

Nimrod

The Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature. James Strong and John McClintock; Haper and Brothers; NY; 1880.

Nim'rod

(Heb. *Nimnrod'*; נִמְרֹד, probably from the Persic *Nabard*, i.e. *Lord*; which corresponds to the Sept. Νεβρώδ; Josephus, Νεβρώδης), the name given by Moses to the founder of the Babylonian monarchy ([Ge 10:10](#); comp. Hegewisch, *Ueber d. Aramaers*, in the *Berl. Monatsschr.* 1794, p. 216 sq.). B.C. cir. 2450. The Mosaic account makes him the son of Cush (on the omission of his name among the children of Cush, ver. 7, see Rosenmüller on ver. 10), an origin thought by some to indicate that the original people of Babylon came from the south (comp. Euseb. *Chron. Amer.* 1:20 sq.; Tuch, *Genesis* p. 230), the Egyptian or Hamitic region, expelling the Shemites (Asshur) from Shinar, and built Babylon, then, overflowing northward, founded Nineveh. (In [Ge 10:11](#) the marginal reading of the A. V. is preferable: וַיֵּצֵא אֶשְׂכָּר, *went forth to Assyria* [see Nordheimer, *Heb. Gram.* 2:95].) Nimrod was a mighty hero (גִּבּוֹר, [Ge 10:8](#)) and hunter before the Lord (comp. Schiller, *Kleine Pros. Schr.* 1:378 sq.). The later Oriental traditions enlarge this account. Josephus (*Ant.* 1:4, 2 sq.) identifies Nimrod with the builder of the tower of Babel, which he represents as an act of blasphemous impiety. This arises from the old etymology; of the name (as if from נָמַר, to *rebel*; Gesen. *Thesaur.* s.v.), and agrees with the remarkable fact that, according to the Persian astrology (*Chron. Pasch.* p., 36; Cedren. *Hist.* p. 14 sq.; comp. Hyde, *A d Ulugbeigh*, p. 44 sq.), the constellation of *the Giant* — that is, Orion (q.v.) — was named from Nimrod; and some have identified Nimrod with the Greek Orion (comp. Movers, *Phon.* p. 471; Baur, *Amos*, p. 351), who was also a giant (*Odys.* 11:309 sq.; comp.

II. 18:486, σθένος Ὠρίωνος; Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 580, Pliny, 7:16) and a mighty hunter (*Odys.* 11:574). The Hebrew *kesil* (כְּסִיל) is rendered *Orion* (*Isa* 13:10; *Job* 38:31) by the Syriac and the Sept. The word means *a fool, an impious person*, applied naturally to a proud blasphemer; and the *chains* or "*bands of Orion*" (*Job* 38:31) may be explained in the same way (see Michael. *Spicel.* 1:209 sq.; *Suppl.* p. 1319 sq.; comp. Gesen. *Comment. on Isaiah* 1:458 sq.). All we know of him serves to place Nimrod in the earliest period of Asiatic antiquity, and he cannot be regarded as a mere astronomical figure. But the strangest opinion is that of Von Bohlen (*Genesis*, p. 126), who makes him the same with Merodach-Baladan! (comp. Tuch, *Genesis* p. 233; Gesen. *Thes.* 2:818. note). The only subsequent notice of the name Nimrod occurs in *Mic* 5:6, where the "land of Nimrod" is a synonyme either for Assyria, just before mentioned, or for Babylonia. There is no ground for regarding *Ge* 10:9-11 as a later interpolation, an opinion maintained by Vater, Schumann, and others, and virtually adopted by Prof. Rawlinson. Nimrod is there briefly characterized thus: "He began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." This narrative is so brief that it is rather obscure. For the Hebrew word relieved "mighty" the Sept. gives γίγας, as if in allusion this, physical stature in connection with his power, or too *Ge* 6:4, as if the old antediluvian Titans had been reproduced in Nimrod. It is hard to determine in what sense the phrase a "mighty one" or a "mighty hunter" is used. If the name Nimrod be a Shemitic one, then it plainly means "let us rebel or revolt;":.but if it be, as some suppose, a Turanian word, its meaning is at present unknown. Much depends on the sense of the phrase "before the Lord." Many, like Perizonius, Bochart, and others, give it only an intensive

