

**THE STORY OF THE  
CHOSEN PEOPLE**



MOSES EXPOSED ON THE NILE

**THE STORY OF THE  
CHOSEN PEOPLE**

**BY**

**H. A. GUERBER**

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS  
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## PREFACE

IN this little volume the author has tried to give a consecutive story of the Jews, or Chosen People, as objectively as the Stories of the Greeks and of the Romans, with which it forms a series. The narrative has been written in the simplest style, so as to enable even the youngest child of the third or fourth reader grade to understand it.

Not the least attempt has been made to dwell upon the strictly religious side of the subject, for, owing to the mixed population in our large cities and schools, such an attempt would be impracticable. The sole aim of this very elementary work is to familiarize children, be they of Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Freethinker parentage, with the outline of the story contained in the Old Testament, so that they can understand the allusions which appear even in juvenile literature, and can look with intelligent appreciation upon the reproductions of works of art which are now to be found in nearly all our books and magazines.

I have found that, when told to young children, these historical narratives prove a source of much interest, and that the elementary knowledge then obtained remains so clear and vivid that even when

they are grown up, and able to enter into the subject more thoroughly, the impression of the story as first heard is the one which is most permanent.

While it may seem that, with all the facilities which the country affords to rich and poor alike, such instruction in schools would be superfluous, the fact remains that, with the exception of a few well-known stories, the children have no idea of the contents of the Old Testament. This lack of general information on the subject is often a great drawback to teachers in the course of their instruction, as references are constantly made to the Bible.

Although this is a juvenile history of the Jews, it has not been written without much research; and, in order to make it as brief, comprehensive, and accurate as possible, many authorities beside the Bible, Josephus, and the Bible dictionaries, have been consulted.

It is hoped that an inkling of the story of the Jews will stimulate the children's interest, will early imbue them with a taste for history, and will give them the desire to gain further and more complete information on the subject when they grow older.

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## CHAPTER I

# THE CREATION

**T**HE Bible, as you already know, is composed of two parts, called the Old and the New Testaments. Both Jews and Christians consider that the first part of this book is sacred, because it contains God's teachings as he revealed, or made them known, to man. They do not, however, agree about the second part, which is considered sacred only by Christians.

The Old Testament contains, besides God's teachings, a history of the Jews, which is so interesting and important that educated people of all countries and religions are expected to know all about it. It is this history which you are going to hear, but, of course, if you want it complete, you must read it in the Bible itself.

The very first book of the Bible is called Genesis, a word meaning "origin," because it tells us about the beginning, or origin, of the world. We are told that in the beginning there was neither land nor water, nor any living things, and that darkness rested over all.

This early stage of affairs, when the elements of all things were mixed up together, has been called Chaos (confusion); and we are told that God, the Almighty,

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who had no beginning or end, created, or made, the whole world out of Chaos.

The story is told very briefly indeed, and all the periods of creation are called days. Of course we now know that by days the writer of the book of Genesis did not mean twenty-four hours, as we do. The word “days” was used for an indefinite space of time; and, just as God is far more powerful than we can imagine, so his days are far longer than ours.

God’s spirit moved over Chaos, and during the first day he said: “Let there be light.” At these words the darkness which rested over all things vanished, and light first appeared. This light shone through the thick vapors which then surrounded the earth.

During the second day, or period, the vapors parted, and now for the first time the blue sky could mirror itself in the blue waters which covered the face of the earth. As the clouds in the sky could rain down water, the Bible says that on the second day God “divided the waters which were under the firmament [or sky] from the waters which were above the firmament.”

During the third day, or period, another great change took place; for the crust of the earth, shaken by earthquakes, formed great bumps and hollows. Thus were formed mountains and valleys; and the waters, which had covered all the face of the earth, now flowed into the deep basins, where they formed lakes, seas, and oceans.

