
THE CURSE OF HAM

RACE AND SLAVERY IN EARLY
JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY,
AND ISLAM

David M. Goldenberg

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRINCETON AND OXFORD

THE CURSE OF HAM



The painting on the book jacket is reproduced from folio 33r of the Alba Bible, a fifteenth-century illuminated translation of the Hebrew Bible into Castilian, accompanied by Jewish and Christian commentaries. The work was commissioned by the churchman Don Luis De Guzmán, the text was prepared by Rabbi Moses Arragel de Guadalajara, and the paintings were executed by Spanish Christian artists. The miniature reproduced on the book jacket depicts the biblical story recounted in Genesis 9. While Noah's son Ham "looks at his father's nakedness," Noah's other sons, Shem and Japheth, respectfully avert their gazes and cover their father. Ham, the father of Kush/Ethiopia, is shown as a black African. Reproduced by courtesy of Mauricio Hatchwel Toledano. Full details of the facsimile edition of the Alba Bible may be found at www.facsimile-editions.com or Facsimile Editions Limited, 40 Hamilton Terrace, London NW8 9UJ, England.

THE CURSE OF HAM

RACE AND SLAVERY IN EARLY
JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY,
AND ISLAM

David M. Goldenberg

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRINCETON AND OXFORD

Copyright © 2003 by Princeton University Press
Published by Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540
In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 3 Market Place, Woodstock,
Oxfordshire OX20 1SY
All Rights Reserved

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available

This book has been composed in Galliard type

Printed on acid-free paper. ∞

www.pupress.princeton.edu

Printed in the United States of America

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Goldenberg, David.

The curse of Ham : race and slavery in early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam / David M. Goldenberg.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-691-11465-X (alk. paper)

1. Ham (Biblical figure).
2. Bible. O.T. Genesis 9, 18–25—Criticism, interpretation, etc.,—History—To 1500.
3. Blacks in the Bible.
4. Blacks—Public opinion—History—To 1500.
5. Jews—Attitudes—History—To 1500.
6. Christians—Attitudes—History—To 1500.
7. Muslims—Attitudes—History—To 1500.
8. Slavery—Justification—History
9. Black race—Color. I. Title.

BS580.H27 G65 2003

291.1'7834896—dc21

2002042713

For

Bernard Lewis

Friend

And

In Memory of My Mother

שרה בת יצחק אייזיק הכהן ז"ל

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xi

Introduction 1

PART ONE IMAGES OF BLACKS

ONE

Biblical Israel: The Land of Kush 17

TWO

Biblical Israel: The People of Kush 26

THREE

Postbiblical Israel: Black Africa 41

FOUR

Postbiblical Israel: Black Africans 46

PART TWO THE COLOR OF SKIN

FIVE

The Color of Women 79

SIX

The Color of Health 93

SEVEN

The Colors of Mankind 95

EIGHT

The Colored Meaning of Kushite in Postbiblical Literature 113

PART THREE HISTORY

NINE

Evidence for Black Slaves in Israel 131

**PART FOUR AT THE CROSSROADS
OF HISTORY AND EXEGESIS**

TEN

Was Ham Black? 141

ELEVEN

“Ham Sinned and Canaan was Cursed?!” 157

TWELVE

The Curse of Ham 168

THIRTEEN

The Curse of Cain 178

FOURTEEN

The New World Order: Humanity by Physiognomy 183

Conclusion

Jewish Views of Black Africans and the Development
of Anti-Black Sentiment in Western Thought 195

APPENDIX I

When is a Kushite not a Kushite? Cases of Mistaken Identity 201

APPENDIX II

Kush/Ethiopia and India 211

NOTES 213

GLOSSARY OF SOURCES AND TERMS 379

SUBJECT INDEX 395

INDEX OF ANCIENT SOURCES 413

INDEX OF MODERN SCHOLARS 431

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A WORK OF THIS SORT, which attempts a historical synthesis covering different time periods, cultures, and languages, is naturally dependent upon the help of others. Several are mentioned and thanked in the notes to this work. In addition, I am indebted to Annalisa Azzoni, William Brinner, Ephraim Dardashti, Joseph F. Eska, Gilad Gevar-yahu, Moshe Lazaar, Nehemiah Levtzion, Bernard Lewis, Renee Levine Melammed, Uri Melammed, Vera Moreen, Yudah Nahum, Ann Macy Roth, Everett Rowson, Yehudah Ratzaby, and Liliane Weissberg for help in their respective disciplines. I am sure that Lewis and Brinner regret ever having occupied an office next to mine.

