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Collective Degradation: Slavery and the Construction of Race

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Early Jewish and Christian Views of Blacks

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In my forthcoming book, *The Curse of Ham*, I explore the various images of the black African in early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. I became interested in this topic because of a claim made by some that anti-Black sentiment in Western civilization has its roots in ancient Judaism, specifically in Rabbinic culture. The immediate focus of my investigation was therefore the literature of the Rabbis of late antiquity, that is, the talmudic and midrashic corpus of writings covering the first eight centuries of the Common Era. It quickly became apparent, however, that this focus needed a context, both diachronic and synchronic. Thus, the investigation began with the biblical, Ancient Near Eastern period and then moved into Hellenistic-Jewish literature before the rabbinic material was approached. As for the synchronic context, an exploration of contemporaneous Christian and Muslim literature became crucial for the following reason: The source for almost all of the Jewish material is scriptural exegesis, and scriptural exegesis traversed confessional boundaries in the Near East. Moving across such boundaries, biblical interpretations took on new forms, which, together with diachronic changes within Jewish civilization, provided the grid on which my exploration was mapped.

In this talk I would like to look at two issues discussed in the book. The first is the primary text on which the claim for a rabbinic anti-Black sentiment is based. It is a midrash that sees the origin of dark skin in a curse of God. The second issue I want to discuss is the matter of color symbolism underlying the common Christian interpretations of the Black as sinner and as devil and demon. The question before us in both cases will be what these stories or interpretations say about the authors' views of black Africans. Certainly, from our perspective today they appear to reflect decidedly anti-Black sentiment. Is that true from the perspective of the authors' own time and place?

Etiologies, Environment, and Somatic Norm

The 2nd-century Rabbi Ishmael described the Jewish skin color as "like the boxwood tree (*eshkeroa* אשכרוע), neither black nor white, but in between."[1] This rabbi's perception of the Jewish skin color as light brown, the color of the boxwood tree,[2] agrees with the descriptions found in a number of papyri from the Ptolemaic period in Egypt that describe the complexion of various Jews as "honey-colored."[3] A similar self-perception is found among other Mediterranean peoples, the Greeks and Romans of antiquity, who saw their skin color as midway between the dark African and the fair German, *inter nigrum et pallidum*.[4] "The Mediterranean type of 'Caucasian' physiognomy with pale-brown (*albus*) skin … represented the Roman somatic norm image."[5]

R. Ishmael was commenting on a legal matter and was not expressing pride in the Jews' skin color, as some think.[6] Nevertheless, we may assume that he, and the Jews in general, were partial to the color of their own skin, for such partiality is a universal phenomenon and is found in all cultures and at all times. As Sextus Empiricus (ca. 200 CE), the Greek philosopher put it when speaking of feminine beauty, all men agree that beautiful women exist, but disagree about what constitutes beauty, "the Ethiopian preferring the blackest and most snub-nosed, and the Persian approving the whitest and most hook-nosed, and someone else declaring that she who is intermediate both in feature and in coloring is the most beautiful of all."[7]

The Greek and Roman preference for their own 'intermediate' color underlies the widespread environmental theory of anthropological differentiation found in classical sources, that is, the theory that the environment determines the physical and nonphysical characteristics of humanity and thus accounts for differences among peoples.[8] The ancient Greeks noticed that those who lived in the remote northern regions of the world were the lightest-skinned people and those in the remote south had the darkest skin, and they developed the theory that the extremes of weather and environment in the far distant areas caused the different ethnic traits, including skin color. The extreme cold and lack of sun in the north produced light skin while the extreme heat and rays of the sun in the south produced dark skin. The closer one came to the center of the world, i.e. Greece and Rome, the more balanced was the environment and thus the effects of the environment on people. In the center humans were the most beautiful physically, in complexion and features, and nonphysically, in temperament (e.g. courage), character (e.g. intelligence, morality), and culture.[9]

The environmental theory is the most common explanation found in classical sources accounting for human color variation, but the Greeks and Romans also recount the myth of Phaeton, who brought the sun chariot too close to the earth. As Ovid said, "It was then, as men think, that the peoples of Ethiopia became black-skinned."[10] Such myths are known as etiologies, that is, stories of ancient times which account for the existing state of the world. Generally, the thing requiring explanation is seen as an unusual or nonideal aspect of the world or of life. Thus Phaeton accounts for the 'unusual' skin color of the black Africans. Another example of an etiology – this from the Bible – is the Garden of Eden story. It explains the snake's unusual (legless) anatomy, as well as the labor pains that women suffer and the reason why one must toil to make the land produce its bounty. An important feature in Ancient Near Eastern etiologies is the curse. "Curses … served

as explanation for enigmatic physiological or environmental peculiarities. The ancestor or proto-type of those exhibiting such abnormalities was considered to have been cursed by God … or by some ancient hero."[11] Thus, to take the Garden of Eden story, the peculiarities of the snake, labor pains, and toil have their origin in God's curses. Another biblical example is the curse of slavery pronounced against Canaan (Gen 9:25), which is seen by Bible scholars as an etiology accounting for the Canaanites' low and servile status at the time of the story's composition.[12]

An etiology explaining the variety of human skin colors is found in the 1st- or 2nd-century CE Jewish paraphrase of the Bible, *Biblical Antiquities*, by Pseudo-Philo. In this work the author adds to the Tower of Babel story an element absent in the biblical account (Genesis 11):

> God divided up their languages and changed their appearances (*mutavit eorum effigies*), and a man did not recognize his own brother and no one heard the language of his neighbor.[13]

"Changed their appearances" refers to ethnic skin color variation, as Louis Ginzberg and Howard Jacobson recognized.[14] The etiological point of the biblical story is intended to explain the diversity of human groupings throughout the world ("The Lord scattered them from there over all the earth"). This is made clear in one of the Dead Sea scrolls which describes the Tower of Babel event as "the confusion of tongue and separation of nations, the settling of clans and allotment of lands."[15] The point of the biblical story is to explain human variation writ large. When Pseudo-Philo said, therefore, that God "changed the appearance" of humanity, he meant a change that would visibly mark human differentiation by its various groupings, i.e. ethnic differentiation by skin color. Where the Bible used speech to illustrate the point, Pseudo-Philo added color.

A rabbinic midrash implicitly subscribes to the same idea, that is the introduction of skin color variation at the Tower of Babel. Isaiah 66:18 describes the messianic age as a time when all "peoples and languages" (Gen 11:6) will be brought together, thus depicting a reversal to humanity's pre-transgression state "of one people and one language." As in Genesis, Isaiah's indicator of differentiation among human groupings is language. But the rabbinic midrash injected skin color in interpreting the Isaiah passage:

> Isaiah said: In the messianic period he who is light-skinned will take hold of the hand of him who is dark-skinned and the dark-skinned will take hold of the hand of the light-skinned and arm in arm they will walk together.…[16]

The same way of indicating anthropological variety by reference to language and skin color is found in very early Ancient Near Eastern texts. The 14th-century BCE Egyptian Hymn to Aton, for example, says:

> O sole god, without another of your kind, you created the world according to your desire…. You set every man in his place…. Their tongues are separate in speech,

> and their nature [or, form] is likewise; the color of their skin is different: you distinguish the peoples."[17]

By using the topos of language and color differences to indicate human diversity and by attaching it to the biblical Tower of Babel story, Pseudo-Philo (explicitly) and the midrash (implicitly) provide an etiology for the different human (ethnic) skin colors.

