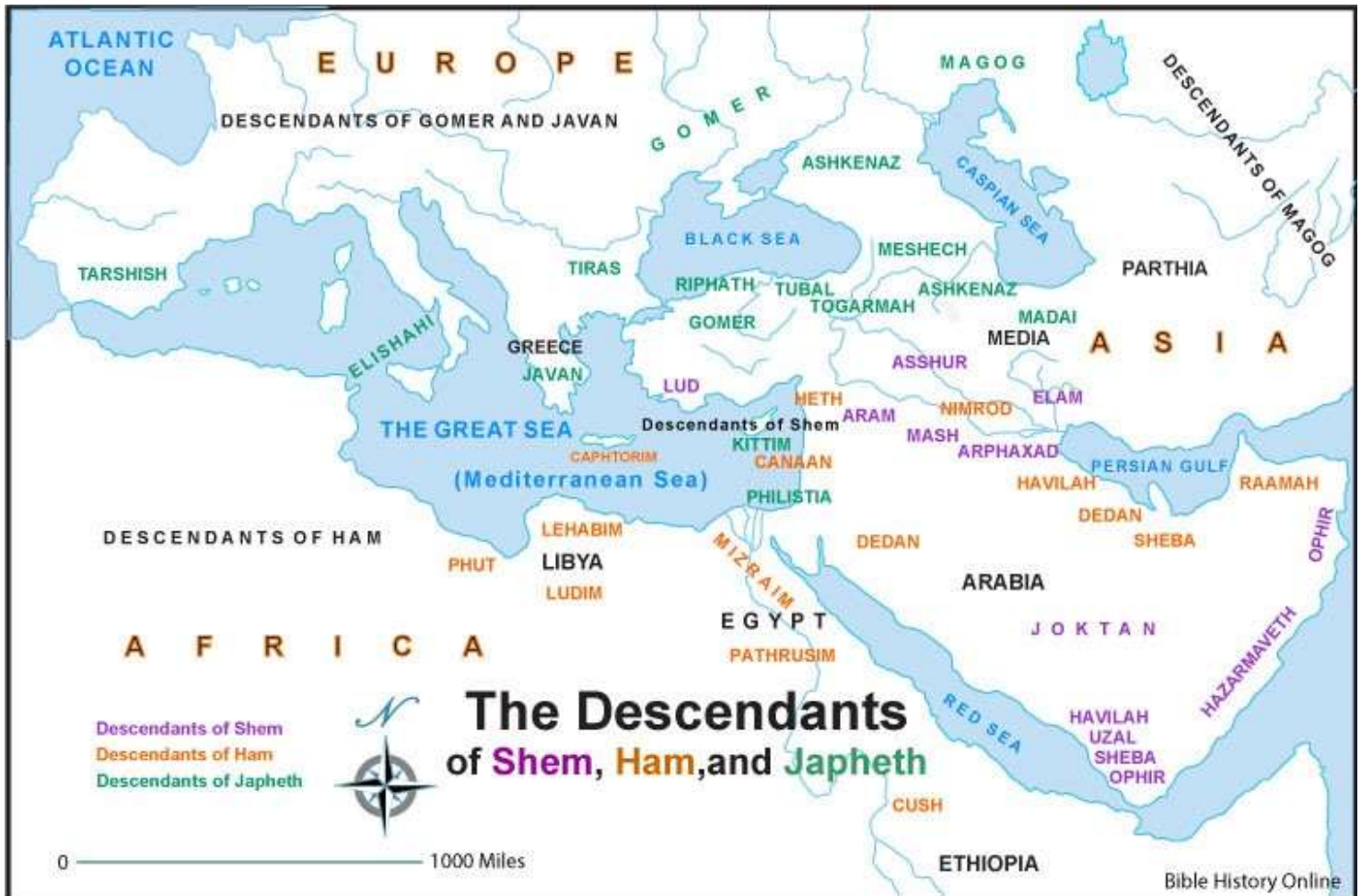


The Spread of the Nations

(Genesis 10:1-32; 11:10-32)

Archaeologist and Biblical Scholar **W. F. Albright** (Ph.D. in Semitic Languages, Johns Hopkins University) wrote rather early in his career, when he was far from being as conservative as he later became, **“The tenth chapter of Genesis ... stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework.... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document.”**¹



¹ William F. Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," as quoted in James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 402.

I. The 14 Nations of Japheth (10:2-5)

The Japhethites were “coastland peoples” (v.5) originally around the Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian Seas. They occupied most of Europe, as well as Asia past Persia and India. Thus they fulfilled Noah’s prophecy of God enlarging Japheth (9:27).

Gomer – Gaul (France); Galatia (Turkey). Josephus the Jewish historian writes: “For Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians [Gauls], but were then called Gomerites.” Some of these Gaulish people may have migrated to Britain and become the ancestors of the Welsh.² **Tarshish** – Spain (Jonah fled here. See **Jonah 1:3**); **Ashkenaz** – Germany. Ashkenazi Jews are Jewish people from Germany, Poland, Russia or European Jews.

Magog – Russia. Ezekiel links the land of **Magog** with the descendants of his brothers, Meshech and Tubal (**38:2**), then with Gomer and Togarmah (**38:6**). **Tubul** – Tobolsk (Russia)? **Meshech** – Moscow?

Josephus links **Madai** to the Medes, a people by the Caspian Sea and strongly allied to the Persians.

Javan – Greeks. Josephus writes, “but from Javan, Ionia and all the Grecians are derived.” Where the OT refers to Greece, the Hebrew is Javan. This is very similar to “Ionia”, long connected with the Greeks.

II. The 30 Nations of Ham (10:6-20)

Cush is the Bible’s name for Ethiopia; **Mizraim** is the customary name for Egypt (**Psalm 78:51** – descendants of Ham); **Lehabim** – Libya

III. The 26 Nations of Shem (10:21-31; 11:10-26)

General settlement: east (Babylon) and southeast (Arabia) – the Middle East. **Asshur** – Assyria **11:10-26** - Origins of the nation of Israel; **10:21** – “children of **Eber**” = early form of “Hebrew”; **11:16** – Eber – the Shemite from whom the name “Hebrew” is derived. **Gen. 14:13** says that Abraham was a descendant of Eber.

10:25 – “**Peleg**” means “division”. In his day occurred the dispersion from the tower of Babel. Some scholars see this “division” as the time of the world-wide continental drift. Others only see migration.

Applications for Today:

- 1) **The diversity of the human race is by God’s design.** “The human race, although united by origin, is divided by language, territory, and politics as a part of God’s design to bring blessing to the human race.”³
- 2) **Though diverse, all of humanity is of equal worth and value to God.** We share a common origin and ancestry. **Acts 17:26** says we are “of one blood.”
- 3) **Jehovah God is LORD of all the nations.** God gave the nations their inheritance (**Deut. 32:8**) and “determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (**Acts 17:26**).⁴
- 4) **God’s plans include all the nations.** **Revelation 5:9-10** says all nations will be represented around the throne of heaven. **Matthew 24:14** says the gospel will be preached to all nations before the end.

² As quoted in Jonathan Sarfati, *The Genesis Account* (Powder Springs, GA: Creation Book Publishers, 2015), 636.

³ Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 230.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Basic, Genesis 1-11* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1998), 132–133.