observe how a man's anger becomes more violent as he rises in station?...

“Flattery, then, must be kept well out of the way of children. Let a child hear the truth, and sometimes fear it: let him always reverence it. Let him rise in the presence of his elders. Let him obtain nothing by flying into a passion: let him be given when he is quiet what was refused him when he cried for it: let him behold, but not make use of his father's wealth: let him be reproved for what he does wrong...

“Above all, let his food be scanty, his dress not costly, and of the same fashion as that of his comrades: if you begin by putting him on a level with many others, he will not be angry when someone is compared with him.”³⁵⁵⁵

The verb which Paul chose as the standard for child-rearing (*ektrēphō*) contains two shades of meaning. On the one hand, it refers simply to “bringing up” a child. It also refers to nurturing and feeding someone (Eph 5:29; Gen 47:17).³⁵⁵⁶

Plutarch (46–122 AD) wrote:

“Lycurgus would not put the sons of Spartans in charge of purchased or hired tutors, nor was it lawful for every father to rear or train his son as he pleased, but as soon as they were seven years old, Lycurgus ordered them all to be taken by the state and enrolled in companies, where they were put under the same discipline and nurture (*ektrēphō*) and so became accustomed to share one another's sports and studies.”³⁵⁵⁷ Nurturing involves more than simply bringing someone up to adulthood.³⁵⁵⁸

“Training” (*paideia*) and “instruction” (*nouthesia*) are roughly synonymous,³⁵⁵⁹ with the first term incorporating correction and discipline (2 Tim 3:16; 4 times in Heb 12:5–11).³⁵⁶⁰ Authors typically used *paideia* in connection with the complete education of children (Prov 1:2, 7–8; Prov 4:1–5; Prov 19:20 in the Greek translation). In fact, the word is related to the terms for “child,” “tutor,” and “teacher.”³⁵⁶¹

Similarly, *nouthesia* means “counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct.”³⁵⁶² It involves verbal admonition,³⁵⁶³ with the goal of redirecting a person's mind onto the right course of action.³⁵⁶⁴ Old Testament authors regarded this

³⁵⁵⁵Seneca, “Of Anger,” in *Minor Dialogs Together with the Dialog “On Clemency,”* 4.21, 94, <https://archive.org/stream/minordialoguesto00seneuoft#page/94>.

³⁵⁵⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἐκτρέφω” (*ektrephō*), *BDAG*, 311.

³⁵⁵⁷Plutarch, “Lycurgus,” in *Plutarch's Lives* (trans. Bernadotte Perrin; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1914), 16.4, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0047%3Achapter%3D16%3Asection%3D4>.

³⁵⁵⁸Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵⁵⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

³⁵⁶⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “παιδεία” (*paideia*), *BDAG*, 748.

³⁵⁶¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

³⁵⁶²Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “νουθεσία” (*nouthesia*), *BDAG*, 679.

³⁵⁶³Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁶⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 419.

training as one of the main roles of parents (Deut 21:18–21; 1 Sam 3:11–14; Ps 78:1–8).³⁵⁶⁵

By the Greco-Roman era, once a boy reached seven years of age, the primary influence upon him officially shifted from his mother to his father.³⁵⁶⁶ Often, his parents hired a tutor.³⁵⁶⁷ Meanwhile, girls received instruction in managing a household.³⁵⁶⁸ In terms of basic education, women in Rome and in Asia Minor—where Ephesus is located—fared better than those in Judea or Greece.³⁵⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the rationale for educating Greco-Roman women appeared to be so that they could teach young boys.³⁵⁷⁰

Quintilian, a great scholar of rhetoric (35–100 AD), asserted:

“I would, therefore, have a father conceive the highest hopes of his son from the moment of his birth. If he does so, he will be more careful about the groundwork of his education...Above all see that the child's nurse speaks correctly...Do not therefore allow the boy to become accustomed even in infancy to a style of speech which he will subsequently have to unlearn...As regards parents, I should like to see them as highly educated as possible, and I do not restrict this remark to fathers alone...And even those who have not had the fortune to receive a good education should not for that reason devote less care to their son's education.”³⁵⁷¹

However, Greco-Roman people frequently denounced highly educated women as promiscuous. In their society, a woman with a bold demeanor implied sexual availability.³⁵⁷²

In 115 AD, Juvenal satirized educated women by writing the following:

“But most intolerable of all is the woman who as soon as she has sat down to dinner commends Virgil, pardons the dying Dido, and pits the poets against each other, putting Virgil in the one scale and Homer in the other. The grammarians make way before her; the rhetoricians give in; the whole crowd is silenced...so torrential is her speech that you would think that all the pots and bells were being clashed together...She lays down definitions, and discourses on morals, like a philosopher...”

