



Genesis - Chapter Ten

I. Genesis 1:1-11:26 - Primeval History (continues)

Summary of Chapter Ten

This Chapter lists the descendents of Japheth, Ham and Shem, the sons of Noah, and provides an indication of the lands to which they migrated.

I.e Genesis 10:1-11:9 - The Descendants of Noah's Sons

The next main section of Genesis outlines developments after the flood, focusing on how humanity becomes divided into different nations.

I.e.i Genesis 10:1-32 - Nations Descended from Noah

This entire passage sets out, largely in the form of lists, how the descendants of Noah's three sons populate different regions of the earth. Additional details of special interest are occasionally added. This genealogical-geographical passage is describing a process that covered a long time, as family clans migrated to particular regions. The ancestor after whom the clan or tribe is named may not have lived in the region that later bears his name. Each of the three main parts of this section concludes with a reference to clans, languages, and nations (v.5, v.20 and v.31).

¹ These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood.

Genesis 10:1

These are the descendents of. This distinctive formula marks the start of a new section in Genesis.

Children were born to them after the flood. The account does not indicate whether any of the children were conceived on the ark but none were born until after the families had disembarked.

² The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³ The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴ The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim. ⁵ From these the coastland peoples spread. These are the descendants of Japheth in their lands, with their own language, by their families, in their nations.

Genesis 10:2-5

The descendants of Japheth are listed first. He was the father of the Indo-European peoples, those stretching from India to the shores of Western Europe. They are each linked by linguistic similarities that often seem invisible to the layman but are much more obvious to the linguist.

Gomer. From this son of Japheth came the Germanic peoples, from whom came most of the original peoples of Western Europe. These include the original French, Spanish and Celtic settlers.

Magog, Tubal and Meshech. These settled in the far north of Europe and became the Russian peoples. These are the nations referred to in eschatological prophecies: <<*The word of the LORD came to me: Mortal, set your face towards Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Prophecy against him and say: Thus says the LORD God: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal*>> (Ezekiel 38:1-3), and: <<*When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them*>> (Revelation 20:7-9).

Madai. From this son of Japheth came the ancient Medes and they populated what are now Iran and Iraq. The peoples of India also came from this branch of Japheth's family.

Javan. From this son of Japheth came the ancient Greeks, whose sea-faring ways are also described.

Ashkenaz. From this son of Gomer came the peoples who settled north of Judæa into what is called the Fertile Crescent. It is one of the kingdoms referred to in a prophecy of doom against Babylon: <<*Raise a standard in the land, blow the*

trumpet among the nations; prepare the nations for war against her, summon against her the kingdoms, Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz; appoint a marshal against her, bring up horses like bristling locusts>> (Jeremiah 51:27).

While from [Togarmah](#) came the Armenian race of people.

[Tarshish](#) is frequently referred to in Scripture and was accepted as a seafaring trading port or nation: <<*You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish shattered by an east wind*>> (Psalm 48:7 NIV), <<*The oracle concerning Tyre. Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your fortress is destroyed. When they came in from Cyprus they learned of it*>> (Isaiah 23:1), <<*The ships of Tarshish travelled for you in your trade. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas*>> (Ezekiel 27:25), <<*But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD*>> (Jonah 1:3). Many people believe it to have been part of what is now Spain.

[From these the coastland peoples spread.](#) This is the only additional remark that is made concerning them; it associates Japheth's descendants with the coastal regions and islands of the Mediterranean Sea.

⁶ The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ⁷ The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. ⁸ Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.' ¹⁰ The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and ¹² Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ¹³ Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹⁴ Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from which the Philistines come.

¹⁵ Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, ¹⁶ and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterwards the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. ¹⁹ And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon, in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. ²⁰ These are the

descendants of Ham, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

Genesis 10:6-20

The descendants of Ham receive considerably more attention than those of Japheth and Shem. Among them figure many of Israel's enemies, such as the Egyptians, Babylonians, Philistines, and various Canaanite groups.

