

Strong's Concordance

Lemek: a descendant of Cain, also a descendant of Seth

Original Word: 

Part of Speech: Proper Name Masculine

Transliteration: Lemek

Phonetic Spelling: (leh'-mek)

Short Definition: Lamech

Word Origin of uncertain derivation

<http://biblehub.com/hebrew/3929.htm>

Lamech

For the person in Genesis 5, see Lamech (father of Noah).

Lamech (/ˈleɪmɛk/; Hebrew: לִמְכָךְ) is a person in the genealogies of Adam in the Book of Genesis. He is the sixth generation descendant of Cain (Genesis 4:18); his father was named Methusael, and he was responsible for the "Song of the Sword". He is also noted as the first polygamist mentioned in the Bible, taking two wives, Ada and Tselah (Zillah). He is not to be confused with the Lamech in Genesis 5.

Biblical context

Sandwiched between two genealogical lines, the passage describing Lamech, son of Methushael, descendant of Cain and his children is fairly substantive:

Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah. And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

[1]

Names

There are various suggestions of the correct translations for the names:

Name	Hebrew	Possible translations
Lamech	לִמְכָךְ	<i>Pauper</i> (via Hebrew), <i>Priest/Servant of God</i> (via Akkadian)
Adah	אָדָה	<i>Ornament, Dawn</i>
Zillah	צִלְהָה	<i>Shadow</i> (Rashi)
Jabal	יָבָל	<i>Shepherd</i>
Jubal	יֻבָל	<i>The ram's horn, Musician, (also) stream</i>
Tubal-Cain	תּוּבַל קַיִן	<i>Thou wilt be brought of Cain</i> (not translating <i>Cain</i>), <i>Blacksmith</i> (translating <i>Cain</i>)
Naamah	נְעֻמָּה	<i>Beautiful, Pleasure</i>

The older Septuagint, unlike the Masoretic Text, has the name *Tubal* rather than *Tubal-Cain*.

Translating the names as well, it is possible to read the text of the story of Lamech as:

God's servant took two wives, light and darkness. The light brought forth the shepherd, who was the father of tent-dwellers, and herdsmen, and his brother was the musician, who was the father of harpists and pipers. But the darkness brought forth the blacksmith, the forger of brass, and of iron, and his sister was pleasure.

Interpretation

When fully translated, the text has a strong resemblance simply to a basic mythology concerning the origin of the various forms of civilisation, the shepherds and musicians being products of the day, and pleasure being a product of the night. Blacksmiths, in carrying out their trade, are also associated with the darkness. Thus, in a sense, Lamech could be interpreted as a culture hero. Some of the names also appear to demonstrate punning - Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal rhyme, and appear to be derived from the same root - JBL (YVL in modern Hebrew): *to bring forth*, (also) *to carry*. A similar description existed amongst Phoenicians.

The names are instead interpreted in the Midrash as an attack on polygamy. *Adah* is there interpreted as *the deposed one*, implying that Lamech spurned her in favour of Zillah, whose own name is understood to mean *she shaded herself [from Zillah at Lamech's side]*. The Midrash consequently regards Adah as having been treated as a slave, tyrannised by her husband, who was at the beck and call of his mistress, Zillah. It further goes on to claim that part of the immorality, which had led God to flood the earth, was the polygamy practised by Lamech and his generation.

The rabbinical tradition is just as condemning of Naamah. While a minority, such as Abba ben Kahana, see Naamah as having become Noah's wife, and being so named because her conduct was *pleasing to God*, the majority of classical rabbinical sources consider her name to be due to her singing *pleasant songs in worship of idols*.

Song of the Sword

The last part of the tale of Lamech (Genesis 4:23–24 ^[2]), takes the form of a brief poem, which refers back to the curse of Cain. In the poem, Lamech's stance resembles that of a supreme warrior, able to avenge himself absolutely. However, no explanation of who Lamech supposedly killed is ever given in the Tanakh. Some scholars have proposed that it is connected to the invention, contextually by Tubal-Cain, of the sword, for which reason the poem is often referred to as the **Song of the Sword**. The poem may originate from the mysterious Book of the Wars of the Lord, though the greater context for it is likely to remain obscure.

However, this paucity of context did not stop a rabbinical tradition growing up around it. The Talmud and Midrash present an extensive legend, told, for example, by Rashi, in which Lamech first loses his sight from age, and had to be led by Tubal-Cain, the seventh generation from Cain. Tubal-Cain saw in the distance something that he first took for an animal, but it was actually Cain (still alive, due to the extensive life span of the antediluvians) whom Lamech had accidentally killed with an arrow. When they discovered who it was, Lamech, in sorrow, clapped his hands together, which (for an unclear reason) kills Tubal-Cain. In consequence, Lamech's wives desert him. A similar legend is preserved in the pseudepigraphic Second Book of Adam and Eve, Chapter XIII; in this version Tubal-Cain is not named, but is instead referred to as "the young shepherd." After Lamech claps his hands he strikes the young shepherd on the head. To ensure his death, he then smashed his head with a rock.

An alternate form of this negative attitude towards Lamech (such as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) claims that even though Lamech did not kill anyone, his wives refused to associate with him and denied him sex, on the grounds that Cain's line was to be annihilated after seven generations. The poem is then given by Lamech to allay their fears. Other classical sources, such as Josephus, see the word *seventy-seven* as the number of sons which Lamech eventually had.

Extending on this classical view of Lamech is the Book of Moses, regarded in Mormonism as scripture. According to this Latter-day Saint text, Lamech entered into a secret pact with Satan, as had Cain before him, becoming a second Master Mahan. When Irad (an ancestor of Lamech) learned his secret and began to publicise it, Lamech murdered him. News of the murder was spread by Lamech's two wives, leading to his being cast out of society.

References

[1] According to Bereshit Rabbah, p.56, she was the wife of Noah, the son of the other Lamech. (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>)

[2] <http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Genesis&verse=4:23-24&src=HE>

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Lamechiel (Lamechalal) In the Testament of SOLOMON, angel who thwarts Deception, of the seven demonic HEAVENLY BODIES. In 3 ENOCH, Lamechiel is one of the PLANETARY RULERS.

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