

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 10

10:1 Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

Noah and Early Post-Flood Colonization

From Noah, God made every nation of men to inhabit the whole earth, and determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live (ACT 17:26, NIV).

Noah was assigned the responsibility of placing his descendents in the areas God designated. We are told in the book The Legend of Noah, (Don Allen, 1963) that Noah took his three sons on a ten-year world tour approximately 80 years after the Flood. During this tour, they determined where to establish colonies and, upon returning to Armenia, began sending groups out to those areas. Berossus mentions that Noah sent colonists to Egypt, North Africa, Arabia and to the east while the French historian Lemaire claims other groups were sent into Europe.

Noah divided the rest of the human family living in Armenia into two parts: one group which remained in Armenia, the other to go with him to finish colonizing the rest of the world. According to Berossus, "*Noah had with him a great number of families whom he intended to lead into various distant colonies.*" After spending over 50 years in Africa, Noah went into Spain 259 years after the Flood in 2069 B.C. After nine years in Spain, Noah moved on to Italy in 2060 B.C. He had established the first colonies there in 2220 B.C., 108 years after the Flood. He is known in Italian history as Janus [the god of two faces who could look in two directions: the world before the Flood and the world after] who reigned for 33 years. Noah left Italy in the hands of Gomer for 58 years, who then passed on his rule to Ashkenaz for 50 years. After Ashkenaz, Ham, known as Camese, came from Africa and ruled for 19 years and undermined the work of his father. As a result, Noah returned to Italy in 2060 B.C. and ruled for 82 more years.

10:2-4 The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim [NIV:"Rodanim", Samaritan Pentateuch, 1CH 1:7].

Twelve Tribes

Only Gomer and Javan have descendants listed. When the three sons of Gomer and the four sons of Javan are added to the other five sons of Japheth, there is a total of twelve tribes to represent all the descendants of Japheth. Throughout Genesis we find that all peoples of great national destiny begin with twelve tribes. Japheth is the first patriarch of twelve tribes.

10:5 From these the peoples of the coasts and islands [NIV: "maritime peoples"] ***separated into their own countries, each with their own language, family by family, nation by nation.*** (REB)

Languages

The actual timing of this occurrence is recorded in GEN 11. The descendants of each of Noah's sons is listed with this basic understanding summarizing each one. We are told in this chapter that each of the individuals mentioned or their descendants, at the time of the tower of Babel, began speaking a different language.

10:6-7 The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. (NIV)

10:8-9 Cush [MOF: "Ethiopia"] **begot Nimrod** [Hebrew: "marad" = "rebel", probably named by God because of what he did]; **he began to be a mighty one** [Hebrew: "gibbor" = "tyrant"] **on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before** [Hebrew: "paniyim" = "in front of" or "in place of"] **the LORD."**

Nimrod

Since Nimrod is not included in the first list of Cush's sons, the conclusion is that Nimrod was born to a different wife than the others. In fact, history shows that Nimrod was the son of Semiramis who, according to the Saxon Chronicle, was descended from Japheth, possibly the daughter of Ashkenaz. If this is true, then Cush would have been approximately 80 years old when he married Semiramis.

One Jewish Targum states in 1CH 1:10 that "*Nimrod began to be a mighty man in sin, a murderer of innocent men and a rebel before the Lord.*" The Jerusalem Targum states that Nimrod "*was mighty in hunting and in sin before God, for he was a hunter of the children of men in their languages; and he said unto them, 'Depart from the religion of Shem, and cleave to the institutes of Nimrod.'*" The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel says: "*From the foundation of the world none was ever found like Nimrod, powerful in hunting, and in rebellions against the Lord.*"

Nimrod placed himself in front of God in the eyes of the people. Josephus says: "*Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah—a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through His means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power.*" (Antiquities, I.IV.2)

10:10-12 His empire at first was Babylon, Uruk [KJV, NIV: "Erech"], **Akkad and Kalneh, in the land of Shinar from which he pushed out into Assyria** [KJV: "Out of that land went forth Asshur"], **building the great city of Nineveh and its suburbs, also Kalah, and Resen, which lies between Nineveh and Kalah.** (MOF)

Asshur

The KJV translation implies that Asshur worked with Nimrod and Cush to create the first human-directed government after the Flood. In ancient German, Asshur was Tuisto, who was conceived in the ark; if this was the case, Asshur was born immediately after the Flood.

10:13-14 From Mizraim sprang the Ludim, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines were descended ["from whom...descended" was an editorial comment probably added in the time of David"]. (REB)

10:15-19 Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites. Later the Canaanite clans scattered and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. (NIV)

Scattering of Tribes

Moses defines the area where the Canaanite tribes scattered—specifically pointing out that God did not scatter them there [i.e. they were not intended to possess this land].

10:20-24 These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations. Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth [KJV: "brother of Japheth the elder"]; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber. The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech. Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber. (NIV)

Birth Order

In 11:10, we find that Arphaxad was born two years after the Flood, while the genealogy shows that both Elam and Asshur were born earlier. Since tradition has Asshur conceived on the ark, and Elam is listed first in order, Elam must have been born the first of twins.

10:25 Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg ["division"], because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan. (NIV)

Peleg & the Genealogy of Shem

According to the genealogy in 11:10-16, Peleg was born 101 years after the Flood. At some point in the lifetime of Peleg, God geographically separated Noah's descendants into nations. [DEU 32:8: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance" is a reference to this division.] God had also divided the world in the pre-Flood period as vs 8 goes on: "when He separated the sons of Adam." Moses mentioned these two separations to show that God had pre-determined Israel's place on the earth from the very beginning.

Moses picks up Peleg's line in 11:16. In arranging the genealogy of Shem in this way, Moses draws attention to the two great lines of humanity which descended from him: one group who sought to make a name for themselves in the building of the city of Babylon (11:4), and another for whom God will make a name in the call of Abraham (12:2). This second group is the one prophesied in Noah's blessing [9:26—the LORD God of Shem].

10:26-30 Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan. The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country. (NIV)

Nimrod's Territory

Other than the area where Nimrod began his kingdom (vs 10) and the editorial comment about the area of the Canaanites (vs 19), this is the only verse that designates territory in this chapter. Moses mentions it to connect the line of Joktan with the building of Nimrod's city and tower, both in the east.

10:31 These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.

10:32 These are the groupings of Noah's descendants, according to their origins, by their nations; and from these the nations branched out over the earth after the Flood. (TAN)

Language

There are 60 separate groupings of the descendants of Noah's three sons listed. It is interesting that today, of the five major geographical divisions of the world, there are 59 language families and single [stand-alone] languages. Even the thousands of languages that have evolved over the centuries can be traced back to one of these 59 language families.