

Introduction to Chapter 11

After a considerable time had elapsed since the flood,³⁶⁴⁹ Noah planted a vineyard (Gen 9:20). Rain came in the right amounts for growing crops which were luxuries,³⁶⁵⁰ such as grapes.³⁶⁵¹ No longer did it obliterate life (Gen 7:17–24; Gen 8:11).³⁶⁵² While the wine which Noah produced brought comfort from his toil, it became a mixed blessing.³⁶⁵³ He drank enough to become drunk, strip himself naked, and lie uncovered in his tent (Gen 9:21).³⁶⁵⁴

Ham—the father of Canaan—took a good look at his father before informing his two brothers (Gen 9:22). By telling others of Noah’s disgraceful state, Ham humiliated his father.³⁶⁵⁵ In contrast, Shem and Japheth expended great effort expended to avoid seeing their father’s nudity. Imagine them plotting how to manage to clothe Noah without catching a glimpse of him. Perhaps they walked backwards until Noah’s toes came into view and then dropped the cloak over their father (Gen 9:23).³⁶⁵⁶

After coming out of his stupor, Noah learned what his youngest son had done to him (Gen 9:24). For the first time in the entire flood account, he spoke.³⁶⁵⁷ He said, “Canaan be cursed. A slave of slaves he will be to his brothers” (Gen 9:25). Noah may have singled out Canaan because he was Ham’s youngest son or,³⁶⁵⁸ perhaps, because Canaan adopted the behavior of his father, meriting Noah’s wrath.³⁶⁵⁹

In contrast, Noah blessed the God of Shem,³⁶⁶⁰ implying that a godly lineage would issue from that son (Gen 9:26).³⁶⁶¹ Noah also requested that Japheth’s offspring would populate extensive territory,³⁶⁶² and that Shem and Japheth would form an alliance.³⁶⁶³ The patriarch’s last recorded words emphatically reiterated his desire that Shem and Japheth subjugate Canaan (Gen 9:27).³⁶⁶⁴

The Death of Noah

1) Gen 9:28–29: Moses at last concluded the genealogy of Noah, which he interrupted at the end of Gen 5:32.³⁶⁶⁵ The entire flood account amplifies biographical material concerning a descendant of Seth (Gen 5:3–4).³⁶⁶⁶ Taken together with Gen 5:32, these verses parallel the genealogy structure of Gen 5,³⁶⁶⁷ with one important deviation. The account of Noah’s

³⁶⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 147.

³⁶⁵⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁶⁵¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁶⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 321.

³⁶⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 198.

³⁶⁵⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁶⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁶⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 200.

³⁶⁵⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 149.

³⁶⁵⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 324.

³⁶⁵⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 9:27.

³⁶⁶⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 325.

³⁶⁶¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁶²Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*פַּתַּח*” (*pathah*) *BDB*, 834,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/834/mode/2up>.

³⁶⁶³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 326.

³⁶⁶⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁶⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

³⁶⁶⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 327.

³⁶⁶⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 151.

descendants forms a segmented genealogy tracing all three of his sons,³⁶⁶⁸ rather than a linear genealogy which mentions only the most prominent son by name.³⁶⁶⁹

The typical format of Gen 5 appears as follows: Person A lived x years and fathered Person B; Person A lived y years after that and had other sons and daughters; Person A lived x plus y years and then he died.³⁶⁷⁰ Moses recorded, “And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.”

This period likely began at the onset of the year-long flood (Gen 7:6). Moses omitted the stock phrase “and he had other sons and daughters” because he traced the lineage of all humanity in his known world, which descended from Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 9:18–27; Gen 10).³⁶⁷¹

Noah’s fate contrasts with that of Utnapishtim, who recounted this post-flood event in the Epic of Gilgamesh:

“Thereupon Enlil went aboard the ship. Holding me by the hand, he took me aboard. He took my wife aboard and made (her) kneel by my side. Standing between us, he touched our foreheads to bless us, ‘Hitherto Utnapishtim has been but human. Henceforth Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto us gods. Utnapishtim shall reside far away, at the mouth of the rivers!’ Thus, they took me and made me reside far away, at the mouth of the rivers.”³⁶⁷²

Unlike Utnapishtim—who achieved immortality—Noah suffered the fate of virtually all his ancestors. Only Enoch escaped death (Gen 5:21–24).³⁶⁷³

a) Read Gen 9:28–29. Why did Moses deviate from the typical genealogy format of Gen 5? How would you characterize Noah’s life? Which aspects would you like to emulate? How do you seek to be different from him?

The Descendants of Noah

b) Gen 10:1: Genesis 10, which some scholars call the Table of Nations, expands upon Gen 9:19.³⁶⁷⁴ It represents God’s concern for all people-groups.³⁶⁷⁵ Moses introduced the descendants of each of Noah’s sons with a standard formula: “The sons of X were.” He ended each section by writing, “These are the sons of X according to their clans and languages in their countries by their nations.”³⁶⁷⁶

The Table of Nations did not comprise a comprehensive list (Gen 10:5).³⁶⁷⁷ Instead, it functioned as a carefully crafted theological statement.³⁶⁷⁸ In the Bible, the number seven

³⁶⁶⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 248–9.

³⁶⁶⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

³⁶⁷⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 121.

³⁶⁷¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 203–4.

³⁶⁷²Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:189–96, 95.

³⁶⁷³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 204.

³⁶⁷⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 367.

³⁶⁷⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 161.

³⁶⁷⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 213.

³⁶⁷⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 367.

³⁶⁷⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 162.

signifies completion or fullness.³⁶⁷⁹ Japheth had seven sons and seven grandsons.³⁶⁸⁰ Among the offspring of Ham are seven sons of Cush and seven sons of Mizraim (Egypt). Shem's line down to Eber names fourteen descendants.³⁶⁸¹ Overall, the Table of Nations contains seventy names, equivalent to ten multiples of seven.³⁶⁸²

Several significant differences exist between this genealogy and the ones in Gen 5 and in Gen 11:10–27.³⁶⁸³ In Gen 10, some of the names represent specific men while others signify people-groups or even locations.³⁶⁸⁴ Other ancient genealogies, such as that of Hammurabi (reigned 1792–1750 BC), also feature the names of tribes and geographic regions.³⁶⁸⁵ Thus, no one's age appears in the list,³⁶⁸⁶ as it presents the relationships between various groups rather than focusing upon individuals.³⁶⁸⁷

A “son” (*ben*) typically refers to a direct descendant. However, the Hebrew language also allows the term to indicate a grandson or the distant offspring of a founding father (Gen 31:17–18, 26–28).³⁶⁸⁸ For example, the “sons of Levi” answered Moses's summons. However, many generations had been born and died since the lifetime of that patriarch (Gen 15:13; Exod 1:1–8; Exod 32:26).

