

project the image of itself as a global leader in grandiose Noah's-ark-like initiatives in the realms of life sciences and environmentalism. For example, in 2014 Viktor Sadovnichy, rector of Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU), announced that MSU would gather samples of all living organisms on the planet and establish the world's first biomaterial bank. He called this project "Noah's Ark," adding: "Should the project be carried out, it will be a breakthrough in Russian history. Russia will be the first [country] in the world to create a Noah's Ark" (quoted in "Russia to Recreate"). As high-blown as such rhetoric might seem, it was exceeded in Noahic chutzpah by a claim by Igor Sechin, CEO of the Moscow-based Russian energy company, Rosneft, in the summer of 2022, less than half a year after Russia's brutal and unprovoked February invasion of the sovereign state of Ukraine and the subsequent economic sanctions leveled against Moscow by Western nations. According to Sechin, while the wartime effort by the United States and its Western allies to reduce their dependence on Russian oil, gas, and coal had forced the West to scale back its ambitions to move away from hydrocarbon-based energy sources in favor of "green" alternatives such as wind, solar, and hydrogen power, Russia, with its enormous energy potential, could serve as a "Noah's Ark" for the present global economy: "In these conditions [of energy shortages] the answer to the question of where the Noah's Ark of the world economy lies is important. Russia, with its energy potential and a portfolio of first-class projects ... can meet the world's long-term needs for affordable energy resources, undoubtedly is this life-saving ark" (quoted by Tsukanov).

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See also → Atra-ḥasis; → Flood, The; → Gilgamesh Epic; → Models and Replicas; → Noah

Noah's Sons

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Judaism
- III. Christianity
- IV. Islam
- V. Literature
- VI. Visual Arts
- VII. Film

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

1. Noah's Sons: Source-Critical and Redactional Considerations. Genesis 5–10 gives Noah's three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth great significance by presenting them as the three ancestors of postdiluvian humanity. Within this section two literary units focus on them: the story of Noah's vineyard and drunkenness in Gen 9:18–27 and the Table of Nations in Gen 10. Whereas the first account describes a hierarchical relationship between the three ancestors (and their respective descendants), the second one, in the form of a segmented genealogy,

shows the ancestors' equal dispersion over the world and their inner differentiation into nations, tribes, and languages. Noah's sons are furthermore mentioned at the end of the genealogy in Gen 5 and in the flood narrative.

Classical source analysis often assigned the whole vineyard/drunkenness narrative (Gen 9:18–27) and certain parts of Gen 10 to J and the coherent basic composition in Gen 10 to the later P source. Today an increasing number of scholars view the formation of these texts conversely: the self-contained Priestly (proto-P) composition constitutes the oldest stratum (Gen 10:1–7, 20, 22–23, 31–32); only later on were scattered non-Priestly passages (10:8–19, 21, 24–30) and the non-Priestly story in Gen 9:18–27 added. Hinting to this development are some features of the non-P texts that can be explained by the wish to rearrange the Priestly plot and to counter the “egalitarian” Priestly theology (see de Pury: 31–32). Moreover, Noah's sons have a crucial function in the Priestly Table of Nations unlike the mentioned non-Priestly texts. Shem, Ham, and Japheth certainly all appear in the story of Noah's vineyard as well, but this narrative culminates peculiarly in the curse of another protagonist, Canaan. Within the context of the Priestly Table of Nations, however, the three names may be fittingly explained as evocative names; they seem more at home here. In fact, the tripartite division of the world seems to be made according to two criteria, which are the geographical position and significance of the names (see Hutzli). First, they stand for the three regions of the world: north (Japheth), south (Ham), and east (Shem). Only one nation, Lydia (*Lûd*, Gen 10:22), does not match its geographical affiliation (it should be ascribed to the north, to Japheth, rather than to the east, to Shem); likely the significance of the designation *šēm* (see the second criterion) is more important for its classification. Second, each name, through its meaning, seems to allude to a characteristic of the relevant region. This seems particularly obvious for Ham (*Hām*). It can be associated with “heat” (*ḥom*) and “hot” (*ḥām*), and Ham indeed encompasses nations that are located in the hot regions of the south. Shem's name (*Šēm*) probably has the meaning “(great) name, reputation” (*šēm*), which makes good sense insofar as Shem is considered to be the ancestor of five nations (regions) of great importance in the Levant during the first half of the 1st millennium BCE: Elam, Assyria, Arpachshad (Babylonia), Lydia, and Aram. Japheth (*Yāpēt*) may be associated with “beautiful, nice” (root *y-p-y*), referring to the much appreciated art and handcrafts that came from northern regions. This interpretation is based on the observation that Gen 10 P has several commonalities with the poem of Tyre's decline in Ezek 27, in which the beauty (*yôpî*) of Tyre is a key motif (see 27:3, 4, 11). Tyre's splendor derives from the