The various librarians who have suffered my excessive requests often went beyond the call of duty on my behalf. My thanks to the indefatigable Judith Leifer at the Center for Judaic Studies and Hilda Pring at the Van Pelt Library (University of Pennsylvania). At the center I was also helped by Ety Lassman, who prioritized her work to my benefit and tutored me in the arcane and very frustrating world of computer formatting. It is a pleasure for me to acknowledge my thanks to Tel Aviv University, which twice awarded me a summer fellowship, and to Hebrew University, where I spent a year's sabbatical and was provided an ideal academic environment. At Tel Aviv Gideon Spiegel and Mina Rosen were exceptionally helpful in making my stay comfortable and productive.

Some people were of particular help to me and I especially wish to thank them. Three colleagues and friends read and commented on drafts of this work. Arthur Kiron read the entire manuscript and, chapter by chapter, discussed its contents with me. His comments were particularly helpful in developing the structure of the book. Mark Smith read the chapters dealing with the Bible; his knowledge of biblical and other ancient Near Eastern literature was an invaluable resource. Richard Steiner read the chapter on philology, dealing with the etymology of Ham, patiently correcting my errors. Others were equally helpful in various ways. Peter Frost put at my disposal some of his published and unpublished material on topics directly relevant to my work. This material—especially his valuable collection of early Christian sources—was very useful. The reader will notice that the name Sol Cohen appears in this study several times. Not infrequently he is cited in the footnotes for alerting me to one source or another. I was fortunate to have him as my colleague and daily traveling companion for many years; his wide-ranging knowledge served this study to good effect. If the analyses of Jewish sources in this study are clear, and if the conclusions turn out to be correct in the light of subsequent discussion, it is due in no small

measure to Tsvi Groner. During my sabbatical in Jerusalem Groner and I met two evenings a week to study Talmud together. Our discussions invariably ranged far beyond the talmudic text and helped sharpen the questions that underlie this study. In many ways I am indebted to this *talmid ḥakham*. My wife Jennie read the entire manuscript of the book and commented from the perspective of someone from a different discipline; she is also responsible for considerable improvements in style. The thanks that I give to my wife and to my children, Joshua, Tirzah, and Shifra, is tinged with regret. They put up with a missing spouse and father for long stretches of time. They may forgive me, but I cannot. Lastly, I am grateful to Brigitta van Rheinberg of Princeton University Press for her close reading of the manuscript and insightful comments toward its improvement. I am sorry that my mother, *zikhronah li-vrakbah*, could not live to see the completion of this work. To her and to my father, *yibadel le-ḥayim ṭovim*, with gratitude I give thanks.

One person has been more helpful to me in more ways than I can even begin to recount. Bernard Lewis entered my life in 1986. I had been president of Dropsie College, a graduate school devoted to Judaic Studies in Philadelphia. The college had ceased to exist as a graduate school and was being reborn as a postdoctoral research institute on the model of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. Lewis, an expert in Islamic history with a strong knowledge in Judaic studies, was then at Princeton (both the IAS and the university), and was a perfect choice as the first director of the new institution. As associate director, I worked closely with him in developing the programs and policies of what became the Annenberg Research Institute for Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. Having a world-renowned scholar at its helm assured the new institution immediate success. Indeed, those were heady days, with some of the world's leading academics in Jewish and Islamic studies converging in Philadelphia.

In our new jobs, Lewis saw to it that I was afforded every opportunity to return to the scholarship of my preadministrative years. In many different ways, some known only to the two of us and some undoubtedly only to him, he assured my return. This book took seed when Lewis, writing his *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, asked my advice about Jewish texts. From that moment on, as the book germinated and took shape, Lewis was at my side, a source of information for matters Islamic and Arabic, an inspiration for what could be achieved, and a constant encouragement (he would say *nudge*) when things looked bleak.

