

Genesis, Part 11

With Chapter 9 we begin a new dispensation, the Age of Human Government. Like all other dispensations, the Age of Human Government begins with blessing. This time God delegates certain of His responsibilities to mankind, and man is faced with a new test: Can he find righteousness through the outside influence of divine institution number 4, human government?

Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. 3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 6 Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. 7 And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.”

In the above passage, we see God blessing Noah and his sons. God instructed Noah to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (vv. 1, 7) just as He had told Adam (1:28). And Noah, like Adam, was to have dominion over animals (9:2; cf. 1:26, 28).

Noah is now allowed to eat meat, provided the blood was drained out first as a mark of respect for the God-given life contained in it. This ban on consuming blood is one of the most important food laws in the OT (cf. Lv. 3:17; Dt. 12:16–25; 1 Sa. 14:32–34).

Pre-flood history was characterized by violence (6:11): Abel’s murder went unavenged, and Lamech overreacted (4:23–24). Now a law of strict retribution is introduced: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed” (6). The idea that punishment must match the crime is

fundamental in OT law (Ex. 21:23–25). Though the death penalty for murder is a clear case of “do-as-you-would-be-done-by,” verse 6 gives a special reason for its appropriateness. Every human being is made in God’s image (i.e. represents God on earth), so to protect the unique status of human life the ultimate penalty must be exacted. With this delegating of some of God’s authority to mankind, we have the beginning of the Age of Human Government, where man is called to administer justice in certain cases.

God’s Covenant

Gen 9:9 “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” 12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” 17 God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

It was God’s purpose that the world should be filled with human and animal life (7–9), for the covenant symbolized by the rainbow was made with every living creature. The word “covenant” means “to cut,” referring to the cutting of the sacrifices which was a definite part of making an agreement (see Gen. 15:9ff which we will look at later in this study).

Through Noah, God made an agreement with all mankind, and its terms still stand today. The basis of the covenant was the shed blood of the sacrifice (8:20–22), just as the basis of the New Covenant is the shed blood of Christ.

The terms of the covenant are these:

1. God will not destroy mankind with a flood of waters.
2. Man may eat animal flesh, but not blood (see Lev. 17:10ff).
3. There is fear and terror between man and beast.
4. Human beings are responsible for human government, as seen in the principle of capital punishment (see Rom. 13:1–5).

God set apart the rainbow as the token and pledge of the covenant. This does not mean that the rainbow first appeared at that time, but only that God gave it a special meaning when He made this covenant. The rainbow is a product of sunshine and storm, and its colors remind us of the “manifold (many-colored) grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). The rainbow appears to be a bridge between heaven and earth, reminding us that in Christ, God bridged the chasm that separated man from God. We meet the rainbow again in Ezek. 1:28 and Rev. 4:3.

We must keep in mind that the covenant was with Noah’s “seed” after him, and this includes us today. It is for this reason that most Christian people have supported capital punishment (9:5–6). God had promised to avenge Cain (4:15), but in this covenant with Noah God gave men the responsibility of punishing the murderer.

Noah’s Descendants

Gen 9:18 The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) 19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.

20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.

21 He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. 23 Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father’s nakedness.

Verses 18 and 19 tell us that Noah’s three sons “went forth from the ark” and “from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.” “Dispersed”

is *naphats* which means to shatter or scatter. It simply indicates these three families, Noah's sons, and their wives, are the parents of today's world population.

Sometime after the Flood Noah began farming and planted a vineyard (9:20). The text does not mean that Noah was the first tiller of the ground, as reflected in the translation of the RSV. Noah was not the first to plant a vineyard. Before the Flood vineyards existed, but until this time Noah had never grown one. The text underscores the proposition that growing vineyards and making wine were very human enterprises. Babylonian tradition knows of the abuse of the fruit of the vine in the period before the Flood, and Matthew 24:38 confirms the "drinking" in this period. Noah's drunkenness was inexcusable. He knew perfectly well what would happen if he imbibed fermented wine to excess.