Furthermore, in the Ancient Near East (ANE), the term “son” did not necessarily imply kinship. Participants in treaties employed similar language.³⁶⁸⁹ A stela (ca. 1575 BC) discovered at Karnak Temple in Egypt says,³⁶⁹⁰ “I captured a message of his...upon a letter of papyrus. I found on it, in written words from the ruler of Avaris, ‘the Son of Re: Apophis, sending greetings to my son, the ruler of Cush.’”³⁶⁹¹ In Ugaritic, a language related to Hebrew, the same word (*bn*) could also refer to a person who lived in a particular city or country.³⁶⁹²

The peoples in Gen 10 represented the major groups known to Israel (Gen 11:1).³⁶⁹³ By citing their common ancestry through Noah, this genealogy emphasizes the fundamental unity of those dwelling in the ANE.³⁶⁹⁴ Yet, it also distinguishes between them in terms of their geographic locations, ethnicities, and political affiliations.³⁶⁹⁵ Similarities of speech occurred across ancestral lines. For example, some of the sons of Ham spoke languages related to those of the sons of Shem.³⁶⁹⁶ No hint of people living outside of the ANE occurs here.³⁶⁹⁷ Moses

³⁶⁷⁹Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, “Seven,” *DBI*, 775.

³⁶⁸⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 213.

³⁶⁸¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 164–5.

³⁶⁸²Ryken, et. al., “Seventy” in *DBI*, 775.

³⁶⁸³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁶⁸⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 165.

³⁶⁸⁵J. J. Finkelstein, “The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty,” *JCS* 20 (1966): 99, 101,

[Http://www.caeno.org/pdf/Finkelstein_Bala%20era_Hammurabi.pdf](http://www.caeno.org/pdf/Finkelstein_Bala%20era_Hammurabi.pdf).

³⁶⁸⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁶⁸⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 368.

³⁶⁸⁸H. Haag, “בן” (*ben*) *TDOT*, 2:145–59, 150, 152.

³⁶⁸⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁶⁹⁰Pritchard, *ANET*, 554.

³⁶⁹¹Ka-Mose, “The War Against the Hyksos (Continued),” in *ANET* (trans. John A. Wilson), 555.

³⁶⁹²J. Bergman, H. Ringgren, and H. Haag, “בן” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:145–59, 148.

³⁶⁹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁶⁹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 163.

³⁶⁹⁵B. Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) – A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 14,

[Http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf](http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf).

³⁶⁹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 243.

³⁶⁹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 368–9.

achieved a two-fold purpose. First, he expressed unity through a common ancestor.³⁶⁹⁸ Then, he described the outcome of the settlement of North Africa, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and coastal areas of the Mediterranean.³⁶⁹⁹

Many commentators concur that the names listed here point to an editor from the first millennium BC, as no extra-biblical record of some of these names appears until that time.³⁷⁰⁰ However, it also appears that the author of the Table of Nations used preexisting material. A change in the customary format occurred by the sixth century BC (Cf. 1 Chron 1:5–23).³⁷⁰¹

Overall, the list consists of a three-part arrangement in accord with Noah's pronouncement in Gen 9:24–27.³⁷⁰² Although some exceptions exist, the Shemites were nomadic, Hamites dwelt in cities, and the sons of Japheth were seafarers.³⁷⁰³ As often occurs in Genesis, the editor began with the lines which God did not choose before discussing Israel's ancestor (Gen 4:17–5:32; Gen 25:12–19; Gen 36:9–37:2).³⁷⁰⁴

This genealogy begins with, “And this [is] the account of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.” As we have seen elsewhere in Genesis, “This is the account of” opens a major new section of the text (Gen 2:4; Gen 5:1; Gen 6:9).³⁷⁰⁵ By utilizing the passive voice to convey that “sons were born” to Noah's progeny, this verse depicts the fulfillment of God's blessing in Gen 9:1.³⁷⁰⁶

a) Read Gen 10.1. What hints do we have that this list is not a typical biblical genealogy? Why do you think the editor used groups of sevens for a total of seventy names? What is the purpose of the Table of Nations?

The Descendants of Japheth

c) Gen 10:2–5. To preserve our sanity, we'll examine only the nations which had a significant effect upon biblical history or the Ancient Near East (ANE). Since the descendants of Japheth included people-groups who had little contact with Israel, Moses gave them the briefest treatment.³⁷⁰⁷ They lived to the north of Israel, spreading from Asia Minor to the Greek islands.³⁷⁰⁸ None of them bordered upon Israel.³⁷⁰⁹

³⁶⁹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 215.

³⁶⁹⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:1.

³⁷⁰⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁷⁰¹Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) – A Socio-Cultural Approach,” 30, <http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf>.

³⁷⁰²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 162.

³⁷⁰³Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) – A Socio-Cultural Approach,” 22, 30, <http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf>.

³⁷⁰⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁷⁰⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 83.

³⁷⁰⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 330.

³⁷⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁷⁰⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 334–5.

³⁷⁰⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

The prophet Ezekiel cited Magog as a future enemy of Israel (Ezek 38:2; Ezek 39:6).³⁷¹⁰ However, that nation remains one of the few groups in Gen 10 which we cannot precisely identify. Extant cuneiform texts never mention the name.³⁷¹¹

On the other hand, the Madai (Medes) played an enormous role in Israel's history. They occupied Northwest Iran,³⁷¹² beginning around 1000 BC. The Medes repeatedly battled with the Assyrians until they formed an overwhelming army with the addition of the Persians late in the sixth century BC.³⁷¹³ This enabled the Medo-Persian Empire to defeat the Babylonians, eventually leading to Judah's return to the promised land (Isa 13:17–22; Jer 51:10–12, 27–28; Dan 5:25–31).³⁷¹⁴ Judah's deliverer, Cyrus the Great (reigned 550–530 BC), eventually ruled over Persia, Medea, Syria, Israel, and parts of modern Turkey (2 Chron 36:20–23).³⁷¹⁵

Despite appearing frequently in the Old Testament, the location of Tarshish remains uncertain.³⁷¹⁶ It could be anywhere in the Mediterranean or Indian Oceans,³⁷¹⁷ ranging from Carthage in North Africa to Tartessus in southwest Spain.³⁷¹⁸ However, the latter option would isolate it from the region of the other peoples named as descendants of Japheth.³⁷¹⁹ Solomon developed extensive trading ties with Tarshish, importing a variety of luxury items (1 Ki 10:21–22).³⁷²⁰ Jonah intended to flee there when he sought to flee from obeying the Lord's command to preach to the people of Nineveh (Jon 1:1–3).

