

GENESIS

Chapter 10

Nations Descended from Noah

These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. 2 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. 4 The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 5 From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations. 6 The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 7 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. 8 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. 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, Accad, and Calneh, 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 fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 14 Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim. 15 Canaan fathered 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. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. 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 sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. 21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. 22 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. 23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. 24 Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. 25 To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother’s name was Joktan. 26 Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. 30 The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. 31 These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. 32 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.

10:1 *generations* – Chronicles: Genealogies. (CSB)

Known as the Table of Nations, this account fills the gap in history between Noah and Abraham, emphasizes the brotherhood of man, shows the relation of the Semitic nations in the border region, and builds on the foundation for the history of redemption. More attention is given to those nations with closer relationships to Israel. (TLSB)

after the flood – Noah’s sons likely had no children until after the flood. (TLSB)

10:2-5 The list is from the least to the greatest (in terms of importance to the descendants of Shem). (TLSB)

10:2 *Japheth* – As the least involved in the Biblical narrative and perhaps also as the oldest of Noah’s sons, his descendants or successors are listed first. The genealogy of Shem, the chosen line, appears last in the chapter (see vv. 21–31; see also 11:10–26). The 14 nations that came from Japheth plus the 30 from Ham and the 26 from Shem add up to 70 (the multiple of 10 and 7, both numbers signifying

completeness; see note on 5:5), perhaps in anticipation of the 70 members of Jacob's family in Egypt (see 46:27; Ex 1:5; also Dt 32:8). The Japhethites lived generally north and west of Palestine in Eurasia. (CSB)

Gomer – The people of Gomer (the later Cimmerians) and related nations (see v. 3) lived near the Black Sea. (CSB)

The Assyrian Gimmirrai people, located north of the Black Sea, instrumental in the fall of the Assyrian Empire. (TL SB)

Magog – Possibly the father of a Scythian people who inhabited the Caucasus and adjacent regions southeast of the Black Sea. (CSB)

Scythians, mentioned in Ezk. 39:6 as a heathen menace threatening to engulf God's people (Rev. 20:8-9). (TL SB)

Madai – The later Medes. (CSB)

Hebrew for Medes, located in mountainous country bordering the Caspian Sea. (TL SB)

Javan. Ionia (southern Greece) and perhaps western Asia Minor. (CSB)

Hebrew name for the Ionian Greeks (Is. 66:19; Ezk. 27:13). (TL SB)

Tubal, Meshech. Not related to Tobolsk and Moscow in modern Russia. Together with Magog they are mentioned in later Assyrian inscriptions. See also Eze 38:2. Probably Tubal was in Pontus, and Meshech was in the Moschian Mountains. Their movement was from eastern Asia Minor north to the Black Sea. (CSB)

Opponents of Assyria who lived northeast of Cilicia in Asia Minor (Ezk. 38:2). (TL SB)

Meshech – Associated with living east of Tubal, finally settling in the vicinity of the Black Sea. (TL SB)

Tiras. Possibly the Thracians of later times. (CSB)

Pirates of the sea, possibly associated with the region/people of Thracians of later times. (TL SB)

10:3 *Ashkenaz*. The later Scythians. All three names in this verse refer to peoples located in the upper Euphrates region. (CSB)

Peoples located in the Upper Euphrates region. (TL SB)

10:4 *Elishah*. Either Alashia (an ancient name for Cyprus) or a reference to Sicily and southern Italy. (CSB)

People whose region of settlement is unclear. (TL SB)

Tarshish. Probably southern Spain. (CSB)

People of southern Spain and Gibraltar country. (TL SB)

the Kittim. A people living on Cyprus. (CSB)

Rodanim. A people whose name is perhaps reflected in Rhodes (a Greek isle). (CSB)

Related to the Ionians and possibly located in Rhodes (a Greek isle). (TLSB)

10:5 *coastal peoples spread in their lands, each with his language, by their clans.* Geographic, ethnic, political and linguistic terms, respectively. These several criteria were used to differentiate the various groups of people. (CSB)

Descendants of Japheth settled along and north of the Great Sea. Each had their own country, language, and tribal divisions. Reference to various languages in vv. 5, 20, and 31 show that the situation described in Chapter 10 developed after the events of Chapter 11, when only one language prevailed (11:1). Chapter 10 gives the setting for Abram in Chapter 12 and following. (TLSB)

10:6-20 Descendants of Ham were located in southwestern Asia and northern Africa. Greater detail indicates greater involvement with Shem's descendants, the line of promise. (TLSB)

10:6 *Ham.* The Hamites were located in southwestern Asia and northeast Africa. (CSB)

Cush. The upper Nile region, south of Egypt. (CSB)

The Upper Nile region, today Ethiopia. (TLSB)

Mizraim. Means "two Egypts," a reference to Upper and Lower Egypt. (CSB)

Put. Either Libya or the land the ancient Egyptians called Punt (modern Somalia). (CSB)

Associated with Egypt and Africa, either Libya or the land of the ancient Egyptians called Punt, Africa's Somali country.