It is assumed that Noah had gathered his vintage and probably had appointed a day of mirth and feasting in his family. He had his sons and their children with him, to rejoice with him in the increase of his house as well as in the increase of his vineyard. Unfortunately, Noah got smashed and passed out. It gets complicated here with lots of speculation.

Ham saw his father's nakedness during the drunken stupor (9:22). Evidently, this was no accidental glance. The Hebrew implies that he gazed with satisfaction. He then retired from the room to tell with delight his brothers what he had seen.

Ham "saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside". The Hebrew word *ra'ah* means to look at searchingly, not a harmless or accidental seeing. Voyeurism violates one's dignity and instinctive right to privacy and propriety. It is a form of domination. To see accidentally and involuntarily would not have been a crime, but Ham's seeing is perverse, a form of homosexual voyeurism. Moses is careful to point out that Ham was the father of Canaan. The Canaanites were notorious in the ancient world for their rampant sexual proclivities. God warned Israel when they were about to enter the land that they must not imitate the actions of the Canaanites.

Lev 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. 23 And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is a perversion. 24 Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, 25 and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you 27 (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), 28 lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. 29 For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. 30 So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God.”

Some commentators argue that perhaps it was a case of Ham had himself been drunk, and had been reprovved for it by his father. Seeing Noah drunk gave him some smug satisfaction. “He told his two brothers outside” in a scornful deriding manner. Modern readers may ask what is wrong with gossiping or joking with your brothers about your parents’ failings? This fails to appreciate how seriously the OT and other ancient cultures took filial duties. “Honor your father and mother” comes next to the Godward commandments in Exodus 20, and striking or cursing your father or mother could be punished by death (Ex. 21:15, 17; cited by Jesus, Mk. 7:10). It is very wrong to make a jest of sin (Prov. 14:9), and to be puffed up with other’s failures (1 Co. 5:2), especially of parents, whom it is our duty to honor.

Either way, this is a case of gross disrespect for a parent by Ham. The modesty and parental respect of Shem and Japheth stand in stark contrast to the actions of Ham. They carried a garment upon their shoulders and backed into the room so as not to see their father’s nakedness (9:23). Perhaps their actions were designed to serve as a rebuke to Ham.

When Noah awoke from his stupor, he knew what Ham, his younger son, had done. Did he have vague recollections about what had happened? Did the other brothers tell him? Did he know by intuition or perhaps by inspiration? The text does not indicate.

The Origin of the Nations

Noah learned what Ham had done and pronounced his famous curse. The spirit of prophecy comes upon him and he tells his sons what will befall them.

Gen 9:24 When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

26 He also said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.

27 May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.”

28 After the flood Noah lived 350 years. 29 All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

Canaan and his descendants (nations named in 10:15–20) were to be the lowest of servants to their brethren and, as pointed out above in Leviticus 18:22-30, they were notorious for their sexual sins. The fact that the curse is on Canaan and his descendants seems to give support to Ham’s sin being of a homosexual nature.

Of course, the Shemites (Semites) were the Jews. Their tribes are listed in 10:21–32, and 11:10–26 traces the line to Abraham. The descendants of Japheth are the Gentiles (10:1–5).

Cursed or Blessed

Before patriarchs died they uttered inspired predictions concerning their sons. Negative predictions are couched in the form of a curse; positive predictions take the form of blessings. Why Noah omits Ham from these prophetic utterances is not clear. Perhaps it was because he had already died. The patriarchal utterances of Noah may not have followed immediately upon the drunkenness incident. Noah lived 350 years after the Flood (9:28). The mention of his death immediately following the

predictions, suggests that these utterances may have been made just before Noah's death. Ham may have died during those three and a half centuries between the Flood and the final days of Noah. In any case, in his prophetic pronouncement, Noah spoke three times concerning Canaan, twice concerning Shem, and once concerning Japheth.

