

The Line of Ham

10: 6-20

DIG: What was significant about the descendants of Ham in relation to the Jewish people? Who was the key person to come through the line of Ham? Why so?

REFLECT: Is there a part of your life that identifies with the line of Ham? Do you have a friend, family member or relative that *seems like* he or she came from the line of Ham? What can you do? What is beyond your control?

The descendants of **Ham** migrated for the most part to northeast Africa, especially Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean region, and southern Arabia. Eventually, **they** formed the eastern and southern people of Mesopotamia. The descendants of Canaan settled in the area that **the LORD** later promised to give to the descendants of Shem.¹⁸⁷

The four sons of Ham were **Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan (10:6)**. **The sons enumerated all became heads of clans whose land was promised to Abraham.** The first son is **Cush**; the **Cushites** settled in the land of the upper Nile south of Egypt in Nubia and Ethiopia. Therefore, **Cush** and Ethiopia are interchangeable in the Bible. **They** intermarried with Semitic tribes living in the same region, so there is some repetition of the names in other lines. The second son is **Mizraim**; this is the well known name for Egypt. In fact, Egypt is called **the land of Ham** in **Psalm 105:23**. The third son is **Put (Jeremiah 46:9; Ezekiel 30:5, 38:5)**; he located in North Africa in modern day Libya. The famous Jewish historian Josephus confirmed this. This is the only **son of Ham** whose genealogy is not given. The fourth son is **Canaan**, the father of **the Canaanites**. They were **Hamitic** in origin, but they adopted a Semitic language and culture, as we know from both the Bible and archaeology.

The five sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca (10:7a). They ended up being nations in southern Arabia. The first son was **Seba**; he migrated from southwestern Arabia across the Red Sea, into the region now known as the Sudan. **His** descendants became known as the Sabeans (**Isaiah 45:14**). The second son was **Havilah** meaning *sand land*; he settled along the Arabian coast at the proverbial source of gold (**2:11**). This is the place where Ishmael (**25:18**) and the Amalekites lived (**First Samuel 15:7**). The third son was **Sabtah**; he settled on the west coast of the Persian Gulf and is sometimes identified with Sabaka who ruled Ethiopia between 712 and 700 BC. **He** conquered Egypt and set up the twenty-fifth dynasty. The fourth son was **Raamah**; he settled in the extreme southwest of Saudi Arabia. The fifth son was **Sabteca**, connected with the land of Nubia or Ethiopia. The sixth son was **Nimrod**. **The five other brothers each became the founder of a people; but Nimrod did not and is, therefore, not included in this verse.**

The sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan (10:7b). Two of Abraham's grandchildren were named Sheba and Dedan (25:3). The first son was Sheba; he settled in southwest Arabia and is famous as the homeland of the queen that visited Solomon in the tenth century B. C. (First Kings 10:1-13). The second son is Dedan; he settled in the oases of El Ela in northwestern Saudi Arabia (Isaiah 21:13; Jeremiah 25:23, 49:8; Ezekiel 25:13). Inserted in this section of the birth of nations is the story of Nimrod. He was the rebel, the founder of Babel, and the hunter of the souls of men. He was the lawless one and the first world ruler - a shadow of the last world ruler, the antichrist who is yet to appear.¹⁸⁸

Cush was the father of Nimrod (10:8a). He was the youngest son of Cush, who apparently resented the curse of Canaan (9:25) more and more as the years went on. By the time Nimrod was born, the resentment had become so strong that he gave his son a name that means *the Rebel, or literally, let us rebel*. The implication is that from childhood Cush trained Nimrod to be a leader in a planned and organized rebellion against God. During the Great Tribulation, the antichrist, or the lawless one (see my commentary on Revelation Bt - **The Rise of the Man of Lawlessness**), will also lead a planned and organized rebellion against ADONAI. The LORD had destined Nimrod to serve his brothers. But Nimrod would not allow it! He would rule them instead! And so Cush began to train Nimrod to rule his brothers and plan against God.¹⁸⁹

Nimrod is obviously intended as a historical figure in this passage, but attempts to identify him have been unsuccessful. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to identify him with others such as Sargon the Great, Naramsim, who was the war-like grandson of Sargon, Marduk, a god of Babylon (Jeremiah 50:2), and Ninurta, the Babylonian god of war. He was the god of the hunt, and was called the arrow or the mighty hero, Gilgamesh, the great hunter of Sumerian literature, Numarad, meaning *a man from the city of Marad*, TukultiNinurta I, the Assyrian king who captured Babylon and carried off the idol of Marduk in 1246-1206 BC. He was the first one to rule Babylonia and Assyria, was called Amenophis, also known as Amenhotep III who ruled Egypt from 1460 to 1379, and finally, Orion, the hunter of Greek mythology. Elsewhere in Scripture he is mentioned only in Micah 5:6.

