

## *Inferno XXXI*

Genesis 10.8-12  
*King James Bible*

The passage references King Nimrod, who was, according to tradition, the architect of the Tower of Babel. As a punishment, God confused the languages and scattered the people all over the earth. Dante places Nimrod in Circle 9 (the circle of traitors) and portrays him as a foolish giant, who babbles incomprehensibly.

### **Genesis 10.8-12, the Bible**

And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

[9] He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said,  
Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

[10] And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and  
Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

[11] Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the  
city Rehoboth, and Calah,

[12] And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.

## *Inferno XXXI*

### Psalm 22 *King James Bible*

Canto XXXI, line 67: "*Raphèl mai ammèche zabì almi.*" A gibberish phrase supposed to express the confusion of languages at the construction of the Tower of Babel. Dante's language, especially his references to the "savage mouth" and the "sweeter psalm," is reminiscent of David's anguished cry to God from Psalm 22. Both cries register the speakers' intensity of feeling and a certain sense of agonizing separation from God.

#### **Psalm 22, the Bible**

[1] My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

[2] O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

[3] But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

[4] Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

[5] They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

[6] But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

[7] All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying,

[8] He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

[9] But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

[10] I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

[11] Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

[12] Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

[13] They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

[14] I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

[15] My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

[16] For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

[17] I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

[18] They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

[19] But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

[20] Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

[21] Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

[22] I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

[23] Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

[24] For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

[25] My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

[26] The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

[27] All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

[28] For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.

[29] All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

[30] A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

[31] They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.