Other etiologies that focus only on dark skin are far more common, turning up all over the Near East – from the 3rd century up until our own time. As is to be expected in Bible dominated societies, these origin stories are often built around biblical personalities and events. A statement attributed to the Syriac Christian church father, Ephrem (d. 373), is quoted in a catena of patristic explanations and exegeses to the Pentateuch.[18] The comment describes the story of Noah's drunkenness in Genesis 9, including the curse of slavery on Canaan, but has the following addition to the biblical account:

> Mar Ephrem the Syrian said: "When Noah awoke and was told what Canaan did … Noah said, 'Cursed be Canaan and may God make his face black (*sawwada allāhu wajhahu*),' and immediately the face of Canaan changed; so did the face of his father Ham, and their white faces became black and dark (*wa- āda bayā wajhuhumā sawādan wa-qatamatan*) and their color changed."[19]

It is questionable whether Ephrem actually authored this statement since it is not found in his extant commentaries.[20] The value of this statement for us, however, is not in its authorship but in the fact that it illustrates an etiology accounting for dark skin color known in eastern Christian circles. Indeed, the tradition makes an appearance later in the same Syriac Christian world. Ishodad of Merv (9th century, bishop of Hedhatha) records it, although not accepting it: When Noah cursed Canaan with eternal slavery, he says, "instantly, by the force of the curse … his face and entire body became black (*ukmotha*). This is the black color which has persisted in his descendants."[21]

Similar stories are told by many others. One of the earliest is transmitted by the 3rd-4th century Samaritan, Marqe:

> "When Kush saw the nakedness of his father, he was cursed and he wore darkness (*wlbš qblh*) – he and all his descendants forever."[22]

As in the Ephrem account, the framework for this story is the biblical narrative of Noah's drunkenness and curse, but the one cursed is not Canaan, as in the Bible, but Kush. It would seem that the cause for the change from biblical Canaan to Kush is that Canaan and his descendants were not black. If the curse was to be one of dark skin, a dark-skinned population would have to be found to carry the curse. Kush, as the biblical ancestor of the dark-skinned Kushites (i. e., black Africans) would fit the bill.

Marqe's explanation for the origin of black skin illustrates another common feature of etiologies: the close connection of the punishment to the crime, in a measure-for-measure association. This aspect is cleverly put into play by Marqe with his use of the metaphor

"to wear darkness": Kush sinfully looked at his father uncovered and was therefore punished with a permanent covering of darkness. The punishment was made to accord with the crime. As Marqe said: "He received recompense according to his action…. Kush saw his father's nakedness, and he was cursed and he wore darkness."

Etiologies of dark skin involving the biblical personalities of Noah and his son Ham are very common in Islamic literature.[23] As an example, I quote Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. ca. 730):

> ām the son of Noah was a white man, with a handsome face and a fine figure, and Almighty God changed his color and the color of his descendants in response to his father's curse. He went away, followed by his sons, and they settled by the shore, where God increased and multiplied them. They are the blacks (*sūdān*).[24]

Rabbinic literature preserves an etiology, transmitted in the early 3rd-century, accounting for the origin of dark-skinned people. It is based on the legend that God prohibited Noah and all the creatures in the ark from engaging in sex during the flood, a legend found in many Jewish sources, both rabbinic and Hellenistic, as well as in Christian literature. Built exegetically upon several verses, the underlying idea was explained by Philo in the 1st century as "it was fitting to sympathize with wretched humanity."[25]

With this legend as a self-understood background, the rabbinic text says that three creatures transgressed – the raven, the dog, and Ham the son of Noah – and were punished. "The dog is connected, the raven spits, and Ham was punished in his skin," or, in the version of the Palestinian Talmud, "in having his skin turn dark."[26] By the 9th-11th centuries a set of explanations for these three punishments seems to have become well accepted, and is commonly found in Jewish literature from that period onward. Accordingly, "connected" refers to the dog's physiological inability to disengage from the bitch immediately after ejaculation; "spit" refers to what was believed to be the raven's unusual manner of inseminating the female by spitting the semen into her mouth; and "Ham was punished in his skin," means that his son Kush, the ancestor of black Africa, was born dark skinned.[27] Some have claimed that this tale reflects a racist view not only of the Black's skin color as a curse but also of the Black as sexually promiscuous. Otherwise, why the connection between black skin and a sexual sin? As we shall see, however, the story, when viewed in historical and cultural context, presents a different picture.

The close connection of the punishment to the crime, the measure-for-measure association, is seen clearly in the case of the dog and raven. They are punished in sexual ways for their sexual sins, i.e. the story is framed as sexual transgressions to explain the unusual sexual behavior of the dog and raven. The dog's punishment of being unable to immediately disengage is recognizable today as natural characteristics of the dog, and was already noted by Aristotle (d. 322 BCE) and Pliny (d. 79 CE).[28] While oral insemination may not be seen today as a sexual characteristic of the raven, it was a common belief in the ancient and medieval worlds. Aristotle records it – "ravens (κόρακες) and ibises" – as a belief alleged by "Anaxagorus and some of the other

physiologers"; Aristophanes of Byzantium (3rd-2nd century BCE) thought that pigeons (περιστερά) copulated orally, and Pseudo-Clement (3rd century CE) claimed it of the raven.[29]

Thus for the dog and raven, but how is Ham's dark skin a sexual punishment? It was commonly believed in antiquity that once the sun had "scorched" the Ethiopians black, the transmission of this characteristic to subsequent generations occurred due to a change in the composition of the Ethiopians' semen, since "the seed comes from all parts of the body" (Hippocrates),[30] and the altered seed was then imparted to the next generation. Strabo (15.1.24), for example, says that after the sun had darkened the Ethiopians, "already in the womb children, by seminal impartation, become like their parents in color." Perhaps the clearest statement to this effect is that by the church father Origen (d. ca. 253): "Among the whole of the Ethiopian race … there is a certain natural blackness because of seminal inheritance (*ex seminis carnalis successione nigredo*), that in those parts the sun burns with fiercer rays, and that having once been scorched, the bodies remain darkened in the transmission of the inborn defect (*infuscata corpora genuini vitii successione permaneant*)."[31] There was even the belief, which goes back as far as Herodotus, that the semen of Ethiopians (and dark-skinned Indians) "is not white like other men's, but black like their skin," although Aristotle pointed out Herodotus' error.[32]

Rabbinic literature does not have anything about "black semen," but the sex-in-the-ark etiology does implicitly subscribe to the idea that dark skin derives from a changed seminal composition. This is seen clearly in Arabic literature, which incorporated the rabbinic story of Ham turning black in the ark and added explanatory glosses such as "then his semen was altered and he brought forth blacks" or "God changed [Ham's] semen such that his wife gave blacks to the world."[33] Although the idea is not explicitly stated in the rabbinic accounts, it underlies a 3rd-century rabbinic explanation of the ark etiology, which compares it to the process of minting coins, a metaphor commonly used to illustrate the act of procreation. The engraved cast stamps out coins all similar to the engraving on the dyecast, just as human semen produces children all similar to its 'encoded' characteristics.[34] The comparison is thus meant to explain the relationship between Ham's punishment and his sin according to the measure-for-measure principle: a procreative (i.e., seminal) punishment for a procreative (i.e., sexual) sin. It would seem, therefore, that the ancient notion of dark skin originating in a changed seminal composition was cast in 3rd-century rabbinic literature in the form of an etiology involving Ham.

