

Genesis Lesson 8: Genesis 10

Lecture

- The genealogy of Genesis 10, called the Table of Nations, is another example of a segmented or horizontal genealogy.
 - The descendants of Japheth, Noah's oldest son, are listed first.
 - The descendants of Shem, Noah's middle son, are listed last, as his line is the chosen line, producing Abram, the patriarch.
 - Note: some translations suggest that Shem was the oldest of Noah's sons. The Masoretic Hebrew text and the Septuagint translate Japheth as the oldest son.
 - In between Japheth and Shem, we have the descendants of Ham, Noah's youngest son.
 - With the descendants of Noah, we see the beginnings of God not choosing the obvious person, such as the oldest son, for his purposes. In this case, God has chosen the middle son Shem to be the chosen one.
- As we noted for Genesis 9:18-19, the Table of Nations documents the sons of Noah adhering to God's command in Genesis 9:1 to "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."
 - All of Noah's sons continue to be blessed by God, as evidenced by their number of sons (and daughters, we presume).
 - Even Ham, who received no blessing from Noah, and Canaan, who was cursed by Noah, were favored by God with the number of their direct offspring and descendants.
 - 11 names are credited to Canaan. Only Joktan, a descendant of Shem, is credited with more names in Genesis 10; he has 13 sons listed.

- Genesis 9:19 reminds us, “These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered *over the whole earth*.”
 - As we discussed with the Flood story, when the Bible uses “the whole earth” expression, it means the *known* world.
 - In the context of Genesis 10, this means the ancient Near East, Asia Minor, North Africa, Arabia, and possibly Spain and Italy.
 - Victor Hamilton refers to this as *ecumene*, which he defines as “a group of peoples who are so interlocked by give and take that they constitute one world civilization.”
 - We might further define “give and take” as societal interactions through migration, trade, war, and, in some cases, language.
 - We should also keep in mind that Genesis 10 reflects the perspective of its author, Moses, who composed the Torah circa 1445-1290 BC.
 - The text accounts for the people groups whom the Israelites were aware of.
 - Moses has addressed how the known peoples and nations of *his* day are related to the sons of Noah, without any commentary on a world beyond the ancient Near East.
- Many of the people groups named in Genesis 10 have been identified by scholars with relative certainty. Still others continue to perplex scholars.
 - According to the ESV Study Bible, “In general, the descendants of Ham settled in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean coast, the descendants of Shem in Mesopotamia and Arabia, and the descendants of Japheth in Europe and the greater area of Asia Minor.”
 - When we read Genesis 11, which relates the story of the Tower of Babel, it seems to us that Genesis 10 is out of place.
 - John Walton says, “the narrator of Genesis 11 moves backward in time to tell the story of how these nations initially became separate from the unified people who developed subsequent to the time of Noah.”

- This answers the implied question of Genesis 11:8: “So the Lord scattered them from there [Babel] all over the earth.”
- Reading the genealogy of Genesis 10, we should remind ourselves several things about Biblical genealogies in general.
 - First, “son” may refer to a son, grandson, a great grandson, or just a descendant.
 - “Father” may refer to the true father or an ancestor.
 - Names and even generations may be omitted from a particular genealogy.
- Stuck in the middle of the descendants of Ham we have a paragraph about Nimrod.
 - He is described as both a mighty warrior and a mighty hunter “before the Lord.”
 - He was also a great city-builder, having constructed Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir, Calah, and Resen.
 - His territory included Babylon, Uruk, Akkad, Kalneh (all in Shinar) as well as Assyria.
 - Most scholars do not interpret the phrase “before the Lord” in a positive context. Rather, instead of being a typical hunter of animals, he is viewed as a hunter of men. He’s conquering men and building an empire.
 - Because Nimrod is associated with Shinar and Babylon, the placement of his description in Genesis 10:8-11 sets up the story of the Tower of Babel and a people group who want to make a name for themselves and be their own gods, rather than serving the one true God.
- In concluding comments on the Table of Nations, I would like to share key points made by Warren Wiersbe and John Walton in their commentaries.
 - First, the Table of Nations is unique in the annals of ancient history. There are no earlier or contemporary examples in other literature. This alone lends credibility to the historicity of the chapter.

