

### LESSON 3

## **THE PLAYING BOARD OF HISTORY (Genesis 10-11)**

Born around 1525 BC, Moses delineates the playing board of history. He will give us the names of nations and peoples and the geographical placement of those who will be involved with Israel (Gen. 10). Neither the name of "Israel," nor Terah, Abraham's father, will be mentioned among them. The reason is because Israel, the nation that is to come from Abraham, will be a completely new work of a sovereign God, a creation act. Israel was not to be reckoned or numbered among the nations (Num. 23:9). They were to be a priestly nation to the pagan nations, as Levi was to Israel. God will be their inheritance (Deut. 9:26, 29; 32:9).

The naming of the nations in Genesis 10 is actually out of chronological sequence with respect to Genesis 11 and the tower of Babel. The story of the tower of Babel actually happens first. Before there can be nations and peoples with geographical boundaries, they first have to be scattered over the earth. So, Moses will list the nations and the peoples, then tell why and how they were scattered. They had refused the mandate given to Noah, to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1). There was nothing they could not do (Gen. 11:6)

Their refusal to spread out and their desire to build the Tower of Babel, indicates that corruption and rebellion has once again arisen like it had in Genesis 6. Since God had covenanted not to flood the earth again, His response will be to divide "the lip," scattering them and placing them in the geographical boundaries given in Genesis 10 to minimize the power of sin and rebellion [**an eschatological theme**]. Later, they will attempt to destroy these boundaries and make themselves into a single group of people, so that once again there will be nothing withheld from them, i.e., nothing they cannot do (Gen. 11:6; book of Daniel).

### **I. THE GENEALOGY OF PEOPLES AND NATIONS—Gen. 10**

- A. Genesis 10:1 says these are the generations (toledoth) of the sons of Noah born to them after the flood
- B. The order given is first the generations of Japheth, 2-6; then Ham, 6-21; and then Shem, 21-31
- C. A larger amount of material is given to Ham, since his son Canaan will be later removed from the land that is given to Israel
- D. Notable is Nimrod, the builder of Babylon and Nineveh, the great city (8-11)
- E. Babylon, Assyria and Nineveh will play a later role in the exile of the northern 10 tribes, i.e., Israel to Assyria in 722 BC and Judah to Babylon in 586
- F. These genealogies are listed for you in the Table of Nations on the next page
- G. Find **Peleg** in the table
- H. He is of the line leading to Terah and Abraham, but his genealogy is given separately in Genesis 11:10-32

**THE TABLE OF NATIONS—Genesis 10**

<b>SHEM (26)</b> -----	ELAM				ALMODAD	
	ASSHUR			<b>PELEG</b>	SHELEPH	
	<b>ARPHAXAD</b> -----	SHELAH		<b>EBER</b> --	JOKTAN	HAZARMAVETH
	LUD				JERAH	
	ARAM	-----UZ			HADORAM	
		HUL			UZAL	
		GETHER			DIKLAH	
		MASH			OBAL	
					ABIMAEI	
					SHEBA	
<b>HAM (30)</b> -----		SEBA			OPHIR	
		HAVILAH			HAVILAH	
		SABTAH	SHEBA		JOBAB	
	<b>CUSH</b> -----	RAAMAH	DEDAN			
		SABTECHAH				
		<b>NIMROD</b> -----			<u>[CITIES IN SHINAR]</u>	
		LUDIM			!	
		ANAMIM			<b>BABEL</b>	
		LEHABIM			ERECH	
		NAPHTUHIM			ACCAD	
	PATHRUSIM			CALNEH		
	CASLUHIM			!		
	CAPHTORIM			<u>[CITIES IN ASSYRIA]</u>		
				!		
				<b>NINEVAH</b>		
	PUT			REHOBOTH-IR		
		SIDON		CALAH		
		HETH		RESEN		
		JEBUSITE				
		AMORITE				
	<b>CANAAN</b> -----	GIRGASHITE				
		HIVITE				
		ARKITE				
		SINITE				
		ARVADITE				
		ZEMARITE				
		HAMATHITE				
<b>JAPHETH (14)</b> -----		ASHKENAZ				
	<b>GOMER</b> -----	RIPHATH				
	MAGOG	TOGARMAH				
	MADAI					
	JAVAN	-----ELISHAH				
	TUBAL	KITTIM				
	MESHECH	TARSHISH				
TIRAS	DODANIM					