Moses's closing statement for this section implies that the Table of Nations does not include every descendant of Japheth.³⁷²¹ He wrote, "From these were separated the nations of the coastlands in their lands, by their languages, by their clans, among their nations." This verse implies that the events of Gen 11:1–9 had already occurred.³⁷²² Ancient people distinguished themselves from others by geographic regions, languages, and ethnic groups, not by racial divisions.³⁷²³

Japheth's offspring were associated with the seas.³⁷²⁴ "These" refers to all his descendants, not only to the sons of Javan (Gen 10:4–5).³⁷²⁵ Clans (*mishpakhah*) in Israel were larger than a household and smaller than a tribe, akin to an extended family (Josh 7:16–17; 1 Sam 10:20–21).³⁷²⁶ A clay map dating to 7th–8th century BC Babylon names many descendants

³⁷¹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 332.

³⁷¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 216.

³⁷¹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 167.

³⁷¹³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 332.

³⁷¹⁴British Museum, "The Cyrus Cylinder,"

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1.

³⁷¹⁵T. Cuyler Young, Jr., "Cyrus (Person)," *ABD* 1:1231–2, 1231.

³⁷¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 218.

³⁷¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 333.

³⁷¹⁸Waltke, and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 167.

³⁷¹⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷²⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 333.

³⁷²¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷²²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

³⁷²³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:1–29.

³⁷²⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷²⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

³⁷²⁶H.-J. Zobel, "מִשְׁפָּחָה" (*mishpat*), *TDOT* 9:79–86, 80.

of Japheth..³⁷²⁷ It confirms that people in the ANE perceived these groups as living on the far reaches of civilization.³⁷²⁸

Read Gen 10:2–5. How would you classify the descendants of Japheth?

The Descendants of Ham

d) Gen 10:6–14: The names listed here include Israel’s nearest neighbors.³⁷²⁹ Not only did these nations surround Israel,³⁷³⁰ conflict often erupted between them.³⁷³¹ Typically, the peoples named here dwelt in cities, representing the apex of social and political civilization in the Ancient Near East (ANE).³⁷³² We’ll examine only the people-groups who had a significant effect upon biblical history or that region.

Consistent with Noah’s curse (Gen 9:20–27), the genealogy of Canaan does not feature seven people-groups,³⁷³³ the number of fullness or completion.³⁷³⁴ In his introduction, the editor listed Ham’s descendants geographically, from south to north.³⁷³⁵ He wrote, “And the sons of Ham [were] Cush, and Mizraim, and Put, and Canaan.”

Cush lies south of Egypt, in the modern-day territories of Ethiopia and North Sudan. Its rich gold mines led to frequent conflict with Egypt, its neighbor to the north. By the time of Moses, Egypt deployed renowned soldiers from Cush into Canaan.³⁷³⁶ Moses married a woman of Cushite origin (Num 12:1).

Mizraim (*Mitsraim*) is the Hebrew name for Egypt. Since that nation consisted of Upper and Lower Egypt, this proper noun occurs in plural form.³⁷³⁷ Initially, Egypt served as a gracious host to Israel before subjecting Moses’s original audience to cruel slavery (Gen 47:1–6; Exod 1:8–14).³⁷³⁸

Most verses in the Greek Old Testament (OT) translate “Put” as “Libya.” This is the only one of Ham’s sons without any children mentioned in this genealogy. The OT speaks of the men of Put as warriors (Jer 46:9; Ezek 30:5; Nah 3:9).³⁷³⁹

³⁷²⁷The British Museum, “The Map of the World,”

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=404485001&objectid=362000.

³⁷²⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*. Gen 10:29.

³⁷²⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 219.

³⁷³⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷³¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷³²B. Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)—A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 28,

[Http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf](http://www.elamit.net/depot/resources/oded1986.pdf).

³⁷³³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 165.

³⁷³⁴Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, “Seven,” *DBI*, 775.

³⁷³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 221.

³⁷³⁶Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 88.

³⁷³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 336. In Hebrew, one pluralizes a masculine noun by adding “im” at its end.

³⁷³⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷³⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 336.

The descendants of Cush settled in or near to Arabia. “Havilah” is related to the word “sandy.” Therefore, whether it represents the location mentioned elsewhere in the OT remains uncertain (Gen 2:11; Gen 25:16–18; 1 Sam 15:7).³⁷⁴⁰

Moses cited Sheba among the descendants of Abraham and his second wife (Gen 25:1–3; 1 Chron 1:32).³⁷⁴¹ During Solomon’s reign, Sheba’s queen traveled to Jerusalem bearing costly gifts of gold and spices (1 Ki 10:1–2).³⁷⁴² According to Ethiopian legend, she gave birth to Solomon’s son after returning to her home. Years later, Menelik visited his father and stole the ark of the covenant before returning to his mother.³⁷⁴³

After mentioning five sons and two grandsons of Cush, the editor of the Table of Nations penned an extended section on Cush’s sixth son (Gen 10:8–12).³⁷⁴⁴ Most likely, this was a later insertion, as it concerns the origin of the two empires which exiled Israel and Judah: Assyria and Babylonia.³⁷⁴⁵

He wrote, “And Cush fathered Nimrod. And he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord, and so it is said, ‘like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.’” Many commentators claim that Nimrod means “We shall rebel,”³⁷⁴⁶ foreshadowing the events in Babel (Gen 11:1–9).³⁷⁴⁷ This view indicts him as the supreme example of insurrection against God.³⁷⁴⁸ Yet, nothing in these verses explicitly links Nimrod to the Tower of Babel.³⁷⁴⁹

Some scholars associate him with Babylon’s patron deity Marduk or with Ninurta, the god of war and hunting.³⁷⁵⁰ However, this genealogy affirms Nimrod’s humanity. Therefore, several other options are worth exploring.

