



SESSION 6

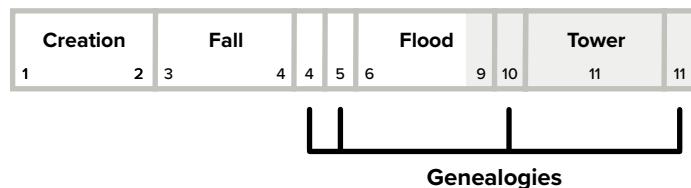
TOWER

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I. PRAYER/REVIEW

A. Genesis 1-11: Horizontal Chart



B. Genesis 6:9-9:29: Flood Account

Flood Judgement	Noahic Covenant	Noah's Story & Canaan's Curse
Build the Ark (6:14)	Be fruitful...increase...fill the earth	Drunkenness
Enter the Ark (7:1)	My covenant with you (plural)	Nakedness
Leave the Ark (8:16)	Never again	Saw (voyeurism)
6:9 8:22	9:1 17	9:18 29

C. Toledot: Genesis 9-11

- Toledot of Noah (Gen 6:9-9:29)
- Toledot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 10:1-11:9)
- Toledot of Shem (11:10-26)

II. NOAHIC COVENANT: GENESIS 9:1-17

A. Background: Covenants

GENESIS 6:18

“But I will establish my covenant with you...”

- The Hebrew word for covenant is *berith* (“to cut”). This is the first occurrence in Scripture. (In Genesis 9:8-17 it occurs eight times.).
- A covenant was a contract or binding agreement that ties the two parties together. Two primary kinds of covenants existed in ancient times:
 - Parity Covenant: an agreement made between equals (e.g. Abraham and Abimelech—21:22-32).

- (b) Suzerainty Covenant: an agreement made between a superior (e.g. a king) and an inferior (e.g. vassal). Biblical examples of these kinds are the Noahic (6:18, 9:8-17); Abrahamic (15:18); Mosaic (Ex 19 -Num 10).
- (3) The Noahic Covenant has affinity to the royal grant covenants of the Ancient Near East whereby a deity bestows a gift, favor, or benefit upon a king.
- (4) In the Noahic Covenant, “the Lord obligates Himself to preserve Noah, throughout the imminent Flood. Noah, on his part, must build an ark to preserve life and enter it according to the Lord’s direction” (Waltke, 123). Otherwise, there is no covenant to be made. Oddly, there is a storyline tension present: will Noah do his part? Can God count upon him to do his task? Likewise, can Noah count on God? Will God actually do as He has promised? As Waltke notes, “It should now be clear that the character of the covenant partners drives the plot” (123).

B. Horizontal Chart: Genesis 9:1-8



C. Exposition: GENESIS 9:1-17

1. God's Charge to Mankind (1,7)

a. To produce Life (1,7)

GENESIS 9:1

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.”

GENESIS 9:7

“As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”

Verses 1 and 7 form an inclusio (bookends) for the full passage of verses 1-7. The emphasis is upon the propagation of life. The wording hearkens back to the original cultural mandate.

GENESIS 1:27-28

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish

in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Note that Noah is now in the place of the next “Adam” in that he is blessed to be an image bearer and as such, God’s representative with a mandate to fill and subdue the earth.

b. To preserve Life (2-6)

(1) Ruling and subduing the earth will not be easy. “The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth...” (9:2).

(2) Eating meat will now be permitted with restriction.

GENESIS 9:3-4

“Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

⁴But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.”

- This may explain the “fear and dread” of the animal world (9:2).
- The restriction is meat that has its lifeblood still within. “The text is prohibiting not simply the consumption of blood but rather the pulsating lifeblood” (Ross, 205).
- Later, in the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant, further dietary restrictions will be given.

(3) Killing of fellow man is expressly forbidden.

GENESIS 9:6

“Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.”

- Life is sacred; man cannot indiscriminately take another’s life.
- Punishment (capital) for breaking this life-code (i.e. committing murder) will be forfeiture of life for life.
- The theological justification is found in the killing of one created in the image of God.
- Man as God’s representative will carry out the death sentence.

