

Africa and the Bible

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The present work, *Africa and the Bible*, is a revised and greatly augmented version by Edwin de Kock (1930.03.09–), his white brother born in South Africa who now lives in Texas. It was first published during 1988. They never knew each other.

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A thoughtful young African once asked, “Does God really love the people of Africa? Do we also have a part to play in the plan of heaven? Is Africa even mentioned in the Christian’s Bible?”

If you are black or any of your ancestors came from that continent, we bring you good news. The Word of God contains an answer to these questions that will truly amaze you.

Is the Bible a White Man’s Book?

Christians believe the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It has two parts, the Old Testament, containing 39 books, and the New Testament, with 27 books. These were written by about 40 different people over a period of almost 1500 years. Among the authors were a medical doctor, farmers, fishermen, judges, kings, preachers, prophets, statesmen, and a tax collector—poor men and rich men. But not one of them was a European! Almost all of them, men of God, belonged to the Hebrew People. They were guided in what they wrote by the Holy Spirit, “because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:21).

Who were these Hebrews? In the Bible they were first called Israelites, a nation of twelve tribes. They were an Asiatic people, living in Palestine. The Bible is therefore not a European book. It is a message from God to all people living everywhere. It is also the best book for Africa and all its scattered children today.

The Hebrews Partly African

Usually the Hebrews are called a Semitic people. This is generally true, but not the whole truth. They often

intermarried with other nations, especially the descendants of Ham, who—if you are black—was also your ancestor.

Two of the largest Israelite tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, were half African in their origin. Their father was a very famous man called Joseph, who explained Pharaoh's dreams and saved Egypt during a great famine, which lasted for seven years. In the Bible this country is also called "the land of Ham" (Ps. 105:23). But who was the mother of Ephraim and Manasseh? Her name was Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On (Gen. 41:50). She was an Egyptian. It is clear, then, that in their origin two important tribes of Israel were partly African.

What is more, they were actually related to you. Many nations and tribes in Africa have Hamitic ancestors and, therefore, a connection with ancient Egypt. The same applies to their descendants abroad. Reader, this is exciting news! It means that you are not only related to the ancient Egyptians with their great civilization, but to the Israelites, who were the people of the Book.

The Bible was not written by Europeans, or intended only for whites. It is definitely a part of your own heritage.

The Hebrews in Africa

But the relationship between the Hebrews and the so-called Dark Continent was not limited to this marriage. Africa was the nursery where God in mercy sheltered his people while they were developing into a nation.

The Lord had called Abraham, their forefather, and brought him from Mesopotamia in the East to Canaan, where his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob were born. This was a country that sometimes suffered from serious drought and famine. But the waters of Africa, which flow from Uganda 2,400 miles (3800 km) northward to the Mediterranean, provided Egypt with a plentiful water supply. Year by year, the floods irrigated and fertilized the rich soil of the Nile delta.

Before he had any children, Abraham sheltered from a severe drought by escaping to Egypt (Gen. 12:10).

Many years later, after God had allowed Joseph to be sold into slavery, he rose to the position of governor over this land. With the king's permission, he invited his father Jacob to bring his sons and their families to settle in Egypt. At that time his extended family numbered only seventy persons (Gen. 46:27).

Another, fearsome, drought was threatening their existence. Jacob, whose other name was Israel, had hesitated for a while; but God said to him, "Do not be afraid to go to Egypt, for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you

to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again . . . and the sons of Israel carried their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.” (Gen. 46: 3-5.)

It seems clear that Canaan was economically dependent on Egypt during the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. This African kingdom was superior to the surrounding countries in culture, knowledge, science, and the arts, especially architecture. Its inhabitants, of course, were not white. It was here that God’s people first became a real and important nation.

They spent 430 years in the Egyptian sphere of influence (Ex. 12:40). Africa helped to shape them. It is also likely that there was further intermarriage with the Egyptians. When they left the land of the Nile, the Israelites were a mighty host. Their warriors alone numbered 603,550 (Num. 1:46). They were also accompanied by a “mixed multitude” (Ex. 12:38), many of these people were surely Africans. These eventually became a part of the chosen people.