For example, Sargon the Great ruled over Akkad, the first known ANE empire, close to 2300 BC. However, he did not descend from Cush.³⁷⁵¹ A powerful pharaoh named Amenhotep (Amenophis) III (1386–1353 BC) was also known as Nimmureya in the Amarna Letters. During his reign, he undertook major building programs.³⁷⁵² He issued several commemorative scarabs, with one depicting him capturing 102 lions.³⁷⁵³

On the other hand, one messianic OT text equates Assyria with the land of Nimrod (Mic 5:5–6).³⁷⁵⁴ The Assyrian ruler Tukulti-Ninurta I (ca. 1246–1206 BC) defeated Babylon and took the statue of Marduk from its temple into captivity.³⁷⁵⁵ By doing this, he asserted the superiority

³⁷⁴⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 221.

³⁷⁴¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 337.

³⁷⁴² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁴³ E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Kebra Nagast* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1932), xliii–xlv, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/kn/kn000-5.htm>.

³⁷⁴⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁴⁵ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 168.

³⁷⁴⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁴⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁴⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁴⁹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷⁵⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁵¹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁷⁵² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁵³ The British Museum, “Collection Online: Commemorative Scarab,”

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=141170&partId=1.

³⁷⁵⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 338.

³⁷⁵⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 337.

of his gods over those of Babylon.³⁷⁵⁶ In order to finance his enormous building projects, he imposed high taxes upon his subjects.³⁷⁵⁷

Since none of these options fits perfectly, “Nimrod” may represent the ANE standard for a nation’s ruler.³⁷⁵⁸ He achieved his power by military invasions, not merely by spreading peacefully into new regions.³⁷⁵⁹ The term used to describe him refers to someone of surpassing might (*gibor*) who accomplishes great deeds (Gen 6:4; Judg 11:1; Prov 30:30).³⁷⁶⁰

Within the ANE, kings boasted of their skill in hunting large game.³⁷⁶¹ In fact, the royal hunt as a symbol of military might took on an aspect of propaganda, especially in Assyria and Egypt.³⁷⁶² The British Museum contains seventh century BC reliefs from Nineveh depicting a lion hunt which cover an entire room’s walls.³⁷⁶³

A stela about the exploits of Thutmose III (1490–1436 BC) says: “I speak...of what he did, without *lying* and without equivocation...without a phrase of boasting therein. If he spent a moment of recreation by hunting in any foreign country, the number of that which he carried off is greater than the bag of the entire army. He killed seven lions by shooting in the completion of a moment. He carried off a herd of twelve wild cattle within an hour...He carried off a rhinoceros by shooting, in the southern country of Nubia, after he proceeded to Miu (Sudan) to seek him who had been rebellious to him in that country.”³⁷⁶⁴

The phrase “before the Lord” does not suggest that God approved of Nimrod’s exploits. Indeed, he may have functioned as a despot, for an Arabic word related to “mighty” connotes tyranny and audacity.³⁷⁶⁵ Most likely, the phrase functions as a superlative, asserting that he exhibited overweening power to evoke great fear.³⁷⁶⁶ As a result, even God acknowledged his abilities.³⁷⁶⁷ This resulted in a proverb citing his prowess (Gen 10:9).³⁷⁶⁸

The editor continued, “The beginning of his kingdom [was] Babel, and Erech, and Akkad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. From that land, he went out to Assyria. And he built Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah. It [is] the great city.” “Beginning” (*reshith*) has several nuances, all of which inform our understanding of this verse. It means “chief,” “best,” “first fruits,” and “first in time.”³⁷⁶⁹ In addition to the early dates of the founding of the cities named here, most of them achieved political prominence in the ANE.³⁷⁷⁰

³⁷⁵⁶Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 124.

³⁷⁵⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 337.

³⁷⁵⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁵⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁶⁰H. Kosmala, “גִּבּוֹר” (*gabbar*), *TDOT* 2:373–82, 373.

³⁷⁶¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁶²Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna): Background Issues and Methods,” *ABD* 6:1109–1119, 1112.

³⁷⁶³Osama S. M. Amin, “Assyrian Lion-Hunting at the British Museum,” <http://etc.ancient.eu/photos/assyrian-lion-hunting-british-museum/>.

³⁷⁶⁴M. S. Drower (trans.), “Pharaoh as Sportsman,” in *ANET*, 243–4.

³⁷⁶⁵Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “גִּבּוֹר” (*gibbor*), *BDB*, 150.

³⁷⁶⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 223.

³⁷⁶⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁶⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339.

³⁷⁶⁹S. Rattray and J. Milgrom, “רֵאשִׁית” (*reshith*), *TDOT* 13:269–72, 269.

³⁷⁷⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

Babylonians understood “*Babel*” to mean “the gate of God.”³⁷⁷¹ Dating to the third millennium BC,³⁷⁷² this city became a major world power by the first millennium BC. Eventually it symbolized all Mediterranean civilization,³⁷⁷³ much like Rome did in the Middle Ages.³⁷⁷⁴

Unlike Greek writers, who praised the great city, biblical authors condemned Babylon for its wickedness (Isa 14:3–6, 16–21; Isa 47; Jer 50:13–15). Babylon began the first wave of deportations from Judah in 597 BC, and Nebuchadnezzar II installed Zedekiah as his vassal (2 Ki 24:1–4; 2 Ki 24:10–17). His army left only some of the poorest people in the land (Jer 52:12–16). After Zedekiah rebelled, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC (2 Ki 24:18–20; 2 Ki 25:8–12). The people of Judah remained outside of the promised land until 538 BC, seventy years after Babylon exiled Israel’s aristocracy.

Erech (Uruk) served as a Sumerian cultural hub.³⁷⁷⁵ One of the early centers of civilization,³⁷⁷⁶ it reached its height in the fourth and third millennia BC.³⁷⁷⁷ Since Gilgamesh reigned from Erech,³⁷⁷⁸ a few commentators equate Nimrod with him.³⁷⁷⁹ After deporting the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, the Assyrians relocated people from Erech into their land (Ezra 4:8–9).³⁷⁸⁰

Sargon the Great founded Akkad on the Euphrates River (ca. 2350 BC).³⁷⁸¹ However, its precise location remains undiscovered.³⁷⁸² Like Hebrew, Akkadian falls within the Semitic language group.³⁷⁸³

Whether “Ashur” represents all of Assyria or only the capital bearing that name remains unknown.³⁷⁸⁴ Assyria overthrew and exiled the Northern Kingdom of Israel, replacing the population with refugees whom they called Samaritans (2 Ki 17:1–6, 24, 41). At that time, Israel ceased to exist as a nation.³⁷⁸⁵ Assyrians practiced exceptional cruelty, even by ancient standards (2 Chron 33:11; Isa 37:21–29).³⁷⁸⁶

Ashurbanipal (668–627 BC) reported:

“Tanis and of all the other towns which had associated with them to plot, they did not spare anybody among (them). They hung their corpses from stakes, flayed their skins and covered (with them) the wall of the town(s). Those kings who had repeatedly schemed, they brought alive to me to Nineveh. From all of them, I had only mercy upon Necho) and granted him life.”³⁷⁸⁷

³⁷⁷¹ Helmer Ringgren, “בָּבֶל” (*babel*), *TDOT* 1:466–6, 466–7.