Why was it Ham whom the Rabbis depicted as having a change of skin color? Because according to biblical genealogy Ham was the ancestor of the dark-skinned Egyptians and Kushites. Furthermore, by this time it was believed – incorrectly – that the name Ham derived from a Hebrew root meaning 'dark,' 'brown,' or 'black.'[35] Thus the Rabbis were able to account for the existence of dark-skinned people while at the same time explaining, implicitly, the etymology of the name Ham.

Let's look more closely at Ham's punishment of dark skin. I said before that by the 9th-11th centuries, explanations of the three punishments had become well-accepted in

Jewish sources, most prominantly in Rashi's 11th-century commentary to the Talmud. The explanation given for Ham's blackness in these later sources is that "Kush descended from him," i.e. Ham's punishment was that his descendant Kush was born dark skinned. Since Kush is the ancestor of the black Africans, the black skin punishment refers specifically to the black African. This interpretation is found also in an Islamic text. Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833) in the name of Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. ca. 730) records the sex-in-the-ark tradition this way:

> Noah placed the women in isolation…. Ham went to his wife one night and had intercourse with her…. When Noah awoke … he said to God, 'Allah, blacken his face and the face of the descendants of the one who disobeyed and had intercourse with his wife.' So Ham's wife had a black son and he named him Kūshā …."[36]

The earlier sources, however, – the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds and the Midrash – assign the punishment of blackness to Ham himself and make no mention of Kush. This is clearly the meaning of the midrash as noted by later commentators, contra Rashi.[37]

This is significant because Ham is the ancestor not only of the black African people of Kush/Ethiopia, but also, according to the Bible, of other dark-skinned people, such as the Egyptians. In other words, that the punishment of dark skin refers to black Africans and black Africans alone, is a view found in Jewish sources not earlier than the 9th century. Due, however, to the overwhelming influence of Rashi's commentary on the Talmud, his explanation of "Ham was punished in his skin" by "Kush descended from him" became accepted as standard. It is found in works of all sorts ranging from the midrashic anthologies from the 12th to 14th centuries, to various 16th-17th century Christian writers, to Eisenmenger's notorious antisemitic tract *Entdecktes Judenthum* (1700), to Jewish encyclopedias, to works of modern scholarship, and it has even made its way into the talmudic text in one manuscript.[38] The original rabbinic etiology of sex-in-the-ark, however, meant to explain why there are darker-skinned people in the world, and these people consisted of all the dark-skinned descendants of Ham, not just the black Africans.[39]

We can see that this is the intended meaning of the etiology by, once again, examining the Arabic writers who adopted the midrash. They speak of Ham's seed being altered on account of his sin in the ark, as noted earlier, as a result of which the "Sūdān" came into the world.[40] Isma il al-Beily has shown that the term Sūdān in early Arabic writings was not restricted in meaning to the sub-Saharan black African, but rather referred to various dark-skinned people including the Copts, Fezzan, Zaghawa, Barbar, Indians, Arabs, the people of Marw, the inhabitants of the islands in the Indian Ocean, even the Chinese, as well as the Ethiopians (abash), Zanj, Buja, and Nubians. In other words, "the coloured people of the world."[41] Other scholars have more recently echoed his conclusion.[42]

Al-Beily mentions Jā iz, Ya qūbī, abarī, Mas ūdī, Ibn Rosteh, and others, who use the word Sūdān with the meaning 'colored people.' We can add several other authors

including those who use the term in the context of Ham's curse of dark skin. As examples I'll quote Ka b al-A bār (d. ca. 652) and Wahb ibn Munabbih, mentioned earlier. Ka b spoke of the cursed descendants of Ham "begetting black (*aswadayn*) male and female children until they multiplied and spread along the shore. Among them are the Nubians (*nūba*), the Negroes (*zanj*), the Barbars (*brbr*), the Sindhis (*sind*), the Indians (*hind*) and all the blacks (*sūdān*): they are the children of Ham."[43] Wahb ibn Munabbih, "a celebrated authority on the traditions of the *ahl al-kitāb*," reported that God "changed [Ham's] color and the color of his descendants in response to his father's curse," and that his descendants include the various races of blacks (*sūdān*): Nubians, Zanj, Qaran, Zaghawa, Ethiopians, Copts and Barbar.[44]

So from the Muslim adoption of and gloss on the midrash one can see that the sex-in-the-ark story is an etiology that is meant to account for the existence of all dark-skinned people, not just the black African. And rabbinic sources do indeed depict Ham's other progeny – at least the Egyptians – as dark skinned,[45] a common depiction of the Egyptian by writers from Asia Minor, Syria, Greece and Rome.[46]

The Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources depicting the Egyptians as a dark-skinned people, parallel the Islamic accounts that consider the Copts, i.e. the Egyptians, as one of the Sūdān. It should not be surprising, therefore, if we find a rabbinic etiology that sees the origin of dark-skinned people beginning with the ancestor of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, that is, Ham. Similarly, Greek myth has an etiology accounting for the dark-skinned Egyptians and Ethiopians. Zeus disguised himself by becoming black (κάρβανος αἰθός) and seduced Io.[47] From this union was born black (κελαινός) Epaphus, whose daughter was Libya (Africa), whose grandsons were Egyptus and Danaus and, according to Euripides, also Cepheus and Phineus (Nubia).[48] In a different genealogy Zeus had four grandchildren: the Blacks (Μέλανες), the Ethiopians (Αἰθίοπες), the Undergrounders (Κατουδαῖοι), and the Pygmies (Πυγμαῖοι).[49] As Stephanie West says, the story is "an explanation for the swarthiness of [Zeus and Io's] descendants, the Egyptians and Libyans."[50] And again, "Sophocles offers us an aitiology for Egyptian appearance and national character based on the circumstances in which the founding father of the race was conceived."[51] Both the Jewish and the Greek etiologies show that in regard to skin color, the Kushites/Ethiopians, that is, the black Africans, were not considered in a separate category but were seen as part of a larger class of dark-skinned peoples. As Snowden said, in the classical color scheme Ethiopians are described as the blackest of mankind, the Indians less so, the Egyptians next in order as mildly dark, and finally the Moors.[52] Thus in both cultures, the Jewish and the Greek, we find etiologies accounting for the anomaly of dark-skinned people in a lighter-skinned world.

What do the dark-skin etiologies imply about the Jewish, and in general the Near Eastern, view of darker-skinned peoples? Do such stories imply a deprecation of dark skin color? Undoubtedly. They obviously indicate that the authors of the stories considered their own lighter skin color to be the norm and, therefore, the preferred. Such human conceit is universal. People everywhere find most desirable that which most closely resembles themselves. The two major studies of ancient Graeco-Roman attitudes toward black Africans, those of Snowden and Thompson, concluded that preference for the

Mediterranean somatic norm of light brown skin was largely responsible for any expressions of anti-Black sentiment in the classical world, which was explained as an ethnocentric manifestation of conformism to dominant aesthetic tastes.[53] Near Eastern attitudes were no different in this regard.

