CHESHVAN [Genesis 10:21](#) (Genealogy of Noah's sons)

(and see: [CHESHVAN supplement GENESIS 5:32; GEN 6:10; GEN 10:2; + GEN 11:10](#)

and the additional, related syntactic ambiguity: [CHESHVAN: a related syntactic ambiguity: Gen 9:22-25](#))

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וּלְשֵׁם יֻלַּד גַּם הֻוא אֲבִי֙ כָּל־בְּנֵי־עֵ֔בֶר אֲחִי יֶ֖פֶת הַגָּדֽוֹל׃

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https://www.anticswiss.com/en/fine-art-antiques/the-sacrifice-of-noah-20585

The month of Cheshvan is the first of the rainy winter months in the Land of Israel. Although this month does not have any formal Jewish holidays,[1] there is a special date in this month that holds liturgical significance outside of the land of Israel. The addition of the words וְתֵן טל ומטר into the Amidah prayer begins in the land of Israel on the 7th of

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[1] Caveat: The Beta Israel holiday of Sigd occurs on 29th Cheshvan. There is a popular belief that the name of the month, "Marcheshvan" incorporates the word *mar*, "bitter," as a prefix to the basic name Cheshvan, and that this is related to the lack of holidays, but, in fact *mar* is original to the name of the month. See ["Putting the Mar Back in Marheshvan"](#) by Shlomo Zuckier, in *The Lehrhaus*.

Cheshvan. According to Jewish tradition, the Flood that is described in Genesis 6-9 began on 17 Cheshvan and lasted a year, so that Noah and his family left the ark on the 27th of Cheshvan.The syntactic ambiguity that I've selected for the month of Cheshvan is about three of these survivors, Noah's sons, particularly Shem and Japheth. It is a "**scope ambiguity**" found in Genesis 10:21, the chapter that reviews the genealogy of Noah's sons.

Modern English Translations:
Alhatorah.org: [main translation; annotated with alternatives] And to Shem, the father of all the sons of Ever,[1] *the brother of Yefet, the elder*,[2] were also born sons.[3]

KJV (biblegateway.com): Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, *the brother of Japheth the elder*, even to him were children born.

NRSVUE (biblegateway.com): To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, *the elder brother of Japheth*, children were born.

Fox, Schocken Bible (1995: https://www.sefaria.org)
[Children] were also born to Shem, the father of all the Sons of Ever [and] Yefet's older brother.

JPS (2006; sefaria.org): Sons were also born to Shem, ancestor of all the descendants of Eber and *older brother of Japheth*.

The difference between the two main reading options is evident in the variation among these modern English translations. The question is essentially: who is the older/oldest brother, Japhet or Shem? i.e., what is the referent of הגדול?
Reading A, with Japhet as the elder brother, is the reading in KJV; whereas the NRSV, Fox, and JPS all follow Reading B; the main translation in alhaTorah.org reflects the ambiguity of the Hebrew, which is somewhat more awkward in English than in the original.

AMBIGUITIES and READING OPTIONS

*SYNTACTIC AMBIGUITY: **Narrow or Wide Scope** Referent of Attributive Adjective

שם...אחי [יפת הגדול] **narrow scope**

Lexical Ambiguity: גָּדוֹל
(1) Age: older; (2) Stature: greater; (3) Size: larger

Morphological Ambiguity or additional syntactic ambiguity?:
(1) Relative comparative adjective: the elder/greater (/larger)
(2) Absolute superlative adjective: the eldest/greatest (/largest)
(3) Absolute non-comparative adjective: the great (/the large)

READING A: the brother of [Japhet, the eldest/elder/greater]--> **Japhet** is the the referent of הגדול; JAPHET is the the elder/greater/great brother,	אחי [יפת הגדול]
READING B: the [elder/eldest/greater/greatest [brother of Japhet]--> **Shem** is the referent of הגדול. SHEM is the elder/greater brother.	[אחי יפת] הגדול

CONTEXT and Implications: What is the birth order of Noah's sons? How might one determine this? Why is this important to exegetes?

From Wikipedia, "Japheth": Japheth first appears in the Hebrew Bible as one of the three sons of Noah, saved from the Flood through the Ark. In the Book of Genesis, they are always in the order "Shem, Ham, and Japheth" when all three are listed.[7][8] However Genesis 9:24 calls Ham the youngest,[8] and Genesis 10:21 refers ambiguously to Shem as "brother of Japheth the elder," which could mean that either is the eldest.[9] Most modern writers accept Shem-Ham-Japheth as reflecting birth order, but this is not always the case: Moses and Rachel also appear at the head of such lists despite explicit descriptions of them as younger siblings.[10]

EXEGESIS

CANTILLATION
Kogut, *Te'amim* p. 43, example 12[2]:

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[2] Kogut brings this example in a section entitled,
"התייחסותה המפורשת של פרשנות המקרא המסורתית לשאלה המחויבות לטעמי המקרא", and notes that the Talmud interprets the verse in accordance with the *te'amim*: b.San 69 a-b.