“Let not the wife of your bosom possess a special style of her own...Let her not know all history; let there be some things in her reading which she does not understand. I hate a woman...who observes all the rules and laws of language, who quotes from ancient poets that I never heard of and corrects her unlettered female friends for slips of speech that no man need trouble about: let husbands at least be permitted to make slips in grammar!

“There is nothing that a woman will not permit herself to do, nothing that she deems shameful, when she encircles her neck with green emeralds, and fastens huge pearls to her elongated ears: there is nothing more intolerable than a wealthy woman.”³⁵⁷³

Despite his former adherence to the sect of the Pharisees (Phil 3:2–7), Paul did not limit training in the Scriptures to boys (Cf. 1 Tim 2:11).³⁵⁷⁴ This was rare at that time within

³⁵⁶⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415.

³⁵⁶⁶Craig S. Keener, “Family and Household,” *DNTB* 353–68, 358.

³⁵⁶⁷Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 337.

³⁵⁶⁸Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

³⁵⁶⁹Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 958.

³⁵⁷⁰Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 144.

³⁵⁷¹Quintilian, *Institutes* (trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 1.1.4–7,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0066%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D2%3Asection%3D29>.

³⁵⁷²Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 243.

³⁵⁷³Juvenal, “Satire 6,” in *Juvenal and Persius* (trans. G. G. Ramsay; LCL; London; New York: Heinemann; Putnam, 1928), 6:434–61, 119–21, <https://archive.org/stream/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft#page/118/mode/2up>.

³⁵⁷⁴Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 322.

Judaism.³⁵⁷⁵ While some rabbis taught that men should teach the Mosaic law to their daughters, others asserted that doing so amounted to debauchery (*m. Sotah* 3.4). The *Jerusalem Talmud* went further, contending, “Let the words of the law be burned rather than committed to women” (*y. Sotah* 3:19).³⁵⁷⁶

Finally, we have the modifying phrase “of the Lord” in Paul’s admonition to train and instruct children. This involves following Christ’s example and practicing what he taught (Deut 6:4–9; Matt 22:34–40).³⁵⁷⁷

The Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) noted: “The law...commands us to bring those children up in learning, and to exercise them in the laws, and make them acquainted with the acts of their predecessors, in order to their imitation of them, and that they might be nourished up in the laws from their infancy, and might neither transgress them, nor have any pretense for their ignorance of them.”³⁵⁷⁸

Plato (427–347 BC) recognized the value of modeling proper behavior. He claimed, “The most effective way of training the young—as well as the older people themselves—is not by admonition, but by plainly practicing throughout one’s own life the admonitions which one gives to others.”³⁵⁷⁹

Paul offered himself as an example worthy of emulation (1 Cor 4:14–17, 21). We, too, must educate our children with a godly demeanor, in addition to emphasizing Christian subject matter.³⁵⁸⁰ Humility, respect, and submission to others represent core values in the families of believers (Eph 4:1–6; Eph 5:18–21).³⁵⁸¹

Read Eph 6:4. How are parents to relate to their children? Why was this unusual in Paul’s era? What did the apostle expect Christian parents to teach their children?

A Slave of Slaves

3) Gen 9:24–25: Interpreters of this passage face two major issues. First, did Noah’s curse merely foretell what would happen or did it change the course of human history? Second, why did the calamity fall upon Canaan, rather than on Ham?³⁵⁸² Moses wrote, “And Noah

³⁵⁷⁵Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁷⁶John Lightfoot, *From the Talmud and Hebraica: A Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 580, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/lightfoot/talmud.vii.iii.html>.

³⁵⁷⁷Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 398.

³⁵⁷⁸Josephus, “Against Apion,” in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Auburn and Buffalo: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 2.204,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0216%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston%20section%3D26>.

³⁵⁷⁹Plato, “Laws,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 10* (trans. R. G. Bury; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1967), 5.729c,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0166%3Abook%3D5%3Apage%3D729>.

³⁵⁸⁰Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, 338.

³⁵⁸¹Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 329.