Nor did black African etiologies of light-skinned people express a different attitude. Veronika Görög-Karady studied the various skin-color etiologies of the Vili in the Congo and concluded: "The texts thus manifest a fundamental ethnocentrism…. The Black constitutes the prototype of humanity from which all the 'races' have issued. What is more, [the Black] appears as the normal condition by which humanity is measured where all the other species of mankind – mixed breeds (*métis*) or whites – figure only as deviations or incomplete or unsatisfactory forms…. The thematic nucleus of the majority of these Vili texts consists of a fault or misdeed imputed to the ancestor or one of the ancestors and to which the deviation of humanity issues directly [….] The racial differentiation flows directly from the nature of the crime…. The transformation of skin color appears as the punishment for an evil action…. All these texts affirm the culpability and justified mythic damnation of the white ancestor."[54] In both light-skinned and dark-skinned societies ethnocentric driven folktales saw the origin of 'non-normal' skin color in divine punishment for disobedience. Only the colors are reversed.

The Near Eastern etiological folktales thus provide us a window into the authors' view of dark skin. While accounting for the variety of human color in the world, these stories see dark skin color as a deviation from the somatic norm and thus aesthetically displeasing. There is no doubt that the authors preferred their own skin color.

It is instructive to compare the two explanations for the origin of dark skin, that is the Near Eastern etiologies and the Graeco-Roman environmental theory. Despite its more scientific sounding explanation, the environmental theory also favored the authors' somatic norm. Implicit in the theory is its ethnocentric character, which viewed others' skin color as an aberrant result of extreme conditions on the normal complexion. Always behind this theory stood the assumption that the changed color was a kind of degeneration, and characteristic of inferiority. The Latin term *decolor* ('discoloration'), often used to describe the phenomenon, conveys "a distinctly pejorative connotation, describing something that ought to be fair and gleaming but is unnaturally darkened…. Since white is the proper and natural color for human beings, to be *decolor* is to be stained and flawed."[55]

This point was emphasized by William Cohen when discussing France's later adoption of the classical explanation in the 17th-18th centuries. "On a theoretical level, environmental theories … were egalitarian; in practice they were not. Being black was definitely less desirable than being white. The climatic theory posited people who were originally white and who turned black only as a result of exposure to extreme forms of temperature; in varying degrees it was thought that this transformation was a form of degeneration, implying a departure from the norm."[56] Cohen's point was made also by Jean Devisse and John Hunwick, but for the Islamic world. Commenting on Ibn Khaldūn's (14th century) rejection of the curse theory of blackness in favor of the

climatic theory, Devisse says: "This position is not … so favorable as it may at first seem. True Ibn Khaldūn … did attribute the blackness of the Sūdān to the action of the sun…. But this theory itself was turned against the Sūdān! A few lines further on, Ibn Khaldūn very seriously explains that, due to the very nature of climate, only the men of the 'temperate' zone can be characterized by *balance*. Thus we are brought back to the Mediterraneocentrism we have already talked about. Beyond the 'temperate' zone, whether to the north or to the south … climatic excesses engender dangerous excesses of character."[57] We can clearly see the non-egalitarian character of the environmental theory in the words of Aristotle: "The nations inhabiting the cold places and those of Europe are full of spirit but somewhat deficient in intelligence and skill…. The peoples of Asia on the other hand are intelligent and skillful in temperament, but lack spirit…. But the Greek race participates in both characters, just as it occupies the middle position geographically, for it is both spirited and intelligent."[58] Like Goldilocks and the porridge, one extreme is too hot, the other too cold; the one in the middle is just right.

In short, somatic norm preference dictated that neither the Greeks and Romans nor those people living in the Near East, whether Jews, Samaritans, Christians, or Muslims, saw darker skin as aesthetically pleasing. The Greeks and Romans expressed this view by means of the environmental theory, the biblically based monotheists by means of etiology with divine curse. The negative aesthetic sentiment is the same; the culturally conditioned literary expression differs.[59]

Recognition of humanity's various skin colors can be traced as far back as ancient Egypt. Several tomb paintings, dating from the 13th and 12th centuries BCE, depict different ethnic groups as four human figures. The figures are identified by their ethnic names and painted in different colors: the Egyptian (*rm w*) is red-brown, the Kushite (*n syw*) black, and the Libyan (*tm w*) and Syrian/Asian (*3mw*) are painted in two different light colors (pink, yellow, or white).[60] As the Egyptian empire expanded its borders it came into contact with peoples of different skin colors, who were at various times represented iconographically.

The same happened in the Islamic world, except that in Islam, of course, the representations are literary, not iconographic. As the boundaries of the Muslim world expanded, we begin to see an emphasis on skin color as a marker of differentiation among peoples. Bernard Lewis has shown that in early Arabic literature, color terms used to describe people generally have a personal rather than an ethnic sense (like our 'sallow' or 'ruddy'), and even when they are used ethnically, the terms are relative, e.g. the Arabs might describe themselves as black compared to the red Persians but as red or white as compared to the black Africans. However, following the Muslim conquests of large areas of Asia and Africa in the 7th century a change took place in Arabic color descriptions of people. There is a "narrowing, specializing, and fixing of color terms applied to human beings. In time almost all disappear apart from 'black,' 'red,' and 'white'; and these become ethnic and absolute instead of personal and relative."[61]

Kim Hall has drawn attention to a similar phenomenon in 16th-century England. She noted that descriptions of blackness and whiteness, dark and light, in English Renaissance

texts do not merely reflect Elizabethan standards of beauty of complexion or a European aesthetic tradition or moral categories, but "become in the early modern period the conduit through which the English began to formulate the notions of 'self' and 'other.'" Hall explains this development against the backdrop of England's movement from insularity to encounters with other peoples. These encounters brought about the "process by which preexisting literary tropes of blackness profoundly interacted with the fast-changing economic relations of white Europeans and their darker "others" during the Renaissance." Thus these preexisting tropes were conveniently used to represent and categorize the other.[62]

The situations described by Lewis and Hall, although existing among different peoples and at different times, point to the same phenomenon. Both the Arabs and the English, who originally used color terms to depict individual complexion contrast, begin to use these terms in fixed ways as ethnic markers in order to describe themselves over against foreign peoples of darker or lighter skin when they discovered such people.

The notion that all humanity is color-coded is expressed in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim biblical interpretations that see Noah's sons as representing the three human skin colors of the world's population. A Jewish text, *Pirqei R. Eliezer*, depicts God as dividing the world among Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and decreeing different skin colors for them (literally, "blessing" them with different skin colors): light colored skin for the Japhetites, medium dark (brown) for the Semites, and very dark (black) for the Hamites.

To my knowledge, this kind of categorization of humanity by specific colors is not otherwise found in biblical or postbiblical Jewish literature. To be sure, we have seen evidence that ethnic color differences were recognized, but we have not come across this type of cataloguing of the world's populations by specific skin colors. Classification of humanity certainly occurred but it was of a religious nature, polytheists (idolaters) as opposed to monotheists, or gentiles as opposed to Jews. Categorization by skin color appears uniquely in this text.

This passage from *Pirqei R. Eliezer*, a work which was composed in Israel after the Islamic conquest, is strikingly paralleled in an Arabic text of approximately the same period. The historian abarī (d. 923) quotes Ibn Abbas (d. 686-8) as saying:

> Born to Noah were Shem, whose descendants were tawny-white (*bayā wa-adma*); Ham, whose descendants were black with hardly any whiteness (*sawād wa-bayā qalīl*); and Japheth, whose descendants were reddish-white (*al-šuqra wal- umra*).[63]

The tradition is repeated in the 13th century by the Christian Ibn al- Ibrī (Bar Hebraeus), known for the "fidelity with which he reproduces earlier writers."[64] Again in another work, Bar Hebraeus speaks of Noah dividing the world among his three sons, with Ham getting the Land of the Blacks (*sūdān*), Shem the Land of the Browns (*sumra*), and Japheth the Land of the Reds (*šuqra*).[65]

This categorization of the world's population by skin color seems to begin with the Islamic conquests in Africa and Asia. With the encounter of large numbers of darker- and lighter-skinned peoples in different parts of the world, color terms are no longer used as indications of relative complexion but as ethnic markers to describe the new populations, as Lewis said. This way of looking at humanity is captured by the story of Noah's sons who represent the three skin colors of all people in the world.