As soon as dry land appeared, God said that the earth should bring forth grass, trees, and plants of all

## *THE CREATION*

kinds; and each one was to have seeds, so that new plants would replace the old as soon as they died. The earth had been bare and ugly when it first rose up out of the waters; but it was now covered with verdure, and became beautiful as it is to-day.

On the fourth day, God allowed the lights in the sky to be seen; and the sun, moon, and stars began to serve, as they do now, to mark the days and the nights, the seasons and the years. Darkness and light were thus clearly divided, and we are told that “God saw that it was good.”

During the fifth day, or period, when the rays of the sun had strengthened the trees and plants, God created the birds and fishes, and bade them multiply and fly through the air, and fill all the waters in the seas. It is in obedience to this command that the birds and fishes lay eggs and hatch their young.

The sixth day, or period, was spent in the creation of the higher animals, and lastly of man. Now the Bible tells us that man was formed out of earth, but that he was different from all the beings which had already been created, because he was like God.

This first man bore the name of Adam. Although his body was made of dust, his life was breathed into him by God, who brought all the animals to him that he might name them, and told him that he should be master over them all.

God had labored for six whole days, or periods, and from Chaos had brought forth the world and all the living creatures in it. He gazed upon his work, “saw

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everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” The labor was done, so, on the seventh day, God “rested from all his work.”

It is partly because God rested on the seventh day, after laboring six days, that we work for six days of the week, and rest on the seventh; and each Sunday is thus an anniversary of God’s day of rest.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

**A**DAM had been placed in a beautiful garden named Eden, which God had planted, and which was watered by four rivers. Here God came to visit the first man, and told him that he could eat of the fruit of every plant and tree in the garden, except the fruit which grew on “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” This tree was placed in the center of the garden, and God gave this order to find out whether Adam would obey him.

Besides, if the man did not eat of the fruit, he would never know trouble or sickness. At the same time that God gave this first command, or law, he added the first punishment, or penalty, saying: “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

God now brought the animals which he had created, so that Adam might name them all. In doing so, the man saw that the beasts went about in pairs, and that he was the only living creature who had no mate. He felt very lonely when he saw this, and told God that he would like to have a companion like himself. So the Creator “caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and

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he slept; and he took one of his ribs,” and from it made a woman.

When Adam awoke, God brought the first woman to him. Adam saw that she was a part of himself; and he said that a man shall “leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.” Thus, in the Garden of Eden and in the presence of God himself, the first marriage was celebrated; and Adam and his wife were so pure and innocent that they were perfectly happy, and no more ashamed of being naked than little children.

Adam dwelt in the Garden of Eden with Eve, as the first woman was called, in perfect happiness, which was to last as long as they obeyed God and did not eat any of the fruit which hung on “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Unfortunately, however, there was an evil spirit, called the Tempter, the Devil, or Satan, who entered the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent.

He was jealous of the happiness of Adam and Eve, and very anxious to deprive them of it. So he spoke to Eve, and told her that God had forbidden their eating any of the fruit of the tree in the center of the garden only because he wanted to keep it all for himself.

The serpent then urged Eve to taste the fruit, saying: “Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Eve believed the words of the wicked serpent, ate some of the fruit, and gave some to Adam, who ate it too.

As the serpent had said, their eyes were now opened; and, whereas they had known only good before, they

## *THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT*

now knew evil also. God had seen that they would never be perfectly happy if they knew evil, and he had kindly kept that knowledge from them.

But now they had disobeyed his command, and with the knowledge of evil came the feeling of shame and fear, which they had never had before, and which made them go and hide among the trees of the garden. In the cool of the day, God came into the garden, and called to them. Adam came slowly, in answer to this call, and excused himself, saying that he was afraid to come out because he was naked.

At these words, God asked him whether he had tasted the forbidden fruit; and when Adam confessed that the woman had given him some, God questioned Eve. She, in her turn, confessed her disobedience, but said that the serpent had tempted her.

