

BIBLE ATLAS

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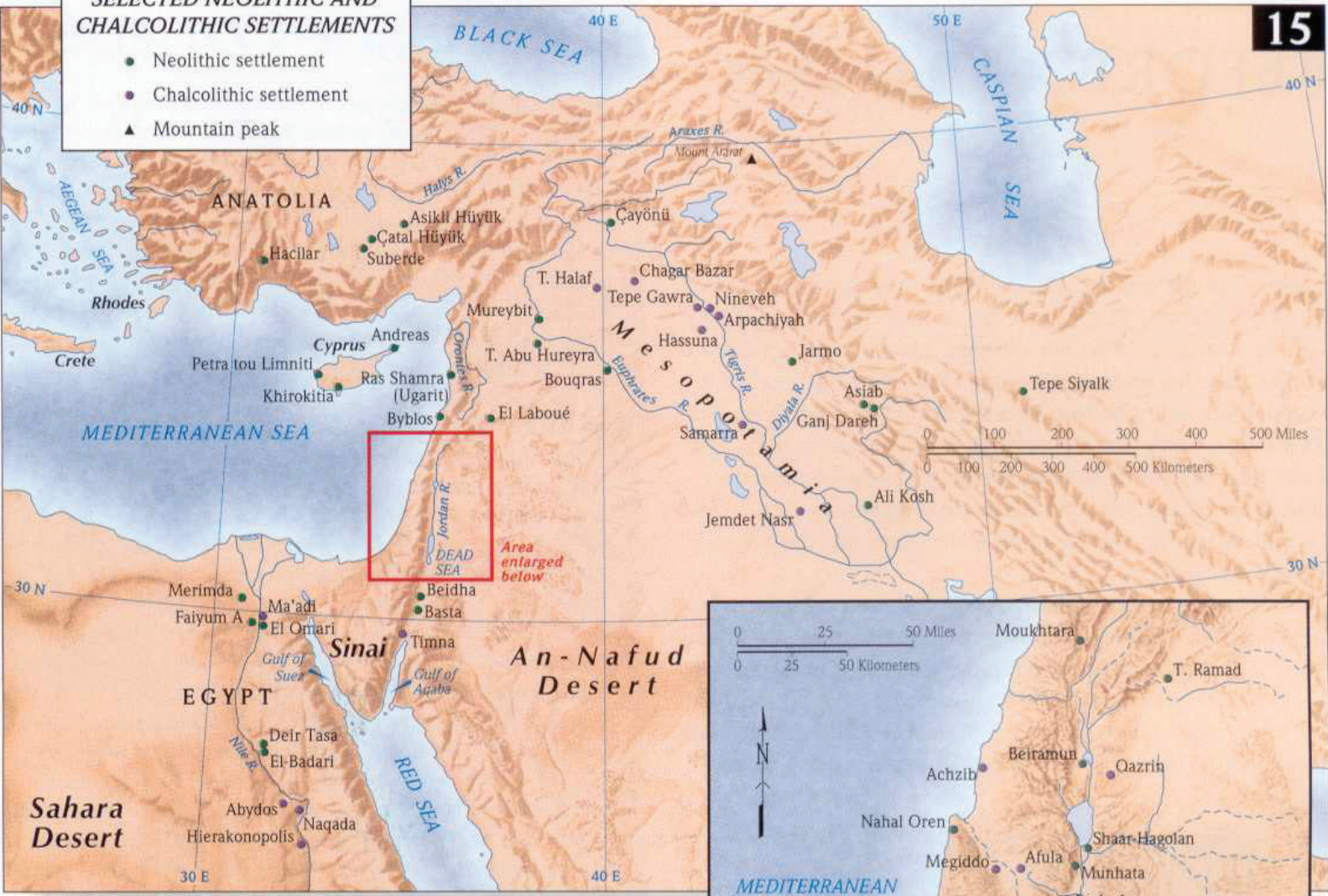
Zaine Ridling, Ph.D.
Editor

Chapter 4

Before Abraham

SELECTED NEOLITHIC AND CHALCOLITHIC SETTLEMENTS

- Neolithic settlement
- Chalcolithic settlement
- ▲ Mountain peak



PALEOLITHIC PERIOD

The Paleolithic period, or “Old Stone Age,” describes that stage when people lived by hunting and gathering. Foraging for food and hunting wild animals consumed practically all of life’s energies.