magnificent products typically associated with the city's international trade partners. It is striking that among the latter, several “sons” of Japheth are mentioned (Kittim, Elishah, Tarshish, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Beth-togarmah). According to another interpretation, Japheth would be derived from the name of the Greek titan Iapetus. What favors the interpretation of the names of Shem, Ham, and Japheth as artificial evocative names, is, first, the three suggested meanings fit the three “world regions,” and second, the three names are almost completely absent from the *onomasticon* of ANE. There are two attestations of *Šēm* as a short or hypocoristic form of a personal name (see Avigad and Sass: 536; Benz: 180), Ham occurs in three late psalms as designation of Egypt (Pss 78:51; 105:23, 27; 106:22). In contrast, most descendants of the three ancestors, that is the nations mentioned in the Priestly (proto-P) strand, are attested literarily and can be identified with some certainty. Through the nearly fitting geographical tripartite division of the enumerated nations the (proto-)Priestly composition represents a veritable literary world map (see fig. 21). In this function, the text is unique within the Bible and the literature of the ancient Near East. The absence of the western cardinal point might be explained by the provenance of the text from a region facing the Mediterranean Sea in the west (see further below).

Noah's three sons are mentioned by name in the Priestly flood story (Gen 6:10; 7:13) as well. The genealogy of Gen 10* constitutes the “natural” continuation of the former unit. A difficulty is the inverted order of the three sons in the flood story (and in the introduction of the Table of Nations in 10:1), as compared to the order that shapes the structure of the table of nations: Shem comes first, and Ham and Japheth follow. This may indicate a redactional-critical differentiation between the two texts. Probably, the author of the flood story took up the pre-existing Table of Nations and added it at the end of the narrative. With regard to Abraham's affiliation to Shem in P's Abraham story, he changed the order of the three sons in his source text. Shem should be Noah's eldest son. A possible reason why this author nevertheless left the order in the body of the Table of Nations unchanged is Japheth's first position that fits with the ark's landing in Ararat which is located in the area of Japheth (see Bosshard-Nepustil: 202). Another reason is as follows: the coexistence of two different orders of the three names should prevent readers from understanding the sequence of the names hierarchically.

2. The Table of Nations: Historical Context. What is the historical context of the proto-Priestly Table of Nations? European and American scholars, according to most of whom it was composed by P, predominantly ascribe it to the Persian period. For them, the composition reflects the Per-

