Learn to Read Genesis Effectively

Distance Learning Programme
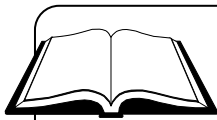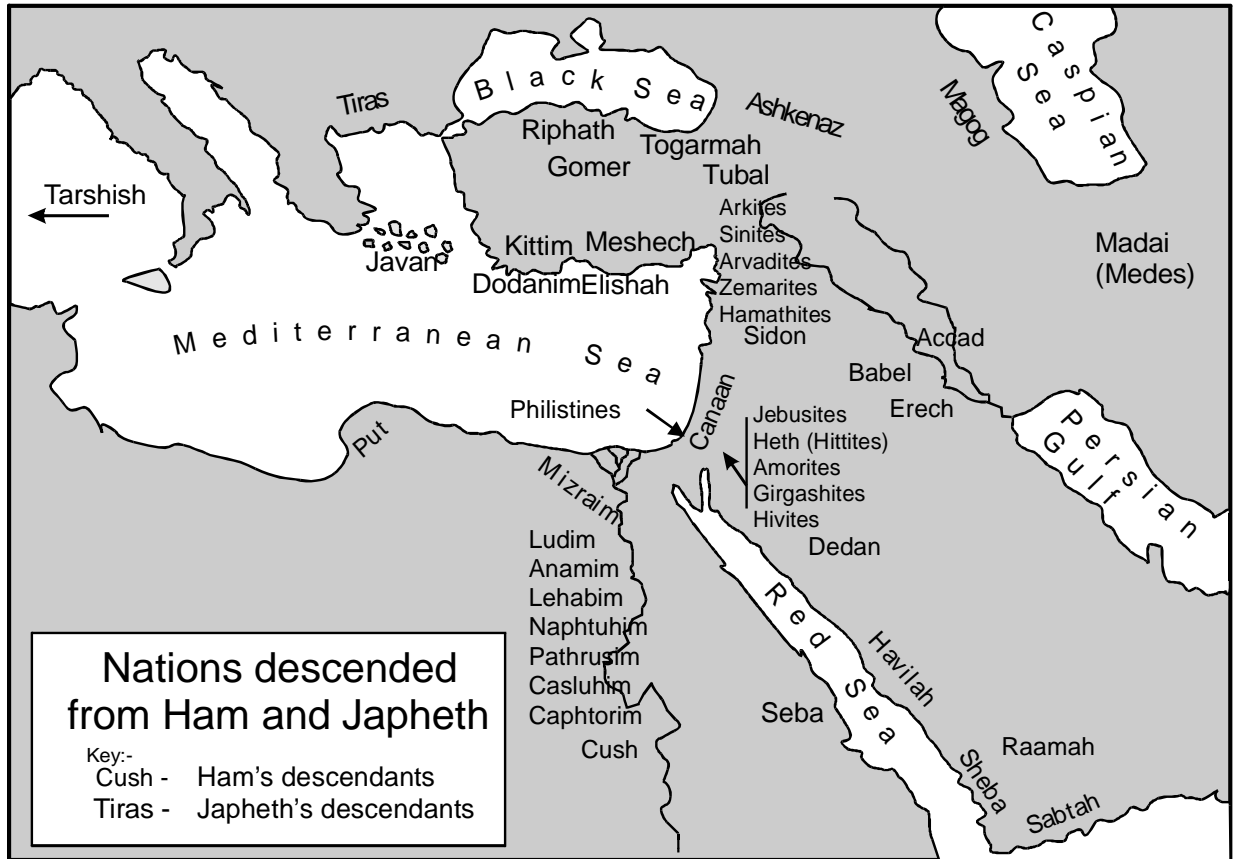
Session 7

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Nations descended
from Ham and Japheth

Key:-
Cush -   Ham's descendants
Tiras -   Japheth's descendants

Read Genesis 10 v 8 to 12

We are told more about Nimrod than we are about anyone else in chapter 10.

Look at the definition of "mighty"
in the *Strong's Concordance* entries
on page 10

Nimrod was a remarkable man, and it seems he dominated the rest of the family and became the first "king".

Verse 9 twice tells us that Nimrod was a mighty man "before the LORD".

Look at the definition of "before"
in the *Strong's Concordance* entries
on page 10

The word translated "before" here is used in many ways in the Bible, so that it is difficult to work out what the phrase means. However, some of the meanings given in Strong's Concordance suggest opposition (to God), and this certainly appears to be the case later in the chapter.

The New International Version makes the meaning of verses 10 and 11 clearer:

> *The first centres of his [Nimrod's] kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah*

Look at the definition of "kingdom"
in the *Strong's Concordance* entries
on page 10

So Nimrod is the first "kingdom builder" mentioned in the Bible. He started his rule in Babylon (also referred to as Babel) and its surrounding area. He later went north to Assyria. Wherever he went he built cities, following Cain's example (ch 4 v 17).