Both Adam and Eve had broken the first law, so they had to suffer the punishment which God had warned them they must receive. The serpent, who had tempted the woman, was condemned to be hated of all men, and to crawl in the dust. Eve was told that she must obey her husband, and that she would suffer, while Adam was doomed to a life of hard work, because the earth would no longer yield him food unless he tilled the soil.

No promise was added to make the serpent's sentence less severe, but Eve was told that her children would fight against the serpent (the spirit of evil), and that in time one of them would conquer him. Adam was promised that his toil would not be in vain, but that God would bless it and enable him to earn, by the

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sweat of his brow, the bread without which he could not live.

When the judgment against the serpent, the man, and the woman had thus been given, God reminded Adam and Eve that, as they had sinned, they would suffer death. He warned them that as their bodies had been made of dust, they could not last forever, using the words which are now spoken in the funeral service: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

## CHAPTER III

# THE FIRST MURDER

**G**OD is as good as he is just, so he next taught Adam and Eve how to clothe themselves in the skins of wild beasts, and then sent them out of the Garden of Eden, which they were never to see again. God did not want them to come back there, because the tree of life grew in the garden, and as long as they ate of its fruit they could not die. To prevent their coming in again, he placed an angel at the gates of Paradise (Eden), and armed him with a flaming sword which turned every way.

Although Adam and Eve suffered keenly for their disobedience, they did not despair. They believed God's words, and began to look forward to the time when the promised child would come, who, by killing the serpent, would make up for the harm they had done. The mention of this child is the first prophecy about the Messiah, or Redeemer; and from the day she left Eden, Eve lived in constant hope of his coming. To prevent man from forgetting this promise, and, the Christians say, as a sign of the last great sacrifice in the Bible, God also taught Adam and Eve to offer living animals upon his altar.

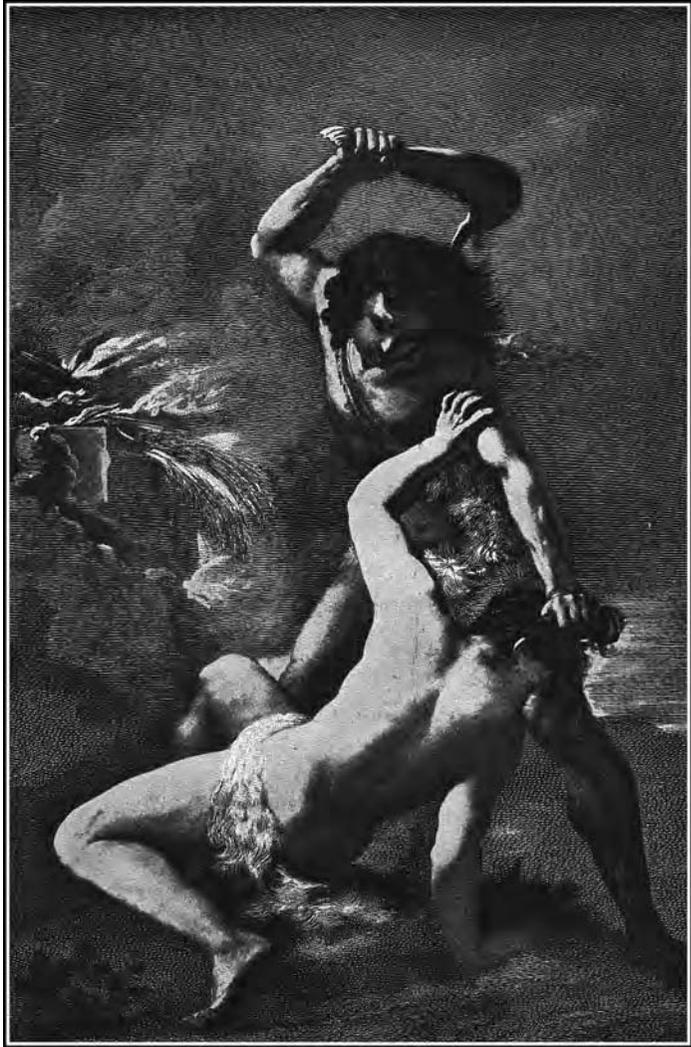
## *THE STORY OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE*

It was after they had been driven out of Eden that Eve gave birth to her first child, in sorrow and suffering, as God had foretold. This child was called Cain, a word which means “a possession,” because his mother thought that he was the promised child; but when her second son, Abel, meaning “a breath or vapor,” was born, Eve began to understand that the time for the keeping of God’s promise might still be a long way off.

