

The Genesis Echo

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The Genesis Echo is an ongoing investigation of pre-Babel history as recorded in both the Bible and the characters of the Chinese language.

The Tower of Babel

Genesis 10 is primarily a record of genealogies and the various divisions which would eventually take place. However, when we come to Genesis 11, we see what caused the division of nations and languages mentioned in the preceding chapter. All the people of the earth were together in the plain of Shinar and shared one language. They were determined to build a tower *"whose top is in the heavens"* (**Genesis 11:4**).

A Chinese word for TOWER (tǎ, 塔) is descriptive of both the materials used to build the tower and the unity of the people who were making it. The components used to make bricks for the tower were DUST (tǔ, 土) and GRASS (cǎo, 艹). All the MEN (rén, 人) involved in the project were of ONE (yī, 一) MOUTH (kǒu, 口) or language.

tǎ

塔

TOWER

tà

塔

UNDERTAKING

There are a few other words inside 塔 related to the construction of the tower. If the image for dust is removed from the left side, the character then becomes UNDERTAKING (tà, 荅). Certainly, the building project they planned was a huge undertaking. But further, if we remove the image for grass from the top of UNDERTAKING, we are left with the word UNITED (gě, 合). To finish the tower would be a huge undertaking that would require a united effort.

gě

合

UNITED

However, the building of the tower was not God's will. The LORD had commanded, *...be fruitful and multiply on the earth ... be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ... be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.* (**Genesis 8:17; 9:1, 7, NKJV**)

Rather than heeding the voice of the LORD and departing from the plain of Shinar to populate the earth, the people stayed together, saying, *...let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.* (**Genesis 11:4, NKJV**)

shé

乱

CONFUSION

Thus, since man disobeyed His will, God disrupted their construction project. He CONFUSED (luàn, 乱) their language. At one moment, they could understand one another, and the next, their speech was a mystery to one another. The etymology of this word appropriately shows a TONGUE (shé, 舌) MYSTERY (yīn, 乚). The Genesis record tells us

...the LORD said, 'Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confusion their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' (**Genesis 11:6-7, NKJV**)

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Though the desire of the people was that they not be scattered (Genesis 11:4), it was God's will that they multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 8:17; 9:1, 7). God's will prevailed, for we are told,

...the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth... Therefore it's name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.
(Genesis 11:8-9, NKJV)

bā bié

巴別

BABEL

The Hebrew word for Babel literally means confusion. The Chinese word for BABEL is 巴別 (bā bié), and speaks of the reason behind the confusion. It records God's DESIRE (bā, 巴) for man to SEPARATE or DEPART (bié, 別) from the plain of Shinar, that the whole earth might be populated.

sàn

散

SCATTER

The SCATTERING of the people from the land of Sinar throughout the world is pictured in 散 (sàn). It literally reveals that ALL (gòng, 共) FLESH (yuè, 月) had to GO (zhǐ, 止). They would MIGRATE to various regions across the globe. A generic word for migrate in the Chinese (qiān, 迁) shows THOUSANDS (qiān, 千) WALKING (chuò, 走).

qiān

迁

MIGRATE

qiān

遷

MIGRATE

Another more detailed word for MIGRATE (qiān, 遷) seems to be specific to the migration of the Chinese people from the plain of Shinar. It reveals their GREAT (dà, 大) WALK (chuò, 走) from the WEST (xī, 西), from which they would eventually STOP (yǐ, 已) in the land we today call China. An interesting note, they acknowledge the general region from which they had departed, using the word WEST (xī, 西), which takes us back to the ONE (yī, 一) MAN (rén, 人) in the garden ENCLOSURE (wéi, 圍) – Adam.

Next time, we will look at how the ancient Chinese knew all these details about the pre-Babel history. How could a people who had secluded themselves from the rest of the world so accurately record in the syntax of their own language the details of creation, Adam and Eve's sin in the garden, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, the tower of Babel and the scattering from Shinar?

Other Resources

Nelson, Ethel R., and C.H. Kang. The Discovery of Genesis: How the Truths of Genesis Were Found Hidden in the Chinese Language. St. Louis, MO : Concordia Publishing House, 1979.

Nelson, Ethel R., Richard E. Broadberry, and Ginger Tong Chock. God's Promise to the Chinese. Dunlap, TN : Read Books Publishers, 1997.

MDBG Chinese-English Dictionary. usa.mdbg.net/chindict/chindict.php