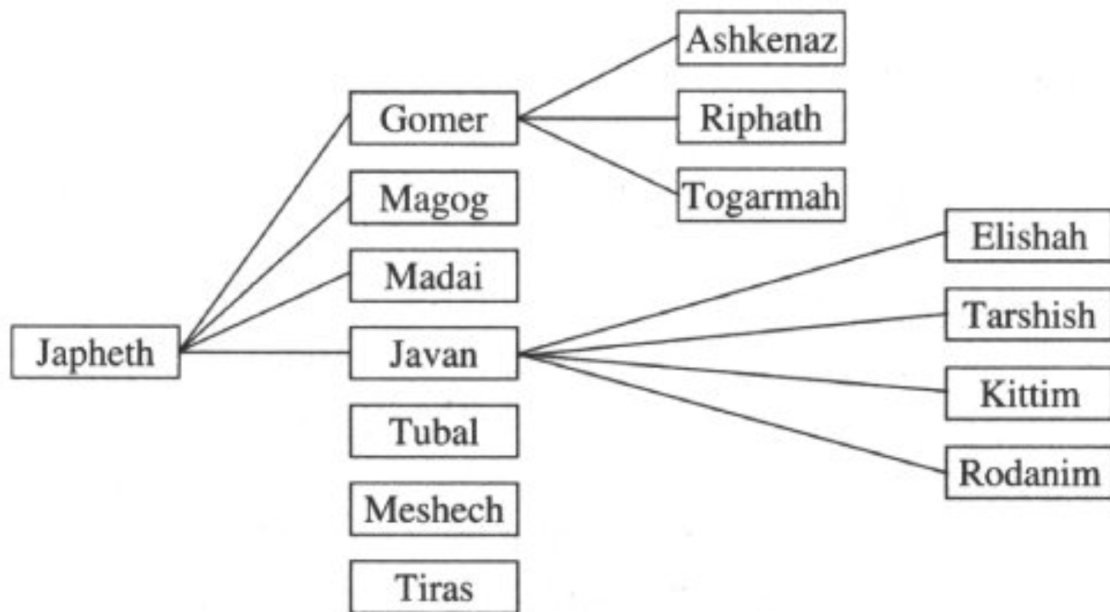


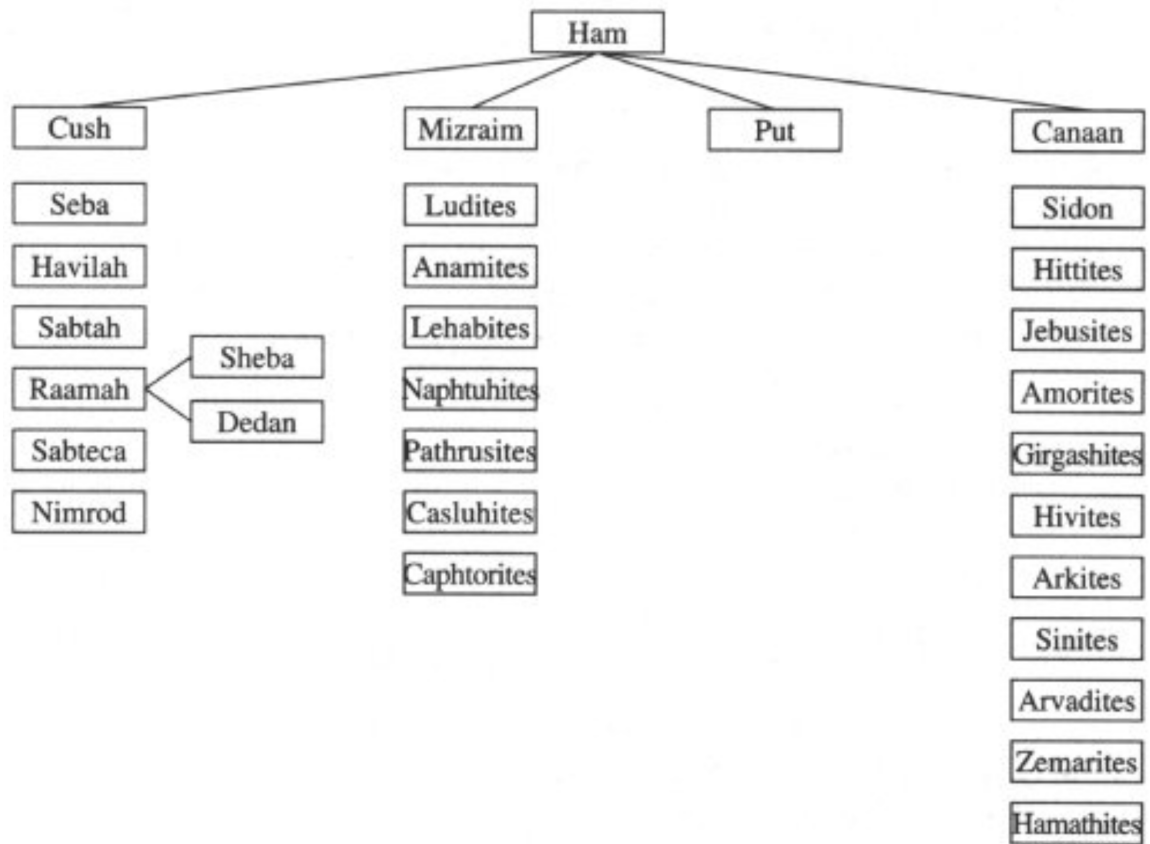
Genesis 10-11 The Table of Nations and The Tower of Babel