THE TABLE OF NATIONS

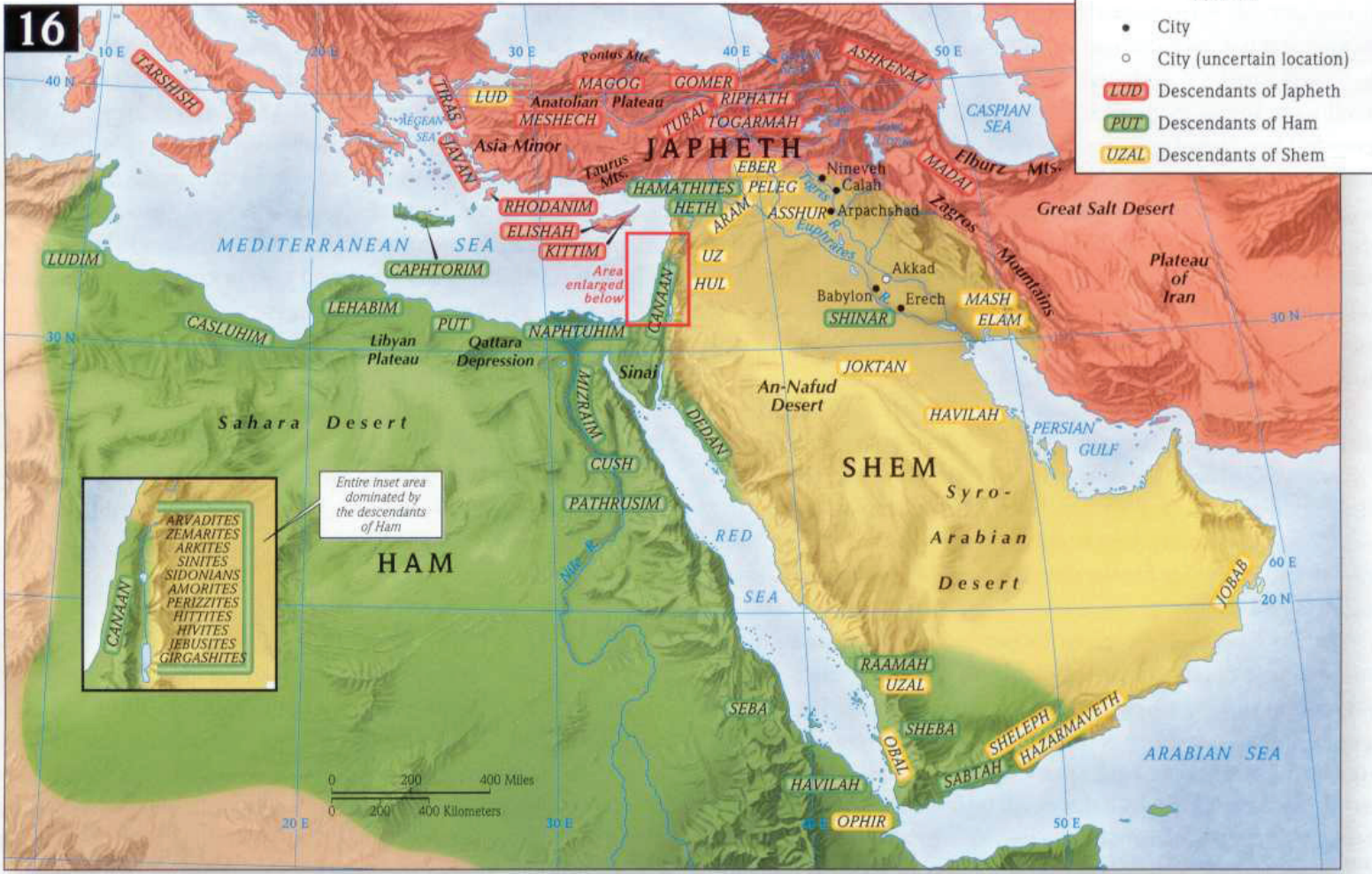
Genesis 10 presents a list of nations descended from the three sons of Noah: Japheth, Ham, and Shem. This "Table of Nations" is unique in the ancient world and contains seventy names of ancestral heads of nations and peoples known to Israel. The list proceeds from the less important, for the purposes of the writer, to the most important. The fourteen descendants of Japheth are named first. Japheth's descendants generally are associated with areas north and northwest of Canaan, including mainland Greece, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), certain Mediterranean islands (Crete, Cyprus, and Rhodes), and the mountainous areas from Armenia to the Caspian Sea.

The list next names thirty descendants of Ham. The Hamites generally are located in North Africa (Egypt and the Sudan), along the coast of Somaliland and the west Arabian coasts, and in certain sections of Mesopotamia. Canaan along with

many of the people-groups Israel encountered as she entered the promised land (Amorites, Jebusites, Perizzites, Hivites, Gergashites, and others) are listed as Hamites.

