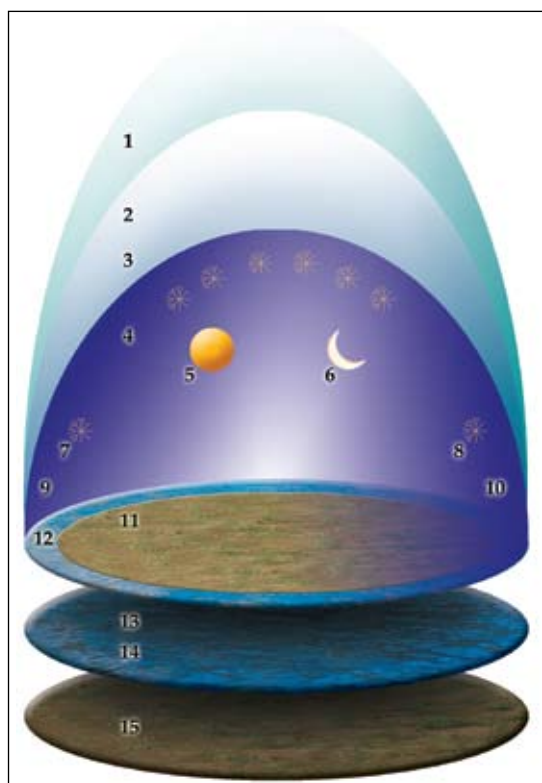


The Egyptian view of world geography is expressed in the Poetical Stele of Pharaoh Thutmose III. In that inscription, the god Amon recounts the many nations and peoples that he has placed under the feet of the Egyptian king. Like the Mesopotamians (and the Greeks), the Egyptians believed that a river encircled the known earth. The nations listed are those with whom Thutmose interacted during his many military campaigns and commercial ventures.

4-5; Younger 2000:149). This view was shared by the ancient Israelites as well.



Mesopotamian Cosmology (Horowitz 2004)  
 1) Upper Heaven of Anu; 2) Middle Heaven of the Igigi gods; 3) Bel sits on a dias in a lapis lazuli (blue) shrine; cf. Ex 24:10, sapphire (blue) bricks; 4) Lower Heaven of the stars (constellations); 5) Shamash; 6) Sin; 7) Shuhar (morning star); 8) Shalem (evening star); 9) The Sun's going forth; 10) The Sun's coming in; 11) Upper earth, the animated beings; 12) Ocean (the Great River); 13) Middle earth, the Apsu (primeval waters), "the water below"; 14) The realm of Ea/Enki; 15) Lower earth, "land of no return," rebellious Anunnaki gods imprisoned here. The dead eat clay and drink dust.

לשמש שם אהל בהם:  
 והוא כהתן יצא מחפתו:  
 ישיש כגבור לרוץ ארצה:  
 מקצה השמים מוצאו:  
 והקופתו על-קצותם:  
 ואין נסתר מחפתו:

He has placed a tent for the sun among them,  
 And it is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;  
 It rejoices as a strong man to run (his) course.  
 Its rising is from one end of the heavens,  
 And its daily rotation to the other end of them  
 And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

(Ps 19:5-7 [Eng. 4-6])

In some Semitic languages (including Hebrew), while facing the east, the South was designated by "the right hand" (Ammurite *Yamūn*, Hebrew *Yāmīn*, *Tēmān*) and the left hand meant North (e.g. Amurrite *Simāl*, Arabic *šimāl*). However, the terminology from culture to culture is not uniform. The Arabic *janūb*, "south," is evidently cognate to biblical *negeb*, *neḡbāh* (Barth 1893:4; 1902:55; Rainey 1984:88).

In the Hebrew Bible "east, eastward" is usually expressed by *qedem*, *qedmā*, "front, frontwards," "eastward toward the shining forth of the sun" (Josh 19:12-13). But when speaking of the four points of the compass the east is not necessarily mentioned first, e.g.,

שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וְרֵאֵה מִן־הַמִּקְוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אֶתֶּה שָׁם צְפֹנָה וְנֶגְבָּה וְקֶדְמָה וְאַחֶרֶת:  
 Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward.

