

## **SESSION 61: DIASPORA, PART THREE**

*Genesis 10:21-32 (with 11:10-32)*


February 23, 2025

### **PREFACE**

We have examined the line descending from Noah's son Japheth; likewise his son Ham. We now conclude Chapter Ten with a look at the line emerging from what Moses—and presumably, we—consider the most important of the three: Shem, father of the Semites, including, eventually, Israel. It makes perfect sense that the author of Genesis would address these three lines in order of ascending importance, ending with this one, for, first, it is his *own* line; second, it is the line that will be followed for the remainder of his book (the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible) and, indeed, the rest of God's word to the end of The Revelation. In v21 he gives away his agenda.

### **v21**

**Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber [Ayer], and the older brother of Japheth, children were born.**

The phrase “the older brother of Japheth” harmonizes with the other times the brothers are listed by name; Shem was the firstborn, always listed first when all three names are included.  The comparison here is made to Japheth, rather than Ham, probably because these two brothers and their descendants have more in common with each other than does Ham—whose line through Canaan was the one prophesied to be cursed, while Shem and Japheth were prophesied blessings. Here he is mentioned last because his line is the most important to the author—and because it then cues up the narrative of the rest of his five books.

The phrase “the father of all the children of Eber” is a reference to Shem's great-grandson through Arpachshad and Shelah. The name Eber presages the name “Hebrew”; it means “across,” or “passing over,” here by extension “the region across the Euphrates River”—thus, referring to more than just the Israelites. As we will see, Eber and his father Peleg did indeed come from across the Euphrates.

Verse 22 gives us the immediate sons of Shem, who, Chapter Eleven tells us lived to be 600 years old and “had other sons and daughters.”

The NIVs and KJVs have it “whose older brother was Japheth” and “the brother of Japheth the elder,” respectively. It can be translated either way—the NIVs and the LSB include margin notes “or...” The historical and biblical convention is to list the eldest son first, and Shem is always listed first when the other names are included. This is the rationale behind the LSB, NASB, and ESV versions.

## v22

The sons of Shem were Elam [ay-LAHM] and Asshur [ah-SHOOR] and Arpachshad [ar-pahk-SHAD] and Lud [LOOD] and Aram [a-RAHM].

Some of the sons of Shem did not travel far, initially at least, from where the ark came to rest; others traveled a more ambitious route.

**Elam:** is the country east of the lower Tigris River; the Assyrians call it Elamtu, which means “highland.”

**Asshur:** settled between the upper Tigris and Euphrates, and became Assyria—sometimes referred to even today as Asshur by some modern Assyrians.

**Arpachshad:** settled along the upper Tigris.

**Lud:** had other thoughts and settled far to the west to the Aegean Sea, near the site of today’s Istanbul, in far western Turkey, possibly becoming the Lydians in Asia Minor.

**Aram:** settled on the upper Euphrates, NE of the Canaanites.

The author Moses discards all but Aram—who is quickly dispensed with in v23—so he can focus his attention on the most important son, Arpachshad.

## v23

The sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash.

I could not find Gether anywhere on our map, and no mention of him beyond this list and the one in 1 Chronicles; but Uz (oots) and Hull (khool) are located just NE of the Canaanites; Mash (mahsh) is located opposite, on the far eastern boundary of the Shemite region.

## vv24-25

Arpachshad was the father of Shelah [SHEH-lakh]; and Shelah was the father of Eber [AY-ber]. Now two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan [yok-TAWN].

We know nothing of Shelah; he was the father of Eber, and in the latter’s two sons we have an important split into two very different (even opposing) families—much like that which will occur later between Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau. Through Peleg will come Abraham; through Joktan, Babylon.

The name Peleg even means “division” or “stream,” and the text emphasizes this by explaining that “in his days the earth was divided”—“divided” here a variant of his name, and meaning to split or divide, make a furrow, to cleave.

Peleg is found, along with his father Eber, in the upper reaches of the Shemite region, nudging up against the Japheth region—today’s turkey. His brother Joktan, however, settled in the heart of this region, and his offspring would appear to become the founders of many Arabic tribes—as seen by the placement of their names (listed in vv26-29) on our map.

**v30**

**Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.**

We don’t really know where these place names should be located, but probably somewhere in southern Arabia.

**vv31-32**

Chapter Ten closes with two summary verses, much as the author did previously after Ham’s descendants (10:20). Now he adds, in v32, the larger summary statement for *all* the sons of Noah.

**These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their tongues, by their lands, according to their nations. These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.**

Even as this verse states what *must* be true—that all humanity, all tribes around the globe emerged from Noah and his three sons—we are still left with nagging questions, among which, *How do we account for such far-flung tribes as the Inuit, Mongols, Chinese, Pacific island natives, American Indians, etc.?* Probably the best we can deduce is that since the Inundation, Noah’s sons and grandsons, and daughters and granddaughters, carried within them the seeds of all the variants we see today across the earth. After all, the typical Anglo-Saxon in mid-America may be just as much a variant from Noah as may be someone from the steppes of Mongolia. Every one of us is the product of his or her ancestors—both near and far.

