From Babel to the Nations:

Tracing the Supreme God Across Ancient Cultures

Unveiling the Roots of Monotheism and Divine Language in Ancient Civilizations

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the presence of a supreme deity across various ancient cultures and proposes that the recognition of a singular, all-powerful god may have originated from a shared source: the Tower of Babel. Drawing from the biblical narrative, it suggests that before the division of languages, humanity spoke a common language—Hebrew—which was used to communicate divine truths and remind the nations of YHWH's sovereignty. However, after the scattering of peoples and languages at Babel, the divine beings assigned to guide the nations led them astray, as described in Psalm 82.

By examining belief systems in ancient China, Egypt, India, Greece, Native American cultures, and others, the paper highlights the persistence of monotheistic elements within largely polytheistic frameworks. Additionally, it considers early Christian, intertestamental, and rabbinic writings on the sacredness of Hebrew, emphasizing its central role in divine-human communication and monotheism. Together, these themes reveal a shared human instinct to recognize and engage with a singular divine authority, reflected in both religious practice and linguistic heritage across cultures.

I. INTRODUCTION

The early chapters of Genesis (1–11) present a cosmic and universal narrative, focusing on the origins of the world, the human race, and the nature of humanity's relationship with God. However, with the scattering at Babel (Genesis 11),[1] the Bible narrows its focus to Abram and his descendants (Genesis 12–50), through whom God would begin His redemptive work in the world. This transition highlights the importance of understanding how other ancient cultures interacted with the divine after Babel, as their fractured understanding of a supreme being reflects remnants of earlier monotheistic traditions. This paper seeks to explore these remnants across various ancient civilizations, tracing the recognition of a supreme deity back to a shared source: the Tower of Babel.[2]

A key theological contrast arises here: at Babel, humanity declared, "*Let us make a name for ourselves*" (Gen. 11:4), while God promises Abram, "*I will make your name great*" (Gen. 12:2). This reversal illustrates the distinction between self-made identity and one bestowed by divine calling. This shift in trajectory—from Babel to Abram—also anticipates a future hope. According to Hebrews 11:10, Abraham "*was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God*," contrasting Babel's failed human city with God's promised, enduring one. As John Lennox observes, "*God took Abram out of the city to take the city out of him,*" suggesting that God's call was not

[1] Genesis 11:4; Genesis 12:2, *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

[2] Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 98.

merely geographic but transformational—removing Abram from a culture of self-sufficiency and reorienting him toward divine dependence.[3]

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Nimrod urged the people to build the tower not only out of arrogance but also to avoid destruction by another flood. This tradition highlights the rebellious spirit of Babel as an intentional defiance against divine judgment.[4]

In ancient Mesopotamia, the word *ziggurat* was used to describe monumental temple towers that symbolized humanity's attempt to bridge the gap between earth and heaven. The Tower of Babel may have been a massive *ziggurat*, representing humanity's prideful attempt to ascend to divine status. Across the globe, ancient civilizations have developed intricate belief systems often centered around the worship of multiple gods and spirits. However, a common thread appears in many of these cultures—the recognition of a supreme being who reigns above all other deities. This concept of a singular, all-powerful god is found in belief systems across China, Egypt, India, Greece, and Native American tribes.[5] Despite their polytheistic frameworks, these cultures often identified one god as the most powerful, presiding over a divine hierarchy.

Some scholars identify the Tower of Babel with *Etemenanki*, a Babylonian ziggurat whose name means "*temple of the foundation of heaven and earth."* This

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[3] John C. Lennox, *"Abraham, the Friend of God,"* YouTube video, 49:23, posted by "John Lennox," October 25, 2023, https://youtu.be/0PsY8Q38oyQ.

[4] Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 1.4.2.

[5] James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 45.

identification underscores the real-world backdrop of Genesis 11 and humanity's prideful attempt to reach heaven on their own terms.[6]

This paper proposes that the shared recognition of a supreme deity could trace back to a common origin: the Tower of Babel. According to the biblical narrative, humanity once spoke a common language before being scattered across the earth.[7] This paper posits that the primordial language, Hebrew, was spoken by all humanity before Babel, and it was the responsibility of the 'sons of God' to remind the nations of YHWH and His sovereignty.[8] After the division of languages at Babel, the 'sons of God' were appointed to guide the nations, reminding them of YHWH's sovereignty. Yet, as Psalm 82 reveals, these divine beings failed in their duty, leading humanity away from YHWH. By examining the presence of a supreme being in various ancient belief systems, this paper explores how this failure unfolded and suggests that remnants of monotheism persisted even as cultures diverged.