## II. EXPLANATION OF THE TABLE OF NATIONS<sup>1</sup>

- A. The author's purpose is seen in 10:32—from them the nations spread out
- B. These names give a backdrop for the remainder of the events in Genesis and the Torah
- C. The lists show signs of selection and shaping to obtain the seventy names in total
- D. All the nations find their origin in the three sons of Noah, showing their unity
- E. Out of this one humanity, Abraham will be called who will restore blessing to all the families of the earth (12:3)
- F. Genesis will conclude with the seed of Abraham, 70—showing forth Abraham's seed as a new humanity and Abraham himself as a kind of 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam, the father of many nations (see Deut. 32:8)
- G. Throughout the list the reader will encounter several historical notes—vss. 8-12, 14, 19, 25—which focus mostly on the nations subject to God's judgment
  - 1. The sons of Japheth (10:2-6)
    - a. As the islands of the nations, vs. 5, they make up the outer fringe of the known world
    - b. When the focus is on God's universal kingdom, these nations again come into view, showing His plan for all mankind (e.g., see Psa. 72:8)
    - c. At the coming of the future king, Num. 24:17ff., these nations will again be included in God's rule (Num. 24:23-24)
    - d. Fourteen names are listed, seven sons and 7 grandsons
    - e. The sons of Magog, Madai, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras are omitted and lists only the sons of Gomer and Javan (see Ezek. 38:2ff.)
  - 2. The sons of Ham (10:7-21)
    - a. Following the list of the 7 sons and grandsons, Moses inserts an historical note on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Nimrod
      - 1) Moses' directs the reader to Nimrod's exploits
      - 2) His character implies his deeds were neither heroic nor entrepreneurial, but defiant and dastardly
      - 3) Nimrod's kingdom, his rule (mamlacah), which was vast, had a starting point, a place of origin—Babel
      - 4) This rule began in the land of Shinar (Sumer), which is considered separate from the land of Assyria (vs. 11)
      - 5) All the names move geographically from south to north
      - 6) Erech, Hebrew, is Uruk, known today as Warka
    - b. The importance of this note lies in its introduction of Babylon which is the subject of 11:1-9

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<sup>1</sup> These observations are summarized from Sailhamer, "The Pentateuch as Narrative," pp. 130-37.

- c. The association of Assyria with Babylon is significant, since Assyria is associated with the list of Shem
  - d. “That he built” can include the idea of rebuilding. He probably didn’t go into Ashur to build but to conquer, incorporating Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah and Resen into his empire, making them more impressive in size
  - e. In so doing, Moses has taken Assyria out of its natural associations with Shem and given it a new identification with Babylon (cf. Num. 24:24 where again Assyria is associated with Babylon [Eber<sup>2</sup>])
  - f. Thus, a distant son of Ham was at war with the distant sons of Shem (Gen. 3:15; 12:3b; 9:25-27)
  - g. All this appears to be the beginning of the symbolic value for Babylon, known in Isa. 13-14, and fully developed in “Mystery Babylon the Great” in Rev. 17
  - h. Micah 5:6 also speaks of Assyria as the “land of Nimrod”
  - i. Following the note on Nimrod, Mizraim (Egypt) contains seven names, which is the last of such lists with seven
  - j. The list for Canaan is more comprehensive, since Moses is especially interested in the exact boundaries of the area of Canaan (19, cf. Num. 34:1-12)
  - k. This is the land promised to Abraham
3. The sons of Shem (10:21-31)
- a. Begins with an introduction, vs. 21, to draw out the lines of continuity running through chapter 10—i.e., looking back to his brother Japheth without noting Ham, and possibly to the Noahic blessing in 9:26-27; looking forward, to the father of the sons of Eber
  - b. The mention of Eber anticipates the genealogy of 11:10-26, which results in the birth of Abraham
  - c. The list is traced up to the two sons of Eber and there follows the line of the second son, Joktan
  - d. Joktan and Peleg thus form a dividing line or division; Joktan and his sons leading to the building of Babylon (11:1-9); and Peleg, leading to the genealogy that leads to Abraham and the promised land (11:10-26; cf. 10:25—in his days the earth was divided)
  - e. Thus, not only is the land divided in the confusion of languages (11:1), but more fundamentally, two great lines of humanity diverge from the midst of the sons of Shem
  - f. Those who seek to make a name for themselves in the building of Babylon (11:4) and those for whom God will make a name (12:2) in the call of Abraham
4. The postscript (10:32)
- a. From these the nations spread out over the earth