The Hebrews, who wrote the Bible, had a double connection with Africa. They were related to it by ties of blood, and were powerfully shaped by Egyptian culture.

The First Bible Writer Born in Africa

While still in Egypt, the Hebrews fell into disfavor with a new Pharaoh, some time after the death of Joseph. They were forced to work as slaves on great building projects, yet they multiplied, as God had promised they would. In the end, Pharaoh made a cruel law to drown all the male children of the Israelites at birth.

But God worked miraculously to save the baby Moses, who was adopted by the wicked king’s daughter. This kind-hearted African princess had him reared as her own son. Moses grew up in Pharaoh’s palace and was “instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22).

When God’s time came, he delivered his people from their bondage through Moses. On the journey to Canaan, it was this man—born and educated in Africa—who had the privilege of receiving the Ten Commandments from the Lord on Mount Sinai. Moses was one of the most important persons who ever lived. He also became the first inspired writer of the Holy Scriptures. It was a son of Africa who produced the first five books of the Bible.

Another interesting fact about Moses is that he was evidently married to a dark-skinned wife, named Zipporah, whose father Jethro was the priest of Midian (Ex. 3:1). The Bible calls her a Cushite woman, and tells how God took her

part when her in-laws objected to her on racial grounds, by punishing Miriam, Moses' sister, with leprosy (Num. 12). From this, she was healed only when Moses prayed for her.

More about the Hamites

The early history of mankind seems to be veiled in mystery, and is often misunderstood. But Moses, writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has left us a reliable record.

From Genesis 10, we learn that all the people on earth are descended from one man called Noah, who had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The children of Shem were the Semitic peoples, including the Israelites and the Arabs. Japheth became the father of the Europeans and many Asiatic nations, for God had promised to enlarge him (Gen. 9:27), which is what he did.

A question that often arises is "Where did the different races come from?" Some think the Lord created them when he destroyed the world's linguistic unity at the tower of Babel. Scattering Noah's descendants certainly had something to do with it, yet language and race are not closely linked. Many who speak the same language, like English, belong to different races. On the other hand, people of exactly the same race, like the whites in northwestern Europe, speak different languages. The following is a more likely explanation.

In every human population, there are people with darker or lighter skins, a variety of hair types, and other physical traits that are usually associated with different races. Genetic diversity within the same group is a normal phenomenon. Those who resemble one another also often intermarry. If they remain in their original population group, their descendants are likely to be reabsorbed into it. But if by migration they separate from it, this stabilizes and strengthens their characteristic features. This can eventually produce a separate race, and incidentally also multiply languages and dialects. Geographical isolation, such as was the norm in earlier centuries, is the key factor.

This, however, leads on to another question: What is the origin of genetic variation? We do not really know. Evolutionists attribute it to mutations, which simply means *changes*, probably caused by cosmic radiation. The problem with this idea is that genetic mutations are mostly harmful to the organism in which they occur and often kill it. Racists have traditionally often said that God cursed Ham by making him black, which is untrue and part of the muddled thinking we discuss below.

He may well have been born rather darker than his brothers—before the Flood, when genetic diversity already existed—and married a woman who was also dark-skinned. Their children took after them, to a varying extent. Among them, Cush was the darkest of all. Furthermore, when God at Babel confused the languages, he would have done so in a way that kept the families intact and relatives together. If they then separated from the rest, migrating to different localities, this would have strengthened their genetic heritage. In this way, different races could stabilize. We note, however, that this also happened to the offspring of Noah's other two sons. For instance, the East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans) have their own racial characteristics, yet they are descendants of Japheth, not of Ham.

But why would God have allowed all this? Why, for that matter, did he in the first place permit the human race to possess or develop genetic diversity? We are unable to answer these questions but know that he loves variety, as can also be seen from the rest of creation. For instance, there are many types and colors of roses. But people are much more closely interrelated than the 150 species of roses, for Noah's children all belong to a single species. As the Bible says, the Lord "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the time before appointed and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts. 17:26).

