

**The Book of Genesis**  
**Genesis 11:10-26: The Line of Shem**  
**2/12/2019 Wednesday PM**

**Introduction**

- Last week we discussed **Nations and languages**.
- We looked at the Table of Nations that outlines the descendants of Noah’s three sons; Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
- In total, there were 70 nations that stemmed from Noah’s descendants.
- What we seen was that they spread out, but only over a small geographic area in the Middle East.
- They decided to build a city with a large tower in it called the Tower of Babel that would “reach the heavens.”
- They were really in rebellion against God and were looking to make a name for themselves and to disobey God’s command to fill the entire earth. They did not want to scatter and spread out across the whole earth.
- God took notice of what they were doing and put an end to it. He scattered the people all over the world and confused their languages.
- This was to make it more difficult for them to conspire together and would maybe halt their constant rebellion.
- Last week we seen the descendants of Shem that were not part of the Seed-line. Tonight we will look at **The Line of Shem** at least the part that makes up the Seed-line.

**Genesis 11:10-26**

<sup>10</sup>This is the account of Shem. Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. <sup>11</sup>And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>12</sup>When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. <sup>13</sup>And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. <sup>15</sup>And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>16</sup>When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. <sup>17</sup>And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>18</sup>When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. <sup>19</sup>And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug. <sup>21</sup>And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>22</sup>When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. <sup>23</sup>And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>24</sup>When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah. <sup>25</sup>And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>26</sup>After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

- **V.10** – We see here that we are entering into another *toledot* because it says “This is the account of Shem.” This is the 5<sup>th</sup> *toledot* we have seen in Genesis out of 11. Remember, Moses is considered the ‘editor’ of Genesis as he seems to be referencing sources each time he begins to talk about “This is the account of...”
- The verse goes on to tell us that “Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad.”
- **What can we learn from this verse?**
- This means that Shem was roughly 97 years old when they boarded the Ark and 98 when they disembarked from the Ark.
- Noah didn’t have his first son Japheth until he was 500 years old, and each son had to be old enough to have a wife. The flood came when Noah was 600 so that’s why we say it was up to 75 that Noah had to build the Ark.
- **V.11** – Here we see that Shem lived another 500 years after he had his first son Arphaxad which would have made Shem 600 years old when he died.
- This genealogy does not add the numbers for us like chapter 5, however it is clearly written the same way.
- **Vv.12-26** – The remaining verses list out Shem’s line all the way to Terah who was the father of Abraham.
- Notice the declining lifespan of Shem’s descendants as compared to what we seen from **Genesis 5**.
- Prior to the Flood, people were living close to 900+ years on average.
- As the chart to the right shows, that was cut in half and continued to drop drastically. **Why?**

Name	Age At Death (years)
Arphaxad	438
Salah	433
Eber	464
Peleg	239
Reu	239
Serug	230
Nahor	148
Terah	205
Abraham	175 (Sarah died at 127)
Isaac	180 (Ishmael 137)
Jacob	> 130
Joseph	110
Moses	120 (recorded as in good condition)
Joshua	110

- One clue to the answer to this is found in the mentioning of Peleg in **10:25** and here in **11:16-19**. Most of the focus of Shem's line from Chapter 10 was to mentioned the member of his line that were not a part of the Seed-line, however Peleg was mentioned along with a few others. **Genesis 10:25** says, "Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan."
- This is a specific mention of Peleg to show the timing of the Tower of Babel dispersion of the people.
- It is no coincidence that there is a sharp drop in lifespan from Eber, Peleg's father, and Peleg himself. Eber was 464 years old when he died and Peleg was 'only' 239. It is also important to note that none of his descendants would ever surpass his lifespan.
- This among other things, leads us to believe that genetics had a lot to do with the declining lifespan.
- Below is information taken from an article titled, "Why Did People Start to Have Shorter Lives After the Flood?" by Bodie Hodge on July 16, 2010 found at [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)

## Genetics

Genetics were likely the primary culprit of the declining lifespan that we see after the flood. We need to keep in mind that there were two major genetic bottlenecks:

1. At the Flood
2. At the Tower of Babel

## Flood Bottleneck

Genetic bottlenecks cause a significant loss of access to other people's versions of genes (called alleles) that are *essentially lost*. The obvious loss of pre-Flood people reduced the alleles in the gene pool in humanity to only eight people, but really only six. Scripture reveals that Noah and his wife had no more sons after the Flood (*Genesis 10*). So, this leaves Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their wives, and, of course, these three men each inherited their genes from the same two parents.

So, early generations after the Flood, like early generations after the Garden of Eden, saw marriages between people who were close relatives. Of course, such close intermarriage was not forbidden until the time of Moses. Regardless, this bottleneck saw the loss of a great many alleles from the gene pool of those who died in the Flood.

## Tower Bottleneck

If you look at the ages of people born after the Flood, the ages do a sudden drop but are stabilized at about 450 years or so:

1	Arphaxad	438	<i>Genesis 11:12-13</i>
2	Shelah	433	<i>Genesis 11:14-15</i>
3	Eber	464	<i>Genesis 11:16-17</i>

So, the ages seem to drop significantly, where Shem, who was born prior to Flood, lived to 600. After the Tower, ages suddenly drop from about 450 to about 235 or so for three generations:

1	Peleg	239	<i>Genesis 11:18-19</i>
2	Reu	239	<i>Genesis 11:20-21</i>
3	Serug	230	<i>Genesis 11:22-23</i>

Even two generations after this, Terah lived to only 205. But age limits trickle down from there.

## Genetic Bottleneck Conclusion

So the Flood and the Tower bottlenecks did something significant to cause ages to drop. In both cases, there is a loss or splitting up of the gene pool. Genetic mutations have a huge impact on longevity. With these bottlenecks, a host of alleles would have been filtered out and lost. For example, immune systems may not be as good, resulting in more infectious disease.