

PART SIX
FROM SHEM TO ABRAHAM
GENESIS 11:10-26

Descendants of Shem

The purpose of this genealogy is to link the primeval narrative with the patriarchal sagas and so with the history of Israel. It witnesses to God's blessing continuing through to Abraham, the father in faith of the people of Israel. Like the genealogy from Adam to Noah (Genesis 5), it speaks of ten generations. The tenth of the earlier genealogy was Noah. The tenth here is Abraham. Another new beginning!

As in the earlier genealogy (see page 64) the numbers differ between the Hebrew, Samaritan and Greek versions. The sum total in the Hebrew MT is 390, in the Samaritan is 1041, and in the Greek is 1270.

¹⁰These are the descendants of Shem. When Shem was one hundred years old, he became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood;

¹¹and Shem lived after the birth of Arpachshad five hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah;

¹³and Arpachshad lived after the birth of Shelah four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴When Shelah had lived thirty years, he became the father of Eber;

¹⁵and Shelah lived after the birth of Eber four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he became the father of Peleg;

¹⁷and Eber lived after the birth of Peleg four hundred thirty years, and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg had lived thirty years, he became the father of Reu;

¹⁹and Peleg lived after the birth of Reu two hundred nine years, and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he became the father of Serug;

²¹and Reu lived after the birth of Serug two hundred seven years, and had other sons and daughters.

Shem has been named already as the son of Noah (see Genesis 10:1 and 31). He has been mentioned also in Genesis 9:18 and 10:21.

Arpachshad has also been named earlier (see 10:22), and in Genesis 10:24, though here he is the eldest son (not the third).

We have already encountered Shelah (see Genesis 10:24), as also Eber (Genesis 10:25) and Peleg (see Genesis 10:25).

Reu and Serug appear only here.

Serug, Nahor and Terah are attested as place names from the area near Haran in Syria.

²²When Serug had lived thirty years, he became the father of Nahor;

²³and Serug lived after the birth of Nahor two hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years, he became the father of Terah;

²⁵and Nahor lived after the birth of Terah one hundred nineteen years, and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶When Terah had lived seventy years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The pre-flood genealogy also ends with three names: Shem, Ham and Japheth (see Genesis 5:32).