The other two references to Nimrod confirm the picture that we have already seen:

Read 1 Chronicles 1 v 10
Micah 5 v 6
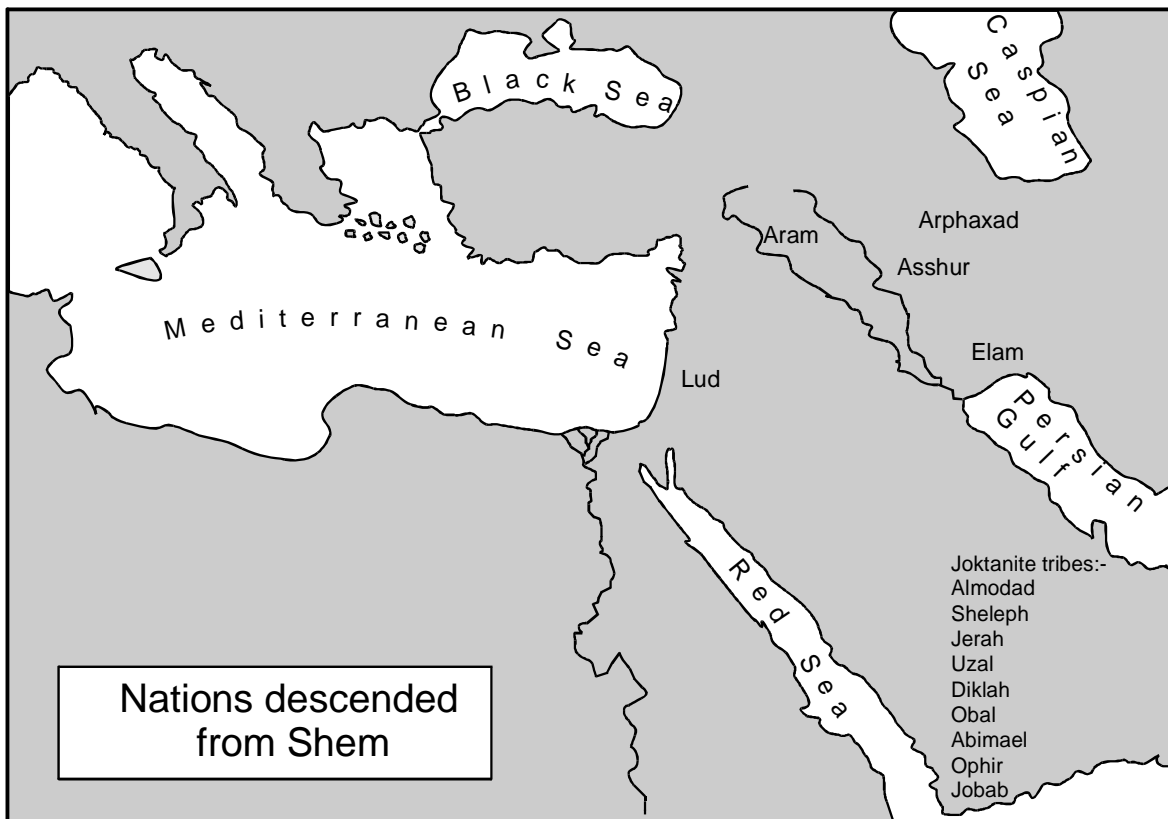
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We conclude, then, that Nimrod founded the Assyrian Empire and built its capital city Nineveh. The Assyrian Empire was later conquered by the Babylonian Empire. The character of the founder was reflected in both empires, which later feature in the Bible as hostile to God's people Israel. We see the hostility predicted in Genesis 3 v 15 starting again with Nimrod after the flood. It continues throughout the rest of Genesis and beyond.

Shem and his descendants

Shem's descendants are listed in verses 21 to 31.

Noah predicted that, of his three sons, Shem would be a worshipper of God (Genesis 9 v 26).

It was from Shem that God's chosen people, the Jews, came. The record of Shem's descendants forms an introduction to the growth and development of the Semitic races throughout the main record of Genesis. There are twenty-six nations listed as coming from Shem. Those whose locations are known in the time of the kings are shown on the map below.
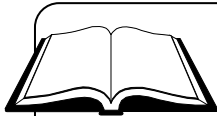

Nations descended from Shem

Genesis 11 v 1 to 9 – The confusion of languages

> Read Genesis 11 v 1 to 9

God gave Noah a command as he left the ark:-

> Read Genesis 9 v 1

It was God's intention that people should spread from the plateau of Ararat and fill the earth. However they journeyed together and found a suitable plain on which to live.

They then showed what they thought of God's command to fill the earth:

> *11 v 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."*

These words may well have been words spoken by Nimrod. We have already read that he founded and then ruled from Babel. Chapter 10 v 11 tells us that he later moved from Shinar north to Assyria, though we are not told why.