meaning-Deojudice, or *quasi maximne* — that is, in the Lord's estimation he was a mighty hunter. But with Hengstenberg we demur to the notion that the Hebrew superlative absolute can be expressed in this way with the solemn name of Jehovah. The phrase is by no means parallel to the so-called absolute superlative in such phrases as "trees of the Lord" ([Ps 104:16](#)), or "a city great to God" ([Jon 3:3](#)), or "a child fair to God" ([Ac 7:20](#)). The instances quoted by grammarians and lexicographers will not sustain the usage, and Nordheimer shrinks from the full vindication of it (*Heb. Gram.* p. 791). For example, the phrase occurs in [Ge 27:7](#), "That I may bless thee before the Lord," that is, in his presence and with his seal and approval. A similar phrase, in which the name God is used, is found in [Isa 56:12](#), "That I may walk before God," that is, in the enjoyment of his blessing and protection. And so in many places in which the idiom is not to be diluted into a mere superlative. Abarbanel, Gesenius, and Van Bohlen explain the clause "before the Lord" as meaning here "whom God favors." Prof. Rawlinson, also goes so far as to say that "the language of Scripture concerning Nimrod is laudatory rather than the contrary" (*Ancient Monarchies*, 1, 217). But the preposition לְפָנַי has often, as Gesenius admits, a hostile sense — in front of, for the purpose of opposing ([Nu 16:2](#); [1Ch 14:8](#); [2Ch 15:10](#)); and the Sept. gives it such a sense in the verse under consideration—ἐναντίον Κυρίου "against the Lord." The Targums and Josephus give the preposition this hostile meaning. The context also inclines us to it. That the mighty hunting was not confined to the chase is apparent from its close connection with the building of eight cities. Such indeed denies that such a connection is indicated by the ו in ver. 10, and Keil as roundly asserts it; but there is no need to lay stress on any consecutive force in the conjunction — the connection and its results are apparent in the context. The prowess in

hunting must have co-existed with valor in battle. What Nimrod did in the chase as a hunter was the earlier token of what he achieved as a conqueror. For hunting and heroism were of old specially and naturally associated, as in Perseus, Ulysses, Achilles, and the Persian sovereigns, one of whom, Darius, inscribed his exploits in hunting on his epitaph (Strabo, xv). The Assyrian monuments also picture many feats in hunting, and the word is often employed to denote campaigning. Thus Tiglath-pileser I "hunts the people of Bilu-Nipru," and one of his ancestors does the same thing. Both are represented as holding "the mace of power," a weapon used in hunting, and at the same time the symbol of royalty. Sargon speaks of three hundred and fifty kings who ruled over Assyria, and "hunted" the people of Bilu-Nipru. Bilu-Nipru means Babylon, and *nipru*, from *napar*, to hunt, may be connected with Nimrod, or Nebrod, as in the Sept. the name is spelled. The chase and the battle, which in the same country were connected so closely in aftertimes, may therefore be virtually associated or identified here. The meaning then will be, that Nimrod was the first after the flood to found a kingdom, to unite the fragments of scattered patriarchal rule, and consolidate them under himself as sole head and master; and all this in defiance of Jehovah, for it was the violent intrusion of Hamitic power into a Shemitic territory. The old hero's might and daring passed at length into a proverb, or became the refrain of a ballad, so that hunters and warriors of more recent times were ideally compared with him — "Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter." Concerning the later life of Nimrod, the Scriptures give not the slightest information, nor even ground for conjecture. But, after seventeen or more centuries, a dubious and supposititious narrative got into credit, of which the earliest promoter that we know was Ctesias, but which, variously, amplified, has been repeated by