The Curse on Canaan

A curse in the Bible is a negative prophecy pertaining to temporal life. Canaan was to be "a servant of servants," i.e., the lowliest of servants. The descendants of Canaan (Canaanites) would be servants first to their own brethren, i.e., other Hamites (9:25), then to the Shemites (9:26), and finally to the Japhethites (9:27). The Egyptians were Hamites, the "brethren" of Canaan. They subjugated Canaan in the fifteenth century b.c. According to Genesis 10, the Assyrians and Babylonians were Hamitic peoples. They dominated Canaan from the eighth to the sixth centuries b.c. When the Shemitic Israelites invaded Canaan in the fourteenth century the second part of the prediction was fulfilled. During the conquests of Alexander the Great, Canaan fell under the domination of the Japhethites. The prophecies of Noah are a capsule of ancient history.

The curse on Canaan had nothing to do with the origin of the black race, as some have contended. Ham had three sons besides Canaan. Cush was the progenitor of the Ethiopians, Mizraim of the Egyptians, Phut of the Libyans, and peoples of Africa. This curse, however, has to do only with the Canaanites, a people who manifested none of the racial characteristics of the black race. The skin texture of Israelites and Canaanites at the time of Joshua's invasion was probably very similar. The problem concerning the Canaanites was not in the color of their skin but rather in the condition of their hearts.

Why the curse on Canaan? Some think it was because he was involved with his father in a carnal act against Noah. Of this, there is no proof. Perhaps there is some merit to the suggestion that since the sin was committed by Ham, Noah's youngest son, the curse is placed on Canaan, the youngest son of Ham. Canaan certainly was not being punished for the sin of his father. Rather this is an announcement that the descendants of Canaan would manifest the same propensity for immorality as their

progenitor Ham. The Canaanites would then be justly punished for their gross sin by being enslaved by one nation after another.

The Blessing on Shem

Noah's utterance seems to contain two blessings for Shem. First, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem" (9:26). The language suggests that Shem had a special relationship with Yahweh, the God of covenant redemption. His descendants would preserve the knowledge of the true God and would disseminate that knowledge throughout the world. Perhaps there is also a hint here that the promised seed would spring from the loins of Shem.

The second blessing on Shem was this: "He shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (9:27). One view is that God (Elohim) is the subject of this sentence. Taken in this way, Noah would be predicting the incarnation. God himself would come to dwell in the tents of Shem." The Apostle John declared that the divine Word became flesh and "dwelt," (lit., tabernacled) among his people (John 1:14).

Others regard the third person pronoun "him" as a reference to Japheth, as a representative of the Gentile believers who will ultimately share in the blessings of Israel. When we view the statement as a whole and include the preceding clause, "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem," it does look more likely that the one dwelling is Japheth as a representative of the born-again Gentiles. Either interpretation can easily be seen as valid, but the sentence structure seems to favor the interpretation that Japheth is the subject represented by the pronoun "him".

The Blessing on Japheth

"May God enlarge Japheth" (9:27). The Japhethites include the Indo-European peoples as well as the brown and yellow races. In the early migrations of the human family from the cradle of civilization, these peoples spread into Europe, Asia, and eventually to the Americas. Noah under the inspiration of God foresaw this expansion of the Japhethites. In 539 b.c. Cyrus the Persian, a descendant of Japheth, conquered Babylon. The Japhethites became masters of the world. From that day to this no Semitic or Hamitic race has succeeded in breaking the world supremacy of the Japhethic peoples.

We conclude chapter 9 with the simple statement that Noah died at 950 years of age, 350 years after the Flood.