(Gen 13:14)



The sun god Re<sup>c</sup> traversing the underworld at night in spite of the Serpent's efforts to hinder his progress. After a papyrus from the Egyptian Museum with no index number (Schulz and Seidel 1998:448 fig.43).



The Egyptian sky goddess Nut giving birth to the morning sun and swallowing the evening sun. Composite based on relief in the Dendara Temple (after Schulz and Seidel 1998:444 fig. 4) and Greenfield, papyrus sheet 87, British Museum EA 10554 (ibid. p.448 fig. 43).

Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south.

(Gen 28:14)

As in the above passage, westward was indicated by "seaward" since the western boundary of the land was indeed the Mediterranean Sea; note for example: יָעַר הַיָּם הַגְּדוֹל יָעַר הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, "and as far as the Great Sea towards the entering in of the sun" (Josh 1:4, 23:4).

### THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORLD SOCIETY

The epigraphic and artistic sources of the ancient peoples are replete with allusions to the various ethnic groups that peopled the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. In most traditions, such as that of the Egyptian artists, there were standard models of facial and sartorial types denoting the peoples that they encountered. This is also true of Mesopotamia and especially of ancient Persia (note the wall reliefs of Persepolis).

For the biblical view of world anthropology we have the "Table of Nations" in Genesis 10 and its parallel in 1 Chronicles 1:4-23. These two texts and their Septuagint counterparts can be used to clarify some of the obscure ethnicons but many of them still remain unknown to us. For a detailed exegesis of these passages one may consult critical and linguistic commentaries. The

treatment here will touch only on those elements and ethnic groups about which something is known and which shed light on the outlook of the passage as a whole.

One may see that the "Table" presents three main branches of the population of the known world as viewed from the standpoint of the land of Canaan/Israel. These are subsumed under the headings of the three sons of Noah, the legendary ancestors of all who came after the Flood. The relations between certain groups are not always comparable to modern knowledge of the language families or generic ties as modern research has defined them. But the general picture is instructive for understanding the ancient mentality.

The descendants of Japheth (Gen 10:1-5; 1 Chr 1:5-7) are:

(1) *Gomer*, the Cimmerians of classical sources, a people from the Caucasus who threatened the civilized nations in the seventh century BCE and later, and *Magog*, probably a kindred group;

(2) *Madai*, the Indo-European nation situated in northwestern Iran; the Persians of southeast Iran are not mentioned.

(3) *Javan* (Hebrew *Yāvān* = an archaic borrowing from Greek Ἴωνες, Ἴωνες before the digamma [f] was lost), viz. Ionia.

(4) *Tubal* and *Meshech* and *Tiras*. Three nations in Anatolia; the first two are Tabal and Mushki, Phrygian kingdoms of Cappadocia known from Assyrian inscriptions. *Tiras* might be the Τυρσηνοί of the Greek sources, viz. the Etruscans who migrated from Lydia in the eighth century BCE at the earliest.

(5) The sons of Gomer are *Ashkenaz* (the Scythians), *Riphath* (unknown) and *Togarmah*, the Til-garimmu of the Assyrian texts.

(6) The sons of Javan are *Elishah* (presumably = ancient Alashia on the south coast of Cyprus), *Tarshish* in Cilicia, *Kittim* (the kingdom of Kition?) and *Dodanim*, which must be corrected to *Rodanim*, in accordance with LXX Ῥόδιοι, Rhodes, and with 1 Chronicles 1:7, which also has *Rodanim*.

Surprisingly, the sons of Ham encompass groups which we would arrange in a different order:

(7) *Cush*, *Mizraim*, *Put* and *Canaan* (Gen 10: 6-10; 1 Chr 1:9-16). This group includes three elements in Africa. *Cush* is presumably the same as Egyptian K3š which is in Nubia, i.e. modern Sudan. *Mizraim* is the Semitic term for Egypt; it derives from Semitic *mišru* (as in Akkadian), "border, district." The dual form evidently reflects the awareness that Egypt was known by its two logical geographical parts: the Nile Valley (Upper Egypt) and the Delta (Lower Egypt). *Put* is on the Libyan coast.

