

Genesis – Story of Noah’s Sons

- Initial Observations
 - The following are some observations for chapter 10 of Genesis.
 - Noah’s oldest son, Shem, is covered last because he is the line of the Seed of the Woman.
 - This chapter is restated in 1 Chr 1:4-23 and is to be taken as a historical record.
 - In the naming of the descendants of Noah’s sons, nations are being described [Gen 10:32].
 - The territory occupied by the people of the nations is also described [Gen 10:5, 19, 30].
 - This chapter mentions that the people were divided according to language [Gen 10:5, 20, 31].
 - All of this tells us that this chapter takes into account the dispersion/confusion events of chapter 11.
- Introduction [10:1]
 - “Now these are *the records of* the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.”
 - The phrase “the records of” is not in the Hebrew text.
 - This phrase was added to try to express the meaning of the word תולדות (tō-le-dōth) which we will look at next.
 - The word “generations” is תולדות (tō-le-dōth) which means “account” or “story of what became of”.
 - This is the same word translated “account” in Gen 2:4 and “generations” in Gen 5:1 and Gen 6:9.
 - The phrase “and sons were born to them after the flood” tells us that Noah’s sons and their wives did not have any children before the Flood.
 - All of humanity today are descendant from Noah’s three sons – Shem, Ham and Japheth.
- The Line of Japheth [10:2-5]
 - “The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras.”
 - The seven sons of Japheth are listed first.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

The record begins with the youngest son, Japheth. Verse 2 lists his own sons, of which there are seven. The first son was Gomer, the Gimirraya of the Cuneiform Akkadian Inscriptions, and the Cimmerians of the Classical Texts, basically located in the area south of the Black Sea. According to the Herodotus, they were displaced by the Scythians and settled in the area of Lake Van. After being defeated by the Assyrians, they settled in the area of Cappadocia. Other suggestions as to their region include Germany, France, and Cambria of Wales.

Japheth's second son was Magog, located between the Black and Caspian Seas, the area of ancient Lydia that is presently Southern Russia, and the region between Armenia and Cappadocia. Josephus identifies them as the Scythians. They are associated with both Meshech and Tubal in Ezekiel 38:2 and with both Gomer and Togarmah in Ezekiel 38:6.

Japheth's third son was Madai. These are the Medes by the Caspian Sea (II Kings 17:6, 18:11; Isa. 13:17, 21:2; Jer. 25:25, 51:11, 51:28). It is believed that some of Madai's descendants migrated to India, and an ancient Indian legend claims that Iyapeti is the father of the Afghans of India. Japheth's name in Hebrew is Yapheth, and so this may have a linguistic connection.

Japheth's fourth son was Javan, which in Hebrew is Yavan. Javan's name refers to Greece, and the Hebrew name parallels the name Ionia, and this is the Ionia of Homer. It refers to the Hellenic race. These people settled along the Aegean Coast of Asia Minor and became known as the Ionian Greeks. They are mentioned in the eighth century B.C. cuneiform literature. The Ugaritic Literature of the 13th Century B.C. refers to the Greeks, often connected with the Elishah to be mentioned in 10:4. Other references are Isaiah 66:19, where the Greeks are connected with Tarshish and Tubal; Ezekiel 27:13, where they are connected with Meshech and Tubal; and Joel 3:6, where they are connected with the Phoenicians and the Philistines. A Greek legend states that Iapetos is the father of the Greeks, and it is known that Iapetos is the Greek form of Yapheth or Japheth.

Japheth's fifth son was Tubal. These are the Tabali of the Assyrian Inscriptions. Herodotus places them in the region of Cilicia and others in East Asia Minor or Eastern Antonia, and including areas of modern Russia. Others suggestions for their locations have included Tobolsk in Siberia on the Tubol River, and others have connected them with the Tibareni in Pontus.

Japheth's sixth son was Meshech. These are the Mushki of the Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions and also mentioned in Egyptian literature. They were located between the Black and Caspian Seas, and were localized in Northern Cilicia and Eastern Cappadocia. Herodotus puts them in Phrygia. Other suggestions include the Southwest Black Sea, Russia, Moscow on the Mosilua River, and the Moschian Mountains near Armenia. They are always mentioned in conjunction with Tubal (Ezek. 27:13, 32:26, 38:2-3, 39:1).

Japheth's seventh son was Tiras, who is associated with the Tursenoi of the Greek Texts or the Etruscans, and the Turcscha of the Sea Peoples in the Egyptian Inscriptions. Other suggestions include the Tyrrhenian of Italy and the Thracians. In Rabbinic tradition, this is Persia

- “The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah.”
 - The three sons (tribes) of Gomer are given.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:3 lists the three sons of Gomer. The first son is Ashkenaz. This is the Ashkuza of the Assyrian Cuneiform Tablets, the Saka of the Persian Texts, and the Scythes of the Greek Texts. In the Classical Greek, they are the Scythians. Others suggestions include Indo-Germanic tribes related to the Scythians, Germany, Scandia, Saxony, Denmark, and Armenia. The Ashkenaz are mentioned in Jeremiah 51:27 in conjunction with Ararat and Minni, located south of Lake Van.

