

Genesis 9:18-10:32 “One Big (Not So) Happy Family!”  
Psalm 87, 72  
Ephesians 3

May 3, 2009

I daresay that Genesis 10 is one of the most important chapters in the whole Bible.  
It reveals how all humanity is connected.

And perhaps not surprisingly, there are 70 nations listed in this table.  
Noah had three sons.

And these three sons produced 70 heirs who spread out into all the earth.

Genesis will end with a man who had 12 sons.  
And he will go down into Egypt with 70 persons.

The number 7 is important in our narrative.

Japheth has seven sons and seven grandsons.

Hence there are 14 names in the line of Japheth.

In the Hamite line

there are seven descendents of Cush (plus Nimrod),  
and seven descendents of Egypt.

In the Shemite line there are two fourteens:

Shem's line includes 14,  
and Joktan's line includes 14.

Notice that I didn't mention the Canaanite line.

There are eleven of them!

Unlike the rest of Noah's descendents,

Canaan is incomplete.

The end of chapter 9 explains why.

### **Introduction: The Curse of Canaan (9:18-29)**

*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.*

Noah is said to be a man of the soil (an ish of the adama –  
just as Adam was taken from the adamah).

Noah is the second Adam

who is called to succeed where the first Adam failed.

We're told that Noah planted a vineyard.

This is a statement of Noah's confidence in God's covenant promise.

God has just said that he will not destroy the earth again by water.

And so Noah plants a vineyard.  
Vineyards do not produce grapes immediately.  
It takes at least three years.  
So this episode must be at least 3-4 years after the Flood.

Noah is celebrating God's covenant.  
He is rejoicing in what God has done, and what God has promised.  
But he overdoes it.

Genesis does not overtly condemn Noah's drunkenness,  
but certainly his lack of moderation became the occasion for Ham's sin.

Notice how I put that:  
the occasion for Ham's sin.

You cannot blame someone else for your sin.  
To take a parallel case today,  
you cannot say, "it's her fault for wearing such a revealing top."  
You are responsible for your own heart and your own eyes.  
Noah bears responsibility for his own failure,  
but Ham and Canaan are guilty because of what they did!

*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.*

Why is Ham's seeing Noah's nakedness such a problem?  
The verb here "to see" suggests the idea of "looking intently" or "gazing."  
The idea is that Ham not only sees, but enjoys the sight.

In a word, it is called voyeurism.  
Among other things, voyeurism refers to those who take delight  
in seeing other people naked.

Voyeurism is always wrong because it violates the dignity of the other person.  
It is especially wrong here because Ham violates the dignity of his father,  
and then compounds his sin by telling his brothers –  
with the idea that they should join him.

Instead, Shem and Japheth take a garment and walk backward into the tent  
to cover the nakedness of their father.

They show honor to their father.

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.”*

If Ham was the one who sinned,  
then why does God curse Canaan?

Some have suggested that since God blessed Ham, Noah could not curse him.  
There is some truth to this,  
    but the key is found in verse 24.

When Noah knew what his *youngest* son had done to him.

Ham is *not* Noah’s youngest son.  
In every listing, Ham is in the middle,  
    Shem, Ham, and Japheth.  
They are listed in reverse order in the Table of Nations (Gen 10)  
    so as to put Shem last (the place of honor).  
But even so, Ham winds up in the middle once more!

So when Noah knew that his youngest son had done something,  
this cannot mean Ham.

But as 10:6 indicates, Canaan was the youngest son of Ham.  
Therefore it would appear that Canaan was somehow involved in this sin.  
We are not given the details, but “his youngest son”  
    must mean “Ham’s youngest son.”  
And when you look back at 9:18 and 9:22  
    every time Ham is mentioned, Canaan is also mentioned.

Some have tried to apply the curse of Canaan to all Hamites  
(that’s how some tried to find a biblical justification for enslaving Africans),  
but Noah plainly speaks *only* of Canaan being a servant to Japheth and Shem.

The rest of the Hamites are *not* cursed by God.

But not only does Noah curse Canaan,  
he also blesses Shem and Japheth.  
He says

*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem...*

But

*May God enlarge Japheth.*

Notice that he uses the covenant name of Yahweh only for Shem,  
the heir of the covenant.

And Canaan will be the servant of both Shem and Japheth.

