

The Tower Of Babel (Genesis 11.1-9) in Old, Middle, And Early Modern English

Old English (11th century)

1 Soðlice ealle menn
spræcon ða ane spræce.

2 Ða ða hi ferdon fram
eastdæle, hi fundon ænne
feld on Senaarlande,
ond wunodon ðæron.

3 Ða cwædon hi him
betwynan: Vton [= Uton]
wyrcean us tigelan ond
ælan hi on fyre.
Witodlice hi hæfdon tigelan
for stan ond tyrwan for
weall-lim.

4 ond cwædon: Vton
timbrian us ceastre ond
stypel oð heofon heahne,
ond uto wyrðian urne
naman, ær ðam ðe we synd
todælede geond ealle
eorðan.

Middle English 1 (1382)

1 Forsothe the erthe was of
oo lip, and of the same
wordis.

2 And whan men shulden
go fro the est, thei founden
a feeld in the lond of
Sennaer, and thei
dwelleden in it.

3 And the tother seide to
his neibore, Cometh, and
make we tile stoons, and
sethe we hem with fier; and
thei hadden tiles for stoons,
and tow3 cley for syment.

4 And thei seiden,
Cometh, and make we to vs
a citee and a towr, whos
heigt fulli ateyne vnto
heuene; and halow we oure
name, or we ben dyuydid
into alle londis.

Middle English 2 (1395)

1 Forsothe the lond was of
o langage, and of the same
speche.

2 And whanne thei zeden
forth fro the eest,
thei fonden a feeld in the
lond of Sennaar, and
dwelliden ther ynne.

3 And oon seide to his
neizbore, Come 3e, and
make we tiel stonys,
and bake we tho with fier;
and thei hadden tiel for
stonus,
and pitche for mortar;

4 and seiden, Come 3e, and
make we to vs a citee and
tour, whos hignesse stretche
til to heuene;
and make we solempne
oure name bifer that we be
departid in to alle londis.

Early Modern English (1611)

1 And the whole earth was
of one language,
and of one speach.

2 And it came to passe as
they iourneyed from the
East, that they found a
plaine in the land of Shinar,
and they dwelt there.

3 And they sayd one to
another;
Goe to, let vs make bricke,
and burne them thorowly.
And they had bricke for
stone, and slime had they
for mortar.

4 And they said; Goe to, let
vs build vs a city and a
tower, whose top may reach
vnto heauen, and let vs
make vs a name, lest we be
scattered abroad vpon the
face of the whole earth.

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5 Witodlice Drihten astah
nyðer to ðam ðæt he
gesawe ða burh
ond ðone stypel ðe Adames
bearn getimbrodon.

6 ond he cwæð: Ðis is an
folc, ond ealle hi sprecað an
leden
ond hi begunnon ðis to
wyrçenne; ne geswycað hi
ær ðan ðe hit geara sy.

7 Soðlice uton cuman ond
todælan ðær heora spæce.

8 Swa Drihten hi todælde
of ðære stowe geond ealle
eorðan.

9 ond for ðam man nemde
ða stowe Babel, for ðam ðar
wæron todælede ealle
spæce.

5 The Lord forsothe
descendide, that he myzte
se the citee and the towre,
the which the children of
Adam bildeden;

6 and seide, Se! the puple is
oon, and oo lippe is to alle,
and this thei han bigunnen
to make, ne thei wolen
leeue of fro her thenkyngis,
to the tyme that thei han
fulfillid hem in dede;

7 thanne come 3e, descende
we, and confounde we there
the tung of hem, that noon
here the vois of his
neizbore.

8 And so the Lord deuydide
hem fro that place into alle
londis; and thei sesyden to
bilde the citee.

9 And therfor was callid the
name of it Babel, for there
was confoundid the lippe of
al the erthe; and fro thens
the Lord disparpoilide hem
vpon the face of alle
regions.

5 Forsothe the Lord cam
down to se the citee and
tour, which the sones of
Adam bildiden.

6 And he seide, Lo! the
puple is oon, and o language
is to alle, and thei han
bigunne to make this, nethir
thei schulen ceesse of her
thougtis,
til thei fillen tho in werk;

7 therfor come 3e, go we
doun, and scheende we
there the tunge of hem,
that ech man here not the
voys of his neizbore.

8 And so the Lord departide
hem fro that place in to alle
londis; and thei cessiden to
bilde a cytee.

9 And therfor the name
therof was clepid Babel,
for the language of al erthe
was confoundide there;
and fro thennus the Lord
scaterede hem on the face
of alle cuntrees.

5 And the LORD came
downe to see the city and
the tower, which the
children of men builded.

6 And the LORD said;
Behold, the people is one,
and they haue all one
language: and this they
begin to doe: and now
nothing will be restrained
from them, which hey haue
imagined to doe.

7 Goe to, let vs go downe,
and there confound their
language, that they may not
vnderstand one anothers
speech.

8 So the LORD scattered
them abroad from thence,
vpon the face of all the
earth: and they left off to
build the Citie.

9 Therefore is the name of
it called Babel, because the
LORD did there confound
the language of all the
earth: and from thence did
the LORD scatter them
abroad vpon the face of all
the earth.