

Genesis 11

QUESTION? How does the world explain the existence of language?

Linguistic Society of America, **FAQ: How Did Language Begin?**

<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/faq-how-did-language-begin>

“What does the question mean?”

In asking about the origins of human language, we first have to make clear what the question is. The question is not how languages gradually developed over time into the languages of the world today. Rather, it is how the human species developed over time so that we - and not our closest relatives, the chimpanzees and bonobos - became capable of using language.

And what an amazing development this was! No other natural communication system is like human language. Human language can express thoughts on an unlimited number of topics (the weather, the war, the past, the future, mathematics, gossip, fairy tales, how to fix the sink...). It can be used not just to convey information, but to solicit information (questions) and to give orders. Unlike any other animal communication system, it contains an expression for negation - what is not the case. Every human language has a vocabulary of tens of thousands of words, built up from several dozen speech sounds. Speakers can build an unlimited number of phrases and sentences out of words plus a smallish collection of prefixes and suffixes, and the meanings of sentences are built from the meanings of the individual words. What is still more remarkable is that every normal child learns the whole system from hearing others use it.

***Animal communication systems, in contrast, typically have at most a few dozen distinct calls, and they are used only to communicate immediate issues such as food, danger, threat, or reconciliation.** Many of the sorts of meanings conveyed by chimpanzee communication have counterparts in human 'body language'. For animals that use combinations of calls (such as some songbirds and some whales), the meanings of the combinations are not made up of the meanings of the parts (though there are many species that have not been studied yet). And the attempts to teach apes some version of human language, while fascinating, have produced only rudimentary results. **So the properties of human language are unique in the natural world.**”*

Did it happen all at once or in stages?

How did these changes take place? Some researchers claim that they came in a single leap, creating through one mutation the complete system in the brain by which humans express complex meanings through combinations of sounds. These people also tend to claim that there are few aspects of language that are not already present in animals.

Other researchers suspect that the special properties of language evolved in stages, perhaps over some millions of years, through a succession of hominid lines. In an early stage, sounds would have been used to name a wide range of objects and actions in the environment, and individuals would be able to invent new vocabulary items to talk about new things. In order to achieve a large vocabulary, an important advance would have been the ability to 'digitize' signals into sequences of discrete speech sounds - consonants and vowels - rather than unstructured calls. This would require changes in the way the brain controls the vocal tract and possibly in the way the brain interprets auditory signals (although the latter is again subject to considerable dispute).

These two changes alone would yield a communication system of single signals - better than the chimpanzee system but far from modern language. A next plausible step would be the ability to string together several such 'words' to create a message built out of the meanings of its parts. This is still not as complex as modern language. It could have a rudimentary 'me Tarzan, you Jane' character and still be a lot better than single-word utterances. In fact, we do find such 'protolanguage' in two-year-old children, in the beginning efforts of adults learning a foreign language, and in so-called 'pidgins', the systems cobbled together by adult speakers of disparate languages when they need to communicate with each other for trade or other sorts of cooperation. This has led some researchers to propose that the system of 'protolanguage' is still present in modern human brains, hidden under the modern system except when the latter is impaired or not yet developed.

When did this all happen?

*Again, it's very hard to tell. We do know that something important happened in the human line between 100,000 and 50,000 years ago: This is when we start to find cultural artifacts such as art and ritual objects, evidence of what we would call civilization (my note: no artifacts ever found are older than about 4500 years). What changed in the species at that point? Did they just get smarter (even if their brains didn't suddenly get larger)? Did they develop language all of a sudden? Did they become smarter because of the intellectual advantages that language affords (such as the ability to maintain an oral history over generations)? If this is when they developed language, were they changing from no language to modern language, or perhaps from 'protolanguage' to modern language? And if the latter, when did 'protolanguage' emerge? Did our cousins the Neanderthals speak a protolanguage? **At the moment, we don't know.**"*

Early Speculations for the Origin of Language (Wikipedia). These were proposed in 1861 by linguist Max Müller

- Bow-wow, or cuckoo theory (imitations of the cries of beasts and birds)
- Pooh-pooh theory (emotional exclamations triggered by pain, pleasure, surprise)
- Ding-dong theory (man is began mimicking the natural resonance of all things)
- Yo-he-ho theory (utterances that come from manual labor, such as "heave-ho")
- Ta-ta theory (simple tongue movements that replicated manual gestures lead to language)

Then, because no one seemed to agree, in 1866, the Linguistic Society of Paris banned any existing or future debates on the subject.

