

Naamah's Seduction of Noah

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Primary points of inquiry for this and related studies:

- Why curse Canaan to be a servant (Gen 9:20-27)?
- Why the early injunctions not to marry any Canaanites (Gen 24:3,37; 28:1,6,8; cp. Gen 27:46)?
- Why the late injunctions to kill all Canaanites (1Sam 15:3)?
- Why link post-flood Rephaim with Canaan's genealogy?

The following summation of the first four interpretations uses the online article by Hahn and Bergsma as its framework. The notations in the outline denoted in red have been added to interact with a fifth interpretation being added for consideration. See http://www.godawa.com/chronicles_of_the_nephilim/Articles_By_Others/Bergsma-Noahs_Nakedness_And_Curse_On_Canaan.pdf. This article is from Scott Hahn and John Seitze Bergsma, "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 1 (Spring 2005).¹ This article should be read as an introduction to the present discussion.

1) **Voyeurism**—Ham merely saw Noah naked

- a) Pros:
 - i) Very conservative in only accepting what is explicit (e.g., saw means saw)
 - ii) Most Popular view
- b) Cons:
 - i) The curse of Canaan is not adequately explained
 - ii) Noah disrobing himself seems to imply illicit sexual intercourse
 - iii) **Early origin of post-flood Rephaim is not explained**

2) **Castration**—Ham castrated Noah

- a) Pros:
 - i) Speculative explanation held by some rabbis
 - (1) Castrated by his younger son who prevented him from having a 4th son so he cursed his 4th son
 - (2) Deprived of fourth son so cursed fourth son
- b) Cons:
 - i) No lexical support
 - ii) **Early origin of post-flood Rephaim is not explained**

3) **Paternal Homosexual Incest**—Ham sexually abused Noah

- a) Pros:
 - i) Popular View
 - ii) To see (*raah*) nakedness (*ervah*) can be an idiom for uncover (*galah*) nakedness (*ervah*) and in turn to have sexual intercourse with: "If a man has sexual intercourse with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or his mother, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the sons of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he bears his guilt." (Lev 20:17; TM; cp. NET & NAS).
 - iii) In the holiness code, uncover (*galah*) nakedness (*ervah*) is used of illicit sexual intercourse: "None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the LORD" (Lev 18:6). Also see Eze 16:36-37; 22:10; 23:10,18,29.
 - iv) The association with wine calls to mind other passages, especially regarding Lot (Gen 19:30-38)
 - (1) Another example of parent-child incest
 - (2) Origin of Canaanites is parallel to origin of Moabites and Ammonites.
 - (3) Ham's incest gives narrative grounds for the prohibitions in Lev 18 and 20 (cp. Dt 22:30)
 - (4) **Post-judgement incest after dealing with Nephilim (by flood and fire)**

¹ These four views pose some type of sexual understanding of the passage. For an argument against a sexual understanding, see Nicholas Odhiambo, *Ham's Sin and Noah's Curse and Blessing Utterances: A Critique of Current Views* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2014). Odhiambo seeks to limit our understanding of the passage to the literal wording of the passage and concludes that Ham accidentally saw Noah naked and was cursed for reporting his nakedness rather than covering it up. Though Odhiambo interacts with the Hahn-Bergsma article and rejects it, the very fact that Noah curses Canaan rather than Ham undercuts Odhiambo's entire thesis. This cryptic curse is an obvious indicator of the cryptic nature of the passage. More is afoot than the simplistic understanding advocated by Odhiambo.