Sometimes we hear a person say, "Black is beautiful!" Indeed, it is. But yellow, brown, and white are also beautiful in the Creator's sight. It is only selfish people, their minds perverted by the Evil One, who think otherwise—mainly because they can use this factor to exploit and degrade their brothers and sisters for looking a little different from themselves. Ultimately there is only one race: the human race, for we are all the children of Noah and his wife, as we are of Adam and Eve.

The family of Ham moved largely westward and southward. Some of them went into Africa, while others settled in Phoenicia, Canaan, and Western Arabia.

Another branch of Hamites evidently migrated to the East, though about them we have less certainty, since the Bible does not deal with them. Yet it is a fact that, for instance, the Melanesians, people who live in New Guinea north of Australia and on several other islands, are black and have kinky hair. They are the most ancient race in the Pacific, and may have affinities with the Aborigines of Australia as well as India's most ancient, dark-skinned inhabitants.

Some Melanesians resemble Africans of the sub-Saharan regions so closely that if they went there it would be difficult

to distinguish them from the local inhabitants. After all, the old continent harbors many varieties of blacks. But how could they have traveled so far away from Africa and the Middle East?

Their ancestors could have gone overland as far as southern China and further by ship. They could also have traveled directly over the sea from Sheba in Southern Arabia or Africa itself. But surely that is impossible! Not at all. A long time before the whites from Europe began to sail around Africa from the fifteenth century onward, both the Indian and the Pacific oceans were crisscrossed by shore-hugging Arab dhows, Chinese junks, ocean-going catamarans and other vessels.

To some western minds, it may be difficult to imagine that the ancients could actually have traveled to the neighborhood of Africa from the Pacific Ocean, yet indisputable proof exists that they did so in the opposite direction. The ancestors of most people in present-day Madagascar, right next door to Africa, migrated from Indonesia. They speak Malagasy, a standardized variety of Merina, an Austronesian, Pacific language. Therefore, they came from the same general area as the one in which the Melanesian blacks are also to be found.

Now let us briefly consider the history of Ham and his descendants, from information supplied by the Bible and history. It is a remarkable story, for it reveals that these people were the earliest builders of what is now called "Western" civilization.

The children of Ham, from whom the world has learnt so much, included the ancient Sumerians, Egyptians, Cretans, the Hittites, and the Phoenicians or Canaanites.

We have already referred to Egypt. The inhabitants of this country, which built a mighty empire in the northeastern section of the African continent and western Asia, were descended from the second son of Ham, whose name was Mizraim (Gen. 10:6). Some Bible translations call him Egypt. This is because *Mizraim* is the Hebrew word for Egypt. The kings of this land were known as Pharaohs. They were African conquerors who played their part in heaven's plan. Some were good men and others evil.

The great stone pyramids, which they built, remained for thousands of years the largest buildings raised by man. They were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Because of a few evil Pharaohs who oppressed the Hebrews, some may think that the Bible has only unfavorable things to say about Egypt. But this is not true. Through Moses, the Lord instructed the Israelites, "You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land," and said

that in the third generation he had a right to worship with God's people (Deut. 23:7,8). At different times, the prophets recorded warnings against wicked rulers and people in Egypt. But they also foretold a time when the Lord would say, "Blessed be Egypt my people" (Isa. 19:25).

When Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, he probably used papyrus, a material made from a reed that can still be seen growing in Central Africa. From *papyrus* comes the word *paper*. The system of writing that Moses used was the Aleph-Beth, which was based on Egyptian hieroglyphics. It was developed somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula, southern Palestine, or Phoenicia. Later the Aleph-Beth became the alphabet we use today.

The Ancient Cretans

Northwest of Egypt lies the island of Crete. Its older name was Caphtor. More than 3,400 years ago, this was the center of a great civilization, which deeply influenced the ancient Greeks and, through them, Europe. To historians the identity of the original Cretans is a mystery, but the Bible tells us that they were descended from Mizraim (Gen. 10:14). As can still be seen from paintings on the walls of ancient, excavated Knossos, they were a dark brown Hamitic people. The later arrivals in Crete were Greeks.