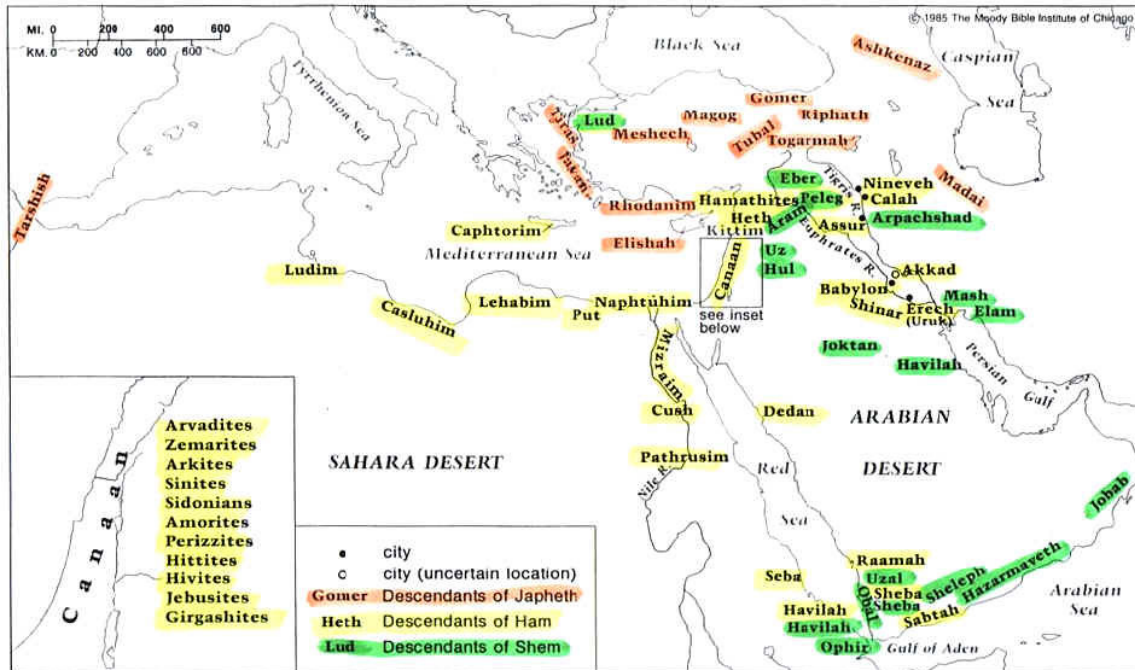
What about Ham?

Ham had been blessed by God (9:1, 7, 8).

But he is not blessed by his father.

Noah curses Canaan,

and is silent about the rest of the Hamites.



### 1. The Sons of Japheth (10:1-5)

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

In Genesis chapter 10 you see two things at work:

- 1) the common grace covenant at work:
  - be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth;
  - you see clearly in Genesis 10 the common grace of God in extending the human race throughout the earth.

- 2) You also see the fragmentation of the human race.
  - at first I called this sermon “one big happy family” –
  - but in a very real way what you are seeing is “one big (not so) happy family.”

In verses 5 and 32 we hear that the nations “spread abroad,” but the word there actually means “divided.”

And at the end of each section (5, 20, 31)

we hear that each of these families are divided into “their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.”

We'll hear next week about the actual event that led to the division of humanity,  
but here we see the big picture.

Humanity has multiplied.  
But humanity has also divided.

*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 clans of Japheth spread northward and then both west and east.

It is often thought that the Japhethites settled Europe and eastern Asia.

They play a minor role in biblical history,

But the blessing of Japheth makes us read this table of nations  
with an eye to the future.

Japheth will dwell in the tents of Shem.

This phrase is an indication of that while Shem is the heir of the covenant,  
Japheth will share in these covenant blessings.

The importance of this promise echoes throughout the prophets,

when Isaiah, for instance,

speaks of how the "tent" of Jerusalem must be expanded:

"Enlarge the place of your tent,  
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;  
do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.  
For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,  
and your offspring will possess the nations  
and will people the desolate cities." (Is 54:2-3)

Some might say, "Oh, but pastor, that's a stretch!

How can you say that this is referring back to Noah's blessing?"

Because Isaiah, only five verses later says,

"This is like the days of Noah to me."

Isaiah did not forget the blessing of Japheth.

