SAMUEL BOCHART

Sacred Geography, part I Phaleg, or the dispersion of people and division of lands after the construction of the tower of Babel. [With:] Sacred Geography, part II Canaan, or the colonies and speech of the Phoenicians

Printed book, Caen: Typis Petri Cardonelli, 1651

Courtesy of Tisch Library Special Collections, Tufts University

Samuel Bochart, a French Huguenot (or Protestant), divided the Sacred Geography (Geographia Sacra) into two parts: Phaleg and Chanaan. Phaleg traces the dispersion of the ancestors of Noah, while Chanaan concerns the travel and influence of the later Phoenicians. Although Bochart and the Anglican Brian Walton belonged to opposing sides in the “war of religion,” the Sacred Geography displays the same scholarly ambition as the Introduction to the London Polyglot.

The first map in Phaleg shows the Holy Land after the fall of the Tower of Babel. It uses both Latin and Hebrew as well as transliterations of Arabic place names, combining knowledge of languages, archaeology, theology, and geography. Major landmarks are illustrated and placed in context with brief inscriptions. For example, Mount Ararat, visited by travelers such as François de la Boullaye-Le Gouz, appears in the inset detail at the bottom left. An inscription records the legend that Noah’s Ark landed there. Note the attention paid to the physical elements of the landscape: mountain ranges, waterways, and palm trees. This map draws on spiritual, scientific, and utilitarian modes of knowledge in order to enable readers to make a virtual pilgrimage across time and space.

—Emily Monty, M.A. art history 2012, Tufts University