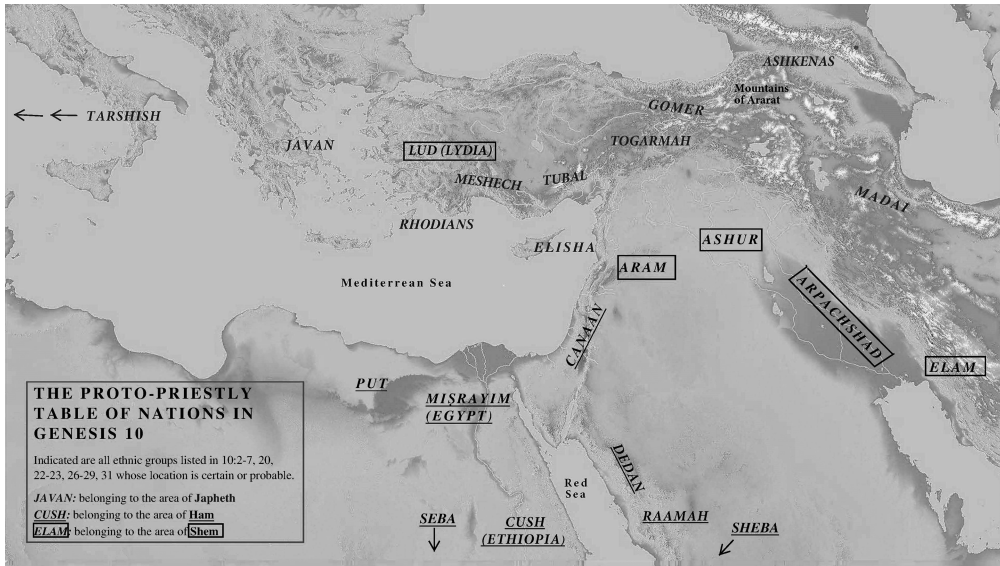


Fig. 21 The Proto-Priestly Table of Nations in Gen 10

sian *oikumene*; some scholars compare the Priestly Table of Nations with the enumeration of nations in the monumental inscriptions of the Persian kings Darius I and Xerxes I (Köckert: 150–51; Nihan: 185–86). But a close comparison of these lists with the biblical account shows that both in form and in content the Table of Nations clearly distinguishes itself from the enumeration of the nations in the inscriptions, which has its own characteristic sequence. Whereas the form of the Table of Nations is tripartite, the enumeration of the nations in the Persian lists is linear. In Gen 10 P, Persia and Arabia are absent; the Medes and Elam, which in the Persian lists are almost always mentioned one after the other, are assigned to two different ancestors (Japheth and Shem, respectively). Finally, whereas the order in the Persian lists reflects relative importance (Persia, Media, and Elam stand at the beginning), in the Table of Nations there is no visible hierarchy. What speaks in particular against a setting in the Persian era is the fact that Persia is not mentioned in the composition. Concerning this argument, some have maintained that the author passed over the Persians because he considered the emergence of the Persian Empire too recent a development. In this respect, however, the occurrence of Javan (Greece) in Gen 10 P, mentioned mostly in postexilic texts of the HB, must be taken into consideration. Moreover, Gen 10 P mentions other nations that became important regional powers a few decades before the emergence of Persia (in the 8th–early 6th cent. BCE): the Cimmerians (Gomer, Gen 10:2), the Medes (Madai, Gen 10:2), and Lydia (Lud, Gen 10:22).

These observations favor the idea that the author of Gen 10* mentioned nations without any regard to the relative time of their appearance in history. The absence of Persia therefore points to a setting *before* the Persian era. The absence of the name Arabia (*ʿārab*), which appears in exilic and postexilic biblical writings, may also be significant.

As for the question of the geographical provenance of the composition, the above-mentioned commonalities with Ezek 27, the lament about Tyre's decline, should be considered. Ezekiel 27 probably is built on an elaborate list of nations with whom the Phoenicians maintained trade relations (see Zimmerli: 659, Greenberg: 569), and the author of Gen 10* perhaps also made use of such a list (or lists), placing these geographical names in the large context of three world regions. In support of this view concerning the Phoenician provenance of the proto-Priestly Table of Nations is the fact that neither of the Phoenician cities (Tyre, Sidon) is mentioned and, furthermore, Canaan is attributed to the south (Ham). A striking particularity of Gen 10* is the absence of the western cardinal point. Lipiński's explanation that the geographical list stems from a region localized at the Mediterranean Sea seems appropriate (Lipiński: 214). From the perspective of a city located on the Phoenician coast, the west is in fact occupied by the sea. In this respect, Phoenicia also makes sense as the place of origin of the proto-Priestly composition in Gen 10.

3. The Story of Noah's Drunkenness. The later non-Priestly story portraying Noah's sons in Gen 9:18–27 placed at the end of the flood narrative, is

elliptical and leads to intriguing questions: What is the exact nature of Ham's offense toward his drunken and exposed father Noah? Is it just that he "saw his father's nakedness" and told to his brothers (9:22) or does the former expression allude to a more serious, sexual transgression (see Lev 18:7; 20:17)? Furthermore, if it was Ham who was guilty of disrespect toward his father, why did Noah's curse not apply to him, but, rather, was directed at Canaan? And why does Ham appear as the youngest son in v. 24, whereas elsewhere in Gen 5–10 he is listed as the second of three? As for the first question, proponents of the interpretation according to which Ham would have committed a sexual offense point to the passage in Lev 20:17, in which the expression "seeing the nakedness" is usually understood as a euphemism for forbidden sexual intercourse (see, e.g., Frankel, 64–65). Nevertheless, the literal understanding should probably be preferred. The good behavior of Shem and Japheth – they enter their father's tent backwards and cover him without looking at him (v. 23: "and they did not see their father's nakedness"); here the verb *r'-h* clearly means "to see" – indirectly points to the nature of Ham's offense, which is looking at his naked father (Day: 139). Obviously, the author saw in this act the violation of a taboo; what is probably behind the harsh sanction is also the son's duty, disregarded by Ham, to assist the drunken father, as documented for Ugarit (cf. *KTU* 1.17.i.30). The latter two incoherencies generally are explained by the idea that the redactor took up an originally independent narrative which included only two sons of Noah: Shem and Canaan. Canaan's offense contrasted with Shem's exemplary conduct. Although a literary prestage of the story cannot be excluded one should also consider the possibility that the post-Priestly redactor invented the plot ad hoc; making use of Canaan's lineage from Ham in the Table of Nations (Gen 10:6), he introduced a polemic tale against Canaan. In doing so he may not have flinched from changing the traditional (Priestly) birth sequence in order to relegate Ham to third place. As for the problem of transferring the retribution from Ham to Canaan, it should also be noted that a curse on Ham would contradict his blessing in the Priestly flood story (see Gen 9:1).