The Generations of Noah

Chapter 10 is an elaboration of the generations of Noah seen in Chapter 9. From his family, the eight who rode out the Deluge in the Ark, all the nations of the world today are descendants. It appears that Noah had no more children than these three: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Seventy descendants of Noah's sons are listed, including 14 from Japheth, 30 from Ham, and 26 from Shem. These are cleverly arranged into patterns, not primarily to trace ancestry; instead, it shows political, geographical, and ethnic affiliations among tribes for various reasons, most notable being holy war. Tribes who are "kin" would be in league together. Thus these generations align the predominant tribes in and around the land promised to Israel. These names include founders of tribes, clans, cities, and territories. This shows which peoples in the ancient world shared in the blessing and cursing motif, and also stresses how they spread out and replenished the earth. They all came from one, Noah, and were therefore one people; but some were closely related and others were distant. The genealogy shows the plight of the human race, scattered across the face of the earth and living according to their own cultural and linguistic affiliations. Wars and conflicts inevitably result from this arrangement.

Gen 10:1 These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.

2 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

4 The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 5 From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

The descendants of Japheth, numbering 14, were given first. Not all these peoples can be identified, but those that can be identified seem to represent those furthest from Israel geographically, either in the far north or the far west. Gomer represented the Cimmerians, thought to be of the same stock as the Scythians. Magog was the land of Gog, between Armenia and Cappadocia (Ezek. 38:2; 39:6). The name represented

Scythian hordes southwest of the Black Sea. Madai represented the Medes east of Assyria and southwest of the Caspian Sea. Javan was the general word for the Hellenic race, the Ionians of western Asia Minor. Tubal and Meshech were northern military states. They might have been located in Pontus and the Armenian mountains. Tiras may refer to the seafaring Pelasgians of the Aegean coasts. Elishah was probably in Crete. Tarshish was a Mediterranean city, possibly Carthage. Kittim is identified with Cyprus.

From these seven, seven more were derived. Three northern tribes came from Gomer: Ashkenaz (related to the Scythians), Riphath, and Togarmah (distant northern tribes).

The sons of Javan, two geographical names and two tribal names, were all kin to the Greeks. Elishah was Alashiyah or Cyprus. Tarshish was a distant coast in Asia Minor. The Kittim also dwelt in Cyprus. The “Dodanim” may have lived in Dodona, Greece (unless “Dodanim” is a textual variant for Rodanim (1 Chron. 1:7)).

These northern tribes did not figure predominantly in Israel’s history but occur frequently in prophetic writings (Ezek. 27; 37–39).

Gen 10:6 The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 7 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

Among the descendants of Ham are some of Israel’s closest neighbors and fiercest enemies. They formed the eastern and southern peoples of Mesopotamia. The Cushites (descendants of Cush) settled in southern Arabia and present-day southern Egypt, Sudan, and northern Ethiopia. They became mingled with Semitic tribes dwelling in the same region, hence there is the repetition of some of the names in other lines. Seba was in Upper Egypt. Havilah (“sand-land”) could refer to northern and eastern Arabia on the Persian Gulf or the Ethiopian coast. Sabtah, ancient Hadhramaut, was on the western shore of the Persian Gulf. Raamah and Sabtecah were in southern Arabia.

Sheba was in southwest Arabia (cf. the queen of Sheba, 1 Kings 10:1–13), and Dedan was in northern Arabia. Some of the people in these ancient kingdoms traced their lineage to Joktan from Shem (Gen. 10:29). So there was a mixing in the settlement.

Gen 10:8 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.” 10 The beginning 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; that is the great city.

Inserted in this table of nations is the story of Nimrod. This is the first “begot” (“was the father of”) section and forms a major stylistic break from the tribal names preceding it. Attempts to identify or date Nimrod have proven unsuccessful, but his interests in fighting and hunting were typical of great Mesopotamian kings. Because his name seems to be connected with the verb “to rebel” (*māraḏ*), tradition has identified him with tyrannical power. Nearly all the cities he founded are well-known in that region. He was the founder of the earliest imperial world powers in Babylon and Assyria. The centers he established became major enemies of Israel.

Gen 10:13 Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 14 Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim.