- Second, the list of sons and other descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth consists of 70 names.
 - The number 70 stands for totality and completion and reflects God's inherent design.
 - Deuteronomy 32:8 tells us, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples"
 - Acts 17:26 say, "From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands."
 - Genesis 10 should cement in our minds that Elohim Yahweh is the God of both geography and history. He is the Lord of the nations.
 - Not all the 70 are names of individuals. Some names are people groups, cities or geographic designations, which suggests that they were derived from a named male ancestor (patronymics).
- Third, all nations belong to the same human family. No race or people can claim to be superior to any other race or people.
- Fourth, God has a purpose for the nations to fulfill.
 - God makes it clear with the call of Abram that his chosen nation was Israel.
 - Nevertheless, God also used Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and Media-Persia to chasten and conquer Israel when it disobeyed as well as to protect his people while in exile.
- Fifth, God is concerned for all the nations.
 - Psalm 67: 1-4 reminds us:
 - "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—² so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, God; may all the

peoples praise you.⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth.”

- And Psalm 86:9 says:
 - “All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.”
- Lastly, we know how the story of all the nations ends. You read one version in Philippians 2:9-10 this week. I also like Daniel 7:13-14:
 - “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

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These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. Genesis 10:32

1. Read Genesis 10: 2-5.

- a. How many sons did Japheth have? What were their names?
 - **Japheth had 7 sons.**
 - The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshek and Tiras. Genesis 10:2
- b. How are the descendants of Japheth described in verse 5?
From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language. Genesis 10:5
- c. How does Ezekiel 27:13 add context?
Greece, Tubal and Meshek did business with you; they traded human beings and articles of bronze for your wares. Ezekiel 27:13

2. Read Genesis 10: 6-20.

- a. How many sons did Ham have? What were their names?
 - **Ham had 4 sons.**
 - The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan. Genesis 10:6
- b. What names stand out to you in verses 6-7?
The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan.⁷ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteka. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. Genesis 10:6-7

c. How do verses 8-12 describe Nimrod?

Cush was the father of **Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth.**⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD.”¹⁰ **The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in Shinar.**¹¹ **From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah**¹² **and Resen**, which is between Nineveh and Calah—which is the great city. Genesis 10:8-12

d. What were some famous places which are associated with Nimrod?

Babylon, Akkad, Assyria, Nineveh

e. What famous prophet did God send to Nineveh?

Jonah

f. According to verse 13, what famous enemy of the Israelites was a descendant of Ham’s son Egypt?

Egypt was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites,¹⁴ Pathrusites, Kasluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Capthorites.
Genesis 10:13-14

g. Which people groups are associated with Canaan’s descendants?

Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites,¹⁶ Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites,¹⁷ Hivites, Arkites, Sinites,¹⁸ Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites. Genesis 10:15-18

h. Where did the Canaanite clans settle? (Hint: also see Exodus 3:8 and Numbers 13:29.)

- Later the Canaanite clans scattered¹⁹ and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiym, as far as Lasha. Genesis 10:18-19
- So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey —**the home of the Canaanites**, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Exodus 3:8
- The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan
Numbers 13:29

3. Read Genesis 10: 21-32.

a. What general name is given to the descendants of Shem?

[The Semites](#)

b. How many sons did Shem have? What were their names?

- [Shem had 5 sons.](#)

• [The sons of Shem: Elam, Ashur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. Genesis 10:22](#)

c. Peleg, a son of Eber, is described as “in his time the earth was divided.” How might this relate to Genesis 11:9b?

• [That is why it was called Babel —because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth. Genesis 11:9](#)

• [In Peleg's time, God scattered all the peoples throughout the Middle East.](#)

d. Where did the clans of Shem settle?

• [The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country. Genesis 10:30](#)

4. Using your Bible’s cross-references for the verses in Genesis 10, locate some other verses associated with the clans and places associated with the descendants of Noah. When you read these verses, what does that tell you about the nations of Genesis 10?

• [Gomer, son of Japheth, lived near the Black Sea.](#)

• [Madai, son of Japheth, became the Medes.](#)

• [Javan, son of Japheth became the Ionians \(southern Greece\).](#)

• [Ashkenaz, grandson of Japheth, became the Scythians who lived in the upper Euphrates region.](#)

• [Cush, son of Ham refers to the upper Nile region.](#)

• [Put, son of Ham could refer to Libya or Punt \(modern Somalia\).](#)

• [The Caphtorites, descendants of Egypt, son of Ham, became the people inhabiting Crete.](#)

- Sidon, son of Canaan, became an important commercial city on the northwest coast of Canaan.
- The Hittites, descendants of Canaan, occupied Asia Minor from 1800 to 1200 BC.
- Later Canaanite clans settled in Sodom and Gomorrah.
- It was Eber, descendant of Shem, who was an ancestor of the Hebrews. Eber is the origin of the Hebrew word for *Hebrew*.
- Elam, son of Shem, settled east of Mesopotamia.
- Ashur, son of Shem, became the Assyrians in northern Mesopotamia.
- Aram, son of Shem, became the are northeast of Canaan, also known as the Syrians.
- Sheba, a descendant of Shem settled in southwest Arabia (Yemen today).
- Noah's descendants populated the ancient Near East, Asia Minor, North Africa, Arabia, and maybe Spain and Italy.