Then along came Charles Darwin in 1871, who stated the following in the ***Descent of Man (an apt name):***

- *"I cannot doubt that language owes its origin to the imitation and modification, aided by signs and gestures, of various natural sounds, the voices of other animals, and man's own instinctive cries."*

Darwin said man learned his language by imitating nature and the "voices" of "other" animals.

- After Charles Darwin died, rumors spread that he had converted to Christianity on his deathbed. His children denied this occurred.

Darwin's Theory of Evolution re-invigorated the discussion, but now, 150 years later, "we still don't know".

So, **Romans 1** has never been truer that when it comes to "speculation" on the origins of language:

- *Rom 1:18-19 NIV, The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who **suppress the truth by their wickedness,**¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.*
 - QUESTION? Is there any suppression of truth going on in our world today?

- Rom 1:25, **They exchanged the truth about God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.
 - “We learned our language skills from the animals” Really?
- Rom 1:28, Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so **God gave them over to a depraved mind**, so that they do what ought not to be done.
 - Depraved (adokinos): Adokinos is the negative of dokinos (tested, approved). So this is a mind that fails the test. Disqualified, rejected, non-functioning.
 - King James uses the word reprobate (Re and probare). Disapproved, worthless, condemned)

QUESTION? Can animals talk? What about Parrots? They talk, right?

- (<https://www.wonderopolis.org/wonder/can-parrots-really-talk>)
 - “Experts say parrots probably do not understand meanings of most words. However, they are aware of the context surrounding words and can make associations with the words. For example, a researcher named Tim Wright explained why a parrot might ask “How are you?” when you enter the room. It’s likely not asking about your well-being. Instead, the parrot imitates the words it has heard you say many times upon walking into a room. Your parrot has made an association between you entering the room and that phrase. “
 - “Repeating sounds you’ve heard many times before is called mimicry. The “talking” we hear from parrots is mimicry of all sorts of sounds. They imitate many things, from spoken words to creaking doors to barking dogs. Most parrots are simply mimicking their owners. They don’t really know what they’re saying.”

QUESTION? So let’s set aside the Tower of Babel for a moment. Where did man’s first language come from?

QUESTION? How is it that man can talk, and animals can’t talk? We are created in God’s image!

QUESTION? How did the entire creation come into being?

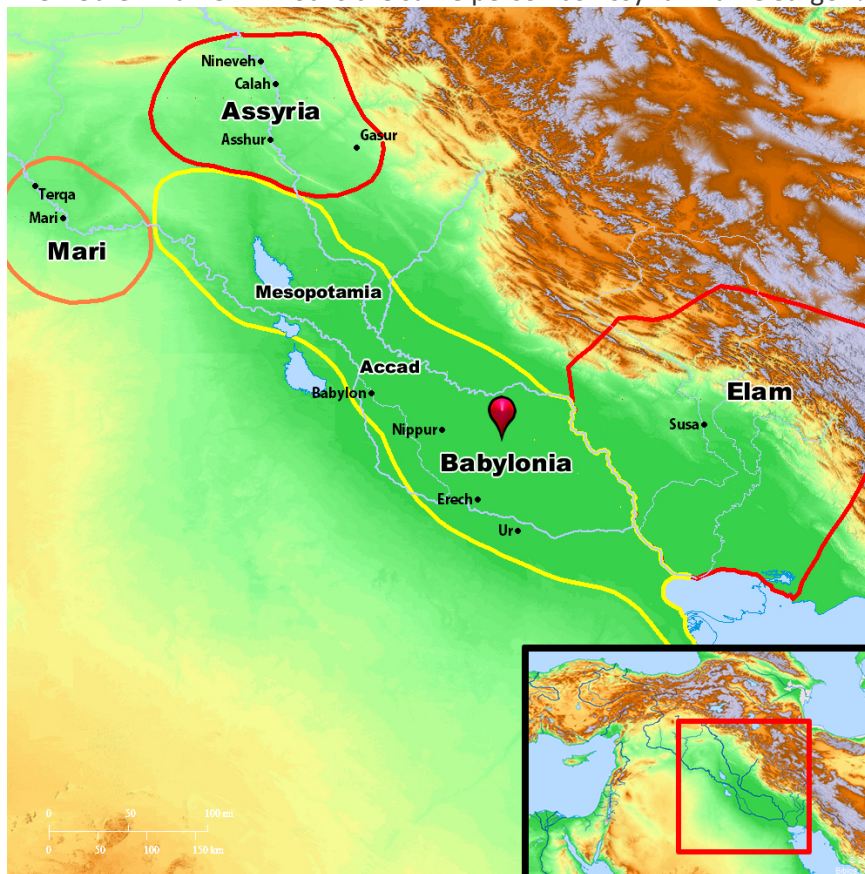
Gen 11:1, Now all the earth ^[a]used the same language and ^[b]the same words.