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<sup>2</sup> Eber in Num. 24:24 is not the Eber of Gen. 10:24, but rather the Hebrew term meaning “beyond (the river), hence a reference to Babylon

- b. His purpose in this genealogy is to provide a context for Babylon (11:1-9)
- c. Notice in 11:1-2, they journeyed eastward, as did Adam and Eve, Gen. 3:24, and as did Cain, Gen. 4:7
- d. It is important that the starting point of the events of the story is a land west of Babylon
- e. Moses is contrasting God's way of blessing, Eden and the Promised Land, with humanity's own attempt to find the "good" by travelling East
- f. In Genesis, when people go "east," they leave the land of blessing, Eden and the Promised Land, and go to a land where their greatest hopes will turn to ruin, Babylon and Sodom
- g. Note: from Sinai a generation will go east into the wilderness where Num. 13-14 tell us that a whole generation dies because they "did not believe" in the Lord and enter the promised land (Num. 14:11)

### III. THE LANDS OF SHEM, HAM AND JAPHETH—the playing board of history with respect to Israel



### IV. THE JUDGMENT ON BABEL—Genesis 11

- A. Like Cain and Abraham's other sons (Gen. 4:16-17; 25:1-6), they journeyed east and settled in the land of Shinar. There they built a city and tower in defiance of God (1-2)
- B. They built the tower to make a name for themselves in imitation of the mountain of God in the Garden of Eden (4, see Ezek. 28:12-14, 16)



- C. Their goal was to keep from being scattered abroad over the face of the earth (4)
- D. The visitation of the Lord was not a visitation of grace as it was with Noah, but a visitation of judgment mixed with grace, they were not destroyed (5-6)
- E. Dividing the lip, they were forced to stop, and were scattered over the face of the whole earth as it had been commanded of Noah in Genesis 9:1 (8)
- F. From their lands the nations would continue to rebel by trying to regather the nations into one (the book of Daniel)
- G. Ephesians 2:11-12 says they were separate from Christ, the seed of the woman; and were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel; strangers to the covenants of promise; having no hope and without God in the world
- H. So, the nations would expand in their rebellion without the true knowledge of God, imitating the true worship and history found in the creation account with a false imitation

#### V. THE CALL OF ABRAHAM—Genesis 11:10-12:3

- A. Abram is called out from the land of Shinar, to separate himself from the nations
- B. It is he who will be the hope of the nations (Gen. 12:3)
- C. The land of Canaan is promised to him (Gen. 15)