Nimrod grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth (10:8b). This verse focuses on his relationship with the earth. He was a hunter of animals, but he was also a hunter of men. **The rabbis teach that he began to display man's power over the wild animals by hunting them, and then capturing them. Then he began to stir up the revolt against God, which resulted in the Tower of Babel.**

He was a mighty hunter before the LORD (10:9a). This verse focuses on his relationship with ADONAI. The phrase **before the LORD** implies antagonism against and opposition to God Himself. **The Jerusalem Targum says that he was powerful in hunting and wicked before the LORD, for he was a hunter of the souls of the sons of men. As he said to them, "Depart from the judgment of God, and hear the judgment of Nimrod."**

Therefore, it is said, "As Nimrod the strong one, strong in hunting and wickedness before ADONAI." The same will be true of the antichrist: The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath, or the Great Tribulation, is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all (Daniel 11:36-37).

The Rabbis teach that the phrase, a mighty hunter, means *he ensnared men with his words and incited them to rebel against God. And the phrase before the LORD means that his intention was to provoke God. Therefore, because of his actions, there was a proverbial saying that developed during his time:* That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD" (10:9b). The word mighty is used to describe Nimrod. Here again we are reminded of the lawless one of whom it is said: The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders (Second Thessalonians 2:9).¹⁹⁰

Nimrod was the first to establish kingdoms. This happened in two stages. The first stage took place in the plain of Shinar where the Tower of Babel would eventually be built. The first city of his kingdom was in Babylon. Therefore, Nimrod laid the seeds of the Babylon captivity (Jeremiah 52:1-34; Daniel 1:1-2) and Mystery Babylon (Revelation 17:1-18), and was the fountainhead of all false worship. The second city was Erech. This is the Babylonian Uruk, and is one hundred miles southeast of Babylon. In Babylonian mythology this was the home of Gilgamesh. Today it is known as Warka. The third city is Akaad and was located north of Babylon on the Euphrates River. The fourth city, whose location is unknown to us today, is Calneh (10:10).

Then there was a second stage. As a result of the confusion of languages in 11:1-9, he went from the land of Shinar to Assyria (which is called the land of Nimrod in Micah 5:6). There he built several cities, the first of which was Nineveh, on the Tigris River, two hundred miles north of the city of Babylon. This became the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Therefore, Nimrod also laid the seeds of the Assyrian captivity of the northern Kingdom. The second city he built was Rehoboth Ir. This is known today as Rebit, which is a suburb of Nineveh. The third city is Calah, known today as Kalhu, which is eighteen miles south of Nineveh on the Tigris (10:11) and the fourth city is Resen, which is located between Nineveh and Calah. Calah has been excavated on the Tigris River about twenty miles south of Nineveh. It is still called *Nimrud* after its founder.¹⁹¹ All four parts actually made up Nineveh; that is the great city (10:12). At first, all these cities were Hamitic cities, but in the course of time they became Semitic cities. Nimrod would war against the northern Kingdom and the southern Kingdom, just as the antichrist will war against the Jews during the last three years of the Great Tribulation.

The second son of Ham was Mizraim. *Mizraim* is the Hebrew word for Egypt. It literally means *two Egypts* and referred historically to Upper and Lower Egypt. He had seven sons and was the father of the Ludites, located in North Africa, west of the Delta (Jer 46:9; Ezekiel 30:5). Secondly, he was the father of the Anamites, who were the Anami in the writings of Sargon II. Thirdly, he was the father of the Lehabites, located in the vicinity of Egypt and Libya. Fourthly, he was the father of the Naphtuhites, located in Lower Egypt in the Delta region, or the people of Memphis (10:13). Fifthly, he was the father of the Pathrusites; he and his family located in Middle Egypt. Sixthly, he was the father of the Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came, not that they were his descendants, but they merely came from the same territory); they located east of the Delta between Egypt and Canaan. Lastly, he was the father of the Caphtor (10:14). Caphtor is another name for Crete and was the original homeland of other Philistine groups (Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7).