What was the motive of the author for writing this "malicious anecdote" (de Pury et al.: 63)? Was his intention mainly to target two nations which are largely negatively portrayed in the HB/OT? The curse in Gen 9:26 "And let Canaan be his (Shem's) servant" may indeed refer to the (alleged) enslavement of the Canaanites by the Israelites (represented by Shem in the story, see below) in wake of the conquest of the land (see Josh 9:21, 27; Judg 1:28–36; 1 Kgs 9:20–21). Such "historical" interpretation fits less well for the wish in 9:27 ("May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem").

Japheth is sometimes identified with the Philistines who took up residence on the coast of Palestine (Amos 9:7); however, since their relationship with Israel during the early monarchy is seen mainly in a negative light in 1–2 Samuel, this interpretation seems doubtful. Perhaps the names of the protagonists refer to "nations" at the time of the author (see Schüle: 152–53). Whereas Shem, specified by his god YHWH, by the extension probably represents Israel, Canaan might refer to the non-Israelite inhabitants in the land and Japheth to a hegemonic power present in Palestine: Persia or Greece. With regard to the geographical location of Japheth in the Priestly Table of Nations, one should consider especially the second of these two possibilities. Following Witte's interpretation (Witte: 315–20), the "settlement of Japheth in the tents of Shem" (v. 27a) could be understood as a response to the conquest of Palestine by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. The "prophecy" in v. 27b can be read as referring to Alexander's conquest of the "Canaanite" (i.e., Phoenician) cities of Tyre and Sidon (and, in particular, to the famous destruction of the former city and the enslavement of its population). In several late texts "Canaanite" stands for the Phoenicians, or at least was understood that way (see Isa 23:11; Exod 6:15 LXX; Jos 5:1 LXX, 12 LXX; Job 40:25 LXX, see also Gen 10:15).

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II. Judaism

Rabbinic traditions about the sons of Noah are generally based on views of their descendants, or on various linguistic exegeses. Thus, Shem, whose descendant is Abraham, is accorded all sorts of positive attributes, such as being born circumcised (BerR 26:3). An example of linguistic exegesis concerns Japhet, the putative ancestor of the Greeks. Connecting the name with the Hebrew root *y-p-h* "beauty," the rabbis read the biblical text "May the beauty of Japhet dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen 9:27) as a reference to the Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint (bMeg 9b; BerR 36:8). Full listings of traditions concerning each son are found in this Encyclopedia under the entries for each son.

Just as in the biblical account, rabbinic tradition sees the sons of Noah as the progenitors of all of humanity. This is seen most clearly in the formulation of "The Seven Obligations of the Sons of Noah," commonly called The Noahide Laws, which list the seven requirements that the rabbis deemed to be obligatory on the sons of Noah, i.e., all of humanity (bSan 56a). A variation of this view is found in the late (8th cent.) Pirquei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer 23 according to which Canaan was also one of Noah's sons.

Rabbinic treatment of the sons as a group focuses on the biblical story of a drunken Noah (Gen 9:18–27). In explaining this enigmatic story, the rabbis posed two key questions: what did Ham do to Noah and why was Canaan punished rather than Ham? As for the first question, two answers are proposed by 3rd-century sages. The first view held that Ham castrated his father; the second that he sexually abused him (bSan 70a). The sexual abuse interpretation may be based on linguistic exegesis of the word *‘š-h* in the biblical "that which his younger son had done [*‘š-h*] to him," as having a sexual connotation, a meaning the verb has in Hebrew (Ezek 23:3, 8, 21) as well as in Ugaritic (*‘šh*) and Arabic (*ḡšw/ḡšy*), although the Talmud offers a more fanciful derivation based on a verbal analogy with the story of Dinah in Gen 34, a story featuring sexual abuse. The sodomy explanation, on the other hand, may be derived from the punishment of slavery on Canaan. A slave is considered to be a socially dead person having no ties to his or her succeeding (and preceding) generations. Slavery, then, would be an apt "measure-for-measure" punishment for an act of castration on Noah, which would cause the "death" of his potential future descendants.

In the Talmud, this idea is expressed in the following fanciful terms: the fact that punishment is meted out to Canaan, Ham's fourth son, suggests that the sinful act had something to do with a fourth son; since castration would deprive Noah of the ability to produce a fourth son, the sinful act must have been castration. As for the question why Canaan was punished and not Ham, one answer, found also in Qumran literature, states that God had earlier blessed Noah and his sons (Gen 9:1), so

that they could not now be cursed. Therefore, the curse was transferred from Ham to Canaan. An alternative explanation holds that although a curse could not be pronounced on Ham directly, he could be cursed indirectly. Thus, the curse was pronounced on Canaan but in such a way as to implicate Ham: "May you be a slave of slaves" suggests that Ham is also a slave.

