

“Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood. his is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah’s sons, who themselves had sons after the flood” (Genesis 10:1).

Genesis chapter ten primarily comprises a long series of genealogies that trace the descendants of Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Every living person can trace his or her lineage back to one of these three individuals.

The tenth chapter of Genesis also provides insight into the historical origins of the nations that exist within our world today. As a result, Genesis chapter ten encompasses what is now known as “The Table Of Nations.”

Many of Noah’s descendants are listed in Genesis chapter ten along with the cities they established or those that were built by their descendants who came later. Instead of conducting an in-depth exploration of this chapter, we will offer a general survey of the people and places mentioned here.

The first person mentioned in [Genesis 10:2](#) is Japheth’s son Gomer. Gomer is said to be the ancestor of those who can trace their lineage back to the ancient peoples of western Europe.⁽¹⁾ Meshech is another person mentioned in verse two. The word “Moscow” is derived from the name Meshech,⁽²⁾ and he likely appears in the ancient ancestries of those who descend from the peoples of eastern Europe.

Another person mentioned in Genesis 10:2 is Madai. Madai became the forerunner of the ancient Medes, a group who lived in the regional areas that are associated with the nations of Iran and Iraq today. This branch of Japheth’s family also includes the people of India; thus, they became the forerunners of those who are counted among the members of the modern-day Indo-European group.⁽³⁾

[Genesis 10:3](#) then mentions a man named Ashkenaz. One source tells us that Ashkenaz and his descendants first settled around the Black Sea and then moved north into the region of Ascania. This area was later known as the Islands of Scandia, or Scandinavia, as we know it today.⁽⁴⁾ It is also possible that some of those ancient settlers found their way into the Germanic areas of Europe, since the word Ashkenaz represents the traditional Hebrew word for Germany.⁽⁵⁾ Genesis 10:3 also references a man named Togarmah who is thought to be the ancestor of the Turkish people.⁽⁶⁾

(1) David Guzik, *Genesis 10 – The Table Of Nations* <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-10/> .

(2) See Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, copyright 1976, by Henry M. Morris, Baker Book House and Master Books, [pg. 248]. However, this claim is disputed by some.

(3) Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, copyright 1976, by Henry M. Morris, Baker Book House and Master Books, [pg. 248].

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(5) Fact Archive.com, *Ashkenazi* <http://www.fact-archive.com/encyclopedia/Ashkenazi> Retrieved 13 April, 2024.

(6) Institute For Creation Research, *Defenders Bible Notes* Genesis 10:3 <https://www.icr.org/bible/Genesis/10/3/> .

[Genesis 10:4-5](#) then mentions a man named Javan, along with his sons. Javan is said to be the forerunner of the peoples of ancient Greece.⁽¹⁾ Elishah, who is also named in verse four, is thought to be the ancestor of the peoples of Sicily and Southern Italy.⁽²⁾

“The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan” (Genesis 10:6).

Genesis 10:6 then shifts our attention to Noah’s middle son Ham. These descendants of Ham later became the forefathers of the peoples of Africa and the Far East. For example, Ham’s son Cush is

generally associated with the peoples of the southern Middle East and Ethiopia. (3)

Others mentioned in this portion of Scripture include Mizraim, who is believed to be the ancestor of the Egyptian people (4) while Put is the ancestor of those who settled in North Africa. (5) Canaan is the ancestor of the Canaanites, who eventually settled in an area of the world that broadly encompasses the nation of Israel today. As most students of Biblical history are well aware, the Canaanites will later play a prominent role in Old Testament history.

[Genesis 10:8-12](#) is a passage that delves into the history of a man named Nimrod. Genesis 10:8 first tells us that Nimrod grew to become a mighty warrior on the earth. Nimrod's name can be translated to mean "rebellion" (6) and he became the founder of what eventually became the Babylonian empire (see the reference to "Babel" in Genesis 10:10). Nimrod is occasionally linked to the effort to construct the Tower of Babel that we'll encounter later in Genesis chapter eleven. (7)

Genesis 10:9 identifies Nimrod as "...**a mighty hunter before the LORD.**" An ancient Jewish commentary explains that reference in the following manner: "*He was powerful in hunting and in wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men, and he said to them, 'Depart from the judgment of the Lord, and adhere to the judgment of Nimrod!'*" (8) Another commentator adds, "*It was through (Nimrod's) ability to fight and kill and rule ruthlessly that his kingdom... was consolidated.*" (9)

(1) "Javan" *Easton's Bible Dictionary* <http://www.bible-history.com/eastons/J/Javan/> .

(2) "Elishah" *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*.

(3) "Cush (2)" *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*.

(4) "Mizraim" *Unger's Bible Dictionary*.

(5) Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, copyright 1976, by Henry M. Morris, Baker Book House and Master Books, [pg. 250].

(6) "Nimrod" *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*.

(7) The ancient historian Flavius Josephus says, "[Nimrod] also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers. (*Antiquities Of The Jews Book 1 4:2*).

(8) See *Genesis 10 Commentary* "Nimrod A Mighty Hunter" <https://www.preceptaustin.org/genesis-10-commentary#10:9> .

(9) James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary*. Quoted in *Genesis 10 – The Table Of Nations* <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-10/> .

