

Genesis 10

This chapter continues the genealogies which we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, as Moses continues the human family tree, bringing us down to Abraham's day. The major point we draw from this chapter is that all of the human race is related; we all descend from Noah through one of his three sons. We also see God's command to Noah to be fruitful and multiply being fulfilled through his sons (9:1, 7). To use a modern analogy, chapter 10 makes us think of the United Nations. It is often referred to as the "Table of Nations."

We will refrain from persistently saying, "We don't know who these people are," or "This person might be the ancestor of such-and-such or, perhaps even such-and-such." What is most relevant for our purposes is to see that the various nations with whom Israel had contact, either in friendly ways or antagonistic ways, throughout biblical history, are all related to Israel.

Speaking in general, the family of Japheth migrates north and west of Canaan, the future land of Israel. Ham's family migrates toward the Nile River in one direction and the Euphrates River in the other direction. The family of Shem, the family from whom comes Abram, stretches from the Iranian mountains into northern Mesopotamia, Syria, and into the Arabian peninsula.

TRANSLATION - 10:1-5:

1 Now these [are] the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Then there was born to them sons after the flood. **2** The sons of Japheth [were]: Gomer, and Magog, and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. **3** And the sons of Gomer [were] Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togaramah. **4** And the sons of Javan [were] Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. **5** From these were spread the islands of the nations into their lands, a man according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

WORDS:

"Families" (ver. 5) is used 304x, making it a significant word. It was first used in 8:19 in a general sense to refer to groups of animals. Here, it refers to human families (cf. 10:20, 31).

GRAMMAR:

"Were spread" (ver. 5, 32) is a *niphal*, a passive form.

COMMENTS:

This paragraph is the family of Japheth. Moses begins with Japheth, the nations which had the least contact with Israel, the furthest from the land of Israel. Moses also only gives grandsons through only two of Japheth's sons.

Magog (Vs 2) is found again in Ezek. 38:2; 39:6 although we do not know which nation it is nor whom Gog, its king, might be. Madai are the Medes (2 Kings 17:6; 18:11; Isa. 13:17; 21:2; Dan. 5:28; 6:15; Ezra 6:2). Javan will eventually refer to the Greeks (Ezek. 27:13; Isa. 66:19; Dan. 8:21; 10:20; 11:2; Zech. 9:13).

Togarmah (vers. 3) exported horses to Tyre (Ezek. 27:13-14; 38:3-6). Ashkenaz will be called the "Scythians" by the Greeks (Jer. 51:27; 1 Chron. 1:6). The Scythians inhabited the area of modern southern Russia.

Tarshish (vers. 4) was heavily involved in trade and commerce (1 Kings 10:22; Jer. 10:9; Ezek. 27:12) and is most widely known from Jonah's life (1:3). Yet, we do not know if it was in the area of Carthage, north Africa or in Spain, the two most widely suggested locations. Kittim was a Phoenician city on the island of Cyprus (Isa. 23:1; Ezek. 27:6; Jer. 2:10). Dodanim (or Rodanim, apparently an alternative spelling) refers to the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea.

All the nations have their own, unofficial at least, borders, their own languages, and their own lifestyle. Largely, these nations have migrated northeast and northwest of Israel. They also have the least amount of contact with Israel during the biblical period.

APPLICATION:

Later Hebrew writers - 1 Chronicles 1:4-23; Tubal and Meshek are mentioned in Ezek. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2-3; 39:1. Madai is found in 2 Kings 17:6; 18:11; Isa. 13:17; 21:2; Jer. 25:25; 51:11, 28; Esther 1:3, 14, 18-19; 10:2; Dan. 8:20; 9:1. Javan is found also in Isa. 66:19; Ezek. 27:13, 19; Zech. 9:13; Dan. 8:21; 10:20. Meshech is found in the chronology of 1 Chron. 1:5, 17 and also in Ezek. 36:26.

In the same way, Elishah is found in the chronology (1 Chron. 1:7) and in Ezek. 27:7. Tarshish is found twenty-six times so it is unfortunate that scholars still have not been able to definitively decide where Tarshish is located. Kittim is found in Num. 24:24; Isa. 23:1, 12; Jer. 2:10; Ezek. 27:6; Dan. 11:30.