The Children of Cush

Black people today are searching for their roots. The Bible can help them do this as no other book can. We have already pointed out that many of them are descended partly from Mizraim, who also fathered the Egyptians. Let us now refer to their other ancestor. Who was he?

His name was Cush, the eldest son of Ham (Gen. 10:6). He must have been black, or very dark-skinned. In the Bible the name Cushite means a black. It is often translated *Ethiopian*. In modern Hebrew the word also means *Negro*. The Cushites were noted for their dark skins, a fact referred to by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 13:23).

And now we must tell you a remarkable story. After the Great Flood, the first civilization on earth was not in Egypt, but near the Persian Gulf, in Mesopotamia. This area lies between two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. It was here that men first settled to irrigate their fields, made laws, and developed many institutions that were later adopted by people in Europe and all over the world. Here, too, they first invented the art of writing. But who were they?

According to historians, the first builders of “Western” civilization were the Sumerians. They left us much of value, an enduring heritage, but little is known about their ancestry. It seems clear, however, that they must have been Hamites.

This conclusion is based on four important facts. First, it is well known that they were a non-Semitic people. Secondly, they spoke a language unrelated to any still in existence today, which rules out any relationship with the whites, the Iranians, or even the Indians. Thirdly, “these Sumerians appear to have been a brownish people with prominent noses,” as H. G. Wells informs us in his *Short History of the World* (Pelican Books), p. 58. Fourthly, the Bible tells us who the first Mesopotamian king was, a man named Nimrod, the son of Cush, the son of Ham (Gen. 10:6, 8).

It is reasonable to suppose that the Sumerians were related to him in some way, for they seem to have supported him. They must have been Hamites, though not all of them were necessarily Cushites.

The story of Nimrod is absolutely fascinating. His name still clings to several ancient places in Iraq, which is the modern name for Mesopotamia. The Bible credits Nimrod with ruling and, in some cases, even establishing the first great cities. He was, in fact, the first man to build an empire.

Here is what the Scriptures tell about him: “Cush became the father of Nimrod. He was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.’” The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.” (Gen. 10:8-11, RSV)

Several of these cities became very important in later history. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire and Babel, or Babylon, of the Babylonian Empire. The Bible speaks of Assyria as “the land of Nimrod” (Micah 5:6). And Nimrod, who started it all, was a black man.

Can this be true? Let us remember that he was definitely a Cushite, and that in the Bible this word always means *black man* or *Ethiopian*. Sometimes we hear a white remark that the blacks and the dark-skinned races of Africa never built a civilization. Such a person forgets about the ancient Egyptians and others. Probably he or she has never noticed or thought clearly about the role of King Nimrod.

It is understandable that such demeaning words can cause great bitterness, and unfortunately some people think that this

is what Christianity teaches, so they reject the Bible as a white man's book. But the Word of God tells a very different story.

Was Nimrod a good man? The Bible seems to imply that he may not have been, for his name means "he shall rebel." But the Word of God is fair to everybody. It not only speaks of people's sins but also records their achievements. It has, in fact, many fine things to say about the Cushites.

After the early days in Mesopotamia, the descendants of Noah began to separate. The Cushites settled in Western Arabia and Ethiopia. The Bible often refers to them. It speaks of the rivers, people, and trade of Ethiopia. The gold and precious stones are especially mentioned (Job 28:19; Isa. 45:14). In ancient times, this area was called Nubia. It was part of what is now Egypt and part of what is now the Sudan. The Hebrews called it the land of Cush (Gen. 2:13; Eze. 29:10).

But part of the Cushite people remained in Western Asia. Eventually they became one with the Arabs, who also have Egyptian blood in them, as well as being Abraham's children. Through them, too, the line of Ham has had an important influence on later history.