I have been privileged to know him. I have been more privileged to call him a friend. May the dedication of this book to him be a token of that friendship.

ABBREVIATIONS

Biblical Literature

Gen	Genesis	Hab	Habakkuk
Ex	Exodus	Zeph	Zephaniah
Lev	Leviticus	Hag	Haggai
Num	Numbers	Zech	Zechariah
Deut	Deuteronomy	Mal	Malachi
Josh	Joshua	Ps	Psalms
Judg	Judges	Prov	Proverbs
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Job	Job
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Song	Song of Songs (Canticles)
1 Kgs	1 Kings	Lam	Lamentations (Eikhah)
2 Kgs	2 Kings	Qoh	Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)
Isa	Isaiah	Est	Esther
Jer	Jeremiah	Dan	Daniel
Ezek	Ezekiel	Ezra	Ezra
Hos	Hosea	Neh	Nehemiah
Obad	Obadiah	1 Chr	1 Chronicles
Nah	Nahum	2 Chr	2 Chronicles

Rabbinic Literature

<i>Ar</i>	<i>ʿArakbin</i>	<i>Giṭ</i>	<i>Giṭin</i>
<i>ARNa, b</i>	<i>Ayot de-Rabbi Natan,</i> recensions a and b	<i>Ḥag</i>	<i>Ḥagigah</i>
<i>AZ</i>	<i>ʿAvodah Zarah</i>	<i>Hor</i>	<i>Horayot</i>
<i>b</i>	Babylonian Talmud; e.g., <i>bBer</i> = Babylonian Talmud, <i>Berakhot</i>	<i>Ḥul</i>	<i>Ḥulin</i>
<i>BB</i>	<i>Bava Batra</i>	<i>Ker</i>	<i>Keritot</i>
<i>Bekh</i>	<i>Bekhorot</i>	<i>Ket</i>	<i>Ketubot</i>
<i>Ber</i>	<i>Berakhot</i>	<i>Kil</i>	<i>Kilayim</i>
<i>Bik</i>	<i>Bikurim</i>	<i>m</i>	Mishna; e.g., <i>mBer</i> = Mishna, <i>Berakhot</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>Bava Meṣiaʿ</i>	<i>Maʿas</i>	<i>Maʿasrot</i>
<i>BQ</i>	<i>Bava Qama</i>	<i>Mak</i>	<i>Makot</i>
<i>Dem</i>	<i>Demai</i>	<i>Meg</i>	<i>Megilah</i>
<i>ʿEr</i>	<i>ʿEruvin</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Menahot</i>
<i>GenR</i>	<i>Genesis Rabba</i>	<i>MidPs</i>	<i>Midrash Psalms</i>
		<i>MQ</i>	<i>Moʿed Qaṭan</i>
		<i>Naz</i>	<i>Nazir</i>

xii ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ned</i>	<i>Nedarim</i>	<i>Shevu</i>	<i>Shevu'ot</i>
<i>Neg</i>	<i>Negā'im</i>	<i>Soṭ</i>	<i>Soṭah</i>
<i>Nid</i>	<i>Nidah</i>	<i>Suk</i>	<i>Sukah</i>
<i>Oh</i>	<i>Ohalot</i>	<i>t</i>	Tosefta; e.g., <i>tBer</i> =
<i>Pes</i>	<i>Pesaḥim</i>		Tosefta, tractate <i>Berakhot</i>
<i>PesR</i>	<i>Pesiqta Rabbati</i>	<i>Tā'an</i>	<i>Tā'anit</i>
<i>PesRK</i>	<i>Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana</i>	<i>Tam</i>	<i>Tamid</i>
<i>PRE</i>	<i>Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer</i>	<i>Tanḥ</i>	<i>Tanḥuma</i>
<i>Qid</i>	<i>Qidushin</i>	<i>TanḥB</i>	<i>Tanḥuma</i> , ed. S. Buber
<i>QohR</i>	<i>Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)</i>	<i>Ter</i>	<i>Terumot</i>
	<i>Rabba</i>	<i>Tg</i>	Targum; e.g., <i>TgQoh</i> =
<i>R</i>	Rabba, e.g., <i>GenR</i> =	<i>y</i>	Targum to Qohelet
	<i>Genesis Rabba</i> ; Rabbi,		Palestinian (<i>Yerushalmi</i>)
	e.g., R. Yannai		Talmud; e.g., <i>yBer</i> =
<i>RH</i>	<i>Rosh Hashanah</i>		Palestinian Talmud,
<i>San</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>		<i>Berakhot</i>
<i>Shab</i>	<i>Shabbat</i>	<i>YalqSh</i>	<i>Yalqut Shim'oni</i>
<i>Sheq</i>	<i>Sheqalim</i>	<i>Yev</i>	<i>Yevamot</i>
<i>Shevi</i>	<i>Shevi'it</i>	<i>Zev</i>	<i>Zevaḥim</i>