At the close of each chapter in his commentary, H. C. Leupold includes “Homiletical Suggestions,” much as Spurgeon does in his wondrous work on the Psalms, *The Treasury of David*—that is, suggestions for how to preach or teach the passage just discussed. I was amused by Leupold’s remarks at the end of Chapter Ten. Instead of bullet-point recommendations for three-point sermons, he offers this.

*Leupold:* It may very well be questioned whether a man should ever preach on a chapter such as this. It could be expounded in adult Bible class study, and even then a summary view of the whole chapter and its purpose might meet all needs. Perhaps the section v. 8-11 could be used on occasion to set forth the story of the origin of the kingdoms of this world and their basic character. But such a sermon might have too little gospel content and be largely negative in character, showing what the kingdom of God is *not*.

In this spirit, I think we should not close Chapter Ten without looking at the continuation of Shem’s line in the second part of Chapter Eleven. Because there we find not just Israel, but the gospel. Our next two and final sessions of this study will focus on the *first* part of Chapter Eleven, vv1-9, but right now let’s skip over that to v10.

Right away we see that even though life spans remain high in comparison to today, they are diminishing in comparison to the earliest days. Thus Shem, the father of the Semites, will live for 600 years. And in v10 we get what may be for some of us a more accurate picture of the family in the ark. How many of us (perhaps after Hollywood’s depiction) have thought of Noah and his wife accompanied by relatively young—by our standards—couples in the ark.

**v10: These are the generations of Shem. Shem was 100 years old and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood;**

So now we know that Noah’s firstborn son was 98 years old during the year-long Inundation, and was 100 when Shem was born.

## TO ABRAM/ABRAHAM

The purpose of this generational list is to move the reader from Noah and his sons, and their immediate descendants, to Abram and, eventually, Israel. And thus it is exclusively focused on this line. Whereas Chapter Ten included some of the respective brothers, this passage is only interested in tracing from Noah and Shem to Abram. In that, it is more akin to most generational lists scattered throughout the OT and NT, which typically follow a specific line, ignoring the rest. For this purpose, the phrase Moses will employ repeatedly here is “he became the father of other sons and daughters.” That will suffice for the rest of each generation, for they are not pertinent to the purpose of the passage. 📌

One other general note: Notice how with each subsequent generation the age at death decreases, from Shem living 600 years, to Terah living 205 years (11:32). **Look again at v21 in Chapter 10.**

### Read Genesis 10:21.

Earlier I pointed out that the phrase “the father of all the children of Eber” is a reference to Shem’s great-grandson through Arpachshad and Shelah. The name Eber presages the name “Hebrew”; it means “across,” or “passing over,” here by extension “the region across the Euphrates River”—thus, referring to more than just the Israelites. Now we can see that Eber—the “Hebrews”—did indeed come from across the Euphrates. **Look at the second map included in the handout.** It is not included on this map, but Eber settled in the region just NE of Haran and N of Gozan, which would place him “across the Euphrates” from the perspective of Canaan/Israel. From Eber to Abram (seven generations) the line worked its way down the Euphrates to Ur of the Chaldeans.

### Read Genesis 11:31-32.

If one is unfamiliar with the terrain of the middle east, one might wonder what the family was doing in Haran if their destination was Canaan; as the crow flies would be much more direct and shorter.

Refer to the family tree included in the handout. This is a streamlined way to see the line from Noah and Shem advancing to the twelve tribes of Israel.

**Note:** In the chart the name “Cainan” is inserted between “Arphaxad” and “Salah” (Shelah); this name is included in Luke 3:36, but not in Genesis or the 1 Chronicles list.

But that route would be straight across hundreds of miles of barren desert, whereas, taking the route they did, would mean a much more pleasant journey, following the fertile crescent through Haran.

As the text tells us, the family settled in Haran for a while, and Terah dies there. Some time after his father dies, Yahweh tells Abram it is time to leave—time to complete his journey (12:1-3)—and he traveled as far as Shechem, which would be about in the middle of today’s Israel, above Bethel and Jerusalem (called Jebus at the time).

So from this we see that Eber’s name was indeed fitting, for his descendants—just seven generations later—did settle on the other side of the Euphrates.

## **To CHRIST**

### **Now turn to Matthew 1.**

We are familiar with the beginning of this line from Abraham to Jesus the Christ: Abraham → Isaac → Jacob (Israel) → Judah... We are also familiar with the ending of the line: “Joseph the husband of Mary” (Matthew 1:16); Joseph did not supply the seed that impregnated Mary, but *legally* Jesus was in his line—the kingly line through David (1:6).

