

Prayers

To God

Pray quietly, waiting on the Lord for His guidance for the day. Let Him be your friend and companion.

For myself

Dear Jesus, lift my spirits this day
Dear Jesus, raise my expectations this day
Dear Jesus, build up my confidence this day
Dear Jesus, encourage my heart this day
Dear Jesus, brighten my darkness I pray
So I may be a light in this world
AMEN

For others

Weekly theme: your local neighbourhood

Pray for those living each side of you and for those who live close to you. Pray about any special problems that have arisen between neighbours.

Meditation

Where do you find peace?

In a quiet moment sitting down with something to read?
Wandering about in a garden, with all its sights and smells?
Thinking to yourself whilst alone for a few moments?
Walking briskly through the hills on a weekend break?
Putting your head back for a languid afternoon snooze?
Talking to the one you love on a lazy Saturday morning?
Doing what you know you can do well, and enjoying it?

Where do you find peace?

Perhaps the truest peace comes unexpectedly,
When, in moments never guessed or pre-determined
Something of God's precious love opens like a flower:
We stop, we look, and as we take the offered gift,
We find that everything seems different;

And truly it is. So now the discovery is made, that

Peace has come upon us with a blessing ...

Bible Passage

Genesis 10

This chapter lists genealogies, and a chart is the best way to present them. So I have translated the text as below, but created charts which contain the bulk of the genealogical information. It should now be easier to read.

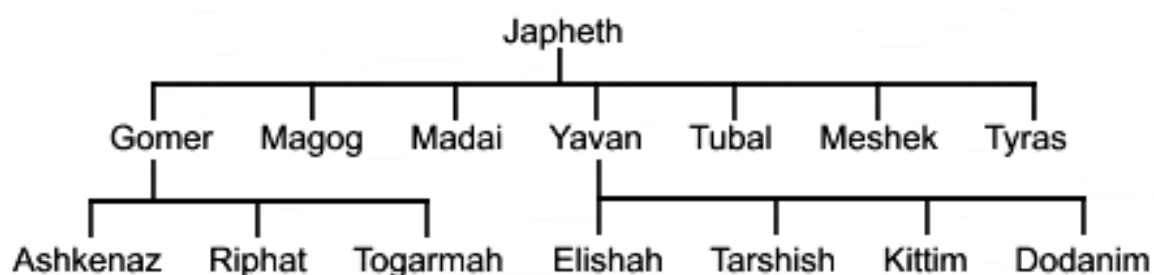
¹ Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, had children after the flood, and these are their descendants ² The descendants of Japheth (**see chart of Japheth**) ⁵ These are the descendants of Japheth who spread out as coastlands peoples, with their own lands, language, families, and nationality.

⁶ Ham's sons were Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. (**see chart of Ham**) ⁸ Cush was the father of Nimrod; he was the first great hero on earth. ⁹ He was a great hunter before the LORD; which is why it is said, "Nimrod, a mighty hunter in God's eyes!" ¹⁰ The centre of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and ¹² Resen between Nineveh and Calah, the capital. (**see chart of Ham**) ¹⁸ Later, the Canaanites were scattered. ¹⁹ Their borders stretched from Sidon to Gerar and as far as Gaza, towards Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, and also Lasha. ²⁰ These are the sons of Ham, their families and languages, their lands and nationalities.

