

apposite to the "Mighty One" of Jacob because "stone" is a doubtful metaphor for "strength."<sup>48</sup> The word *'ebhen* connotes "strength" in Job 6:12, however, and "hardness" in Job 38:30 and 41:16, and could well be an epithet of God. These epithets are most appropriate descriptions of God, who throughout Jacob's life was his strength and defense.

There is good evidence for regarding the God of the patriarchs as El, who manifested various aspects of His nature in the epithets by which He is known in the Pentateuchal sources. It is He with whom the name Yahweh is identified, and the epithets inherent in the tradition of the God of the Fathers, i.e., the "God of Abraham," the "Fear of Isaac," and the "Mighty One of Jacob," may well be descriptive epithets of El, the God of the patriarchs.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 1006.

## XX

## WHO WAS NIMROD?

By W. H. GISPEN

(Translated by T. E. N. OZINGA)

In Genesis 10:8 we read that Cush became the father of Nimrod. In addition Nimrod is mentioned in the OT in I Chronicles 1:10 and Micah 5:6 (Hebrew text, 5:5). The LXX renders this name *Nebroth*; the Vulgate, *Nemrod*; Josephus, *Nebrodes*.

Gesenius-Buhl<sup>1</sup> connects the name with the Hebrew verb *mrd*, which means in the Qal "to rebel"; cf. e.g., Genesis 14:4; Numbers 14:9; II Kings 18:7; 24:1, 20. In that case "Nimrod" might mean "we shall rebel" or "we rebel." Josephus<sup>2</sup> mentions that *Nebrodes* incited people to presumption toward God and contempt of Him, which led to the building of Babel (cf. Gen. 11:1-9). Winer,<sup>3</sup> who also connects Nimrod with *mrd*, calls these conceptions based on the name triflings (Latin *nugae*).

Böhl<sup>4</sup> considers the name an ironical pun on the part of the Israelites. The god of the chase and of war was called *Nimurta* (*Nimurda*, *Nimurd*) by the Sumerians. This the Israelites made into Nimrod—"we will rebel." That the rebellious Nimrod is represented as the son of the "Moor" Cush is due not to ethnological but religious-ethical reasons.

Koehler-Baumgartner<sup>5</sup> supports the view that Nimrod is to be

1. W. Gesenius-F. Buhl, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* 17 (Leipzig, 1921).

2. *Ant.* I, 4, 2.

3. Georg Benedict Winer, *Lexicon manuale Hebraicum et Chaldaicum in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Lipsiae, 1828).

4. F. M. Th. Böhl, *Genesis* (in *Tekst en Uitleg*; two volumes; I, 1923; II, 1925).

5. L. Koehler-W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1953).

identified with the god Nimurta=Ninurta, without connecting Nimrod with the Hebrew verb *mrd*. W. von Soden<sup>6</sup> holds that the name of Nimrod is that of Ninurta of Nippur, the Sumerian god of war and the chase. Whether in Nimrod the memory is preserved of Sargon of Accad cannot be settled any more, according to Von Soden. The city of Calah (cf. Gen. 10:11) is called Nimrud at present "comme si le dieu de la chasse, Nin-urta, avait survécu dans le Nemrod biblique à qui l'on attribuait la fondation de Kélah-Kalhu. . . ."<sup>7</sup>

Nimrod has also been connected with Marduk, the god of Babel, as by Lipiński.<sup>8</sup> He, however, wishes to interpret Genesis 10:9 in the sense of Marduk's being a mightier hunter than Jahweh. Nimrod probably does not have reference to a god. Therefore De Liagre Böhl<sup>9</sup> has changed his view cited above to the extent that, following E. A. Speiser, he now thinks of an abbreviation of the Assyrian royal name Tukulti-Ninurta ("help from Ninurta"), viz., Tukulti-Ninurta I, king of Assyria (1242-1206 B.C.), known among the Greeks by the name of Ninos. According to De Liagre Böhl, Genesis 10:8-12 is an excursus from an older source, perhaps an excerpt from a hero-saga, verse 10 marking the culminating point of his conquests. De Vaux<sup>10</sup> also favours Tukulti-Ninurta I. During his reign Assyrian power rose to its first height.

