Where is Shinar?

You will not find the traditional answer here. We have to return to natural logic as in the previous article and assume Noah landed on the seashore and not literally on the top of some mountain or far inland from any access to the ocean. You have to apply some science and logic to the stories in the bible if you are going to make sense of the message. If something has no appearance of a more scientific conclusion based on the observations given then we must form an allegorical interpretation. This brings science and religion together as long a science does not assume fascination and religion do not assume magic. This is not to restrict God from miracles, but if a more rational explanation is available in order to take the ridiculousness out of a religious theory, why hold on to magic if it is not needed. Such was the case with Noah’s observation of the flood. With Shinar, even the science of history follows religious assumptions without any rational analysis.

From Wikipedia we get the following about Shinar:

The name Shinar occurs eight times in the [Hebrew Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible), in which it refers to [Babylonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonia).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinar#cite_note-JewishEnc-3) This location of Shinar is evident from its description as encompassing both Babel ([Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon)) (in northern Babylonia) and Erech (Uruk) (in southern Babylonia).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinar#cite_note-JewishEnc-3) In the [Book of Genesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Genesis) 10:10, the beginning of [Nimrod](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nimrod)'s kingdom is said to have been "Babel [Babylon], and [Erech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erech) [[Uruk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruk)], and [Akkad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_Empire), and [Calneh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calneh), in the land of Shinar." Verse 11:2 states that Shinar enclosed the plain that became the site of the [Tower of Babel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_Babel) after the [Great Flood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flood_myth). After the Flood, the sons of [Shem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shem), [Ham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ham_(son_of_Noah)), and [Japheth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japheth), had stayed first in the highlands of [Armenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia) and then migrated to Shinar.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinar#cite_note-4)

The process of putting Babylon in parenthesis is based on tradition. This association comes from as far back as religious interpretations associated them. This is neither scientific nor rational, but rather assuming because of similar phonics. Even science follows religious tradition when it comes to Babylonia. You can click any link and it will take you to Wikipedia for more information. The last place Babel is mentioned was Genesis 11 and the first time Babylon was mentioned is 2 Kings 17. This is after the death of David. One would think that the two words would be associated at one point from the flood to the time of David. You cannot find one instance. There is no direct association in the Old Testament. Both Jew and Christian make an association out of tradition—probably because of phonics or some other assumption. I know of no source that equates even similar meanings. There is also no association in modern revelation or the Book of Mormon. All we have is a tradition.

From the American Dictionary of the English Language—Noah Webster 1829 we have the following:

BABEL, n. [Heb.] Confusion; disorder

BABYLONIAN, n. An inhabitant of Babylonia. In ancient writers, an astrologer, as the Chaldeans were remarkable for the study of astrology.

The meanings of both are quite different. The first does not give a place and the second does not even provide any meaning associated with Babel. The dictionary referrers to the term *Babylonian* having great qualities. This is positive while Babel has a negative meaning. In the Bible, after Israel was held captive in geographical Babylon, the term became an allegorical condition of bondage. For this reason, Babylon lost its original meaning identified by the Chaldean and perhaps obtained a more negative tradition. If Babel gave the correct meaning to the Chaldeans and not the historical Babylon, we have a natural discrepancy. King Nebuchadnezzar obtained some Jews because they were of Chaldean origin. If Jerusalem or some other Jewish origin produced the Chaldean, why do we associate the Chaldean with Babylon? They had astrologers, but the sciences of the Chaldean came from without in the same way the confounding of languages came from without, according to some linguists.

The allegory to man in bondage is like ignorance and servitude. It correlates *Babylon* to Israel held captive. Scripture also uses Egypt as a place where Israel was held captive. In both cases, Babylon and Egypt were great civilizations long before the Hebrews became captive in either—first in Egypt and later in Babylon. Eventually, tradition forgets the greatness and fuses the allegorical into the literal concepts. Equating Babel with Babylon does almost the same thing because Babel is likewise thought to be some sort of evil because of the later captivity. If Babel represented something evil and Babylon had bad memories for the Jews, the association was naturally reinforced if they had no knowledge where Shinar originated. The Jews knew Jerusalem and Egypt of an old tradition, but their memory was fused more to Babylon as the bad place. It was natural to attach Babel and Babylon together. A few years back in Frankfort Germany an archeological exhibition demonstrated that [Babel is not Babylon](http://www.metadesign.com/clients/babylon-myth-and-truth-%E2%80%93-exhibition).