A few hundred years after Christ, the Arabs built a great empire. With their allies, the North African Berbers or Moors, they conquered and for about eight hundred years ruled over most of Portugal and Spain. At this time they made truly great contributions to European civilization. One of these was our figure system, still called Arabic numerals, including the zero, without which modern mathematics and science would have been impossible.

In Southern Arabia, the Cushites created a thriving and highly civilized kingdom known as Sheba. It had trade relationships and other arrangements with ancient Israel. The Bible tells how the Queen of Sheba journeyed from her country all the way to visit King Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-13).

The last Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, claimed to be a descendant of these two famous people. But is this true? It is impossible to be sure. The idea is found in old Ethiopian legends, especially the *Kebrā Nagast* ("Glory of the Kings"). What is certain is that in ancient times there was a close tie between Southern Arabia, where Sheba was located, and East Africa; and Amharic, the dominant language of Ethiopia, is a Semitic language, related to Hebrew.

Cushites in Jerusalem

The Bible not only refers to Cushites living near Palestine, but makes it clear that, at different times, there were black

men at the royal court in Jerusalem. Several held responsible positions.

In the time of King David, it was a Cushite who bravely ran to bring him the unwelcome message that his rebel son Absalom had been killed (2 Sam. 18:21, 31, 32). From the book of Jeremiah, we know that about 400 years later blacks were still associated with the Judean rulers. One of them was Ebed-melech, a court official working for Zedekiah. He bravely went to the king and obtained permission to remove Jeremiah from the muddy cistern into which his enemies had thrown him, thereby saving the prophet's life (Jer. 38:6-13).

To this kind-hearted and God-fearing black man the Lord sent the promise that his own life would be spared in the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's army (Jer. 39:15-18).

Ham, His Son Canaan, and the Curse

Ham's fourth and youngest son was Canaan. In the Bible, we read that this was the man whom Noah cursed (Gen. 9:20–27). Not everything that happened in that tent so long ago has been recorded in the Scriptures, but the context indicates that alcohol was the root cause of the iniquity that followed. It also suggests that Noah's son Ham and his grandson Canaan had joined the patriarch in that drinking bout. The upshot was a curse, about which we need to be very specific.

It came down heavily on Canaan. The Bible mentions this fact emphatically, in three successive verses (Gen. 9:25–27). It clearly states that Canaan's offspring would one day serve the descendants of Shem and Japheth. But the Holy Word of God says nothing about the enslavement or servitude of Ham's other sons. Only Canaan. It is untrue that, according to the Bible, the curse would also apply to Cush, who fathered the blacks, or Phut and Mizraim, from whom the lordly Egyptians descended.

As history has amply documented, the latter were a proud people, whose civilization endured for more than two thousand years, until the time of Alexander the Great. In all that time, despite their ups and downs or even conquests by foreign nations, the Egyptians were not in servile bondage. On the contrary, it was they who often conquered, subjected, or enslaved others, like the Israelites.

Sometimes people who do not read the Scriptures carefully have tried to apply father Noah's curse to all the blacks in the world. They confuse the children of Cush with those of Canaan. Slave owners in the United States and the whites of other countries, like South Africa, delighted in describing black people as "hewers of wood and drawers of water." They

failed to notice, however, that these were not Noah's words, but the sentence that Joshua pronounced against the Hivites, a Canaanite people of Gibeon and a few others towns, who had deceived the invading Israelites to escape extermination (Josh. 9). Then, too, this curse, which the Bible also mentions in three different verses, was specifically linked to service "for the house of God" (vs. 23) and "for the altar of the LORD" (vs. 27).

No, it was not Cush, forefather of the blacks, on whom Noah pronounced his curse. It was specifically to come down on the Canaanites. And even they were able to escape it by turning to God, who sets free all who accept and love him. He not only visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me" but also shows "mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:5, 6).

We also need to notice a further point: although the Lord respects paternal curses, he does not need to abide by them. His longsuffering and loving-kindness included the Canaanites. Although he had called Abraham to their country and made a promise that his descendants would one day take possession of it, he refused to allow them to do so at once. Instead, he granted the Canaanites four additional centuries for repentance, to turn from their evil ways, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). The Lord is longsuffering with nations as well as individuals.