³⁷⁷² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 223.

³⁷⁷³ Jean-Claude Margueron, trans. Paul Sager, “Babylon (Place),” *ABD* 1:563–5, 563.

³⁷⁷⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁷⁵ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29–31.

³⁷⁷⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁷⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339.

³⁷⁷⁸ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 10:29–31.

³⁷⁷⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 222.

³⁷⁸⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁸¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339.

³⁷⁸² Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁸³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 243.

³⁷⁸⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 339–40.

³⁷⁸⁵ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings* (ed. E. Ray Clendenen, Kenneth A. Mathews, and David S. Dockery; NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 340.

³⁷⁸⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁸⁷ Assurbanipal II, “Campaigns Against Egypt, Syria, and Palestine,” in *ANET* (trans. Daniel David Luckenbill), 295.

Aside from the capital, Nineveh was the most prominent of Assyrian cities. Founded in approximately 4500 BC,³⁷⁸⁸ its ruins lie along the Tigris River in Mosul, Iraq.³⁷⁸⁹ Fear that God would forgive Assyrian violence led Jonah to flee in the opposite direction from Nineveh (Jon 3:1–4:2).

Grammatically, “the great city” seems to refer to Calah.³⁷⁹⁰ However, that site remained insignificant until it became Assyria’s capital in the ninth century BC.³⁷⁹¹ Therefore, this phrase likely describes Nineveh (Jon 1:1–2; Jon 4:11).³⁷⁹²

Overall, Nimrod’s empire encompassed all of Mesopotamia, from Babylon to Assyria.³⁷⁹³ He descended from Ham. Yet his territory was surrounded by kingdoms ruled by men who claimed Shem as their ancestor (Gen 10:21–31).³⁷⁹⁴ They repeatedly experienced conflict.

The Casluhim remain unidentified.³⁷⁹⁵ Their significance arises from the editor’s note which says, “...and Casluhim (from which came out the Philistines).” Philistines entered Canaan over land from modern day Turkey and by ships which sailed from Crete and Cyprus.³⁷⁹⁶ Since Amos 9:7 asserts that the Philistines came from Crete (Caphtor) even as Israel came from Egypt, they may not have originated there (Jer 47:4).³⁷⁹⁷

The presence of Philistines in Canaan during the lifetimes of Abraham and Isaac may indicate that a small group of Philistines settled there before 1200 BC (Gen 21:32–34; Gen 26:1). After the Sea Peoples ended Egyptian control over Palestine, many Philistines entered the region.³⁷⁹⁸ Beginning with the years when judges ruled over Israel until early in David’s reign, warfare against the Philistines occurred often (Judg 13:1–5; 1 Sam 4:10–11; 1 Sam 17:50–54; 2 Sam 5:17–25).

In 589 BC, a coalition of Egyptian and Philistine soldiers drew Nebuchadnezzar’s forces from Jerusalem. At that time, Assyria deported the Philistines from their cities (Jer 37:5–10; Jer 47:1–7).³⁷⁹⁹ Three years later Jerusalem also fell (2 Ki 25:1–12).

Read Gen 10:6–14. How would you characterize the descendants of Ham? What does the omission of sets of seven tell us about these people-groups? Why did the editor focus upon Nimrod? What impact did these nations have upon Israel and Judah?

³⁷⁸⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 224.

³⁷⁸⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 340.

³⁷⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 224.

³⁷⁹¹A. Kirk Grayson, “Calah (Place),” *ABD* 1:807–8, 808.

³⁷⁹²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 340.

³⁷⁹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 169.

³⁷⁹⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 369.

³⁷⁹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁷⁹⁶H. J. Katzenstein, “Philistines: History,” *ABD* 5:326–8, 326.

³⁷⁹⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 170.

³⁷⁹⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 26:6.

³⁷⁹⁹H. J. Katzenstein, “Philistines: History” in *ABD*, 5:326–328, 328.

The Descendants of Canaan

e) **Gen 10:15–20:** Although Noah cursed Canaan (Gen 9:20–27), his fertility remained unaffected. This list names eleven of his descendants, second in number only to Joktan.³⁸⁰⁰ We'll examine only the people-groups which significantly affected biblical or Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) history. The amount of detail in this genealogy corresponds with the importance of these nations in relationship to Israel (Gen 15:17–21; Exod 3:7–8).³⁸⁰¹ Canaanites inhabited portions of the eastern Mediterranean.³⁸⁰² Today this area lies within Israel, part of Syria, and Lebanon.³⁸⁰³

“Heth” refers to the Hittites.³⁸⁰⁴ Two different groups of people bore this name, creating much confusion.³⁸⁰⁵ Kings who settled in Syria and Turkey ruled over the Hittite Empire.³⁸⁰⁶ It reached its apex during ca. 1650–1200 BC.³⁸⁰⁷ However, the Semitic names of the Hittites mentioned in the Old Testament point to a different origin, consistent with Canaan.³⁸⁰⁸ Heth's descendants lived in what became Judah (Gen 23:1–6).³⁸⁰⁹ Esau grieved his parents by marrying a Hittite woman (Gen 26:34–35; Gen 27:46).³⁸¹⁰

Jebusites lived in the area which includes Jerusalem (Judg 19:10–12; Josh 15:63).³⁸¹¹ Eventually, David captured the city and made it his capital (2 Sam 5:4–9).³⁸¹² Most likely, Jebusites appear in this list of Canaan's progeny because they resided in his territory.³⁸¹³ They did not descend from him.³⁸¹⁴

Amorites (“of the West”) entered Northwest Mesopotamia in the mid-third millennium BC.³⁸¹⁵ They invaded Mari and made it one of their capitals.³⁸¹⁶ In approximately 1960 BC, an alliance of Amorites and Elamites destroyed Ur, the city of Abraham's birth (Gen 11:27–31). Thus, Hammurabi (reigned 1792–1750 BC), the most famous Amorite king,³⁸¹⁷ ruled over the Babylonian Empire.³⁸¹⁸

Amorites had a huge influence on the language, religion, and laws of Canaan. Among extant ANE law codes, the 18th century BC Code of Hammurabi first established the law of retribution (e.g. “An eye for an eye”). However—unlike in Israel (Cf. Exod 21:18–26)—social class determined the penalty.³⁸¹⁹

“If a seignior (free man) held (a debt of) grain or money against a(nother) seignior and distrained (someone as) his pledge and the pledge has then died a natural death in the house of his

³⁸⁰⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 330–1.

