

The Ancient Hebrew Race

'To Shem, the forefather of all the children (descendants) of Eber, children were born ... To Eber were born two sons. The name of one was Peleg (meaning, 'Division') for in his days the earth was divided' (Genesis 10:21 & 25). Four generations after Shem, Eber was born (Luke 3:35 & 36). All of the descendants of Shem are called 'Semites' and that includes the Hebrews, the Jewish people. Eber was mentioned as being a descendant of Shem because he was a very important man in the history of the Jewish people. From Eber we get the root word for 'Hebrew', which is the race of Jewish people plus it is their spoken language. 'Eber lived four hundred thirty years after he became the father of Peleg and became the father of many sons and daughters' (Genesis 11:17).

Four generations later, a man named Nahor had a son named Terah. Nahor had many children but only Terah's name was mentioned in the Bible. 'Nahor (the grandfather) lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah ... Terah lived seventy years and became the father of Abram, Nahor (the grandson) and Haran' (Genesis 11:25 & 26). Abram, later renamed Abraham and his family once lived in Mesopotamia in Ur of the Chaldees, in what is now Northern Turkey. He was one of Terah's four children; three sons and a daughter Sarai (Genesis 20:12) born to their father Terah and his two wives (who were never named). Haran had a son named Lot and a daughter named Milcah then Haran died while the family still lived in Ur (Genesis 11:28). Abram married his half sister Sarai and Nahor married his niece (Haran's daughter) Milcah (Genesis 11:29). They all moved south to what is now Syria and settled there, naming their new settlement Haran after Abram's late brother. The city of Haran is still there. Abraham was called a Hebrew so his entire family were Hebrew, Habiru, Abiru or Obri, the same word but with different accents from different countries (Genesis 14:13).

After God spoke to Abraham they family moved to what was then, Canaan. 'Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his nephew, all their substance they had gathered and the souls (servants) whom they had gotten in Haran and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan' (Genesis 12:5). Nahor, Milcah and their family stayed in Haran. The Habiru or Hebrew race was well known in and around Mesopotamia where Abraham and Sarah were born 1,949 and 1,959 years after creation. They were alive before the Bible had begun to be written, yet there is archaeological proof they lived in Mesopotamia. Hundreds of thousands of ancient inscriptions and artefacts have been found during excavations in and around Israel. Not all of them relate to the Bible but the proof of ancient peoples have been found and many of them are mentioned in the Bible, some only briefly and some give us much information about these various tribes and peoples. The ancient writings regarding the Hebrews or Habiru, referred to them as a class of people who moved from Mesopotamia to what is now known as the Middle East. The ancient texts reveal the Hebrews lived apart from society, believed in one God and never assimilated into the pagan populations. They engaged in intermarriage rather than marrying outside their own family of Hebrews.

Abraham married his half sister Sarai, later renamed Sarah. Abraham said, "Sarai is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother and she became my wife' (Genesis 20:12). Sarai acknowledged Abraham as her brother (Genesis 20:5). Their son Isaac married his cousin Rebekah, who was the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor (Genesis 22:23). Rebekah and Isaac's son Jacob married his cousins Rachael and Leah, who were the daughters of Rebekah's brother Laban (Genesis 29:16). Anyone outside of the Hebrew family were shunned or sent away. Abraham's seven sons born to Hagar and Keturah were sent away (Genesis 25:6). Rebekah and Isaac's son Esau married wives from the neighbouring pagan tribes, but he also married a first cousin, a daughter of Ishmael but they were all completely unacceptable to Isaac and Rebekah. It is written Esau's wives, "Made life bitter and a grief of mind and spirit for Isaac and Rebekah" (Genesis 26:35). Esau moved his wives and children far away from Jacob (Genesis 36:6). The Lord God wanted His nation to be pure so the intermarriage was necessary to achieve His goal of having a pure race to bring forth our Messiah Jesus. Once the nation of Israel was established, God stopped all intermarriage within the family (Leviticus 18:6) but they still had to continue marrying within their own tribes (Exodus 28:21).

Eventually, any Jewish man and woman could marry but they could not marry outside of the Jewish people. 'Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You (men) have sinned and have married foreign women and have increased the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the God of your forefathers and do His will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign women ... They brought an end to all the men who had married foreign women' (Ezra 10:10 & 11). Nehemiah wrote, "In those days I saw the Jews who had married (pagan) women of Ashdod, of Ammon and of Moab. Their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod and could not speak in the Jews' language (Hebrew) but according to the language of each people ... Should we then listen to you to do all this great evil, to trespass against our God in marrying foreign women? ... Thus I cleansed them from all foreigners" (Nehemiah 13:23, 24, 27 & 30).