An example of how God can drastically modify a father's curse concerns the patriarch Levi. Jacob never forgot how this son, together with his brother Simeon, had treacherously murdered the men of an entire city, which they burned after stealing everything in it, and enslaved their women as well as their children (Gen. 34). So on his deathbed, he cursed them: "I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel" (Gen. 49:7). What was the aftermath?

Simeon's descendants eventually disappeared as a tribe. They were absorbed by Judah, with whom at first they shared the southern part of Canaan. It seems that they fell victim to the ancestral curse.

But far otherwise was the outcome for Levi. He evidently experienced deep repentance, for his tribe became especially loyal to the Lord. From their midst, he raised up Moses, one of his greatest servants in all of human history. Furthermore, because at Sinai the Levites remained faithful to God and sided against those who had worshiped the golden calf, they obtained a special blessing (Ex. 33:26-29). Their greatest reward was maintaining the sanctuary service as well as the priesthood itself. Previously this had been the prerogative of

every male who headed a household, but this was now removed from the other tribes and restricted to the Levites. The office the high priest also became hereditary and was limited to the lineage of Aaron.

The Lord did not actually set aside their forefather's curse on the Levites but changed it into an abundant blessing. They would still be scattered in Israel, but with the addition of special cities and their surrounding lands. They would also be sustained by the tithe of all the tribes. No longer would they have to struggle to make a living through agriculture, trade, or anything of that sort. Instead, they would be full-time workers of God in both the sanctuary service and as judges and teachers throughout the land.

Canaanites and Phoenicians

But let us now also ask the following question: who and what were the Canaanites? The answer is full of surprises. As we know, they lived in what the Old Testament calls the land of Canaan. They spoke a language closely related to Hebrew, and they were highly civilized. It is unfortunate that they also practiced a terrible religion based on sex and human sacrifice.

North of them lived another branch of the same people. These were known as the Phoenicians, who also established Carthage in North Africa. This empire ruled over a part of Sicily and Spain.

The Phoenicians did much to transfer the culture and ideas of Asia to Europe. From them, the ancient Greeks acquired the Aleph-Beth, which they developed into the alphabet. In its Latin form, this is the most important system of writing in the world today. Without it, our modern civilization would be unthinkable.

It is even possible that the Phoenicians invented the Aleph-Beth, or it may have been the brilliant idea of a southern Canaanite or somebody in the Sinai Peninsula. Note, however, that in all these areas there lived closely related descendants of Ham. As stated earlier, the Aleph-Beth was also based on Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Occasionally one meets somebody who says that not only the Bible, but also writing itself, must be rejected, because it began as the product of some white man's brain. We can now see that this is simply untrue. On the contrary, the descendants of Ham were the first to invent systems of writing, including the Aleph-Beth in which the Old Testament was first written. The Word of God most definitely also belongs to the children of Africa, and has great meaning for every one of us today.

The Hebrews and the Canaanites

God did not want his people to intermarry with the Canaanites. Why? This had nothing to do with questions of nationality or race. He simply wanted to safeguard Israel from the evil religion practiced by these people.

But, in spite of this, it is a fact that the Israelites did intermarry with the Canaanites, at different times. An example of this is recorded in Judges 3:5,6 where it is stated that “the people of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and they took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons; and served their gods” (RSV).

And this had not been the first time. The intermarriage began in the time of Jacob, the Israelites’ ancestor. He had twelve sons. One of them was Joseph, who married an Egyptian woman. But what about the other sons? The Bible does not say where they all obtained their wives, but we do have clear information about Judah, the father of the most important tribe, after whom all Jews are named today.

He had children by two Canaanite women, namely the daughter of Shua, and Tamar (Gen. 38). All three his surviving sons, Shelah, Perez and Zerah (Num. 26:19-21), were therefore half Canaanite and, of course, partly descended from Ham. It is likely that at least some, perhaps all, of Judah’s other brothers followed his example.

