



Josephus and Genesis Chapter Ten

A Wonderful Stepping-Stone

by Bodie Hodge on November 18, 2009

Abstract

The writings of the historian Josephus provide interesting insights into the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. Bodie Hodge, AiG–U.S., explains.

Keywords: Josephus, table of nations, people groups, biblical accuracy

Josephus was a first-century Jewish historian with an intriguing history of his own! He served as governor of Galilee, fought against Rome in the first century, and was eventually captured. His surrender ultimately took him to Rome, where his captors became Roman Emperors (Vespasian and his son Titus). He was ordered to write a history of Jewish nation because of all the strife that had been going on in that area.¹

But the history I want to discuss is not Josephus's life, but something he wrote about. In his book about Jewish history, *The Antiquity of the Jews* (specifically chapter 6, which is reprinted in the appendix of this article), Josephus gave Christians a brilliant "stepping-stone" to the genealogies in Genesis 10.

Table of Nations

Josephus connected many of the nations that formed after the confusion at the Tower of Babel with the nations around him. He often listed the common Greek name for these nations, which provided a solid translation of ancient history into his era. From his work, Christians can connect those nations to the nations we have today. Hence, we have a stepping-stone between nations and people groups soon after the Flood and those today.

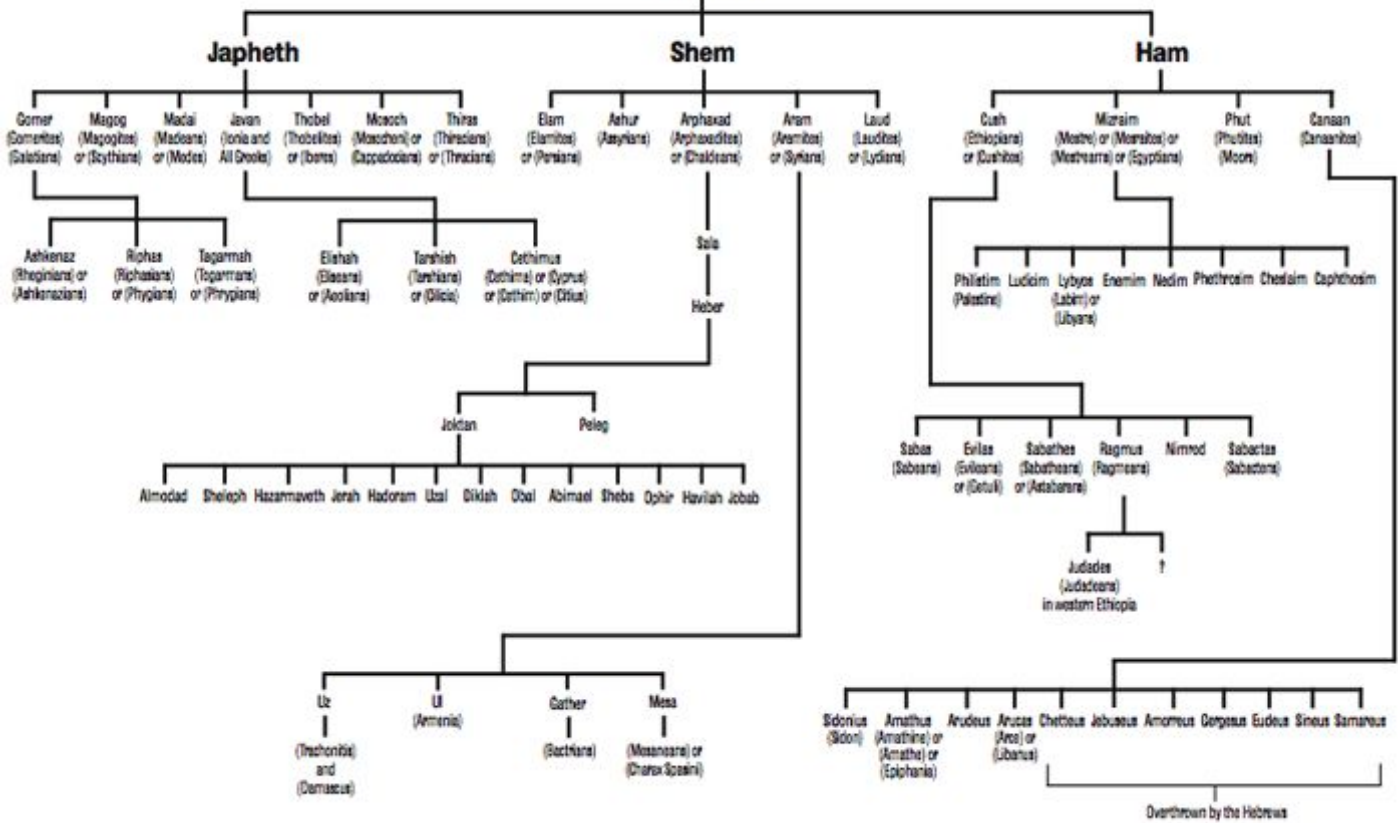
For example, Josephus mentions that Gomer, one of Noah's grandsons, had descendants that the Greeks called Galatians! If you recall, Paul wrote an epistle to the Galatians who were living in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

Another intriguing connection is that of Magog—also one of Noah's grandsons. Josephus's research reveals that the Scythians were descendants of Magog. The Scythians are now a variety of people groups living north of the Black Sea.