The dispersion at Babel not only fragmented humanity's linguistic unity but also gave rise to enduring mysteries regarding the origins of language. Among these are language isolates, tongues that bear no known connection to other languages, such as Basque, Sumerian, or Ainu. These isolates seem to emerge suddenly and without clear lineage, paralleling the abrupt division of languages described in Genesis 11. While not the focus of this paper, the existence of language isolates underscores the complexity of humanity's linguistic divergence and invites reflection on the profound impact of Babel.

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[6] Stephanie Dalley, *The Mystery of the Hanging Garden of Babylon: An Elusive World Wonder Traced* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 38–40.

[7] R.H. Charles, trans., The Book of Jubilees (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 12:25-27.

[8] Michael S. Heiser, The Unseen Realm, 123.

An appendix listing these isolates offers further insight into the enigmatic nature of human communication and its roots in divine history.[9]

II. ANCIENT CHINA: SHANG DI AND TIAN

A. Shang Di (上帝):

i. Ancient Chinese beliefs prominently featured Shang Di, the *"Supreme Deity"* or *"Emperor of Heaven."* According to Sima Qian's Records of the Grand Historian (Shi Ji), the Yellow Emperor, Hang Di, built an altar on Mount Tai to worship Shang Di. Shang Di was seen as the ultimate authority over the heavens and earth, governing cosmic balance, justice, and order.[10]

ii. Later, the concept of Shang Di was integrated into Tian, or *"Heaven,"* particularly during the Zhou Dynasty. While more abstract than Shang Di, Tian retained its supreme status, reflecting a belief in a singular authority overseeing all other gods and spirits.[11]

iii. Chinese concepts like Shang Di (the Supreme God) or Tian (Heaven) offer intriguing cross-cultural parallels. These traditions portray divine sovereignty over creation and humanity, themes central to Genesis. Such

[9] The concept of language isolates—languages with no known genetic relationship to other languages—illustrates the enigmatic nature of linguistic diversity. To provide a deeper exploration of this phenomenon, Appendix A offers a comprehensive list of known language isolates, further emphasizing the profound linguistic fragmentation following Babel.

[10] Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, vol. 28, book 6, 624.

[11] Herrlee G. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China, Volume One: The Western Chou Empire* (University of Chicago Press, 1970), 193.

cross-cultural accounts suggest that ancient peoples perceived a shared human experience of catastrophic floods, which they attributed to divine purposes. This recognition broadens our understanding of the flood narrative as part of a larger theological dialogue in the ancient world, rather than an isolated account.[12]

III. ANCIENT EGYPT: AMUN-RA AND THE CONCEPT OF A SUPREME BEING

A. Amun and Amun-Ra:

i. In Egyptian mythology, while many gods were worshiped, one god stood above the rest: Amun, later merged with Ra to form Amun-Ra. This supreme god became the embodiment of creation, life, and cosmic order, reigning over both gods and humanity.[13]

ii. Amun-Ra was worshiped not just as a sun god but as the creator of the universe, a role akin to that of a supreme deity overseeing a divine council. Though Egypt's belief system was polytheistic, Amun-Ra was considered the highest and most powerful of all gods, symbolizing the ultimate divine authority.[14]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] George Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (Routledge, 2005), 34.

[14] James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 58.

IV. HINDUISM: BRAHMAN AS THE ULTIMATE REALITY

A. Brahman:

i. In Hinduism, Brahman is the ultimate, formless, and transcendent reality, from which all things emanate. While Hinduism contains a vast array of gods, these deities are understood as manifestations of Brahman. Brahman is eternal and infinite, representing the unchanging essence of the cosmos.[15]

ii. Even though popular Hindu worship focuses on deities like Vishnu, Shiva, and Devi, they are expressions of the singular Brahman. The Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures emphasize the supreme status of Brahman as the foundational reality behind all creation.[16]

V. GREEK AND ROMAN BELIEFS: ZEUS AND JUPITER AS SUPREME GODS

A. Zeus and Jupiter:

i. In Greek mythology, Zeus was the ruler of the Olympian gods, commanding authority over both gods and men. His Roman counterpart, Jupiter, held a similar position of supreme authority. Despite the pantheon of gods in both cultures, Zeus and Jupiter were regarded as the highest deities, responsible for maintaining order and justice.[17]

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[15] S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads* (HarperCollins, 1994), 98.