Another matter is the question of what happened to the many Canaanites whom Israel conquered but allowed to live on among them. After the time of Joshua, these people were no longer destroyed (Judges 2:20-23). Eventually, we read less and less about them. We are not told why this is so, but the explanation must be that they simply intermarried with and became a part of Israel and Judah. Eventually, the Most High even taunted them with this factor: “Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem: Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite” (Eze. 16:2, 45). Intermarriage with pagans was a major and probably the chief reason why the people of God worshipped idols (Ezra 9:10-14), which brought them untold suffering and trouble, culminating in the Babylonian captivity.

Incontrovertible proof of the close link between the Canaanites and the Israelites is Hebrew, in which a major part of the Old Testament was written. This was obviously not the language of Abraham, who had come from Ur in southern Mesopotamia and probably spoke Accadian. His descendants learnt Hebrew in the new country to which he had immigrated. Let us note that the Bible itself calls it “the

language of Canaan” (Isa. 19:18), that is, a Canaanite language, as some scholars have put it.

In ancient Old Testament times, all the people in and close to the Promised Land spoke more or less the same language, with only differences of dialect. These included the Phoenicians, who themselves were Canaanites. It would be reasonably correct to say that Hebrew was a kind of Phoenician. The world owes a great debt to the “language of Canaan,” for it has given us a great part of the Bible, with all its blessings and benefits.

That the children of Israel became rather closely related to the Canaanites would be hard to dispute.

David’s Canaanite Connections

Let us now return to the line of Judah. His half Canaanite son, Perez, was a direct ancestor of David. This famous king was of rather mixed descent. Royalty often is. Another of his Canaanite ancestors was Rahab, who married Salmon, the father of Boaz, well known in the Bible for his Moabite wife, a wonderful woman called Ruth (Matt. 1:5,6).

While noting David’s Hamite connections, we must in fairness point out that he may also have had some white forebears, from the line of Japheth, for the Bible says that he was “ruddy” (1 Sam. 16:12).

Christ, the Canaanites, and the People of Africa

But if David had Canaanite ancestors, the same must also be true of Jesus Christ, who was descended from him. The Redeemer was not simply a Semite. The Bible calls him the Son of Man. In his veins there flowed the blood of many nations. But was Canaan not cursed? Yes, indeed, by his grandfather Noah. How then could Jesus have been related to him? This is surely the clearest proof that no human being, nationality, or race is excluded from the love of God. With Christ there are no curses, only blessings for everyone who believes in him.

Another strong probability is that the Son of God was also descended from the ancient Egyptians and therefore could claim a biological kinship with Africa. How can this be true?

Let us remember Joseph’s half-Egyptian sons. The two tribes descended from Ephraim and Manasseh became very large and influential in Israel. Most of these people lived in northern Canaan. But in the time of King Asa very many God-fearing immigrants from Ephraim and Manasseh settled in Judah (2 Chron. 15:8-12), later becoming a part of the Jews. The Bible says that they arrived in “great numbers” (verse 9).

This happened about 900 years before Christ. A study of genealogy shows that within a few centuries most people in a country become kinsfolk. Each person has millions of living relatives. By the time our Lord was born, every Jew in Palestine must have had some ancestors from Ephraim and Manasseh, the two tribes of Joseph, and therefore a blood relationship with Africa.

The Bible also informs us that the royal house of David, to which Jesus belonged, intermarried directly with the northern Israelite tribes (2 Kings 8:16-19; 11:1, 2; 23:36). Rumah, the town mentioned in the last passage referred to, most probably lay within the territory of either Ephraim or Manasseh. Genealogically Zebudah, the mother of King Jehoiakim, was an ancestress of Christ.

Our Lord had several Hamite connections. This means that he is related to the children of Africa. It is only ignorant people who say that he is just the white man's God. Of course, we must not go to the other extreme. He is the white man's Saviour, too, for he loves all people, from every nation, tribe, and race.

Christ's Personal Links with Africa

Once upon a time, the Lord Jesus visited Africa. In fact, he actually lived on this continent for several months. "When was that?" you may ask.