Another exciting aspect of Josephus is that his table of nations gives extra-biblical support to Genesis 10 and the division of the peoples by family group when God judged them by confusing their languages. The following is a chart that shows Josephus's table of nations graphically:

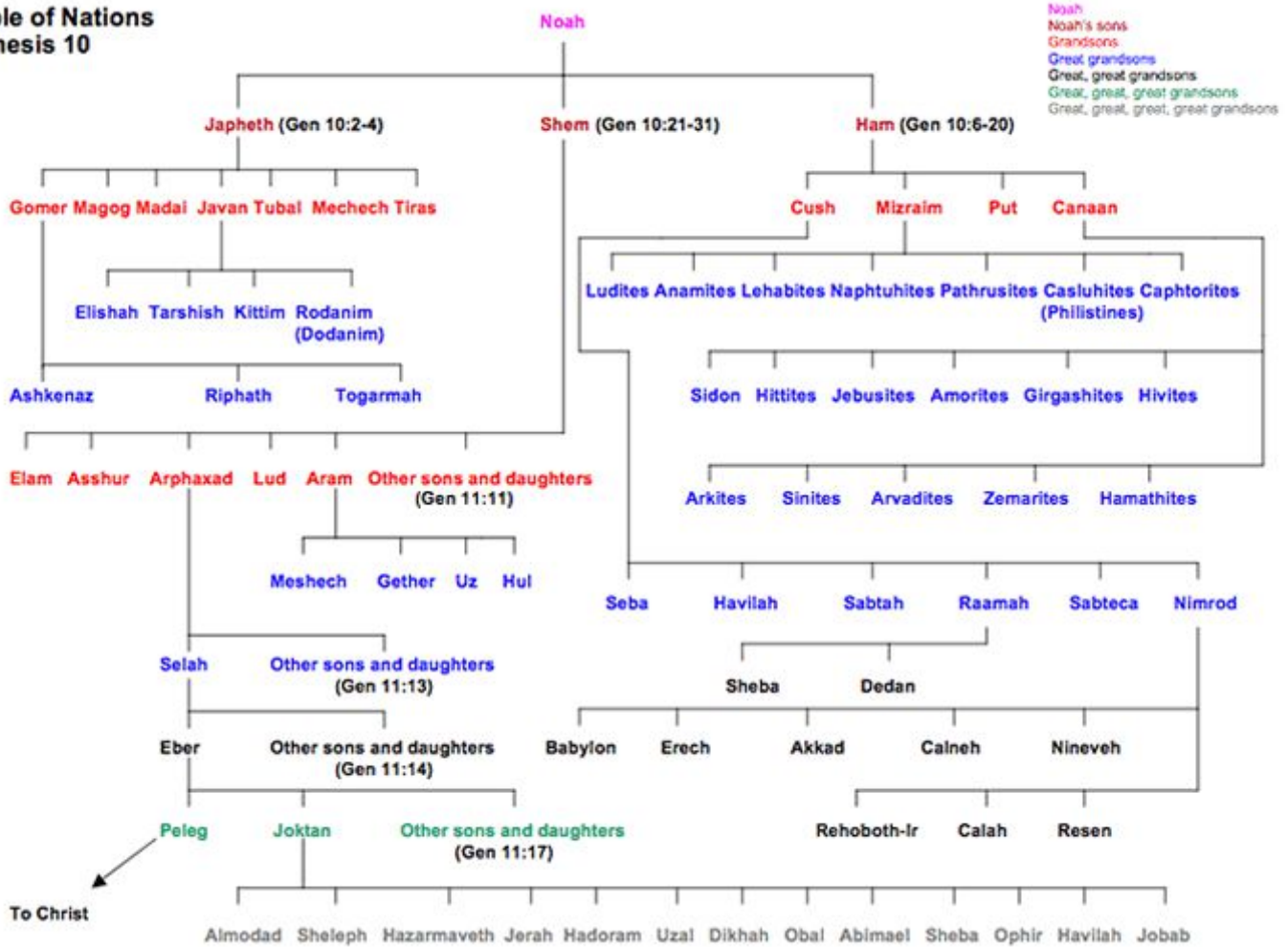
JOSEPHUS' TABLE OF NATIONS

Noah



Consider how similar this is to the Bible's table of nations, which obviously influenced him. But consider how much we can learn from Josephus's comments on the subject. Here is an illustration of the Bible's table of nations in Genesis 10:

**Table of Nations
Genesis 10**



Conclusions

Although Josephus’s work is not infallible, it does point to biblical accuracy. Take particular notice of some of the names of Canaan’s sons. The Bible reveals them as people groups such as Jebusites, Sinites, Girgashites, etc. Josephus gives the specific names of Canaan’s sons such as Jebuseus, Gergesus, Sineus, etc. These are fascinating confirmations of the Bible’s teachings.

I hope you will take a few minutes to look over this and see how valuable Josephus’s research was to people living in his time—and ours.

Appendix

The following are excerpts from Josephus’s Antiquity of Jews as translated by William Whiston and adapted in the Online Bible. The names of Noah’s grandsons are numbered, and his great-grandsons have a letter associated with their father’s number, etc. Also, if the name is not obvious, then I (Bodie Hodge) link who it is in the biblical genealogies in brackets.

Japheth

Now they were the grandchildren of Noah, in honour of whom names were imposed on the nations by those who first settled them. Japheth, the son of Noah, had seven sons; they inhabited so, that, beginning at the mountains Taurus and Amanus, they proceeded along Asia, as far as the river Tanais, and along Europe to Cadiz; and settling themselves on the lands which they came upon, which none had inhabited before, they called the nations by their own names; for

1. **Gomer** founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians, [Galls,] but were then called Gomerites.
2. **Magog** founded those who from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians.
3. Now as to **Javan** and **Madai**, the sons of Japheth; from Madai came the Madeans, who are called Medes, by the Greeks;
4. but from **Javan**, Ionia, and all the Greeks, are derived.
5. **Thobel** [Tubal] founded the Thobelites, who are now called Iberes;

6. and the Mosocheni were founded by **Mosoch** [Mechech]; now they are Cappadocians. There is also a mark of their ancient name still to be shown; for there is even now among them a city called Mazaca, which may inform those who are able to understand, that so was the entire nation once called.

7. **Thiras** [Tiras, Tyras] also called those whom he ruled over, Thirasiens; but the Greeks changed the name into Thracians. And so many were the countries that had the children of Japheth for their inhabitants.

1A. Of the three sons of Gomer, **Ashkenaz** founded the Ashkenazians [Germany], who are now called by the Greeks Reginians.

1B/ So did **Riphas** found the Riphasiens, now called Paphlagonians; and

1C. **Togarmah** the Togarmans, who, as the Greeks resolved, were named Phrygians.

4A. Of the three sons of Javan also, the son of Japheth, **Elishah** gave name to the Eliseans, who were his subjects; they are now the Aeolians.

4B. **Tarshish** to the Tarshians; for so was Cilicia of old called; the sign of which is this, that the noblest city they have, and a metropolis also, is Tarsus, the *tau* being by change put for the *theta*.

4C. **Cethimus** [Kittim] possessed the island Cethima; it is now called Cyprus; and from that it is that all islands, and the greatest part of the sea coasts, are named Cethim by the Hebrews; and one city there is in Cyprus that has been able to preserve its name; it has been called Citius by those who use the language of the Greeks, and has not, by the use of that dialect, escaped the name of Cethim. And so many nations have the children and grandchildren of Japheth possessed.

Now when I have premised somewhat, which perhaps the Greeks do not know, I will return and explain what I have omitted; for such names are pronounced here after the manner of the Greeks, to please my readers; for our own country language does not so pronounce them; but the names in all cases are of one and the same ending; for the name we here pronounce Noeas, is there Noah, and in every case retains the same termination.

Ham

The children of Ham possessed the land from Syria and Amanus, and the mountains of Libanus; settling all that was on its sea coasts, and as far as the ocean, and keeping it as their own. Some indeed of its names are utterly vanished away; others of them, being changed, and another sound given them, are hardly to be discovered; yet a few there are which have kept their names entire.

1. For of the four sons of Ham, time has not at all hurt the name of **Cush**; for the Ethiopians, over whom he reigned, are even at this day, both by themselves and by all men in Asia, called Cushites.

2. The memory also of the Mesraites is preserved in their name, for all we who inhabit this country [of Judea] called Egypt Mestres [Mizraim], and the Egyptians Mestrians.