[Genesis 10:14](#) then mentions the Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came), and verse [fifteen](#) references another prominent Old Testament people group known as the Hittites. [Genesis 10:16](#) goes on to cite three other ethno-cultural groups known as the Jebusites, Amorites, and Gergashites. All five of those regional powers would later clash with the ancient Israelites.

[Genesis 10:17](#) then offers an intriguing reference to a group known as the Sinities. The prefix "sin" (pronounced "sy") is linked to the people of China to this day. One example can be found in the word "sinology," a term that relates to the study of Chinese culture. So Genesis 10:17 may speak of those who became the forerunners of those who reside in the region that encompasses modern day China.

A portion of [Genesis 10:18-19](#) then goes on to tell us, "**Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed...**" and outlines the migration of these family groups. This is the only people group from Genesis chapter ten that moved during this period, and may it infer that these families traveled further than the others.

Some speculate that these groups traveled across the [theoretical land bridge](#) that once spanned the Bering Strait. From there, they eventually moved throughout the North and South American continents. If this is accurate, then it means that the modern-day Inuit and Native American peoples, along with the original inhabitants of Mexico, Central America, and South America share a common ancestry that began with Noah's son Ham.

“And children were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder. The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram” (Genesis 10:21-22).

Noah's son Shem serves as the linguistic source for the term “Semitic,”⁽¹⁾ a term that has come to be largely associated with the Jewish people.⁽²⁾ Genesis 10:21 also mentions Eber, the person from whom the term “Hebrew” is derived.⁽³⁾

“The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram” (Genesis 10:22).

There are some who draw a connection between Elam and the ancient Persians, a civilization that is historically linked to the contemporary nation of Iran. Asshur became the forerunner of the Assyrians, a group that gained a notorious reputation for their violent and ruthless behavior in the Old Testament era.⁽⁴⁾

Genesis chapter eleven will later establish Arphaxad's ancestral connection to Abram (also known as Abraham- see [Genesis 11:10-27](#)). Abram will go on to become a pivotal figure in the history of salvation and we will begin an extended look at his life when we reach Genesis chapter twelve.

Aram was the predecessor of the Arameans, a people group that is linked to the area of Syria.⁽⁵⁾ The language of the Arameans was Aramaic, a language that enjoyed widespread use and popularity even into Jesus' era. Some portions of the Old Testament were written in Aramaic, thus displaying its broad application.⁽⁶⁾

In Genesis 10:25 we read, ***“To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided...”*** This reference to the “earth's division” almost certainly refers to the events of Genesis chapter eleven, where we will see how God divided humanity into different language groups. However, we should also note that Peleg's name may derive from multiple words like “division,”⁽⁷⁾ “earthquake,”⁽⁸⁾ or “watercourse.”⁽⁹⁾

These terms likely stem from the Old Testament practice of naming children after notable events that coincided with their births. Because of this, some theorize that the earth's land areas underwent some form of separation during the period that corresponded with Peleg's childbirth. This, in turn, has led to speculation that Genesis 10:25 referenced a form of [“Continental Drift”](#) long before that term was invented.⁽¹⁰⁾

(1) “Semites, Semitic Religion” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*.

(2) As in the term “anti-semitic,” for example.

(3) *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, [Genesis 10:21].

(4) “Archaeologists have discovered that the Assyrians were merciless and savage people. The Assyrian army was ruthless and effective. Its cruelty included burning cities, burning children, impaling victims on stakes, beheading, and chopping off hands.” (“Assyria” *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

(5) “Aram” *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1988.

(6) Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, copyright 1976, by Henry M. Morris, Baker Book House and Master Books, [pg. 259].

(7) “Peleg” *Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*.

(8) “Peleg” *New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*.

(9) “Peleg” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*.

(10) “Some creationists propose a form of continental break-up after the flood, in the days of Peleg. This again would mean several centuries for animals to disperse, in this instance without the necessity of land-bridges. However, continental break-up in the time of Peleg is not widely accepted in creationist circles.” See *How did animals get from the Ark to isolated places, such as Australia?* ChristianAnswers.Net http://christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c006.html?zoom_highlight=peleg

The final verse of Genesis chapter ten offers a concluding summary of this chapter.

“These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood” (Genesis 10:32).

While it may be tempting to skip past this roster of barely pronounceable names in Genesis chapter ten, these individuals are important because they are linked to everyone who is lives today. This means that someone in Genesis chapter ten had a part to play in each of our individual lives.

Genesis chapter ten also reminds us that our lives have meaning and importance. Much like the people of Genesis chapter ten, our lives will help write the history of those who follow. Our choices and actions (or those we fail to take) will become a part of our histories and the histories of others.

This helps explain why the New Testament book of Ephesians tells us, “***...be very careful how you live. Don’t live like foolish people but like wise people. Make the most of your opportunities because these are evil days. So don’t be foolish, but understand what the Lord wants” (Ephesians 5:15-18 GW).***

It also explains why our lives have meaning, both now and in eternity. We leave a legacy for others who follow, and we will help shape and influence future generations, just like those we read of here in Genesis chapter ten.

Perhaps this is why Romans 2:6-8 reminds us that, “***God will reward each of us for what we have done. He will give eternal life to everyone who has patiently done what is good in the hope of receiving glory, honor, and life that lasts forever. But he will show how angry and furious he can be with every selfish person who rejects the truth and wants to do evil” (CEV).***

Therefore, the genealogies of Genesis chapter ten should prompt us to ask an important question: “*what kind of history are we writing today?*”