- QUESTION? What’s the difference between language and words?
 - Compare American English with British, Australian, South African (same language, diff words)
 - Our Liverpool experience! The accent was so strong we couldn’t understand them.
- QUESTION? Does language change over time?
 - Ancient Greek with Modern Greek – very different
 - Ancient Hebrew with Modern Hebrew – also different
 - Hand out the English Language Sheet

Gen 11:2, And it came about, as they journeyed ^[c]east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and ^[d]settled there.

- They (who are they?)
 - The descendants of Noah
 - Gen 9:32, *These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their descendants, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.*
- Land of Shinar
 - Mesopotamian Valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

- It is now the southern region of Iraq, the State of Kuwait and part of Iran
- Sumerian civilization first took form in southern Mesopotamia around which would make it the first urban civilization in the region. Mesopotamians are noted for developing one of the first written scripts around 3000 BCE: wedge-shaped marks pressed into clay tablets.
- **Sargon, also known as Sargon of Akkad**, (flourished 23rd century BC), ancient Mesopotamian ruler (reigned c. 2334–2279 BC) who was one of the earliest of the world's great empire builders, conquering all of southern Mesopotamia as well as parts of Syria, Anatolia, and Elam (western Iran).
- The ancient Jewish writers Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus suggested Nimrod was a giant who opposed God¹ and the tyrant behind the construction of the Tower of Babel (respectively).² [Genesis 10:10–12](#) includes within Nimrod's kingdom the Sumerian cities of **Babel** and **Uruk** (Erech); the city of **Akkad** (Accad) in “**the land of Shinar**” (southern Mesopotamia/Babylonia); and the Assyrian cities of **Nineveh, Resen, and Calah**. Archaeologists have uncovered the remains of some of these cities, which have helped them identify Nimrod.
 - *Gen 10:10-12, [Speaking of Nimrod] And the beginning of his kingdom was ^[a]Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, ¹² and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.*
- The Old Testament mentions Nimrod four times, calling him “a mighty one on the earth” ([Gen. 10:8](#); [1 Chr. 1:10](#)); “a mighty hunter before the LORD” ([Gen. 10:9](#)); and the founder of the Assyrian Empire ([Mic. 5:6](#)).
- Nimrod's origin in Cush matches Sargon's origin in Sumerian Kish
- The Hebrew name Nimrod is the same person as Assyrian name Sargon! Nimrod means “rebel”.



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- Settled there
 - QUESTION? Didn't God say to fill the earth?
 - *Gen 1:28, God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it*
 - *Gen 9:1, Then God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.*
 - In an act of disobedience, they all settled in one place, the Land of Shinar

Gen 11:3-4, Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and ^[a]fire them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. ⁴ And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of all the earth.

- Bottom line, they didn't want to be scattered, QUESTION? WHY?
 - They wanted a one-world civilization!
- Bricks are made from clay and hardened by firing. This is easier than making cut stones.
 - The word is the same used for bricks made for the pyramids by the Israelites.
 - In that case, they also mixed their clay with straw.
- The word for tar really means asphalt, a petroleum product used for making our roads.
 - Noah coated the ark with "pitch" which is more like what we call "tar"
 - This is made from heating wood or plants or from distilled petroleum.
 - **Let us build** – WE are doing this.
 - To make a name – so WE will "make a name".
 - For ourselves – for US, it's all about us!
 - And somehow building a tower will keep us from being scattered as God commanded?
- Build a city, Babel, the original BABYLON
- And a tower to reach to "heaven".
 - They probably didn't think it would go all the way to "heaven".
 - This was not to get closer to the true God.
 - These people worshipped the moon and stars, instead of God.
 - They would place a temple or altar at the top, sometimes for human sacrifice.
 - One language
 - One government
 - One religion
- This is not like the Washington Monument, this is a Ziggurat (a stepped pyramid)
 - **Show Powerpoint OF ZIGGURATS**
- QUESTION? Why are these buildings found all over the world?

