

May 28, 2006 AM

**THE TABLE OF NATIONS  
GENESIS 10:1-32**

“generations” (*toledoth*) section runs from 10.1–11.9, encompassing these genealogies and the story of the debacle of the Tower of Babel.

**Structural matters:** These are not exhaustive histories. Certain people and events are selected for particular purposes. Chapter 10 is leading us to chapter 11. The story is telling us how things developed in the world and how God is working through all of it. How did all these nations with their various languages, etc. come about?

**The continuation of the promise:** Babel will not be the end of the story. As we will see in the next “generations” section, God will continue his work through Abraham, who is of the line of Shem, one of the sons of Noah. God’s intention is to save the nations of the earth. These are the nations that are listed in chapter 10 and of whom God speaks when he calls Abraham and tells him that through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed (cf. 12.1-3).

**The seventy nations:** Seven is a predominant figure throughout the author’s genealogical records. There is a representative completeness to the record indicated by the 7 x 10 number. The seventy nations are representative of the entire world. Later in Genesis, when the children of Israel go down to Egypt, we learn that there are seventy of them. Gordon Wenham, “Israel is thus a microcosm of the wider family of humanity described in this chapter.” (214)

Israel is, like Noah and his ark, the new world within the world. Israel becomes the nation through whom all the nations of the world will be blessed. Israel becomes the priestly nation that represents the world before God and God before the world. Cf. Feast of Tabernacles/Booths/Succoth and 70 bulls offered during the feast.

Jesus, as he is the fulfillment of God’s promises, sends out seventy witnesses for the ingathering of the nations (cf. Luke 10:1ff.).

**Creation-Fall-New Creation:** creation with Noah, fall at Babel, new creation with Abraham.

### 1. THE SONS OF JAPHETH (2-5) [Refer to Table of Nations Chart]

Japheth is the first son listed, probably because he is the firstborn (cf. 10.21). (Ham was the youngest–9.24. Shem is then the second born. The younger replaces the older.)

Japheth will inherit the blessings with Shem as he dwells in Shem’s tents (cf. 9.27).

We are given seven sons and seven grandsons of Japheth. Again, the numbers being important. They are probably representative of the whole family. I will only highlight a few of these names.

The sons of Japheth–Magog, Tubal and Meshech (cf. Ezekiel 38-39). God will bring them from the north to attack Israel, but then God will destroy them, making their flesh food for the birds of the air. Through this God will make his name known the nations.

*Madai* - Medes (later a part of the Medo-Persian Empire). They are significant in biblical history because, for instance, Cyrus and Darius the Mede were both instrumental in the children of Judah being returned to their land and rebuilding the temple. (cf. also Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah)

These Medes become worshipers of Israel’s God.

Javan’s descendants are later associated with Greece. This is made clear in Daniel’s prophecy where the Hebrew name is used for the country led by Alexander (cf. Dan 8.21; 10.20; trans. “Greece”).

*Tarshish* - we do know that Jonah was trying to flee to this place in rebellion against his commission to go to Ninevah of Assyria (Jonah 1.3; 4.2). Tarshish was known for its maritime activities (cf. e.g., 1 Kgs 10.22; also 2 Chr 20:36-37; Ezek 27:35).

### 2. THE SONS OF HAM (6-20)

Cush, Mizraim (Egypt), Put and Canaan were the four sons of Ham. All but Put are well known inside and outside of Scripture.

The land of Cush is south of Egypt (in Africa of course). Cush (what the LXX calls “Ethiopia”) is about the southern-most of the Biblical lands. From beyond the land of Cush is the outer reaches of the earth. Cf. Psa 68.31 and also the Queen of Sheba (Sheba

being one of the grandsons of Cush; 10.7) comes to inquire of Solomon's wisdom (cf. 1 Kgs 10.1ff.).

*Nimrod*: "mighty man" = *gibborim*. Used in Gen 6.4 to speak about the violent men of the earth at that time. This word is associated with military might. Nimrod was a prominent warrior, a violent man. Thus, his connection with the pre-flood sin of violence is made clear.

Nimrod was also known for his hunting. This might mean that he was a hunter of men, but it could very well mean that he was a hunter of animals, something which probably wasn't done before the flood since they probably didn't eat meat.

"Before YHWH" - I think it is best to connect the events to come at Babel with God coming down to see what the children of men are building with what is said here about Nimrod being before YHWH. Nimrod was a mighty man, but his prowess is always under the final judgment of God. He is not nor ever could be out from under God's judgment.

Nimrod was the founder of the kingdom of Babel or Babylon (10.10; Babylon is the land of Shinar; cf. Dan 1.2; Zech 5.11). Nimrod certainly had a hand in all of this.

Nimrod, then, becomes the father of the two nations that are used by God to punish his people Israel: Assyria and Babylon. But as we march throughout Scripture holding on to the promise of God as we go, we see times in which Ninevah repents at the preaching of Jonah and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, comes to worship God.

*Mizraim (Egypt)*: lit. "two Egypts" (upper and lower Egypt); eventually the oppressors of God's people from whom they must be delivered.

Philistines = Egyptians as well. They also are a constant threat to the people of God especially in the times of the judges and kings. But cf. Isa 19.24-25

*Canaan*: land of Canaan eventually becomes the Promised Land for the people of God (Gen 15).

Heth: father of the Hittites. Later on in Genesis we read that it is from the sons of Heth (obviously in the land of Canaan) that Abraham buys a cave to bury Sarah (cf. Gen 23; also 49.31-32). Converted Hittites throughout; e.g., Uriah.

Jebusites - original founders and inhabitants of Jerusalem (cf. Josh 15.8; also 2 Sam 5.6ff.).

Amorites - originally allied with Abraham when he went to war to rescue Lot (cf. Gen 14.5-7, 13), but they eventually had to be exterminated from the land of Canaan. It was when their sin was "filled up" that God allow them to be destroyed (cf. Gen 15.16).

Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim all become prominent in Genesis 14 and Abraham's war. Sodom and Gomorrah are obviously well known because of their destruction later on in Genesis 19.

### 3. THE SONS OF SHEM (21-31)

*Eber* - This name is the Hebrew word for Hebrew.

Aram is associated with Syria and related to the Arameans. From the Arameans Abraham and all the patriarchs will descend. Cf. Dt 26.4-5, "my Father was a wandering Aramean."

Peleg and Joktan; Joktan now, Peleg after the Tower debacle (like the genealogy of Cain precedes that of Seth).

Peleg means "divided." There is a play on his name throughout this genealogical record as we hear the word "spread" (e.g., the peoples spread or dispersed from here).

Joktan - family were "east" people. East is the place of exile. Adam and Eve were driven east. Cain was driven east. It is from the east that the people come to the land of Shinar to build the Tower of Babel (11.2).

**Application: (1)** No matter how strong man seems to become, he does so because God has strengthened him, and he always stands to be judged by God. **Application: (2)** God's redemptive plan is being worked out in the earth (i.e., it is not invisible).

**Application: (3)** God *is* working out his redemptive plan no matter what men may do and how men may try to thwart his work.