What has surprised modern scholars is the inclusion of Canaan as a descendant of Ham. Linguistics discerned long ago that the Canaanite dialects are part of the family which modern scholarship has called the "Semitic" languages. The appropriateness of that latter title is itself questionable since the biblical ethnographic division in this chapter included Elam as a son of Shem as well as other elements whose languages are hardly "Semitic" in the modern linguistic sense.

The Cushites in this list are then linked with elements that all seem to be either in northeast Africa or on the southern "heel" of the Arabian Peninsula, viz. Seba, Havilah and Sab-



The Family of Nations.

tah, Raamah and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah are said to be Sheba and Dedan, two elements in south and north Arabia respectively.

Furthermore, the link between Cush and Nimrud the mighty hunter is strange. Nimrud is associated with a group of cities in Mesopotamia: Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar (\**Sanġa* = Sumer in Mesopotamian terminology), and Ashur (Assyria), and its political capital, Nineveh, as well as Rehoboth-ir (possibly = *rēsīt āli* "the open space around the city") and Calah along with Resen (unknown) between Nineveh and Calah. The Chronicler mentions the connection between Nimrud and Cush but he ignores the list of Mesopotamian cities.

*Mizraim* is surprisingly associated with the Ludim (Lydians in southwest Turkey) and an obscure group called Caslulim from whom the author derives the Philistines, but also the Caphtorim, i.e. the people of Crete (from which Amos 9:7 derives the Philistines).

Canaan, as a supposed descendant of Mizraim, is called the ancestor of a number of well-known peoples: Sidon, his firstborn (Sidonians is the biblical generic name for the Phoenicians); Heth (the Neo-Hittite states that survived the collapse of the Hittite empire and continued to exist in north Syria); the Jebusite (the occupants of pre-Davidic Jerusalem) and the Amorite (originally the population of north Syria in the Middle Bronze Age); and the people of several well-known city-states: Arkite (of 'Arqat) and the Sinite (of Siyannu), Arvadite (of Arvad) and the Zemarite (of Šumur, Šimīru, classical Simyra) and the Hamathite (the Neo-Hittite/ Aramaic city-state of Hamath). In general, one may note that all the identifiable elements in this group were speakers of one of the so-called

Northwest Semitic dialects (according to current terminology), viz. Canaanite and Aramaic. None of them are in Transjordan.

The descendants of Shem (Gen 10:21-32; 1 Chr 1:23) are even more obscure and speculative. The main emphasis is on the descendants of Eber (*'Eber*) since Abram is called an 'Ivri (Hebrew).

The list as a whole includes some overlaps and duplications. What is especially surprising is the absence of some of the most important ethnic groups of the earlier periods, such as the Hurrians and the Urartians. The similarity to the ethnic picture in Ezekiel 27 indicates that it reflects a viewpoint of a very late period. One might think of the Persian empire but it does not seem to match what is known about the many nations of the Persian Empire and the neighboring areas (as described, e.g., by Herodotus). In general, one may note that the three sons of Noah and their descendants are roughly placed in three areas, north, south and east of the Levant. Perhaps this is its main object: to show how the eastern Mediterranean littoral is the land bridge between the main branches of the human race.

An ancient view of the peoples of the world as comprising a vast feudal society with each nation assigned to the care of a specific heavenly being is clearly reflected in the original text of Deuteronomy 32:8-9.

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,  
 When He separated the sons of man,  
 He set the boundaries of the peoples  
 According to the number of the sons of God.  
 And YHWH's portion was His people; Jacob was the allotment of His inheritance.

At the end of line 8, the Masoretic Text as we have it now reads יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "according to the number of the sons of Israel." However, the Septuagint reads here κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ, "according to the number of