In the present writer's opinion verse 10 does not warrant this identification, since the beginning of the kingdom of Tukulti-Ninurta I did not lie in Babylonia. The epos recounting his heroic deeds celebrates the exploits of the Assyrians. The reign of this king falls after Nimrod.

Other kings have also been thought to qualify as possible Nimrods. Van Gelderen and Van Leeuwen hold that it is Naram-Sin of Accad who is called Nimrod here.<sup>11</sup> According to Van Gelderen the Cush of verse 8 is not identical with the Cush of verse 7. In verse 8 Cush

6. Cf. art. "Nimrod" in *RGG*<sup>3</sup>, IV, Sp. 1496, 1497.

7. E. Dhorme, *Les religions de Babylone et d'Assyrie II* (Paris, 1949), 108.

8. E. Lipinski, "Nimrod et Assur," *Revue biblique*, 73 (1966), 77-93.

9. F. M. Th. de Liagre Böhl in *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux*, 16 (1959-1962), 115-117.

10. R. de Vaux, *La Genèse*<sup>2</sup> in *La Sainte Bible* (Paris, 1962).

11. C. van Gelderen, "Who Was Nimrod?" in *The Expositor*, Eighth Series, VIII (1914), 274-282; N. D. van Leeuwen, "Wie waren Kus en Nimrod?" *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 21 (1921), 18-31.

should be considered a personification of the ancient city of Kish in northern Babylonia. It is supposed that of old the name of Kish was pronounced Kush by the western Semites.<sup>12</sup> Van Gelderen paraphrases the expression: "Cush begat Nimrod" in this way: "The kingdom of Kish begat the empire of Accad." Via Arabic he construes a relationship between the names of Nimrod and Naram-Sin. He is of the opinion that it may be assumed on historical grounds that the tradition about the Accadian realm was passed on to the Hebrews in connection with the name of Naram-Sin and by way of the southern Semites. For further details the reader is referred to the two articles. However, at the time Van Gelderen and Van Leeuwen wrote their articles Naram-Sin was dated about 2600 B.C. At present he is placed at 2270-2233 B.C. (by Von Soden) or 2159-2123 B.C. (by Van der Meer). In the view of the present writer Sargon of Accad would qualify rather than Naram-Sin.<sup>13</sup> Sargon reigned 2350-2294 B.C. (Von Soden) or 2242-2186 B.C. (Van der Meer) and founded a great empire. It does not seem plausible that another Cush would be meant in verse 8 than in verse 7.

The mystery remains unsolved. H. Zimmern<sup>14</sup> deems it possible that the Nimrod figure is derived from Gilgamesh. Skinner<sup>15</sup> thinks Gilgamesh "the nearest analogy." Gunkel<sup>16</sup> prefers Gilgamesh to a Libyan hunter called Nmrt. Rabast<sup>17</sup> also mentions Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh reigned as king in the city of Erech, mentioned in Genesis 10:10.

To be sure, it is difficult to connect the name of Nimrod with that of Gilgamesh. P. Haupt called the Gilgamesh epos "Das Babylonische Nimrodepos."<sup>18</sup> This identification cannot be proved either.

12. J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament X* (Leiden, 1959), 58, favours the thought that Kish is meant.

13. Cf. D. J. Wiseman, "Nimrod," *The New Bible Dictionary* (London, 1962).

14. Cf. E. Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*<sup>3</sup> (Berlin, 1903)=Schrader, *KAT*<sup>3</sup>, p. 581.

15. J. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*<sup>2</sup> (Edinburgh, 1930), (in *The International Critical Commentary*).

16. H. Gunkel, *Genesis*<sup>3</sup> (Göttingen, 1910) (in *Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament*).

17. K. Rabast, *Die Genesis* (Berlin, 1951); cf. for the Gilgamesh epic, A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh-Epic and the Old Testament Parallels*<sup>2</sup> (Chicago, 1954); E. A. Speiser (in Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 72-79).