This new way of classifying people will explain the medieval interpretations of the rabbinic sex-in-the-ark story, which I discussed earlier. We saw that although the 3rd-century story has Ham who was darkened and became the ancestor of all dark-skinned people, by the 8th-9th centuries in Islamic sources and the 9th-11th centuries in Jewish sources it was understood that it was really Kush, one of Ham's sons, who was darkened and became the ancestor of dark-skinned people. In the Islamic version we can actually see how the Kush interpretation is grafted onto the earlier story mentioning only Ham: "When Noah awoke … he said to God, 'Allah, blacken his face and the face of the descendants of the one who disobeyed [i.e. Ham] and had intercourse with his wife.' So Ham's wife had a black son and he named him Kūshā …." (Ibn Hishām, d. 828 or 833).[66] Noah curses Ham and his descendants but the result is a blackening of Kush alone. The explanation for the interpretation in both Islamic and Jewish sources lies in the changed perception of skin color from a marker of complexion to a marker of ethnicity. Since skin color had now become an ethnic marker with black marking the Kushites, the person who became darkened in the story had to be Kush, the black African ancestor. If the story explicitly mentioned Ham, it could be interpreted away in the face of the way the world and its peoples were now perceived. Blackness was no longer seen as a complexion with varying shades, which might encompass several peoples, the Jew and Arab included. Skin color, as Lewis says, became fixed, narrowed and specialized.

The original, 3rd-century, sex-in-the-ark story, however, does not speak of black Africans but of all darker-skinned people. Read in historical and cultural context it is an etiology that implies an ethnocentric preference for the somatic norm and nothing more; it evinces no racist sentiment toward the black African.

Color Symbolism: Black as Sinner, Devil, and Demon

One image of the black African introduces us to the complex world of color symbolism, specifically the symbol of black as evil. The issue before us is not the abstract metaphor of black as evil (e.g., black heart, black day), which is apparently universal, but the concretization of the metaphor of blackness in the black person, in other words, the notion that the biblical black African metaphorically or allegorically represents evil. We find this first in the works of Philo, the first-century Alexandrian-Jewish philosopher, who explains that Kush's black color adumbrated his son's, Nimrod's, evil nature, "because pure evil has no participation in light."[67]The application of the metaphor of darkness as evil to dark-skinned people was also made in one rabbinic midrash which, interpreting Amos 9:7, says that when the Israelites sin they are like Kushites, i.e. black in sin. The most extensive such application of the metaphor was made by the church fathers in their allegorical interpretations of the Bible. The most ramified of these

interpretations, as well as the one with the greatest influence, was that of Origen (d. ca. 253). Using the metaphor of blackness as sin, he identified various biblical references to Ethiopia or Ethiopian(s), as well as the black maiden in Song 1:5-6, as symbols ("types") of the gentiles, who, not having known God, were born and lived in sin. Building on this foundation, Origen then erected an exegetical superstructure that encompassed all scriptural Ethiopians as sinners. Thus, God's words to the prophet Zephaniah, "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia will I receive the dispersed ones" (Zeph 3:10), means that although the Ethiopian, typologically the gentile church, "has been stained with the inky dye of wickedness [and] has been rendered black and dark," he will nevertheless be accepted by God; or, to take another example, Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian (Jer 38:7-13), who is "a man of a dark and ignoble race," represents the sinning gentiles.[68]

Origen's biblical exegesis was enormously influential on the church fathers who followed.[69] His interpretation of Song's maiden as an Ethiopian, and his use of this and other biblical Ethiopians as a metaphor for those in sin (i.e. the gentiles), became widespread in later patristic literature. It "set the tone of all later exegesis."[70] In sum, the patristic hermeneutic tradition saw the biblical Ethiopian as a metaphor to signify any person who, not having received a Christian baptism, is black in spirit and without divine light. In a similar way "Ethiopia" came to symbolize the "as yet unevangelized, and spiritually unregenerated world of sin."[71]

Can we say, as some wish to do, that that such interpretations are racist (leaving aside for the moment the anachronistic terminology as applied to the early centuries CE)? Frank Snowden argued that patristic exegesis from Origen to the 6th century leaves no doubt about the equality of the Black in the eyes of the church fathers.[72] Even if Origen's exegetical framework, which indeed included the Ethiopian within the Christian dispensation, was founded on the basis of interpreting Ethiopian as sinner, a point that Snowden does not consider, nonetheless Snowden is right: Christian exegesis does not harbor anti-Black sentiment. In allegorizing the biblical text the early Fathers drew on the common metaphor of darkness/blackness as evil, and, unless there is evidence to the contrary, we cannot assume that such exegesis reflects an antipathy toward black Africans. The same can be said for the Rabbis and Philo.

Elsewhere, Philo allegorizes the black raven that Noah sent from the ark, as "a symbol of evil, for it brings night and darkness upon the soul... The passage is to be interpreted allegorically, for unrighteousness is the adversary of the light of righteousness."[73] Does this imply that Philo was anti-raven? Or, to ask the question from the opposite direction, when Philo gives a positive allegorical interpretation of the color of the Ethiopian whom Moses married ("resolve unalterable, intense, and fixed," who, black like the pupil of the eye represents the soul's power of vision),[74] does this imply that Philo was pro-Ethiopian? Neither "pro" nor "anti," Philo was using the universal symbols of color in his allegorical arsenal. To claim that such allegorical interpretations are racist is to read modern-day assumptions and terminology back into history.

To be sure, the patristic interpretation of Ethiopian as sinner and the depiction of the devil and demons as Ethiopians had a negative impact over time and did contribute toward a

developing racism. These "texts were repeated again and again, and it is undeniable that they inspired the later interpretations that invariably identified blackness with sin, Ethiopia with the land of sin, and the Ethiopian with the collective sin of a people."[75] It is, Landislas Bugner concludes, "beyond question that this pejorative extension of the symbolism of black color reflected unfavorably on the person of the African."[76] This is no doubt true but it is an unforseen and unintentioned consequence of the church fathers' exegesis. The same may be said for the Rabbis' etiology of dark skin as a curse of God. They too were not motivated by racist sentiment although their ideas had negative consequences beyond their own cultural and chronological context.

These conclusions are in line with the overall findings in my book, that neither in the Bible nor in postbiblical literature of late antiquity do we find any racist views or attitudes toward the black African. Lewis did not find anti-Black sentiment in Arabia until the 7th-century conquest of Africa and the enslavement of its inhabitants. Snowden and Thompson similarly did not find a prejudiced view of Blacks in ancient Greece and Rome. I came to the same conclusion for the Jewish and Christian worlds of antiquity and late antiquity.

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[1] Mishna, *Nega im* 2.1; *Sifra, Nega im* 1.4-5 (p. 60a).

[2] Yehuda Feliks, *The Song of Songs: Nature, Epic and Allegory* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1974), p. 43.

