

GENESIS

Lesson 19 w/Answers

Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and The Table of Nations; Genesis 10

In this lesson, we will examine Genesis Chapter 10, often referred to as the Table of Nations. Many believe that we can see the roots of every ethnology from this chapter (see Genesis 10:32). We can also follow the lineage of Noah and his three sons that lead to the Hebrew people and eventually to Jesus, who was born into the line of David.

Let's take a brief look at each of Noah's sons and what we know about their descendants. We begin this study by looking at Genesis 10:1-32, which describes Noah's and his three sons' lineage; they collectively fathered seventy nations.

For this week read through Genesis Chapter 10, then consider the following:

1. How many sons did Japheth father? (See Genesis 10: 2.)
 - a. ANSWER: Japheth fathered seven sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshek and Tiras.
2. In total, how many nations descended from Japheth and his sons? (See Genesis 10: 3-4.)
 - a. ANSWER: Seven nations descended directly from Japheth and seven more from his sons. Specifically, Gomer, a son of Japheth went on to father three sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah; and Javan, also a son of Japheth, fathered four sons: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittites, and the Rodanites, for a total of 14 nations originating from Japheth.
3. How many nations did Ham and his descendants father? (See Genesis 10:6-20.)
 - a. ANSWER: Altogether, Ham and his descendants fathered thirty nations. Of those, two in particular jump out: Egypt and the land of Canaan. We will study more about these two in later lessons, but it is important to remember that Abraham will live in both of these nations in following God's call. As part of these sojourns, God will lead his chosen people out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan, where they will try to conquer the Canaanites and occupy the land. Eventually, the descendants of Shem will defeat the descendants of Ham and become the nation of Israel.
4. How many nations did Shem and his descendants father? (See Genesis 10:21:32.)
 - a. ANSWER: Altogether Shem and his descendants fathered twenty-six nations.

Taking a casual look through the names recorded in this chapter, we can readily identify several names as the beginning of civilizations that we encounter as we read through the Old Testament (Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites and Canaanites, for example). Other names may seem strange and are hardly mentioned after Chapter 10. In subsequent lessons in this study, we will look closer at some of these names, as we study what the land and people were like during the time of Abraham. For now, we see only a brief glimpse of those civilizations, leading up to the birth of Abraham in Genesis Chapter 11.

Continuing our exploration of Genesis Chapter 10:

5. From which of Noah's sons did Abraham descend? (See Genesis 11:10-32.)
 - a. ANSWER: Abraham descended from Shem, who would father the Semites or Semitic people, whom we refer to as such today.
6. How do we know that Abraham is a Hebrew? (See Genesis 14:13.)
 - a. ANSWER: We know this because Abraham refers to himself as a Hebrew, likely a reference to being a *Habiru*—a term for being an alien in the land. As an alien from the land of Ur and now living in the land of Canaan, Abraham used this label to describe himself and his people. The term Habiru would eventually be applied as well to the slaves living in Egypt. After the exodus from Egypt, the term "Hebrew" gradually came to refer specifically to God's chosen people, the descendants of Abraham.
7. While Egypt and Canaan are recognizable to most Bible students, some may not recognize the name Cush and Put. Can you identify which civilizations these two represent?
 - a. ANSWER: Cush will become Ethiopia, and Put will become Libya. Collectively then, we see the beginnings of Ethiopia, Libya, and Egypt in Northern Africa and Canaan, which will eventually become the nation of Israel, in the Middle East.
8. Can you determine from whom the Arab peoples are descended from?
 - a. ANSWER: The Arabs are a semitic group of people. Therefore, they are descendants of Shem. As we venture further into the book of Genesis and study the birth of Ishmael, we will look at this question more closely. However, given their semitic features, we know that they are descendants of Noah's son Shem.

9. Read the scripture Genesis 10:8-12. What else does it tell us about Nimrod, who was "a mighty hunter before the LORD?"
- ANSWER 1: We are told that he was the first to build a mighty empire, and that one of the cities he founded was the city of Babylon.
 - ANSWER 2: It also tells us that Babylon was located in the Land of Shinar, which is modern day Iraq. Today, we know this city as Baghdad.
 - ANSWER 3: Finally, we also see from this passage that "he [Nimrod] went out from that land and built Nineveh." It is also worth noting that in some texts Nimrod's name is also given as Ashur, or Asshur, as that is the Assyrian name for Nimrod.
10. We can see from the Table of Nations that the very early origins of both the Assyrian and Babylonian nations trace back to Nimrod, who descended from Cush in modern-day Ethiopia. Now identify where the Philistines descended from by reading Genesis 10:13-14.
- ANSWER: *"Egypt was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Kasluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphtorites."*

As we can see from our study of this brief chapter, the Table of Nations lays the groundwork for the key nations/civilizations that we will be studying throughout Genesis and the remainder of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, Matthew 1:1-17 provides the genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham, who, in Genesis 11:10-32 we noted had descended from Shem.

In the next lesson, we explore the Tower of Babel and the great scattering of the nations.

In Christ,

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