Out of tradition:

“The Hebrew for Shinar is שִׁנְעָר Šin`ar, and in an ancient Greek translation of the Bible or Septuagint, it is expressed as Σεννααρ Sennaar. This was a geographical locale of uncertain boundaries in Mesopotamia thought to be the cradle of civilization centering between the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Thought to be a corruption of Shene Nahar ("two rivers"), Shene or ("two cities")[[1]](#endnote-1), Shinar could represent Sumer ("land of the civilized lords" or "native land"). This is far too different for two cities or two rivers to be associated with the land of the civilized lords. Sumer is correct, Shene is pushing it for being Shinar. Jubilees 10:20 states the ancients built the Tower of Babel with bitumen from the sea of Shinar. David Rohl theorized that the Tower was actually located in Eridu, which was once located on the Persian Gulf. This is where ruins of a massive, ancient ziggurat, worked from bitumen seemed to exist.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

The above give more clarity, but the tower location is too assumptive. Trying to associate the *land of civilized Lords* with *two rivers* or *two cities* again refers to Babylon. This is if we assume Shene means Shinar. If you look only in one place you can find two cities and even two rivers. The Nile Delta, for example, could just as easily be Shinar if you look there. Bitumen is a naturally occurring organic byproduct of decomposed organic materials used as mortar in ancient construction. According to a Rutgers University Professor, the ancients used bitumen to cement blocks of stone together in the Great Pyramids of Giza. Just because it exists in the Persian Gulf does not negate the pyramid construction from using Bitumen. If they found Bitumen in Babylon someone would have noted it. We cannot localize this oil substance to the region where you think the city of Babel originated. Babel could have easily been in Egypt as well as Babylon. You cannot conceive Shinar as the land of Sumer because Genesis indicates Shinar is west and Sumer (mount of the east), or Babylon resided in the east. Shem went east and thus the Bible is contradictory to tradition. Of course, we ask west and east from where?

Naturally, this would be from Noah’s landing—the center of all great civilizations from the generations of Noah. A central location on a seashore is the now Gaza shores—later to be called the central part of the land of the Canaanites. As Ham went west with Noah to Egypt, the distance was short and also fitting.



The map illustrates the later Land of Canaan. This is indicative of the expansion of Ham and others of Noah while Shem was farther East, above the Persian Sea, and Japheth was farther North West in the isles of Greece as Genesis calls it the *isles of the Gentiles*. If you do not accept this general view, you have the land of Shinar not with Noah, but with Shem according to tradition. To have the Land of Shinar with Shem does not make sense according to Genesis.

A coast on the Mediterranean Sea gives us a general location of the landing of Noah. The Sea of Shinar could be the same sea that we call the Mediterranean. Shinar is simply due west along the shoreline from Noah's landing. Traveling would naturally follow shorelines or fertile areas inland.

Perhaps the Mediterranean, where the Nile empties, was between the landing east and the Land of Shinar west as in agreement with Genesis. You can speculate with many locations, but this provides an east-west relationship while other areas in the region provide a north-south relationship relative to seas such as Mt. Ararat in Turkey being the preferred landing from tradition. This, however, destroys the possibility of a normal landing from the ocean and assumes the world was literally covered.

The reason the modern-day Gaza Strip becomes the logical place for the Ark landing according to the Biblical description of the movements of the descendants of Noah.

The idea that Shinar is a corruption of other words is also assuming. If any corruption, it would have accrued over many years after Moses. Because God gave Genesis to Moses, it is pointless to view corruption prior to that. Given to Moses only 1447 years before Christ, the corruption of Genesis is unlikely if the Hebrew translation is correct. Biblical tradition often equates two words because they sound alike or because the Lord inspires confusion for His own purpose. Entomologists do just this. Not knowing the meaning of a word before translation is altogether assuming that phonetics is the basis of understanding and not the meaning of the term.

The reason the Land of Shinar is so important is that it was a land of many cities mentioned in conjunction with the generations of Ham, the son of Noah.

[Genesis 10:6-12](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/ot/gen/10.6-12?lang=eng#p5)

6 And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.

7 And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan.

8 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

11 Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah,

12 And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city

We have Ham, Cush and then Nimrod before there is any mention of a person’s character or life. The cities mentioned in relation to Nimrod were Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh. All were in the land of Shinar. Cities mentioned in reference to decedents of Ham described nothing about their lives or where they went until *out of that land* or out of the land of Shinar *went forth Asshur*. This could be back to present day Israel or somewhere in that direction.

Now the generations of Japheth have no mention of cities or direction. Instead of anything specific, it becomes Isles of the Gentiles. Because Moses receives the record long lost, he and most every Hebrew would know what this translation would mean—ancient Greece.

[Genesis 10:2-5](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/ot/gen/10.2-5?lang=eng#p1)

2 The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.

3 And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah.

4 And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided into their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

It would make sense that Noah kept records in the land of Shinar and not among the descendants of Shem or Japheth; otherwise, there would be more information about those sons, their cities, and movement. It is also logical to assume that, given that Moses received this record, the use of Gentiles comes from a term already in use. By the time of Moses, knowledge of the Creation has completely dissipated, but not the various civilizations. We have to assume that the Gentiles in the time of Moses were the people of Japheth and the *isle of the Gentiles* represents the Isles of Greece because Greece became a great civilization as also the land of Sumer became great civilization in the east. One can surmise that Egypt was not the land of the Gentiles nor was Sumer. The argument leaves Egypt as the Land of Shinar, also a great civilization.