[3] See Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley, 1999), pp. 29-30; see also I.F. Fikhman, "The Physical Appearance of Egyptian Jews according to the Greek Papyri," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 18 (1999) 134. For "honey-colored," as an intermediate shade between black and white, see E. Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry*, pp. 57-59. See also David Goldenberg, "The Development of the Idea of Race: Classical Paradigms and Medieval Elaborations," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 5 (1999) 565, for this description as a common term of human complexion.

[4] Frank Snowden, "Asclepiades' Didyme," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 32 (1991) 248; idem, "Attitudes toward Blacks in the Greek and Roman World," in *Africa and Africans in Antiquity*, ed. Edwin Yamauchi (East Lansing, 2001), pp. 256-257, and Lloyd Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1989), p. 131.

[5] Thompson, *ibid*.

[6] See Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2:238.

[7] Sextus, *Against the Ethicists* 43.

[8] E.g., Aristotle, *Problemata* 10.66, 898b, *Generation of Animals* 5.3.782b; Pliny the Elder (1st century), *Naturalis historia* 2.189-190; Ptolemy (2nd century), *Tetrabiblos* 2.2.56-58; Galen (2nd century), *De temperamentis* 2.5 and 6. Literature on the theory in Graeco-Roman, Islamic, and Jewish sources will be found in Goldenberg, "The Development of the Idea of Race," p. 562, n. 3.

[9] In discussions on the history of racist thinking, insufficient attention is given to this ancient link between physical and the nonphysical characteristics, which we find as early as Herodotus and Hippocrates, and which are explicitly or implicitly given an inferior/superior ranking. Such a link later became a crucial component of racist thinking. I have discussed this to some extent in "The Development of the Idea of Race," pp. 561-563.

[10] Ovid (d. 17 CE), *Metamorphoses* 2.235-236. The story is mentioned as early as Theodectes (4th cent BCE) apud Strabo 15.1.24.

[11] Stanley Gevirtz, *Curse Motifs in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1959), p. 258.

[12] There is some dispute over which historical-political situation of which Ancient Near Eastern period best fits the background of the Genesis story, but there is general agreement that the curse of Canaan is meant to explain the situation of Canaanite servitude. Claus Westermann, *CC: Genesis 1-11*, pp. 490-491; see also Lloyd R. Bailey, *Noah: The Person and the Story in History and Tradition* (Columbia, SC, 1989), pp. 159-161; David Neiman, "The Date and Circumstances of the Cursing of Canaan" in Alexander Altman, ed., *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge Mass., 1966), pp. 113-134; A. Van Selms, "Judge Shamgar," *VT* 14 (1964) 308; Frederick W. Bassett, "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan: A Case of Incest?" *VT* 21 (1971) 232. For interpretations of the meaning of the biblical story, see M. Vervenne, "What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor? A Critical Re-Examination of Genesis 9.20-27," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 68 (1995) 33-55, esp. 37-38.

[13] *Biblical Antiquities* 7.5: "Divisit Deus linguas eorum et mutavit eorum effigies, et non cognovit unusquisque fratrem suum nec audiebant singuli quique linguam proximi sui." Ed. Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 11, 101.

[14] Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1925), 5:203, n. 88. Jacobson, *Commentary*, p. 384.

[15] War Scroll 10.8-15, ed. and trans. Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 304-309. Similarly in 4Q266 11 9-10, ed. J.M. Baumgarten in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* 18 (1996) 76-77.

[16] Louis Ginzberg, *Ginzei Schechter* (New York, 1928), 1:86. The text is discussed in my *Curse of Ham*, pp. 44, 116.

[17] This and other Egyptians texts are discussed in *The Curse of Ham*, pp. 114-15. .

[18] The catena is found in MS Leiden, Scaliger Arab. 230, which bears the title *Kitāb takwīn al-khalā iq wa-tafsīruhū* and is dated to 1528 (author unknown). It was published in Paul de Lagarde's *Materialien zur Kritik und Geschichte des Pentateuchs* (Leipzig, 1867), Part II.

[19] The text is on 2:87 in Lagarde's edition and is cited by Max Grünbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sagenkunde* (Leiden, 1893), p. 86.

[20] Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, p. 333, n.15, quoting Sebastian Brock in an oral communication. So too Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina lists the Ephrem citations in the catena under "opera dubia" (*Patrologia Syriaca*, Rome, 1965, p. 74).

[21] *Commentaire d'Išo dad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament*. Genèse: Text, ed. J.-M. Vosté and C. Van Den Eynde. CSCO 126, Scriptores Syri 67 (Louvain, 1950), pp. 128-129. Translation, C. Van Den Eynde. CSCO 156, Scriptores Syri 75 (Louvain, 1955), p. 139.

[22] Ze ev Ben- ayyim, *Tibat Marqe*, pp. 288-289, sec. 232a.

[23] Abu Ali Mu▫ammad Bal amī (10th century): Hermann Zotenberg, ed. and trans. *Chronique de Abou-Djafar-Mo`hammed-ben-Djarir-ben-Yezid abari traduite sur la version persane d'Abou-`Ali Mo`hammed Bel`ami* (Paris, 1867-74), 1:115. Ibn akim (d. 1014) in the name of Ibn Mas✇◈d (d. 956): B. Barbour and M. Jacobs, "The Mi raj: A Legal Treatise on Slavery by Ahmad Baba," in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, ed. J.R. Willis (London, 1985), 1:132; see also John Hunwick, "Islamic Law and Politics over Race and Slavery in North and West Africa (16th-19th Century)," in *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, ed. Shaun E. Marmon (Princeton, 1999), p. 48, and Mahmoud Zouber, *Ahmad Bābā de Tombouctou (1556-1627): sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1977), pp. 140-141. Ibn Khalaf al-Nīshāpūrī (before 1100): *Qi a al-anbiyā* , ed. abīb Yaghmā ī (Persian Texts Series, no.6; Teheran. Ibn al-Jawzī (12th century): *Tanwīr al-ghabash fī fa l al-sūdān wa'l- abash*, trans. Akbar Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature: Some Unpublished Manuscripts," in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, ed. Willis, 1:56. Zakariya Muhammad al-Qazwini (d. 1283): *Athar al-bilad wa-akhbar al- ibad* (Beirut, 1960), p. 22; cf. Abū al- Alā al-Ma arrī (d. 1057): G.B.H. Wightman and A.Y. al-Udhari, eds. and trans., *Birds through a Ceiling of Alabaster: Three Abbasid Poets*, Hamondsworth, 1975, p. 116. al-Dimashqī (13th century): *Kitāb nukhbat al-dahr fi ajā ib al-barr wa l-ba r*, ed. A.F. Mehren (St. Petersburg, 1866; repr. 1923), p. 266; trans., Mehren, *Manuel de la cosmographie du moyen age* (1874, repr. Amsterdam, 1964), p. 385. *The Thousand and One Nights*, trans. Richard Burton, ed. L.C. Smithers (London, 1894), 3:364-365 (the 335th night). al-Jā iz (d. 868/9): *Fakhr al-sūdān ala al-bidan*, ed. G. van Vloten in *Tria opuscula auctore* (Leiden, 1903), pp. 81-82; re-edited by Abd al-Salām Hārūn in *Rasā il al-Jā iz* (Cairo, 1964), 1: 219-220; and by T. Khalidi in *The Islamic Quarterly* 25 (1981) 23-24, with translation on p. 48. A *adīth* recorded by al-Kisā ī in his *Qi a al-anbiyā* , ed. Isaac Eisenberg, *Vita prophetarum auctore Mu▫ammed ben Abdallāh al-Kisa i* (Leiden, 1923), p. 101; trans., Thackston, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa i*, pp. 107-108