Another “son” of Ham was Mizraim, or Egypt. Mizraim developed into (*yālad*) tribes that ranged from North Africa to Crete. Few of these tribes or peoples can be surely identified. Pathrusites refer to the southern Egyptians. The Philistines were Israel’s great rivals for control of Canaan (1 Sa. 4–31). The Caphtorites are Cretans. The placing of the Philistines in this connection represents migration, not lineage. The Philistines migrated from their Aegean homelands through Caphtor into the Delta of Egypt and finally to Palestine. This, however, appears to refer to an earlier group of Pelasgo-Philistine tribes, distinct from those in the 13th century b.c.

Gen 10:15 Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, 16 and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, 17 the Hivites, the Arkites, the

Sinites, 18 the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward, the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. 19 And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. 20 These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

The final Hamite line that was significant for Israel was the Canaanite group. Special attention is given to the inhabitants of Canaan whom Israel expected to displace. Sidon was the oldest Phoenician coastal city. The Amorites, Girgashites, and Hivites are often-mentioned Canaanite peoples. The Arkites ... Hamathites were the inhabitants of well-known cities in Syria. Sidon was the predominant Phoenician city. The Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem. Amorites was a general reference to western Semites, but here points to a smaller ethnic group in the mixed population of Canaan. The other Canaanite tribal names were tribes that settled in Lebanon, Hamath on the Orontes River, and all through the land. Their listing is significant after the passage pronouncing the curse on Canaan (9:25–27).

Gen 10:21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. 22 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. 23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. 24 Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. 25 To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. 26 Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. 30 The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. 31 These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

The descendants from Shem are recorded last. That Ham was Noah's youngest son is clear (9:24), but whether Japheth or Shem was the eldest depends on how this verse is translated. Since Abraham was descended from Shem, Israel felt a special affinity for these people. However, few can be identified, though many seem to be Aramean or Arabian tribes.

Elamites, descendants of Shem's first son Elam, dwelt in the highlands east of Babylonia in southwestern Iran. Asshur was the name of the region and people of Assyria, where Nimrod, a Hamite, had founded several cities (v. 11). Others contend that Asshur was unlikely to be a reference to Assyria, but was possibly a Sinaitic tribe. Arphaxad resided northeast of Nineveh. Lud was the Ludbu of the Assyrians. Perhaps Lud was a shortened form of Ludda, possibly another name for Lydia (in what is now western Turkey). Aram was an ancestor of the Aramean tribes that lived in Syria. His descendants (v. 23) are not well known. In so far as they can be identified, Joktan and his descendants seem to have lived in southern Arabia.

The note on Eber's son Peleg—that in his time the earth was divided—seems to pinpoint the Babel experience (11:1–9). The verb *pālaḡ* is used in the Old Testament to describe division into languages. So the Babel event occurred five generations after the Flood.

The genealogy then turns to trace the tribes from Peleg's brother ... Joktan (10:26–29), most of whom lived in the Arabian peninsula. Israel would find ancient blood ties with these 13 tribes of Joktanites in the desert.

Gen 10:32 These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these, the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

Here is a colophon-type ending, reminding the readers that all families came from Noah, but some were of special interest to the nation Israel.