> Look at the definition of "name"
> in the *Strong's Concordance* entries
> on page 10

? What were the motives behind building the tower?

x They wanted to build a city and a tower to make a name or reputation for themselves

x They thought that the city and tower would form a focal point to keep their community united in that area

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This was totally opposed to what God intended when He gave Noah the command to "fill the earth". So their city and tower became a visible sign of their rebellion against God.

God could see the potential for ever greater rebellion in this situation, so He took control.

> Read Genesis 11 v 5 to 9

Therefore God created many and varied languages in order to put down this rebellion and so cause mankind to repopulate the whole earth according to His plan and purpose.

Without a common language, evil and rebellious influences and ideas would not spread so quickly. There would be a language barrier.

God could now deal with one group of people who would then be less influenced by the rest of the world.

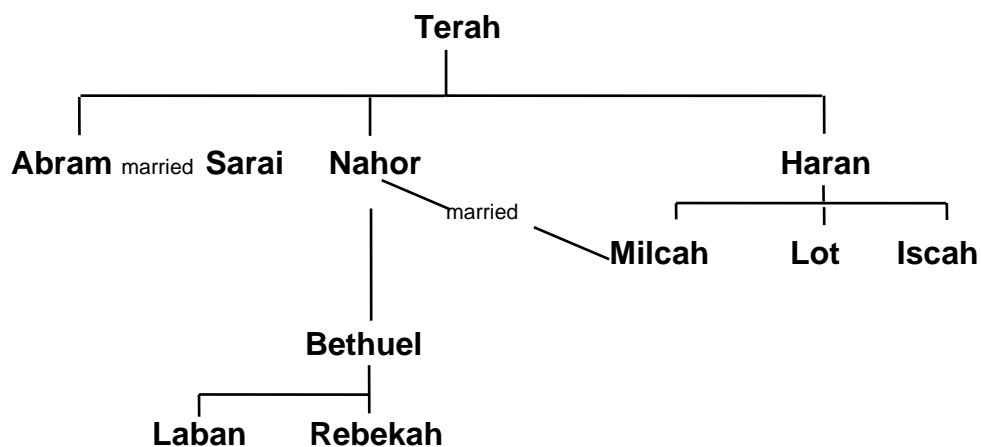# Genesis 11 v 10 to 30 – The ancestry of Abram

Read Genesis 11 v 10 to 30

We have already looked at a summary in chapter 10 v 22 to 31 of the descendants of Shem. Here we have more selective detail of the line of Shem. It is in fact continuing the record given in chapter 5 and is given in the same style.

We are given the line of Shem straight down to Abram. So if we combine the information given in chapter 5 with that in chapter 11 verses 10 to 26, we have a complete record of Abram's ancestry.
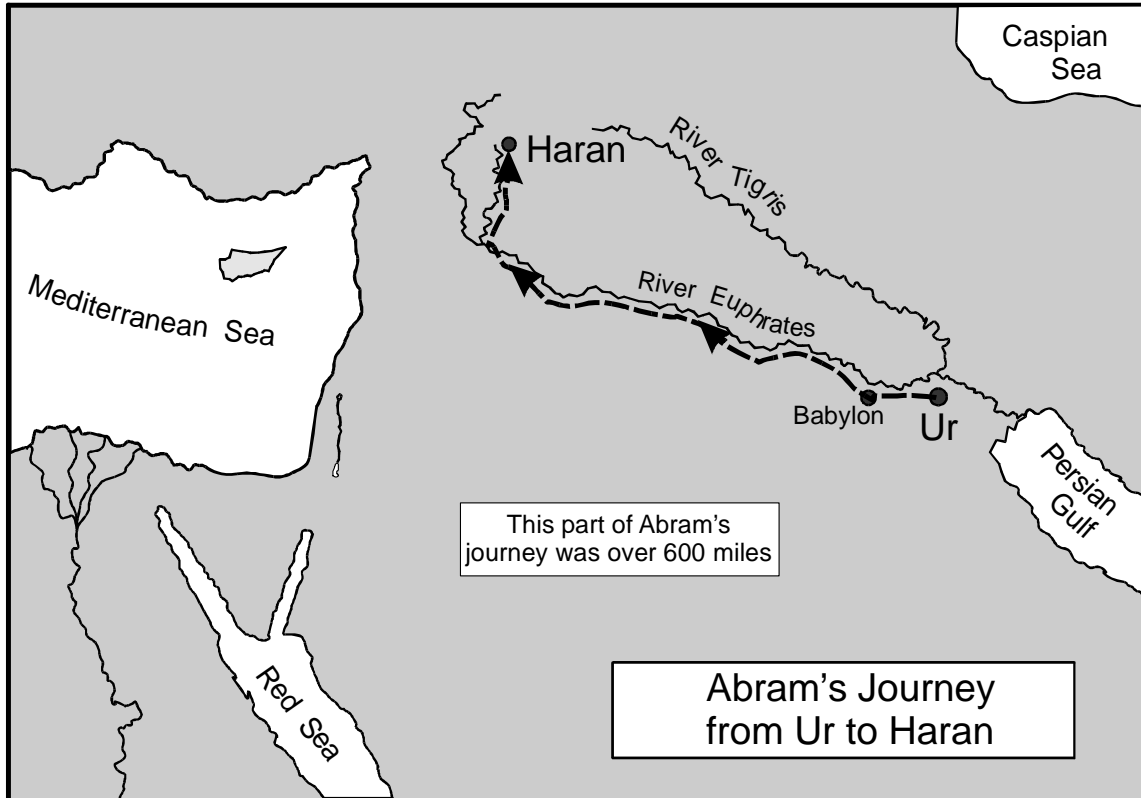
Some interesting facts emerge from a careful reading of the line given in chapter 11:

- x   Shem lived to be 600 years old
- x   Abram was 150 years old when Shem died
- x   Abram's possible contact with Shem could be the reason why Abram was a worshipper of the true God although he lived in an idolatrous city

Verses 27 to 32 detail the descendants of Terah, Abram's father. This fills in the background of Abram, who is one of the greatest characters in the Bible. (As we shall see later, his name was changed to Abraham.) The family tree below summarises verses 27 to 29 and shows how Abram was related to people about whom we shall read later:

```
                              Terah
        ┌───────────────────────┼───────────────────────────┐
  Abram married Sarai        Nahor                         Haran
                                │  married              ┌────┼────┐
                                │        ╲           Milcah  Lot  Iscah
                                │
                             Bethuel
                        ┌───────┴───┐
                      Laban      Rebekah
```

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The rest of chapter 11 tells us that Terah and his family were in Ur of the Chaldees, which was a city or district midway between Babylon and the Persian Gulf. Haran died while they were still in Ur. After this, Terah took his family to the place called Haran. While they were in Haran, Terah died. So the scene was set for God's dealings with Abram, which we will begin to look at in the next session. The map below shows their journey from Ur to Haran.

This part of Abram's journey was over 600 miles

Abram's Journey from Ur to Haran

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Summary

The end of chapter 11 forms a convenient point to remind ourselves what the Bible has told us so far:

- x After creation, everything conformed to God's wishes. There was no challenge to His authority
- x God gave Adam and Eve the choice of whether or not they would respect His authority and believe Him
- x Overcome by ambition and desire, they chose to believe the serpent rather than God, and in so doing challenged God's authority
- x God responded by passing a death sentence on mankind, and foretold a hard struggle between those who respected God's authority and those who did not
- x Cain showed the capabilities of those who did not accept God's commands by murdering his brother
- x A corrupt violent world was the eventual result of people turning their backs on God's commands
- x God decided to stop the corruption and violence by destroying most of the world's population with a flood
- x He made a fresh start with Noah and his family
- x God's authority was again challenged by most people led by Nimrod
- x This time the spirit of rebellion was restrained by God introducing different languages so that people could not understand each other. This resulted in them spreading all over the earth
- x God was now able to continue His plan with a small group of people without too much interference from the rest of the world
- x God began to do this through Abram and his family

Optional assignment 7

The line from Adam to Abram

Make a time chart of the family line from Adam to Abram from information given in chapter 5 and chapter 11 verses 10 to 26. You can make the time chart similar to that on page 5 of the first session. Indicate each person's lifespan with a line and see if you agree with the comments on chapter 11 half way down page 7.

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Strong's Concordance **entries**

MIGHTY

1368 gibbôwr (ghib-bore') or (shortened) gibbôr (ghib-bore')
intensive from *1396*;
powerful; by implication, *warrior, tyrant:*
champion, chief, x excel, giant, man, mighty (man, one), strong (man), valiant man.

BEFORE

6440 pânîym (paw-neem') plural (but always as singular) of an unused pâneh (paw-neh')
from *6437*;
the *face* (as the part that *turns;*
used in a great variety of applications (lit. and fig.);
also (with prep. pref. *as* a prep. (before etc):
+ accept, a- (be-) fore (-time), against, anger, x as (long as), at, + battle, etc.

KINGDOM

4467 mamlâkâh (mam-law-kaw')
from *4427*;
dominion, ie (abstract) the estate *(rule)* or (concrete) the country *(realm)*:
kingdom, king's, reign, royal.

NAME

8034 shêm (shame)
a primitive word perhaps rather from *7760* through the idea of
definite and conspicuous *position;*
an *appellation*, as a mark or memorial of individuality;
by implication *honour, authority, character:*
+ base, [in-] fame [-ous], name [-d], renown, report

Notes

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