[16] Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 47.

[17] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (Harvard University Press, 1985), 120.

ii. This hierarchical structure, with Zeus/Jupiter at the top, mirrors the biblical idea of a divine council, where one supreme god rules over other deities and spiritual beings.[18]

VI. NATIVE AMERICAN BELIEFS: THE GREAT SPIRIT

A. The Great Spirit (Wakan Tanka):

i. Many Native American tribes believed in a single, all-powerful deity known as the Great Spirit. Among the Lakota people, this supreme being was called Wakan Tanka ("*Great Mystery*"), representing a transcendent force that governed life, creation, and the universe.[19]

ii. The Great Spirit, though often seen as a more abstract presence, was revered as the highest divine authority, with other spiritual beings acting under this supreme entity's rule. This reflects a similar concept of a supreme god presiding over lesser spiritual beings.[20]

VII. ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF BELIEF IN A SUPREME GOD

A. **Zoroastrianism:** Ancient Persian Zoroastrianism recognized Ahura Mazda as the one true god, a being of light and goodness who created the world. Ahura Mazda

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[18] Michael Grant, *Gods and Mortals in Classical Mythology* (Dorset Press, 1979), 67.

[19] Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 12.

[20] Arlene Hirschfelder and Paulette Molin, *Encyclopedia of Native American Religions* (Facts on File, 1992), 54.

presided over a council of divine beings known as the Amesha Spentas, reflecting a monotheistic structure with an emphasis on divine justice.[21]

B. **Mesopotamia:** The Mesopotamian god Anu was revered as the father of the gods and the supreme deity in their pantheon. Anu's authority was similar to that of other supreme gods, ruling over a council of lesser gods responsible for the natural world and human affairs.[22]

VIII. THE DIVINE COUNCIL: A COMMON DENOMINATOR IN ANCIENT BELIEFS

The idea of a divine council, where a supreme god governs alongside spiritual beings or lesser gods, is a common theme in ancient religious systems. Michael Heiser's work on the biblical concept of the divine council provides a framework for understanding how this idea appears across cultures. Before Babel, these 'sons of God' were able to communicate with humanity through a common language—Hebrew. This primordial language unified humanity under YHWH's sovereignty. However, after the confusion of languages at Babel, this unity was lost, contributing to the divine beings' failure to keep the nations aligned with YHWH.[23]

[21] Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Routledge, 2001), 45.

[22] Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 142.

[23] Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm,* 92-94.

A. The Biblical Divine Council:

i. In the Bible, God presides over a council of divine beings (the bene elohim) as seen in Deuteronomy 32:8[24] and Psalm 82. After the Tower of Babel incident, God divided humanity into nations and assigned these nations to the authority of these divine beings. However, as described in Psalm 82, many of these beings led the nations astray, falling into corruption.

B. Parallels Across Cultures:

i. In ancient Egypt, Amun-Ra presided over a council of gods. Similarly, Zeus ruled over the Greek gods in the pantheon, and Brahman manifested as various deities in Hinduism. These parallels suggest that the belief in divine councils, under a supreme being's rule, was a common religious theme.[25]

C. Corruption of the Divine Beings:

i. Psalm 82 describes how the divine beings assigned to rule the nations failed in their duties, leading the people into idolatry. This mirrors how many myths across the ancient world describe gods who became corrupt, further reflecting the biblical view of spiritual rebellion among these beings.[26]

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[24] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Deuteronomy 32:8.

[25] Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm,* 106.

[26] Ibid., 105.

After the Tower of Babel incident, the divine council, composed of the 'sons of God,' was meant to guide humanity's nations, each assigned to one of these beings. However, with the scattering of languages, the divine order fractured, leading to the eventual failure of these beings to keep the nations aligned with YHWH's sovereignty. This division of language plays a critical role in understanding the loss of unified communication.[27]

IX. THE PRIMORDIAL LANGUAGE: HEBREW IN EARLY CHURCH FATHERS AND INTERTESTAMENTAL WRITINGS

Prior to Babel, the primordial language—believed to be Hebrew—served as the singular means of communication between humanity and the divine. This language not only unified humanity but also facilitated the communication between the 'sons of God' and the nations they were meant to guide. With the division of languages, this divine connection was disrupted, contributing to the spiritual decline of the nations.[28]

This concept was preserved through various intertestamental writings, early church fathers, and rabbinic tradition. Hebrew is not only seen as the first language of humanity but also as a sacred language through which divine truths were communicated. By linking the primordial language to God's communication with humanity, particularly through His covenant with Abram, Hebrew becomes central to the expression of monotheism and divine sovereignty.[29]

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[27]Ibid., 110-112.