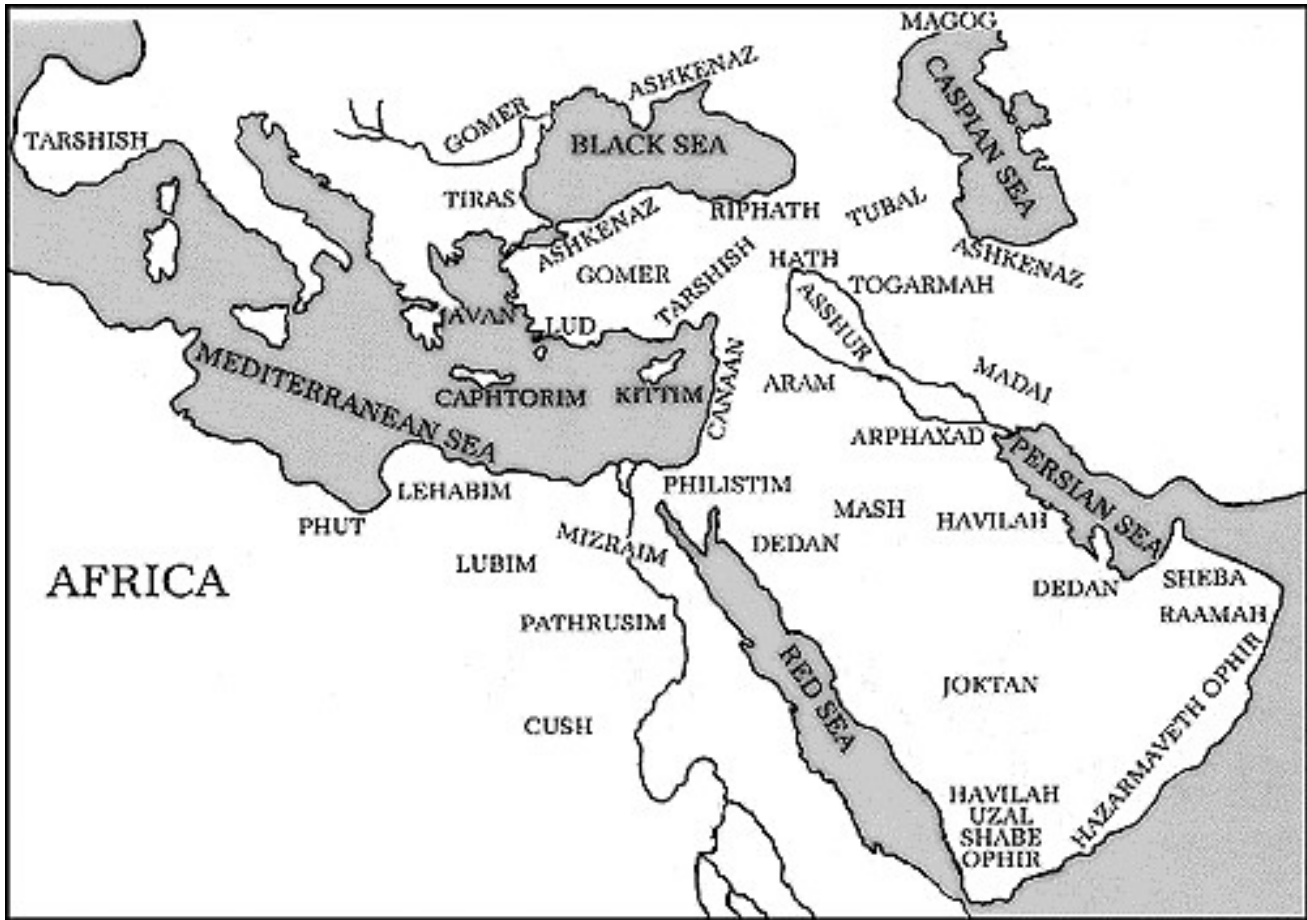


TABLE OF NATIONS

Genesis 10

JAPHETH

Gomer Magog Madai Javan Tubal Meshech Tiras

Ashkenaz
Riphath
Togarmah

Elishah Kittim
Tarshish Dodanim

HAM

Cush Mizraim Put Canaan

Seba
Sabteca
Havilah
Nimrod
Sabtah
Raamah

Ludim Pathrusim
Anamim Casluhim
Lehabim Caphtorim
Naphtuhim

Sidon Hivite
Heth Arkite
Jebusite Sinite
Amorite Arvadite
Girgashite Zemarite
Hamathite

Sheba
Dedan

SHEM

Elam Asshur Arpachshad Lud Aram

Shelah

Eber

Peleg Joktan

Almodad Diklah
Sheleph Obal
Hazarmaveth Abimael
Jerah Sheba
Hadoram Ophir
Uzal Havilah
Jobab

Uz
Hul
Gether
Mash