- v) **Gen 9:20–27** is chastically linked to **Gen 6:1–4** (sons of God and daughters of men). One story introducing the flood, the other concluding it. Both deal with illicit sex.
- b) Cons
- i) The passages used in support are dealing with illicit heterosexual activity
 - (1) Exposing the nakedness of your father is done by having sex with one's mother (Lev 18:7-8).
 - (2) Likewise, **Lev 18:14,16; 20:11,13,21** all describe a woman's nakedness as the nakedness of her husband
 - (3) The same logic is at work in **Deut 22:30** and 27:20, which describe intercourse with one's father's wife as "uncovering the father's skirt."
 - (4) The condemnation of homosexuality uses a different verb (Lev 18:22; 20:13)
 - ii) Curse of Canaan is not adequately explained
 - iii) **The parallel with Lot in Gen 19:30-38 was heterosexual, thus one would anticipate heterosexual incest after dealing with Nephilim (by flood and fire)**
 - iv) **The parallel in Gen 6:1-4 was heterosexual**
 - v) **early origin of post-flood Rephaim is not explained**
- 4) **Maternal Heterosexual Incest—Ham had sex with Noah's wife**
- a) Pros:
- i) The biblical idiom of uncovering your father's nakedness is understood in its normative sense of having illicit **heterosexual** intercourse **with one's mother**.
 - ii) As in the above interpretations, Ham is still affirmed to be the **biological** father of Canaan
 - iii) Maternal incest with one's mother is a more serious form of incest than paternal incest of a father and daughter (cp. Lot) and thus **explains the curse** of Canaan and the greater antagonism toward Canaanites
 - iv) Gives rationale for Canaan's action as a power play with historical parallels.
 - v) Answers objection that Noah would not have known Canaan's name with a plausible appeal to chronological compression (e.g., Gen 5:32).
 - vi) Appeals to *her-tent* translation to bolster case (Gen 9:21)
 - (1) The consonantal form **hlha** appears to have the feminine possessive suffix (see **H. H. Cohen, *The Drunkenness of Noah*, 8**).²
 - (2) **Cohen, Kikawada and Quinn (*Before Abraham Was*, 102)**, and the rabbinic sages suggest it is the tent of Noah's wife.
 - (3) The articular feminine form **hlhah** also occurs, for example, in Gen 24:67, where Isaac brings Rebekah into **the** tent of **his mother** to consummate their marriage. Incidentally, Isaac did not bring his wife into his father's tent, but the tent of his mother, Sarah, who had passed away, thus confirming that the wife could have a separate tent from the husband.
 - (4) Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine whether the form **hlha** in v. 21 is intentionally feminine, or an example of archaic orthography for the masculine pronominal suffix (see **Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2:161**).
 - (5) Subsequent to the release of the Hahn-and-Bergsma article in 2005, some more recent commentators have found their argument persuasive. See for example, Abraham Kuruvilla, *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (2014). As to their *her-tent* postulation, Kuruvilla says, "Whether this is intentionally feminine, or if it is simply an archaic form of the masculine, is unclear (p. 127, n. 64).
- b) Cons:
- i) The MT points the word according to the Qere **hlḥa** (*his tent*)
 - ii) LXX follows MT in confirming that it was *his tent*
 - iii) **Noah disrobing himself is much more likely associated with illicit intercourse, not in preparation for intercourse with his own wife. Hahn and Bergsma, as well as Vicent, are inconsistent in using the illicit sex argument to discount the voyeurism interpretation and not recognizing that it undercuts their material incest interpretation.**³
 - iv) **The early origin of post-flood Rephaim is not explained**

² I removed the reference to Gen. Rab. 36:7 by Hahn and Bergsma in support of the *her-tent* interpretation since, in my consultation of Gen. Rab. 36:7, the rabbinical speculations listed there did not include support for their claim being made regarding the tent. I have not confirmed the validity of the sources cited by Hahn and Bergsma highlighted in blue.

³ Noel R. Vicent, "The Sin of Ham: A Fresh Exegetical Approach to Genesis 9." Available at <https://veritasapologia.wordpress.com/2007/05/01/the-sin-of-ham-a-fresh-exegetical-approach-to-genesis-9>.

5) **Paternal Heterosexual Incest**—Noah had sex with Ham's Wife

a) Pros:

- i) Gives partial explanation for the early origin of post-flood Rephaim
- ii) Gives plausible genetic explanation for the genocide of Canaanites (1Sam 15:3)
- iii) Is not the only interpretation that uses the *her-tent* translation
 - (1) *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (GHG, 254,256)⁴ confirms the masculine understanding
 - (a) The *Kethibh* (*what is written*) **hl̄ḥa** is always with the *Qere* (*to be read*) **Ḥḥa**
 - (b) *Qere* were corrections made in the margins or footnotes for impossible words, offensive words, or due to reference for the Divine name. But “in the cases of some very common words...it has not been considered necessary to place the *Qere* in the margin, but its vowels are simply attached to the word in the text” (GHG, 66). Vowels were not added to the Hebrew text until 600 A.D.
 - (c) The feminine suffix would normally be: **ḥl̄ḥa**
 - (d) The masculine suffix would normally be: **Ḥḥa**
 - (2) Isaac's consummation with Rebekah in Sarah's tent (**hl̄ḥah**) has the **article** and is pointed with a Qames (**hl̄ḥah**) rather than Holem (**hl̄ḥa**); nevertheless, sometimes this form means *to her in the tent* (Gen 18:6), *her tent* (Gen 24:67), *to her in her tent* (Jdg 4:18), *the tent* (Ex 18:7; 33:8-9; Num 11:26), and sometimes this supposedly feminine form is equated with *his tent* (Josh 7:22)! Given this flexibility regarding the articular form, can we be so certain that the anarthrous form would be any less flexible?
 - (a) If Moses meant *his tent*, he could have said so with **Ḥḥa** just as he did elsewhere: Gen 13:3; 26:25; 31:25; 33:19; Ex 33:8,10; Num 11:10 (see also Josh 7:24; Jdg 4:11; Ps 27:5).
- iv) Is the most plausible explanation for Noah's illicit disrobing
 - (1) *Uncover* (*galah*) in Gen 9:21 is in the Hithpael and thus primarily reflexive, sometimes intensive, but seldom passive (GHG, 419-150): *He uncovered himself*.⁵
 - (2) As noted above, *uncover* (*galah*) *nakedness* (*ervah*) in Gen 9:21-22 is associated with illicit sex on the part of the one doing the uncovering. The one doing the uncovering shares culpability for the copulation.