[28] James Barr, Hebrew*, Aramaic, and the History of Israel's Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 89-91.

[29] James Barr, Hebrew, *Aramaic, and the History of Israel's Language*, 89-91.

Early Church Fathers on the Primordial Language

Many early Christian writers, influenced by Jewish tradition and their understanding of the Old Testament, believed that Hebrew was the language of Eden and divine revelation. Several church fathers offered insights on the sanctity of Hebrew and its place as the original language of humanity.[30]

A. **Origen (AD 185–253):** Origen, one of the earliest and most influential theologians, suggested that Hebrew was the first language of humanity. In his Homilies on Genesis, Origen writes that Hebrew was the language used by Adam and Eve to communicate with God before the Fall. This connection between Hebrew and divine communication reinforces the idea of a supreme God speaking to humanity through a sacred language. Origen's support of Hebrew as the primordial language stems from his deep respect for the Hebrew Scriptures, which he believed to be divinely inspired in their original language.[31]

B. **Jerome (AD 347–420):** Jerome, the translator by of the Latin Vulgate, also believed in the importance of Hebrew as the sacred language. In his preface to the Pentateuch, Jerome noted that Hebrew was the language of creation and the prophets. He insisted that knowledge of Hebrew was essential for understanding the fullness of divine revelation, implying that it was the primordial language through which God communicated His sovereign will to humanity.[32]

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[30] Robert L. Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 108-110.

[31] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus, trans. Ronald E. Heine* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 49-51.

[32] Jerome, *Prologus Galeatus*, in *Patrologia Latina, vol. 29*, edited by Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1845), 24-25.

C. **Ephrem the Syrian (AD 306–373):** Ephrem, a Syriac Christian theologian, also reflected on the sacredness of Hebrew in his commentaries. He considered it the language of divine truth, used by God to reveal His will to Adam and the patriarchs, showing how Hebrew was a means of direct communication from a supreme God to His people.[33]

Intertestamental Writings on the Primordial Language

The intertestamental period (the time between the Old and New Testaments) produced various Jewish writings, including the Book of Jubilees and 1 Enoch, that reference the primordial language and its role in human-divine communication. These texts highlight how Hebrew, as the divine language, was restored to Abram, signifying the special relationship between God and His chosen people.[34]

A. The Book of Jubilees (circa 2nd century BC):

In Jubilees, also known as The Little Genesis, Hebrew is explicitly referred to as the language of creation and the language spoken by Adam.[35] According to Jubilees 12:25-27, Abram learned Hebrew from his ancestors and used it to communicate with God. This act of restoration highlights how Hebrew, as the primordial language, was integral to God's covenant with Abram, marking the establishment of monotheism and divine sovereignty over humanity. The restoration of Hebrew to Abram is not only a

[33] Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis,* trans. Edward G. Mathews Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 20-22.

[34] James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 50-52.

[35] James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 73-75.

reaffirmation of God's authority but also a symbol of His singular reign over the nations.[36]

B. 1 Enoch (circa 3rd century BC):

The Book of Enoch, an influential intertestamental work, presents the idea of angelic beings teaching humans divine knowledge, including language.[37] Enoch, as a mediator between the human and divine realms, was thought to communicate with angels in a celestial tongue. Many later Jewish and Christian traditions equated this divine language with Hebrew, reinforcing the belief that Hebrew was not only the primordial language of humanity but also the language used by divine beings, further linking it to the concept of monotheism.[38]

Rabbinic Traditions and the Sanctity of Hebrew

The belief that Hebrew was the original language of humanity is also found in rabbinic tradition. The Talmud and various midrashim recount how Hebrew was the language spoken by Adam, Noah, and Abraham. In rabbinic thought, Hebrew is often described as the "*Holy Tongue*" (Lashon HaKodesh), distinct from all other languages due to its divine origin.

The Talmud: In *Sanhedrin 38b*, the Talmud reflects on how Adam named the animals in Hebrew, signifying that it was the first language given to humanity by God. The Talmudic sages also connected Hebrew to the creation narrative, seeing it as the

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[36] Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 103.

[37] George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 128-130.