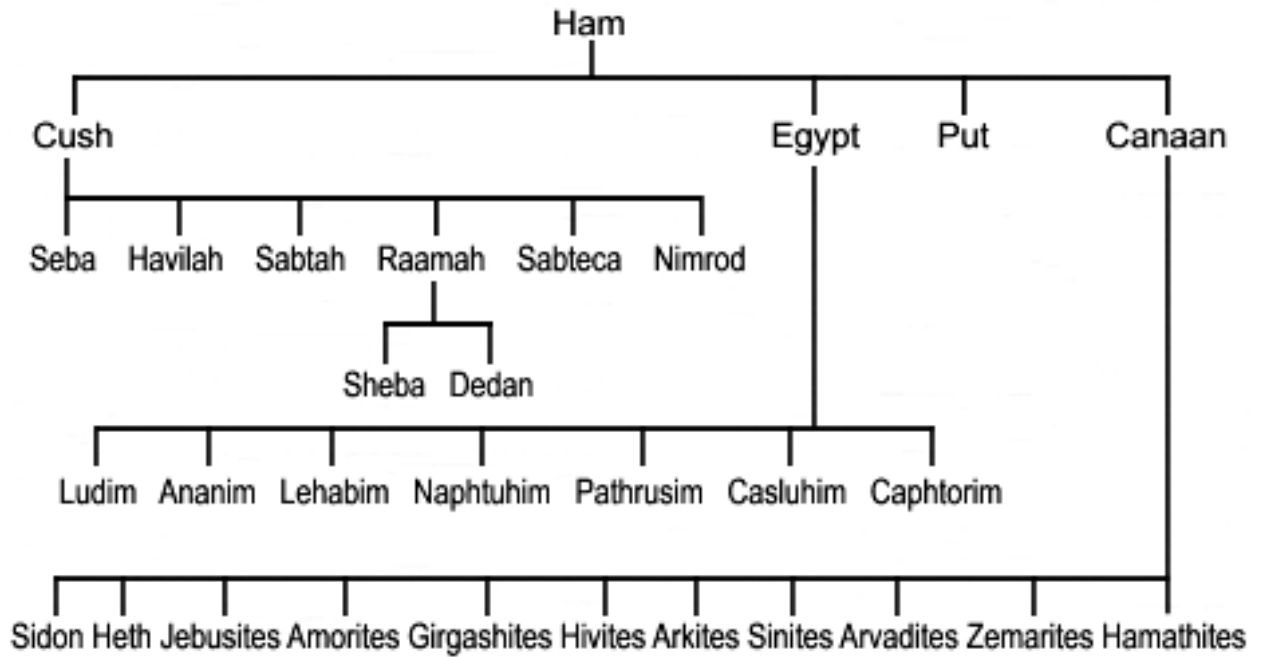
²¹ Shem, the elder brother of Japheth, also had sons; he was also the forefather of the children of Eber. (**see chart of Shem**) ²⁵ Eber had two sons, one named Peleg (in his days the earth was divided) and his brother was Joktan. (**see chart**) ³⁰ The territory in which the descendants of Joktan lived stretched from Mesha to Sephar, in the eastern hill country. ³¹ These are the sons of Shem, their families and languages, their lands and their nationalities.

³² These are the descendants of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent and nationality. From them, the nations spread over the earth after the flood.