While Eve nursed her children, Adam tilled the soil, and when the two boys grew up, they worked too, Cain at the plow, and Abel as a shepherd. Thus, you see, farming and cattle raising were the two first occupations of man.

When these two young men were old enough, they got ready to offer a sacrifice to God. But Cain, the elder, was in a bad temper when he laid a basket of fruit on the altar. An offering made in such a spirit could not be agreeable to God, so he not only refused it, but also rebuked Cain for his bad feelings. Abel, who was gentle and loving, brought a lamb from his flock, and laid it upon the altar, full of love and trust in God; so his sacrifice was accepted.

Shortly after this ceremony, the two brothers met in a very lonely place; and Cain, who had long been jealous of his brother, took this chance to fall upon him and murder him. This first crime was very quickly punished. Even as Cain fled in terror from the spot where his brother’s lifeless body was lying, God suddenly appeared to him, and asked: “Where is Abel, thy brother?”



DEATH OF ABEL

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Cain crossly answered: "Am I my brother's keeper?" But God knew all that had happened. To punish Cain, God told him that the earth would no longer bear any fruit under his care, and that he would not be allowed to make his home near the spot where his murdered brother lay.

At the same time, God also filled Cain's heart with a constant dread that some one would kill him, as he had killed Abel. He therefore fled in terror; but God, who did not wish him to perish, put a mark upon him, and spoke a sevenfold curse upon any one who should dare to lay hands upon him.

Protected by this mysterious mark, which is called the "brand of Cain," the unhappy man started out; and, after wandering about in an aimless way for some time, he settled in the land of Nod, a word which means "banishment."

Here Cain saw that the earth would no longer bring forth fruit for his support; so he ceased to earn his living as a farmer, and began to make all kinds of things instead. His haunting fears, however, never left him; and



## *THE FIRST MURDER*

to protect himself, he built a fortified city, to which he gave the name of his son Enoch.

We know very little about Cain's life after that, and the Bible only tells us the names of some of his descendants. Lamech, his great-great-great grandson, was the father of Jabel, the first wandering herdsman, and Jubal, the inventor of the first musical instruments, and Tubal-cain, the first smith, who made articles of iron and bronze.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE DELUGE

**A**DAM and Eve, in the mean while, continued to live alone, mourning the death of Abel, and the departure of Cain. But when they were one hundred and thirty years old, a third son was born to them, and they called him Seth, which means “the appointed,” because they thought that it was surely the Redeemer who had come.

They were again disappointed, however; but Seth married, and Adam had many descendants, the sixth in direct line being Enoch. This man was very good and pious, and “walked with God.” He was rewarded for his goodness; for God did not allow him to die like the rest of his race, but carried him off to heaven, so that “he should not see death.”

Enoch’s son, Methuselah, is noted as having reached the greatest age ever attained by man,—nine hundred and sixty-nine years. He was two hundred and forty-three years old when Adam died, and must often have heard him tell about the Garden of Eden, the eating of the forbidden fruit, and how he was driven out of Paradise.

## *THE DELUGE*

Methuselah's grandson was Noah, who was born six hundred years before Methuselah died; and Noah no doubt often heard his grandfather relate the stories which Adam had told.

The world had grown very wicked during the fifteen hundred and fifty-six years which had passed by since the creation of Adam; for his numerous descendants had married daughters of Cain, and had learned to do many evil things.