The last and most extensive part of the list contains twenty-six descendants of Shem, the ancestor of Israel. Genesis 11:10–26 connects Shem with Abram (Abraham), who received God's gracious covenant of blessing and hope for the human race (Gen. 12:1–3).

Identification of many of Shem's descendants remains uncertain. Some of the names seem to refer to areas of northwest Mesopotamia (Eber, Peleg, Aram). Elam was at the bend of the Persian Gulf, while Asshur and Arpachshad are in the upper Tigris region. Several names can be located plausibly in Somaliland (Havilah, Ophir). The thirteen sons of Joktan are related to the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula.



The Biblical Table of Nations

Genesis 10

The genealogical table in Genesis 10 reflects Israel's views of world geography in the post-Exilic period. It was probably compiled in the 5th or 4th century B.C., incorporating earlier materials and primitive traditions. The peoples of the world are divided into three groups descended from the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Despite the many doublets in the list, it is evident that Shem lives to the east, Ham to the south, and Japheth to the north, corresponding to the three regions of the earth then recognized. The names are represented here on a modern map of the Middle East.

16a

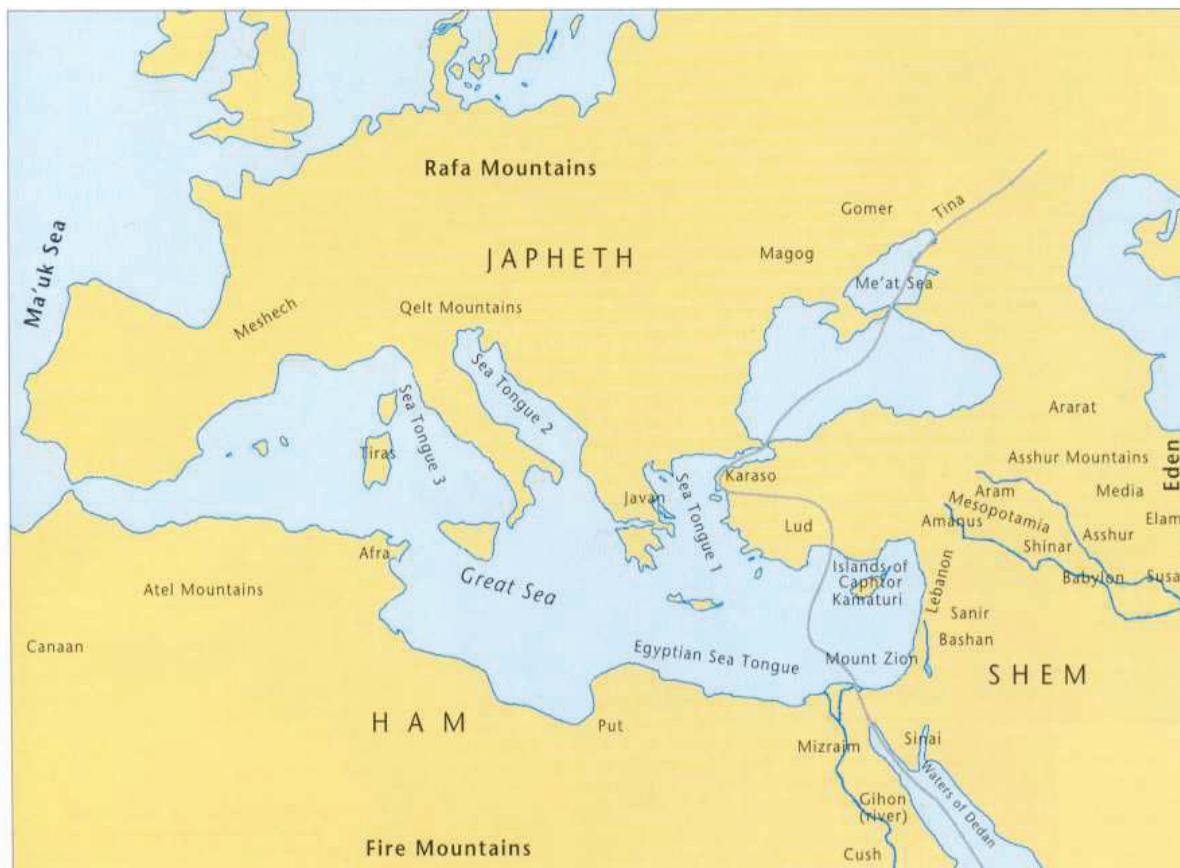


Shem
Ham
JAPHETH

The Biblical Table of Nations in the Hellenistic Period

Jubilees 8-9

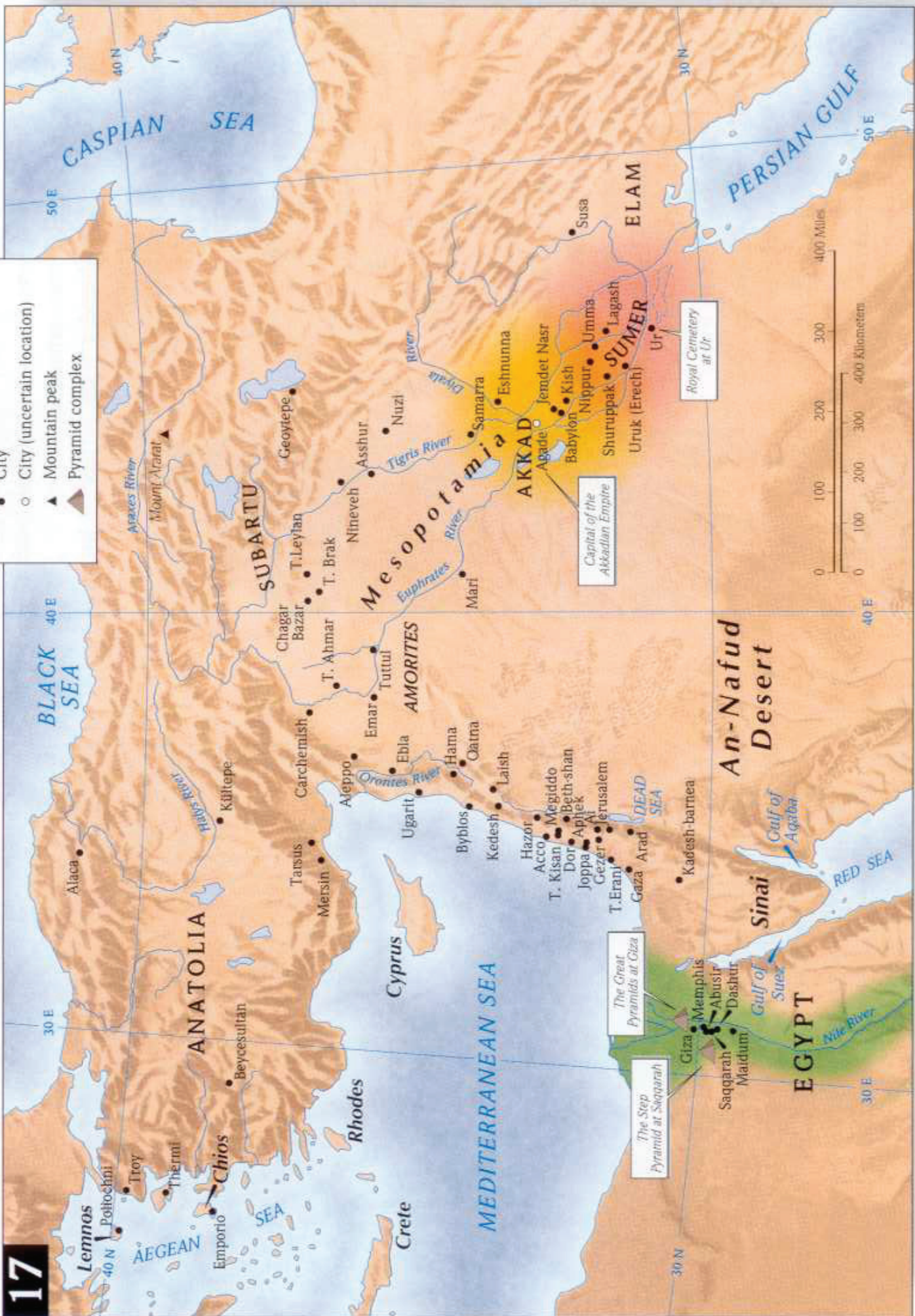
The book of Jubilees from the 2nd century B.C. presents a revised form of the table of nations in Genesis 10, interpreting it in the light of the new geographical knowledge of the Hellenistic period. It tells how the world was allotted to the three sons of Noah. Shem received the best part, the central part of the earth bounded by a line extending northward to the Tina (Don) River through Karaso (Hellespont) and the Caspian and Me'at (Azov) seas, and southward from Karaso through Lud to the waters of Dedan (Red Sea). All the lands north and west of this line belonged to Japheth, and the lands south and west were the heritage of Ham.



H A M

S H E M

Fire Mountains



ANCIENT NEAR EAST IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ▴ Pyramid complex