

A Basis for Black Pride in the Bible

Because all humanity has its origin in Adam and the three sons of Noah. (Genesis 9 & Acts 17), this is an appropriate starting point for gaining a proper biblical basis for racial identity. And because we all stem from the same root, it is absurd for any group to claim superiority over another. It was God's intention to reestablish the human race through the three sons of Noah; therefore, God legitimized all races over which each son stands as head and over which Noah presides as father. This is especially true since the scriptures say that God blessed Noah and his sons, and the command to repopulate the earth was comprehensive and equally applied to each of them.

Each son is associated with nations of peoples, as is recorded in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. Black people, then, as all other races, can take pride in the fact that it was God's intention that we exist, survive, and function as nations of people.

One particularly informative verse is 1 Chronicles 4:40, which indicates that Hamitic people living in Canaan positively contributed to community life, productivity, and social well-being: "They found rich and good pasture, and the land was broad and quiet and peaceful; for those who lived there formerly were Hamites." Here, we have a biblical foundation for appropriately placed black pride.

When one examines the biblical data, it becomes distinctively clear that black people have an awesome heritage. To support a basis for black pride in the Bible, all we have to do is look at blacks who made outstanding contributions to biblical history.

Influential Blacks in the Bible

The Sons of Ham

Noah's son Ham had four sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. Cush was the progenitor of the Ethiopian people. This is validated by the fact that the names Cush and Ethiopia are used interchangeably in the Scriptures (Gen. 2:13; 10:6). Mizraim was the progenitor of the Egyptian people, who are understood in Scripture to have been a Hamitic people, and thus African (Ps. 78:51; 105:23, 26-27; 106:21-22). Put was the progenitor of Libya, and Canaan was the progenitor of the Canaanites, one of the most problematic foes of God's chosen people, the Israelites.

Nimrod

Of particular importance is the powerful Old Testament figure Nimrod, the descendant of Cush, who ruled in the land of Shinar (Gen. 10:8-10; 11:2). Nimrod eventually became the father of two of the greatest empires in the Bible and in world history, Assyria and Babylonia. He was the first great leader of a world civilization (Gen 10: 10-12). He led all the people on earth and served as earth's protector. Nimrod's presence and accomplishments confirm the unique and early leadership role black people played in world history, albeit not always in a spiritually beneficial way (Gen 11: 1-9).

The Tribe of Ephraim

Hamitic peoples were crucial to the program of God throughout Old Testament biblical history. Joseph's wife, an Egyptian woman (Gen. 41:45, 50-52), was the mother of Manasseh and Ephraim, who later became leaders of Jewish tribes. In fact, the tribe of Ephraim produced one of the greatest leaders Israel ever had – Moses's successor, Joshua

(Num. 13:8; 1 Chron. 7:22- 27). This Jewish-African link is very strong in Scripture. The prophet Amos said, “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel? Declares the Lord” (Amos 9:7).

Caleb

Caleb was the son of Jephunneh the Kennizzite; the Kennizzites were a part of the Canaanite tribes (Gen. 15:19) and descendants of Ham. Caleb also came from the tribe of Judah (Josh. 14:6, 14). Judah, the progenitor of the tribe, fathered twin sons by Tamar, a Hamitic woman (Gen. 38). Caleb joined with Joshua as one of the two spies who went to explore Canaan and brought back a positive report to enter the land and take possession of it, as God had declared (Num. 13-14).

Jethro

Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, from whom Moses received the greatest single piece of advice regarding national leadership, ministry organization, political strategy, and personal planning (Ex. 18: 13-27) ever recorded, was a Kenite (Judg. 1:16) part of the Canaanite tribes (Gen. 15:19) who descended from Ham. At that time, the Kenites has settled in the land of Midian.