He knew that the tent of Shem must be extended

in order to include Japheth.

And so Isaiah frequently speaks of the good news proclaimed to the "coastlands."

This word "coastlands" is used 42 times.

It is used here in Genesis 10:5 to refer to the Japhethites.

And then it is not used again until Psalm 72, which we sang earlier.

The kings of Tarshish and the coastlands  
render tribute to the son of David.

And then Isaiah speaks of the “coastlands” 19 times –  
almost every time in promise:  
“the coastlands wait for his law” (Is 42:4)

Indeed, at the conclusion of Isaiah 66:18-21, the LORD speaks of the Japhethites:

*“the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.  
And they shall come and shall see my glory,  
and I will set a sign among them.  
And from them I will send survivors to the nations,  
to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow,  
to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away,  
that have not heard my fame or seen my glory.  
And they shall declare my glory among the nations.  
And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations  
as an offering to the Lord, on horses and in chariots  
and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries,  
to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord,  
just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel  
to the house of the Lord.  
And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites,”  
says the Lord.*

The Japhethites will be brought in.  
When God restores his people from exile,  
then some of his people will go and declare the glory of the LORD  
to the Japhethites.

This finally comes to fruition in the book of Acts  
when God restores his people from exile,  
and Paul, one of the “survivors” of the exile  
travels throughout modern day Turkey and Greece  
(the area initially settled by the sons of Japheth),  
bringing the “offering of the Gentiles” to God.

(Remember that Paul in Romans 15:16 describes himself as  
“a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles  
in the priestly service of the gospel of God,  
so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable,  
sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”)

And today God calls Japhethites (as well as Hamites and Shemites)  
to this priestly service in his holy temple.

But most of OT history focuses on the relationship between the Hamites and the Shemites.

## 2. The Sons of Ham (10:6-20)

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.*

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.*

Cush himself apparently went south with most of his brethren.

But at least one of his sons went east:

Nimrod.

Nimrod is described as the "first on earth to be a mighty man."

He is a "gibbor" – the same word used in 6:4 to describe the "giants" that were in the earth in the days of Noah.

It is also the word used to describe David's "mighty men" and other great warriors.

He is described as the builder of Ninevah

and that his realm was the land between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris.

Given that the beginning of his kingdom was Babel,

it may be that he was the king who sought to build the Tower of Babel in ch. 11.

But at any rate, the Hamites are the great builders of the ancient world.

In this respect they are the "heirs" (in a sense) of the line of Cain.

Just as the line of Cain was busily seeking to build a city for themselves, so now the line of Ham does the same.

And in verses 13-19 we hear of the rest of the Hamites:

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

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 Hamites, then, include the worst enemies of Israel throughout their history:  
the Canaanites, most obviously,  
but also the Egyptians and the Philistines are Hamites,  
and the two great cities that took them captive  
(Babylon and Ninevah) are rooted in Nimrod,  
even though many of the peoples who lived there were Semites.

And the main focus of these 15 verses

is to highlight the negative.

When Israel hears the table of nations read as they come into the Promised Land,  
they hear that the nation that held them captive for 400 years is Hamite.

The seven nations that they must now destroy are Hamites.

And the great powers of the ancient world have Hamitic roots.

But they can take heart because at least the worst threat (the Canaanites)  
will become their servants.

Notice that the geographical description is most detailed for the Canaanites:

they settle in the land that will later be promised to Abram,

from Sidon in the north to Gaza in the south

But the subsequent history gets more interesting.

The idea that all Hamites are under God's curse will *not* fly.

Most of the Canaanites will be destroyed.

And those of the Canaanites who were not destroyed (the Gibeonites)  
became servants to Israel.

But the future of Ham is not entirely bleak.

Psalm 72 speaks of the kings of Sheba and Seba bringing gifts  
to the Davidic king.

In other words, Psalm 72 speaks of how both Japhethites and Hamites  
will live under the dominion of God's anointed king.

And so perhaps it is fitting that Psalm 72 also invokes Noahic language:

“May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon,  
throughout all generations!”

Psalm 87 is even more specific to Ham:

“Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon;  
behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush –

This one was born there, they say.

And of Zion it shall be said,



This one and that one were born in her  
for the Most High himself will establish her.  
The LORD records as he registers the peoples,  
This one was born there.