NOTE: We won't be going verse by verse through the table of nations in chapter 10. However, you should definitely read the text. I have provided three charts of the descendents of Noah's sons here (taken from Kenneth Matthews' commentary on Genesis) so you can see the lines, and a map of (approximately) where each group settled.

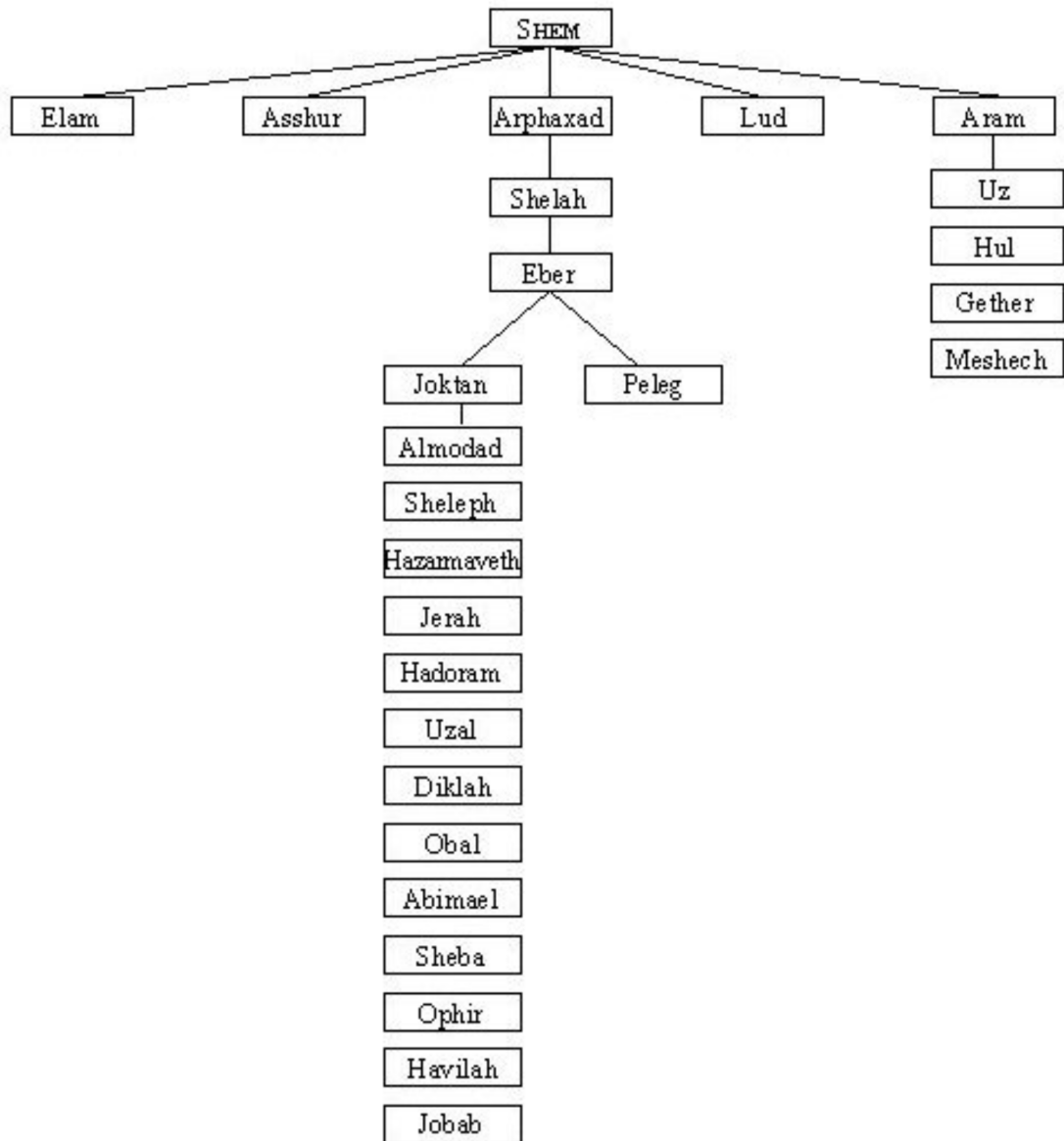
JAPHETH'S DESCENDANTS



HAM'S DESCENDANTS



SHEM'S DESCENDANTS





NOTE: You should be aware of a few important things

1. Chapter 10 explains the lineage and geographical dispersion of the nations from Noah's sons. But chapter 11:1-9 explains how that dispersion took place.
2. Notice that extra commentary is given about "Nimrod" (His name means "we shall rebel") in 10:9-10. He is pictured as a mighty man ("before the Lord" doesn't mean he was godly) who began to build a kingdom in Shinar. Shinar and this "kingdom" will be important in chapter 11.
3. Also in Shem's line, Peleg is born from a man name Eber (Eber is where our word Hebrew comes from). In 10:25 the text says that it was during Peleg's life that the "earth was divided," which means it was during his lifetime that mankind was dispersed at the tower of Babel.
4. Also notice after each genealogy of Noah's sons, the text says "these are the sons of...after their families (i.e.clans), tongues, and nations." This is after the confusion of languages.

Genesis 11:1-9 The Tower of Babel

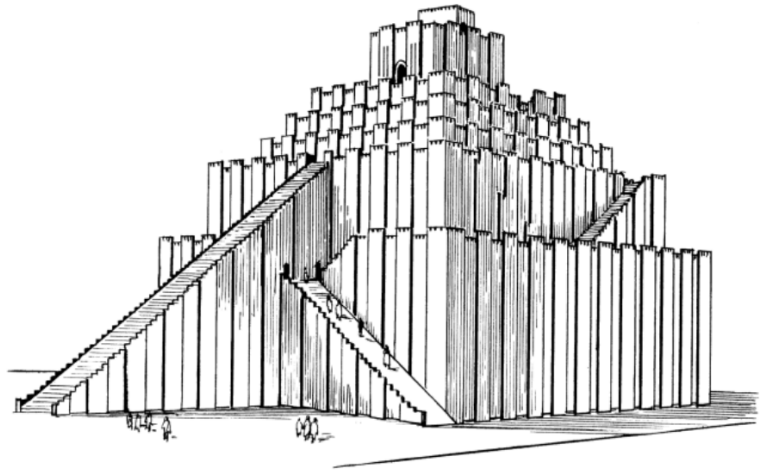
I. The People Are United By Language (1)

- A. The People are of “one lip” (i.e. language) and “one word” (i.e. vocabulary)
