

Ethnicity, Race, and the Bible

Agenda

- ✓ Black presence in the Bible
 - ✓ Doctrine of Election in OT
- ✓ Depictions of Africa in the Bible
 - ✓ Problem with Paul
- ✓ Passages typically assumed to deal with race

Slave Owners & The Bible

- Taught that Blacks had no heritage in the Word
- Blacks were not human and were inherently inferior
 - God foreordained Blacks to servitude
- Slavery was not a violation of God's law

The Bible and Race

1. There are profound differences in the concept and attitude of race in the Bible versus Eurocentric interpretation
2. Biblical authors were color conscious but not as a basis of enslavement, oppression, or demeaning identity

De-Africanization of the Bible

- Denial of the presence of African nations and peoples in scripture
- Removal of Egypt from Africa and placement in the Western world

Prominent African Nations

Egypt

Cush / Ethiopia

Sheba

Ophir

Israel always held African nations and people in
the highest regard

Challenges with African Presence in the Bible

- What constitutes/defines black in antiquity?
- Significance of color v. nationality in the Bible

The One Drop Rule

The Curse of ...

✓ Ham: Genesis 9:18-29

✓ Cain: Genesis 4:1-16

Wherever you see “Ham/Canaan/Cain” or their
descendants there a black presence is found in
the Bible

Terms indicative of “color” in the Bible (Hebrew)

- ✓ *Sahor* (Song of Solomon 1:5,6) - black, swarthy, tawny, very dark
- ✓ *Ham* ~ *hum*: darkened, dark brown, black (only used for the color of sheep)
- ✓ *Qedar* – dark skinned, Gen 25:13 = Son of Ishmael
- ✓ *Pinehas* ~ Pa-Nehsi = Nubian: Son of Eli and grandson of Aaron which ties him to Moses

Prominent People of Color in the OT

- ✓ Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12), son of Cush, founder of civilization in Mesopotamia
- ✓ Abram was from Ur which included the Sumerians “black headed ones” – black blood flowed in Abram
- ✓ Hagar was Egyptian – why did Sarah choose Hagar?

Prominent People of Color in the OT

- ✓ Kedar and the Kedarites, a powerful tribe (Isaiah 21:16, 42:11, 60:7; Jer. 2:10, 49:28; Ezekiel 27:12; Neh 2:19, 6:6)
- ✓ Joseph's Egyptian wife, Asenath (Gen. 41:45,50, 46:20) mother of Manasseh and Ephraim forefathers of the two largest tribes in Israel

Prominent People of Color in the OT

- ✓ Pharaoh's daughter, *Bithiah* (Exodus 2:5ff; I Chron 4:17ff), who pulls Moses out the water and marries Mered, an Israelite

- ✓ Exodus 2:15-21

- ✓ Zipporah (Num 12:1)

Prominent People of Color in the OT

Cushan-rishathaim (Judges 3:7-10)

Phineas, Eli's wicked son (I Sam 4:11)

The Cushite who tells David of Absalom's death (2 Sam 18:19-32)

Solomon's love (Song of Solomon 1:5ff, 6:13)*

Prominent People of Color in the OT

✓ Queen of Sheba (I Kings 10:1-13)

✓ Abishag (I kings 1:2-4; 2:13-25)

✓ Amos 9:1-10

✓ Zephaniah (Zep 1:1)

Jeremiah

- ✓ 62 references to Egypt, Cush (Ethiopia), and other African countries
 - ✓ Jehudi, a court official (36:14, 23)
 - ✓ Ebed-Melech, saves Jeremiah's life (38, 39)

From slaves to rulers, from court officials to authors
who wrote parts of the OT itself, from lawgivers to
prophets, black people and their lands and individual
black persons appear numerous times. In the veins
of Hebrew-Israelite-Judahite-Jewish peoples flowed
black blood

Charles Copher