18. Cf. F. M. Th. de Liagre Böhl, *Het Gilgamesj-epos*<sup>2</sup> (Amsterdam, 1952), p. 8.

Driver<sup>19</sup> calls it “an attractive and probable conjecture.” The fact that Gilgamesh, a king of the first dynasty of Uruk or Erech, was afterwards deified and celebrated in more than one epos tells in favour of this identification. He was one of the best-known characters in Babylonian and Assyrian literature and art, so that it is probable that he became proverbial (cf. Gen. 10:9). Moreover, he descended from the hero of the Babylonian flood story, Ut-Napishtim, as Cush, the father of Nimrod, descended from Noah.

In Genesis 10:8-12 we have to do with a passage that is difficult to interpret. Genesis 11:1-9 precedes Genesis 10:8-12 in time as regards the events that are described. As far as the difficulties of interpretation are concerned, Genesis 10:8-12 resembles Genesis 6:1-4. The word *gibbōr*, which is used in Genesis 10:8 referring to Nimrod, pointedly connects the *gibbōrīm*, “the mighty men that were of old” (cf. Gen. 6:4), of the time before the flood, with those after the flood. Even if we do not think of Gilgamesh, this still holds good. The line of the men of renown before the flood is taken up again by the founders of great cities and realms, the mighty men of the time after the flood; they are the kings of Babel and Erech and Accad and Nineveh. The latter is the line of kings who were mighty hunters (cf. Gen. 10:9), as especially the kings of Assyria were known to be; they were depicted as lion-hunters.

In this view again much remains unsolved, such as the connection between Nimrod and Cush and between the names of Nimrod and Gilgamesh.

However, the expression “we shall rebel” is a biblical characterization of Mesopotamian kingship. The original name for Gilgamesh is *bil-ga-mesh*, meaning “the ‘old one’ is a young man.”<sup>20</sup> That does not lead us anywhere. But the might of a celebrated and glorified king of the old Sumerians may have been typified in the name of Nimrod. And the hero Gilgamesh, who was a mighty hunter, may have been the pattern of what was typical in the Israelite view of the great kings of Babylonia and Assyria. In the words of Jastrow: “Gilgamesh, to be sure, is not identical with the Biblical Nimrod, but the Gilgamesh story has evidently influenced the description given

in the tenth chapter of Genesis of Nimrod, who is viewed as the type of Babylonian power and of the extension of Babylonian culture in the north.”<sup>21</sup>

Nimrod (Gilgamesh) marked the beginning. Then came the kingdom of Babel, Erech, Accad, Calneh, Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen (Gen. 10:10-12). Nimrod began to be a mighty man on the earth. He did not limit himself to the hunt, but founded a kingdom, which extended from one city to another in the land of Shinar and the realm of Assyria, the land of Nimrod (Micah 5:6). And the downfall of this realm was brought about by the ruler of Israel (cf. Micah 5:1-6; Rev. 19).

Nimrod is both a person and a personification (see Van Gelderen). Therefore verses 8-12 fit into the list of Genesis 10, which connects Nimrod with Cush, which is probably to be taken in a broad sense including Arabia as well.

König<sup>22</sup> adduces arguments for the theory that a Cushite appeared in the region of the Euphrates. He points to the relationship between Egyptian and Semitic and old traditions of an expedition of a group of Cushites to the north through Arabia. He rejects identification of Cush with Cash or Kish.

De Fraine<sup>23</sup> also draws attention to a relationship between the Egyptian and Semitic languages, mentioning the pronouns and numerals.

Schott asserts that Gilgamesh in all probability really existed and that his reign is to be sought between c. 2750 and 2600 B.C. It was the time that the Sumerians had the greater part of Babylonia under control. They had several city-states, but had already to combat the Semitic Accadians in the north of the country. Gilgamesh must have been one of the mightiest rulers of this period. Concerning the events during his reign we cannot derive much from the older sagas which are our only source about him. Schott writes that “sagenhafte” traditions about other kings of this early period have also come down to us, but that nevertheless the tradition about Gilgamesh is by far the

19. S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*<sup>3</sup> (London, 1904) (in Westminster Commentaries).

20. Cf. A. Falkenstein in *RLA* (= *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*) (Berlin und Leipzig, 1928-) III, 357.

