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## Sommario/riassunto

Studies of the Curse of Ham, the belief that the Bible consigned blacks to everlasting servitude, confuse and conflate two separate origins stories (etiologies), one of black skin and the other of black slavery. This work unravels the etiologies and shows how the Curse, an etiology of black slavery, evolved from an earlier etiology explaining the existence of dark-skinned people. We see when, where, why, and how an original mythic tale of black origins morphed into a story of the origins of black slavery, and how, in turn, the second then supplanted the first as an explanation for black skin. In the process we see how formulations of the Curse changed over time, depending on the historical and social contexts, reflecting and refashioning the way blackness and blacks were perceived. In particular, two significant developments are uncovered. First, a curse of slavery, originally said to affect various dark-skinned peoples, was eventually applied most commonly to black Africans. Second, blackness, originally incidental to the curse, in time became part of the curse itself. Dark skin now became an intentional marker of servitude, the visible sign of the blacks' degradation, and in the process deprecating black skin itself.

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