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III. Christianity

Christian reception of Noah's sons attends to at least three elements of their story in the biblical narrative. First, there is interest in the sons' connection to the ark and to their being saved with Noah from the flood. One question was why the sons were saved. Justin, *Dial.* 92, argued that the sons, like their father, must have been righteous before God. Moreover, since this righteousness was independent both of circumcision and of the Law, which came later, their story is another proof-text in the argument that righteousness is not dependent on one's obedience to such laws. Irenaeus, *Epid.* 18, stayed closer to the text itself. The sons are not identified as righteous, so it must be that their being saved is a gift of God to Noah, who alone was righteous (cf. also *Haer.* 5.29.2). There is interest also in the sons' role in constructing the ark. Augustine, *Quaest. Hept.* wondered what other workmen helped Noah and what they thought of the project. Picking up on this query, the later English text, *Cursor Mundi*, says the other workmen obviously despised Noah, his God, and the ark. They quit and Noah had to do the work alone. Yet, the *Chester Mystery Cycle* says Noah's sons ended up taking over for the departed workmen (Murdoch: 104).

Second, the sons represent nations and peoples whose later histories were of interest to Christian exegetes. Augustine, *Civ.* 15.26, suggested that the ark's three decks could, among other possible interpretations, symbolize the three sons and the nations to emerge from each of them. In this way, the ark is a type for Christ, for, in one entity, it was saving not merely the three sons but all persons. Interpretations of Gen 10 led most commentators to think of the sons' descendants geographically. Japheth's descendants moved to Europe, Shem's moved east, and Ham's primarily moved south, to Canaan and to Africa (Stander: 118–19 and nn. 29–32; Aelfric, *Heptateuch*). Even so, despite Gen 11's identification of Shem with the later Hebrews, exegetes frequently linked the Jews (and other seeming heretics) typologically with Ham, in reaction to his improper treatment of Noah. Augustine, *Faust.* 12.23, argued

Ham's action in looking at Noah is the action of the Jews who "saw the nakedness of their father, because they consented to Christ's death." He further suggested Ham's name means *calidus* ("hot") and so symbolizes the heretics, whose spirit is impatient and who mock what Christians honor (cf. Didymus, *In Gen.* 165–66; Philo, *Sobr.*). Following to one extent or another Augustine's ideas, the Carolingian theologian Wigbod, *Comm. Gen.*, argued Shem was the representative of the apostles and patriarchs, Japheth the representative of Christians, and Ham the representative of the Jews and other heretics. An anonymous 13th-century sermon connects Ham's mocking of Noah's nakedness with the Jews' mocking of Jesus's nakedness on the cross (Murdoch: 99). Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, added that Ham's (and the Jews') problem is a loss of respect for those in positions of authority (WA 42: 377–93). Christian missionaries to China in the 16th and 17th century prompted Mendoza, in his 1585 *History of China*, and John Webb, in his 1669 *The Antiquity of China*, to argue that the Chinese people are a descendant either of a nephew of Noah or of one of his sons, perhaps Ham (Leslie: 408). In addition, the association of Ham with the peoples of Africa and the curse on Ham's descendants through Canaan, justified in the minds of some theologians a link between black persons and the right of others to subjugate them to slavery (Meiring; van Selms: 140).

This tragic use of Ham's legacy as a justification for slavery suggests a third aspect of the sons' story that was of keen interest to Christian exegetes. This was the sons' roles in the aftermath of Noah's drunkenness (Gen 9:20–27). Besides the negative association with Ham and the positive associations with Japheth and Shem noted already in Christian exegesis, there is a genuine concern to understand why Canaan is cursed if it was Ham who mocked Noah. Indeed, following exegetes like Chrysostom, *Pent.*, and Basil, *Sermon 11*, many refer to the story as the "cursing of Ham" or "sin of Ham." Origen, *Sel. Gen.* and *Comm. Jo.* 20.77, suggests Canaan must have shared his father's impiety, since Gen 9:18 and 22 mention only Canaan and not Ham's other sons. Moreover, to Origen, the curse in Gen 9:24 refers to Canaan being "a slave of slaves," but since Japheth and Shem did not become slaves, it had to be the case that Canaan, not Ham, was the subject of the curse. All of Ham's descendants were to become slaves, but Canaan's descendants among them were to be the slaves among these slaves. Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen.* 29.21, argued that Ham's punishment for exposing Noah was the experience of watching Canaan's descendants suffer from slavery. Basil of Caesarea, *Enarratio in Isaiam* 13.268, understood that the curse would effect in Ham and Canaan repentance for their various vices and so yield in them a more holy life.