 - 1. All the people spoke the same language and used the same words
 - 2. The people are united as one people group through language and culture
- B. The People’s Unity Will be the Source of Their Rebellion
 - 1. Many people believe the unity of mankind would solve the world’s problems
 - 2. Shouldn’t a unified humanity with no cultural differences promote a godly unity of faith?
 - a. This will never be the case because the real problem of sin is still present in the hearts of mankind
 - b. If the entire world became united with no more nations, races, or differences – sinful humanity would unite in rebellion against God

II. The People Are United In Rebellion (2-4)

- A. The People Disobey God’s Command (2)
 - 1. God restated a single command to Noah and his Sons – Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth
 - a. God’s original mandate was for mankind to fill the creation with the image of God
 - b. The descendants of Noah began that process as they migrated from where Noah settled
 - 2. The People Settle in the Land of Shinar instead of continuing to fill the earth.
 - a. United humanity disobeys God’s command
 - b. This act of rebellion is consistent with Nimrod’s activities in 10:9-10 - *He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And **the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.***
 - c. The Land of Shinar – this will later be called “Babylonia.”
 - i. Babylon will be located there
 - ii. Shinar is where Nebuchadnezzar will take captives from Jerusalem (See Daniel 1:2)
 - iii. Shinar is the land from which the remnant of Israel is promised to return from captivity (See Isa. 11:11)