b) Cons:

- i) Does not explain why the first three decedents of Ham were not likewise cursed thus the lack of genocide for Cush, Egypt, and Put.
- ii) Copan (*Is God a Moral Monster*, 66, 158-197) gives an extended argument for the popular moral explanation for the Canaanite genocide.
- iii) Is highly dependent upon the questionable *her-tent* translation of Gen 9:21
 - (1) MT and LXX both read *his tent*.
 - (2) This same anarthrous form occurs in Gen 12:8; 13:3; 35:21.

The following excerpt is from Mark Wayne Biggs, *The Case for Lilith: 23 Biblical Evidences Identifying the Serpent as Adam's First Failed Wife in Genesis*, Kindle Edition (Samson Books, 2010), 170-172:

From our study above, we now see that when Ge 9:22 states Noah's *ervah* was uncovered, this implies there was an improper sexual relationship committed between close relatives of Noah. But who committed the offending act? Hamilton and Basset hold that it was Ham having incest with his mother. However, that theory suffers two major faults. First, it does not explain how Canaan came to inherit the Nephilim lineage. As previously deduced, both Noah's wife and Ham had to be clear of Nephilim defilement. If Canaan were the result of their union, he could not inherit Nephilim decent. Second, Hamilton and Basset's contention does not match the literal Hebrew of Genesis. Verse 22 does not state that Ham uncovered Noah's *ervah*. Rather, it states that Ham merely “saw” Noah's *ervah*. Ham was a passive

⁴ References to GHG are to page numbers.

⁵ In terms of Strong numbers, I did a string search in Bible works for *uncover* 01540 *nakedness* 06172 (*@01540 *@06172) and got 21 hits in 18 verses for the phrase: Lev 18:6-8,10-19; 20:18-19; Eze 16:37; 23:10,18. When I expanded the search to allow for intervening words, five more verses were added to the list: Lev 20:11,17,20-21; Eze 22:10. In short, to *uncover nakedness* was used exclusively for illicit sexual uncovering. Odhiambo tries to deflect from the *illicit* nature of this uncovering by pointing out that it is not *literal* uncovering in Eze 16:37 since God does the uncovering (pp. 113-115). So what? God is still using the metaphorical imagery to convey a shameful uncovering. Moreover, even Odhiambo admits that the parallel between Lam 4:21 “and our verse is rather striking” since “in both cases the drunkenness is associated with cloth removal and with the verb indicating removal of clothing being in the hithpael stem” (p. 83, n. 9).

observer. Furthermore, the literal Hebrew of verse 21 is quite clear that in his drunkenness Noah uncovered his own ervah. As we have seen from our discussion of Le 18:10 above, Noah uncovering his own ervah indicates that he committed the offending sexual act.