Gen 11:5-6, Now the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the ^[a]men had built. ⁶ And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have ^[b]the same language. And this is what they have started to do, and now nothing which they plan to do will be ^[c]impossible for them.

- The Lord "came down". I guess the tower wasn't high enough.
- QUESTION? What is the concern here?
 - One world civilization, one government, one language sounds like a great idea
- QUESTION? What's wrong with this? Nations are needed to police other nations.
 - Twice, a nation tried to take over the world, and twice they were stopped

- People glorify the idea of a world without borders, without nations, without war
 - But when there is possible global unity among sinners, no one on earth can stop them.
- QUESTIONS? In what direction is our world moving today?
 - What about languages? Languages are disappearing!
 - National Review article from 2001 - *“Thousands of human languages head toward extinction. The 15 most common languages are now on the lips of over half the world’s people.”*
 - Half the world’s people speak one of only 15 languages.
 - *“Ninety percent of humanity speaks only a hundred languages.”*
 - *“Half of the world’s 6800 languages are spoken by only 2,500 people.”*
 - *“Only 600 are being taught to children. The rest can’t survive because there’s not another generation to speak them.”*
 - Which language? Probably English. Why? Because of technology and the Internet.
 - God made us a rich and powerful nation because of the faith of our founders.
 - Now we have turned away from God and lead the world in sin and decadence.
 - Judgment is coming. The US doesn’t seem to appear in any end-times prophecies.
 - What nation and government?
 - National boundaries are disappearing through GLOBALIZATION
 - Look at the EU
 - Look at our southern border
 - Russia is annexing Ukraine, China wants Hong Kong and Taiwan
 - In the 80’s and 90’s, # countries increased, now they are contracting.
 - Why do the Washington elites hate “America First”? It’s anti-globalization!
 - **SEE THE GRAPH from the world economic forum-RELIGION IS MISSING!**
 - However, there is also a big push toward religious ecumenism
 - Can’t we all just get along?
 - What currency will be used? Digital, block-chain, it tracks every transaction.
 - The US dollar is devaluing and quickly going out of use. It can’t be tracked.
 - Story about the bank giving me trouble over buying the camper!
 - Federal regulations require banks to report larger deposits/withdrawals
 - Our inflation is intentional, so are the many crises we are experiencing.
 - It’s not just the US. Inflation is worldwide!
 - What religion?
 - Worship of Antichrist
 - He will promise to bring peace and order in the world.
 - What happens to those who choose not to be a part of this world system?
 - What do you think Nimrod did to those who didn’t go along?
- QUESTION? This is gradually happening. What must happen for globalization to become a reality?
 - A world-wide crisis, which we believe is the taking out of believers in the Rapture event
- This is why the kingdom that Antichrist sets up is called Babylon.
 - It is a false kingdom built on lies, and promising peace (a false peace)
 - But after 3 ½ years, the peace agreement is broken, and war breaks out.
 - At the end of 7 years, Christ returns, destroying the false kingdom and all unbelievers.
 - He establishes His Millennial Kingdom on earth.
 - QUESTION? Now how is this one world government different from what they started in Babel?

Gen 11:7-9, Come, let Us go down and there confuse their ^[a]language, so that they will not understand one another's ^[b]speech." ⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called ^[a]Babel, because there the LORD confused the ^[b]language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

- "Let Us" go down and there confuse their language is the antithesis of "Let us" make bricks.
- In an instant, God frustrates their puny efforts to make themselves a city and a name.
- QUESTION? Who scattered them?
 - You can't build a city if you can't talk to the person next to you.
- The scattering was a judgment, and also a blessing
- QUESTION? Can you imagine a world run by Nimrod, the rebel?
 - Nations hold other nations accountable, and keep them in check
 - Even with the languages and cultural differences, look what mankind has achieved

Gen 11:10-32, refer to the chart