Το ἐκ Σύγχυσι πύργο (Γένεσι 11: 1 – 9)

The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1 - 9)

In chapter 10 of Genesis we find a table of peoples, drawn up according to their geographical and historical rellationships "according to their tribes and languages" as they were understood at the time. It portrays the differences of ethnicity and laguage as being the result of dispersal.

Chapter 11, however, has a different, and older, explanation for the diversity of peoples and languages; this account is certainly more dramatic and, with its anthropomorphic portrayal of the Lord (JHVH) coming down to look at what men are doing, it has caught the popular mind through the ages.

Because of its repetitive nature the passage has been used to show grammatical structures of a given language and for language comparisons. For these reasons it has become traditional for conlangers to translate the Babel text into their own language for sharing with others.

1.1 The TAKE Text

The TAKE version, as one might expect, is based on the Greek Septuagint version, not on the Hebrew of the Masoretes. In this version, the city in which the tower is built is named **Confusion** *(Σύγχυσις), not 'Babel' as in the King James Version.*

1. και παντό το γῆ ἔς ἐνό χεῖλο, καὶ ἔστιν ἐνό φωνή εἰς παντό ἄνθρωπο.

2 και γένε ὅτι, ἕως σφᾶς κίνει ἀπ᾽ ἀνατολή, σφᾶς εὗρε πεδίον ἐν το Σεναάρ γῆ και κατοίκει ἐκεῖ.

3 και ἄνθρωπος λέγε εἰς το πλησίο «Δεῦτε, ἴθι ἡμᾶς πλίνθευε και ὄπτα πλίνθο συν πυρό». και πλίνθο γένε εἰς σφᾶς ἀντί λίθο, και ἄσφαλτο ἔς εἰς σφᾶς ἀντί πηλό.

4 και σφᾶς λέγε «Δεῦτε, ἴθι ἡμᾶς οἰκοδόμει εἰς ἡμᾶς αὐτό πόλι και πύργο, το ἐξ ὅ κεφαλή μέλλε ἔς μέχρι το οὐρανό, και ἴθι ἡμᾶς ποίει εἰς ἡμᾶς αὐτό ὄνομα πρίν ἡμᾶς διάσπειρε ἐπ εἰς το πρόσωπο το ἐκ παντό το γῆ.

5 και το Κύριο κατάβη ἴνα ἔ ὅρα το πόλι και το πύργο, ὅ το ἐκ το ἄνθρωπο-λαό γενεά οἰκοδόμει.

6 και το Κύριο λέγε «Ἰδού, ἔστιν ἐνό γένο και ἐνό χεῖλο ἐκ παντό ἄνθρωπο, και σφᾶς ἄρχε ποίει τοῦτο, και νῦν παντό πράγματο, ὅσο σφᾶς ἄν ἐπίθη ποίει, οὐκ ἔκλιπε ἐκ σφᾶς.

7 δεῦτε και ἐπειδή ἡμᾶς κατάβη ἴθι ἡμᾶς σύγχει το ἐκ σφᾶς γλῶσσα ἐκεῖ, ἴνα μη ἔκαστο ἄκουε το ἐκ το πλησίο φωνή».

8 και το Κύριο διάσπειρε σφᾶς ἀπ᾽ ἐκεῖ ἐπ᾽ εἰς το πρόσωπο το ἐκ παντό το γῆ, και σφᾶς παῦε οἰκοδόμει το πόλι και το πύργο.

9 δια τοῦτο το ἐκ το πόλι ὄνομα κάλει Σύγχυσι, δι᾽ ὅτι ἐκεῖ το Κύριο σύγχει παντό το χεῖλο το ἐκ παντό το γῆ, και ἀπ᾽ ἐκεῖ Κύριο το Θεό διάσπειρε σφᾶς ἐπ᾽ εἰς το πρόσωπο το ἐκ παντό το γῆ.

1.2 The TAKE Text Glossed

This is a morpheme by morpheme gloss; διά-σπειρε has been glossed with the Latin derived 'di-sperse' rather than 'through-scatter', as the Latin derived morphemes are, in my opinion, closer in meaning to the TAKE morphemes; similarly σύγ-χει as 'con-fuse' rather than 'together-pour' and Σύγ-χυσι as 'Con-fusion' rather than 'Together-pouring.'

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1 και  παντό  το   γῆ    ἔς ἐνό χεῖλο, καὶ ἔστιν    ἐνό φωνή  εἰς παντό  ἄνθρωπο.
  and all    the  earth be one lip,   and there.be one voice to  all    person.


2 και  γένε   ὅτι,  ἕως   σφᾶς κίνει ἀπ᾽ ἀνατολή, σφᾶς εὗρε   πεδίον
  and happen that, while 3PL  move  from east,    3PL  find  plain


   ἐν   το   Σεναάρ γῆ    και κατοίκει ἐκεῖ.
   in  the  Senaar land and settle    there.


