

**Ham (Person)**

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Judaism
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**I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament**

Ham (MT *Ḥam*, LXX Χαμ, Josephus Χαμας) is one of the three sons of Noah (Gen 5:32; 6:10; 7:13;

9: 18a; 10: 1; 1 Chr 1: 4), the father of Canaan (Gen 9: 18b, 22), and the ancestral father of the Hamites (Gen 10: 6, 20; 1 Chr 1: 8; 4: 40; 6Q19: 1). In the historical psalms dating from the Second Temple period the name appears in the phrases “tents of Ham” (Ps 78: 51) and “land of Ham,” a poetic reference to *Miṣrayim* (Egypt; Ps 105: 23, 27; 106: 22; cf. *tSim* 6: 4).

The etymology of *Ham* is disputed. Apart from the Egyptian word *ḥm* (“slave”), derivations from the Hebrew word *ʿam* (“those related/people”) or from the Hebrew verbal root *ḥāmam* (“become warm/hot”; cf. *ḥām* II “warm/hot”) have been proposed (Hess: 30–31).

In the Priestly genealogies of the sons of Noah (Gen 5: 32; 6: 10; 7: 13; 9: 18a; 10: 1) Ham is consistently listed in second place, following Shem and preceding Japhet. Hence, he appears as the second son of Noah, who together with his sons and their wives survived the great deluge (Gen 6–9). In the oldest layer of the Table of Nations (Gen 10), which is likewise of Priestly provenance, Ham and his descendants again rank in second place (Gen 10: 6–20). Here, however, the list of the sons of Noah commences with Japhet and culminates in the offspring of Shem, as the following events focus on Abraham and his sons, who originate from the tribe of Shem. Ham appears as the father of *Kūš* (Nubia), *Miṣrayim* (Egypt), *Pūt* (Libya), and *Kēnāʿan* (Canaan). With the exception of Canaan, Ham thus represents the peoples south of Israel, which were later – enriched by non-Priestly material (Gen 10: 8–19) – differentiated into further peoples and eponyms of ethnic groups in the Levant “by their families and languages” (Gen 10: 20). From a historical perspective the mentioning of four sons of Ham in Gen 10: 6 might be perceived as a reflection on the political status of Egypt in the 7th century BCE (Malamat: 359–60; Lipiński: 162–63). The genealogical information given in 1 Chr 1: 4, 8 is dependent on the Priestly data in Gen 5: 32; 6: 10; 10: 1, 6, 20, while the reference to the Hamites in 1 Chr 4: 40 constitutes specifically Chronistic material.

Ham emerges as a more developed character compared to the other sons in the story of Noah’s vineyard, even though Ham was introduced only at a later stage of redaction (Gen 9: 20–27). As can be perceived in the blessing and curse in Gen 9: 26–27, the originally independent narrative included only two elements: the curse of Noah’s son Canaan who approached his intoxicated and naked father (cf. *tRūb* 3: 13–14) and thus failed to observe the ANE obligation to honor one’s parents, on the one hand, and the blessing of Shem who covered his father’s nakedness, on the other (cf. Lev 18: 7–8). Only when this didactic tale (cf. Aqhat Legend, KTU 1.17 I: 30–31) that aims to encourage the appropriate behavior towards a helpless father was introduced into the context of the Priestly account of

primeval history were Ham (Gen 9: 18b, 22a\*) and Japhet (Gen 9: 23a\*, 27) added to the story line in order to adapt the narrative to the Priestly lists of the sons of Noah. From a narrative point of view, this development entailed a change in the identity of the perpetrator of the disgraceful deed against Noah, the exact interpretation of which is left open by the narrator (the mere sight of the father’s nakedness or a sexual offense?; cf. Bergsma/Hahn). The identity was changed from Canaan to Ham, the father of Canaan (Gen 9: 18b, 22a\*); 10: 6b). Thus, a negative depiction of Ham, as briefly reflected in the paraphrased Exodus events encountered in Ps 78: 51; 105: 23–38; 106: 22, is prefigured in the primeval history. That Noah’s curse does not apply to Ham (I), but his son Canaan, is due to the logic of the redactional revision of the narrative in which the curse does not fall on the direct survivors of the deluge who are perceived as blessed by God (Gen 9: 1 [P]; cf. 4Q252 11,6–7) and in which Ham only experiences the consequences of his own actions through the fate of his son (cf. Exod. 20: 5), just as Noah was defiled by his son Ham. When comprehending Gen 9: 20–27 not only as a paradigm for the behavior between a father and his sons but also as an expression of ethical and cultural identification (cf. Lev 18: 3), the narrative in its present form reflects the tense relations between Israel, Canaan, and Egypt that permeated the entire history of ancient Israel.

**Bibliography:** ■ Bergsma, J. S./S. C. Hahn, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9: 20–27),” *JBL* 124 (2005) 25–40. ■ Hess, R. S., *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1–11* (AOAT 234; Kevelaer 1993). ■ Lipiński, E., “Les Chamites selon Gen 10,6–20 et 1 Chr 1,8–16,” *ZAH* 5 (1992) 135–62. ■ Malamat, A., “The Conception of Ham and His Sons in the Table of Nations (Gen 10: 6–20),” in *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, FS D. B. Redford (ed. G. N. Knoppers/A. Hirsch; PĀ 20; Leiden 2004) 359–60. ■ Witte, M., *Die biblische Urgeschichte: Redaktions- und theologisches Beobachtungen zu Genesis 1,1–11,26* (BZAW 265; Berlin/New York 1998). [Esp. 102–5]

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