³⁸⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸⁰²Walton, *Genesis*, 368.

³⁸⁰³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 221.

³⁸⁰⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸⁰⁵Gregory McMahon, “Hittites in the OT,” *ABD* 3:231–3, 232.

³⁸⁰⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸⁰⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸⁰⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸⁰⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸¹⁰McMahon, “Hittites in the OT,” 231.

³⁸¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸¹²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸¹³Stephen A. Reed, “Jebus (Place),” *ABD* 3:652–3, 652.

³⁸¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 225.

³⁸¹⁵George E. Mendenhall, “Amorites,” *ABD* 1:199–202, 199.

³⁸¹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸¹⁷Mendenhall, “Amorites,” 201.

³⁸¹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 370.

³⁸¹⁹Huffman, “Lex Talionis,” *ABD* 4:321.

distrainer, that case is not subject to claim. If the pledge has died from beating or abuse in the house of his distrainer, the owner of the pledge shall prove it against his merchant, and if it was the seignior's son, they shall put his son to death; if it was the seignior's slave, he shall pay one-third mina [eighteen shekels] of silver and also forfeit everything else that he lent.

“If a seignior struck a(nother) seignior's daughter and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus. If that woman has died, they shall put his daughter to death. If by a blow he has caused a commoner's daughter to have a miscarriage, he shall pay five shekels of silver. If that woman has died, he shall pay one-half mina [twenty-five shekels] of silver. If he struck a seignior's female slave and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay two shekels of silver. If that female slave has died, he shall pay one-third mina [eighteen shekels] of silver.”³⁸²⁰

Another Amorite settlement began in Palestine in the second millennium BC. Abraham and Jacob lived near there.³⁸²¹ These Amorites scattered throughout the region of the Jordan River and Judah (Gen 14:13; Gen 48:21–22).³⁸²² Moses defeated some of them on Israel's way to the promised land (Deut 3:8; Num 21:25–26). The prophet Ezekiel accused Jerusalem's inhabitants of behaving like the progeny of Amorites and Hittites (Ezek 16:1–3).³⁸²³

Canaanites (Phoenicians) lived along the highway which connected Egypt to Mesopotamia.³⁸²⁴ They spread from Gerar (Gen 20:1), north of Sidon,³⁸²⁵ down to Gaza.³⁸²⁶ Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim comprised four municipalities in southeast Canaan, near the Dead Sea.³⁸²⁷ The Lord destroyed those cities during Abraham's lifetime (Gen 19:24–25; Deut 29:23).³⁸²⁸

Read Gen 10:15–20. Why do you think Canaan's genealogy included such detailed information? How would you characterize these nations?

The Descendants of Shem

f) Gen 10:21–31: As often occurs in the genealogies of Genesis, the final line of descent in Gen 10 includes the people whom God chose as his own (Cf. Gen 25:12, 19–26; Gen 36:1; Gen 37:1–2).³⁸²⁹ We will address only those nations which impacted biblical or Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) history.

³⁸²⁰Hammurabi, “Code of Hammurabi,” in *ANET*, 209–14, 175. A mina was worth 50 shekels.

³⁸²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 341.

³⁸²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸²³Mendenhall, “Amorites,” 201–2.

³⁸²⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸²⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 227.

³⁸²⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 171.

³⁸²⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 227.

³⁸²⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 172.

³⁸²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 343.

Elam, a non-Semitic nation east of the Tigris River in modern-day Iran,³⁸³⁰ dates to the third millennium BC.³⁸³¹ Its inclusion here appears to relate to geography, rather than to ethnicity.³⁸³² At its height, this confederation of peoples stretched from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf.³⁸³³ In 722 BC, Assyria exiled Israelites to Elam (Isa 11:11) and transferred Elamites to Israel (Ezra 4:9).³⁸³⁴

Arameans reached the height of their power near the end of the second millennium BC, dominating Mesopotamia.³⁸³⁵ They enjoyed a close relationship with Israel’s patriarchs. Isaac married a descendant of Aram, and Jacob lived among his in-laws after fleeing from Esau (Gen 25:20; Gen 31:20; Deut 26:1–5).³⁸³⁶

One ancestral line receives considerable attention here and in Gen 11:10–26.³⁸³⁷ Although Eber lived at least three generations after Shem, his name occurs in this introduction.³⁸³⁸ His prominence likely derives from the link with the name “Hebrew” (Gen 14:13).³⁸³⁹ Moses wrote, “And to Eber were born two sons. The name of the one [was] Peleg because in his days the earth was divided, and the name of the other [was] Joktan.”

“Peleg” as both a noun and a verb occurs in at least fifteen ANE languages. Twelve of them connote similar meanings: “half” or “divide.”³⁸⁴⁰ As with many names in the Bible, this moniker portended the future. However, the exact nature of this division has several contenders.³⁸⁴¹

In Akkadian and in Hebrew, the noun can mean “channel” or “ditch” (Ps 1:3; Isa 30:25; Isa 32:2).³⁸⁴² Therefore, “in his days” could refer to when people dug irrigation canals,³⁸⁴³ enabling sedentary agriculture as a way of life differing from a pastoral existence.³⁸⁴⁴ Genesis 11:2 describes a mass migration of people to the southeast which may have resulted from agricultural advancements.³⁸⁴⁵ However, most commentators link this event with the scattering of the nations at Babel (Gen 11:1–9).³⁸⁴⁶ The verb form of *peleg* can depict the confounding of speech (Ps 55:9).³⁸⁴⁷

Moses’s original audience likely knew exactly what the word *palag* represented, although time has obscured it for us. We cannot even determine whether this division portrays a positive or a negative event.³⁸⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the division separated the blessed progeny of Peleg from

³⁸³⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 10:31.

³⁸³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 228.

³⁸³²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 344.

³⁸³³François Vallat, “Elam (Place),” *ABD* 2:424–9, 424.