Secondary Literature

<i>AB</i>	<i>Anchor Bible</i> series (Garden City, N.Y., 1964–)
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York, 1992)
<i>ACW</i>	<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i> (Westminster, Md., 1946–)
<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; rev. A. Cleveland Coxe (1885–87, 1896 [“American edition”], repr., Peabody, Mass., 1994)
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (Berlin, 1972–)
<i>ANT</i>	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , ed. M. R. James (Oxford, 1924); ed. J. K. Elliott (Oxford, 1993)
<i>APOT</i>	<i>Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament</i> , ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford, 1913)
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>CAD</i>	<i>Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , ed. Ignace J. Gelb et al. (Chicago, 1964–)
<i>CANE</i>	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> , ed. J. Sasson et al. (New York, 1995)
<i>CC</i>	<i>Continental Commentaries</i> series (Minneapolis, 1990–)

- CCL *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina (Turnhout and Paris, 1953–)
- CPL *Clavis patrum Latinorum*, ed. Eligius Dekkers and Aemilius Gaar (Steenbrugis, 1995)
- CSCO *Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium* (Louvain, 1903–)
- CSEL *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna, 1866–)
- DJD *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert: The Texts from the Judaean Desert*, vols. 1–39 (Oxford, 1955–2002)
- EB *Encyclopaedia Biblica* [Hebrew: *Enṣiqlopedyah Miqra'it*] (Jerusalem, 1950–88)
- EI¹ *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (Leiden, 1913–36)
- EI² *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1960–)
- EJ *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972)
- FC *Fathers of the Church* (New York, etc., 1947–)
- FHN *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum*, ed. T. Eide, T. Hägg, R. H. Pierce, and L. Török (Bergen, Norway, 1994–)
- FS Festschrift
- GCS *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig, 1901–)
- HBOT *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen, 1996)
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*
- IB *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. N. B. Harmon (New York, 1956)
- IBWA *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, ed. Ladislav Bugner, trans. William G. Ryan (Cambridge, Mass., 1976)
- ICC *International Critical Commentary* series (New York, 1895–)
- IDB *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, 1962); Supplementary volume (1976)
- IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*
- JANES *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
- JAOS *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
- JE *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1901–6)
- JJS *Journal for Jewish Studies*
- JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
- JPSC *The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1989–96)
- JQR *Jewish Quarterly Review*
- JRT *Journal of Religious Thought*
- JSJ *Journal for the Study of Judaism*