5. Read Acts 17:24-27.

a. How does this passage relate to Genesis 10?

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. Acts 17:24-26

b. Why did God ordain the time and place in which people live?

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. Acts 17:24

- c. How does this passage make you think about the time and place in which Jesus lived?
 - God ordained the place where Jesus would be born, live, preach, and die.
 - God sent Jesus to his own people the Jews, but they rejected his message.
 - God ordained the time in which Jesus would preach his message.
- 6. According to Psalm 86:9 and Philippians 2:9-10, what is God's ultimate plan for the nations?
 - All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name. Psalms 86:9
 - Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, Philippians 2:9-10
 - All nations will come to worship God as the ruler of the earth and Christ as his king.

Genesis Lesson 8

Genesis 10

Genesis 10: The Table of Nations

- The Genealogy of Genesis 10 Is Another Example of a Segmented/Horizontal Genealogy
- The Descendants of Japheth, Noah's Oldest Son, Are First
- The Descendants of Shem, Noah's Middle Son, Are Last, as His Line is the Chosen Line, Producing the Patriarch Abram
- Some Translations Suggest That Shem Was the Oldest Son; the Masoretic Hebrew Text and the Septuagint Translate Japheth as the Oldest
- Between Japheth and Shem, We Have Ham's Descendants
- We See the Beginnings of God Not Choosing the Obvious Person, Such as the Oldest Son, for His Purposes

Genesis 10: The Table of Nations

- It Documents the Sons of Noah Adhering to God's Command to "Be Fruitful and Increase in Number and Fill the Earth" (Genesis 9:1)
- All of Noah's Sons Continue to Be Blessed by God, as Evidenced by Their Number of Sons (and Daughters, We Presume)
- Even Ham, Who Received No Blessing from Noah, and Canaan, Cursed by Noah, Are Favored by God with the Number of Their Direct Offspring and Descendants
- 11 Names Credited to Canaan
- Only Joktan, Descendant of Shem, Is Credited with More Names; He Has 13 Sons Listed

Genesis 10: The Table of Nations

- Genesis 9:19
- When the Bible Uses “the Whole Earth” Expression, It Means the *Known* World
- In the Context of Genesis 10, This Means the Ancient Near East, Asia Minor, North Africa, Arabia, and Possibly Spain and Italy
- Victor Hamilton Calls This “Ecumene”; A Group of Peoples Interlocked by Give and Take; One World Civilization
- Give and Take = Societal Interactions Through Migration, Trade, War, and, in Some Cases, Language
- Genesis 10 Reflects the Perspective of Its Author, Moses, Who Composed the Torah Circa 1445-1290 BC
- The Text Accounts for the People Groups Whom the Israelites Were Aware of
- There Is No Commentary on the World Beyond the Ancient Near East