Gomer’s second son is Riphath. In I Chronicles 1:6, the name is spelled as Diphath, due to a scribal error since in Hebrew the letter resh (r) and daleth (d) look very much alike and are sometimes mistaken for each other. Josephus identifies them as the Paphlagonians, located between the Black Seas and Bythina on the southern edge of the Black Sea. Other suggestions include the Tiphcean Mountains of Cappadocia, Rhebas, the Celts, and Anatonia.

Gomer’s third son is Togarmah. This is the Togarama of the Hittite Texts, the Til-Garimmu of the Assyrian Akkadian Texts. Other suggestions as to the actual location include Cappadocia, Armenia, and Turkey-Turkistan (Asia Minor). Other references to the house of Togarmah are in Ezekiel 27:14, noted for exporting horses to Tyre, and in Ezekiel 38:6 where they are part of Gog’s army.

- “The sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim.”
 - The four sons (tribes) of Javan are given.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:4 lists the four sons of Javan, or Yavan. The first son is Elishah, a word related to Hellas, the Greek name for themselves. These are the Alashiya of the Mari, the Nuzi, Ugaritic, and the El-Amarna Texts, and the Boghazroy (Hittite) Inscriptions. They are also the Eilesians of Homer. They have been located on Cyprus, which is rich in copper in the central and western parts of the island, and have also been connected with Crete.

Javan’s second son is Tarshish. His descendants were located in southwestern Spain. They are the Tartessus of Spain and of Herodotus. They have also been located in Sardinia. Other references to them are in I Kings 10:22, where they were exporters of gold and silver, ivory, and apes and peacocks; in Isaiah 23:1, where they are connected with ships; in Jeremiah 10:9, where they were exporters of silver; and in Ezekiel 27:12, where they are connected with Tyre and are mentioned as exporters of silver, iron, tin, and lead. This area was the direction of Jonah’s flight (Jon. 1:3), and it was also the destination of Solomon’s ships (II Chron. 9:21) and of Jehoshaphat’s ships (I Kings 22:49).

Javan's third son is Kittim, mentioned in Phoenician records, located on Cyprus or the Phoenician section of Cyprus in contrast to the part of Cyprus settled by Elisha. The ancient name in Cy of the modern city of Larnaca was Kitom on Cyprus. One suggestion puts them on the south coast of Asia Minor as well. Other references are Numbers 24:24, where they are associated with ships; Isaiah 23:1, where they are described as a land; and Ezekiel 27:6, described as isles.

Javan's fourth son is Dodanim, (in I Chron. 1:7 spelled as Rodanim, another scribal error for the same reason noted above). These are the Dodanoi of ancient Greece, the people of the Peloponnesus during the Mycenaean Period, located at different times in northern Greece, Macedonia, and Rhodes.

- “From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.”
 - The nations of Japheth spread to the coastlands.
 - This includes Europe to the west and India/Asia to the east, fulfilling Noah's blessing [Gen 9:27].
 - Japheth's descendants were separated into nations and families (tribes).
 - They spoke the same language up until God confused their lips [Gen 11:7].
- The Line of Ham [10:6-20]
 - “The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.”
 - The four sons of Ham are listed next.

Ariel's Bible Commentary

The line of Ham begins with verse 6 listing his four sons. The first son is Cush. He and his line most likely lived in the land of Nubia and Ethiopia since the vast majority of the cases where Cush is mentioned refer to Ethiopia. However, in light of 10:8–12, his descendants might be associated with the Kisshites or Cassites of Mesopotamia.

Ham's second son is Mizraim, and this is the well-known Hebrew name for Egypt. In Hebrew, this name is a dual form indicating the inclusion of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Ham's third son is Put. This is the Putaya of the Old Persian Inscriptions and they were located in North Africa in the area of modern-day Somaliland or Somalia, and their territory is believed to include Libya. Put is the only son of Ham whose genealogy is not given. Other references to Put are Jeremiah 46:9, where he is associated with Cush; Ezekiel 30:5, where he is associated with Ethiopia and Lud; and Ezekiel 38:5, where he is associated with Cush and Persia.

Ham's fourth son is Canaan, the father of the Canaanites. Therefore, the Canaanites were Hamitic in national and racial origin, but they adopted a Semitic language and culture. It was this son and his descendants that fell under the curse of Noah.

- “The sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca;”
 - Five sons (tribes) of Cush are given.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:7a lists the five sons of Cush. The first son is Seba. Josephus identifies him as the Seba between the Blue Nile and the White Nile. Strabo identifies him as the Seba along the African Coast. Others suggestions locate them in Upper Egypt on the Nile and the Sudan.