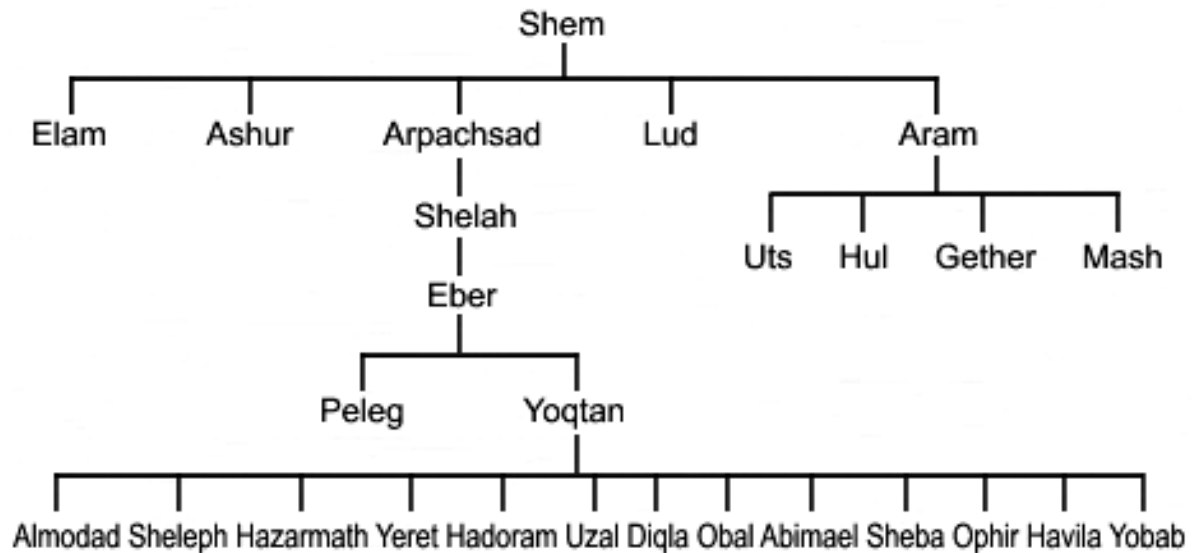
The family tree of Japheth



The family tree of Ham



The family tree of Shem



Review

God had said to Noah and his sons, 'be fruitful and multiply!' (Gen 8:17, 9:1, 9:7), and Genesis 10 is the evidence that God's command was obeyed! It is very easy for us to feel overwhelmed when reading the list of odd sounding names here in this chapter. This,

however, is an unfortunate response to an important part of scripture, because if we look at it carefully, we will find that it sets the scene for everything that follows in Scripture.

The writer of Genesis wanted to account for everything in the world as was then known, and this chapter identifies the social structure of nations within which the people of God (Israel) would eventually take their place. Ultimately, God's chosen people Israel descended from Abraham, who was the son of Terah, and Genesis 11 confirms that Abraham's father was Terah, of the ancestral line of Peleg, going back to Shem (11:10-27). We are being told that God's blessing has rested on a particular family line descended from Noah, and we must remember that Noah blessed the descendants of Shem (9:26). In contrast, and because of what we read yesterday, Noah also cursed the ancestral lines of Ham and Canaan in particular, the eventual enemies of God's people. We also discover here that the ancestral line of Noah's other son Japheth is of little significance; it contains names that have no significance in the rest of Scripture!

Many peoples of ancient times had their own national gods, and believed that their god had made their own nation before going on to make other nations. This is easily seen by reading the ancient myths and legends found in other Middle Eastern cultures going back thousands of years before Christ. In contrast to this rather shortsighted view of things centred on a single nation and their god, Genesis here presents a magnificent sweep of records accounting for all creation before we have ever arrived at his choice of Israel. This is the only ancient record that offers this degree of insight, claiming in effect that despite the social divisions of the world, all people come from the same 'source', that is Noah, and before him, Adam, and ultimately having been created by one Creator God.

Such an assessment of the origins of humanity has given rise to the moral principles and ideas of common humanity essential to the world even today. This was radical enough at the time, but in presenting this truth about the intention and purposes of God in creation, Genesis set out the foundations of morality and humanity now assumed by Christians and also by seculars and humanist thinkers. There is also one other major consequence of this way of presenting God and His creation; the Bible assumes no moral judgement on people because of who they are, only on what they do (as in the stories of Cain and Noah). Christian faith therefore stands against all aberrations of this concept such as ethnic cleansing, apartheid, and racial prejudice in all its forms.

Now to the detail of the chapter. The genealogies of Genesis 10 identify the known world, with the descendants of Noah creating all the nations (10:32). Most of the sociological and geographical settings within which the story of God's people is to be found are identified here. For example, the land of Canaan is identified with its borders (10:18), and this will all become significant for future generations when Israel attempts to 'take' the 'Promised Land' from the Canaanites (see the book of Joshua). We find a mention of Assyria (10:11) and Babylon (10:10), nations that would one day lay a significant part in the life of God's people. Both these nations were founded by Nimrod, a renowned ancient hero who was known for building cities, as was his ancestor Cain (4:17f.), who represents the 'evil' side of Adam's generations. These evil nations, as Scripture presents them, invaded and destroyed Israel (Assyria) and Judah (Babylon) respectively, centuries later.

Of all the genealogies, that of Shem is the most important. The line to follow is through Arphaxad to Shelah, Eber and Peleg, for as we will find out, this leads eventually to Abraham (11:10-27). In contrast to the warlike city states founded by Nimrod, the tribal groupings represented by these names are believed to have been peaceful nomadic groups, fulfilling Noah's blessing of Shem (9:26). We are supposed to observe here that God's people have peaceful roots, and Abraham's quiet and dignified life as presented in Genesis (12f.) comes from this heritage, supported by this blessing of Noah.