Hundreds of years later, long after the death of King David, the Hebrews became known as Jews after Jacob's son Judah and his property named Judea (2 Kings 16:6) however, they were still called Hebrews long after Jesus died (Philippians 3:5) and the Book of Hebrews was written for the Hebrew Christians living in Rome. The Hebrew family began as a small group of about seventy people in twelve families who went to Egypt because there was a seven-year famine in Israel (Genesis 46:27). They were all the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Abraham and his son Isaac. God made a covenant with Abraham and promised his descendants would belong to God and He promised to give them land so their nation could dwell as a sovereign nation. God said, "As for Me, behold My covenant is with you. You will be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither will your name any more be called Abram but your name will be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful and I will make nations of you. Kings will come out of you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant. I will be God to you and to your seed after you. I will give to you and to your seed after you the land where you are travelling, all the land of (Israel) for an everlasting possession. I will be their God. As for you (Abraham), you will keep My covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations" (Genesis 17:4 to 9). God said to the Children of Israel, "You will be My own possession from among all peoples on earth, for all the earth is Mine. You will be to Me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5 & 6).

'These are the names of the twelve sons of Israel (Jacob) who went into Egypt. Every man and his household (wives and children) came with Jacob; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. All the souls who came out of Jacob's body were seventy souls and Joseph was already in Egypt. ... 'On the second (visit to Egypt) Joseph was made known to his brothers and Joseph's race was revealed to Pharaoh ... The people grew and multiplied in Egypt until there arose a different king who did not know Joseph. The Pharaoh took advantage of our (Hebrew) race and mistreated our forefathers' (Acts 7:13, 17 to 19). ... Joseph died as did all his brothers and all that generation' (Exodus 1:6). For four hundred and thirty years they lived in Egypt (Exodus 12:40) and grew into a nation of about a million people. There were so many Hebrews living in Egypt, the Egyptians became alarmed and slowly began to enslave them. When they first moved to Egypt they were completely free but after about four hundred years and the first generations died out, they were enslaved. It was only the penultimate Pharaoh who enslaved the Children of Israel, not the earlier ones. We know that because it was under his rule when the children of Israel began to cry out to God for help. They were slaves for a short time, maybe eighty years, just before Moses was born, not the entire four hundred years. The Bible does not mention a succession of Pharaohs enslaving the Children of Israel. The Scripture says, "The Children of Israel were fruitful, increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty. The land of Egypt was filled with them. There arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the Children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them lest they multiply and if any war breaks out, they join themselves to our enemies and fight against us and escape out of the land" (Exodus 1:7 to 10). For the Children of Israel to have increased from about seventy people to over a million would have taken hundreds of years and they were not enslaved until they outnumbered the Egyptians. That penultimate Pharaoh died and a new, the last Pharaoh ruled Egypt (Exodus 2:23). It was during the last Pharaoh's reign when the Children of Israel left Egypt forever, and with them a multitude of Egyptians went with them. History reveals, after the ten plagues, the Pharaoh who was supposed to be able to control the elements had failed in the eyes of the Egyptians who were left, they overthrew him so he was the last in that line of Pharaohs.

From that Pharaoh's decision, we know the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob left Egypt forever. From seventy or so people they grew to a multitude. 'The children of Israel did according to the word of Moses and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, jewels of gold and clothing. God gave the Hebrew people favour in the sight of the Egyptians so they let them have what they asked. They despoiled the Egyptians. The Children of Israel travelled from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot who were men, plus women and children. A mixed multitude (of Egyptians) went with them, with flocks, herds and very much livestock' (Exodus 12:35 to 38). Six hundred thousand men plus their wives = 120,000 people. Add their children, and according to the Bible they were very fruitful so even if each family had just four children, there would have been thousands of Hebrews but some families could have had a lot more than four children per couple. Egypt was filled with the Hebrews. They entered Egypt a starving family and left Egypt a wealthy nation. After wandering around the wilderness for forty years they settled in the Land of Israel, promised to them when God made the covenant with Abraham. Israel is still their rightful land and always will be.