This happened shortly after he was born. Herod was trying to have the baby Jesus killed, but God warned his foster father, Joseph, to take him to Egypt in Africa for refuge. The Saviour's family remained here until the death of the ruthless king. (Matt. 2:13-15). This personal visit of God's Son to Africa was not accidental. It was rather a fulfillment of a Bible prophecy, which said, "Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15).

Satan hoped to destroy Jesus and in this way extinguish the light of the world. But in Africa, Joseph and Mary found for him security and refuge. You can be sure that God loves this continent for sheltering his baby Son.

The crucifixion scene provides another good reason for God's personal interest in the people of Africa. The Romans forced the Saviour to carry the heavy cross on which he would be crucified. But, burdened with the great load of the world's sin, weakened by trial and scourging during a whole night without rest, he was unable to bear its weight. He had also lost much blood. Nobody offered to help him. Some mocked him because he could not carry the cross. He staggered and fell to the ground.

But in this crisis God had a plan. A man from Africa would have the honor of carrying the cross to Calvary for him who would, by dying on it, redeem the world.

Simon of Cyrene, which is in Libya, North Africa, was coming in from the country. He met the crowd. He heard the mockery. His soul was stirred and his sympathy aroused by what he saw. The Roman soldiers noticed him standing there, so they seized him and placed the heavy cross upon his shoulders (Matt. 27:32). What a privilege! What an honor! Remember, it was a man from Africa who took up the cross and carried it for Jesus.

And now, today, the question arises: Who will do this for Jesus? Will he find people of African ancestry ready to take up the cross and follow him? Will he find someone like Simon of Cyrene in you?

The Gospel, Africa and You

After Christ had risen from the grave and gone back to heaven, his disciples carried on his work. They made many converts. Very soon their attention was directed to the people of Africa, by God himself.

The Bible tells a thrilling story of Philip, the evangelist, who was instructed by an angel to go to the Gaza road, where he met a V.I.P. This was the treasurer of Ethiopia. As he rode in his chariot, he was reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. (Acts 8:26-38) This shows that he was already a believer in the true God and understood the Hebrew language.

At that time, Ethiopia was ruled by a dynasty of queens. Their capital was probably in Upper Nubia at Meroë, about 125 miles (200 km) north of modern Khartoum.

Directed by the Spirit of God, Philip went up to the chariot and explained the Gospel to the traveler from Africa. Very soon the man asked to be baptized. Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:37, 38. RSV)

God makes the same offer today to every child of Africa. "If you believe with all your heart, you may." Also note this wonderful promise: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

These words refer to all mankind: all races, all nations, all men and women everywhere. God loves the children of Shem, Ham and Japheth: black, white, yellow, and brown. Color, after all, is only skin deep. With him it makes no difference.

All people are the children of our Lord, who “made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Ultimately, there is only one race: the human race.

The Lord has multitudes of people of African origin. He is calling them to him, and offers them eternal life through his Son, Jesus Christ, who—as we have shown—is no stranger. The Saviour is even related to the descendants of Ham, to you.

Long ago, he came to Africa as a child. Soon he will be coming back, but now as a King. It is time to get ready to meet him. Listen to his gracious invitation, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

God loves Africa, together with all its sons and daughters, wherever they live on the face of the earth. He loves you. But you must do your part. You must respond. You must give yourself to him, now!

About the authors

Fares Muganda (1920.05.15–1974.12.04) was born in Majita, Tanganyika (later Tanzania). He became a teacher-evangelist, covering many parts of Africa, including Egypt. He also served as a pastor, Union Departmental Director (Youth, Sabbath School, and Publishing), and Field President. In 1969, he completed a BA degree (Theology) at Solusi University, Zimbabwe. A mighty preacher, he was the Union Evangelist in Tanzania until the time of his death. He also wrote a tract entitled *Africa in the Bible*.

The present work, *Africa and the Bible*, is a revised and greatly augmented version by Edwin de Kock (1930.03.09–), his white brother born in South Africa who now lives in Texas. It was first published during 1988. They never knew each other.