Another interesting observation regarding Jethro is that he is identified as “the priest of Midian” (Ex. 3:1). Since he was a priest, yet he was not a Levite and the Aaronic priesthood had not yet been established, the question is: What kind of priesthood could this have been? The only other priesthood within the framework of Scripture to which Jethro could have belonged was the priesthood of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18). This is significant because Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:17). This means that the priest Jethro, who was of African descent, may have been indicative of pre-Aaronic

priesthoods, such as that of Melchizedek, which foreshadowed the priestly role of both Christ and the church.

This, then, is another basis for recognizing the strategic role Africans played in the biblical saga that continues today, because all Christians are related to Jethro and his priesthood as part of the royal priesthood.

Zipporah

Zipporah was the daughter of Jethro, the African wife of Moses. She bore him two sons and rescued his life from divine judgment when she circumcised her son – a task that belonged to Moses (Ex. 2:21-22; 4:24-26; 18:2-3). If she is the same black wife of Moses spoken of in Numbers, then God intervened on her behalf against the racism regarding their interracial marriage by Moses's brother and sister (Num. 12:1-15).

Ebed-Melech

Ebed-Melech was a godly royal black African official in the palace of King Zedekiah of Judah during the time of the siege of Jerusalem. His name means "servant of the King." He was used by God to assist the prophet Jeremiah in his release from prison when Jeremiah had been sentenced to death. Ebed-Melech was rewarded for his heroism with the divine message that he would not fall by the sword during the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians because of his trust in God (Jer. 38:1-13; 39:15-18).

Simon of Cyrene

Simon of Cyrene, who help Jesus on the Via Dolorosa, was of African descent. This we know because Cyrene is a country in North Africa (Matt. 27:32). He was compelled by the Romans to carry the cross of Christ to His crucifixion site. This means that the first person to follow behind Jesus, bears His cross, and have Christ's blood run off on him

was a black man. This is the spiritual posture of discipleship God calls all believers to have as we identify with Christ and His suffering (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26).

David

King David is known not only as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam.13:14) but as one of the greatest kings in Israel's history David's great-grandmother was a Canaanite woman, Rahab who is also listed in the Hall of Faith (Heb. 11:31). David's grandmother was Ruth, a Moabite, from a people who were Canaanites as well. David, one of the heroes of the faith, hailed from mixed Jewish and Hamitic ancestry and stands as a leader of whom blacks can be proud to call our own.

Solomon

Solomon was David's son with Bathsheba, a Hamitic woman. Bathsheba literally means the daughter of Sheba. The Table of Nations identifies Sheba in the line of Ham, making Sheba a descendant from an African nation (Gen. 10:7). The Song of Solomon describes Solomon's features as "tanned and handsome, better than ten thousand others! His head is purest gold, and he has wavy, raven hair" (Song 5:10-11 TLB). Solomon was not only the wisest man to rule a nation, but he also brought about the greatest extension of Israel's reach as a kingdom (1 Kings 3:3-14). Solomon's great-great- grandmother, great-grandmother and mother gave him roots within the black race and place him as an example of black achievement.

Zephaniah

Underscoring the fact that black people are an integral part of God's revelatory process in both the proclamation and recording of divine revelation is the prophet Zephaniah.

The Old Testament states that Zephaniah was of Hamitic origin. He was from the lineage of Cush (Zeph. 1:1), and he prophesied God's judgment on Judah and her enemies for their rebellion against God and their gross idolatry; yet, he proclaimed, the grace of God would save a remnant and restore blessing to the people.

People of African descent can take pride in God's prophet Zephaniah, one of the biblical authors, as their forefather.

Simeon and Lucius

The church at Antioch had two black men as leaders. Their names were Simeon, who was called Niger or black (as I mentioned earlier), and Lucius, who was from Cyrene. These two black men assisted in the ordination and commissioning of the apostle Paul (Acts 13: 1-3).

This verifies that black people were not only leaders in the culture of the New Testament era, but also leaders in the church itself.

Reference

Oneness Embraced: A Kingdom Race Theology for Reconciliation, Unity, and Justice

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