[24] Quoted by Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), *Kitāb al-Ma ārif*, ed. Tharwat Ukāsha (Cairo, 1960), p. 26; ed. F. W•stenfeld, *Ibn Coteibas Handbuch der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1850), p. 14. Translation is that of B. Lewis in *Race and Slavery*, pp. 124-125, and *Islam*, 2:210, except for "Barbars," where Lewis has "Berbers"; also translated in Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, p. 15. On the Barbars, see my article "Geographia Rabbinica: The Toponym Barbaria," *JJS* 50 (Oxford, 1999) 53-73. According to later Arabic sources, Wahb was a convert from *ahl al-kitāb*, i.e. Judaism or Christianity, or specifically from Judaism, but the earliest sources know nothing of this. He was probably born a Muslim (see R.G. Khoury in *EI*^{2} 11:34). This is also the opinion of A.A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, ed. and trans. L.I. Conrad (Princeton, 1983; original Arabic, 1960), p. 123; R.G. Khoury, "Quelques réflexions sur la première ou les premières bibles arabes" in *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et cultural*, ed. T. Fahd (Leiden, 1989), p. 561; idem, "Ibn Khald◈n et

quelques savants des deux premiers siècles islamiques," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987) 196; and Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 10-12.

[25] For sources on the prohibition of sex in the ark, see L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:188, n. 54; Mena□em Kasher, *Torah Shelemah* (Jerusalem, 1927-), 2:408, n. 200, 2:418, n. 31; and M. Grünbaum, *Semitische Sagenkunde*, pp. 85-86. Philo, *Questions on Genesis* 2.49

[26] Babylonian Talmud, *San* 108b; Palestinian Talmud, *Ta an* 1.6, 64d. See also *Genesis Rabba* 36.7 (p. 341).

[27] See e.g., *Pirqei de-Rabbenu ha-Qadosh*, 3.97, in *Sheloshah Sefarim Nifta□im*, ed. Samuel Schönblum (Lemberg, 1877), p. 32b; Rashi to *San* 108b; and *Arukh*, ed. Kohut, 7:226a, s.v. *qashar*.

[28] Pliny, *Natural History* 10.83.174. See also Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* 5.2.

[29] Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals* 3.6; Aristophanes, *Excerptorum Constantini De natura animalium* etc. as cited by John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1980), p. 138, n. 4; Ps-Clement, *Recognitions* 8.25 (ANF 8:172).

[30] Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places* 14. On the ancient theory of "pangenesis," see Iain Lonie, *The Hippocratic Treatises "On Generation," "On the Nature of the Child," "Diseases IV"* (Berlin, 1981), pp. 115-117.

[31] *Commentary to Song of Songs* 2.2, GCS 33 (Origen 8) 125, ACW 26:107.

[32] Herodotus 3.101; cf. 3.97. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 2.736a, 10-15.

[33] Qatādah (d. 736) quoted by Tha labī, *Qi a al-anbiyā* (Cairo, 1954), p. 57; Ibn Jurayj (d. ca. 766) quoted by abarī, ed. M.J. de Goeje, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari* (Leiden, 1964), 1:196, trans. F. Rosenthal, *The History of Tabari*, vol. 1 (Albany, 1989), p. 365; Dimashqī (13th century), *Nukhbat al-dahr*, ed. A.F. Mehren, p. 266; trans., A.F. Mehren, *Manuel de la cosmographie*, p. 385; excerpted in Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, p. 212. See also Bal amī's (10th century) Persian version of abarī ("May God change the semen of your loins. After that all the people and fruit of the country of Ham became black"), ed. and trans., Hermann Zotenberg, *Chronique de Abou-Djafar-Mo`hammed-ben-Djarir-ben-Yezid Tabari*, 1:115.

[34] *Genesis Rabba* 36.7 (pp. 341-342). The metaphor of the dyecast for human procreation is found, e.g., in *Genesis Rabba* 37.5 (pp. 347-348).

[35] On this incorrect etymology of Ham, see *The Curse of Ham*, ch. 10.

[36] Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Kitāb al-tījān an fī mulūk imyar* (Haydarabad, 1928/9), p. 24. My thanks are due to Barbara von Schlegell for her translation of this passage.

[37] Benjamin b. Eliezer Ha-Kohen Vitale (d. 1730, Italy), *Gevul Binyamin* (Amsterdam, 1727; repr. New York, 1992), part 1, p. 8b.

[38] *Yalqu Shime oni, Noa* 58, ed. Heiman et al., 1:199 (so also *Haggadot ha-Talmud*, p. 102a); David B. Amram, *Midrash ha-Gadol*, 1:175 (Gen 8:7); for the Chrisitan writers, see Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: Black People in Britain since 1504* (Atlantic Highlands NJ, 1984), pp. 142-143; *Entdecktes Judenthum* ([Frankfurt], 1700), 1:448, "Der Cham ist an seiner Haut gestraffet worden; dieweil der schwartze Cus darvon hergekommen ist." As far as modern works are concerned, in addition to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. Ham (A. Rothkoff) and the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. Ham (J. Jacobs), the "Kush" explanation is found in E. Isaac (see next note); J. Preuss, *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin*, p. 537 (English edition, trans. F. Rosner, p. 460); and Peter Frost, "Attitudes toward Blacks in the Early Christian Era," *The Second Century* 8 (1991) 3. MS Jerusalem, Yad ha-Rav Herzog, of BT *Sanhedrin*, a late Yemenite manuscript, has incorporated the explanation into the talmudic text, a common phenomenon.

[39] This point was recognized by Emmanuel Tonguino, *La malediction de canaan et le mythe chamitique dans la tradition juive*, p. 139, but unfortunately not by Ephraim Isaac, "Genesis, Judaism and the 'Sons of Ham," p. 84; Isaac makes the same error again – mistaking Rashi for the Talmud – in his discussion of *Sukkah* 53a on p. 81.

[40] See the sources listed above in n. 33.

[41] Uthmān Sayyid-Ahmad Isma il al-Beily, "'As-Sudan' and 'Bilad as-Sudan' in Early and Medieval Arabic Writing," *Majallat Jāmi at al-Qāahirah bi-al-Khar ūm* [*Bulletin of Cairo University in Khartoum*] 3 (1972) 33-47; quote on p. 39. *Brbr* may refer to the Berbers of North Africa or the Barbars south of Ethiopia depending on the context; see my article "Geographia Rabbinica: The Toponym Barbaria," *Journal for Jewish Studies* 50 (1999) 53-73.

[42] So Akbar Muhammad speaking of Jā īz (d. 869): "'Sudan … is not consonant with 'black' and 'Negro.' … [Jā īz] applies it to African and Arab peoples, including the Coptic Egyptians, as well as to Indians and other Asians…. Therefore, it seems appropriate to render *sudan* as 'dark-skinned' peoples" (Akbar Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature," p. 49). See also J.L. Triaud in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition, 9:752b, s.v. Sūdān (Bilād al-Sūdān 'land of the blacks' refers to the "Saharo-Sahelian sector of Africa").

[43] Recorded by al-Kisā ī in his *Qi a al-anbiyā* , cited above, n. 23.

[44] For references, see above, n. 24.

[45] See, e.g., *Genesis Rabba* 40.4 (p. 384).