2. God’s Covenant with Noah (8-17)

a. Characteristics:

(1) Breadth: universal (“your descendants and with every living creature”—9:8-10)

(2) Permanence: perpetual (“everlasting covenant”—9:16)

- (3) Nature: unconditional ("I [God] will"—6:18; "I now establish my covenant"—9:9; note that there are no stipulations; God in grace has bound Himself to this unilateral agreement).
- b. Sign of the Covenant

GENESIS 9:17

So God said to Noah, "This is the sign (i.e. the rainbow) of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

The sign itself, a heavenly rainbow, is literally in Hebrew the word for "bow." The "bow" was an instrument of war. In some ancient mythologies the bow was a symbol of the hostility of the gods. Not so with the Noahic Covenant. This bow is God's celestial peace-sign that never again will such a flood judgment occur (9:15).

III. NOAH'S STORY AND CANAAN'S CURSE: GENESIS 9:18-29

A. Background to the Story (18-19, 28-29)

1. Genealogy

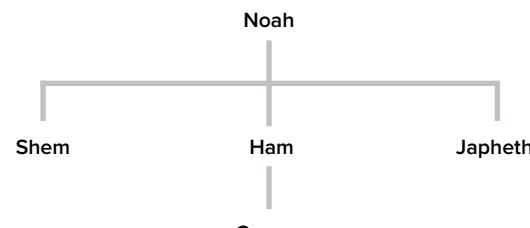
GENESIS 9:18-19

The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.)¹⁹ These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth.

◆ INSIGHT

The covenant with Noah and the later covenant at Sinai (called Sinaitic or Mosaic) share intentional similarities. To answer the question "why?", Sailhamer notes, "The answer that best fits with the author's purposes is that he wants to show God's covenant at Sinai is not a new act of God... Once again at Sinai, as He had done in the past (e.g. here with the Noahic Covenant), God is at work restoring His fellowship with man and bringing man back to Himself... (which is) the author's development of God's restoration of blessing."

(Sailhamer, EBC, 93).



2. Summary (28-29)

a. Noah's life after the flood: 350 years

b. Noah's life in total: 950 years

"And then he died" completes the story begun in Genesis 5:28-32 (where also it is stated that Noah had sons at the age of 500; 5:32).

B. Bizarre Story (9:20-23)

GENESIS 9:20-23

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard.

²¹ When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

1. Theological purpose

- a. The theme of blessing and cursing continues to be prominent (9:24-27).
- b. “Out of the virtues and vices of Noah’s sons grew the virtues and vices of the families of the world” (Ross, 210).

2. Story observations:

- a. Noah’s drunkenness led to his lying down “uncovered” (exposed, naked).
- b. Ham observed the embarrassing scene but did not act prudently. “Saw” speaks of looking at searchingly, longingly (as in Song of Solomon 1:6; 6:11b); best to understand this as prurient voyeurism which would rob the drunken Noah of his private space and dignity. Note the warning of Habakkuk 2:15: “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin until they are drunk, so that he can gaze upon their naked bodies.”
- c. Shem and Japheth act with consideration and considerable restraint, honoring their father regardless of his current condition (cf. Ex 20:12). The garment could have been Noah’s that Ham took away in order to either expose his father or to give it to his brothers. The text clearly notes that the righteous brothers did not see their father’s nakedness. The contrast of the three brothers (hubris vs piety) is deliberate and foreshadows the scattering and widespread abandonment of the common moral code.

C. Blessing and Cursing (9:24-27)

1. Cursed: Canaan (24-25)

Why curse Ham’s son, Canaan, if Ham was the guilty one? “As the youngest son wrongs his father, so the curse will fall on his youngest son, who presumably inherits his moral decadence (see Lev 18:3; Deut 9:3)” (Waltke, 150).

To curse is to pronounce divine judgment upon anyone who profaned what is sacred, but it would always be within God’s will or judgment as to whether the curse is valid (and therefore enacted as part of God’s will/judgment).

2. Blessed: Shem and Japheth (26-27)

To Shem is the blessing; it entails God's election of Shem and his descendants to fulfill the mandate (of 1:26-28) and ultimately crush the serpent (3:15; 4:26). The line of blessing/promise has been established.

Japheth's territory will be extended by God (see 10:2-5); his descendants will "live in the tents" (have a kind of fellowship) with the Shemites (Semites). Fruchtenbaum suggests, "So while the Japhethites would conquer the Jews physically, the Jews would conquer the Japhethites spiritually" (199). This of course would be a future fulfillment.