When God saw that the people were growing so bad, he no longer allowed them to become as old as their fathers had lived to be. Instead of permitting men to live nearly a thousand years, like the good Methuselah, God shortened their lives.

Then, a little later, seeing that the "wickedness of man was great in the earth," God regretted having ever created man, and made up his mind to take the human race off the face of the earth, and completely destroy it. Only one family was to be spared, the family of Noah, because he was a truly good man, who thus "found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

Noah was the tenth patriarch, or father of a family, in Adam's race; and he was six hundred years old before the threatened destruction of mankind took place. God warned him that a great flood would visit the earth, and gave him directions how to build a large boat, or ark, in which he and his family could take refuge. This ark was at once begun, as God had commanded, although all Noah's neighbors laughed at him, and paid no heed

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when he begged them to turn from their wicked ways and repent.

At the end of one hundred and twenty years the ark was finished. In obedience to God's command, Noah then entered into this ship, with his wife, his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. There were, therefore, eight human beings in the ark, besides the animals which it contained. Of these Noah took with him one pair of every kind that was "unclean," or not fit for sacrifice; but of the "clean" animals he took seven of each kind,—three pairs and an extra male for sacrifice.

So great was the throng of animals which pressed about the ark that it took them seven days to enter it. Then, when they were all safely housed, God shut Noah in. Next he allowed the waters of the deep to rise and overflow, and sent down torrents of rain, which fell for forty days and forty nights.

This great downpour is called the flood, or deluge, and in it perished every living creature that was left upon earth. The waters rose higher and higher, until they overtook and drowned the last fugitives. At the end of forty days, Noah alone remained alive, with his family and the animals which he had taken into the ark. All the wicked people had died, and a new record was about to begin.

The ark, with all its living freight, floated about for five months, before it ran aground upon the peak of Mount Ararat; but two more months passed by before the other mountain tops rose out of the waters.

## *THE DELUGE*

Forty days later Noah opened the window of the ark, and sent out a raven. The bird flew to and fro, but did not come back to the boat. In the course of the next week Noah sent forth a dove, which flew back; and a few days later he sent it out again and it brought back an olive twig with young leaves.

Noah joyfully received this olive twig, because he knew it was a sign that the waters had gone down, and that even low trees were now entirely uncovered and were putting forth new leaves. Ever since then an olive branch has been considered an emblem of peace and good tidings.

After waiting another week, Noah came out of the ark; and he again set foot on dry ground when he was six hundred and one years old. He was followed by his family, and by all the animals and birds in the ark. Then the first thing that he did was to give thanks to God for saving him. He built an altar upon Mount Ararat, and there offered up a sacrifice of every kind of clean bird and beast.

## CHAPTER V

### NOAH'S DESCENDANTS

**G**OD was much pleased by Noah's act of piety in giving thanks and offering a sacrifice as soon as he came out of the ark. For this reason he promised the patriarch that he would never curse the earth again on account of man, nor destroy it. He added that he would be patient with all living things, and would never send such a flood again as long as the earth lasted.

The blessing which had been spoken in the Garden of Eden, "be fruitful and multiply," was repeated; and the animals were again made subject to man, who was now allowed to eat meat for the first time.

Besides the law about the killing of animals for food, God now made a decree against murder, saying that he who "sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." That is why murderers are still put to death.

God then made a covenant, or agreement, with Noah, and said that if men obeyed him he would watch over them and not destroy them; and as a reminder of this promise, he set the rainbow in the clouds. This is the reason why you will often hear the rainbow called the "bow of promise."

## *NOAH'S DESCENDANTS*

Although God had saved Noah and his family, to begin a new race, it soon became plain that they too would sin; for Noah himself yielded to the low vice of drunkenness. His son Ham found him in a drunken sleep, and went and told Noah's other sons, mocking him.

Shem and Japheth were shocked and ashamed, but they did not join in their brother's mockery. Instead of this, they threw a great cloak over their sleeping father, to hide him from their own and everybody else's eyes.