Cush’s second son is Havilah, who settled in Southern Arabia, the proverbial source of gold mentioned as early as Genesis 2:11 and which is located along the Arabian Coast. Ishmael lived here (Gen. 25:18) and also the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:7). Havilah is also mentioned under Shem. Perhaps it is a different person of the same name, or perhaps this double occurrence indicates a mixing of the races.

Cush’s third son is Sabtah. This is the Shabwat of the Sabean Inscriptions and the Sabatoh of the Greek Texts, which locate them in the western Hadramaut region. Others locate them on the west coast of the Persian Gulf. They are sometimes identified with Sabaka, who ruled Ethiopia 712–700 B.C. Sabaka conquered Egypt and set up the 25th dynasty.

Cush’s fourth son is Raamah, identified with the Ragmah of the Sabean Inscriptions who lived in the extreme southwest of Saudi Arabia. They are also identified with Oman.

The fifth son is Sabteca, connected with the land of Nubia, or Ethiopia. This is an Ethiopian tribe. Others connect them with Samudake, east toward the Persian Gulf. Raamah is also sometimes identified with Sabaka, who succeeded his brother Sabrika as king and ruled 700–689/688 B.C. in Phoenicia.

- “and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.”
 - The two sons of Raamah are given.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:7b lists the two sons of Raamah. The first one was Sheba. This is the Sabean Kingdom of southwest Arabia and the home of the Queen of Sheba, identified with Marib in Yemen.

Raamah’s second son is Dedan, identified with the Oasis of el-’Ela in Northwestern Saudi Arabia, also identified with the Julia of Northern Arabia. Other references to Dedan are: Isaiah 21:13, which mentions the caravans of Dedan; Jeremiah 25:23, which connects Dedan with Edom; Jeremiah 49:8, which again connects him with Edom; and Ezekiel 25:13, saying his location borders on the land of Edom.

- “Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a powerful figure on the earth.”
 - The phrase “became the father of” is יָלַד (ya-lad) which means “bring forth” or “beget”.
 - This is the first “begetting” mentioned in Gen 10.
 - Nimrod is sixth son of Cush in addition to the five sons mentioned in verse 7.
 - The name “Nimrod” comes from the word מָרַד (ma-rad) which means “to rebel”.
 - Some have suggested that this name was assigned to this sixth son of Cush later in his life based upon his rebellious nature.
 - The phrase “mighty one” is גִּבּוֹר (gi-bor) which means “strong” or “mighty”.
 - This word is used again in verse 9 and, though often used in a positive sense, carries the meaning of an arrogant tyrant here [1 Sam 17:51].
- “He was a mighty hunter in the face of the LORD; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty hunter in the face of the LORD.’”
 - The two words “mighty” are גִּבּוֹר (gi-bor) which we saw in verse 8.
 - They still carry the meaning of an arrogance here, but with regard to being a “hunter”.
 - The two words “hunter” are צַיִד (tsa-yid) which means “hunter” or “game”.
 - This word is associated with the hunting of animals in the story of Esau [Gen 25:27; 27:3; 27:30].
 - Nimrod was a hunter of animals, but he was also a hunter of men, stirring up a rebellion against God among the people which eventually resulted in the building of the tower of Babel.
 - The phrases “before the Lord” are לְפָנֵי יְהוָה (liph-ney YHWH) which means “in the face of the Lord”.
 - These phrases are used here in the sense of antagonism – antagonism and opposition to God.
 - The fact that a saying developed comparing people to Nimrod tells us that he became so powerful that he was renowned for his strength and abilities as well as his opposition to God.
- “The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”
 - The word “kingdom” is מַמְלָכָה (mam-la-cah) which means “kingdom” or “dominion”.
 - This word indicates that Nimrod took control of a large area in building an empire.
 - This is very different from the “nations” mentioned elsewhere in this chapter which is the word גּוֹי (goy) which means “nation” or “people group” (and Gentiles after the call of the Hebrews).
 - The word “Babel” is בָּבֶל (ba-vel) which means “Babel” or “Babylon”.
 - Here this refers to the city of Babylon, not the future Babylonian empire.
 - These four cities are situated in the land of Shinar which is the region of Babylonia and is located in southern Mesopotamia.