There are millions of people around the world who do not believe the entire Bible is the truth, written down by many holy prophets as God told them what to record on His behalf. What we would like to do is show sceptics the truth of the history of the Bible then hopefully they will accept if the history is true, then logically the entire Bible is true. Moses wrote the Torah, which are the first five books of the Bible. He wrote down exactly what God told him to write (Exodus 17:14; 24:4 & 7; 33:11; 34:27; Numbers 33:2). The Bible is

inspired by God Himself so, 'Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and for instruction in righteousness so the people of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17). The Bible is a theological book that constantly reveals God's interaction with the people who lived in and around Israel and other nations we now call southern Europe, southern Asia and the Middle East. Apart from the Hebrews, the remainder of mankind did not hear about God for centuries. The Bible is filled with true historical events and people with complete accuracy. We know what is written in the Bible is accurate because it was God Himself Who dictated to the scribes and prophets what He wanted known and they carefully compiled and copied the pages of the Bible as we know it. The history of creation and Noah's Ark could only have been written with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit because it happened long before Moses was born. Non-believers have tried to explain away historical events because of their own unbelief. Sadly, some modern Christians and modern secular Bible readers are sceptical about the truth of the Bible. They are those people who study the Bible academically but have no faith in its message, claiming it to be merely a great work of ancient literature. The events recorded in the Bible are not myths, legends or fiction. The Tenach or Old Testament is a truthful testimony about the Jewish race and their history dating back to creation.

The problem the secular world has with the Bible is the amazing statements regarding the Lord. Unsaved people cannot comprehend He is an Almighty, All powerful, Omniscient, Omnipresent Creator Who is able to hold the entire earth in His holy hands with ease, and Who has always been there without the need for Him to have a beginning. They cannot accept this incredible Lord can do what we call miracles but to Him they are as easy as speaking all of creation into existence. What we call miracles are events that have no physical explanation. Because their finite minds cannot comprehend what the Bible says about God, they discard all of it as fiction. The Bible was not written in an isolated land far from anywhere in a little world of its own, it was written by educated Jewish scholars, scribes and prophets who lived among ancient civilisations. Civilisations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Jordan, Arabia, Syria, Damascus, Lebanon, Tyre, Turkey, Malta, Gaza and of course Israel and Jerusalem. There are thousands of ancient manuscripts, artefacts, murals, hieroglyphs, scrolls, paintings and several other kinds of archaeological evidence that supports what is written in the Bible about the ancient Hebrew tribes and other cultures in and around the Middle East. Their languages were very much like the Hebrew language and were dialects from the same original language. That is because many of the ancient nations had descended from Abraham and his family.

Abraham had eight sons; Isaac, his son of promise and forefather to all Jewish people. Ishmael, the son of Hagar the Egyptian woman who found him an Egyptian wife (Genesis 21:21). Ishmael moved to Egypt and had twelve sons (Genesis 25:13 to 16) who went on to produce the Ishmaelites and other half-Hebrew/half-Egyptian groups. Abraham's second wife Keturah had six sons (Genesis 25:1) who produced six more Hebrew tribes. Abraham's nephew Lot had two sons, Moab (producing the Moabites) and Ben-Ammi (producing the Ammonites). Isaac's son Esau produced more Hebrew tribes and all of these people, known as Arabs, would have spoken Hebrew and dialects of Hebrew. They have a common ancestry, which fully supports the Biblical narrative. Back since Isaac was born, there has been terrible jealousy and all of these Arab tribes hate the Jewish people and are constantly trying to destroy Israel.

What set the ancient Hebrews apart from all the other nations was the worship of our One True God and their service to Him. Whereas the other nations worshipped multiple false gods, idols, animals, had evil rituals and often had human sacrifices. God called Abraham His friend (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). He called Abraham's family to bring knowledge of God to the world, culminating in the arrival of our Saviour Jesus in Israel. This ancient Hebrew race was the only nation on earth to be trusted to bring the oracles of God to the world (Romans 3:2), and the only nation on earth to have brought forth our Messiah. 'The book of the genealogy of Messiah Jesus ... the Son of Abraham; Abraham became the father of Isaac. Isaac became the father of Jacob. Jacob became the father of Judah' (Matthew 1:1 & 2). 'It is evident our Lord has sprung out of (the tribe of) Judah' (Hebrews 7:14). An amazing effort from this one elderly man Abraham, from the ancient Hebrew tribe and from him there are many millions of Jewish people and Hebrews all over the world, just as God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 'God said to Abram, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward, southward, eastward and westward, for all the land you can see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as numerous as the dust of the earth, so if a man can number the dust of the earth then your seed may also be numbered. Arise and walk through the land in its length and in its breadth, for I will give it to you" (Genesis 13:14 to 17). 'God brought Abram outside and said, "Look toward the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them ... So will your offspring be"' (Genesis 15:5). God said, "I will surely do you good and make your seed as numerous as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered because there are so many" (Genesis 32:12). 'Yet the number of the Children of Israel will be as numerous as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered' (Hosea 1:10).

Amen and God bless you.

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