

## The Tower of Babel

The building of the Tower of Babel was the work of pride. The builders aimed at constructing something according to their own ideas, and thus resist the guidance of God. When the children of Noe had become very numerous, the proudest and most experienced among them met to resolve upon the execution of some work so great and so strong as to be the wonder of all ages to come and cause the builders to be spoken of as the most skillful, the most powerful of men. They thought not of God, they sought only their own glory. Had it been otherwise, as I was distinctly



told, God would have allowed their undertaking to succeed. The children of Sem took no active part in the work. They dwelt in a level country where palm trees and similar choice fruit grow. They were, however, obliged to contribute something toward the building, for they did not dwell so far distant at that period as they did later. The Semites were less numerous than the children of Cham and Japhet, and among them the family of Heber and the ancestors of Abraham studiously refrained from encouraging the enterprise. Upon Heber who, as we have said, took no part in the work, God cast His eyes; and amid the general disorder and corruption, He set him and his posterity apart as a holy nation. God gave him also a new and holy language possessed by no other nation, that thereby his race should be cut off from communication with all others. This language was the pure Hebrew, or Chaldaic. The first tongue, the mother tongue, spoken by Adam, Sem, and Noe, was different, and it is now extant only in isolated dialects. Its first pure offshoots are the Zend, the sacred tongue of India, and the language of the Bactrians. In those languages, words may be found exactly similar to the Low German of my native place. The book that I see in modern Ctesiphon, on the Tigris, is written in that language. Heber was still living at the time of Semiramis. His grandfather Arphaxad was the favorite son of Sem. He was a man of great judgment and full of profound wisdom. But a good deal of idolatrous worship and sorcery may have been handed down by him. The Magi derive their origin from him.

The Tower of Babel was built upon rising ground, about two leagues in circumference, around which lay an extensive plain covered with fields, gardens, and trees. To the foundations of the Tower, that is up to its first

story, twenty-five very broad stone walks led from all sides of the plain. Twenty-five tribes were engaged in the building, and each tribe had its own road to the Tower. Off in the distance, where these roads began, each tribe had its own particular city that, in time of danger or attack, they might flee to the Tower for shelter. The Tower was intended likewise to serve as a temple for their idolatrous worship. The stone roads were, where they took their rise in the plain, tolerably far apart; but around the Tower, they lay so close that the inter-vening spaces were not greater than the breadth of a wide street.

Before reaching the Tower, they were connected by cross arches, and between every two there opened a gateway about ten feet wide into its base. When these gently inclined roads had reached a certain height, they were pierced by single arcades. Near the Tower the arcades were double, one above the other, so that through them one could make the circuit of the building, even around the lowest part, under all the roads. Above the arches that connected the inclined roads were walks, or streets, running horizontally around the Tower.

Those gently rising roads extended like the roots of a tree. They were designed in part, as supporting counter-pillars to strengthen the foundation of the immense building, and partly as roads for the conveyance from all points of building materials and other loads to the first story of the Tower. Between these extended bases were encampments upon substructures of stone. In many places the tops of the tents rose above the roads that ran through them. From every encampment, steps cut in the walls led up to the walks. One could go all around the Tower through the encampments and arches and under the stone roads.

Besides the occupants of the encampments, there were others who lived in the vaults and spaces on either side of the stone roads. In and around the whole building swarmed innumerable living beings. It was like a huge anthill. Countless elephants, asses, and camels toiled up and down the roads with their heavy burdens. Although these burdens were far broader than the animals themselves, yet several could with ease pass one another on the roads. On them were halting places for feeding and unloading the animals, also tents on the level spaces and even factories. I saw animals without a guide bearing their burdens up and down. The gateways in the basement of the Tower led into a labyrinth of halls, passages, and chambers. From this lower part of the Tower, one could mount by steps cut out on all sides. A spiral walk wound from the first story around the exterior of the polygonal building. The interior at this point consisted of cellars, immense and secure, covered chambers and passages.

