

## Hebrews, Homeless Wonderers

To explain the Hebrew's homelessness we need to understand the origin of the name "Hebrew." According to the study done by Kang,

In Gen. 14:13, Abraham is called Habiru, means "Hebrew". In Gen. 41: 12, Joseph was also called "Hebrew". Therefore, Habiru was the name for Abraham and his family. It actually originates from the word "SA-GAZ" of Ur III Tablet which was translated as Habbatu. The word "SA-GAZ" appears on the Tablet of 2000 – 1800 BC, which originally meant a "robber". In the City of Mari written on the Tablet of 2500 BC, this word was used for a "group of nomads", or "those who crossed the river," (came from beyond the river), or "the ones who always carried their own food". Therefore, it was a name for Terah and Abraham. On Nuji Tablet Habiru was a slave or a hired servant. On Alalakh it was used as soldiers came from other countries. People believed that Habiru was polluting and threatening the region up to Egypt. Therefore, Israel was wandering nomads having no nation of their own. They were pain to others. In those days, people beyond the river were the trouble makers. In Gen. 5:30, Noah and Lamech's sons came from the southern part of Mesopotamia and Shem, Terah and Abraham came from Ur.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shin T. Kang. *Bible Study Correspondence Course* (Poulsbo, WA: Five Words Bible Society, 2004), 42. NRSV writes "God caused me to leave"; NIV "God had me leave;" Scofield Bible "God caused."  
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According to Kang, the reason why Abraham left his hometown and became a wanderer (homeless) and how Abraham himself understood can be explained several different ways from the exegesis of Gen. 20:13: The context of the text is Abraham's encounter with the King Abimelech when this wanderer settled between Kadesh and Shur.

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“While residing in Gerar as an alien, Abraham said of his wife Sarah, ‘She is my sister.’ And King Abimelech of Gerar sent and took Sarah (Gen. 20:1-2) Abraham says to his wife; ‘And when **God caused me to wander** from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother’ “ (Gen. 20:13).

According to Kang’s exegesis,

For the word “God” Abraham used is “Elohim” but the verb “caused,” is plural, which means “Elohim”(God) is also plural. In fact, when “Elohim” is a God, the verb “caused” must be singular. But when the verb is plural “Elohim” must be plural also. In those days when the “Elohim” is plural it meant pagan gods, angels, kings, rulers. Abraham must have understood What Elohim meant when it was singular or plural. Therefore, it looks as though Abraham placed his Elohim God on the same level as pagan gods; he didn’t quite understand that the one who caused him to leave Ur was God but pagan gods, kings or rulers; he could have lied to King Abimelech to please him that he too believe in pagan gods; it was pagan rulers who defeated Ur III, forced him leave his hometown and made him a wanderer.<sup>2</sup>

Kang points out the sociopolitical context of the day as one of the causes for Abraham’s leaving his home town Ur; there was a war in the region between **Kdolaomel and Amuraphel** that defeated Ur III and Nations, in today’s Iraq, and neighboring nations rose up independently in the Near East and strived to strengthen their powers.<sup>3</sup>

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Kang explains the context of Egypt that forced Israelites into slavery;

Under the rule of Amenemhet III, Egypt rose as a great empire in the region expanding its territory and achieving great prosperity, power and peace in the region. Many people from Asia immigrated to Egypt. This is when Abraham went down to Egypt. Perhaps the king Joseph served was Amenemhet I. The sudden immigration from overseas caused problems because 100-140 years later their descendants became rulers of

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<sup>2</sup> Shin T. Kang. *Bible Study Correspondence Course* (Poulsbo: Five Words Bible Society, 2004), 44. Other Scripture texts support Abraham’s faithlessness in several other occasions: He couldn’t trust God’s promise to bless him and left Canaan for his survival from the famine (Gen. 12: 10-11); He couldn’t trust God’s protection and told Pharaoh and Abimelech a lie that his wife was his sister (Gen. 12: 12-20; 20:13); He couldn’t trust and wait until God’s promise for his heir through Sarah becomes a reality and took Hagar, the Sarah’s slave girl, as his wife to produce an heir (Gen. 16: 1-4) and married another woman, Keturah who bore him six more sons (Gen. 25:1-6).

the country. In 1786 -1551 B.C. **Hicsos** kingdom (king of shepherds, foreign rulers) reigned the Egypt including Syria-Palestine. After that, Ah-Moses I had overthrown these foreign-born rulers and Egyptians regained the reign of Egypt. At this time Ah-Moses I became to feel nervous about the presence and numbers of the Hebrews, their wealth and power and about the possibility that these Hebrews can join the enemy in case Egypt fights against Asians and the remnant nations of **Hiksos** and that the Hebrews can go back to Canaan which will cause Egyptian economic downturn, and foreign domination again. Kang notes further;

Ah-Moses seized the power under the campaign that he will throw out all the Hebrews who outnumbered others and had strongest economic power. This is where Ah-Moses began to reduce the number of Hebrews. After his first son Thut-Moses II ruled for 3 years, his wife Hat-shep-sut ruled through 1490-1468 B.C. After Thut-Moses III died, his son Amen-Hopis became the king of the Egypt who was the one imposed forced labor on the Hebrews and became the rival to Moses,<sup>4</sup> (Ex. 1:13-14).

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<sup>1</sup> Shin T. Kang. *Bible Study Correspondence Course* (Poulsbo, WA: Five Words Bible Society, 2004), 84. Kang explains that the 10 plagues in Exodus event (Ex. 7:14-12:36) meant 10 pagan gods Egyptians were worshipping that Yahweh God defeated: 1) **Water turned to blood** (Ex. 7: 14-25) represents Hapi, Isis, Khnum, gods of Nile river for prosperity but these gods will now torment Egyptians. 2) **Frogs** (Ex. 8:1-15) represent a god helps safe child-delivery but this god will now be harmful to people including children. 3) **Gnats** (Ex. 8:16-19) represent god of wilderness but this god is now agonizing Egyptians. 4) **Flies** (Ex. 8:20-32) represent sun-god but this god now troubles Egyptians. 5) **Livestock diseased** (Ex. 9:1-7) represent Hathor god, symbolized by milkcow and Apis symbolized by a bull but this god now destroys their livestock, their wealth. 6) **Boils** (Ex. 9:8-12) represent Sekhmet god who controls disease and Sunu god who heals sickness now make people sick. 7) **Thunder and Hail** (Ex. 9: 13-35) represent Nut god of heaven and Osiris god that watches over crops now rather destroy crops. 8) **Locusts** (Ex. 10: 1-20) also represent Nut god and Osiris god that sent locusts (to let them eat every plant in the land -10:12). 9) **Darkness** (Ex. 10:21-29) represents Re and Horus, sun-gods, and Nut and Hathor, god of heaven, all brought darkness. After all, the Egyptian gods can't be any help to Egyptians. 10) **Death of the Firstborn** (Ex. 11:1-12:30) meant that all Egyptian gods – Heqet god that appears to the mother at the child-birth, Isis god that protects children, and Pharaoh's son worshiped by Egyptians- didn't have any power to protect Egyptians when their firstborn were killed and they rather allowed them to be killed. Therefore, Egyptian gods only bring evil upon the Egyptians.

Shin T. Kang. *Bible Study Correspondence Course* (Poulsbo, WA: Five Words Bible Society, 2004), 83-84.

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<sup>4</sup> Shin T. Kang. *Bible Study Correspondence Course* (Poulsbo, WA: Five Words Bible Society, 2004), 72-73. Hat-shep-sut was the one who adopted Moses as his son and named him so.