³⁵⁸²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 323–4.

awoke from his wine, and he knew what his youngest son did to him. And he said, ‘Canaan be cursed. A slave of slaves he will be to his brothers.’” In the entire account of Noah’s experiences, Moses attributed only these words to him (Gen 6:8–9:29).³⁵⁸³ Furthermore, for the first time in Scripture, a human uttered a curse upon someone else.³⁵⁸⁴

Family patriarchs making pronouncements concerning their children appear throughout Genesis.³⁵⁸⁵ These declarations functioned much like reading a will to one’s heirs.³⁵⁸⁶ Typically, such statements focused upon productive soil, the descendants of their offspring, and the relationships between them (e.g. Gen 24:60; Gen 27:27–29, 39–40; Gen 49:1).³⁵⁸⁷

When the Lord curses someone or something, it remains binding (Gen 3:14, 17–19; Ps 37:22).³⁵⁸⁸ However, God is not obligated to afflict a person whom another human curses (2 Sam 16:9–12; Prov 26:2).³⁵⁸⁹ Consequently, scholars disagree whether the Lord spoke prophetically through Noah concerning his grandson.³⁵⁹⁰

Some experts assert that Ham’s behavior served as the occasion when Noah cursed Canaan, rather than causing it.³⁵⁹¹ His voyeurism and mockery may have finally pushed Noah beyond the breaking point.³⁵⁹² Similarly, Esau prepared a meal to accompany the moment when Isaac would bless him. Food did not provide the rationale for the decree (Gen 25:23–28; Gen 27:1–4).³⁵⁹³

Commentators have wrestled with this text for millennia,³⁵⁹⁴ seeking to determine why Noah singled out Canaan when Ham perpetrated the offense.³⁵⁹⁵ Some posit that a scribe erroneously added “Ham, the father of” to the standard Hebrew text of Gen 9:22.³⁵⁹⁶ However, most bible scholars avoid making such assertions unless there is no other way to interpret the text.³⁵⁹⁷ In one perspective, God had already blessed Noah and his sons,³⁵⁹⁸ and Noah could not overturn that benediction (Gen 9:1).³⁵⁹⁹

According to the *Midrash Rabbah*, a Jewish text which dates to shortly after the exile: “Rabbi Judah said, ‘Since it is written, “And God blessed Noah and his sons,” while there cannot be a curse where a blessing has been given, consequently, [Noah] said, “Cursed be Canaan.”’” Rabbi Nehemiah explained, ‘It was Canaan who saw it [in the first place] and informed them, therefore the curse is attached to him who did wrong.’”³⁶⁰⁰

On the other hand, grammatical evidence suggests that Ham was Noah’s youngest son *qaton*, rather than the second-born (Cf. Gen 5:32).³⁶⁰¹ This also fits with the Hebrew

³⁵⁸³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁵⁸⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁵⁸⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁸⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁵⁸⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁸⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁵⁸⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 350.

³⁵⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁵⁹¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁹²Walton, *Genesis*, 350.

³⁵⁹³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁵⁹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁵⁹⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁵⁹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 197. Wenham disagrees with that claim.

³⁵⁹⁷Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 124.

³⁵⁹⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁵⁹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁶⁰⁰Freedman, trans, *Genesis* (vol. 1 of *Midrash Rabbah Translated into English*), 36:7–8, 292, <https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp#page/n339>.

³⁶⁰¹Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 431,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/430>.

treatment of word pairs, in which the shortest terms appear first.³⁶⁰² In this scenario, “Shem, Ham, and Japheth” does not reflect their birth order.³⁶⁰³

Since Noah’s youngest son humiliated him, he cursed Ham’s youngest son.³⁶⁰⁴ Once again, Genesis reflects the corporate solidarity of the Ancient Near East.³⁶⁰⁵ What the patriarch of a family or clan did affected his descendants for good or for ill (Exod 20:5–6; Num 16:25–33; Josh 7:24–26; Jer 35:18–19).³⁶⁰⁶

People tend to reproduce children whose behavior resembles their own.³⁶⁰⁷ In this view, Canaan conducted himself during this episode in a manner which merited the sentence he received.³⁶⁰⁸ Egypt (Mizraim) and Canaan—two of the nations which descended from Ham—exhibited notoriously contemptible behavior (Gen 10:6; Lev 18:3).³⁶⁰⁹ In Joshua’s era, the people of Canaan suffered the consequences of acting like Ham (Exod 23:23–24; Deut 9:4–5).³⁶¹⁰ The struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman continued (Gen 3:15; Gen 4:9–11).³⁶¹¹