#### VI. THE PLAYING BOARD OF HISTORY ADVANCES—the movement of the nations

- A. The ancient world at a glance

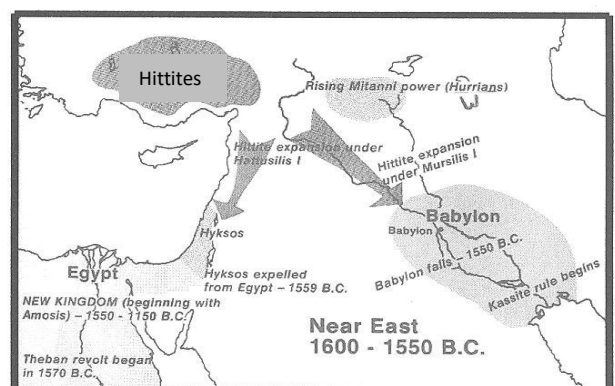
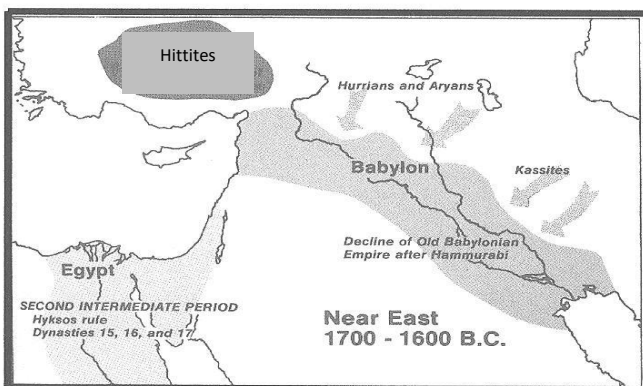
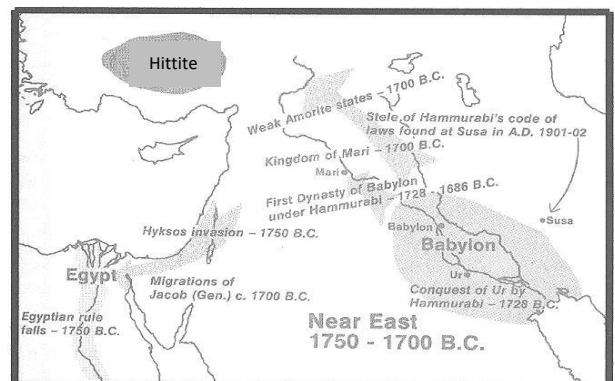
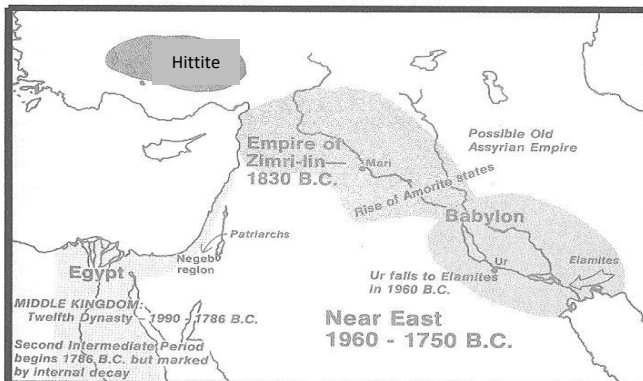
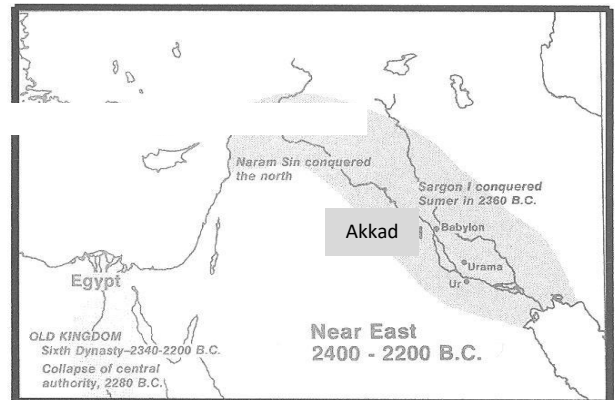
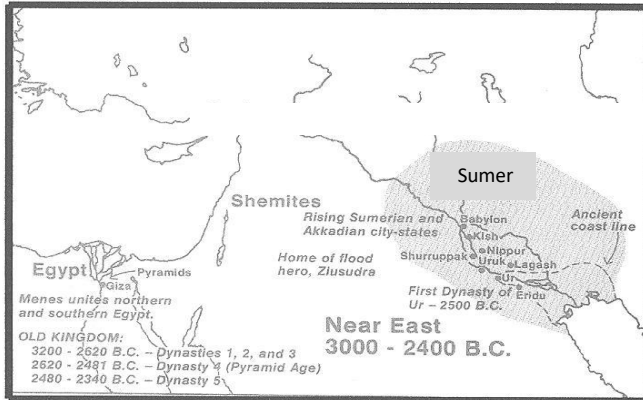


Find:

1. Canaan
2. Assyria
3. Babylon (Sumer = Shinar)
4. Egypt (Mizraim)
5. Media
6. Aram (Syria)
7. Edom
8. Moab
9. Ammon
10. Tigris River
11. Euphrates River