When Noah came to his senses, he was bitterly ashamed; and when he heard how rude Ham had been, Noah sent him away, and cursed him, saying that his children would be slaves. This prophecy came true, and Ham was the ancestor of the black, or negro, race, who were slaves even in this country half a century ago.

Noah then rewarded Shem and Japheth for their dutiful conduct, by blessing them. In time, Japheth's descendants became the ancestors of all the European nations (and thus of the Americans); while Shem was chosen as the father of the race of the Jews. You will often hear it called the "Chosen Race," because God gave his laws to this people, and said that the Messiah would be born among them.

Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood, and died when he was nine hundred and fifty years old. The date of his death is said to be just halfway between the creation of Adam and the birth of Christ, whom the Christians consider as the Redeemer

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promised when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden.

Noah died just one year before the great patriarch Abraham was born; but the story of creation passed directly from Adam to Methuselah, from Methuselah to Noah, and from Noah to Terah, the father of Abraham. Thus, although it was not yet written, but only told, it could not have changed much, although so many years had passed since the creation of Adam.

The Bible tells us that the descendants of Noah's sons spread, in the course of time, all over the face of the earth. In a few words it says that Japheth's race included all the Gentiles (people who were not Jews). One of the descendants of Ham was Nimrod, a mighty hunter and king, and the founder of a great city called Babylon. Some of Nimrod's descendants built the city of Nineveh also, and formed the great Assyrian Empire.

The only one of Noah's sons whose story is given at length in the Bible, is Shem, the ancestor of the Jewish race. In his days "the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech," and we are told that the people generally wandered about in search of good pasture for their large flocks, which were their chief possession.



## *NOAH'S DESCENDANTS*

Journeying thus from place to place, Shem's descendants came at last to the plain of Shinar, where Nimrod lived. Here the soil was mostly clay, so the people soon learned to make bricks, and to use them for building houses.