NT writers - Paul mentions the Scythians in Colossians 3:11. Some scholars suggest the nations assembled on the day of Pentecost are intended to reflect this Table of Nations. While the nations themselves are not the same, we believe *theologically*, the events of Pentecost “undid” the division of the nations caused at the Tower of Babel of chapter 11. Since Jesus is descended through Abraham, therefore through Shem (Luke 3:36), neither Ham nor Japheth are found in the NT. John will use “Magog” as a picture of the enemy of the early church in Revelation 20:8, based more on Ezekiel’s use rather than Genesis 10. The island of Cyprus is found seven times in Acts: 11:19-20; 13:4; 15:39; 21:3, 16; 27:4. Since the Greeks and their culture had a strong influence over the early Roman Empire, Greeks are found frequently in the NT. “Greek” is found 31x; “Greece” is found only in Acts 20:2.

TRANSLATION - 10:6-20:

6 Now the sons of Ham [were]: Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. **7** And the sons [of] Cush: Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca and the sons of Raamah [were] Sheba and Dedan. **8** And Cush bore Nimrod; he began to be a warrior on the earth. **9** He was a warrior of game before Jehovah so that it was said, “Like Nimrod a warrior of game before Jehovah.” **10** And it was the beginning of his kingdom of Babel and Erech and Akkad and Calneh in the land of Shinar. **11** From that land he went out to Asshur and he built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir (or “a city”), and Calah. **12** And Resen between Nineveh and Calah this [was] the great city.

13 And Mizraim bore Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim. **14** And Pathrusim and Casluhim from which went out from Philishtim and Caphtorim.

15 And Canaan bore Sidon his firstborn and Heth. **16** And the Jebusites and Amorites and Girgashites. **17** And Hivites and Arkites and Sinites. **18** And Arvadites and Zemarites and Hamathites and afterwards there were scattered from the clans of the Canaanites. **19** Now the boundary of the Canaanites [was] from Sidon to go toward Gerar until Gaza to go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim until Lasha.

20 These [are] the sons of Ham according to their families, according to their languages in their land of their nations.

WORDS:

“Warrior” (ver. 8; 66x) is a cognate word with the word translated “prevail” in 7:18, 19-20, 24 and was also found in 6:4. It can also refer to a man, in general, but emphasizing a male at the height of his physical strength. “Game” (ver. 9; 14x) and its word family are used 41x. “Kingdom” (ver. 10; 117x) is also a widely used word in the OT since Israel will form a kingdom and then serve as a picture of the kingdom of the Messiah, the church of Christ. The

whole word family, which includes “to reign” (350x) and “king” (2,530) and “queen” (35x) is found 3,147x. “Firstborn” (ver. 15) is used 120x.

GRAMMAR:

“Began” (ver. 8) is a *hiphil*. “Were scattered” (ver. 18) is *niphal*.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Babel” (ver. 10) “Shinar”

COMMENTS:

The second paragraph records the family of Ham. These nations will frequently be the antagonists of Israel throughout OT history. The length of the section indicates its importance. Also, the references to these men or nations will be more frequent through the OT than the sons of Japheth.

Cush (vers. 6) is identified with northeast Africa, usually Ethiopia or modern Sudan. Mizraim is the Hebrew word for Egypt, a dual (plural) word suggesting Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Canaan is the land that will be promised to Abraham and his family, Israel (12:1, 5; 13:7; 15:18-21; 17:8).

These (in verse 7) nations apparently were located in southern Arabia. Havilah was mentioned in the description of Eden (2:11), where gold was located. It is also the area where Ishmael will migrate (25:18). Sheba was also known for trade, especially in Solomon’s time (1 Kings 10:1-13; 2 Chron. 9; Psa. 72:10, 15; Isa. 60:6; Ezek. 27:22; Jer. 2:20; 6:20). It is located in modern-day Yemen.

Nimrod (vers. 8-10) certainly cannot be identified with any other known figure from ancient history. Micah 5:6 identifies Assyria as the land of Nimrod. He established some cities which became large and influential: Babel (50 miles southeast of modern Baghdad), Erech (spelled also Uruk; one hundred miles further south than Babel), a city of Sumer, and Akkad (at one time, a capital of Assyria), which gave its name to a Semitic language, Akkadian. The expression “before the Lord” would most easily mean that he had God’s approval for his hunting. It could also mean he was the “greatest,” the phrase “before the Lord” suggesting the superlative.

Asshur (vers. 11-12) refers to both the nation of Assyria and a city in Assyria. Nineveh, once a capital of Assyria, is also known from Jonah’s day (1:2; 3:3; 4:11). Its founding is dated around 4,500 B. C., making it one of the oldest cities. Modern day Mosul lies across the Tigris River from ancient Nineveh. It was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B. C. Calah was once a capital of Assyria as well.