There is controversy over whether the genealogical line given in Luke 3 represents Mary’s line, as opposed to Joseph’s. But the writer to the Hebrews clearly and poetically establishes the case for Jesus being “after the order of Melchizedek”—that is, both king and priest.

### **Read Hebrews 7:14–17.**

Here the preacher repeatedly quotes from Psalm 110:4 to make the case for Christ alone being the true Messiah—both king and priest, descended from Judah and the kingly house of David, as well as “priest forever,” as the eternal advocate between man and God.

Over the past few weeks we have traced through countless unpronounceable names from Noah and his three sons to Christ Jesus the Son of God—from Noah to Moses and the Law, to salvation in Christ through His gospel—all according to the plan God set down long before the first man was even created.

# SESSION 61

Diaspora, part three  
Genesis 10:21-32 (with 11:10-32)

## Sons of Shem

**Elam:** is the country east of the lower Tigris River; the Assyrians call it Elamtu, which means “highland.”

**Asshur:** settled between the upper Tigris and Euphrates, and became Assyria—sometimes referred to even today as Asshur by some modern Assyrians.

**Arpachshad:** settled along the upper Tigris.

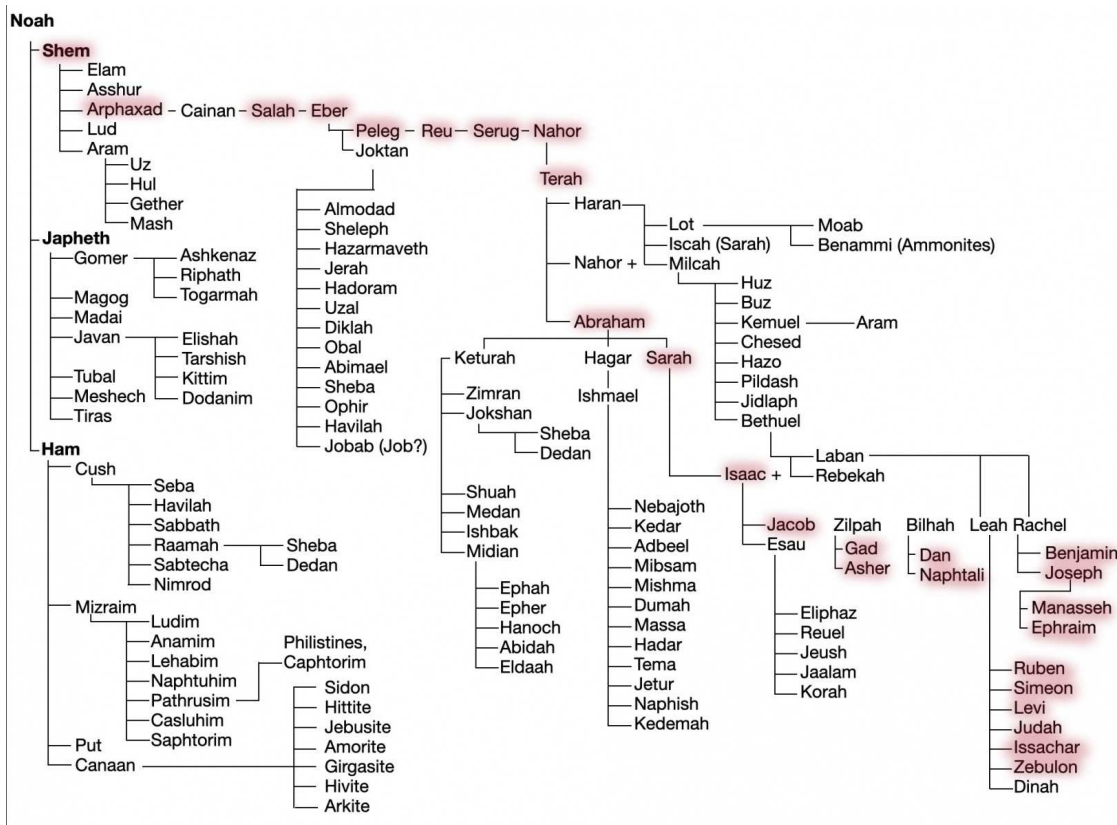
**Lud:** had other thoughts and settled far to the west to the Aegean Sea, near the site of today’s Istanbul, in far western Turkey, possibly becoming the Lydians in Asia Minor.

**Aram:** settled on the upper Euphrates, NE of the Canaanites.

The author Moses discards all but Aram—who is quickly dispensed with in v23—so he can focus his attention on the most important son, Arpachshad.

## To Abram/Abraham

The purpose of this generational list in Chapter Eleven is to move the reader from Noah and his sons, and their immediate descendants, to Abram and, eventually, Israel. And thus it is exclusively focused on this line. Whereas Chapter Ten included some of the respective brothers, this passage is only interested in tracing from Noah and Shem to Abram.



For complete notes and audios for each session, go to [DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/](http://DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/)