“A slave (*evedh*) of slaves” creates a Hebrew superlative, meaning the lowest of subjects.³⁶¹² We cannot determine whether this means that Canaan’s progeny would be the property of others or merely their servants. The term *evedh* covers a wide range of subordination to another person or nation. Even Israel’s king depicted himself that way when he wrote to the emperor of Assyria (2 Ki 16:7).³⁶¹³

However, we do know that Canaan’s offspring experienced subjugation to the descendants of Shem and Japheth. Approximately forty years after Moses penned Genesis, Shem’s descendants overtook Palestine (Josh 11:16–20; Josh 16:10; Josh 17:12–13).³⁶¹⁴ Slavery as an Ancient Near Eastern institution began ca. 4000 BC, when warriors took captives in battle. It later expanded to debtors and their children (Lev 25:39–44; Neh 5:5).³⁶¹⁵

In Europe and the United States, people tragically misused this verse to assert that God commanded the subjugation of Africans.³⁶¹⁶ One abolitionist wrote, “I am persuaded that no passage in the sacred volume of revelation has suffered more abuse than ‘Noah’s curse or malediction.’”³⁶¹⁷

Ham’s name comes from a term meaning “hot” or “warm” (*ham*),³⁶¹⁸ yet proponents of slavery claimed that “Ham” meant “black” or “burnt.”³⁶¹⁹ Although none of Canaan’s offspring included Africans with dark skin (Gen 10:15–19),³⁶²⁰ advocates of slavery asserted that the curse applied to all of Ham’s descendants (Gen 10:6–14).³⁶²¹ Finally, a curse does not

³⁶⁰² Shem (שֵׁם) and Ham both consist of two consonants. Japheth has three.

³⁶⁰³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁶⁰⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁶⁰⁵ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁶⁰⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325.

³⁶⁰⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁶⁰⁸ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁶⁰⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 201.

³⁶¹⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.

³⁶¹¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 351.

³⁶¹² Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 431,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/430>.

³⁶¹³ H. Ringgren, U. Rütterswörden, and H. Simian-Yofre, “עֶבֶד” (*evedh*) *TDOT* 10:376–405, 387, 390.

³⁶¹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶¹⁵ Muhammad A. Dandamayev, “Slavery: Ancient Near East,” *ABD* 6:58–62, 58–9.

³⁶¹⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 355.

³⁶¹⁷ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (ed. D. A. Carson; New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2003), 51.

³⁶¹⁸ K.-M. Beyse, “חָם” (*ham*), *TDOT* 4: 473–7, 473.

³⁶¹⁹ Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 52.

³⁶²⁰ Walton, *Genesis*, 355.

³⁶²¹ Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 52.

equal a command.³⁶²² Modern Old Testament scholars recognize such views as “exegetically ridiculous.” Nevertheless, some reprinted commentaries reflect a pro-slavery position even today.³⁶²³

One reprinted book by A. W. Pink claims:

“The whole of Africa was peopled by the descendants of Ham, and for many centuries the greater part of that continent lay under the dominion of the Romans, Saracens, and Turks. And, as is well known, the negroes who were for so long the slaves of Europeans and Americans also claim Ham as their progenitor...The fulfillment of this part of the prophecy is well-known to our readers.”³⁶²⁴

By claiming theological justification for a great blot on European and American history, such publications continue to foster racist attitudes in our churches.³⁶²⁵

a) Read Gen 9:24–25. Why did Noah curse Canaan, rather than Ham? Were Noah’s words binding upon God? Why or why not? How did the improper exegesis of these verses impact African, European, and American history? What effect does this passage have upon the way we treat others?

Blessed Be the God of Shem

b) Gen 9:26–27: After Noah cursed Canaan (Gen 9:24–25), he said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and let Canaan be a slave to him. May God make wide for Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be a slave to him.” Surprisingly, Noah blessed God, rather than his son Shem, in response to his sons’ righteous act (Gen 9:20–23).³⁶²⁶

Since Noah did not mention a specific benefit, he seems to have thanked the Lord for being the God of Shem.³⁶²⁷ His godly lineage would proceed through that son (Gen 11:10–11, 31),³⁶²⁸ which explains the omission of Japheth. In this verse, Noah desired the servitude of Canaan; he did not cause it.³⁶²⁹ Repeating the request twice makes it emphatic.³⁶³⁰

Regarding Japheth, Noah engaged in wordplay by matching the verb for “make wide” (*pathah*) with the name of his son (*yapheth elohim leyapheth*).³⁶³¹ He asked the Lord to give Japheth an extensive inheritance of land.³⁶³² Japheth’s offspring eventually spread through Greece and Turkey, then into Europe (Gen 10:2–5).³⁶³³

The identity of “him” in the phrase “let him dwell in the tents of Shem” remains

³⁶²²Walton, *Genesis*, 355–6.

