

GENESIS  
Chapter 9:24-26

Technical Notes of Matthew Poole

**(24) And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.**

*Noah awoke from his wine*, from his drunkenness, or from his sleep, the effect of it, *and knew*, either by the information of his sons, or by Divine inspiration, *what his younger son had done unto him*; or, *his little son*, either Ham, mentioned ver. 22, or Canaan, mentioned in the next verse; by comparing of which places it may be gathered that Canaan first saw it, and told his father Ham of it, and he told it to his brethren. The latter seems here principally intended, 1. Because the curse following is appropriated to him. 2. Because of the title of *younger* or *little son*, which seems not to be so properly added if Ham was meant; both because it doth not appear that he was the youngest, for wheresoever these three brethren are mentioned he is always put in the middle place, and because that addition seems to be unnecessary and impertinent to the present business, which if Canaan be intended, is proper and pertinent, by way of distinction, to show that he spake of his grandson, or his son's son. *Object*. He calleth him his son. *Answ*. Grandchildren are frequently called their grandfather's sons in Scripture, as Gen. 29:5; 2 Sam. 19:24; 1 Chron. 1:17.

**(25) And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.**

*And he said*, not from the passion of revenge, but by Divine inspiration, and the Spirit of prophecy, *Cursed be Canaan*; hateful to God, abhorred by men, miserable in his person and posterity. *Quest*. Seeing Ham committed the crime, why is the curse inflicted upon his son Canaan? *Answ*. 1. When Canaan is mentioned, Ham is not exempted from the curse, but rather more deeply plunged into it, whilst he is pronounced accursed, not only in his person, (which is manifestly supposed by his commission of that sin for which the curse was inflicted,) but also in his posterity, which doubtless was a great aggravation of his grief; as on the contrary Joseph is said to be blessed when his children are blessed, Gen. 48:15, 16. 2. It seems therefore very probable from these words, and the Hebrew doctors and others affirm it, that Canaan did partake with his father in the sin, yea, that he was the first discoverer of his father's shame. 3. Canaan is particularly mentioned by the Spirit of prophecy, in regard of the future extirpation of that people; and this is here remembered for the encouragement of the Israelites, who were now in their expedition against them. 4. This may be an ellipsis, or defect of the word *father*; for such relative words are oftentimes omitted and understood in Scripture, as Matt. 4:21, *James of Zebedee, for the son of Zebedee*; John 19:25, *Mary of Cleopas, for the wife of Cleopas*; Acts 7:16, *Emmor of Sychem, for the father of Sychem*, as our English translation rightly supplies it from Gen. 33:19. Thus *Goliath* is put for *Goliath's brother*, as is evident by comparing 2 Sam. 21:19, with 1 Chron. 20:5. So here *Canaan* may be put for *the father of Canaan*, as the Arabic translation hath it, that is, *Ham*, as the *Seventy* here render it. And though Ham had more sons, yet he may be here described by his relation to Canaan, because in him the curse was more fixed and dreadful, reaching to his utter extirpation, whilst the rest of Ham's posterity in after-ages were blessed with the saving knowledge of the gospel. *A servant of servants*, i.e. the vilest and worst of servants; as *vanity of vanities* is the greatest vanity, Eccl. 1:2; and *great wickedness*, Hos. 10:15, is in the Hebrew *wickedness of wickedness*; and *King of kings* is put for the chief of kings.

**(26) And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.**

*Blessed be the Lord God of Shem. Quest.* What is this to Shem? for it is not Shem, but God who is here blessed. *Answ.* 1. Shem also is here blessed, and that in the highest degree, because the Lord hath here declared himself to be Shem's God. Now for God to be said to be any man's God, is every where mentioned as the height of blessedness: see Gen. 17:7; Psal. 144:15; Jer. 31:33; Matt. 22:32. But the phrase is here justly varied. The curse is fixed upon Ham, because man alone is the author of his own sin, and the cause of his ruin; but because God is the author and fountain of all the good that man either doth or receiveth, therefore the blessing is emphatically given to God, who only doth the work, and of right is to receive all the glory, yet so as it redounds to Shem also. And Shem is here peculiarly mentioned, not Japheth, both for the comfort of the Israelites, whose progenitor he was, and because this blessing was first seated and long continued in Shem's posterity alone, Japheth's posterity being for a long time excluded from it; and because the Lord Christ, who is often called *the Lord* and *God* in Scripture, did take flesh from Shem; and so the incarnation of Christ may be here foretold, and Shem highly honoured and blessed in this, that he should be the father of Christ according to the flesh, Rom. 9:5. *Answ.* 2. This may be a short and abrupt manner of speech, which is frequent in the Hebrew tongue; and it may signify that Shem should be so eminently blessed, that men beholding it should be rapt up into admiration, and break forth into the praises of that God who gave such gifts unto men, and did so great things for Shem. *Answ.* 3. The words may be otherwise rendered, either thus, *Blessed, O Lord God, let Shem be*, i.e. Do thou bless him. So it is only the construct from *Elohe*, for the absolute *Elohim*, which is not unusual in Scripture. Or thus, *Blessed of the Lord God be Shem, or shall Shem be*. So here is only a defect of the Hebrew particle *min*, which is oft wanting.