

# Extrabiblical Sources relating to the Tower of Babel passage from Genesis

## 11

From Antiquities of the Jews Book 1 by Josephus

The Full Book can be found at <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/josephus/ant-1.html>

### CHAPTER 4.

#### **CONCERNING THE TOWER OF BABYLON, AND THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES.**

1. Now the sons of Noah were three, - Shem, Japhet, and Ham, born one hundred years before the Deluge. These first of all descended from the mountains into the plains, and fixed their habitation there; and persuaded others who were greatly afraid of the lower grounds on account of the flood, and so were very loath to come down from the higher places, to venture to follow their examples. Now the plain in which they first dwelt was called Shinar. God also commanded them to send colonies abroad, for the thorough peopling of the earth, that they might not raise seditions among themselves, but might cultivate a great part of the earth, and enjoy its fruits after a plentiful manner. But they were so ill instructed that they did not obey God; for which reason they fell into calamities, and were made sensible, by experience, of what sin they had been guilty: for when they flourished with a numerous youth, God admonished them again to send out colonies; but they, imagining the prosperity they enjoyed was not derived from the favor of God, but supposing that their own power was the proper cause of the plentiful condition they were in, did not obey him. Nay, they added to this their disobedience to the Divine will, the suspicion that they were therefore ordered to send out separate colonies, that, being divided asunder, they might the more easily be Oppressed.

2. Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers !

3. Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than any one could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water. When God saw that they acted so madly, he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not grown wiser by the destruction of the former sinners; but he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them divers languages, and causing that, through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called *Babylon*, because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the

word *Babel*, confusion. The Sibyl also makes mention of this tower, and of the confusion of the language, when she says thus: "When all men were of one language, some of them built a high tower, as if they would thereby ascend up to heaven, but the gods sent storms of wind and overthrew the tower, and gave every one his peculiar language; and for this reason it was that the city was called *Babylon*." But as to the plan of Shinar, in the country of Babylonia, Hestiaeus mentions it, when he says thus: "Such of the priests as were saved, took the sacred vessels of Jupiter Enyalios, and came to Shinar of Babylonia."

### The Sibylline Oracles From Book III (117-129)

Full Book can Be Found at:

<https://sacred-texts.com/cla/sib/sib.pdf>

Page 24 (Line 117 – 129)

But when the threatenings of the mighty God  
Are fulfilled, which he threatened mortals once,  
When in Assyrian land they built a tower;-  
120 (And they all spoke one language, and resolved  
To mount aloft into the starry heaven;  
But on the air the Immortal straightway put  
A mighty force; and then winds from above  
Cast down the great tower and stirred mortals up  
125 To wrangling with each other; therefore men  
Gave to that city the name of Babylon);-  
Now when the tower fell and the tongues of men  
Turned to all sorts of sounds, straightway all earth  
Was filled with men and kingdoms were divided;

### The Book of Jubilees – Chapter 10:19-28

Entire Book can be found at <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>

19. For they departed from the land of Ararat eastward to Shinar; for in his days they built the city and the tower, saying, 'Go to, let us ascend thereby into heaven.'
20. And they began to build, and in the fourth week they made brick with fire, and the bricks served them for stone, and the clay with which they cemented them together was asphalt which comes out of the sea, and out of the fountains of water in the land of Shinar.
21. And they built it: forty and three years [1645-1688 A.M.] were they building it; its breadth was 203 bricks, and the height (of a brick) was the third of one; its height amounted to 5433 cubits and 2 palms, and (the extent of one wall was) thirteen stades (and of the other thirty stades).

22. And the Lord our God said unto us: Behold, they are one people, and (this) they begin to do, and now nothing will be withholden from them. Go to, let us go down and confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech, and they may be dispersed into cities and nations, and one purpose will no longer abide with them till the day of judgment.'
23. And the Lord descended, and we descended with him to see the city and the tower which the children of men had built.
24. And he confounded their language, and they no longer understood one another's speech, and they ceased then to build the city and the tower.
25. For this reason the whole land of Shinar is called Babel, because the Lord did there confound all the language of the children of men, and from thence they were dispersed into their cities, each according to his language and his nation.
26. And the Lord sent a mighty wind against the tower and overthrew it upon the earth, and behold it was between Asshur and Babylon in the land of Shinar, and they called its name 'Overthrow'.
27. In the fourth week in the first year [1688 A.M.] in the beginning thereof in the four and thirtieth jubilee, were they dispersed from the land of Shinar.
28. And Ham and his sons went into the land which he was to occupy, which he acquired as his portion in the land of the south.