- “From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah,”
 - Nimrod left the region of Babylonia and went into Assyria [Micah 5:6].
 - The text here does not say why Nimrod left Babylonia, but this is explained in chapter 11.
 - Nimrod built four cities in Assyria, three of which are mentioned in this verse.
 - Nineveh is located about 200 miles north of Babylon on the Tigris River and became the capital of Assyria.
 - Rehoboth-Ir was basically a suburb of Nineveh and Calah was located on the Tigris River about 18 miles south of Nineveh.
- “and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.”
 - The fourth city built by Nimrod is mentioned here – Resen was located between Nineveh and Calah.
 - These four townships came together to make up the great city of Nineveh – an exceedingly large metropolis [Jonah 3:3].
- Summary of Genesis 10:8-12
 - Cush’s had a sixth son (Noah’s great-grandson) named Nimrod.
 - Nimrod became a prominent figure on the post-flood earth.
 - He had a reputation as a mighty hunter, but was arrogant and rebellious against God.
 - Nimrod displayed man’s power over wild animals through his hunting prowess.
 - He also hunted men, inciting them to join him in his rebellion against God.
 - Many people did follow Nimrod which allowed him to establish the first post-flood empire.
 - When the Tower of Babel dispersion took place (chapter 11), Nimrod moved to the land of Assyria.
 - In Assyria, Nimrod was able to establish another empire which included the great city of Nineveh.
 - The effects of Nimrod’s influence on the post-flood world continue until this day.

- Extra-biblical Information about Nimrod
 - At a time when people were supposed to be spreading out all over the world, a man named Nimrod rose to power and drew people to him.
 - He was able to hunt and kill wild animals that threatened people, so he became a hero.
 - Nimrod knew of God’s laws, but he believed that life would be miserable if he lived by those laws.
 - Nimrod was so admired for his ability to protect people from wild animal attacks that people readily accepted his anti-God beliefs.
 - So many people followed under Nimrod’s rule that a formidable city was established in Babylonia.
 - As Nimrod gained power, he began to promote the worship of visible objects – the sun, moon, etc.
 - The name of the main god of Babylon was Bel – the chief god over many idols.
 - To strengthen his power over the people, Nimrod declared himself to be the high priest of Bel.
 - One of Nimrod’s schemes to hold the people together was to build a massive tower in Babel designed to inspire wonder and awe.
 - The tower worked as it drew more and more people to Nimrod’s growing empire.
 - This was in opposition to God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”.
 - In addition, Nimrod’s growing control over the people of the world was opposed to God’s rule.
 - At this point, God stepped in and thwarted Nimrod’s plans by confusing the people’s language and scattering them over all the earth.
 - Nimrod moved from Babylonia to the land of Assyria and established a new empire there.
 - In this Assyrian empire he continued the practice of idol worship, in particular of the sun and snakes.
 - Eventually, Nimrod died and his death was a shock to his followers.
 - Satan, who was behind Nimrod’s rise to power, was not about to allow the idol worship to end.
 - Satan used Nimrod’s wife Semiramis (or Ishtar) to continue to maintain control over the people.
 - Semiramis took control of the empire, but some people were not comfortable being ruled by her.
 - She knew she needed something to inspire awe among the people.
 - Sometime after Nimrod’s death, Semiramis gave birth to a baby boy (Tammuz).
 - She concocted a story that Tammuz had no human father, but had come from a beam of light from the sun-god and was here to restore Nimrod’s empire.
 - This caused many people to believe that Nimrod was actually the sun-god and that Semiramis was the mother of god.

- She came to be known as the “virgin mother” and the “queen of heaven” and she garnered a huge following among the people.
- She became the first leader of “religion” in the world and the cult that followed her was the cult of Cybele as a Mother goddess (symbolized by the moon) in the Middle East.
- One well-known world-wide religion continues to worship the queen of heaven even though this is a pagan concept and completely non-biblical.
- This religion also practices a 40 day period of self-denial which developed from a pagan observance corresponding to a period when Semiramis (Ishtar) supposedly mourned the death of Tammuz.
- Many other pagan celebrations that originated with the religion of Nimrod have influenced worship in modern Christianity.
 - The winter solstice was the occasion to celebrate the birth of the child of the queen of heaven, yet this is the date we celebrate Christmas.
 - Another celebration was for the birth of Semiramis (Ishtar) who was said to have been a spirit prior to the flood and was born when a large egg dropped from heaven into the Euphrates River.
 - This egg is known as the Ishtar (Easter) egg which is the origin of the Easter egg hunts practiced today.

- “Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim.”
 - The seven sons of Mizraim are listed next.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:13–14 lists the seven sons of Ham’s second son, Mizraim. His first son was Ludim, who was located in Lydia in North Africa; he was also associated with an African tribe located west of the Delta Region. Other references include Jeremiah 46:9, where Ludim is associated with Cush and Put as well as in Ezekiel 30:5, where the association is made with Cush and Put (in the Hebrew, but not in the English translation).

Mizraim’s second son was Anamim, connected with Cyrene. This is the Anami of the inscriptions of Sargon II.

The third son was Lehabim, located in the vicinity of Egypt and Libya.

The fourth son was Naphtuhim, located in Lower Egypt in the Delta Region; his were the people of Memphis.

The fifth son was Pathrusim, located in Upper Egypt in the land of Pathros.

The sixth son was Casluhim (whence went forth the Philistines). These were the people west of the Delta between Egypt and Canaan. In the Greek text, these are the Nasmonim, who lived in the area of the Gulf of Sidra. This was as close as the Philistines came to Egypt.