3 και  ἄνθρωπος λέγε εἰς το πλησίο   «Δεῦτε,   ἴθι ἡμᾶς πλίνθευε    και  ὄπτα
  and person    say  to the neighbor "Come![1], IMP 1PL  make.bricks and  bake
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    πλίνθο συν πυρό».    και πλίνθο γένε   εἰς σφᾶς ἀντί       λίθο, και
    brick  with fire."  and brick  become to  3PL  in.place.of stone, and

    ἄσφαλτο ἐς εἰς σφᾶς ἀντί       πηλό.
    bitumen be to  3PL in.place.of mortar.

4 και σφᾶς λέγε «Δεῦτε, ἴθι ἡμᾶς οἰκοδόμει εἰς ἡμᾶς αὐτό πόλι και πύργο,
  and 3PL  say  "Come!, IMP 1PL  build      to  1PL  self city and tower,

    το ἐξ ὁ   κεφαλή μέλλε    ἐς μέχρι    το  οὐρανό, και ἴθι ἡμᾶς ποίει
    the of which head  going.to be as.far.as the heaven, and IMP 1PL  make

    εἰς ἡμᾶς αὐτό ὄνομα πρίν  ἡμᾶς διά-σπειρε ἐπ’ εἰς το  πρόσωπο
    to  1PL  self name before 1PL  di-sperse on  to  the face

    το ἐκ παντό το γῆ.
    the of all   the earth.

5 και το Κύριο κατά-βη ἵνα    ἒ  ὄρα το πόλι και το  πύργο,
  and the Lord  down-go so.that 3SG see the city and the tower,

    ὁ    το ἐκ το ἄνθρωπο-λαό γενεά      οἰκοδόμει.
    which the of the  human-folk offspring build.

6 και το Κύριο λέγε «Ἰδού,      ἔστιν    ἑνό γένο και ἑνό χεῖλο ἐκ παντό ἄνθρωπο,
  and the Lord  say  "Behold[2], there.be one race and one lip  of all   person,

    και σφᾶς ἄρχε ποίει τοῦτο, και νῦν παντό πράγματο, ὄσο      σφᾶς ἀν
    and 3PL  begin do    this,  and now all   thing,     as.many.as 3PL  soever

    ἐπί-θη   ποίει, οὐκ ἐκ-λιπε    ἐκ  σφᾶς.
    on-put[3] do,    not from-depart from 3PL.

7 δεῦτε και ἐπειδή ἡμᾶς κατάβη  ἴθι ἡμᾶς σύγ-χει  το  ἐκ σφᾶς γλῶσσα   ἐκεῖ,
  come! and after  1PL  down-go IMP 1PL  con-fuse the of 3PL  language there,

    ἵνα     μη ἔκαστο ἄκουε το ἐκ το πλησίο   φωνή».
    so.that not each   hear  the of the neighbor voice."

8 και το Κύριο διά-σπειρε σφᾶς ἀπ’ ἐκεῖ   ἐπ’ εἰς το  πρόσωπο
  and the Lord  di-sperse 3PL  from there on  to  the face

    το ἐκ παντό το γῆ,     και σφᾶς παῦε οἰκοδόμει το  πόλι και το  πύργο.
    the of all   the earth, and 3PL  stop build     the city and the tower.

9 δια       τοῦτο, το ἐκ το πόλι ὄνομα κάλει Σύγ-χυσι,  δι’ ὅτι    ἐκεῖ
  because.of this,  the of the city name  call  Con-fusion, because[4] there

    το Κύριο σύγ-χει  παντό το χεῖλο το ἐκ παντό το γῆ,
    the Lord  con-fuse all   the lip   the of all   the earth,

    και ἀπ’ ἐκεῖ Κύριο το Θεό διά-σπειρε σφᾶς ἐπ’ εἰς το  πρόσωπο
    and from there Lord  the God di-sperse 3PL  on  to  the face

    το ἐκ παντό το γῆ.
    the of all   the earth.
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[1] δεῦτε is not the verb 'to come.' It is an *intejection* of encouragement, protest etc.
[2] ἰδού also is not the verb 'to behold'; it is an *interjection*.
[3] ἐπί-θη "on-put" in English we say "under-take".
[4] δι’ ὅτι literally: because.of [the.fact]that

1.3 A 'Fair Translation' of the TAKE Text

1. And all the earth was one lip, and there was one voice for all people.
2. And it happened that, while they were moving from the east, they found a plain in the land of Senaar and settled there.
3. And a person said to his neighbor "Come, let us make bricks and bake the bricks with fire." And brick became for them replacement for stone, and bitumen was for them replacement for mortar.
4. And they said "Come, let us build for ourselves a city and tower, whose head is going to be right up to heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name before we are dispersed onto the face of all the earth.
5. And the Lord we down so that he might see the city and the tower which the offspring of men were building.
6. And the Lord said "Behold, there is one race and one lip for all people, and they have begun to do this, and now all things, howsoever many they undertake to do, will not fail for them.
7. Come, after we have gone down, let us there confuse their language so that each may not hear their neighbor's voice."
8. And the Lord dispersed them from there onto the face of all the earth, and they stopped building the city and the tower.
9. Because of this the city's name was called Confusion, because there the Lord confused all the lips of all the earth, and from there the Lord God dispersed them onto the face of all the earth.