many compilers of ancient history down to our own times. Rollin, Shuckford, and Prideaux seem to have given it a measure of credit. It is briefly to this effect: Some make Nimrod to be Belus, and consider Nin (for *os* and *us* are only the Greek and Latin grammatical terminations) to have been his son; others identify Nimrod and Ninus. It is further narrated that Ninus, in confederacy with Aric, an Arabian sovereign, in seventeen years spread his conquests over Mesopotamia, Media, and a large part of Armenia and other countries; that he married Semiramis, a warlike companion and a continuer of his conquests, and the builder of Babylon; that their son Ninyas succeeded, and was followed by more than thirty sovereigns of the same family, he and all the rest being effeminate voluptuaries; that their indolent and licentious character transmitted nothing to posterity; that the crown descended in this unworthy line one thousand three hundred and sixty years; that the last king of Assyria was Sardanapalus, proverbial for his luxury and dissipation; that his Median viceroy, Arbaces, with Belesis, a priest of Babylon, rebelled against him, took his capital, Nineveh, and destroyed it, according to the horrid practice of ancient conquerors — those pests of the earth — while the miserable Sardanapalus perished with his attendants by setting fire to his palace, in the 9th century before the Christian aera. That some portion of true history lies intermingled with error or fable in this legend, especially the concluding part of it, is probable. Mr. Bryant is of opinion that there are a few scattered notices of the Assyrians and their confederates and opponents in Eupolemus and other authors (of whom fragments are preserved by Eusebius), and in an obscure passage of Diodorus. To a part of this series, presenting a previous subjugation of some Canaanitish, of course Hamitic, nations to the Assyrians, a revolt, and a reduction to the former

vassalage, Mr. Bryant thinks that the very remarkable passage, [Ge 14:1-10](#), refers; and he supports his argument in an able manner by a variety of ethnological coincidences (*Anc. Mythol.* 6:195-208). But whatever we know with certainty of an Assyrian monarchy commences with Pul, about B.C. 760; and we have then the succession in Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon. Under this last it is probable that the Assyrian kingdom was absorbed by the Chaldeo-Babylonian Kitto. The chief events in the life of Nimrod, then, are (1) that he was a Cushite; (2) that he established an empire in Shinar. (the classical Babylonia), the chief towns being Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh; and (3) that he extended this empire northward along the course of the Tigris over Assyria, where he founded a second group of capitals, Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen. These events correspond to and may be held to represent the salient historical facts connected with the earliest stages of the great Babylonian empire.

⇒ [Bible concordance for NIMROD](#).

1. There is abundant evidence that the race which first held sway in the lower Babylonian plain was of Cushite or Hamitic extraction. Tradition assigned to Belus, the mythical founder of Babylon, an Egyptian origin, inasmuch as it described him as the son of Poseidon and Libya (Diod. Sicul. 1:28; Apollodor. 2:1, § 4; Pausan. 4:23, § 5); the astrological system of Babylon (Diod. Sicul. 1:81), and perhaps its religious rites (Hestiveus ap. Josephus, *Ant.* 1:4, 3) were referred to the same quarter; and the legend of Oannes, the great teacher of Babylon, rising out of the Erythraean sea, preserved by Syncellus (*Chronogr.* p. 28), points in the same direction. The name Cush itself was preserved in Babylonia and the adjacent countries under the forms of Cossaei, Cissia, Cuthah, and Susiana or Chuzistan. The earliest written language of Babylonia, as known to us