These names (vers. 13-14) have the Hebrew masculine plural ending (“im”) which identifies them as ethnicities.

Sidon (ver. 15) was a Phoenician city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Heth refers to the Hittites.

The Jebusites (vers. 16) established the city that would be called Jerusalem (Gen. 15:21; Exo. 3:8, 17; 13:5; Josh. 15:8, 63; 18:28; Judges 19:10-11; 2 Sam. 5:6-8). The Amorites, Girgashites (perhaps connected with Gadara in Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26, 37), are listed among the nations in Canaan which Israel was to exterminate because of their idolatry and immorality (Deut. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; 24:11).

The same is true of the Hivites (vers. 17; Gen. 34:2; Josh. 9:1, 7; 11:3; Judg. 3:3). The Amorites were the group which gave us the tablets found at Mari.¹ Og and Sihon are Amorites (Deut. 3:8).

The Arvadites (vers. 18) lived in a city of Phoenicia which was associated with Tyre (Ezek. 27:8, 11). Hamath served Kings David and Solomon (2 Sam. 8:9-10; 2 Chron. 8:4). It was also later conquered by King Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:28).

Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim (vers. 19) were located south of the Dead Sea and will play a prominent role in Genesis 19. Gerar will also be prominent in Genesis 20-21, 26.

APPLICATION:

Later Hebrew writers - On Nimrod, 1 Chron. 1:10; Micah 5:6. Cush is found twenty-nine times, scattered throughout the OT. Mizraim, as the Hebrew word for Egypt, is found 681x throughout the OT; clearly a major country in biblical history! Put is found seven times, aside from Gen. 10:6; Jer. 46:9; Ezek. 27:10; 30:5; 38:5; Nahum 3:9; 1 Chron. 1:8. Canaan, another major land in biblical history, is found 93 times with nearly half (46x) in Genesis.

Seba is found also in Isa. 43:3; Psa. 72:10; 1 Chron. 1:9. Havilah is found also in Gen. 2:11; 10:29; 25:18; 1 Sam. 15:7; 1 Chron. 1:9, 23. Sabtah is only found, otherwise, in 1 Chron. 1:9. Raamah is also in Ezek. 27:22 and the genealogy in 1 Chron. 1:9. Sabteca is only found, otherwise, in the genealogy of 1 Chron. 1:9. Sheba is found twenty-three times. Dedan is found in Gen. 25:3; Ezek. 27:20; 1 Chron. 1:9, 32.

Like Egypt, Babel is an important city in biblical history. It is only used twice in Genesis (10:10; 11:9) but 260x in the rest of the OT, mainly in 2 Kings (32x), Jeremiah (169x), and Ezekiel (20x). Calneh is found, otherwise, in Amos 6:2. Shinar, the land of Babel, is found also in Gen. 11:2; 14:1, 9; Josh. 7:21; Isa. 11:11; Zech. 5:11; Dan. 1:2. Asshur, the city of the nation of Assyria (they are both the same words in Hebrew), is found 151x, primarily in 2 Kings (49x) and Isaiah (44x). Nineveh is found 17x, the most dense use, of course, in Jonah.

The Ludim are also found in Jer. 46:9 and the genealogy in 1 Chron. 1:11. The Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, and Casluhim are also found only in the genealogy of 1 Chron. 1:11-12. The Philistines are another major people in biblical history, being used 288x, especially Judges (34x), 1 Samuel (152x), and 1 Chronicles (29x). The Caphtorim are found also in Deut. 2:23 as well as the genealogy in 1 Chron. 1:12.

Sidon is found 22x, a major city in biblical history. Heth is found 14x, all but once (1 Chron. 1:13) in Genesis.

The Jebusites are found 41x; Amorites, 87x; Girgashites, seven times. The Hives are found 25x; the Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites only twice (here and 1 Chron. 1:15, 16).

Gerar plays a prominent role in Genesis (20:1-2; 26:1, 6, 17, 20, 26; see also 2 Chron. 14:12-13). Gaza is found 21x. Sodom is found 39x, predominately in Genesis. Gomorrah is also used frequently (19x). Zeboim is found five times (Gen. 10:19; 14:2, 8; Deut. 29:22; Hosea 11:8).

NT writers - An Ethiopian (from Cush) becomes a Christian in Acts 8:26-40. Babel is not found in the NT but "Babylon" is found a dozen times: Matt. 1:11-12, 17; Acts 7:43; 1 Peter 5:13 and it place a central role as a symbol of the nation of Rome (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Sidon, along with Tyre, is found eleven times. Sodom (nine times) and Gomorrah (four times) are found in contexts usually referring to their destruction in Genesis 19.