Beyond these receptions of the three named sons of Noah, some Christian writers added other sons

to Noah's lineage. Early Anglo-Saxon kings, feeling as though their own tribal histories were not included in Gen 10's "table of nations" invented a fourth son of Noah, Scaef. He was assumed to have been born during Noah's time on the ark itself. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (857 CE) is the first to mention him, identifying him as the first in the royal lineage that came to include Aethelwulf, king of Wessex. Scaef is likewise mentioned in Aethelward's *Chronicon*, Alfred's *Chronicle*, and in *Textus Roffensis*. Criticism of this invention is present already by the mid-11th century in a Canterbury manuscript of miscellaneous monastic texts and in the 12th-century *Gesta regum Anglorum* by William of Malmesbury (Anlezark). A different tradition about a fourth son of Noah emerged in Eastern Christian traditions, perhaps derived from earlier, Jewish sources. The Ethiopic *Book of Adam* 3.13 refers to other sons of Noah after the flood. The Syriac *Book of the Cave of Treasures* and Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, inter alia, identify one such son, Yonton. He was presumed to have been the teacher of astronomy to Nimrod (Gero: 324–26).

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IV. Islam

The Qur'an does not name Noah's sons but says his family was saved from drowning (S 11:40; 21:76; 23:27). One son, however, trusting in a mountain, was drowned (11:40–47), as presumably was Noah's wife (66:10). Muslim writers usually identify the drowned son as Canaan (Kan'an) or Ḥām (cf. Gen 9:18). Al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) says Noah had another son Eber (ʿĀbir; cf. Gen 10:21), who died before the flood.

Noah appealed to God that the drowned son was a part of his family, but God declared otherwise and

rebuked Noah for his ignorance (S 11:46). Some interpreters hold instead that the unrighteous deed referred to here was that of the son, but Noah had been warned not to pray for evildoers (S 11:37; 23:27; cf. the case of Abraham 9:113–14; 11:76; Gen 18:22–33). God does not forgive the wicked even if a prophet petitions him on their behalf (S 9:80; 63:6).

Noah's struggle with God may reflect Muḥammad's own anxiety over unbelieving relations, but it seemingly draws ultimately upon Ezek 14:12–20, cited by Syriac writers such as Jacob of Serugh (d. 521). In this passage God warns that if he decided to punish a sinful land, the presence of Noah, Daniel, or Job would not save it: the righteous would only save themselves and not even their own sons or daughters (cf. also Ezek 18:4).

Islamic tradition identified the surviving sons as Shem (Sām), Ham (Ḥām), and Japheth (Yāfith) [qq.v.], following Genesis (5:32, etc.). As in Gen 10, their descendants peopled the earth, but al-Ṭabarī and other historians thereby accounted for a broader swathe of the world's population, reflecting the world as known in their own times.

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V. Literature

In biblical tradition, the sons of Noah – Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 5:32; 10:1; 1 Chr 1:4) – are primarily known for three events. First, they are a part of the flood events, occupying a place on the ark (Gen 6:10; 7:13; Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5; cf. S 11:42–47) and receiving God's covenant (Gen 9:1, 8; cf. Jub 7:20–25; Sanh. 56a). Second, when Noah is overcome by wine and his nakedness is espied by Ham, Noah curses Ham's son Canaan and blesses Shem and Japheth (Gen 9:20–27); the curse stipulates Canaan's servitude to others (Gen 9:24–25). The main theories regarding the transgression of Ham range from voyeurism to castration, paternal to maternal incest. Though both Shem and Japheth have positive roles in the biblical account, Shem gains more prominence in religious traditions and

reception (Sir 49:16; Luke 3:36; Paraph. Shem). Third, there is a three-part division and distribution of the earth's lands among the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 10; Jub 8:10–9:15; 10:27–36; Mak 23b; Josephus, *Ant.* 1:109–150; Apoc. Adam 72:15–74:26). These three themes find permutations in world literature.

In his award-winning short story "The Sons of Noah" (1992), John Candy depicts a religious community living in a lush Pacific Northwest valley with a primordial river that floods regularly. When a developer attempts to industrialize the pristine land the river floods and drowns all modernist actors. What remains is the Amish-like community, *The Sons of Noah Church*, and a rainbow with a reference to the divine promise of Gen 9 (cf. Farson Negley, *The Sons of Noah* [1949]). D. H. Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow* (1915) portrays Ursula skimming through Gen 9, while bored in church; she makes believe that naiads and dryads, fauns and nymphs survived the flood; and how a nymph peered into the ark and overheard the sons of Noah along with their father plot of ruling the world. Ham beholding Noah's nakedness serves as a comparison for a homosexual act performed by two fathers, in Mark Merlis's novel *JD* (2015). The protagonist wrestles with Gen 9 and rabbinical interpretations of Noah's nakedness vis-à-vis the curse and Ham's role, as his adolescent son nearly catches him in the act.

