

## **ORIENTAL ORIGINS IN THE BIBLE**

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A Bible study guide, which reveals the origins of the Oriental peoples according to the Bible.

After several years of study this writing was completed in 2000.

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A Bible study project by Paul Phelps

All Bible quotations are from the New King James Version except for my own translations, or as otherwise indicated.

The Bible speaks about origins and this study examines Biblical genealogy to find the origin of the Oriental peoples, the world's largest family of nations. The orient has the largest population group of earth. The anthropological and historical evidences show that all East Asian peoples had their origin in China. From the Bible we can identify the first people group that populated China.

All men in fact belong to **one family** because Adam and Eve were parents of us all (Gen. 3:20), but there are three different genealogies after the Flood. Gen. 9:18-19,

Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth... These three were the sons of Noah, **and from these the whole earth was populated.**

Bible scholars have traced the descendants of Ham mainly into Africa, and also into the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and South Pacific regions. The name Ham means *hot* and indicates that Hamitic people went to hot climates. The descendants of Japheth have been traced to European and Aryan people, mainly of Europe, and also into central Asia, Iran and north India. The name Japheth means *enlarged* or *expanded*, and indicates the nature of this people.

Bible scholarship traditionally has held the view that descendants of Shem only settled in western Asia, thought to be Arabs and Jews mainly. But this conclusion does not take east Asia into account (half of humanity), and gives only a small portion to Shem. But Shem was given *the greatest honour of all*. Gen. 9:26,

And he said: Blessed be the LORD, **the God of Shem...**

The Bible says that Shem is the original forefather of the **West** Asian people together with the **East** Asian people. The genealogy of all the Oriental people can be traced to Shem in the Genesis account.

Shem means *honourable name*, which fits well to oriental cultural values. The Hebrew Bible often refers to God as "The Honourable Name" (HA-SHĒM), thus joining God with the people of Shem. In Genesis 10:21, Shem is called "The father of all the children of Eber," meaning **the Hebrew race**. The word *Hebrew* means 'of Eber,' or 'descended from Eber.' Gen. 10:25,

To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.

Hence the Hebrew race has descended from Eber in two branches, of Peleg, or of Joktan. The name Peleg means *sectioned* or *partitioned*, thus relating him to Babylon (Gen. 11:7-9), but the name Joktan means *Youngson*.

Only the first generation of Joktan's descendants was recorded in the Bible (Gen. 10:26-29; I Chron. 1:19-23). Joktan's family of thirteen sons is the largest family of early Bible times. It is unusual that their names were even recorded because Joktan's lineage does not recur in later Bible history. Peleg's lineage recurs however (Genesis 11), so Bible readers have traditionally thought that Peleg's descendants are the only Hebrews in existence. But the descendants of Joktan are in fact another, **even larger** branch of Hebrews. Peleg's lineage has heightened visibility in the Bible because God chose Abraham's kindred to lead the Bible narrative; but the disappearance of Joktan's lineage from the Bible narrative means that Joktan's family left west Asia entirely and migrated far away to another land.

For more than a century Noah and all the Flood survivors dwelt somewhere **in the east**. This was eastwards of the Euphrates River plain: the Bible calls it the plain of Shinar. Gen. 11:2,

And it came to pass, **as they journeyed from the east**,  
that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

Later on, the plain of Shinar was renamed Babylon (Gen. 11:9). The phrase "from the east" is MI-KĒDEM in Hebrew, and we can give a literal translation. MI is 'from,' or 'coming from' (and can not be translated otherwise). KĒDEM is '*the front of the east,*' or '*the orient.*' The root idea is "front" —in a geographic sense referring to the coastlands of east Asia facing sunrise. In the time sense it can also mean '*ancient beginnings*' (the front of time), and can sometimes be translated 'ancient orient.' In Genesis 11:2, the word KĒDEM reveals that the Flood survivors journeyed **from the orient** before entering the land of Babylon. (Many Bible versions have poor translations of KĒDEM.)

The earliest sojourn of the Flood survivors was eastwards of Babylon, across the Iranian plateau, taking more than a century according to the genealogy of Gen. 11:10-16. More than a century is indicated (in Gen. 10:25) from the Flood until Peleg, and it could have been many years later that he entered Babylon. Peleg definitely went into Babylon, for his descendants were all dwelling there, including Abraham (Gen. 11). *But Joktan did not go with Peleg into Babylon.*

The pre-Babylonian sojourn is an important factor for it helps us to know the location of Joktan's migration route. He evidently separated from the caravan *before* they came to Babylon because **he chose to go east**. Gen. 10:30,

And their dwelling place was from Mesha  
as you go towards Sephar, the mountain of the east.

The caravan travelling west to Babylon *was already in the east*, so Joktan's decision to travel *farther east* means that he separated from the caravan and turned towards the orient; (we give our own translation of Gen. 10:30 later on).

Some scholars have suggested that Joktan went to Arabia because two of his sons, Sheba and Havilah had the same names as two Arabian tribes. But those Arabian tribes were of Cushite descent *in the lineage of Ham* and not in the lineage of Shem at all (Gen. 10:6-7). Arabia is part of the migration route to Africa, the land of Cush; therefore the first peoples in Arabia were Cushite. Names may reappear in different genealogies but relationship is not implied.

The separation of Peleg's clan and Joktan's clan made two Hebrew peoples, the **Western** Hebrews of western Asia and the **Eastern** Hebrews of east Asia, the orient. ***Oriental*** are Hebrew people.