3. **Phut** also was the founder of Libya, and called the inhabitants Phutites, from himself; there is also a river in the country of Moors which bears that name; where it is that we may see the greatest part of the Greek historiographers mention that river and the adjoining country by the appellation of Phut;

2A. but the name it has now, has been by change given it from one of the sons of Mizraim, who was called **Lybyos** [Ludites]. We will inform you presently what has been the occasion why it has been called Africa also.

4. **Canaan**, the fourth son of Ham, inhabited the country now called Judea, and called it from his own name Canaan.

The children of these [four] were these:

1A. **Sabas** [Seba], who founded the Sabeans;

1B. **Evilas** [Havilah], who founded the Evileans, who are called Getuli;

1C. **Sabathes** [Sabtah], founded the Sabathens—they are now called by the Greeks, Astaborans; (135)

1D. **Sabactas** settled the Sabactens; and

1E. Ragmus [Raamah] the Ragmeans; and he had two sons, the one of whom, Judadas, settled the Judadeans [Sheba?], a nation of the Western Ethiopians, and left them his name; as did Sabas to the Sabeans.

1F. But **Nimrod**, the son of Cush, stayed and tyrannized at Babylon, as we have already informed you.

Now all the children of Mizraim, being eight in number, possessed the country from Gaza to Egypt, though it retained the name of one only,

2A. the **Philistim** [Casluhites; for the Greeks call part of that country Palestine. 2B. As for the rest, **Ludicim** [Ludites], and

2C. **Enemim** [Anamites], and

2D. **Labim** [Lehabites/Lybybos], who alone inhabited in Libya, and called the country from himself,

2E. **Nedim** [Naphtuhites] and

2F. **Phethrosim**, and

2G. **Chesloim** [8th son that that came after the biblical table of nations?], and

2H. **Caphthorim**; we know nothing of them besides their names; for the Ethiopic war, which we shall describe hereafter, was the cause that those cities were overthrown.

4A. The sons of Canaan were these: **Sidonius**, who also built a city of the same name—it is called by the Greeks, Sidon;

4B. **Amathus** [Hamathites] inhabited in Amathine, which is even now called Amathe by the inhabitants, although the Macedonians named it Epiphania, from one of his posterity;

- 4C. **Arudeus** [Arvadites] possessed the island Aradus;
 4D. **Arucas** [Arkites] possessed Arce, which is in Libanus; but for the seven others, [Eueus,]
 4E. **Chetteus**, [Hittites?]
 4F. **Jebuseus** [Jebusites founded Jerusalem],
 4G. **Amorreus** [Amorites],
 4H. **Gergesus** [Girgashites],
 4I. **Eudeus** [Hivites?],
 4J. **Sineus** [Sinites, Sinai is named for this tribe, and perhaps those that left and settled in the Orient],
 4K. **Samareus** [Zemarites] we have nothing in the sacred books but their names, for the Hebrews overthrew their cities; and their calamities came upon them on the occasion following.

Shem

Shem, the third son of Noah, had five sons, who inhabited the land that began at Euphrates, and reached to the Indian Ocean.

1. For **Elam** left behind him the Elamites, the ancestors of the Persians.
2. Ashur lived at the city of Nineveh; and named his subjects Assyrians, who became the most fortunate nation beyond others.
3. Arphaxad named the Arphaxadites, who are now called Chaldeans.

Aram had the Aramites, which the Greeks called Syrians;

4. as **Laud** founded the Laudites, which are now called Lydians.

5. Of the four sons of **Aram**,

5A. **Uz** founded Trachonitis and Damascus; this country lies between Palestine and Coelosyria.

5B. **UI** [Hu] founded Armenia; and

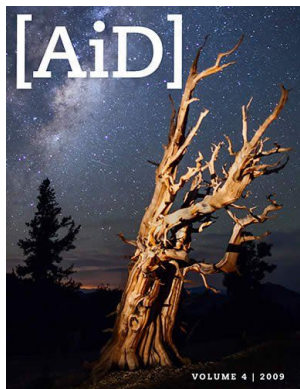
5C. **Gather** the Bactrians; and

5D. **Mesa** [Mechech] the Mesaneans; it is now called Charax Spasini.

3A. **Sala** was the son of Arphaxad;

3A1. and his son was Heber [Eber], from whom they originally called the Jews Hebrews.

3A1A. Heber begat **Joktan** and **Peleg**: he was called Peleg, because he was born at the dispersion of the nations to their various countries; for Peleg among the Hebrews signifies Division. Now Joktan, one of the sons of Heber, had these sons: Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. These inhabited from Cophen, an Indian river, and in part of Asia adjoining to it. And this shall suffice concerning the sons of Shem.



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Footnotes

1. The United States is not the first to try to bring peace in the Middle East—and wars in the Middle East go back 2,000 more years to the time of Abraham and the first recorded war (Genesis 14).

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