[38] George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation,* 128-130.

language through which God created the world, further tying it to divine sovereignty and monotheism.[39]

Midrash Rabbah: In Genesis Rabbah 18:4, the rabbis describe Hebrew as the language of creation and communication between God and the patriarchs. They believed that Hebrew had been spoken before Babel and was restored to Abram as part of his special relationship with God.[40] This restoration of Hebrew to Abram is symbolic of the re-establishment of divine communication and the reaffirmation of God's singular rule over His people.[41]

Paul's Reference to the *"Tongues of Angels"* and the Primordial Language

In 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul refers to the *"tongues of men and angels,"* a passage often interpreted in various ways throughout church history. Modern Pentecostal movements have tended to equate this phrase with their practice of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, which involves unintelligible, ecstatic speech. However, an examination of early Church Fathers suggests that this connection was not present in the early Christian understanding, and they interpreted Paul's reference more metaphorically or spiritually.

A. **Origen (AD 185–253):** Origen's *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* explores the spiritual gifts, including the gift of tongues, as a means of divine communication. He acknowledges the existence of angelic speech but emphasizes that it

[39] The Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin 38b, trans. Jacob Neusner* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 82.

[40] *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis,* trans. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, *vol. 1* (London: Soncino Press, 1961), 145.

[41] Ibid., 147

transcends human language.[42] While Origen believed Hebrew was the first language of humanity, he did not link this to the gift of tongues or glossolalia. His emphasis on spiritual, angelic communication points to a form of divine interaction far beyond any human language, further distancing the *"tongues of angels"* from modern glossolalia.[43]

B. **John Chrysostom (AD 347–407):** In his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Chrysostom viewed Paul's reference to the *"tongues of angels"* as a rhetorical exaggeration to stress the superiority of love over all spiritual gifts. For Chrysostom, Paul was not identifying a literal language of angels or endorsing ecstatic speech. Instead, he was illustrating that even if one could speak in the loftiest of tongues, without love it would be meaningless. This directly contradicts any notion that the *"tongues of angels"* refers to glossolalia.[44]

C. **Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430):** Augustine, in his *On the Trinity*, discussed Paul's mention of the *"tongues of angels"* in terms of divine communication. He suggested that angelic communication was superior to human language but focused on the idea that love transcends all gifts. Augustine did not link this form of communication to glossolalia, and like Chrysostom, he interpreted the *"tongues of angels"* as symbolic of a higher form of divine knowledge, not literal ecstatic speech.[45]

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[42] Origen, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians,* trans. John Patrick (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 41.

[43] Ibid., 22

[44] John Chrysostom, Homilies on First Corinthians, *Homily 32, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, Volume 12,* edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 196–199.

[45] Augustine, *On the Trinity,* trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), 64.

D. **Thomas Aquinas (AD 1225–1274:** Aquinas addressed the nature of angelic communication in his *Summa Theologica*, describing it as non-verbal and superior to human speech. He argued that angels communicate directly through intellect and will, bypassing language altogether. This philosophical perspective reinforces that the *"tongues of angels"* would not align with glossolalia, as it transcends any form of vocal expression.[46] For a more detailed discussion, see *"Spiritual Gifts and the Primordial Language."*[47]

X. *CONCLUSION*

The early Church Fathers provide strong evidence that Paul's reference to the *"tongues of angels"* was understood metaphorically or as a symbol of transcendent, divine communication, rather than as an endorsement of ecstatic, unintelligible speech like modern glossolalia. By focusing on the primacy of love and the superiority of spiritual communication, they distanced Paul's words from the later Pentecostal interpretation. Therefore, the *"tongues of angels"* should not be understood as equivalent to the modern phenomenon of speaking in tongues.

Understanding Paul's reference to the *"tongues of angels"* is not merely an academic exercise, but one that affects our theological comprehension of divine communication. The modern Pentecostal emphasis on glossolalia may, in fact, be a distraction from the original language taught to Adam and later fragmented at the Tower

[46] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), I, Q. 107, Art. 1.

[47] D. Gene Williams Jr., *Spiritual Gifts and the Primordial Language: A Study of Continuation, Cessation, and Early Church Perspectives*, accessed December 14, 2024, https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr; https://defendtheword.com/academic-papers.html.

of Babel. It is possible that the language of angels, when manifested in human form, appears corporeally as Hebrew, as taught to Adam, but that in their spiritual state, angels communicate directly through intellect and will, bypassing language altogether. This distinction is important because it points to a more profound form of divine communication, one that transcends human language and aligns with early Christian beliefs about angelic communication.