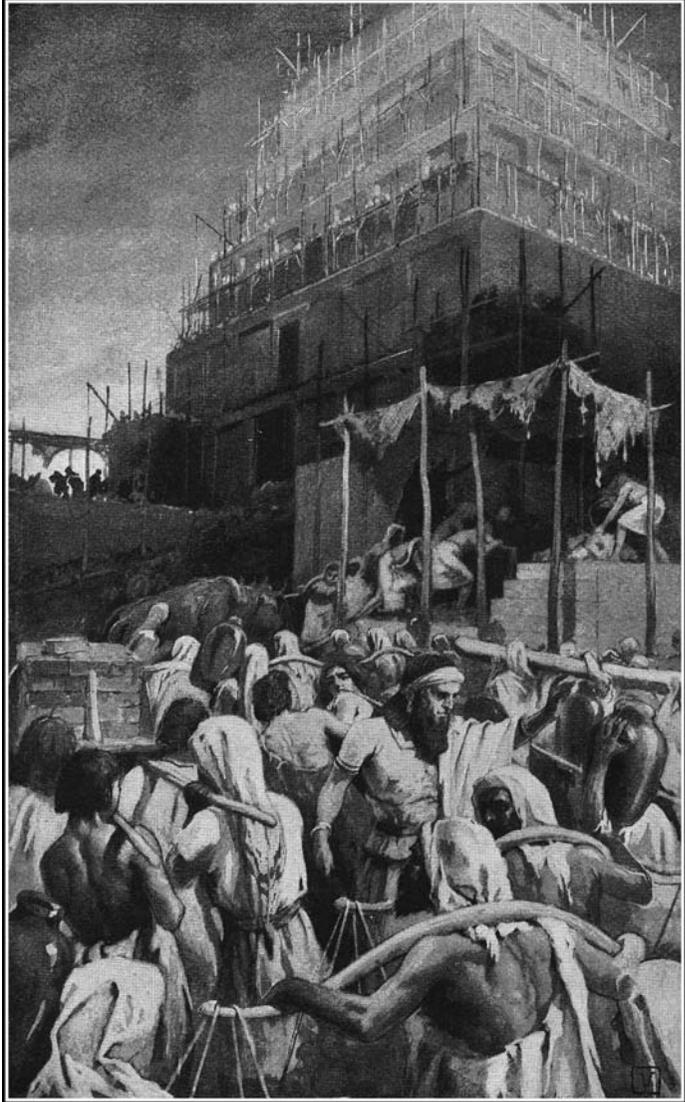
## CHAPTER VI

# THE TOWER OF BABEL

**T**HERE were plenty of building materials on the plain of Shinar, so the people soon fancied that it would be a fine thing to join Nimrod and found a world-wide empire, with a great city as its capital. Nimrod, it seems, was at the head of this plan, and greatly encouraged them. He hoped that if all the people were banded together, he would be able to prevent them from being scattered all over the face of the world, as God had said he intended to have them.

The work of building was therefore begun, and by Nimrod's orders a huge tower was erected near the new city. But "the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded;" and it did not please him. To defeat their plans, God confused the tongues of the builders, so that they spoke different languages; and then, as they could no longer understand one another's speech, the men left off working together.

People who do not understand one another are sure to quarrel, and before long the builders went off in different directions, in search of new homes, where they



BUILDING THE TOWER OF BABEL

## *THE STORY OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE*

could speak their own language in peace. Thus Nimrod's plan to found a great empire came to an end, and the Tower of Babel (confusion) was never completed.

Terah, the father of Abraham, was the eighth in direct descent from Shem, son of Noah. Besides Abraham, he had two other sons, Nahor and Haran, who were probably much older than Abraham. The brothers all married, and for some time dwelt in the ancient city of Ur; but before long God called to Abraham, and bade him go into a new land which would be given to him. In obedience to this call, the whole family set out, and made their home east of the Euphrates River, where Terah died when Abraham was seventy-five years old.

Nahor, the oldest living son of Terah, claimed the land where they had settled as his inheritance; and, after a second call from God, Abraham continued his journey, traveling southward with his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot. They were going in search of the land promised by God, for Abraham fully trusted in these words which the Lord had spoken:

“I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

These last words, as you see, contained a new promise of a Redeemer, like the one made to Adam, and God now added the information that this Redeemer would bless even the Gentiles,—that is to say, the people who did not belong to the Chosen Race.

## *THE TOWER OF BABEL*

Abraham now crossed the Euphrates River, and hence received the name of Hebrew, which is borne by his descendants, and which means “the man who has crossed the river.” He passed through the desert, crossed the river Jordan, and entered the Holy Land, where he rested for a while.

From there Abraham wandered on in search of pasture, until he came at last to the rich land of Egypt. Here he was in a strange country, among a strange people. He was afraid they would kill him to obtain possession of Sarah, his wife, so he coaxed her to say that she was only his sister.

The people, thinking that Sarah was an unmarried woman, carried her off to the king’s palace to be his wife; but, as soon as she arrived there, a terrible disease visited all the family of the king. At first no one knew the cause of this sickness, but finally the king found out that it had been sent to punish him for trying to take another man’s wife.

He had no intention of doing so wicked a thing, so he at once sent Sarah back to her husband, and reproved Abraham for deceiving him. He also bade Abraham leave the country, saying that he did not wish to keep a man who had brought him nothing but harm.

Thus forced to wander on, Abraham traveled northward until he came to Bethel, in the Holy Land, where he had once rested, and where he rebuilt the altar to worship God.

His cattle had now become so numerous that it was very hard indeed to find pasture enough for all his

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flocks. One day a quarrel arose between the shepherds of Abraham and those of Lot; and, to prevent a renewal of it, the uncle and nephew decided to part. As Lot was the son of an elder brother, Abraham gave him the first choice; and he passed down the valley to the eastward, where the pasture seemed the best. Then Abraham, still trusting in the promises of God, moved a little way towards the south, where he again rested and built another altar.