The seventh son was Caphtorim, the Kaptara of the Amarna Letters, also connected with Crete; Caphtor is mentioned in Amos 9:7: the Philistines from Caphtor.

- “Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite;”
 - The eleven sons of Canaan are listed next.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:15–18a focuses on the sons of Canaan: And Canaan begat, a total of eleven sons. The first son was Sidon, his first-born. Sidon’s house was in Phoenicia and the land of the Sidonians.

The second son is Heth, the father of the Hittites. After the fall of the Hittite Empire, they migrated to the Far East and became known as the Cathay now associated with Hong Kong. Remnants of the Hittites occupied the Hill Country of Judah at one time (Num. 13:29).

The third son is the Jebusite who inhabited Jerusalem, located in the Hill Country of Judah (Num. 13:29, Josh. 11:3). Joshua 15:8 mentions the border of the Jebusite, and the same is Jerusalem; Joshua 18:28 states the Jebusite is the same as Jerusalem; in Judges 1:21, the Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem; in Judges 19:10, Jebus is the same as Jerusalem; in II Samuel 5:6–9, David took Jerusalem, the Jebusite stronghold.

The fourth son is the Amorite, the Amurru of the Cuneiform and the Egyptian Texts. The Amorites also occupied the Hill Country of Judah at one time (Num. 13:29, Deut. 1:44, Judg. 10:5, Josh. 11:3). They also occupied the east side of the Jordan, or the Trans-Jordan (Num. 21:13; Deut. 1:4, 1:7; Josh. 2:10, 9:10, 24:8; Judg. 10:8, 11:22). Mamre was an Amorite city (Gen. 14:13), and Shechem was an Amorite city after the Hivites were destroyed (Gen. 48:22).

The fifth son is the Gergashite. The name is found in Phoenician Texts and in the Egyptian Inscriptions of Ramses II. The exact location of the Gergashites is unknown. If they are related to the Gerasenes of Luke 8:26 and 8:37, it would put them in the area of the Sea of Galilee.

The sixth group mentioned was the Hivites. They occupied the central Hill Country of Judah, north of Jerusalem, including the city of Gibeon (Josh. 9:3–7, 9:17; 11:19). They occupied the city of Shechem in the Hill Country of Ephraim (Gen. 34:2).

The seventh name is the Arkite, the Irgata of the Cuneiform Tablets and the Amarna Letters. They occupied Tel Argoh in Lebanon (Phoenicia), about eighty miles north of Sidon, eleven miles north of Tripoli.

The eighth group was the Sinites. These are the Siyanru of the Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Ugaritic Texts. They made up a city-state located on the coast between Ugarit and Arvad. Some have identified the Sinites with China, and in Modern Hebrew the word is used of China; but it is questionable whether that was the meaning in Classical Hebrew.

The ninth group of descendants from Canaan was the Arvadites, the Ruad of the Assyrian, Egyptian, and Classical sources. They also are the Arwada of the Amarna Letters. Theirs was an island city in northern Phoenicia and associated with Tyre in Ezekiel 27, verses 8 and 11.

The tenth group is known as the Zemarites, the Tzimira of the Assyrian Inscriptions, the Tzumur of the Amarna Letters, and are also mentioned in Phoenician and Classical records. They were the northernmost Egyptian stronghold in the Land of Canaan located at the border of Amurru. This is modern Sumra, a city between Arvad and Tripoli at the mouth of the El-kabir River, also known as the Eleutheros River.

The eleventh son was the Hamathite. This group would be associated with Hamath on the Orontes River in Syria.

- “and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. The territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.”
 - The dispersion and territory of the Canaanites is described next.

Ariel's Bible Commentary

Then, in Genesis 10:18b, is the dispersion of Canaan: and afterward, meaning after a period of time in the above settlements, were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. Indeed, it is possible that the Hittites and the Sinites may have moved to the Far East where they fathered the Mongols of China and Japan, and this would also ultimately include the American Indians.

Genesis 10:19 describes the border of the Canaanites: And the border of the Canaanite was from Sidon, which is Phoenicia in Lebanon, the northwestern border: as you go toward Gerar, unto Gaza, which is Philistia and is the southwestern border. Next, the border was: as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, which is the Arabah, and is the southeastern border. Finally, their area continued: unto Lasha, this is the northeastern border. The western border is understood to be the Mediterranean. This is indeed the approximate borders of the Promised Land that which is later promised to Abraham.

- “These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.”
 - 30+ nations are described in the record of the descendants of Ham.
 - The time span covered in this section is three generations.