A character in John Kendrick Bangs's *A House-Boat on the Styx* (1895) theorizes that humans, descendant from apes, had tails; and that Noah and his sons could build the ark so industriously because they had a tail as a third arm. Further, the reason humans no longer have tails is due to Shem, Ham, Japheth, and Noah overworking them and falling off or getting pinched off when the door of the ark closed. Later, Shem tells of his pet Creosaurus named Fido who was kept in a barn before the flood; it ate Ham's favorite trotter, along with five cows, but died choking on the wheels. In Bertolt Brecht's story "Vor der Sintflut" (ca. 1925, "Before the Flood"), a legend of the asses is expounded explaining why Ham has a rotund derriere. With a Norwegian sailor shipwrecked in the English Channel as the setting of *The Stranger from the Sea* (2019) by Paul Binding, two cats feature whose names are Japheth and Ham and their mother is called Mrs. Noah. Animals and Noah's sons also converge in the Talmud; Sanhedrin 108 maintains sexual congress was forbidden during the flood events, yet three in the ark violated this and were punished: the dog, the raven, and Ham.

The names of Noah's sons are often understood emblematically. Philo takes the names of Shem, Ham, and Japheth to symbolically mean good, bad, and indifferent, respectively (*QG* 1.88). Matthew Poole (*Synopsis Criticorum*, vol. 1 [1669]) relates Greco-Roman mythology which parallels Noah as

Saturn, who has three sons, and divided the world between them: Ham as Jupiter, who castrates his father; Japheth as Neptune, who has providence over the seas; Shem, the worshipper of God, as opposite of Pluto, i.e., Hades; and even Canaan as Mercury, the slave of the gods. Japheth and Shem are mentioned in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) as Christian's former identity. Alternatively, the names of Noah's sons represent pigmentations; thus, Shem is yellow, Japheth white, and Ham is black (Martin Delany, *Principia of Ethnology* [1879]).

In fact, in most of the literature involving Shem, Ham, and Japheth the themes of Noah's curse and the sons' allotted territories coalesce to hypothesize that the lineage of each of the sons represent different races who traditionally occupy specific realms or continents: Japheth in Europe, Shem in Asia, and Ham in Africa. Specifically, Ham's curse taken to be black skin, Canaan's fate of enslavement, and this family's territory corresponding to Africa has led to the justification of the enslavement of Africans, especially in the cases of the American South, South Africa, and South America. Both fiction and non-fiction attest this.

The lineage of Noah's sons, race, and geographic local surface in novels. In William Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* (1848) a gentleman traces his patronymics to one of the most ancient families of Wales, projecting still further to Shem (cf. Edward Thomas, *Beautiful Wales* [2016]). In *Non luogo a procedure* (2015, *Blameless*) by Claudio Magris, a curator of the Museum of War grapples with her own identity as she negotiates issues of race and exile, the curse of Canaan and ascendancy of Shem, Ham and enslavement. Zoë Wicomb's *October* (2014) juxtaposes the wine intoxication witnessed by Ham, traditionally alleged ancestor of Africans, and the wine of Eucharist introduced by the Huguenots of European descent. In his essay "The Servant in the House" (ca. 1920), W.E.B. Du Bois criticizes the unsophisticated spiritual myth that Negroes are destined to be servants; with sociological adeptness, he elucidates manifestations of this mentality in America particularly.

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VI. Visual Arts

When Noah's sons appear in European artwork depicting the construction of, entry into, or departure from the ark, they tend to be indistinguishable from one another. Four of the five paintings in Kaspar Memberger the Elder's ark cycle (oil on canvas, 1588, Residenzgalerie, Salzburg/Austria) illustrate this convention. Eight people, four men and four women, contribute to building the ark in the first painting (see fig. 22) and to loading the ark in the second painting. Noah's family remains out of sight in the third painting, hidden inside the ark. In the fourth painting, the eight humans exit the ark, following the animals. In the fifth, Noah and his wife kneel beside the sacrificial altar, while Noah's sons build a house and their wives engage in various domestic tasks. In all four paintings where Noah's family members are visible, their distribution in the painting seems to be driven by artistic rather than thematic considerations.

Some artists, however, depict fewer humans than might be expected from the Genesis story. Late antique and medieval depictions of the ark after the flooding has begun sometimes show Noah and his family through the windows in the ark's topmost floor. A fresco in the nave of the Abbey Church of St. Savin-sur-Gartempe in France (ca. 1100) provides a particularly fine example. In the slightly later Morgan Crusader Bible/Shah Abbas Bible (ca. 1250, New York/USA, Morgan Library, MS M.638, fol. 2v), however, only Noah, his wife, and two sons – presumably Japheth and Shem – appear. The fifth window is empty, perhaps as a rebuke to Ham for his role in the events of Gen 9:20–27.