- JSOT* *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSP *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JSQ *Jewish Studies Quarterly*
JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
 KBL L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum alten Testament*, Mitarbeit von B. Hartmann und E. Kutscher, 3rd ed. (Leiden, 1967–96); English translation: Koehler, Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M.E.J. Richardson (Leiden, 1994–2001)
 KJV King James Version of the Bible (London, 1611)
 LCL Loeb Classical Library (London, 1912–)
 LSJ Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, rev. Henry S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed., 1940; rev. suppl. 1996)
 LXX The Septuagint (see Glossary)
MGWJ *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*
 MT Masoretic Text (see Glossary)
 NAB New American Bible (Washington, D.C., 1970, 1987)
 NASB New American Standard Bible (1977, 1995)
 NEB New English Bible (Oxford–Cambridge, 1970)
 NIV New International Version of the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1978, 1983)
 NJB New Jerusalem Bible (Garden City, N.Y., 1985)
 NJPS *Tanakh*, New Jewish Publication Society translation of the Bible (Philadelphia, 1985)
 NKJV New King James Version of the Bible (New York–Oxford, 1982, 1990)
NPNF1 *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st ser., ed. Philip Schaff (1886–89 [“American edition”], repr., Peabody, Mass., 1994)
NPNF2 *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (1890–99 [“American edition”], repr., Peabody, Mass., 1994)
 NRSV New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (New York–Oxford, 1989)
 NTA *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, rev. ed., English translation, ed. R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge, 1991–92; based on the Hennecke-Schneemelcher German edition, 1959)
NTS *New Testament Studies*
 OEAE *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford, 2001)
ObT *‘Olam ha-Tanakh* Bible commentary series (Tel Aviv, 1993)

OLD	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford, 1982)
OTL	<i>Old Testament Library</i> series (Philadelphia, 1961–)
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , ed. James Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y., 1983)
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series Graeca</i> , ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857–66)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series Latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844–55)
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> (Paris, 1907–)
Q	Qumram (see Glossary)
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RE	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft neue Bearbeitung begonnen von Georg Wissowa</i> (Munich, 1980)
REB	Revised English Bible (Oxford–Cambridge, 1989)
REJ	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i>
RLA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> (Berlin and Leipzig, 1932–)
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible (New York, 1952)
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> series (Paris, 1946–)
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Kittel; trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964–76)
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; trans. David Green (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1990–)
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i> series (Waco, Tex., 1982–)
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

This page intentionally left blank

THE CURSE OF HAM

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

Blackness and Slavery

The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled. Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers."

(Gen 9:18–25, RSV)

THIS BIBLICAL STORY has been the single greatest justification for Black slavery for more than a thousand years. It is a strange justification indeed, for there is no reference in it to Blacks at all. And yet just about everyone, especially in the antebellum American South, understood that in this story God meant to curse black Africans with eternal slavery, the so-called Curse of Ham. As one proslavery author wrote in 1838, "The blacks were originally designed to vassalage by the Patriarch Noah."¹

This book attempts to explain how and why this strange interpretation of the biblical text took hold. It does so by looking at the larger picture, that is, by uncovering just how Blacks were perceived by those people for whom the Bible was a central text. What did the early Jews, Christians, and Muslims see when they looked at the black African? Clearly, the biblical interpretation is forced. How, then, did the biblical authors view Blacks and what were the postbiblical forces that wrung such a view from the Bible?

This is a book about the ancient link between black skin color and slav-

2 INTRODUCTION

ery. It is, thus, a study of perceptions, symbolic associations, and historical ramifications. It explores how dark-skinned people were perceived in antiquity, how negative associations attached to the color black were played out on the stage of history, and how the connection between blackness and slavery became enshrined in the Curse of Ham.

In 1837 the painter and theorist Jacques Nicolas Paillot de Montabert wrote:

White is the symbol of Divinity or God;
Black is the symbol of the evil spirit or the demon.
White is the symbol of light . . .
Black is the symbol of darkness and darkness expresses all evils.
White is the emblem of harmony;
Black is the emblem of chaos.
White signifies supreme beauty;
Black ugliness.
White signifies perfection;
Black signifies vice.
White is the symbol of innocence;
Black, that of guilt, sin, and moral degradation.
White, a positive color, indicates happiness;
Black, a negative color, indicates misfortune.
The battle between good and evil is symbolically expressed
By the opposition of white and black.²

De Montabert wrote these words in a manual for artists. For us, they starkly demonstrate how deeply and in how many varied ways black-white symbolism is part of Western culture.