- The Line of Shem [10:21-31]
 - “Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth, children were born.”
 - The name of Shem’s son Eber is עֵבֶר (‘ev-er) from which comes the word עִבְרִי (‘iv-riy) which is the word for Hebrew.
 - The phrase “the father of all the children of Eber” states the fact that the Hebrew people are descendants of Shem.
 - This fact is the main significance of the line of Shem because this is the line of Christ.
 - The phrase “the older brother of Japheth” reminds us that Shem is the firstborn son of Noah, even though his line is mentioned last in this chapter.
 - “The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram.”
 - The five sons of Shem are listed next.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:22 lists the five sons of Shem. The first son was Elam, identified with the country east of Babylon, which later became part of Persia; and the capital was Susa or Shushan. Today this area is located in southwestern Iran.

Shem’s second son was Asshur, identified with the land of Assyria along the Tigris. The capitol of Asshur was Nineveh. These were the Semitic Assyrians that supplanted the Hamitic Assyrians of Genesis 10:11.

Shem’s third son was Arpachshad. Josephus identified him with the Chaldeans. Others identify him with the Araphu in the area of Nuzi, with the Babylonian section of Chaldea, or with the Arpachides in Assyria, northeast of Nineveh. Arpachshad was the seed-son.

Shem’s fourth son was Lud, associated with the Ludi of the Classical Sources, and the Lubdu of the Assyrians in the area of Nuzi. This location is the Lydia of Asia Minor.

Shem’s fifth son was Aram, the same as the name of the land of Aramea between Damascus and the Euphrates River. Aram was the common Hebrew name for Syria.

- “The sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash.”
 - The four sons of Aram are listed next.

Ariel’s Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:23 lists the four sons of Aram, and these sons of Aram fathered the Syrian tribes between Aramea and Mesopotamia. The first son was Uz. Josephus locates him in the area of Trachonites in northeastern Canaan. He was located in northwest Mesopotamia (Gen. 22:21), and, perhaps, was in the same location as the home of Job (Job 1:1). Uz’s territory may also be the same as the land of Uz in Jeremiah 25:20.

The second son was Hul. Josephus locates him in Armenia; more likely, he was located in the Leja region.

The third son was Gether. His specific location is unknown, but Josephus puts him in Bacteria, in northeastern Afghanistan.

The fourth son was Mash. His specific location is also unknown, but Josephus puts him in Mesene at the mouth of the Euphrates near Charax. Others place him in Strabo's Mount Masius in the Tur Abdin Range between the Tigris River and the Habar Triangle.

- “Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber.”
 - The son and grandson of Arpachshad are listed next.

Ariel's Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:24–30 focuses on the line of Arpachshad, who is the seed-son. Verse 24 states: And Arpachshad begat Shelah. Shelah's location is unknown. (The Septuagint and the Book of Jubilees state: Arpachshad begat Kenan and Kenan begat Shelah, placing Kenan between Arpachshad and Shelah. The shorter order is picked up in Luke 3:35–36. Obviously, the Hebrew Text behind the Septuagint included a generation left out by the Masoretic Text.)

Then Shelah begat Eber. Eber is the name of the region of Ur of the Chaldeans, Haran, and Paddan-aram; and Eber is the father of the Hebrews.

- “Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.”
 - The two sons of Eber are listed next.

Ariel's Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:25 lists the two sons of Eber: And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg. For in his days was the earth divided. The name Peleg means “to divide.” Some identify this event with the continental divide or the continental drift. However, contextually, it more likely refers to the language division of the Tower of Babel judgment. This means that the confusion of tongues occurred during Peleg's lifetime. A text of King Tukultininurta II refers to a people called Palga near the Harbur River.

The author of Genesis then adds: his brother's name was Joktan, an Arabian tribe.

- “Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah and Obal and Abimael and Sheba and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.”
 - The thirteen sons of Joktan are listed next.

Ariel's Bible Commentary

Genesis 10:26–30 lists the thirteen sons of Joktan, each of whose families became Arabian tribes. Verses 26–29 list the sons of Joktan, the first being Almodad, the South Arabian people of the Tribe of Al-Mudad in Yemen.

The second son was Sheleph, listed in the Sabean Inscriptions and Arabic geographical notations. According to Ptolemaus, this was the Salipeni between Sheba and Hadramaut. This is the South Arabian people of es-Sulaf in Yemen, also called Salaf or Salif.

The third son was Hazarmaveth, whose name appears in the Sabean Inscriptions and in the Classical Texts, located in Hadramaut of South Arabia.

The fourth son was Jerah, the Jerakh next to the Hazarmaveth.

The fifth son was Hadoram, the Adramitae in South Arabia.

The sixth son was Uzal, which is the old name for modern Sana, the capital of Yemen. His land might alternatively be Azalla in the area of Medina.

The seventh son was Diklah, the Dakalah of Yemen.

The eighth son was Obal, the Abel of South Arabia or Yemen.

The ninth son was Abimael, nothing more about him is known.

The tenth was Sheba, the Sabeans of southwest Arabia, also listed as being part of Ham's line in 10:7.

