

The Origin of the Nations, from Genesis 10

Introduction

Genesis chapter 10 contains an account of “the origin of the nations”. Basically, that chapter discusses the descendants of Noah’s three sons – Shem, Ham and Japheth. The account then goes on to describe the various nations that those descendants founded, throughout the world.

As we know, *everything* that is written in Scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial to us (see 2 Timothy 3:16). So, what types of important information can be gleaned, from the account of the lineage of Noah in Genesis 10? It appears to me that that lineage provides valuable information for (at least) **three** separate areas in Scripture, as described below.

So, first consider the diagram in the link below. That diagram displays the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth – as well as the countries that were subsequently founded by those descendants. As mentioned in the diagram, there is a broad, general consensus about the countries founded by the descendants of Shem and Ham. However, there is quite a bit of *disagreement* about the countries originated by Japheth.

As a result, the countries listed in that diagram represent a hypothesis about the descendants of Japheth; based upon archeological research, and on the relationship of those countries to Scriptural prophecies. Here is the diagram:

[Origin of the Nations](#)

Ethnic Groups in the Middle East

As shown in the above diagram, Shem had five sons – Elam, Asshur, Arpachsad, Lud, and Aram. All of those men (and their descendants) settled in the Middle East – and those descendants became the nations of Persia, Assyria (North Iraq), Babylon (South Iraq), Turkey and Syria. As a result, Shem’s descendants comprise the **majority** of the ethnic groups which are “native” to the Middle East.

The reason why this is important is that the descendants of Shem are referred to as “**Shemites**” – or “Semites” in the English pronunciation. In other words, the term Semite refers to all of the descendants of Shem. As noted above, Shem’s descendants comprise **most** of the ethnic groups in the Middle East. As a result, Israelites, Arabs, Turks, and Persians are all Semites!

Of course, in our modern culture, the terms “Semite”, and “Semitic”, are usually used to refer *exclusively* to Jews. However, that is not *strictly* correct – because the term “Semite” refers to all of the descendants of Shem, not just to Israelites.

The diagram also shows us that one of the descendants of Shem – through his son Arpachsad – was the man named **Eber**. Eber’s descendants are the “**Heberews**” – or “Hebrews”. One of the descendants of Eber was Abraham – so Abraham (and *his* descendants) are Hebrews. Of course, Abraham was the forefather of both Arabs **and** Israelites. So, this means that Israelites and Arabs are Hebrews; but Turks and Persians are not Hebrews.

Finally, note that the descendants of the man named Canaan primarily settled in the *land of Israel* - and as a result, that region was actually called Canaan at that time. Basically, the “main” Canaanite tribe – along

with six “branches” from that tribe – settled in that region. The six “branch” tribes were called the Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites.

The reason why this is important is because in multiple places, God told the Israelites that He would **drive out** those seven specific groups from the land – *so that* the Israelites could inherit that land. (For example, see Joshua 3:10 and Deuteronomy 7:1.)

Of course, Canaan was one of the sons of Ham. As stated in Genesis 9, Ham acted sinfully, after he saw the nakedness of his father Noah – and Noah then explicitly *cursed* Ham’s son Canaan. So, it appears *possible* that the “dispossession” of Canaan’s descendants from the Promised Land was at least *partially* “related” to Ham’s sin.

The Family Tree of Abraham

The next item to consider concerns the descendants of Abraham, himself. The diagram below displays Abraham’s sons, grandsons and great-grandsons – along with his more distant descendants:

[The Family Tree of Abraham](#)

As shown in the diagram, Abraham had two sons – Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac himself also had two sons – Jacob and Esau. The descendants of Ishmael are the Arabs; and the descendants of Esau are the Palestinians.

Also note that God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. As a result, the descendants of Jacob are known as the “**Israelites**”. Jacob had 12 sons; so those 12 sons – and their descendants – are **all** Israelites. However, Arabs and Palestinians are **not** Israelites – because they are not descended from Jacob. (They *are* descended from **Abraham** – but they are not descended from Jacob.)

The reason why this is important is because God’s covenant with Abraham was passed down to Isaac – not to Ishmael; and it was then passed down to Jacob – not to Esau. As a result, God granted the inheritance of the Promised Land to the **Israelites** – not to the Arabs or Palestinians. In addition, this line of “covenant inheritance” is one of the reasons why God is frequently referred to as “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” in Scripture.

Another item to note on the diagram is that in the strictest sense, the term “Jews” refers to the descendants of the man named Judah. Basically, Judah’s descendants are the “**Judahites**” – or “Jews”. As shown in the diagram, Judah was one of the 12 sons of Israel. So, the Jewish people are Israelites – because Judah, himself, was a descendant of Israel.

However, Israel had 11 *other* sons as well – other than Judah. So, the descendants of the other 11 sons are Israelites – because they are descended from Israel. However, those descendants are not Jews – because they are not descended from Judah.

The above information can be “summarized” as follows: All Jews are Israelites; but **not** all Israelites are Jews!

Of course, in some cases the term “Jew” is used in a broader sense – to encompass *all* Israelites. However, in the *strictest* sense, Jews are only the descendants of Judah – not the descendants of the other 11 tribes.

As it turns out, Scripture appears to confirm that fact. For example, in Romans 11:1, the apostle Paul states that he is a descendant of Benjamin. In that same verse, Paul identifies himself as an **Israelite** – but he does NOT identify himself as a **Jew**! This makes sense, because strictly speaking, only the descendants of Judah are Jews – and Paul is not a descendant of Judah! (Paul is a descendant of Israel – through Benjamin – but he is not a descendant of Judah.)

Finally, as noted above, God passed down the Abrahamic covenant to **Jacob**. So, the descendants of **all 12** of Jacob’s sons have an inheritance in the Promised Land.

Two Prophesied Attacks on Israel

The final area to consider involves prophecies about attacks against Israel, in the end times. There are two specific prophecies about very coordinated, large-scale attacks against Israel; those attacks both involve many nations attacking Israel. Those prophecies are contained in the chapters of Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38.

Of course, the country *names* that are listed in those prophecies are the *ancient* place names – so that the most of the names in question are not very familiar to people today. The diagram below displays the nations involved in both of those prophesied attacks – along with information about the modern nations that those names represent.

[Prophecies of Two Attacks on Israel](#)

As shown, the nations involved in the Psalm 83 attack are directly adjacent to Israel; while the nations in the Ezekiel 38 attack are much further away from Israel. In addition, those two attacks will evidently take place at different times. Essentially, the Psalm 83 attack will take place *first*; and at some point *after* that the Ezekiel 38 attack will occur.

Also note that the nation of Asshur, which is listed in Psalm 83, refers to Assyria. This can be seen in the “origin of the nations” diagram, above – because the descendants of the man named Asshur settled in the country of Assyria.

The ancient country of Assyria roughly encompassed the modern regions of eastern Syria, and northern Iraq. Interestingly, that is the **precise** area that the terrorist group called ISIS currently controls. In other words, it appears that ISIS has “reconstituted” the territory of ancient Assyria. That, in turn, could explain why Asshur is listed as attacking Israel in the end times, in Psalm 83!

Conclusion

In some cases, it is difficult to determine the “importance” of certain sections in Scripture. In particular, it is often hard to see why Scripture goes into great detail about the “lineages” of various people. This article hopefully demonstrates some important reasons for studying the lineage of Noah and his sons!