Some scholars argue that these associations were the cause of Black enslavement for centuries. They claim that the negative value of blackness—whether due to a psychological association of darkness with fear of the unknown or due to some other cause—underlies the negative sentiment toward dark-skinned people that resulted in Black slavery.³ The historian Winthrop Jordan especially assigns a great deal of weight to the Africans' skin color. The associations of black and white as symbolic of evil and good, sin and purity, and the like, Jordan argues, were transferred to human beings when the light-skinned English came into contact with the dark-skinned Africans.⁴ Speaking of the slaves in antebellum America, Toni Morrison put it this way:

The distinguishing features of the not-Americans were their slave status, their social status—and their color. It is conceivable that the first would have self-destructed in a variety of ways had it not been for the last. These slaves, unlike many others in the world's history, were visible to a fault. *And they had*

*inherited, among other things, a long history on the meaning of color; it was that this color "meant" something.*⁵

"Color meant something." Indeed, it meant a great deal. And it conveyed the same negative associations in many different cultures. The same black-white color symbolism seen in Western traditions is found in China and South Asia.⁶ It has been found among the Chiang (a Sino-Tibetan people), the Mongour (a Mongolian people), the Chuckchees of Siberia, and the Creek Indians of North America.⁷ It is in Sanskrit, Caledonian, and Japanese, as well as Western, literature.⁸ Indeed, according to many anthropology reports, the phenomenon is common even in black Africa.⁹ It appears that the symbolism of black-negative and white-positive is widespread among peoples of all colors.¹⁰

The same associations of black and white are also found in our earliest written records in the ancient Near East and the classical world.¹¹ In Christianity these associations played a large role in the meanings given to light and darkness. "There is continual conflict between the world of darkness, that is sin, error and death, and the figure of Christ who is light, truth and life."¹² Jesus is "the light of the world" (John 8:12, 9:5). "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). It played an even larger role when the church fathers in the third century began to allegorize the scriptural Black (the "Ethiopian") as sin, as we shall see later. The common patristic depiction of devils as Ethiopians was of one cloth with this symbolism in the service of exegesis.

The negative symbolism of the color black may indeed have influenced how the light-skinned European came to perceive the dark-skinned African. Some sociologists, however, have questioned whether black-white symbolism "must necessarily transfer to social relations"; to see blackness as a metaphor for negative values, they claim, is not the same as seeing black people negatively.¹³ We cannot so easily jump from abstract metaphor to human reality.

Whether or not the negative value of blackness was the cause of anti-Black sentiment, and whether or not anti-Black sentiment led to Black slavery, it is clear that already by the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade in the fifteenth century Black and slave were inextricably joined in the Christian mind. Over and over again one finds Black enslavement justified with a reference to the biblical story of the curse of eternal servitude pronounced against Ham, considered to be the father of black Africa.

This book looks at the relationship between color symbolism and color prejudice and asks whether the former must lead to the latter, and whether color prejudice, strictly defined, must lead to ethnic prejudice. It seeks to uncover that point in time when blackness and slavery were first joined and it tracks the Western justification for the join in an evolving biblical inter-

pretation. The focus of the study is on those civilizations that accepted the Bible as a basis of life.

It begins the investigation by examining the ancient Jewish world. This is not accidental. If a biblically rooted Western civilization came to exhibit anti-Black sentiment over many centuries, could the origin of such sentiment lie in the Bible? If Christian exegesis from the earliest centuries interpreted the scriptural Black as sinner and understood the devil to be an Ethiopian, could these interpretations derive from Christianity's cradle, ancient Judaism? The question takes on even greater importance in light of recent writings by scholars and nonscholars alike who have concluded that there is indeed an underlying anti-Black sentiment in early Jewish society.¹⁴

Was Jewish antiquity where anti-Black attitudes originated and became fixed in Western civilization? To answer this question I examine how Jews of the ancient world perceived black Africans over a fifteen-hundred-year period, from about 800 B.C.E. until the eighth century C.E. after the appearance of Islam. What images of Blacks are found in Jewish literature of this period and what attitudes about Blacks are implicit in those images? How did Jewish society of the biblical and postbiblical periods relate to darker-skinned people, whether African or not? The examination of the ancient Jewish world will provide the necessary framework in which to examine and understand the biblical Curse of Ham text and its later interpretations in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic exegesis. If the biblical Curse reflects an anti-Black sentiment, that sentiment should be found elsewhere in early Jewish literature. If it is not, then we must account for the development of such sentiment and for its expression in the various biblical interpretive traditions.