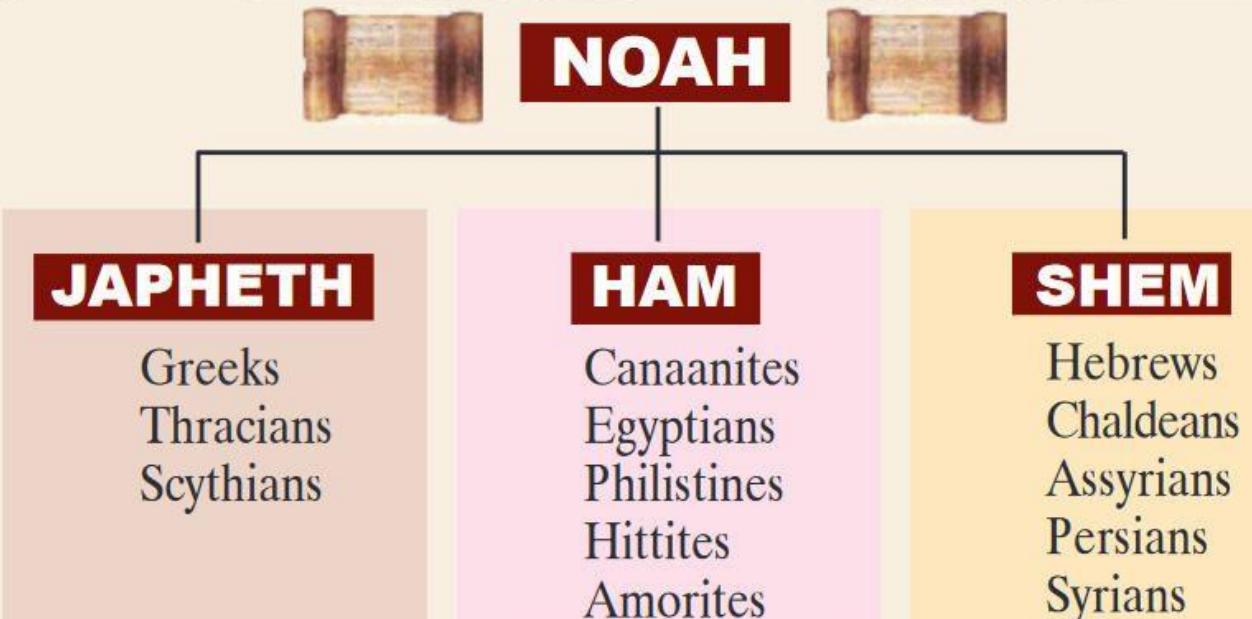


ESV Study Bible Map of the Descendants of the 3 Sons of Noah (Genesis 10)

Genesis 10: The Table of Nations

- Many of the People Groups Have Been Identified by Scholars with Relative Certainty
- Still Others Continue to Perplex Scholars
- According to the ESV Study Bible:
 - The Descendants of Ham Settled in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean Coast
 - The Descendants of Shem Settled in Mesopotamia and Arabia
 - The Descendants of Japheth Settled in Europe and the Greater Area of Asia Minor

Bible Nations Descended from Noah's Sons



Where the Descendants Settled

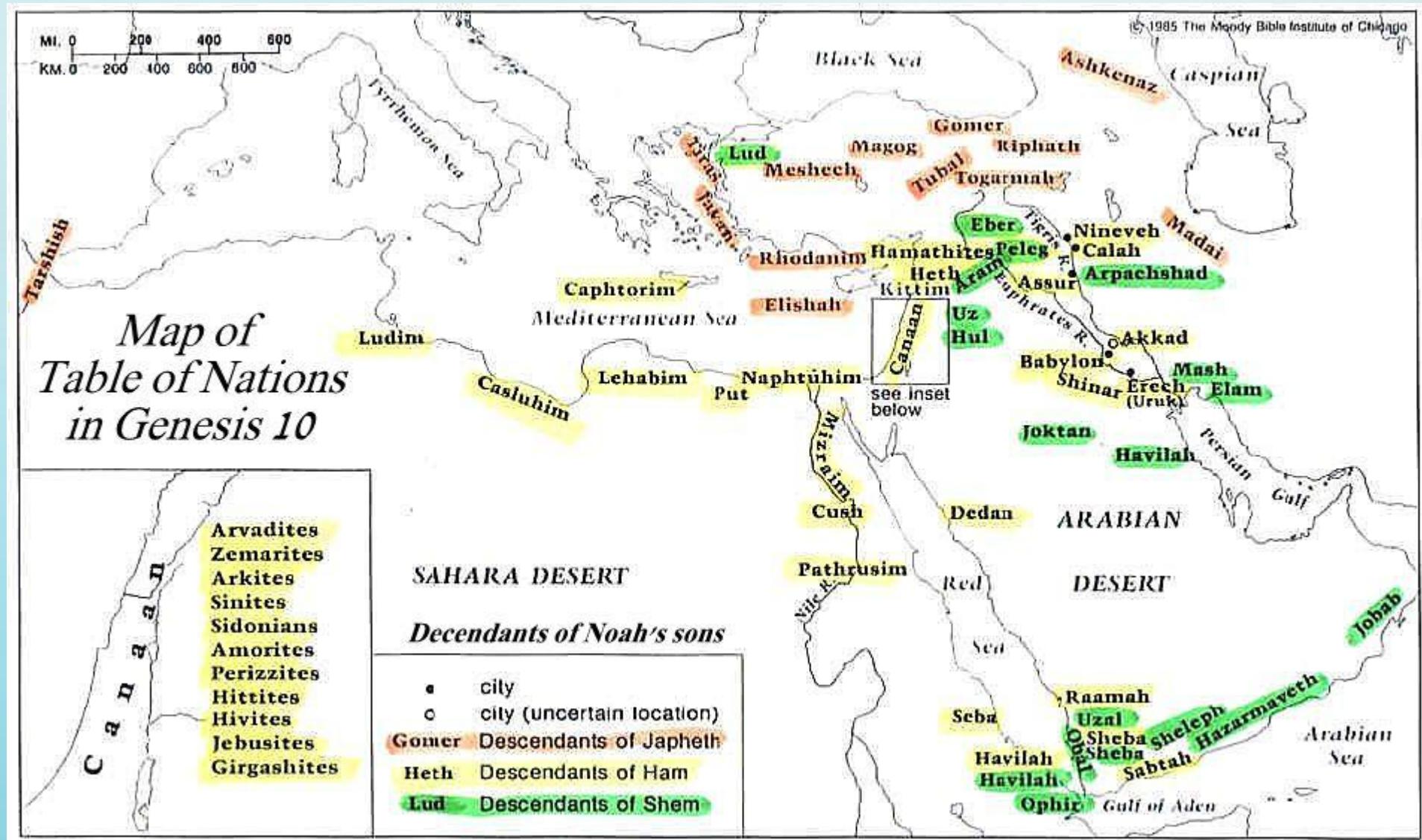
For the most part,
JAPHETH'S
descendants settled
in
• Europe
• Asia Minor