Canaan. The name means "land of purple" (as does Phoenicia, the Greek name for the same general region)—so called because Canaan was a major producer and exporter of purple dye, highly prized by royalty. The territory was much later called Palestine after the Philistines (see v. 14). (CSB)

Originally the low coastal plain northeast of Egypt, later extended to include the Jordan Valley and the whole region west of the river. (TLSB)

10:7 *sons of Cush.* The seven Cushite nations here mentioned were all in Arabia. Sheba and Dedan (or their namesakes) reappear as two of Abraham's grandsons (see 25:3). Together with Raamah they are mentioned in Eze 27:20–22. (CSB)

Descendants of Cush settled in Arabia. (TLSB)

10:8 *Cush.* Probably not the same as that in vv. 6–7. Located in Mesopotamia, its name may be related to that of the later Kassites. (CSB)

Nimrod. Possibly the Hebrew name of Sargon I, an early ruler of Akkad (see v. 10). (CSB)

Nimrod was the first after the flood to move early civilization in a new direction (cf v.9), which Scripture does not well define. (TLSB)

mighty man – Powerful warrior or community leader. Literally, “a mighty man of valor.” Boaz’s social, legal, and economic status in the town was well respected. (TLSB)

10:9 *mighty hunter* – Hunting or warrior activities were the first steps toward dominating men and using them for conquest. Large, well-organized hunting parties may be in mind. Nimrod’s reputation was widespread and emulated by others. (TLSB)

before the Lord – His conduct may have defied God. The expression speaks of being in the presence of God, who determined to judge the actions of humankind (cf. 9:5-6). Early rabbinic and Christian interpreters often attributed the building of the tower of Babel to Nimrod. (TLSB)

10:10 *kingdom* – Earth’s first empire was the product of aggression. Cities listed below were great post-flood cities. (TLSB)

Babel – This was the ancient city of Babylon. (TLSB)

Erech. The Hebrew name for Uruk (modern Warka), one of the important cities in ancient Mesopotamia. (CSB)

Akkad – Became chief center of Semites in Babylon. (TLSB)

Calneh – Exact location unknown. (TLSB)

Shinar – Babylon, possibly associated with Shumir of the Sumerians. (TLSB)

10:11 *Nineveh* – Most famous of the three Assyrian capitals. (TLSB)

Rehoboth-Ir – Possibly a suburb of Nineveh. (TLSB)

Calah – Chief Assyrian center southeast of Nineveh. (TLSB)

10:12 *great city*. Possibly a reference to Calah (or even Resen), but most likely to Nineveh (see Jnh 1:2; 3:2; 4:11), either alone or including the surrounding urban areas. (CSB)

Nineveh, a metropolis with all its surrounding cities. (TLSB)

10:13 *Ludites*. Perhaps the Lydians in Asia Minor (see note on v. 22). (CSB)

In northern Africa, west of the Nile (cf Jer. 46:9; Ezk. 27:10). (TLSB)

Anamites. Located in north Africa, west of Egypt, near Cyrene. (CSB)

Lehabites. Perhaps the Libyan desert tribes. (CSB)

Naphtuhites. People of Lower Egypt. (CSB)

10:14 *Pathrusites*. The inhabitants of Upper Egypt. (CSB)

Inhabitants of Pathros; its capital, Thebes. (TLSB)

Caphtorites. Crete, known as Caphtor in ancient times, was for a while the homeland of various Philistine groups (see Jer 47:4; Am 9:7). The Philistines themselves were a vigorous Indo-European maritime people who invaded Egypt early in the 12th century B.C. After being driven out, they migrated in large numbers to southwest Canaan, later extending their influence over most of the land. The Philistines of the patriarchal period (see 21:32, 34; 26:1, 8, 14–15, 18) no doubt had earlier settled in Canaan more peacefully and in smaller numbers. (CSB)

Philistines – Indo-European invaders of Egypt who migrated to southwest Canaan and troubled Israel until the time of David. (TLSB)

10:15 *Sidon*. An important commercial city on the northwest coast of Canaan. (CSB)

People of ancient Canaanite seacoast city by the same name. (TLSB)