Hebrew as the Language of Divine Sovereignty

Building on these interpretations, some scholars have speculated that Hebrew could be the *"tongue of angels"* that Paul referenced, considering its status as a sacred, primordial language in Jewish and early Christian thought. According to traditions such as the *Book of Jubilees*, Hebrew was the language taught to Adam by God and the angels.[48] This tradition, combined with Paul's reference to angelic tongues, supports the view that Hebrew may have been considered the language of divine revelation both in heaven and on earth. The restoration of Hebrew to Abram thus represents not only the re-establishment of divine communication but also the reaffirmation of God's singular, sovereign rule over His chosen people.[49]

The idea that Hebrew was the primordial language, spoken by Adam and later restored to Abram, is deeply embedded in early Christian, Jewish, and intertestamental writings. Church fathers such as Origen and Jerome, along with texts like the *Book of Jubilees* and rabbinic traditions, testify to the sanctity of Hebrew as the divine language

[48] VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 55-57.

[49] Ibid., 57.

through which God revealed His will.[50] Paul's reference to the *"tongues of angels"* reinforces the notion that Hebrew may have been considered the sacred language of both heaven and earth, used for divine communication.[51]

This exploration of Hebrew as the primordial language complements the broader theme of a universal search for a supreme deity across ancient cultures. From China's Shang Di to Egypt's Amun-Ra, Hinduism's Brahman, and the Great Spirit of Native American beliefs, the concept of one ultimate deity surfaces despite the existence of many gods. This supreme deity often presides over a divine council, paralleling the biblical understanding of God's sovereignty over other spiritual beings.[52]

Together, the concepts of a supreme god and a primordial language—both central to human-divine interaction—reveal a shared human instinct to recognize a singular divine authority and communicate with that authority. These enduring themes, present across various ancient traditions, underscore humanity's quest to understand divine order and establish a connection with the ultimate source of power and wisdom.[53]

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[50] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, 49-51.

[51] 1 Corinthians 13:1, *English Standard Version*.

[52] Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm,* 127-129.

[53] VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 66-69.

APPENDIX A: LANGUAGE ISOLATES AND THEIR CONNECTION TO BABEL

Language isolates are languages that have no demonstrable genetic relationship to other languages, meaning they do not belong to any known language family. Some of these classifications are subject to scholarly debate, and linguistic research may reveal previously unknown relationships in the future.

Below is a list of some well-known language isolates from around the world:

Africa

- **Hadza** (Tanzania)
- **Sandawe** (Tanzania)

Asia

- **Burushaski** (Pakistan, northern India)
- **Korean** (Korea; debated, but often treated as an isolate)
- **Ainu** (Japan; nearly extinct)
- **Nivkh** (Russia, Sakhalin Island)
- **Ket** (Siberia, Russia; Yeniseian languages, sometimes debated)
- **Kusunda** (Nepal; critically endangered)

Europe

- **Basque** (*Euskara*; spoken in northern Spain and southwestern France)

Americas

- **Haida** (Canada, British Columbia)
- **Keresan** (United States, New Mexico; includes multiple dialects)
- **Cayuse** (United States, extinct)
- **Zuni** (United States, New Mexico)
- **Tarascan/Purépecha** (Mexico)
- **Huave** (Mexico; also called *Ombeayiüts*)
- **Yuchi** (United States, Oklahoma; critically endangered)
- **Chitimacha** (United States, Louisiana; extinct)
- **Atakapa** (United States, Louisiana and Texas; extinct)
- **Washo** (United States, California-Nevada border)
- **Mapudungun** (Chile and Argentina; sometimes debated)
- **Tiwi** (Australia; historically classified as an isolate, though newer analyses suggest potential connections)

Oceania

- **Tiwi** (Australia; sometimes debated as an isolate)
- **Kusunda** (Nepal; critically endangered)
- **Extinct Language Isolates**
- **Etruscan** (Italy; ancient)
- **Sumerian** (Iraq; ancient Mesopotamia)
- **Elamite** (Iran; ancient)
- **Meroitic** (Sudan; ancient Nubia)
- **Hurrian** (Near East; ancient)
- **Hattic** (Anatolia, Turkey; ancient)
- **Pictish** (Scotland; debated and poorly attested)

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The Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 38b. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011.

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