HAM'S descendants
settled in
• Canaan
• Egypt
• Africa

SHEM'S descendants
were called the Semites:
• Abraham
• Isaac
• Jacob
• David
• Jesus

Barnes' Bible Charts

*Map of
Table of Nations
in Genesis 10*



Map of the Table of Nations of Genesis 10; Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois; 1985

Genesis 10 Seems Out of Place

- When We Read Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel, Genesis 10 Seems Out of Place
- John Walton: “The Narrator of Genesis 11 Moves Backward in Time to Tell How These Nations Initially Became Separate”
- Answers the Implied Question of Genesis 11:8: “So the Lord Scattered Them from There [Babel] All Over the Earth”

Biblical Genealogies

- “Son” May Refer to a Son, Grandson, Great Grandson, or Just a Descendant
- “Father” May Refer to the True Father or an Ancestor
- Names and Even Generations May Be Omitted from a Particular Genealogy

Nimrod

- A Mighty Warrior and Hunter “Before the Lord”
- A Great City Builder; Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir, Calah, Resen
- Territory Included Babylon, Uruk, Akkad, Kalneh (All in Shinar) as Well as Assyria
- Most Scholars Do Not Interpret “Before the Lord” in a Positive Context
- Rather, Instead of Being a Typical Animal Hunter, He Is Viewed as a Hunter of Men; Conquering Men and Building an Empire
- Nimrod’s Association with Shinar and Babylon Sets Up the Story of the Tower of Babel and a People Group Who Want to Make a Name for Themselves and Be Their Own Gods, Rather Than Serving the One True God

Nimrod



Nimrod; David Scott; 1832; Glasgow Museums, Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

The Table of Nations

- Key Points by Warren Wiersbe and John Walton
- FIRST: the Table of Nations Is Unique; No Earlier or Contemporary Examples in Other Literature; Lends Credibility to the Historicity
- SECOND: the List of Sons and Other Descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth Consists of 70 Names
 - 70 Means Totality, Completion; Reflects God's Inherent Design
 - Deuteronomy 32:8
 - Acts 17:26
 - Genesis 10 Should Cement in Our Minds That Elohim Yahweh Is the God of Both Geography and History; He Is Lord of the Nations
 - Not All 70 Are Names of Individuals; Some Are People Groups, Cities, and Geographic Designations; Suggests a Derivation from a Named Male Ancestor (Patronymics)

The Table of Nations

- THIRD: All Nations Belong to the Same Human Family; No Race or People Can Claim to Be Superior to Any Other Race or People
- FOURTH: God Has a Purpose for the Nations to Fulfill
 - God Makes It Clear with the Call of Abram That Israel Was His Chosen Nation
 - Nevertheless, God also Used Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and Media-Persia to Chasten and Conquer Israel When It Disobeyed as Well as Protect His People While in Exile
- FIFTH: God Is Concerned for All the Nations
 - Psalm 67:1-4
 - Psalm 86:9
 - Daniel 7:13-14