[46] Franz J. Dölger, *Die Sonne der Gerechtigkeit und der Schwarze*, p. 54.

[47] See E. Lobel, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (London, 1956), 23:55-59, a fragment of Sophocles' *Inachus*. Lobel understands that κάρβανος αἰθός means that Zeus looked like an Egyptian, but Stephanie West thinks that it indicates Ethiopian, not Egyptian ("Io and the Dark Stranger [Sophocles, *Inachus* F 269a]," *Classical Quarterly* 34 [1984] 292-297); so also Richard Carden, *The Papyrus Fragments of Sophocles*, Berlin, 1974, p. 70-71 ("negro Zeus"), and Dana Sutton, *Sophocles' Inachus*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1979, p. 43 ("Negro … or perhaps 'sunburnt'").

[48] Aeschylus, *Suppliants* 312-316; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca.* 2.1.4. The description of Epaphus as κελαινός is in Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 851. In classical sources Libya means the continent of Africa. Euripides is quoted in Apollodorus. For Phineus meaning Nubia, see Yoshiyuki Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names*, p. 222. For the biblical form of the name, see KBL, 3:926, s.v. *Pynḥs* with literature cited, plus M. Görg, *Aegyptiaca-Biblica: Notizen und Beiträge zu den Bezeihungen zwischen Ägypten und Israel* (Wiesbaden, 1991), pp. 7 and 183.

[49] R. Merkelbach and M.L. West, *Fragmenta Hesiodea*, Oxford, 1967, p. 74, frg. 150 (= *POxy* XI 1358 frg. 2); see Snowden in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, ed. John Boardman et al. (Zurich, 1981-), 1/1: 414.

[50] West, "Io and the Dark Stranger," p. 295.

[51] Ibid., p. 297. West thinks that the etiology is meant to account for national character as well because Zeus is depicted in terms (master of charms/drugs, sly, crafty) that were said to be characteristic of the Egyptians.

[52] "Asclepiades' Didyme," pp. 242-244.

[53] Frank Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, pp. 75-79, and *Blacks in Antiquity*, pp. 171-179 Snowden's "Attitudes toward Blacks in the Greek and Roman World," pp. 265-266. Frank Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity* (1970) and Lloyd Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (1989), pp. 8, 19.. add: so too Jean-Jacques Aubert, "Du noir en noir et blanc: éloge de la dispersion," *Museum Helveticum* 56 (1999) 159-182, especially 176.

[54] Veronika Görög-Karady, "Noirs et Blancs: A propos de quelques mythes d'origine vili" in *Itinérances – in pays peul et ailleurs* (Paris, 1981), 2:82-83, 88-89.

[55] David Wiesen, "Juvenal and the Blacks," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 31 (1970) 142-143.

[56] William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans*, p. 13; similarly, 82, 86, and see 236-237.

[57] Jean Devisse in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, ed. Ladislas Bugner, trans. William G. Ryan (Cambridge MA, 1976), 2/1:221, n. 179. John Hunwick, "A Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and their Legacy," an unpublished lecture given at the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, 15 February 1993, p. 19. My thanks to Prof. Hunwick for the copy of his talk.

[58] *Politics* 7.6.1, trans. H. Rackham (LCL).

[59] Another difference between the environmental theory and the etiology (rabbinic or Greek) is of interest. The theory directly links physical and nonphysical characteristics, both of which are explicitly or implicitly considered as inferior or superior, while the etiology has no reference to nonphysical characteristics. On this point and its relationship to racist thinking, see David Goldenberg, "The Development of the Idea of Race," pp. 561-570.

[60] Erik Hornung with A. Brodbeck and E. Staehelin, *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits*. Aegyptiaca Helvetica 7-8 (Basel, 1979-80), 2:134-136. See also F.J. Yurco, "Two Tomb-Wall Painted Reliefs of Ramesses III and Sety I and Ancient Nile Valley Population Diversity," in

Egypt in Africa, ed. Theodore Celenko (Indianapolis, 1996), p. 109, where earlier literature is cited.

[61] Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, pp. 22 and 26.

[62] Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness*, pp. 2-4.

[63] *Tarikh al- abarī*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, 1:199. A little later (p. 220) abarī repeats this tradition, again in the name of Ibn Abbas, but this time has "tawny with hardly any whiteness" (*udma wa-bayā qalīl*) for Ham instead of "black with hardly any whiteness." My translation of abarī's color terms follows Lane, who notes that applied to human complexion *adam* means "tawny or dark-complexioned, syn. *asmar*," *umra* means whiteness, and *šuqra* implies some mix of red and white, the common classification for a light-skinned complexion (Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, pp. 37a, 640c [see also 642a, *a mar*], and 1581b).

[64] M. Sprengling and W.C. Graham, ed., *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament*, pp. 34-35 and 44-45. Bar Hebraeus' father was a Jewish convert to Christianity (thus the name). The quotation is from J.B. Segal, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition, 3:805, s.v. Ibn al- Ibrī.

[65] *Tā rīkh mukhta ar al-duwal*, ed. A. āli ānī (Beirut, 1890; repr. 1983), p. 15.

[66] See above, n. 36.

[67] Philo, *Quaestiones in Genesim* 2.82.

[68] Origen, *Homilies to Song* 1.6, *Commentary to Song* 2.1, 2.2, GCS 33 [Origen 8] 35-38, 113-126; English translation in ACW 26:91-107, 276-277 (R.P. Lawson, 1957). Similarly in his *Homilies on Jeremiah* 11.5, "We are black when we begin to believe. Therefore it is said at the beginning of Song 'I am black and beautiful.' At first our soul is compared to an Ethiopian. Then we are cleansed and become all white (bright), as it says 'Who is she who comes up having been made white'" (GCS 6 [Origen 3] 84-85; SC 232:428-431. In his *Homilies on Numbers* 6.4, and similarly in 7.2, Origen again makes the equation of the Ethiopian wife of Moses = the gentile church (and Miriam, Moses' sister = the synagogue, the Jews); GCS 30 (Origen 7) 36, 39; SC 415:156-159, 172-173.

[69] Dennis Brown, *Vir Trilinguis: A Study in the Biblical Exegesis of Saint Jerome* (Kampen, The Netherlands, 1992), pp. 17, 141, 153-155; J.W. Trigg, *Biblical Interpretation* (Wilmington DE, 1988), pp. 23, 26; M. Simonett, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, trans. J.A. Hughes (Edinburgh, 1994; original Italian, 1981), p. 39; J. Daniélou, *Origen*, trans. W. Mitchell (New York, 1955), p. 304; Bertrand de Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis*. *I: The Greek Fathers*, trans. L. Maluf (Petersham MA, 1993), pp. 112-113; original French, 1980, p. 132.

[70] Fran¤ois de Medeiros, *L'occident et l'Afrique (XIII^e^-XV^e^ siècle)* (Paris, 1985), p. 47, n. 45.

[71] Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, pp. 40, 112.

[72] F. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, pp. 196-215; *Before Color Prejudice*, pp. 99-108.

[73] Philo, *Quaestiones in Genesim* 2.35-36, trans. R. Marcus (LCL).

[74] Philo, *Legum Allegoriae* 2.67, trans. G.H Whitaker (LCL).

[75] J. Devisse in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, 2/1:61. Devisse is talking specifically about Jerome, but what he says can be applied in general to patristic exegesis of the Ethiopian.

[76] *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, 1/1:14. See also Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, p. 42.