In this line you will find the name 'Eber', and there is a great deal of debate as to whether this name is the basic word from which we get the term 'Hebrew'. Independent ancient literary sources confirm the existence of nomadic group called the 'Eberites'; they are clearly mentioned in Egyptian Hieroglyphic records dated from around 1,500 - 2,000 BC, for example. Many scholars now reckon that these people were 'Hebrews', meaning the descendants of Abraham. Peleg and Yoqtan are another key pair here. They are the two sons of Eber, and their names are significant. The name 'Peleg' means 'divided', and this points us forward to the coming story of the 'Tower of Babel', after which God divides the nations and their languages to keep the nations humble (Gen 11:1-9). The other son named Yoqtan is described as possessing substantial mountainous lands 'to the east', which were a natural habitat for nomadic tribal groups.

Genesis 10 is the most ancient of all documents in our possession today which affirms that all people are related to each other and interlinked. If we reflect that this is the great principle upon which even the Charter of the United Nations is founded, then we must accept its significance. This passage of scripture refers to nations, languages and tribal groupings, but although their differences are reported, they are not highlighted. Most of the chapter consists of names, not descriptions of skin colour or culture, because these are not relevant to God's order of things and his perception of people as His creation. All are made in His image and related to each other, and our past, our present and our future are all intertwined.

Discipleship

Application

The generations of Ham

It is reported at the beginning and the end of this chapter (10:1-4 and 10:32), that each tribal group had spread out over the known world at the command of God. Even Ham, whose actions had brought a curse upon his son Canaan (9:25) received the same blessing of fertility and power to 'multiply' from the Lord. However, his generations produced the nations which proved to be competitors and enemies of God's people Israel, as the rest of scripture tells.

Does this all mean that our futures are predetermined? That may be to take things too far, but if we think about it in a different way; who decides whether you or I are born into this world a Christian in the USA or a Muslim in Egypt or a worshipper of ancestors in Africa? Our lives are to a large extent predetermined by where we are born and into what social or national group. The value of this Scripture is its insistence that whatever our place in this world socially or even in terms of religion, we are all God's people and His salvation plan which unfolds throughout Scripture is for all, whether of the line of Abraham or not. Of that, the New Testament is very clear. The Gospel is for 'Jews and Gentiles' (Romans 1:16f. etc.).

God's eternal plan of salvation

We have already stressed the importance of Genesis 10 in stating the principle that all people are related to each other, but this takes on an important theological meaning within scripture. All the nations represent the whole world, and whether they have been cursed or not, they are all subject to the Covenant promise of God for Salvation, established through Noah! Even though God eventually chooses to reveal His plan of salvation through one person, Abraham, and his family the nation of Israel, this great genealogy represents a huge number of other peoples. God is concerned for them all, and the purpose of His choice of

Israel is that they may be a '*light to the nations*' (Is 42:6, 49:6,7 - and more than 20 such references in the Psalms). The light that God wishes to show is His salvation, and '*the nations*' referred to are the whole world as in Genesis 10. Before the plan of Salvation is begun through the Covenant with Abraham, scripture tells us of the full extent of God's vision.

Ideas for what to do

- *Have a look in an encyclopaedia, or use the internet, to look up the names of all the nations in the world today, and explore some facts about one or two you do not know well. See if you are thereby challenged about the vastness of God's creation and the nature of the world in which we live.*
- *Pray for the nations of the world and their great differences. Pray that the United Nations will become a more effective force for what is good within our world, and not merely be a focus for its ills and problems*

Questions (for use in groups)

1. *What names do you recognise in this list? Can you place where you find them elsewhere in scripture?*
2. *Within your group, make a list of the reasons why a genealogy such as this is important for the Bible.*
3. *Does it matter that the names in this list do not cover parts of the world that we now know about?*

Final Prayer

Lord God, Creator of the World and Saviour of all, show Your majesty and might through the things You do in the world; through signs and wonders, through works of love and peace, and through the sustenance and guidance of the poor in heart. Yet in the midst of all You do, bless me this day, I pray. AMEN