

**Linda Southerland**  
**Second Vice President/Educational Chairman**

**Educational - Religious Beliefs of the Chickasaws**  
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In ancient times, Chickasaws placed great importance and meaning on those locations defined as important by history and tribal religion. The great migration legend, describing how the tribe moved from the "place of the setting sun" to the east as ordained by Aba Binili (God), was central in explaining the importance of the homelands. One can only imagine the sorrow experienced by our ancestors when it was determined that they would have to be "removed" from their sacred home.

Explanations of natural phenomena and descriptions of one's place in the universe were common themes as well. Chickasaw elders conveyed ancient knowledge as a sacred obligation, thereby instilling in younger generations cultural identity and tribal cohesiveness. The stories of the elders had significance in describing tribal history, not in terms of chronological dates, but more in terms of how events and locations impacted nature and people.

Family histories have become increasingly important for Chickasaws in today's society. As enhanced technology creates greater distances between tribal members, family histories connect the people to the nation. Like language, the preservation of family information is fundamentally important in understanding their culture, and, like oral tradition, it must be passed on to future generations of Chickasaws.

The Chickasaw do not have a tradition of a time when they were without belief in a supreme being, whom they called Aba Binili (Sitting or Dwelling Above) also called Inki Abu (Father Above) under Christian influence.

There were ancient beliefs in a multitude of celestial powers. There were four "Beloved Things" above: The clouds, the sun, the clear sky and "He that lives in the clear sky."

It was believed that Aba Binili lived above the clouds and on earth with "unpolluted" people. He is the sole creator of warmth, light and of all animal and vegetable life.

The Chickasaw worshipped Aba Binili "...in smoke and cloud, believing him to reside above the clouds, and in the element of the holy fire."

Lightning and thunder were called Hiloha (Hiloha-thunder) and its rumbling noise ROWAH. When it rained, thundered, and strong winds blew for a long time, the beloved or holy people were thought to be at war above the clouds. Many Chickasaw used to fire off their guns, pointed at the sky, at such times. This was to show that the warriors were not afraid to die so that they could aid the holy people.

Fire was very much respected by the Chickasaw. Trees were deadened and later used to keep their annual holy fire burning. It was unlawful - and considered the work of evil spirits - to extinguish even the cooking fire with water.

### Legend of the Flood

Long ago, perhaps in the days when Chickasaws still resided in the land of the setting sun, their Great Spirit, Ababinili, sent rain. Soon water covered all the Earth. Some Chickasaws made rafts to save themselves. Then, creatures like large white beavers cut the thongs that bound the rafts. All drowned except one family and a pair of each of all the animals. When the rain stopped and the flood began receding, a raven appeared with part of an ear of corn. The Great Spirit told the Chickasaws to plant it. The Great Spirit also told them that eventually the Earth would be destroyed by fire, its ruin presaged by a rain of flood and oil.

The Chickasaws are not the only North American Indian Tribe who has a legend of the flood. Almost every other ancient people, from the Chinese to the Mayans and Incas, had their own version which told of destruction of the world by water.

### A Psalm of David

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
The Great father above is a shepherd Chief. I am His and with Him I want not.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He throws out to me a rope and the name of the rope is

love and He draws me to where the grass is green and the water not dangerous, and I eat and lie down and am satisfied.

He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Sometimes my heart is very weak and falls down but He lifts me up again and draws me into a good road. His name is WONDERFUL.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Sometime, it may be very soon, it may be a long, long time, He will draw me into a valley. It is dark there, but I'll be afraid not, for it is in between those mountains that the Shepherd Chief will meet me and the hunger that I have in my heart all through this life will be satisfied. Sometimes He makes the love rope into a whip, but afterwards He gives me a staff to lean upon.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

He spreads a table before me with all kinds of foods. He puts His hand upon my head and all the "tired" is gone. My cup He fills till it runs over. What I tell is true. I lie not.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

These roads that are "away ahead" will stay with me through this life and after; and afterwards I will go to live in the Big Tepee and sit down with the Shepherd Chief forever.