³⁸³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 228.

³⁸³⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 10:31.

³⁸³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 230.

³⁸³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 227.

³⁸³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 343.

³⁸³⁹Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, “עֵבֶר” (*ēber*), *BDB*, 720, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/720>.

³⁸⁴⁰K.-D. Schunck, “פָּלַג” (*palag*), *TDOT* 11:54–8, 546–7.

³⁸⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 230–1.

³⁸⁴²Schunck, “פָּלַג” (*palag*), *TDOT*, 11:547.

³⁸⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 345.

³⁸⁴⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 230–1.

³⁸⁴⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 10:31.

³⁸⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231.

³⁸⁴⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 173.

³⁸⁴⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 371.

the line of Joktan.³⁸⁴⁹ Peleg’s genealogy continues in Gen 11:18–26.³⁸⁵⁰ His descendants include Abraham, the one through whom God would bring salvation to the world (Gen 3:14–15; Gen 12:1–3; Matt 1:1–2).³⁸⁵¹

The next few verses focus upon the thirteen sons of Joktan. Although we cannot determine the precise range of the settlements of the sons of Joktan,³⁸⁵² their names testify to their Arabian origin.³⁸⁵³ Some commentators emphasize the polytheistic nature of these nations. For example, Hazarmaveth means “oasis of Mot,” the god of death.³⁸⁵⁴ This association may have developed because people harvested frankincense—a resin used for embalming corpses and covering the odor of death—from tree sap in this region of Oman.³⁸⁵⁵

Moses closed this section of the genealogy of Shem by writing, “These [are] the sons of Shem according to their clans, and their languages, in their lands, by their people-groups.”

Read Gen 10:21–31. Why would Moses mention Eber in the introduction of this genealogy when he had to be at least Shem’s great-grandson? How would you characterize the sons of Joktan? What do you think caused the division of the world during Peleg’s lifetime? Do you consider yourself to be more like Peleg’s or Joktan’s descendants? Why?

Seventy Nations

g) Gen 10:32: The Table of Nations in Gen 10 concludes by saying, “These are the clans of the sons of Noah according to their genealogies, by their nations. And from these were divided the nations in the land after the flood.” This verse forms a Hebrew literary device called an *inclusio* by repeating the information from Gen 10:1.³⁸⁵⁶ Together they form a frame around the genealogy enclosed within them.³⁸⁵⁷ However, Gen 10:32 replaces “sons were born” with “the nations were divided.”³⁸⁵⁸

The number of descendants attributed to the progeny of Noah points to a larger theological reality.³⁸⁵⁹ Ranging from Iran to Ethiopia and from Turkey to Libya,³⁸⁶⁰ this list

³⁸⁴⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 172.

³⁸⁵⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231.

³⁸⁵¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 163.

³⁸⁵²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231–2.

³⁸⁵³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 345.

³⁸⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 231.

³⁸⁵⁵W. W. Müller, “Hazarmaveth (Person),” *ABD* 3:85–6, 85.

³⁸⁵⁶Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral, 2nd Ed.*, 54.

³⁸⁵⁷Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 2nd Ed.*, 303.

³⁸⁵⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 174.

³⁸⁵⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 367.

³⁸⁶⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 346.

mentions seventy people, places, and nations.³⁸⁶¹ Seventy consists of ten sevens, the number of perfection. Throughout the Old Testament, some fascinating usages of this number occur.³⁸⁶²

First, seventy represents a great number of descendants (Gen 46:27; Judg 8:30; 2 Ki 10:1).³⁸⁶³ For example, the Canaanite fertility goddess Asherah reportedly bore seventy children.³⁸⁶⁴ Within Israel, seventy elders represented the nation as they ate in God’s presence on Mount Sinai, assisted Moses, and participated in idolatry within the temple (Exod 24:9–11; Num 11:16; Ezek 8:10–12).³⁸⁶⁵ Whether positive or negative, the number “seventy” indicates fullness or completion.³⁸⁶⁶

God chose Israel as one nation among seventy to represent all humanity (Deut 32:8).³⁸⁶⁷ The Lord ordered Jacob’s descendants to share their knowledge of him throughout the earth (Deut 4:5–8; Ps 102:12–22; Isa 66:18–21).³⁸⁶⁸ Moses commanded Israel to inscribe the words of God’s law onto an altar covered with plaster (Deut 27:1–8). According to the *Mishnah*, they wrote all the words of the law “in seventy languages” (*m. Sotah* 7.5).³⁸⁶⁹

This implies that God holds all people-groups accountable, whether they view him as their Lord or not (Amos 9:7).³⁸⁷⁰ All humans share a common origin, lending inherent dignity and value to everyone. We all bear God’s image, even after the fall (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 5:1–4).³⁸⁷¹

Read Gen 10:32. Why is the number seventy so important in understanding the genealogy in Gen 10? How does this reminder of our common origin and accountability impact the way you view and treat other people?

Jesus Sends Seventy

2) Luke 10:1–2: These verses follow the missionary journey of the twelve disciples and Christ’s call to assist him by ushering in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1–6, 57–62).³⁸⁷² Luke 10:1–20 continues the theme of outreach,³⁸⁷³ with an interesting twist. Although Luke provided no location for this enterprise, he included some intriguing hints regarding the identity of those who would hear the gospel.³⁸⁷⁴

³⁸⁶¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁸⁶²Ryken, et. al., “Seventy,” *DBI*, 775–6, 775.

³⁸⁶³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 213–4.

³⁸⁶⁴Ginsberg, trans., “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, II AB 6:46, 134.

³⁸⁶⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 10:29.

³⁸⁶⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 164.

³⁸⁶⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 214.

³⁸⁶⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 346.

³⁸⁶⁹Ryken, et. al., “Seventy,” *DBI*, 775.

³⁸⁷⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 174.

³⁸⁷¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 346.

³⁸⁷²Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 410, 412.

³⁸⁷³John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993), 549.

³⁸⁷⁴Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 410–11.