The eleventh was Ophir identified with Aphar, the Sabean capital. Some have identified Ophir's territory with Somalia or Somaliland. His area was famous for its gold (I Chron. 29:4; II Chron. 8:18; Job 22:24, 28:16; Ps. 45:9).

The twelfth son was Havilah, located on the west coast of Arabia north of Yemen, also known as Khawlan in Arabia Felix and also mentioned in Ham's line in 10:7.

The thirteenth son was Jobab, the Yobaritai mentioned by Ptolemaus in southeast Saudi Arabia. His land was also identified with the town of Juhaibab, in the area of Mecca.

Genesis 10:29 concludes all these were the sons of Joktan.

- “Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.”
 - The territory occupied by the sons on Joktan is described here.
 - This territory is bordered by Mesha on the west and Sephar on the east.
 - The exact locations of Mesha and Sephar are debated, but the territory is almost certainly on the Arabian peninsula, probably near the Red Sea.
- “These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.”
 - 26 nations are described in the record of the descendants of Shem.
 - The time span covered in this section is five generations.
- Conclusion [10:32]
 - “These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.”
 - The first part of this verse summarizes the entire chapter.
 - This brings to conclusion the record of the Table of Nations.
 - The second part of this verse is a lead-in to chapter eleven and the dispersion of the nations.
 - The total number of nations described in this chapter is seventy.

- The Rebellion of Man [11:1-4]
 - “Now the whole earth spoke the same language and had the same vocabulary.”
 - The phrase “used the same language” is literally “was of one lip” and the phrase “the same words” is literally “of one set of words”.
 - These two phrases mean that everyone spoke the same language and could understand each other.
 - “It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.”
 - The phrase “as they journeyed east” describes the movement of Noah’s descendants on the earth.
 - Their movement to the east was relative to the mountains of Ararat [Gen 8:4].
 - The word “plain” is בִּקְעָה (biq-ah) which means “valley” or “plain”.
 - This word describes an area which would be good for cultivating crops and grazing animals.
 - As we have seen, the land of Shinar is the region of Babylonia.
 - The people “settled there” instead of filling the earth as they had been commanded [Gen 9:1].
 - “They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly.’”
 - The people determined to make bricks.
 - The Babylonian region lacks stone, but is rich in river deposits which are good for making bricks.
 - This is the beginning of their rebellion against God because they were planning to stop migrating.
 - They heated the bricks to cure them and make them as good as stone for building.
 - This indicates that they intended to erect buildings that would last a very long time.
 - “And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.”
 - In addition to using the brick in place of stone, the people used tar in place of mortar.
 - There are tar pits in southern Mesopotamia, but very little clay which could be used for mortar.
 - This use of alternate materials shows how determined the people were to settle in Babylonia.
 - “They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven,”
 - The people wanted to build a city that they could settled down in.
 - The desire to build a city is not new [Gen 4:17], but in this case the point was to defy God’s will.
 - The city they wanted to build was Babel [Gen 11:9].
 - The people also wanted to build a tower that would reach way up into the sky.
 - The purpose for building this tower is not given here, but we have seen from extra-biblical writings that it would inspire awe among the people.

- Additional possible reasons...
 - Protection from another worldwide flood.
 - If so, why build it in a valley rather than on a mountain?
 - Besides, God had promised not to send another flood.
 - An attempt to reach God.
 - This stems from the mistaken belief that the third heaven is just above the earth.
 - This would establish a name for themselves with man and God.
 - An attempt to worship the heavens.
 - This would mean that the people were practicing astrology.
 - This fits well with Nimrod's idolatry encouraging the worship of the sun and the moon.
 - To prevent the scattering of the people.
 - The tower would be a monument to their greatness.
 - The tower would set up a power-center in Babel to their own glory and fame.
 - This would result in one centralized, united government over everyone.
 - This reason fits well with this passage.
- “and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”
 - The people wanted more than buildings – they wanted to make a name for themselves.
 - The word “name” is שֵׁם (shem) which means “name”, but also “reputation”.
 - Instead of focusing on God, the people were motivated by pride to show what they could do through human effort apart from God.
- Summary of Genesis 11:1-4
 - In the giving of the Noahic covenant God gave instructions that the people should populate the earth [Gen 9:7].
 - Initially, the people spread to the east of the mountains of Ararat, but then they settled into a fertile valley in the region of Babylonia.
 - This was the first step in the people becoming filled with pride and deciding to disobey God.
 - Their next move was to develop building materials so they could construct permanent housing as part of building a city.
 - In addition, they built a tower that reached high up into the sky.
 - Their intention was to establish a reputation for being able to accomplish all of this without the help of God.
 - The people believed that their city and their impressive tower would prevent God from being able to make them scatter around the earth.
 - Their desire to stay in southern Mesopotamia seems innocent enough, but it was rooted in the sin of pride as well as a spirit of independence from God.
 - Pride and a spirit of independence from God were the source of original sin (Satan's and Adam's).