There are precious few near kinswomen with whom Noah could have committed the offending sexual act. The only known women are the three wives of his sons. One might theorize that an unspecified granddaughter could be the culprit. However, the time needed for such a speculative granddaughter to grow to maturity does not fit the time scales implied by the passages. Furthermore, any such granddaughter would not explain Canaan's central role in the episode. We are therefore left with only one viable candidate for Noah's sexual indiscretion – Ham's wife. This is because Noah's offense concerned his son Ham and his **firstborn** Canaan. We can safely conclude that Noah had to have had adulterous relations with Ham's wife, and that Canaan was very likely the result. There are many other intriguing clues in Genesis 9 indicating Noah had sexual relations with Ham's wife. Verse 21, besides relating that Noah uncovered his own nakedness (i.e. committed the offending act himself), literally states that Noah uncovered himself in "her tent." This implies Noah had sexually defiled his lineage by uncovering himself in some woman's tent. Another clue to Noah's adultery comes from a fascinating ambiguity in verse 24. The verse has two equally valid, and yet opposing, interpretations of the literal Hebrew. In the first interpretation, the passage can be literally read to say that when Noah awoke, he knew "**what he had yielded to himself was his youngest son.**" This means that Noah awoke from his drunkenness and knew he had conceived to himself his youngest son, Canaan. In the second interpretation, the verse could literally be read to say that Noah awoke and knew "what his younger son had yielded to him." This is the traditional reading, and it means that Noah knew that Ham had yielded something to him. When applied to the notion of Noah's adultery, this reading implies that Noah awoke and knew that his youngest son Ham had yielded to him a defiled grandson in Canaan. Therefore, Noah cursed Canaan. One logical deduction for how Noah could learn such information from his drunken escapade is that **after Noah got drunk and was seduced by Ham's wife, he awoke and realized the type of woman she was. Noah understood Ham's wife was a seductress defiled of Nephilim lineage. He thereby cursed Ham's firstborn.** My literal translation of Ge 9:20-24 is below. The word-by-word breakdown is given in Table 7-1.

Ge 9:20-24 (My [Biggs'] Literal Translation)

20 And Noah became a man of the ground, and he planted a vineyard.

21 And he drank from the wine, and he was drunk, and he uncovered himself in the midst of her tent.

22 And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and he told to two of his brothers in the way.

23 And Shem and Japheth took the garment and laid it upon the shoulder of both, and they walk backward and will they cover the nakedness of their father, and their faces were backward, and the nakedness of their father they did not see.

24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and he knew what **he had yielded to himself was his youngest son.**

Biggs appeals to 1En 106:17 as proof that Enoch prophesied that "Noah and his sons would produce giants once again on the earth after the flood, and that this would usher in yet another round of punishment on the earth. This is certainly a shocking revelation" (Biggs, 165-167).

16. And this son who has been born unto you shall be left on the earth, and his three children shall be saved with him: when all mankind that are on the earth shall die [he and his sons shall be saved]. 17. And they shall produce on the earth giants not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh, and there shall be a great punishment on the earth, and the earth shall be cleansed from all impurity. (1En 106:16-17)

An online edition of Enoch finds this conclusion so unbelievable that it transposes the order of these two verses so as to make the giants attributable to the Gen 6:1-4 event.⁶ Isaac notes this possibility.⁷ Nevertheless, he retains the

⁶ See http://www.summascriptura.com/html/Enoch_1_GHS.html#106.

⁷ E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 87. Johnson circumvents this problem by translating 1En 106:17 as, "They **who** begot

order above, which, as Biggs notes, attributes the return of the giants to Noah and/or his sons. Deductive logic decisively makes Ham's wife the most likely suspect for carrying any recessive Nephilim gene. The proposition that Ham's wife would be such a carrier is not uncommon among nephologists. This interpretation has the decided advantage of giving at least a partial explanation for the early origin of post-flood Rephaim and a plausible genetic explanation for the genocide of Canaanites (1Sam 15:3). Preference herein, accordingly, will be for this translation of 1En 1:16-17 and for Biggs' proposition.