Canaan (Canaanites) was destined to be enslaved by both Jews (Semites) and Japhethites (Gentiles of later, developing history).

IV. TABLE OF NATIONS: GENESIS 10:1-32

A. Toledot # 5: Shem, Ham, Japheth

GENESIS 10:1

This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

GENESIS 10:32

These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.

Note that these two verses form an inclusio (bookends) between all the genealogical listings of the three brothers.

One of the implications of these family lines repopulating the earth is the theological teaching of the commonality of all peoples; that is, there is no justification for racial or ethnic superiority of any family line.

At the end of each brother's lineage is the acknowledgment that all peoples spread out into "territories," "clans," "nations," and "languages" (see 10: 5, 20, 31).

B. Summary Table: Genesis 10

Table of Nations
(Gen. 10)

	Japheth	Ham	Shem
Lineage	10:2-4	10:6-20	10:21-31
Sons	7	4	5
Key Names	Gomer Javan	Cush Nimrod	Araphaxad Eber
Settlements (overlapping)	Turkey Greece Asia Minor	Egypt Africa W. Arabian Peninsula	Mesopotamia Arabia

C. Observations: Genesis 10

1. This is a segmented (as opposed to linear) genealogy tracing the genealogy of the three sons of Noah.
2. The line of Messianic blessing is of Shem (called Shemites or more often, Semites... thus Semitic peoples).
3. One important purpose of these genealogies is not simply to trace ancestry but political, geographical, and ethnic affiliation within these tribal peoples. Additionally, there is evidence that this is a selective list, not a comprehensive, ancestral list.
4. Two descendants receive additional scrutiny and information:

GENESIS 10:8-12

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth.⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD.”¹⁰ The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in Shinar.¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah¹² and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah—which is the great city.

Nimrod's name means “we will rebel.” As a “mighty warrior” (tyrant, leader of aggression) he will expand his influence not by scattering out but by military aggression. He is linked to Babylon (Tower of Babel) and Nineveh, both to be historical enemies of the later nation of Israel.

GENESIS 10:25

Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

Peleg's name means “division.” This name and meaning may prophesy the dispersal of nations at Babel (11:1-9). Further it may demarc the elect (blessing) line of Shem from the non-elect (cf. the extended line of Shem—11:10-26).

5. The number of nations in Genesis 10 is 70. Interestingly, this corresponds to the number of Jacob's family that traveled (sojourned) to Egypt (Gen 46:26-27). The author-compiler of the Book of Genesis seems to hold forth this seed of Abraham as the “new humanity” with the patriarch-father, Abraham, as a kind of “second Adam,” or “the father of many nations” (Gen 17:5).

Also, note that Jesus sent out the “seventy” in a broader preaching mission (Lk 10:1-16). Perhaps, this number of “evangelists” corresponds and foreshadows worldwide evangelism (the Great Commission).

V. TOWER OF BABEL: GENESIS 11:1-9

A. Chiastic (Mirror) Structure (11:1-9)

A... All the earth one language (1)

B... People settle together there (2)

C... Said to each other (3)

D... Come, let us make bricks (3)

E... City and a Tower (4)

Pivot

→ X But the Lord came down (5)

E'... City and a Tower (5)

D'... Come, let us...confuse (7)

C'... Not understand each other (7)

B'... People scattered from there (8)

A'... Language of the whole earth (9)

B. Exposition

GENESIS 11:1-4

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.

² As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. ³ They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.

⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

Not all of the Scripture is in strict chronological order. Biblical writers valued purpose and theme over strict time sequences. Genesis 11 explains how and why the scattering of the peoples occurred; Genesis 10 and the genealogical lists simply document the result.

From Ararat “men moved eastward” to the plain of Shinar, that is, the area later called Babylonia (a nemesis to the Israelites in their historical development).

The use of bricks suggests permanency. The grand scheme to build city and tower betrays rebellion and hubris. Babylon (Hb. “babel”) means “gate of God” and may suggest that the purpose of the tower was related to astrology and the stars, thus the first false religion (cf. Rev. 17:5). Note their driving motivation: a name, a city, a tower, a permanency.

GENESIS 11:5-10

But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶ The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” ⁸ So the

LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.⁹ That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

“But the Lord came down” is the crux of the passage. The people tried to build up toward the heavens, but God must come down to deal with prideful rebellion.