Ham's immediate sons are Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. Cush and Put are the regions to the south and west of Egypt, respectively: <<***Cush was her strength; Egypt too, and that without limit; Put and the Libyans were her helpers***>> (Nahum 3:9 ESV). Apparently, the family of Cush divided into two branches early. Some founded Babylon (notably, Nimrod) and others founded Ethiopia.

Cush became the father of Nimrod. This association may seem unusual given that Cush is linked geographically with Africa, and Nimrod with Mesopotamia. Nimrod is of particular interest for several reasons. He is linked to the great cities of Babel, i.e. Babylon, refer to the comment on 11:9; and Nineveh in Assyria, whose inhabitants at a later stage would descend in destructive power on the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The military might of the Assyrians and Babylonians may account for the related observations that Nimrod was a mighty warrior and a mighty hunter, which is apparent from a later prophecy: <<***They shall rule the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod with the drawn sword; they shall rescue us from the Assyrians if they come into our land or tread within our border***>> (Micah 5:6). These descriptions, one of which is linked with irony to the expression before the LORD, are probably to be viewed negatively. Nimrod's aggression as a person runs totally counter to what God had intended when at creation he commissioned humanity to be his vice-regents or representatives.

Babel in the land of Shinar. These details link Nimrod with the Tower of Babel episode in Chapter Eleven. Nimrod's kingdom is the antithesis of what God desired.

The great city. This probably denotes a region that included both Nineveh and Calah: <<***So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth***>> (Jonah 3:3 ESV). The detailed list of Canaan's descendants includes cities that play a significant role in later episodes in Genesis.

The family of Sidon, the firstborn of Canaan, went north and is related to the Hittites and Lebanese.

Many commentators believe the Oriental peoples descended from the Sinites.

The specific mention of Sodom and Gomorrah is used as a possible link with the actions of the men of Sodom in 19:4-8 for those who believe that Ham's curse was based on some sexual impropriety against Noah in 9:22.

The designation Canaanite is sometimes used to cover all the different groups mentioned in vv.15-19, for example: <<*Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, 'You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women'*>> (Genesis 28:1).

²¹ To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. ²² The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. ²³ The descendants of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. ²⁴ Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. ²⁵ To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the descendants of Joktan. ³⁰ The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar, the hill country of the east. ³¹ These are the descendants of Shem, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

³² These are the families of Noah's sons, according to their genealogies, in their nations; and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

Genesis 10:21-32

These verses list the descendants of Shem. These are the people with whom Israelites felt the most affinity, for Abraham was descended from Shem. Insofar as they can be identified, many of these are Arabian tribes or kingdoms.

From Shem comes Elam, who was an ancestor to the Persian peoples; Asshur, who was the father of the Assyrians; Lud was father to the Lydians who lived for a time in Asia Minor; and Aram was father to the Aramæans, who we also know as the Syrians. Arpachshad was the ancestor to Abram and the Hebrew nation.

Uz. Later, a region in Arabia was named after this son of Aram. Job came from the land of Uz: <<*There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil*>> (Job 1:1). Some commentators believe that Jobab is Job, but their names are actually quite different in the Hebrew.

Sheba is generally thought to have been a wealthy trading nation in the region of modern Yemen and is best known for its queen who visited King Solomon: <<***When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions, having a very great retinue and camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she discussed with him all that was on her mind***>> (2 Chronicles 9:1).

From the outset, Shem's great-grandson Eber is selected for special attention, being mentioned even before Shem's own sons are named. The designation Hebrew: <<***Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner; these were allies of Abram***>> (Genesis 14:13) is 'ibri and is derived from Hebrew 'Eber. By way of underlining his importance, readers are informed that he called one of his sons Peleg, which may be taken to mean division, for in his days the earth was divided. This is probably an allusion to the Tower of Babel incident (Genesis 11:1-9). The line of Shem's descendants from Arpachshad to Peleg is repeated with additional information in Genesis 11:11-19.



The map indicates in initial settlements of the descendants of Noah