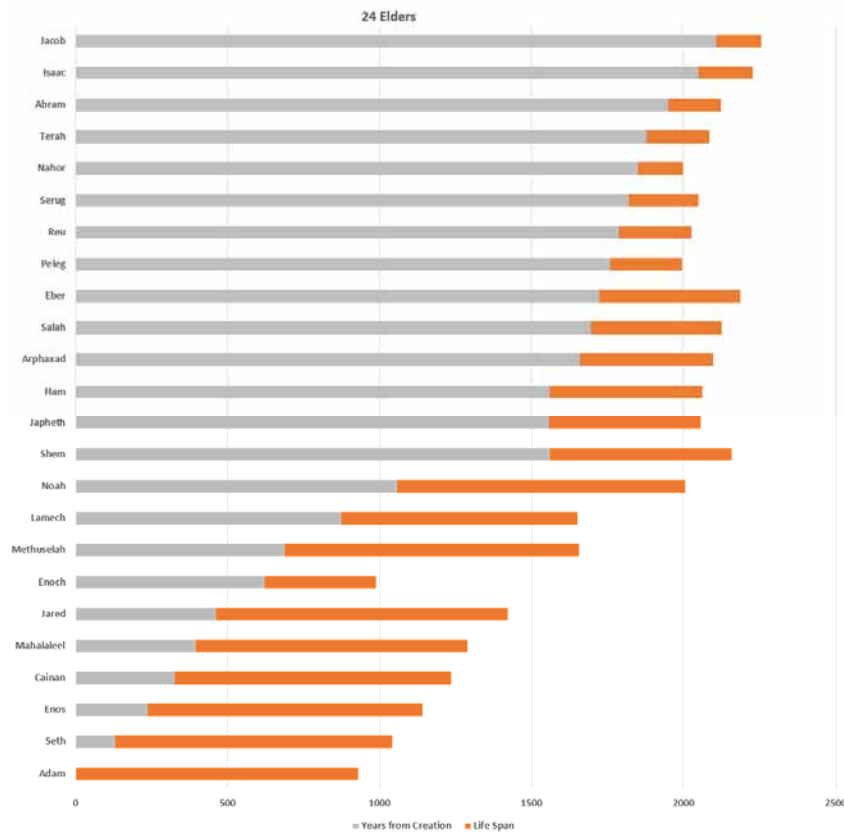
What about Biggs' translation of Gen 9:24? Should the verse really be translated as saying that Noah "yielded [*asah*] to himself was his youngest son?" The verb in question is used of God making (creating) a child in the womb (Job 31:15; BDB). But this occurrence is used of God creating, not man procreating. TWOT notes that *make* is used interchangeably in Genesis for *create*, but *create* "always connotes what only God can do and frequently emphasizes the absolute newness of the object created," but *make* is "much broader in scope, connoting primarily the fashioning of the object with little concern for special nuances." But compare the fruit tree *yielding* fruit after their kind (Gen 1:11-12), which "is the first recorded account of sexual reproduction" (Biggs, 184), thus giving the mystical meaning. According to Biggs, "the mystical meaning is established by the Principle of First Appearances (PFA). PFA theory asserts that the mystical meaning of a word is defined by the context of the Biblical passages in which the word is first found" (Biggs, 32). However, since I give little weight to mystical arguments, this particular argument by Biggs carries little weight for me. The lexical argument above for the word itself is accordingly very weak.

On the other hand, the sematic argument for Biggs' position is even stronger than Biggs' anticipates. The exact phrase only occurs five other times. Only one time is the phrase translated *had done to him* (1Sam 19:18). Three times it means *made for himself* (2Chron 32:27,29; SSol 3:9). As Biggs rightly notes, these three occurrences support his argument: *Noah made for himself a son* (TM). Nevertheless, Biggs fails to cite the other occurrence: *made for it* (Ex 37:27). Even so, this instance supports the *made-for* translation. Moreover, Biggs does not cite the similar phrases: *made for themselves* (Gen 3:7;), *make for yourself* (Jer 2:28; Eze 16:16-17,24). The preponderance of biblical evidence, therefore, supporting Biggs' *made-for* interpretation is even stronger than he has cited. Consequently, preference herein will be for this translation of Gen 9:24 and accordingly for Biggs' proposition.

The next Sunday (7-31-2016), after I presented this material to our Sunday School class the Sunday before, Doug Berner noted that this interpretation of Noah and Ham's actions would support his interpretation of the 24 elders.⁸ Originally, I had been highly skeptical of Berner's identifying the 24 elders with the OT patriarchs because he included Ham in that number. However, this current analysis suggests that Ham may have been a rather innocent party in this whole affair. Therefore, I am now open to Berner's thesis and have graphed his timeline below.

giants...will suffer." Ken Johnson, Ken Johnson, *The Ancient Book of Enoch* (USA, 2012), 166. Nevertheless, he attributes the return of the postflood giants to Canaan using genetic tampering (p. 183).

⁸ Douglas Berner, *When God Intervenes: The Beginning of the End* (USA: CreateSpace, 2013), 234-242. This graph is adapted from Berner's chart on p. 236. The lifespans of Japheth and Ham are unknown. For graphical purposes, their lifespans have been estimated to be 500 years each.



For sake of expediency, let us assume that Biggs is correct that Naamah was Ham's wife (Gen 4:22). Comparatively, Ham was rather innocent of wrongdoing in that case. Ham merely walked into his own wife's tent and discovered that his naked father had committed adultery with Naamah. Ham then complained to his brothers that his father had been had committed adultery with Naamah—Ham's wife.⁹ Since I am primarily posting these notes to facilitate my discussion elsewhere, my less technical summation of the possible importance of this seduction of Noah by his daughter-in-law in relation to the seduction of Lot by his daughters and the possible eschatological implications will be summarized in my book *Monogamous Sex in Heaven*.

⁹ Some of the other speculations that Biggs would make regarding Naamah I would hold to be very questionable. I do not believe that Naamah was a virgin, for example, when she seduced Noah. Yet I would allow the possibility that Canaan might legally have been Ham's firstborn and that the rest of Ham's children might have had a different mother.