

Identifying Nimrod of Genesis 10 with Sargon of Akkad

<http://buff.ly/2gvwCm3>

Genesis 10:8-11

Genesis 10:8 - "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth."

Nimrod is called a descendant or "son" of Cush, but not an immediate son (similarly, Jesus is called the Son of David).

In fact, the name Nimrod ("we will rebel") is a dysphemism (opposite of a euphemism) - a nickname that denotes a harsh or negative connotation. The author chose not to call him by his own name and honor him, but instead give him a derisive name that reveals his true character. (Similarly, Gilgamesh which means "heroic ancestor" and is a euphemism and likely not the historical name for the king of Uruk in the Gilgamesh Epic.)

Nimrod is probably to be identified with Sargon of Akkad, who reigned 56 years, c. 2340 – c. 2284 B.C., and was history's first tyrant, empire builder and dynasty founder.

Sargon was the first to include a propaganda campaign to instill fear as part of his military conquests and in civic art and monuments. Stone reliefs depict vanquished prisoners being fed to wild dogs and vultures, for instance, a scene that you would never see in Egyptian monuments. The later Assyrians carried on this cruel tradition to greater heights, impaling conquered citizens on spikes. Sargon also began a system of dating that was carried on for centuries later through the Assyrian Empire. The Prophet Micah even refers to Assyria as the "land of Nimrod" (Micah 5:6). The Assyrian and Babylonian kings saw themselves as the heirs of Sargon's empire.

Like Moses, Sargon is described as evading death in a legend of his infancy: "She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid. She cast me into the river which rose over me. The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the drawer of water. Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son." In fact, the widespread knowledge of Sargon's story around the Middle East could be what gave Moses' mother the idea.

Sargon came from the Sumerian city of Kish, which can be related etymologically with Cush. This would also clarify the location of the second river flowing around the land of "Cush" out of Eden (Genesis 2:13) Kish was the first place in which "kingship was lowered from heaven" after the flood, according to the Sumerian King List.

The name Sargon means "the true and legitimate king," and it too might even be another euphemism. It sounds like he was trying to legitimize his rule. In fact, the Sumerian King List says he started out as cup-bearer of Ur-Zabada, and there is evidence he usurped the kingship from his master.

Genesis 10:8 - Rather than "he began to be a mighty man on earth, it should be

translated “he profanes, or acted irreverently” as a “mighty man” on the earth. The Nephilim were also described as “mighty men which were of old, men of renown” (Genesis 6:4).

Mighty “hunter” can also mean “slaughterer.” “Before the Lord” means “in the face of, in defiance of” the Lord.

Genesis 10:10 - “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”

The list of cities should logically begin at the south and go north. “Calneh” is not a town, but should be read as “were all of them” i.e. all the cities that were in the land of Shinar (Sumeria).

Genesis 10:11 - “Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah,”

Actually, not Asshur, but Nimrod continued his conquests to include destroying and then rebuilding Asshur, Nineveh, etc.

Where was the Tower of Babel?

The name of the city of Babel (confusion) could also be a biblical dysphemism. In Hebrew, “Babel” is from the verb balal, which means to “confuse or confound.” The phrase “Tower of Babel” does not appear in the Bible; it is always “the city and its tower” or just “the city.” In Akkadian, Babel/Babylon means the “Gate of God”, from bab-ilu (bab “gate” + ilu “god”).

The city in which the Tower was built was probably not Babylon but Eridu in far southern Sumer. The Babylonian creation account says, “All lands were sea, then Eridu was made.” The earliest known ziqqurat (from zaqaru, to be high) is at Eridu, dated in its earliest level to the Ubaid period (5000-3500 B.C.) Baked brick technology is dated to ca. 3100 B.C. The Tower would have been the first, an experiment, and thus earlier. (For comparison, the earliest Egyptian pyramid is the Pyramid of Djoser, constructed 2630 B.C.–2611 B.C. during the third dynasty.)

Further, Enki, the god of Eridu, is appealed to in a Sumerian epic entitled “Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta” that mentions the confusion of languages and people yearning for a return to unity. (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enmerkar_and_the_Lord_of_Aratta)

Eridu was founded ca. 5400 B.C. on the then shoreline of the Persian Gulf. There was some confusion by ancient historians between Babylon and Eridu. One name of Eridu in cuneiform logograms was pronounced “NUN.KI” (“the Mighty Place”) in Sumerian, but much later the same “NUN.KI” was understood to mean the city of Babylon. The much later Greek version of the King-list by Berossus (c. 200 B.C.) reads “Babylon” in place of “Eridu” in the earlier versions, as the name of the oldest city where

"the kingship was lowered from Heaven." The ziggurat ruins of Eridu are far larger and older than any others, and seem to best match the Biblical description of the unfinished Tower of Babel. Plus, "Eridu was for all practical purposes abandoned after the Ubaid period" ca. 4000-3800 B.C., which could indicate a dislocation of the population after the destruction of the Tower and confusion of languages.

Alternative: Not Sargon but Enmerkar?

An alternate choice for Nimrod is Enmerkar (-KAR meaning "hunter") of the king-list and other legends, who is said to have built temples both in his capital of Uruk and in Eridu. (See <http://www.ancient-wisdom.com/iraqeridu.htm>)

Enmerkar is known from a few other Sumerian legends, most notably Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, where a previous confusion of the languages of mankind is mentioned. Enmerkar is said here to have had a temple built at Eridu, and is even credited with the invention of writing on clay tablets. Euechous named by Berossus (c. 200 B.C.) as being the first king of Chaldea and Assyria, is probably Enmerkar of Uruk. Euechous has long been identified with Nimrod. (See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enmerkar>)

A hymn to restore linguistic unity

"The Incantation of Nudimmud", a hymn imploring the god Enki to restore the linguistic unity of the inhabited regions, is part of a longer epic called "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta":

"At such a time, may the lands of Shubur and Hamazi, the many-tongued, and Sumer, the great mountain of the me of magnificence, and Akkad, the land possessing all that is befitting, and the Martu land, resting in security — the whole universe, the well-guarded people — may they all address Enlil together in a single language! ... Enki, the lord of abundance and of steadfast decisions, the wise and knowing lord of the Land, the expert of the gods, chosen for wisdom, the lord of Eridug, shall change the speech in their mouths, as many as he had placed there, and so the speech of mankind is truly one!"