Hittites. A powerful people, centered in Asia Minor, who dominated much of Canaan from c. 1800 to c. 1200 B.C. (CSB)

Heth. Origin of Hittites, who for centuries occupied the region from near Sidon to the Euphrates. (TLSB)

10:16 *Jebusites*. Inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan. Jerusalem was also known as Jebus during part of its history (see Jdg 19:10–11; 1Ch 11:4). (CSB)

Amorites. The name comes from an Akkadian word meaning “westerner” (west from the Babylonian perspective). Amorites lived in the hill country of Canaan at the time of the Israelite conquest. (CSB)

10:17–18 Together with the Gergashites (v. 16), these groups inhabited small city-states for the most part. (CSB)

Along with Gergashites, tribes listed inhabited relatively small city-states and in due time went out of existence upon arrival of Israelites. (TLSB)

10:19 *Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim* – Parameters of Canaanite presence reached north as far as Sidon, south as far as Gaza, and east as far as the Salt Sea area. (TLSB)

10:20 Descendants of Ham settled east and south of the Great Sea. Each had their country, separate language, and tribal divisions. (TLSB)

The Semites

²¹ Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber. ²² The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. ²³ The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech. ²⁴ Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber. ²⁵ Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan. ³⁰ The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country. ³¹ These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

³² **These are the clans of Noah’s sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.**

10:21 *Sons were also born to Shem.* The descendants of Shem were called Shemites (later modified to Semites). (CSB)

older brother – Most significant history, that of Shem, is reserved for last. The writer clarifies that Shem was the oldest brother; Ham was the youngest. (TLSB)

Eber. Though a distant descendant of Shem (see vv. 24–25; 11:14–17), Eber’s importance as the ancestor of the Hebrews (“Eber” is the origin of the Hebrew word for “Hebrew”) is already hinted at here. The Ebla tablets frequently refer to a king named Ebrium, who ruled Ebla for 28 years. It is possible that Ebrium and Eber were the same person. (CSB)

10:22 *Elam.* The Elamites lived east of Mesopotamia. (CSB)

Elam’s descendants inhabited the region beyond the Tigris, east of Babylon. (TLSB)

Asshur. An early name for Assyria in northern Mesopotamia. (CSB)

Arphaxad. See also 11:10–13; perhaps a compound form of the Hebrew word for Chaldea, in southern Mesopotamia. (CSB)

Usually identified with the mountainous region northeast of Nineveh. (TLSB)

Lud. Probably the Lydians of Asia Minor. (CSB)

Aram. Located northeast of Canaan, the area known today as Syria. (CSB)

Comprehensive name for the plain occupied by the Arameans, extending from the mountains of Lebanon to beyond the Euphrates. (TLSB)

10:23 *Uz* – Home of Job (Job 1:1). (TLSB)

10:24 *Shelah.* See 11:12–15. (CSB)

Mentioned again in 11:12-15, significant because of his son Eber, ancestor of the Hebrews. (TLSB)

10:25 *the earth was divided.* Perhaps resulting from the dispersion of peoples described in 11:1–9. (CSB)

10:26 *Joktan.* The predecessor of numerous south Arabian kingdoms. (CSB)

10:28 *Sheba.* In southwest Arabia (roughly the area of Yemen). A later queen of Sheba made a memorable visit to King Solomon in the tenth century B.C. (see 1Ki 10:1–13). (CSB)

10:29 *Ophir.* The source of much of King Solomon’s gold (see 1Ki 9:28; 10:11). Its location seems to have been south of Palestine, perhaps somewhere in Africa or south Arabia (but see note on 1Ki 9:28). (CSB)

10:30 *Mesha...Sephar...Hill Country* – Its general location is in southern Arabia. Too little is known to locate this region precisely. (TLSB)

10:31 Repetition of vv. 5, 20, distinguishing between the descendants of each of the sons of Noah. (TLSB)

10:32 Summary statement to bind together the three branches of the human race after the flood. No further information is provided regarding the origin of races. Given their geographical and historical interrelationships, these various groups intermarried even as groups do today. (TLSB)

Ch 10 The Table of Nations describes the origins and interrelationships of many nations of the world. The list is important because it is the only document of its kind in existence and demonstrates the common descent of all human beings from Noah. Most important to the list are the Canaanites and Shemites, around whom the stories of the OT will revolve. From the Shemites would come the good news that God was remembering His promise of the Seed that would crush the head of the evil one (3:15). • Thank You, O God, that You have been faithful to Your promises of a Savior from sin and death, despite our constant straying into temptation. Amen. (TLSB)