

# The Nations



THE OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

# The Nations



- Heb. goy/goyim; Greek ethnos
- Definition – Group formed on the basis of political or social interests or on kinship. (BEB)
- Usually connected by a shared land and language
- Much is said about the nations in Scripture
- We will examine in this lesson the view of the nations given in the Old Testament

# The Nations in the Old Testament



- Their origin – Acts 17:26; Gen. 10-11

## Acts 17:26 (ESV)



**26** And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

## Genesis 10:1–5 (ESV)



**1** These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. **2** The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. **3** The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. **4** The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. **5** **From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.**

## Genesis 10:6–20 (ESV)



**6** The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ... **8** Cush fathered Nimrod...**10** The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. **11** From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, ... and **12** Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. **13** Egypt fathered Ludim, ... Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim. **15** Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, **16** and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, **17** the Hivites, ... **18** ... and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. **19** And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. **20** **These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.**

## Genesis 10:21–31 (ESV)



**21** To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. **22** The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. **23** The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. **24** Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. **25** To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. ... **30** The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. **31** **These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.**

## Genesis 11:1–9 (ESV)



**1** Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. **2** And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ...  
**4** Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” **5** And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.

## Genesis 11:1–9 (ESV)



**6** And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. **7** Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” **8** So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. **9** Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

# The Nations in the Old Testament



- Their origin – Acts 17:26; Gen. 10-11
- The chosen nation – Gen. 12:1-3

## Genesis 12:1–3 (ESV)



**1** Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. **2** And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

## Genesis 15:13–21 (ESV)



**13** Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. **14** But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions....**16** And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” .... **18** ... “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, **19** the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, **20** the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, **21** the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

## Deuteronomy 12:29–31 (ESV)



**29** “When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, **30** take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.’ **31** You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

## 2 Kings 17:6–8 (ESV)



**6** In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria ...**7** And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt ..., and had feared other gods **8** and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel ...

## 2 Chronicles 36:14–16 (ESV)



**14** All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the LORD that he had made holy in Jerusalem.

**15** The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.

**16** But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

## Jeremiah 29:10–14 (ESV)



**10** “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. **13** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

# The Nations in the Old Testament



- Their origin – Acts 17:26; Gen. 10-11
- The chosen nation – Gen. 12:1-3
- God's concern for the nations – Gen. 12:3

## Genesis 12:1–3 (ESV)



**1** Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. **2** And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

## Exodus 19:5–6 (ESV)



**5** Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;  
**6** and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

## Deuteronomy 4:5–7 (ESV)



**5** See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

**6** Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ **7** For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

## 1 Kings 8:41–43 (ESV)



**41** “Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake **42** (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, **43** hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

## Isaiah 56:3–7 (ESV)



**3** Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”.... **6** ... the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— **7** these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

# The Nations in the Old Testament



- Their origin – Acts 17:26; Gen. 10-11
- The chosen nation – Gen. 12:1-3
- God’s concern for the nations – Gen. 12:3
- God’s plans for the nations – Is. 2:2-4

## Isaiah 2:2–4 (ESV)



**2** It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, **3** and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. **4** He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

## Isaiah 42:6–7 (ESV)



**6** “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, **7** to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

## Daniel 7:13–14 (ESV)



**13** “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. **14** And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

## Zechariah 8:22–23 (ESV)



**22** Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. **23** Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’ ”

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