Luke wrote, “After these things, the Lord commissioned seventy[-two] others, and he sent them two by two before him into every city and place where he himself was about to come.” Manuscript evidence between “seventy” and “seventy-two” is evenly divided.³⁸⁷⁵ However, one document attesting to “seventy” (*P*⁷⁵) dates to the third century. Those citing “seventy-two” begin in the fourth century.³⁸⁷⁶

While the standard Hebrew (Masoretic) text of the Table of Nations lists seventy nations (Gen 10), the Greek translation of that chapter names seventy-two.³⁸⁷⁷ This may have occurred because Jewish scholars regarded those two numbers as interchangeable.³⁸⁷⁸ In Num 11:24–26, the Holy Spirit fell upon seventy elders around the tabernacle and two who remained in the camp. Whether to include the two in the camp among the seventy leaders might account for this uncertainty.³⁸⁷⁹

The disciples’ mission foreshadows the Spirit falling upon gentiles (Acts 2:1–5, 17–21; Acts 10:44–48).³⁸⁸⁰ By sending out seventy (or seventy-two) missionaries, Jesus expressed his concern for every people-group in the world.³⁸⁸¹

Third Enoch, a fifth–sixth century AD Jewish apocryphal book, asserts, “[There] are seventy-two princes of kingdoms on high corresponding to the 72 tongues of the world.”³⁸⁸²

We also have the *Letter of Aristeas*, a second century BC legend surrounding the Greek Old Testament (OT). It claims that seventy-two scholars traveled to Alexandria. They translated the Hebrew Scriptures into a language which people of many nations could understand.³⁸⁸³

Regarding the number seventy, Moses commanded Israel to inscribe the words of God’s onto an altar covered with plaster (Deut 27:1–8). According to the *Mishnah*, they wrote all the words of the law “in seventy languages” (*m. Sotah* 7.5).³⁸⁸⁴ This implies that God holds all people-groups accountable, whether they view him as their Lord or not (Amos 9:7).³⁸⁸⁵

Jesus sent (*apostellō*) these apostles out in pairs. This enabled them to give credible witness concerning the reception they received (Deut 19:15; Luke 10:3–17).³⁸⁸⁶ It also provided camaraderie, accountability, and increased security (Ecc 4:9–12; 2 Cor 8:18–22). Dispatching people on a mission to proclaim the kingdom of God was unparalleled at that point in Jewish history.³⁸⁸⁷

As Christ prepared to send them, he said, “The harvest is great, but the ones working are few. Pray, then, of the Lord of the harvest that he might send out workers into his harvest.” In the agrarian milieu of the Bible, the imagery of a harvest connoted God’s blessing, abundance, and

³⁸⁷⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 348.

³⁸⁷⁶Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, Luke 10:1, 224.

³⁸⁷⁷Garland, *Luke*, 425.

³⁸⁷⁸Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 549.

³⁸⁷⁹Pao and Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 316–7.

³⁸⁸⁰Garland, *Luke*, 425.

³⁸⁸¹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 411.

³⁸⁸²R. Ishmael Ben Elisha, *Hebrew Book of Enoch (Enoch 3)* (trans. Hugo Odeburg; London: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 17:8, https://archive.org/stream/HebrewBookOfEnoch3/BookOfEnoch3_djvu.txt.

³⁸⁸³H. St. J. Thackeray, trans., *The Letter of Aristeas, Translated with an Appendix of Ancient Evidence on the Origin of the Septuagint* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917), 33–4, https://archive.org/stream/theletterofarist00unknuoft/theletterofarist00unknuoft_djvu.txt.

³⁸⁸⁴Ryken, et. al., “Seventy,” 775.

³⁸⁸⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 174.

³⁸⁸⁶Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 550.

³⁸⁸⁷Garland, *Luke*, 425.

reward for hard work (Exod 23:16; Deut 28:1–6; Prov 20:4).³⁸⁸⁸ Usually when the metaphor of the Lord reaping appears in the OT, the focus falls upon impending judgment (Isa 17:10–12; Jer 51:33; Joel 3:13).³⁸⁸⁹ Yet, it does occasionally connote salvation (Jer 2:3; Hos 6:11).³⁸⁹⁰

As Christ’s parable of the vineyard workers implies, vintners could easily find day laborers for harvests (Matt 20:1–7). Locating people to do the strenuous work of missions for little earthly reward proves more difficult.³⁸⁹¹ Therefore, Christ implored his followers to pray for God to direct people to engage in evangelism and discipleship in order to expand his kingdom (Luke 24:46–49; Matt 28:16–20).³⁸⁹² In reality, the harvest comes from and belongs to the Lord.³⁸⁹³ We have the privilege of participating in God’s great plan for humanity.

For those working in agriculture, the concept of a harvest of grain or produce promotes an impression of urgency.³⁸⁹⁴ Peak reaping conditions often remain quite short.³⁸⁹⁵ This may result in seasonal workers employed to assist those who labor year-round.³⁸⁹⁶ Notably, Jesus expanded ministry responsibilities beyond the twelve disciples and even beyond the seventy (two) (Luke 24:46–49; Acts 1:7–8; Acts 8:1–12).³⁸⁹⁷

Although Christ had resolutely begun traveling toward his death in Jerusalem, he remained concerned for people of every nation (Luke 9:51–56).³⁸⁹⁸ Choosing seventy (two) missionaries to go ahead of him symbolized sharing the gospel with the whole known world.³⁸⁹⁹ This task soon grew exponentially (Acts 17:6; Acts 24:5; Rom 1:8; Rom 15:20–26).³⁹⁰⁰

God continues to use his people to reach the nations, often in ways we don’t expect. We sow the seed of God’s Word, but the Lord makes it grow (1 Cor 3:5–9). When the end of this age arrives, those who do evil shall be destroyed, while God’s people shall enjoy his presence forever (Matt 13:36–43).³⁹⁰¹ Participating in the advance of the gospel remains a difficult task. Yet, it brings tremendous joy (Phil 1:3–18).³⁹⁰²

Read Luke 10:1–2. Why is the number of apostles Jesus sent on this mission significant? How do you help with the task of reaping God’s harvest? Discuss some creative ways to reach those in our generation.

³⁸⁸⁸Ryken, et. al., “Harvest,” *DBI* 365–7, 365.

³⁸⁸⁹Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 550.

³⁸⁹⁰Bock, *Luke*, 291.

³⁸⁹¹Garland, *Luke*, 425–6.

³⁸⁹²Bock, *Luke*, 291.

³⁸⁹³Garland, *Luke*, 426.

³⁸⁹⁴Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 413.

³⁸⁹⁵Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 551.

³⁸⁹⁶Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 413.

³⁸⁹⁷Bock, *Luke*, 297.

³⁸⁹⁸Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 549.

³⁸⁹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 348.

³⁹⁰⁰Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 168.

³⁹⁰¹Ryken, et. al., “Harvest,” 367.

³⁹⁰²Bock, *Luke*, 296.