TRANSLATION - 10:21-32:

¹ See the Introduction for a discussion of the relevancy of the Mari tablets to the study of Genesis.

21 And to Shem was born also he [was] the father of all the sons of Eber, the brother of Japheth, the oldest. **22** The sons of Shem [were]: Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram. **23** And the sons of Aram [were] Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash. **24** And Arpachshad bore Shelah and Shelah bore Eber. **25** And to Eber was born two sons: the name of the first Peleg because in his days was divided the earth and the name of his brother [was] Joktan. **26** And Joktan gave birth to Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah. **27** And Hadoram and Uzzal and Diklah. **28** And Obal and Abimael and Sheba. **29** And Ophir and Havilah and Jubab; all these [were] sons of Joktan. **30** And it was their territory from Mesha to go toward Sefarah the mountain of the east.

31 These [were] the sons of Shem according to their families, according to their languages in their land according to their nations. These [were] the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies in their nations and from these were scattered the nations in the earth after the flood.

COMMENTS:

The final list is that of Shem, listed last because he is the ancestor of Abraham who will be the focus of chapters 11 and 12.

Elam (vers. 22) was east and northeast of the Euphrates and Mesopotamia (14:1, 9; Ezra 4:9; Isa. 11:11). Susa was its capital (Esther 1:2-5; Dan. 8:2). Asshur was the capital of Assyria (2:14; 10:11). There was apparently another "Asshur" in northern Sinai (25:3, 18; Num. 24:22, 24; 2 Sam. 2:9; Psa. 83:8). Aram is the ancestor of the Arameans or Syria as modern translations translate it. See Genesis 25:20; 31:20; Deut. 26:5. Its capital was Damascus and Aramaic became the common language of the Jews following the exile in Babylon and was probably the language spoken by Jesus and His contemporaries.

This "Uz" (vers. 23) does not seem to be the home of the patriarch Job since his "Uz" is likely closer to Edom, southeast of Israel (1:1; 2:11; Gen. 36:28; Lam. 4:21).

Eber (vers. 24) is the ancestor of the Hebrews. It was in Peleg's day (vers. 25) that the earth was divided. The easiest interpretation of that refers to the division following the incident at the Tower of Babel. Otherwise, the division could refer to any number of possibilities such as an earthquake or the division of the single continent into the seven continents we know today.

Ophir (vers. 26-29) was noted for its gold (1 Chron. 29:4; 2 Chron. 8:18; Job 22:24; 28:16; Psa. 45:9). King Solomon held commerce with Ophir (1 Kings 9:28; 2 Chron. 8:18).

All these nations are related to Israel. There is one God and one humanity (cf. Acts 17:26). There was nothing special about Israel. God will call Abram and send the Messiah through his family simply out of God's gracious plans to save all these nations from their sins. God will later tell Israel, "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).

It has been frequently pointed out that if one excludes the warrior Nimrod, then there are 70 nations or progenitors of nations listed here. Perhaps Jesus chose 70 disciples (Luke 10:1) to call people to Him as a reflection of this table of 70 nations.

APPLICATION:

Later Hebrew writers - Eber is mentioned fifteen times, mainly in Genesis 10 (3x), 11 (4x), and 1 Chron. Elam is found 17x. Arpachshad is found nine times, in Genesis 10:22, 24; 11:10-13 and 1 Chronicles 1:17-18, 24. Lud is found three times: Gen. 10:22; Ezek. 27:10; 1 Chron. 1:17. Aram is also found half a dozen times: Gen. 10:22-23; 22:21; 1 Chron. 1:17; 2:23; 7:34.

Uz is found in Gen. 10:23; 22:21; 36:28 and 1 Chron. 1:17, 42. Hul and Gether are only here and in 1 Chron. 1:17. Shelah, Peleg, and Javan are found nine times, seven times and six times, respectively (here, Gen. 11:12-15, 16-19; 1 Chron. 1:18-20, 23-25).

Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Uzal, and Diklah are found here and the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 1:20-21. Hadoram is found more frequently, in 1 Chron. 1:21; 18:10; 2 Chron. 10:18. Abimael is found here and the genealogy (1 Chron. 1:22). Sheba is found frequently, 23x. Havilah is found in 2:11, 10:7, 29; 25:18; 1 Sam. 15:7; 1 Chron. 1:9, 23.

NT writers - Shem's family who are in the line of Jesus Christ are given in Luke 3:35.