Gen. 9:28 says that Noah lived several years beyond the Babylon confusion and so did the other post-Flood Patriarchs (Gen. 11). Therefore they also took part in Babylon's confusion if they were there. But we doubt that Noah was in Babylon at all. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8) and was righteous (Eze. 14:14; 2 Peter 2:5); hence he certainly would have opposed the ambitions of Babylon and Nimrod's kingdom (ref. Genesis 10:8-10). The Bible does not say where Noah, Shem, Arphaxed, Salah and Eber then were, but the possibility is that, like Joktan they may have gone eastward, farther into Asia.

We shall now examine the names mentioned in Gen. 10:30. The Flood had erased all former place names but the names in the Bible have *meaning*, and that is important. Mesha means '**departure**,' which probably refers to Joktan's point of departure from the caravan. Joktan's group took their departure point somewhere on the Iranian plateau, or in central Asia, and that departure point (MĒSHA) became **the starting point** of Joktanite settlement. Joktan's clan was certainly the first to scout the ancient Silk Road, which later became the main road of settlement into east Asia. Mesha (the departure point) was the start of the ancient Silk Road. The Silk Road first began near the city of Mashhad, in north-eastern Iran, and that name may derive from the ancient name of Mesha.

The phrase, "towards Sephar" is a translation of SEPHARÀH (in the Hebrew), but it literally means '**towards a numerous population**.' Instead of a name, if we take *word meaning* we find a prophecy for the numerous populations that now exist in China and through all the orient.

The phrase, "the mountain of the east" is a translation of HAR HA-KĒDEM, but the literal Hebrew meaning is '**the mountain of the orient**.' Now we have our own translation of Gen. 10:30,

And their dwelling place shall be from the departure point,  
as you go towards a numerous population, the mountain of the orient.  
(translation mine)

"The mountain of the orient" might be a particular mountain that marks the far-eastern extent of the oriental homelands or it could be just a symbolic term for the numerous population of east Asia, but it definitely means that Orientals are Joktan's descendants. (Joktan is indicated in Gen. 10:30, from the context.)

Chinese history affirms that the early pioneers came into the eastern plains of China *from the west*, migrating along the Silk Road route. This verifies the accepted dating of early settlements in the Yellow River valley of north China. Bible chronology puts this migration at about 2200 BCE. Tribal diversity in the orient began with Joktan's thirteen sons and their families. It may also be due to others associated with the Patriarchal families. The whole of east Asia was eventually populated by descendants of those Semitic settlers. We therefore conclude that **the East Asian peoples are entirely Semitic** and may properly be called Eastern Hebrews. Other west Asian tribes came into China later on, such as the Elamites, the ten northern Israeli tribes, the Persian Jews, and the Assyrians. These were Semitic and they all eventually assimilated into China.

We shall now consider the language aspect of Oriental origins and we want first of all to clear up existing misunderstanding on the subject. Bible scholars have made conclusions about language categorisation and in such conclusions only the languages of Western Semites are regarded as Semitic (from Shem). It is true that Oriental languages appear unrelated to the languages of ancient Western Semites, such as Chaldee, Canaanite Hebrew and Aramaic. This non-relationship has led some to conclude that the peoples of China and the orient are not Semitic. But the East Asian languages are equally unrelated to Hamitic languages and Japhetic Indo-European languages. This means that East Asian languages have another origin—not necessarily based on ancestry. The Bible does not say that all Semitic peoples must have related languages. That is a conclusion of the past that needs more consideration so that the contradictions may be corrected.

But we agree the non-relationship of Oriental languages to other languages is an interesting mystery and deserves an answer. The Bible says that *at first* all men used the same language; “Now the whole earth had one language and one speech” (Gen. 11:1).

The language brought over with Noah from the pre-Flood world apparently continued into this world more than two centuries. It was a unifying influence until it was confused amongst the Babylonian community. The Bible does not say what happened to the original language. The only reason given us for the confusing of it was that God wanted the Babylonian people to scatter abroad (see Gen. 11:8-9). Therefore God did not change the language of people that were not in Babylon for they were not part of the problem! Everyone that had earlier removed from the Babylon crowd and had chosen their migration route ***would have continued speaking the language taught them by Noah.***

This means that Joktan’s clan remained entirely unaffected by the chaos in Babylon, and kept the ancient original language brought over by Noah. Joktan went to China, and this explains why Chinese is ***not related*** to languages that began in Babylon; it also explains why the language of China does not identify ancestry. Chinese legends indicate great antiquity for their language, and the findings of archaeology support this conclusion.

Various Oriental peoples not from China have national languages that seem unrelated to Chinese and unrelated to the other Babylonish languages as well. God might have done a miracle in China, just as He did in Babylon, (although we do not have a Bible record of it), to get people moving into the other lands around China. The miracle of languages may have happened again, and that can explain how the various Oriental languages came to be. As well, some of the Southeast Asian languages developed from foreign language intermixture.

Bible readers might be interested in Zephaniah 3:9, for it says that God will restore a pure language to the people when He sets up His kingdom on earth. The language from Eden probably lasted until Noah, with no major changes. It evidently was brought to China by Joktan—and has continued ever since as the spoken language of China. It might have seen changes during all the time since humanity first began, but much honour surrounds the Chinese language because of its ancient origins.

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For evildoers shall be cut off: but  
those that wait upon the LORD,  
**they shall inherit the earth.** Psalm 37:9