21. Morris Jastrow, Jr., *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (Boston-New York-Chicago, London, 1898), p. 515.

22. E. König, *Die Genesis*<sup>2</sup> (Gütersloh, 1925).

23. J. de Fraine, *Genesis* (Roermond, 1963) (in *De Boeken van het Oude Testament*).

richest and, what is even more important, gives a real insight into human destiny.<sup>24</sup>

Scripture portrays Nimrod as "a mighty hunter before the LORD" (Gen. 10:9). Jahweh sees this mighty man and his hunting, which takes place under Jahweh's eye. Jahweh is present at the chase. Not only the righteous man (Noah; cf. Gen. 7:1), but also the man who seeks his strength in the hunt (Nimrod), and even the murderer (Cain; cf. Gen. 4:14, 16) act under His eye; yea, all the inhabitants of the earth (Gen. 6:11). Cain and Noah are conscious of the presence of the LORD; Nimrod probably is not.

Genesis 10:9 seeks to comfort those that are oppressed by mighty men, founders of realms (cf. vss. 8-12), with this revelation of the real situation, a revelation which has become proverbial.

It is not to be assumed that the expression "before the LORD," "in God's sight," conveys a kind of approval of the hunt which at the time might have been considered a blessing, because wild beasts formed a menace to mankind (cf. Gen. 9:2). The expression "before the LORD," "in God's sight," is a general one (cf. Jonah 3:3, where in Hebrew a similar expression is used; see also II Kings 5:1; Prov. 14:12; Acts 7:20). Only when this is quite clear from the context, it may denote approval or disapproval.

Verse 9 offers even less support for Kittel's supposition.<sup>25</sup> He maintains that to the author of this verse (which is from another hand than verses 8 and 10-12) Nimrod was one of the heroes of chapter 6:1-4. The addition "before Jahweh" would mean that Nimrod was a hero of the hunt belonging to the divine generation of heroes. In that case he would originally have been a celestial hunter dwelling in the proximity of the godhead. To the Greeks Orion was such a celestial hunter. And according to Kittel, later traditions have in fact linked Nimrod with Orion.

In the present author's opinion it is more profitable to work out a point also mentioned by Kittel, *scilicet*, that in the Gilgamesh epic

24. Albert Schott, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos neu übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen. Durchgesehen und ergänzt von Wolfram von Soden* (Stuttgart, 1958), pp. 5, 6. See for the spread far and wide of the Gilgamesh-epic, which appears, *i.a.*, from the fragment found in Megiddo in 1955, A. Falkenstein, F. M. Th. de Liagre Böhl, H. Otten, and P. Calmeyer in *RLA* III, 337-374.

25. Cf. R. Kittel, "Nimrod" in *PRE<sup>3</sup>* (= *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche<sup>3</sup>*) (Tübingen, 1896-1913) XIV, 102-105.

Gilgamesh is definitely portrayed as a great hunter. It is even thought that representations have been found of him fighting a lion. It has been said before that Babylonian and especially Assyrian kings are often depicted lion-hunting. Therefore it is strange to distinguish, as Kittel suggests, between Nimrod the founder of a realm, and Nimrod the hunter, as if there were a dual tradition. Neither is it necessary to see Nimrod characterized in verse 9 as a hunter of men, an oppressor.

Genesis 10:9a states: "It is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." This is different from Numbers 21:14, where the text reads: "Therefore it is said in the Book of the wars of the LORD."

In Genesis 10:9b we have to do with a proverbial saying.<sup>26</sup> König points out the terseness of this saying: "der und der ist" is omitted. With whom this saying originated, verse 9b does not reveal. As appears from the words "before Jahweh," we shall have to think of the Israelites. Because the expression has been preserved in the book of Genesis, it is still known to many peoples.