The building was begun on all sides at once. All tended to one central point

where at first stood a large encampment. They used tiles, also immense hewed stones, which they hauled to the site. The surface of the walks was quite white, and it glistened in the sun. At a distance, the sight it presented was wonderful. The Tower was planned most skillfully. I was told that it would have been finished and would now be standing as a magnificent monument of human skill, had it been erected to the honor of God. But the builders thought not of God. Their work was the offspring of presumption. The names of those that had contributed to the grandeur and magnificence of the building were inscribed with words of praise in the vaults and on the pillars; in the former by means of different colored stones, and on the latter in large characters. There were no kings, but only the heads of the different families, and they ruled according to common counsel. The stones employed in the building were skillfully wrought. They fitted into one another, held one another together. There were no raised figures on the building' but many parts of it were inlaid with colored stones and, here and there, were figures hewn in niches. Canals and cisterns were constructed for water supplies. All lent a helping hand, even the women trod the clay with their feet. The men worked with breast and arms bare, the most distinguished wearing a little cap with a button. Even in very early times, women kept the head covered. The building so increased in bulk and height that, on account of the shade it cast, it was quite cold on one side, while on the other the reflection of the sun's rays made it very hot. For thirty years, the work went on. They were at the second story. They had already encircled and walled in the interior with tower like columns, had already recorded their names and races thereon in colored stones when the confusion broke forth. I saw one sent by God, Melchisedech, going around among the leaders and the masters of the building. He called upon them to account for their conduct, and he announced to them the chastisement of God. And now began the confusion. Many who had up to this time worked on peaceably, now boasted their skill and the great services they had rendered in the undertaking. They formed parties, they laid claim to certain privileges. This occasioned contradictions, animosities, and rebellion. There were at first only two tribes among the disaffected and these, it was resolved, should be put down; but soon it was discovered that disunion existed among all. They struggled among themselves, they slew one another, they could no longer make themselves understood by one another, and so at last they separated and scattered over the whole earth. I saw Sem's race going farther southward where later on was Abraham's home. I saw one of Sem's race. He was a good man, but he did not follow his leader. On account of his wife, he preferred staying among the wicked ones of Babel. He became the leader of the Samanenses, a race

that always held themselves aloof from others. Under the cruel Semiramis, Melchisedech transplanted them to Palestine.

When in my childhood I had the vision of the building of the Tower, I used to reject it because I could not understand it. I had, of course, seen nothing like it, no buildings but our farmhouses 1 and the city of Coesfeld. More than once I thought it must be Heaven. But I had the vision again and again, and always in the same way I see it still, and I have also seen how it looked in Job's time.

One of the chief leaders in the Tower building was Nemrod. He was afterward honored as a deity under the name of Belus. He was the founder of the race that honored Derketo and Semiramis as goddesses. He built Babylon out of the stones of the Tower, and Semiramis greatly embellished it. He also laid the foundation of Ninive, and built substructures of stones for tent dwellings. He was a great hunter and tyrant. At that period savage animals were very numerous, and they committed fearful ravages. The hunting expeditions fitted out against them were as grand as military expeditions. They who slew these wild animals, were honored as gods.

Nemrod also

That is, where the door serves as an egress for the smoke, as well as for the cows. drove men together and subdued them. He practiced idolatry, he was full of cruelty and witchcraft, and he had many descendants. He lived to be about two hundred and seventy years old. He was of sallow complexion, and from early youth he had led a wild life. He was an instrument of Satan and very much given to star worship. Of the numerous figures and pictures that he traced in the planets and constellations, and according to which he prophesied concerning the different nations and countries, he sought to reproduce representations, which he set up as gods. The Egyptians owe their Sphinx to him, as also their many-armed and many-headed idols. For seventy years, Nemrod busied himself with the histories of these idols, with ceremonial details relative to their worship and the sacrifices to be offered them, also with the forming of the pagan priesthood. By his diabolical wisdom and power, he had subjected the races that he led to the building of the Tower. When the confusion of tongues arose, many of those tribes broke away from him, and the wildest of them followed Mesraim into Egypt. Nemrod built Babylon, subjected the country around, and laid the foundation of the Babylonian Empire. Among his numerous children were Ninus and Derketo. The last-mentioned was honored as a goddess.