The third son of Ham was Put, but his genealogy is not given.

The fourth son of Ham was Canaan. The area that he settled in was later called *Palestine* after the Philistines. The Canaanites are of interest to us because these were seven of the prominent nations at the time when Joshua conquers the Land. He was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and was the forbearer of the Phoenicians. They became a great maritime nation based first in Sidon and later in Tyre. His second son Heth later became the Hittites (10:15), a very powerful nation, as a result of their monopoly in the smelting of iron. Their empire lasted for eight hundred years from the time of Abraham all the way through to Solomon (Numbers 13:29). The third son's descendants were the Jebusites. They were the original inhabitants of Yerushalayim and lived in the hill country (Numbers 13:29; Joshua 11:3, 15:8, 18:28; Judges 1:21, 19:10; Second Samuel 5:6-9). The fourth son's descendants were the Amorites, whose name comes from a Babylonian word meaning westerner, lived in other parts of the hill country of Jerusalem and on the east side of the Jordan (Numbers 13:29, 21:13; Deuteronomy 1:4 and 7, 1:44; Judges 10:5 and 8, 11:22; Joshua 2:10, 9:0, 11:3, 24:8). They were one of the most prominent tribes, and sometimes their name is used to represent all the Canaanites (15:16).

Most of the lesser-known groups lived in small city-states. The fifth son's descendants were the Girgashites (10:16). They were related to the Gergesenes (Luke 8:26 and 37) and lived in the area of the Sea of Galilee. The sixth son's descendants were the Hivites and they occupied the center hill country of Judah, north of Yerushalayim, including the city of Gibeon (Joshua 9:3-7 and 17, 11:19). They also occupied the city of Shechem in the hill country east of Ephraim (34:2). The seventh son's descendants were the Arkites, they occupied Tell Arkah, a town in Phoenician territory about eleven miles north of Sidon, or modern day Tripoli, Lebanon. The eighth son's descendants were the Sinites, and they were another northern Canaanite people. Their home of origin may be identified with the northern Phoenician city state of Siyannu. They were seldom self-governing, being controlled in turn by Ugarit, the Hittites and the Assyrians (10:17).¹⁹²

The ninth **son's** descendants were the **Arvadites**. **They** were an island city in Phoenicia, associated with Tyre (**Ezeki'el 28:8 and 11**), and about twenty-five miles north of Tel Arkah and about ninety-five miles north of Beirut. **The** tenth **son's** descendants were the **Zemarites**, and **they** were the northern most Egyptian stronghold in the land of **Canaan**. Today this is modern Sumra. The eleventh and last **son's** descendants were the **Hamathites**. They are the inhabitants of the city of Hamath, which is approximately one hundred and thirty miles north of Damascus and inland on the Orontes River. It was ruled in succession by the Egyptians, **the Hittites** and the Assyrians (**10:18**).

Later the Canaanite clans scattered (10:19). The **Hittites** spread to Asia Minor and perhaps the **Sinites** to China. The others may well have spread out as well. It is only of **the Canaanites** that this statement is made, suggesting thereby that these tribes eventually spread out more than any of the others. Perhaps this is seen best in their spread north and east into Asia and then ultimately (via the Bering Sea land bridge which existed during the Ice Age) into North America.¹⁹³

And the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon, or the northwestern border; toward Gerar as far as Gaza, this is Philistia and the southwestern border; and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, or the southeastern border; as far as Lasha, or the northeastern border (10:19). The western border is understood to be the Mediterranean Sea. These are the approximate borders of the Promised Land.

These are the three generations of the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations (10:20). There are a total of thirty nations that cover four generations. **Although divided by language and country, they were all Ham's children.**

After listing the main **nations** descended from his older brother Japheth and his other brother **Ham**, Shem then proceeds to his own family, which he knew from Noah's prophecy (**9:26**) would be the one chosen to transmit the knowledge of the true **God** and **His** promises to later generations.¹⁹⁴