If there was a hunter in Israel who attracted attention by his achievements in the hunt, this was the expression used at the time of the author. It will not readily have been used in a derisive manner, since "before Jahweh" will have prevented this. However, the currency of this expression in Israel proves that the figure of Nimrod and the stories about him were well known. This points again to Gilgamesh, who, as appears from excavations, was indeed widely known.

Rashi<sup>27</sup> explains Genesis 10:9 in yet another way. Nimrod ensnared people by his arguments and made them err by rebellion against the omnipresent God. His intention was to provoke Him to His face. And the expression of verse 9b applies to any man who insolently commits wickedness, who, while knowing his Lord, means to rebel against Him.

In Genesis 10:10 we read of Nimrod: "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." The meaning of this verse is that in the beginning, initially, Nimrod's kingdom extended as far as Babel and the other places mentioned in the land of Shinar. Later on Nineveh and the

26. Cf. Gen. 22:14; I Sam. 19:24; 10:12.

27. R'Shelomo Jischaqi (1040-1105), famous Jewish commentator living in France.

places mentioned in verses 11, 12 were added. Together all these cities constitute the realm, the territory, of Nimrod.

It seems best to me to take Asshur as the subject of verses 11 and 12. Nimrod is mentioned last in verse 9. Asshur occurs as a person in verse 22. To be sure he is counted there as belonging to the sons of Shem. This might, however, tell strongly, in connection with the originally Sumerian cities mentioned in verse 10, in favour of attributing a Semitic origin to the cities of the land of Asshur (in verses 11 and 12). Asshur is indeed an ancient city, but it would be remarkable if this city were not then represented as built by Nimrod. One cannot speak with certainty. Probably Asshur is in this case either a person or a personified nation. Just as Nimrod, though denoting first and foremost a particular king, may yet serve as a characterization of the kings of the Babylonians and the Assyrians, thus in like manner Asshur may here be the forefather of the Assyrians as well as the Assyrians in general.

And as a particular king the likeliest candidate for Nimrod is Gilgamesh.

Finally, in order to be complete, I should mention that in the view of the adherents of the source-analysis, Genesis 10 is shared by P and J; chapter 10:8-12 is attributed to J. For the solution of the problem "Who was Nimrod?" this is of no consequence. The less so since the present author with this article wishes to honour Oswald T. Allis, the opponent of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis.<sup>28</sup>

## XXI

### THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE TETRAGRAM

By R. LAIRD HARRIS

It is a most curious fact that the ancient pronunciation of the name of the God of Israel has been totally lost. Israel's faith was the only worthy faith in antiquity. It was the world's first monotheism and is the only ancient faith to have become truly a world religion. It was unique in being wholly spiritual and without a material representation of the deity. It was also unique, unfortunately, in its loss of the pronunciation of the deity's name. The situation is strange indeed and would hardly have been forecast by those sincere men who felt that they dared not pronounce the ineffable name lest they should profane it. The result seems really to have been a profanation of a different kind. Not to use the name of God seems to profane it just as the coarse use of the Name would have done. But the facts are plain. The ancient Hebrews, naturally, pronounced and wrote the name of God. But they had not invented vowels, so they only wrote the consonants. The later ban on pronouncing the Name was so complete that the vowels used were entirely lost though the consonants have been preserved in ancient manuscripts and inscriptions. It seems that the oldest known writing of the Name that we have is on the Mesha stone shortly after 850 B.C., where the familiar four letters appear: YHWH. How did Mesha king of Moab pronounce this name when he cursed the king of Israel as he doubtless did many times!

It is probable that some day the lack will be remedied. Some day some transcription into another language with vowels will doubtless be found which will serve as a Rosetta stone to unlock the secret. In the meantime we may theorize, but in line with hoary tradition we should remember to theorize reverently. The sacred name is still sacred. We may come to know how to pronounce it, but equally

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Oswald T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia, 1943), a richly documented book.