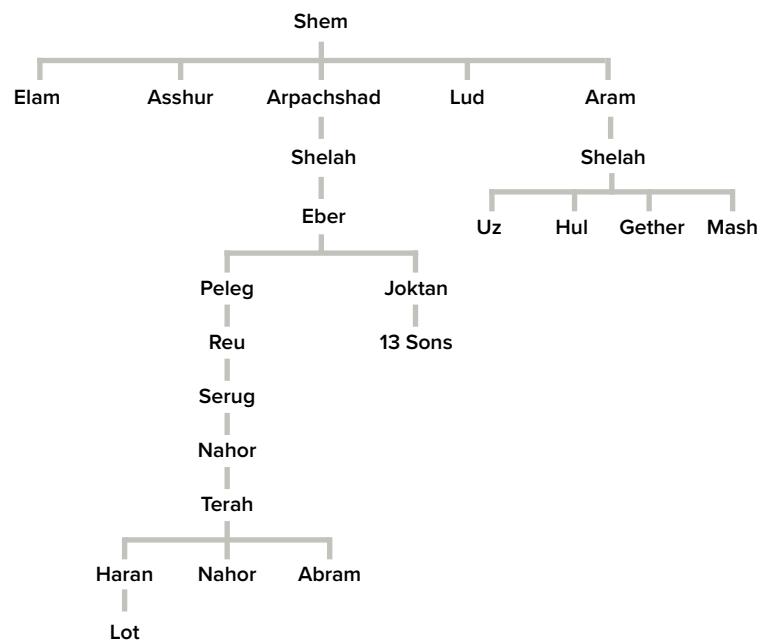
Man’s common language and rebellious spirit must be checked or “nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (11:6). In other words, all they plan to do, they will attempt to do without any regard to God’s intentions or commands. Rebellion has again seized the hearts of men (cf. 6:5).

C. Theological Insights on the Tower Story

1. It chronicles the beginning and reasons for the many languages on the earth.
2. It shows the development and origin of the races (with Gen 10).
3. It illustrates the sinfulness of man, the rebellious hubris of man, the need for God’s judgment to accomplish His clear mandate (be fruitful, scatter, rule).
4. It sets the stage for the story of Abraham.

VI. TOLEDOT OF SHEM: Genesis 11:10-26

A. Genealogical Lineage of Shem



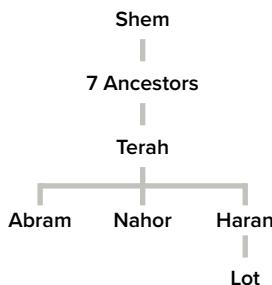
B. Observations

1. This genealogy will advance the line of blessing. The events of rebellion at the Tower do not fix man's story as one of perpetual rebellion and ungodliness. The line will eventually reach to Abram and the blessing/promise.
2. This "toledot" consists of ten names to provide transition from Flood to Abram/Abraham. Abraham will be the father of the future Israelites, the means by which God will covenant to bless all nations.
3. Note Luke 3:33 (beginning with Abraham) to Luke 3:38 (Adam, the son of God). This is the genealogy of 11:10-26. This is the outworking of the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15).

VII. TOLEDOT OF TERAH: GENESIS 11:27-25:11

A. Background

This toledot begins the important story of Abram (Abraham). The genealogical notation is brief (cf. 11:10 with 11:27ff).



B. Observations

1. The story begins with the tight-knit family in Ur (of the Chaldeans—as that area would later be called in human history). Ur was located on Euphrates River in lower Mesopotamia (near modern-day Persian Gulf). See the map on page 6.
2. At this place Abram will receive his call to leave and follow God's leadership (see Acts 7:2). He will travel to Haran (550 miles north) to the region of Paddan Aram (modern Syrian-Turkish border).
3. Abram ("exalted father") will marry Sarai ("princess"). Following his father's lead, Abram with Sarai and nephew, Lot, follow Terah from Ur to Haran (where Terah will die). Abram will not follow God's call until the death of his father, whereby he will then take Sarai and Lot to the land of Canaan. This may indicate that he was initially slow to believe or have faith in God's call upon his life. Or, it may show his sense of responsibility to care for his father (to his death) before embarking on the unknown "faith" adventure. With Abram's move to Canaan, the story of Abram (Abraham) begins. And with this move, the "Movement 1: Prologue" ends.