GENESIS 11

The Tower of Babel[i]

1 At first, the people of the whole earth spoke one[ii] language. Everyone used the same words.

2 It came to pass, as they traveled from the east,[iii] they found a plain in the land of Shinar. Then they settled there.

3 And they said to one another, "Come! Let's make bricks and heat them until they are hard." So they used bricks instead of stone and tar instead of mortar.

4 Then they said, "Come! Let's build a city and a tower.[iv] Let's make its top reach heaven. Let's make a name for ourselves so that we won't spread across the face of the whole earth."[v]

5 Then Yahveh came down to see the city and the tower that the people[vi] were building.

6 Then Yahveh said, "Look! The people are united. They all have one[vii] language. This is only the beginning of what they can do. Now nothing that they imagine will be impossible for them. **7** Come! Let's go down and mix up[viii] their language so that they cannot understand one another's speech."

8 So the people stopped working on the city, and Yahveh scattered them over the face of the whole earth.[ix]
9 That is why its name is Babel, because Yahveh mixed up the languages of all the earth. Yahveh scattered them from there to all parts of the earth.[x]

Shem to Abram

10 These are the generations of Shem. Shem was 100 years old and fathered Arphaxad two years after the flood. **11** Shem lived 500 years after he fathered Arphaxad. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

12 And Arphaxad lived 35 years and fathered Salah. **13** And Arphaxad lived 403 years after he fathered Salah. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

14 And Salah lived 30 years and fathered Eber. **15** And Salah lived 403 years after he fathered Eber. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

16 And Eber lived 34 years and fathered Peleg. **17** And Eber lived 430 years after he fathered Peleg. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

18 And Peleg lived 30 years and fathered Reu. **19** And Peleg lived 209 years after he fathered Reu. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

20 And Reu lived 32 years and fathered Serug. **21** And Reu lived 207 years after he fathered Serug. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

22 And Serug lived 30 years, and fathered Nahor. **23** And Serug lived 200 years after he fathered Nahor. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

24 And Nahor lived 29 years and fathered Terah. **25** And Nahor lived 119 years after he fathered Terah. He also fathered other sons and daughters.

26 And Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. **27** Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran fathered Lot. **28** Now Haran died while his father Terah was still living. He died in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees.

29 Then Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife[xi] was Sarai.[xii] The name of Nahor's wife[xiii] was Milcah.[xiv] Milcah was the daughter of Haran. Haran was the father of both Milcah and Iscah. **30** But Sarai was barren. She had no child.

31 Then Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran's son), and his daughter-in-law Sarai (Abram's wife[xv]). They left the Ur of the Chaldees together to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.[xvi] **32** Terah lived 205 years. Then he died in Haran.

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i Babel means "confusion." However, there is a wordplay with the Akkadian "Bab" which means gate or portal. Thus, Bab-El implies "portal to god" in a negative sense. Bab-El was the beginning of an organized world system against God. They were trying to effect a system of worship (portal or gate) to a new god.

ii The Hebrew אֶחָת is an **Aleph**-Het-**Tav**. Most translations translate it as one, first, or once. It represents putting the **Aleph**-**Tav** first. In the beginning, one language would help people communicate God's goodness to one another. But depraved humans turned against God's goodness. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

iii They came from the east of Shinar. That would mean that the Ark would be in the mountains of Iran, not in Turkey.

iv The Hebrew מִגְדָּל (*mig-dawl*) derives from גָּדַל (*gaw-dahl*, magnify, great, exceed). *Gaw-dahl* has the idea of greatness, to become larger, bigger, and in some contexts speaks of exaltation. The word *gaw-dahl*, like *mig-dawl*, can be translated as "tower." The people of Babel were seeking to become great, to become higher than everything else, to exalt themselves. These towers were to be monuments that exalted their greatness, their proud independence from God, their open rebellion against God.

v This is open rebellion. God had told them to spread out and fill the earth (Gen 9:7).

vi The Hebrew means כָּל־בְּנֵי הָאָדָם means "all the children of Adam." This is a Hebrew idiom for all humanity — men and women alike. Here "sons" is not gender-specific but denotes membership in the corrupted human family descended from Adam and Eve. See Dan 7:13.

vii The Hebrew אֶחָת is an **Aleph**-Het-**Tav**. Most translations translate it as one, first, or once. It represents putting the **Aleph**-**Tav** first. In the beginning, one language would help people communicate God's goodness to one another. But depraved humans turned against God's goodness. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

viii The Hebrew בָּלַל means blend, confound, confuse, mingle, mix up, perplex. It marks a divine act that disrupts human unity and pride by introducing disorder into their self-centered plans.

ix This could be the division during the days of Peleg.

x When Babel was over, God's relationship with humanity was in shambles. But God still wanted a family. So, He started over with another man - - - Abraham.

xi The Hebrew אִשָּׁת is an **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav**. The **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong's defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Sarai was the mother of God's covenant nation of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.

xii Sarai means "princess."

xiii The Hebrew אִשָּׁת is an **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav**. The **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong's defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Milcah was also part of the genealogy of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.

xiv Milcah means "queen."

xv The Hebrew אִשָּׁת is an **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav**. The **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong's defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Sarai was the mother of God's covenant nation of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.

xvi Stephen, in Acts 7, gives us some information about this.