B. The expansion of the nations from 3,000-1550 BC<sup>3</sup>

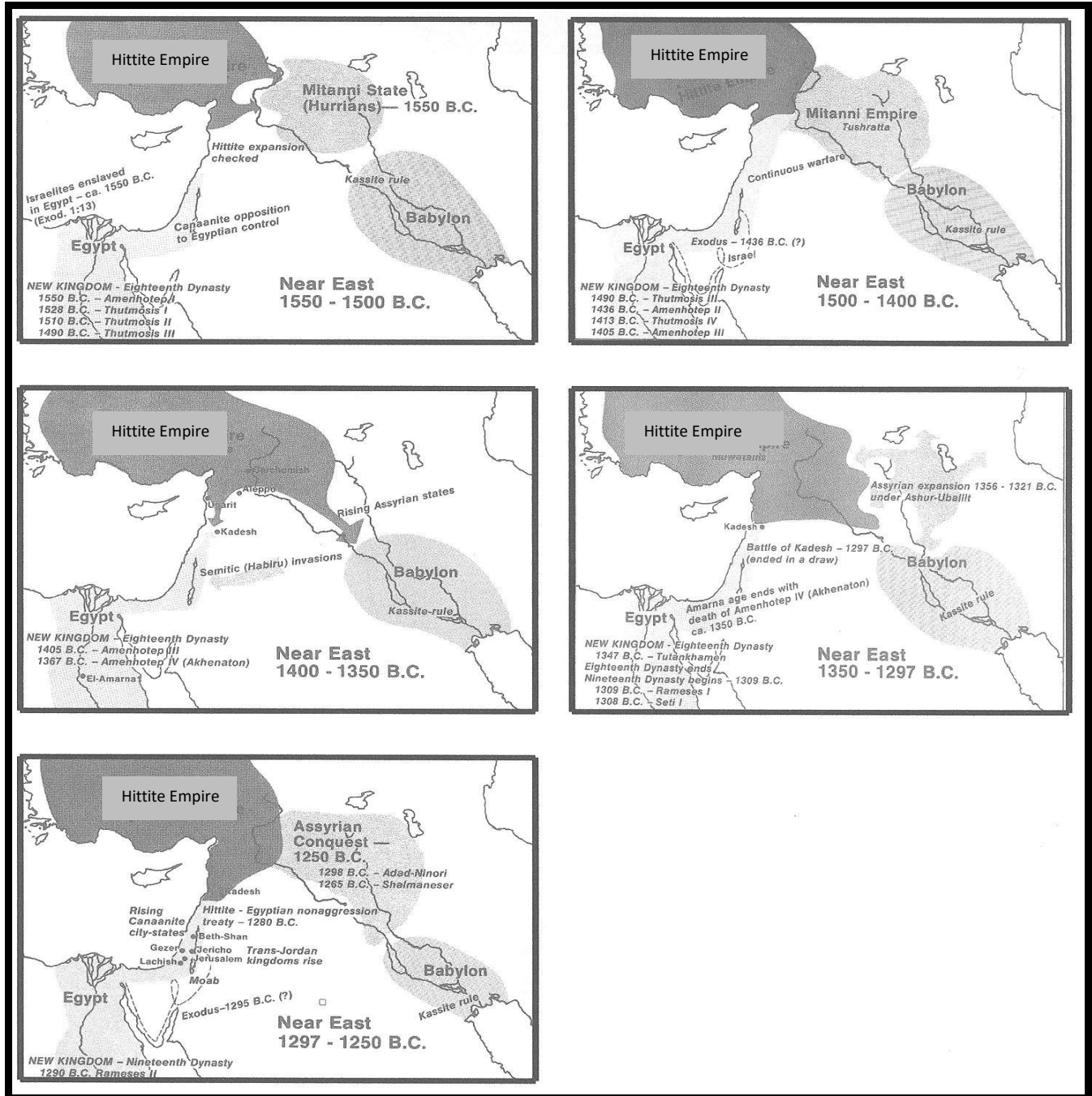
1. History begins at Sumer
2. Sumer goes back to about 3,000 BC



<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from Livingston, The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment

C. The expansion of the nations from 1550-1250 BC

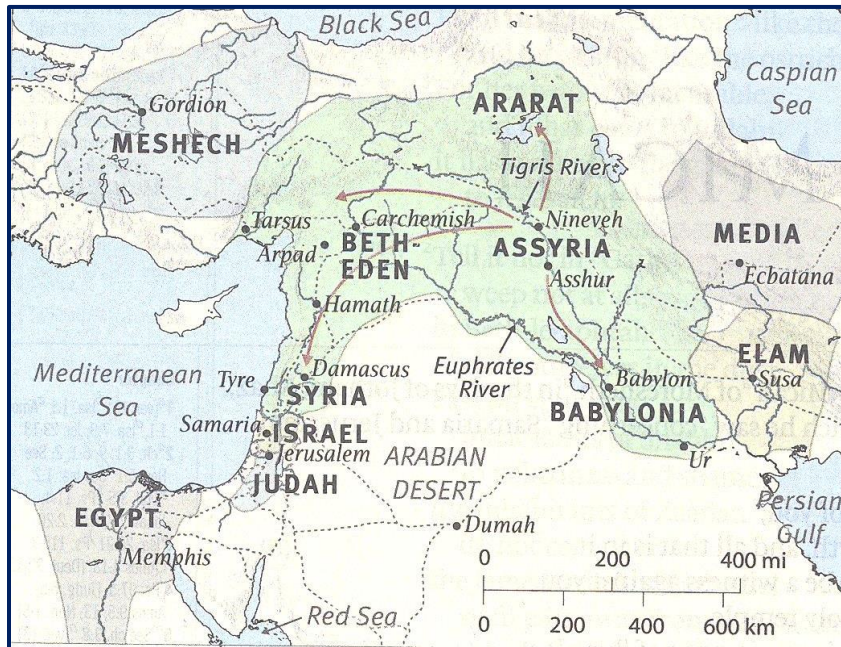
1. Moses is born in 1525 BC
2. The exodus occurs at 1445 BC; late date equals 1260 BC
3. The book of Judges is from around 1350-1100 BC where Samuel is the last judge
4. David begins to reign in 1010 BC





## VII. THE EXPANSION OF THE NATIONS ACCORDING TO DANIEL

- A. The neo-Assyrian empire between 745-701—Israel, the 10 northern tribes were exiled by the Assyrians in 722 BC



- B. The neo-Babylonian empire exiles Judah 597-586 BC





C. The Mede/Persian empire from 539-333BC



D. Alexander the Great's empire from 323-305 BC—later split among his generals

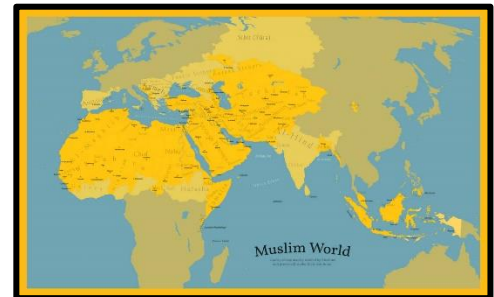




E. The Roman empire—753 BC-AD 117 (Judea annexed in 63 BC)



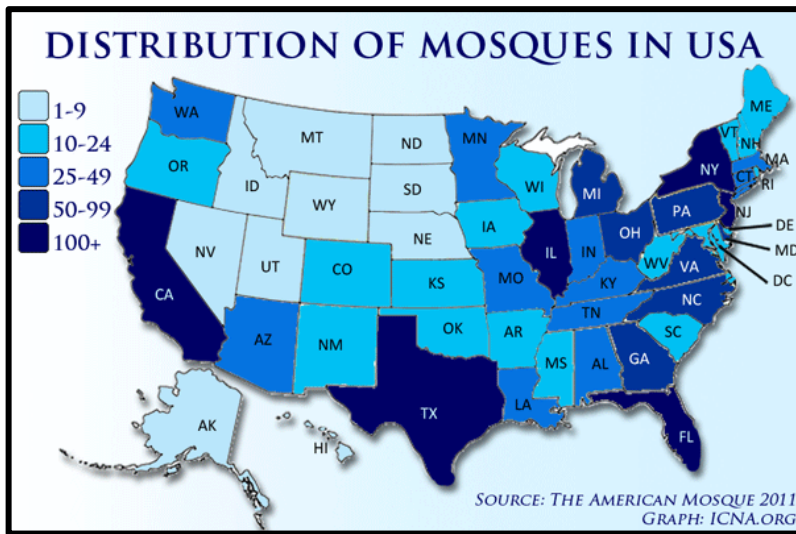
F. The Ottoman empire—1699-1914 and the Muslim world today



G. The Bible lands today



## H. Mosques in the USA

**VIII. THESE ARE THE NATIONS ISRAEL IS TO BE SCATTERED AMONG**

- A. Lev. 26:14-39, \*32-33
- B. Deut. 4:25-28
- C. Deut. 28:47-52, 62-68

**IX. ISRAEL WILL BE REGATHERED AND EXALTED OVER THE NATIONS IN THE LATTER DAYS—**

- A. Exod. 15:16-18
- B. 1 Sam. 2:10
- C. Deut. 30:1-3

**X. OBEDIENCE TO THE COVENANT IS THE KEY TO BLESSING OR CURSING**

- A. Deut. 11:18-28
- B. Deut. 26:16-19
- C. Deut. 28:1-2, 15