On the other hand, some artists include nine family members. A collaboration between Jacob Savery the Elder and Jan Brueghel the Younger (ca. 1575–1600, private collection, Zurich) shows the eight expected people, in two groups of four. Jacob Savery the Younger, however, places Noah's three sons (identifiable as male by their hats) and two of his daughters-in-law at the base of the ramp leading



Fig. 22 K. Memberger the Older, *Der Arche-Noe-Zyklus für Fürsterzbischof Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau. Bau der Arche* (1588)

into the ark, with one daughter isolated at left, guiding an elephant. Noah and his wife stand with their backs to the viewer, and Noah's wife holds a baby, who looks over her shoulder toward the viewer. Perhaps Savery intended the baby to be Ham's son Canaan, the ninth human mentioned by name in the biblical story of Noah.

Beginning in 19th-century artwork, one sometimes finds Ham depicted with an African physiognomy, based on dubious exegesis of Gen 9:20–27 and so-called “Table of Nations” in Gen 10 (Braude). However, such racialized depictions of Ham and his brothers are absent from earlier Western artwork.

Islamic artwork featuring Noah's sons – an indirect reflection of biblical influence – is best known from Ottoman and Mughal settings of the 16th through 19th centuries. The treatment of Noah's sons is not much different here than in European artwork; the sons are typically indistinguishable. A miniature by the 16th-century Mughal artist Miskin (Washington, DC/USA, Smithsonian, F1948.8), however, shows one finely-dressed individual outside the ark; two figures in the ark try to pull him in. This may reflect the qur'ānic tradition of Noah's “fourth” son, traditionally called Yam (the Qur'ān neither names nor enumerates Noah's sons, who refused to join his father aboard the ark (S 11:42–43).

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VII. Film

Shem, Japheth, and Ham (their birth order per Gen 9:24; 10:21) take no actions in the biblical flood story except entering and leaving the ark. After the flood they are briefly foregrounded (Gen 9:22–26), and receive genealogies in Gen 10. Some filmmakers pay them more attention, in varied ways.

Michael Curtiz's *Noah's Ark* (1923, US) dresses Noah's sons in rough tunics, a prehistoric aesthetic.

Shem and Ham are married, Japheth betrothed to Miriam. When Miriam is taken to Akkad as a virgin sacrifice, Japheth rushes to rescue her. He is captured, blinded, and enslaved turning a millstone (mimicking Jud 16:21). While the Akkadians flee the floodwaters, Japheth frees himself and Miriam, escaping to the ark, where his sight is miraculously restored.

El Arca (dir. Juan Pablo Buscarini, 2007, AR/IT) stands out by giving Noah's daughters-in-law unique appearances and personalities alongside his sons. Unfortunately, it indulges the racist “curse of Ham” motif by giving Ham dark skin, a broad nose, thick lips, short stature, and certain childish characteristics. But all three of Noah's sons and their wives resist Noah's project in various ways. In one early scene, Noah's daughters-in-law scheme against him and debate which son should take over. Shem, Ham, and Japheth also express skepticism, at one point discussing possible retirement home options for Noah. In the end, though, all family members learn to cooperate, befitting the film's overt theme.

While *Noah's Ark* and *El Arca* depict Shem, Japheth, and Ham as adults, *Evan Almighty* (dir. Tom Shadyac, 2007, US) and *Noah* (dir. Darren Aronofsky, 2014, US) treat them as children and teens. In *Evan Almighty*, Dylan (Johnny Simmons), Jordan (Graham Phillips), and Ryan (Jimmy Bennett) Baxter – ranging in apparent age from preteen to late teens – variously experience humor, skepticism, and resentment when their father (Steve Carell) begins to build an ark, but later pitch in to help.

Aronofsky takes the familiar biblical order Shem, Ham, and Japheth as birth order, despite Gen 9:24. According to the script, Shem (Gavin Casalegno) is seven years old, Ham (Nolan Gross) five, and Japheth (possibly Mellie Campos or Oliver Saunders, both credited as “newborn baby”) newborn as the film opens. When the flood comes, ten years have passed. Shem (Douglas Booth) and Ila (Emma Watson), whom Noah (Russell Crowe) rescued early in the film, are now a couple. Ham (Logan Lerman) desires a similar relationship, but shortly after meeting Na'el (Madison Davenport) he fails (and Noah declines) to rescue her from a violent mob. Meanwhile, a blessing from Methuselah (Anthony Hopkins) makes the previously barren Ila fertile; the twin girls she bears to Shem bring the family's count to the familiar eight persons. Ham's resentment of Noah invites recruitment by ark stowaway Tubal-Cain (Ray Winstone). After Noah's post-flood drunkenness, Ham goes off on his own.

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See also → Ham (Person); → Japheth (Person);
→ Nations; → Shem