³⁶²³Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 53.

³⁶²⁴Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Seaside, OR: Watchmaker, 2011), 126, [Http://www.grace-ebooks.com/library/Arthur%20W.%20Pink/Gleanings%20in%20Genesis%20-%20Arthur%20W.%20Pink.pdf](http://www.grace-ebooks.com/library/Arthur%20W.%20Pink/Gleanings%20in%20Genesis%20-%20Arthur%20W.%20Pink.pdf).

³⁶²⁵Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 54.

³⁶²⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325.

³⁶²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶²⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁶³⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶³¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325. *Pathah* is the lexical form for *levapheth*.

³⁶³²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “פַּתַּח” (*pathah*), *BDB*, 834, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/834>.

³⁶³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325–6.

unclear. Ancient literature suggests that Noah referred to God.³⁶³⁴ For example, an Aramaic paraphrase of this verse says, “And he shall make his Shekinah to dwell in the tabernacles of Shem.”³⁶³⁵ According to the *Babylonian Talmud*, “Although God has enlarged Japheth, the Divine Presence rests only in the tents of Shem.”³⁶³⁶ When Moses recorded Noah’s words, Israel was likely constructing the tent where God took up residence (Exod 25:8–9, 22; Exod 40:17, 33–38).³⁶³⁷

However, several issues persist with the interpretation that “him” refers to the Lord,³⁶³⁸ leading most current scholars to take a different approach.³⁶³⁹ In Gen 9:27, Noah blessed Japheth, not Shem.³⁶⁴⁰ Therefore, the one who inhabits Shem’s tents is Japheth, rather than God.³⁶⁴¹ Furthermore, “tents” (*ohel*) occurs in plural form. This indicates that multiple households would reside among Shem’s descendants.³⁶⁴²

Thus, the people descending from Shem and Japheth would coexist in peace.³⁶⁴³ Commentators have advanced numerous possibilities regarding such an alliance.³⁶⁴⁴ Yet, none of the suggestions emerge as strong contenders as they typically trace a people-group to the wrong ancestors. The incorporation of gentiles into the people of God has some merit (Eph 2:11–22).³⁶⁴⁵

This section concludes with, “Let Canaan be a slave to him.” Both Shem and Japheth’s progeny would subjugate those of Noah’s youngest son (Cf. Gen 9:22–25).³⁶⁴⁶ The offspring of Moses’s original audience would have recognized that the people of Canaan sinned as their ancestor Ham did (Gen 10:15–19; Exod 3:8; Deut 9:5).³⁶⁴⁷

However, God made exceptions to Noah’s curse and blessing. Rahab the gentile prostitute and her family joined the people of the Lord (Josh 2:8–14; Josh 6:25). Meanwhile, the Israelite Achan broke God’s command regarding taking plunder from Rahab’s city. As a result, his family received the death penalty (Josh 7:1, 15, 22–26). Ultimately, Israel and Judah also followed the way of the Canaanites (2 Ki 17:7–20).³⁶⁴⁸ Even then, God spared a faithful Cushite, a descendant of Ham (Gen 10:6; Jer 38:7–10; Jer 39:15–18).

Read Gen 9:26–27. Who did Noah bless for Shem’s righteous act? Why? How does this text foretell the incorporation of Gentiles into the people of God? Why do we know that the Lord made exceptions to Noah’s blessing and curse?

³⁶³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202.

³⁶³⁵John Wesley Etheridge, trans., *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, with Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862), 54, http://www.pathoftorah.com/pdf/ebooks/targum/targum_genesis_exodus.pdf.

³⁶³⁶b. Yoma 10a, <http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Yoma.pdf>.

³⁶³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202–3.

³⁶³⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁴⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202–3.

³⁶⁴¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁴²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 202–3.

³⁶⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁴⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 351.

³⁶⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 203.

³⁶⁴⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁴⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 351.

³⁶⁴⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150.