

## **Which of Noah's Three Sons Is Your Ancestor?**

(Genesis 10 & 11)

From whom do you come? Your family tree finds its roots in the sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who had sons after the flood (10:1). In this lesson, you can find out which one. After the death of Noah, we come to two chapters often skipped over when studying the book of Genesis—chapters 10 and 11. However, these fascinating chapters record with remarkable accuracy how Noah's sons' were obedient to what command in Genesis 9:1b?

Let's discover which son is your ancestor by first considering ...

### **The Descendants of Japheth (10:2–5)**

Less is recorded about Japheth, probably because his descendants settled farthest from the Promised Land. They aren't as significant because Israel, and Jerusalem in particular, is the heart of Bible geography. Events and people far removed from there are not major players. Japheth's descendants through Gomer (10:2–4) are believed to have settled north of the Black Sea in ancient Crimea (Cry-me'-uh), a peninsula in southwest Russia, extending into the Black Sea.

Gomer's descendants expand into Germany, through Gomer's son Ashkenaz (Ash'-kuh-naz). Gomer's descendants spread into France and Spain. They also become the Celtic people in Briton (Brit'-un), which becomes Great Britain and includes England, Scotland, and Wales, as well as islands in the region. Little is known of the other sons of Gomer.

Three sons of Japheth, Magog, Tubal, and Meshek (Me'-shek), probably are the Scythians (Sith'-e-uns) who settle east of the Black Sea in what today is Russia. What does Revelation 20:8 reveal about Gog and Magog?

This depicts Gog and Magog invading Israel. Satan is Gog, while Magog appears to be the people with Satan, but they are not specifically identified in Scripture.

Descendants of Madai (Mad'-i) settle in Media, land of the Medes, which is now northwestern Iran. The Medes later join Babylonia in destroying Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The descendants of Tiras (Ti'-rus) may have settled near the border of southeast Europe and Asia.

Javan (Ja'-van) (10:4) is father of the Greeks. Greece includes many islands in the Aegean, Ionian, and Mediterranean Seas, such as Crete and Rhodes.

Japheth is the father of what are called the Indo-Europeans. This refers to a family of chief languages that includes Europe, southwestern Asia, and India. Linguistic scholars believe these languages descend from a common language spoken in the late Stone Age. This is totally consistent with Genesis 10.

Japheth's descendants inhabit Europe and parts of Asia and India, but they go even farther. Anthropologists believe expansion continues across the Bering Strait on the eastern coast of Siberia in Russia. The Strait is frozen from October until June, making it possible for people to have walked across to Alaska, a distance of about 50 miles. From there, expansion continues into North and South America. This means Japheth's descendants populated most of the world. This is the fulfillment of what prophecy of Noah in Genesis 9:27?

### **The Descendants of Ham (10:6–20)**

Ham's four sons (10:6) settle in Africa and the Middle East. Descendants of Cush settle in Ethiopia, modern Sudan, and then spread to other parts of Africa. Egypt, also called "Mizraim," (Miz'-ra-im), settled in Egypt and North Africa. Put is the founder of Libya in North Africa, west of Egypt. Canaan is the ancestor of the tribes that settled in Palestine and Turkey—including the Hittites, Jebusites who dwelt in Jerusalem, the Amorites, etc. (10:15–18).

Cush is the father of Nimrod, who is the first powerful leader of armies (10:8). How does Genesis 10:9 describe Nimrod?

Many believe the description of Nimrod should be translated "a mighty tyrant against the Lord." This would be consistent with the fact he founded two imperial cities famous for their opposition to Israel: Babel, or Babylon, and Nineveh (10:10–11).

The Assyrians, whose capital was Nineveh, later destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, while the Babylonians destroyed the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The territory of the Canaanites is detailed in verses 15–20 and includes most of the land between the Nile and Euphrates Rivers. This is important because of what promise God later made to Abraham recorded in Genesis 15:18b?

The list in Genesis 10 is obviously not complete, and, therefore, one of the most difficult races to trace is the Asians. However, some evidence indicates they are survivors of the Hittite Empire, which was in Modern Turkey. Some suggest that when the empire fell suddenly, the survivors fled eastward into Mongolia and southward into China.

They probably expanded into Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, etc. This is supported by archeologists, who have noted similarities in the customs of the Hittites and Mongols, such as doing hair in pigtailed and shoes with turned-up toes.

### **The Descendants of Shem (10:21–32)**

Shem's descendants are probably listed last so less important matters could be taken care of first, and the Bible then focuses on the most important line. Shem's son Elam settles on the western edge of ancient Persia, modern Iran. The Assyrians come from Asshur. Lud is the father of the Lydians, and Aram is the father of the Syrians (10:22). Shem's son Arpachshadd (Ar-pack-shad'), grandfather of Eber, had a descendant named Terah (Te'-rah), to whom was born what important Old Testament figure (11:26)?

These make a total of 70 nations: 26 from Shem, 30 from Ham, and 14 from Japheth.

### **The Tower of Babel (11:1–9)**

In Genesis, we find something that often occurs in the Bible. Events are arranged thematically rather than chronologically. It has already been stated the people were divided by clans and languages (10:31) and the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood (10:32b). So, the events in the first nine verses of chapter 11 precede some sections of chapter 10. The account of the descendants of Noah is completed in chapter 10, and now the Bible goes back and gives details about a certain part. (Remember, in a similar way, chapter two went back to explain the details of the sixth day of creation recorded in chapter one.)

Chapter 10 tells us where the descendants of Noah scatter, and chapter 11 tells us why. What does Genesis 11:1 record?

Noah's descendants migrate east from Ararat and find a plain in the land of Shinar (Shi'-nar), and settle there (11:2b). This was near what would later be Babylon, which is a derivative of the word "Babel." Babylon was near the Euphrates River, about 55 miles (90 km) south of modern Baghdad, Iraq. Instead of multiplying and filling the earth, what do they decide to do, according to Genesis 11:4?

This is an expression of pride and defiance of God's command. The tower would be a shrine to themselves and a strong unifying and binding influence tying them to one location.

We are all tempted to build monuments to ourselves, such as prestigious titles, impressive assets, a business, or anything we do to impress people. These are not wrong in themselves, but when we get involved in anything that draws us away from God and draws attention to ourselves, we are building our own “tower of Babel.” In whatever endeavor we are involved, we need to remember what command of Jesus in Matthew 5:16c?

God decides to confuse their language so they can't communicate, which will sabotage their defiant plans (11:7). This reveals God's sense of humor. Imagine the morning after God confused their language: a brick mason asking his helper for another brick, saying, “May see tang bray?” The helper says, “Huuuh?” and the workman says more loudly, “May see tang bray?” I can't imagine how funny it would have been to be around the Tower of Babel that day. So, they stop building the tower and the city. That place is called Babel, or Babylon (11:9a), which means confusion of voices or languages. What happens as a result (11:9c)?

The remainder of chapter 11 records Shem's line to Abram (Abraham). Under the leadership of Joshua, Shem's descendants, the Israelites, eventually conquer the land of Canaan, a fulfillment of Noah's prophecy in (9:24–27).

This is a biblical history of the races of the world. Outside the biblical account, it is interesting to note the word “race” in Webster's New World Dictionary, Second Edition, has a mesmerizing definition: “1. any of the different varieties of mankind, distinguished by form of hair, color of skin and eyes, stature, body proportions, etc.: many anthropologists now consider that there are only three primary major groups, the Caucasoid [Caucasians], Negroid [Ethiopians], and Mongoloid [Asians], each with various subdivisions (sometimes also called races)”