- The Judgment of God [11:5-9]
 - “The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which mankind had built.”
 - The phrase “The Lord came down to see” is language that mocks the tower built by mankind.
 - This phrase indicates that the supposedly high tower they had built is so tiny in comparison to God that He had to stoop down to see it.
 - However, by stooping down to see what mankind had done God is showing that, even though He is infinitely greater than mankind, He does care about what people are doing.
 - The phrase “the sons of men” is actually “the sons/descendants of Adam”.
 - This is just another way to describe all of mankind.
 - The phrase “had built” tells us that the tower was completed at this point.
 - “The LORD said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language.’”
 - The phrase “they are one people” simply means that everyone is of the same nationality (i.e. under one government).
 - The phrase “they all have the same language” is a reference back to verse 1 – the whole earth spoke the same language and had the same vocabulary.
 - “And this is what they began to do, and now they will believe they can do anything they plot to do.”
 - The word “this” refers to the building of the city and the tower.
 - The word “purpose” is זָמַם (za-mam) which means “purpose”, “devise”, “plot” or “plan”.
 - The phrase “impossible for them” is literally “cut off from them”.
 - The meaning here is that mankind will think that nothing they set out to do will be thwarted.
 - This statement includes the idea that the idolatry which is rampant on the earth will go unchecked.
 - This indicates that the government (probably under Nimrod’s control) did not restrain, but instead encouraged the lawlessness of the people.
 - “Come, let Us go down and scramble their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.”
 - The phrase “let Us go down” is another clear reference to the Trinity.
 - This “go down” is not to observe this time, but to thwart the plans of mankind.
 - The word “confuse” is בָּלַל (ba-lal) which means “confuse”, “mix” or “scramble”.
 - This means that God did not create brand new languages, but scrambled one language into many.
 - God’s purpose in scrambling the languages was to keep people from being able to understand one another and thereby cooperate in rebellion.
 - However, within each people group (nation) they would speak the same language.
 - “So the LORD dispersed them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.”
 - The word “scattered” is פָּרַץ (puts) which means “scatter” or “disperse”.

- This is the dispersion described multiple times in chapter 10 [Gen 10:5, 20, 31-32].
- The dispersion was “from there” meaning from the land of Shinar (Babylonia) [Gen 11:2].
- The dispersion was not merely to the nearby regions, but over the entire earth.
- The scrambling of languages and dispersion resulted in people ceasing the building of the city.
- The tower was complete, but the city was still being built when God’s shut it down.
- There was no need to continue building the city because the population that remained in Babylonia (and spoke the same language) could live in the existing city comfortably.
- “Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD scrambled the language of the whole earth;”
 - The naming of the city was based upon God’s actions in dispersing the people.
 - The name Babel is בָּבֶל (ba-vel) which means “Babel” or “Babylon”.
 - It is interesting to note that בָּבֶל (ba-vel) is related to בָּבְלִי (bav-liy) which means “scatter”.
 - In addition, בָּבֶל (ba-vel) sounds a lot like בָּלַל (ba-lal) which is the word for “scramble”.
 - One reason given for the name has to do with the confusing (scrambling) of the languages, so the similarity in sound between בָּבֶל (ba-vel) and בָּלַל (ba-lal) is definitely one source of the name.
- “and from there the LORD dispersed them abroad over the face of the whole earth.”
 - The other reason given for the name has to do with the scattering (dispersing) of the people, so the relation of בָּבֶל (ba-vel) to בָּבְלִי (bav-liy) is also a source of the name.
 - Of course, all of this word play is with regard to the Hebrew name for the city.

- Summary of Genesis 11:5-9
 - Mankind was impressed with themselves over the tower up to the heavens that they had built, but to God it was miniscule.
 - God knew that the people were rebelling and were starting to believe that they could do whatever they wanted to do independently of Him.
 - That arrogant spirit of independence was bad enough, but they had also engaged in idol worship under Nimrod's influence and that idolatry was likely starting to gain traction.
 - Just as He had done with the judgment of the Flood, God put an end to this rebellion.
 - This time, however, all He needed to do was scramble the language of the people into many languages so that they were unable to communicate and cooperate in their rebellion.
 - This resulted in the separation of the people into 70 separate nations based upon their language.
 - These people groups were dispersed all around the globe to "fill the earth" as God had commanded.
 - Although not mentioned here, it is very likely that changes to people's appearance (skin color, hair color, etc.) also occurred during this dispersion to encourage people to identify with others of their own nation.
 - God's method of judgment of this rebellion was specifically designed to thwart globalism (one world government) and promote nationalism.
 - By dispersing the people into separate nations, each under its own government, God prevented Satan from leading the people astray through one rogue leader such as Nimrod.
 - Globalism efforts today such as the United Nations are in direct opposition to God's intent that there should be separate, sovereign nations.
 - This same principle applies to globalism efforts within the Church such as the World Council of Churches which is heavily influenced by Satan.