[Genesis 10:21-30](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/ot/gen/10.21-30?lang=eng#p20)

21 Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born.

30 The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram….

…And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar a mount of the east.

Here the city Sephar is considered to be in South Arabian towns or districts a town bare the name. This is south and not east as in *thou goest unto Sephar a mount of the east.*

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The validity of these cities would work if the *mount of the east* meant the entire Arabian Peninsula—east of Egypt. The central aspects of the two civilizations are more north of the entire lands respectively. Keep in mind Abraham came from Mesopotamia and he was a descendant of Shem. Despite the idea of enlarging the lands only clarifies the east and west directions where biblically the Land of Shinar was west.

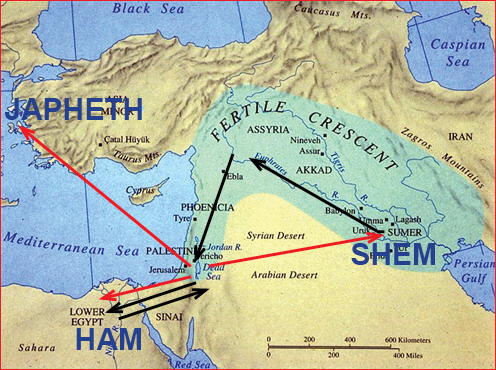
Authorities say Sephar is a location, mentioned in reference to the boundary of the sons of Joktan a son of Peleg. Genesis mentions that at the time of Peleg, the *“earth was divided”* and biblical authorities assume he lived in Shinar because the division is associated with the Great Tower. Joktan's brother Peleg becomes the ancestor of Abraham. Since Abraham came from the land of ancient Sumer, the same authorities assume Shinar was in this vicinity. Just because Peleg represents the time of the confounding of languages does not yield a location of Shinar. The time of Peleg is associated with an event and not a place. Genesis was giving the generations of Shem and the record simply gives the time of Peleg as living at the time of the division or confounding of tongues after the Great Tower was built.

The division of people is more logical than the conclusion some amateur geologist uses as the division of continents. If such a division of land happened, it would be long before Peleg. The people must have known of each civilization and probably traveled between them. The many generations as a historical account were recorded as given to Moses years after the Great Tower and not before. We have only these clues: Isles of the Gentiles for Japheth, the mount of the east for Shem, and as Genesis records of Noah and Ham—the Land of Shinar:

Genesis 11:2

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

This reference could refer to all the people of Noah going west to Shinar before the generations dispersed in various directions. Because the generations are given first does not suggest timing. Generations itself implies many years after. *As they* *journeyed from the east* does not happen after the great division. It happens before the generations were recorded. Why would the record talk of only Noah as they and yet before this is listed the many generations after Noah? They move to the *land of Shinar* then the Great Tower is built. Japheth perhaps then went north to the isles of the Gentiles and Shem to the mount of the east. It really does not matter because the three directions represent three great civilizations. See **Image.**



The three directions in red point to three great civilizations. It would be natural to assume the migration followed fertile areas or if by boat the coastlines. The red indicates the different generations while Shem may have taken a path through the Fertile Crescent. The black gives us the travels of Abraham which would naturally be the normal travel of the past. Combining the two confirms the consistency of the Land of Shinar being in Egypt. If the landing of the Ark was at the central point in the description of Genesis, it causes wonder why for thousands of years since man came to understand geography and maps, not one person has suggested Egypt be Shinar. If someone did, it is hard to know it through the darkness of tradition. Some maps suggest the locations indicated for Shem, Ham, and Japheth are constant with a more reasonable conclusion. If you put the Great Tower in Sumer, Genesis geographically becomes a contradiction because that is not where the generations of Ham flourished. If you put the Ark in the Persian Gulf, the fathers of Abraham would have gone west and not east. This would put the mount of the east towards India and Abraham did not come from there. Honestly, all of Arabian Peninsula could be the mount of the East. Mount means people or civilization and not a mountain. This comes from understanding allegory in scripture as *mountains of the Lords house.*

The landing of the Ark on Mount Ararat as some religious scientists claim along with the sea of Shinar as the Black Sea is directly much more north of two great civilizations. Again Genesis becomes a contradiction. There is no mention of any generations of Noah going south. This would put Shinar in Greece, the same place as the Isles of the Gentiles. Despite all traditional assumptions, the geography in the *Book of Mormon* describing the migration of the Jaredites fits perfectly with Egypt and the travels from the Great Pyramid or Tower—giving us understanding why there are pyramids in Central America. This comes later.

1. The New York Review, St Joseph's Seminary, 1907, p. 205. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Legends: The Genesis of Civilization (1998) and The Lost [↑](#endnote-ref-2)