from existing inscriptions, bears a strong resemblance to that of Egypt and Ethiopia, and the same words have been found in each country, as in the case of Mirikh, the Meroe of Ethiopia, the Mars of Babylonia (Rawlinson, *Herod.* 1:442). Even the name Nimrod appears in the list of the Egyptian kings of the 22d dynasty, but there are reasons for thinking that dynasty to have been of Assyrian extraction. Putting the above-mentioned considerations together, they leave no doubt as to the connection between the ancient Babylonians and the Ethiopian or Egyptian stock (respectively the Nimrod and the Cush of the Mosaic table). More than this cannot be fairly inferred from the data, and we must therefore withhold our assent from Bunsen's view (*Bibelwerk*, v. 69) that the Cushite origin of Nimrod betokens the westward progress of the Scythian or Turanian races from the countries eastward of Babylonia; for, though branches of the Cushite family (such as the Cossaei) had pressed forward to the east of the Tigris, and though the early language of Babylonia bears in its structure a Scythic or Turanian character, yet both these features are susceptible of explanation in connection with the "original eastward progress of the Cushite race.

2. The earliest seat of empire was in the south part of the Babylonian plain. The large mounds which for a vast number of centuries have covered the ruins of ancient cities have already yielded some evidences of the dates and names of their founders, and we can assign the highest antiquity to the towns represented by the mounds of Niffar (perhaps the early Babel, though also identified with Calneh), Warka (the Biblical Erech), Mugheir (Ur), and Senkereh (Ellasar), while the name of Accad is preserved in the title Kinzi-Akkad, by which the founder or embellisher of those towns was distinguished (Rawlinson, 1:435). The date of their foundation may be placed at about B.C. 2200. We may

remark the coincidence between the quadruple groups of capitals noticed in the Bible, and the title Kiprat or Kiprat-arba, assumed by the early kings of Babylon, and supposed to mean "four races" (Rawlinson, 1:438, -447).

⇒ See also the [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#).

3. The Babylonian empire extended its way north-ward along the course of the Tigris at a period long anterior to the rise of the Assyrian empire in the 13th century B.C. We have indications of this extension as early as about 1860, when Shamas-Iva, the son of Ismi-dagon, king of Babylon, founded a temple at Kilehshergat (supposed to be the ancient Asshur). The existence of Nineveh itself can be traced up by the aid of Egyptian monuments to about the middle of the 15th century B.C.; and though the historical name of its founder is lost to us, yet tradition mentions a Belusas king of Nineveh at a period anterior to that assigned to Ninus (Layard's *Nineveh*, 2:231), thus rendering it probable that the dynasty represented by the latter name was preceded by one of Babylonian origin.;

It is impossible with certainty to identify Nimrod with any names as yet deciphered on the Assyrian monuments. Von Bohlen throws discredit on the whole story by identifying him with the historical MerodachBaladan. Remembering, however, that the Septuagint and Josephus write the name Nebrod or Nebrodes, we have the less difficulty in identifying the deified Nimrod with *Nipru*, *Bil-Nipru*, or *Bel-inimrod*, signifying "the lord," "the hunter;" *Enu*, another title, being the corresponding or Cushite term for Bil, Bel, or BaaL Thus Babylon is called the city of Bil-Nipru; and its fortifications are named in Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions Ingur-Bilu-Nipru. The chief seat of his worship as a god was at Nipru (Niffar or Calneh) and at Calah (Nimrud). The son of Bil-Nipru and his wife Beltis or BeltaNiprata, was Nin, the

Assyrian Hercules, and eponymously connected with Nineveh. Whether this identification be accepted or not, it may be added, in conclusion, that the shadow of Nimrod has never left his country. The famous ruined palace is named after him, and so is a temple — the Birs; a dam across the river is called Sukr-el-Nimrod; and Layard tells us that when the head of one of those singular figures was laid bare, his attention was turned to it by the wild exclamation, "Obey! hasten to the diggers; they have found Nimrod himself!" while the workmen were amazed and terrified at the sudden apparition. Arabian story prattles of him as a worshipper of idols and the persecutor of Abraham. See Frostneich, *Devenatore Nimrodo* (Altdorf, 1706); *Jour. Soc. Lit.* April, 1860.