- iv. This “place” will be the land characterized with rebellion and enmity against God’s people throughout scripture.
- 3. The People Probably Desire the Comfort of a City
 - a. Remember the curse of laboring from the ground is still in place
 - b. The people are showing the same tendency as Cain and his line
 - i. Cain and his descendents built cities and developed cultural advances to ease the problems associated with the curse (See Ch. 5)
 - c. The people also show the same traits which caused the fall of creation
 - i. Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command desiring to be independent of God and seeking the one thing God told them not to do.
- B. The People Intend to Live Independently (3-4a)
 - 1. The People Form Their Own Building Materials (3)
 - a. Most ancient buildings were made of stone rather than brick (stones were readily available)
 - b. In the Mesopotamian valley, stones for building were in short supply – so men decide to make their own building materials
 - i. Even though building a city at Shinar would not be ideal, the people resolve to do their own will
 - ii. Mesopotamian archaeology has confirmed that many cities in the area were made from man-made bricks rather than stone
 - c. The people resolve “
 - 2. The People Intend to Build A Great City (4a)
 - a. The people desire to build a “tower” reaching into the heavens
 - b. This is probably a reference to a Mesopotamian Ziggurat
 - i. A Ziggurat was a stepped pyramid in many ancient Mesopotamian cities that served as meeting places between gods and men. They also were used as temples to worship gods
 - ii. Some reached around 90 meters (270 ft.)



C. The People Pridefully Rebel Against God (4b)

1. They People Desire a Great Name

- a. The people are arrogant and prideful, desiring to reach God on their own terms rather than obey His commands
- b. They are unwilling to serve God, instead opting for their own independence and attempting to enhance their lives by their own works rather than dependence upon God.

2. The People Desire To Settle in One Place

- a. The people refuse to submit to God's will and word
- b. They were specifically told to disperse and fill the earth, this is exactly what they are trying to avoid.

D. The Sinful Heart of Man is Alive and Well

- 1. Over time, the "new" creation of Noah starts looking more and more like the old creation that God destroyed – Man's sinfulness continues to grow
- 2. "Babel expressed a naïve and total confidence in what human achievement could effect...It was the beginning of the utopian humanistic dream to which mankind has always aspired"
(William Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 83)

III. The People's Self Destruction is Prevented By God (5-9)

A. God Beholds Man's Rebellion (5-6)

1. The Lord Sees Man's Work (5)

- a. Ironically, even though man is building his tower up to the heavens, it is still so insignificant that God must "come down" to see it
- b. To God, all the men's effort and arrogant work is as ants scrambling around thinking they are doing some magnificent work

2. The Lord Acknowledges Man's Sinfulness (6a)

- a. "...and this they began to do..."

- b. The Lord sees that men's fallen nature has led them to rebellion even though they are united together in language and culture
 - c. Rather than bringing peace and harmony, their "unity" has brought coordinated rebellion
- 3. The Lord Acknowledges Sin's Potential (6b)
 - a. God recognizes that if man is allowed to continue in this unified rebellion there is no limit to the arrogant sinfulness he is capable of.
 - i. There will be no evil they are not capable of if they continue unrestrained
 - b. God is not worried that man will usurp his authority
 - c. God acknowledges that if many continues as he is, he will bring self-destruction upon himself because of God's justice
 - d. God acknowledges that mankind's unity is destructive and we will see that the gospel is the only answer to this problem

B. God Separates and Scatters The People (7-9)

- 1. God Determines to Confuse Their Language (7)
 - a. God uses the same words the men used (mockingly)
 - i. Mankind said "Go to (i.e. come) let us make bricks...let us build a city
 - ii. God says "Go to (i.e. come) let us go down and confound their language
 - b. Why doesn't God just go down and destroy the tower?
 - c. Why doesn't God just destroy the people?
 - i. God strikes at the root of the problem. The heart is sinful and a united humanity will never grow closer to God – always rebel against Him.
 - ii. A humanity that is divided by language, culture, and geography will not unite in coordinated rebellion against God.
- 2. God Scatters the People Over the Earth (8)
 - a. Notice that the scattering of the people is not the judgment
 - b. The people scattering to the ends of the earth has been God's command since the beginning of Genesis.
 - c. God acts to move mankind even though mankind does not want to comply
 - d. This is where the "table of nations" (ch. 10) comes from
- 3. The Place is Called Babel (9)
 - a. The place is called Babel which means "confusion"
 - b. The unity of mankind is broken here as his languages are confused and divided.

- c. The re-establishment of man's unity is recorded on the day of Pentecost when thousands of pilgrims in Jerusalem heard the gospel preached in their own language. The unity of mankind is perfected only in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

NOTE: Every time we have seen God's judgment in Genesis, it has always been followed by a gracious act. (Adam's nakedness was clothed, Cain was given a mark, Noah's family is saved from the flood.) There is no gracious act after the judgment of confounding man's language. It is almost as if God's relationship with the nations ends here.

Is all hope of reconciliation gone? No.

The remainder of chapter 11 chronicles the line of Shem down to a man that God has chosen to carry the promise of the seed. His name is Abram and from this point on in Genesis, the Bible focuses on a single family from which He will bring forth a holy nation.

NOTE: God declares in Genesis that he is not finished with the nations. Remember the table of nations in chapter 10? It is to these that God refers when He tells Abram that through his seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.