Even the Hamites will become children of Zion.

This is especially interesting because of the place of Egypt in biblical history.  
We'll be dealing with Egypt quite a bit throughout Genesis,  
but the Psalms connect Egypt with Ham very closely,  
even referring to Egypt as "the land of Ham" in Psalms 78 and 106.

Egypt is the land of dust and death  
Egypt is the opposite of Eden.  
If the Promised Land is the land of blessing,  
then Egypt is the land of cursing –  
the land where bad things happen.

Certainly by the time Genesis 10 was written,  
Egypt did not have a good reputation.  
And it would not surprise Israel in the land  
to hear that the Philistines were fathered by Egypt!  
Because from the period of the Judges through the time of David,  
the Philistines essentially replace Egypt as their greatest tormentor!

When you read the prophets in Noahic context,  
you start to realize how important Genesis 10 is.

Isaiah 13-19 consists of oracles against the nations,  
focusing on the Hamitic and Semitic peoples around Israel,  
but then in 19:21 Isaiah says,  
*The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians,  
and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day  
and worship with sacrifice and offering,  
and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them.*  
And in verse 23, he says,  
*In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria,  
and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria,  
and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.  
In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria,  
a blessing in the midst of the earth,  
whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying,  
"Blessed by Egypt my people,  
and Assyria the work of my hands,  
and Israel my inheritance."*

Genesis 10 sets the stage not just for the history of the nations-  
not just for the world history of the City of Man-  
but also for the redemptive history of the City of God!

And to see the beginning of this, we turn to the sons of Shem:

### **3. The Sons of Shem (10:21-31)**

*21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born.*

Verse 21 identifies Shem not only as the father of all the Semites,  
but especially of the children of Eber (whence the name “Hebrew” derives).

*22 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.*

*23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.*

The Elamites, the Assyrians, and the Arameans (the Syrians)  
are perhaps the most famous of the Shemites.

But they are also the most distantly related to Israel,  
because the holy line is clearly identified with Eber:

*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.*

Peleg means “division.”

This may mean that the Tower of Babel was built in Peleg’s day.  
But Babel may have happened sooner.

The point here is that in Peleg’s day you see the division of the nations.  
Moses speaks of this in Deuteronomy 32:8,

*When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,  
when he divided mankind,  
he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.*

This suggests that the division in Peleg’s day  
is not merely a political division,  
but is in fact a division with of redemptive proportions.

The Shemites are themselves divided,  
with salvation coming through the line of Eber and Peleg  
(foreshadowing the coming of Abraham).

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.*

**Conclusion: These Are Your Kin (10:32)**

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.*

We will continue to see the importance of the Table of Nations throughout Genesis.

We will hear about Abram the Hebrew (the heir of Eber) in Genesis 14,  
with an account of how he relates to the Canaanites and Semites.

The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
can only be understood in the light of Genesis 10.

The nations surrounding you are your kin.

When God calls Abram he will say that in him “all nations will be blessed.”

Genesis 10 reminds us of the importance of the nations  
in God’s purposes for Abram.

Israel is taken out of the nations in order to bring blessing to the nations.

We need to remember this.

God’s purpose in election is *not* to save a few people  
and damn the rest of humanity!

God’s purpose in election is to save the world.

God has not called you so that you might have a nice, safe, comfortable existence.

God has called you so that you might inhabit the tents of Shem –

that you might participate in the covenant blessing that God gave Abram –  
so that “through the church the manifold wisdom of God  
might now be made known to the rulers and authorities  
in the heavenly places.” (Eph 3:9)

You are not a ghetto of heaven.

You are a colony of heaven.

What is the difference?

A ghetto is a segregated community that is isolated from everyone else.

A colony is an outward-looking, forward-looking community  
that expects to expand and eventually take over!

I know.

Nowadays colonialism is not popular!

But God has called you to be a colony of heaven here in Michiana.

You are called to bear witness to the coming of the kingdom of God –  
that God has brought in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ God has established one new man,

bringing together both Jew and Gentile,

Shemite, Hamite and Japhethite,

together in one tent – the tent of Jesus Christ the second Adam.

The gospel has come to you,

not so that you might be happy and comfortable,

but so that you might be a witness to those around you  
of the glorious Kingdom of Jesus.