From Exegesis to History

The importance of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) for Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam is obvious and can be gauged by the enormous quantity of biblical interpretation and expansion generated by these three faith-cultures and their offshoots. More than the quantity, it is most striking how the same interpretive traditions with and without variation are so widely disseminated among these monotheistic faiths. How can one account for this melting pot of biblical interpretation? Of course, when Christianity and Islam accepted the Jewish Bible as part of their heritage, they inherited as well some of Judaism's interpretations of its sacred text. It is often noted that the Qur'²an and later Islamic stories about biblical personalities and events (*isrā'īliyyāt*) reflect much of ancient Jewish biblical interpretation. As the ninth-century traditionist, al-Bukhārī, wrote: "The Jews used to read the Torah in Hebrew and to interpret it to the people of

Islam in Arabic.”¹⁵ The same is true for Christianity in Asia Minor and the lands of the Near East. The Christian Syriac Bible translation, the Peshiṭta, has been shown to contain many Jewish interpretations embedded in its translation. The church fathers of the East, especially, but not only, Ephrem (d. 373), transmit Jewish midrashic explanations again and again. Origen (d. ca. 253), who wrote in Greek, not Syriac, lived in the Near East, first in Alexandria, then in Caesarea, and his works too contain many Jewish interpretations. So do the writings of Jerome, who lived in Bethlehem.¹⁶ Sometimes these church fathers quote a contemporary, usually anonymous, Jewish source (e.g., “the Hebrew”). Many times they transmit a Jewish interpretation without attribution.

Of course, there are uniquely Christian and Islamic biblical interpretations. Jewish midrash, for example, sees no foreshadowing (“types”) of Jesus or Muḥammad in the Hebrew Bible. But even many of the unique Christian or Islamic interpretations can often be seen to reflect earlier, Jewish, thinking. The concept of the *logos*, for example, which John 1:1–18 applies to Jesus (“In the beginning was the word [*logos*], and the word was with God, and the word was God. . . . Through him all things were made. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”), is used by the Jewish philosopher Philo (b. ca. 25 B.C.E.) as a device by means of which the infinite, transcendent God was able to create a finite, real world—the way an immaterial God can make contact with a material world. Similarly, the metaphor of light and darkness used by the early Christians (“You are all children of light,” 1 Thessalonians 5:4–5; the Two Ways of Light and Darkness, *Barnabas* 18–20) is an echo of the dualistic theology of the Dead Sea sect (the “children of light” and the “children of darkness”).¹⁷ In other words, Hebrew Scripture together with its early Jewish interpretation became part of the common heritage of all biblically based cultures in the Near East during the first several centuries of the Common Era. If the church fathers transmit originally Jewish expansions and explanations without attribution, it is not because they want to hide their Jewish source, but because these interpretations had become part of the biblical package lived and studied by all, the way one read and understood the Bible. It was the vehicle of intellectual intercourse and commonality as much as the basis of, and impetus for, differentiation.

Whether Jewish, Christian, or Islamic, biblical exegetical traditions moved freely among the geographically and culturally contiguous civilizations of the Near East. It is precisely the fluidity of the various interpretations and legends that provides a unique opportunity for cross-cultural investigation. When we can determine the direction of a tradition, the very confessional permeability of biblical exegesis becomes a historical witness to changes in attitudes and perceptions. For as exegesis crossed denominational lines it took on new coloring reflecting its new environment. By

sample content of The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World)

- [download Perfect Scoop: Ice Creams, Sorbets, Granitas, and Sweet Accompaniments](#)
- [read online Black & Decker: The Complete Guide to Garages](#)
- [Myriah Fire pdf, azw \(kindle\)](#)
- **Billie Jo online**
- [Bungalow 2 pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)

- <http://anvilpr.com/library/Almost-Interesting--The-Memoir.pdf>
- <http://betsy.wesleychapelcomputerrepair.com/library/The-Secret-Ingredient--Family-Cookbook.pdf>
- <http://www.celebritychat.in/?ebooks/Myriah-Fire.pdf>
- <http://academialanguagebar.com/?ebooks/Billie-Jo.pdf>
- <http://ramazotti.ru/library/Bungalow-2.pdf>