אֲחִי יֶפֶת הַגָּדוֹל

The cantillation marks point to READING A; the conjunctive *merha* under Yefet joins this word to the following one, "the elder/the eldest"; while the disjunctive *tipha* under the preceding word, "the brother of", separates it from the word pair.

[Targum Onqelos](#) (3rd century)

תרגום אונקלוס

וּלְשֵׁם אִיתְיְלִיד אַף הוּא אֲבוּהוֹן דְּכָל בְּנֵי עֵבֶר אֲחוּהִי דְיֶפֶת רַבָּא.

And (children) were born also to Shem, the father of all the sons of Eber, and the brother of Yapheth the great(/er/est)

Translation in alhatorah.org (based on Metsudah Chumash (Metsudah Publications, 2009) ([CC BY-NC 4.0](#)) with modifications): "Sons were also born to Shem, father of the Children of the Other Side. He was the brother of Yefes, the elder."

Grossfield, *Aramaic Bible* vol. 6: "And also to Shem, the ancestor of all of Eber's descendants, the elder brother of Japheth (children) were born."

READING: The Aramaic seems to retain the ambiguity–as evident in the difference between the two English translations above: alhatorah.org/Metsudah Chumash: READING A; Grossfield: READING B.

Disambiguation Expression: since Aramaic uses the particle ־דְ rather than the Hebrew's genitive construct, the attributive adjective might best taken to refer to Yefet. In order to say "the greater/elder brother of Yefet", it would be smoother in Aramaic to have the adjective immediately follow its referent, before the ־דְ particle אֲחוּהָא רבא אחוהא דְיֶפֶת: אחוהא רבא דְיֶפֶת. However, Grossfield's translation follows READING B, with Shem as the older brother. The Aramaic construction in Onqelos and Neofiti is the same as that in psJon, where contextual clues point to Shem as the likely referent.

Birth order: not determinative. It is also possible that Onkelos is referring to stature rather than age, but the Aramaic רַבָּא has the same range as Hebrew הגדול, and does not convey what kind of greatness is understood.

[Targum Yerushalmi (Neofiti)](#) = Targum Onkelos

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תרגום ירושלמי (ניאופיטי)

ולשם אתיליד אף_א הוא אבוהון דכל בני עובריא_ג אחוי **דיפת** רבה.

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McNamara, *Aramaic Bible*, Vol. 1A: "And (children) were also born to Shem; he is the father of all the sons of the Hebrews, the elder brother of Japheth."

The Neofiti is like Onqelos, with the orthographic difference of רבה with a *heh* rather than an *aleph*. I think the Aramaic retains the ambiguity, or works best with READING A, with Japhet as the elder brother, but McNamara, like Grossfield on Onqelos, translates according to READING B, with Shem as the elder one. The Aramaic construction in Onqelos and Neofiti is the same as that in psJon, where Shem is quite likely the referent.

[Targum Pseudo-Jonathan](#)

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תרגום ירושלמי (יונתן)

ולשם איתיליד אף הוא בר הוא אבוהון דכל בני עיבראי אחוי דיפת רבא בדחלתא די״י.

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Alhatorah.org ([J. W. Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee (London, 1862)](#): And to Shem also was born a son. He is the father of all the sons of the Hebrews, the brother of Japheth, great in the fear of the Lord.

Maher, Aramaic Bible, Vol. 1B: "To Shem also *a son* was born. He is the father of all the children of the *Hebrews*, the brother of Japhet, great *in the fear of the Lord*."

Syntactically, the ambiguity is likely retained. Content-wise, we may presume that it is Shem who is being described as the more God-fearing of the brothers, supporting READING B, and Etheridge's translation. The syntax of the verse is somewhat smoothed out in the Targum by the addition of the pronoun "הוא," forming a new nominal sentence, instead of the apposition in the Hebrew, but this does not have an impact on our specific question.

READING: READING B: the [great/greater/greatest brother] of Japhet, i.e., referring to SHEM.

Disambiguation Strategy: insertion of בדחלתא די״י disambiguates lexically against the background of the Targum's *Tendenz*: Shem is greater in character.

Disambiguation Expression: insertion of בדחלתא די״י.

Birth order: not determinative; we can infer with some confidence that Shem is understood to be younger than at least one of his brothers, and likely that he is specifically younger than Jefeth. Presumably, from the understanding that "greater" refers to Shem, and specifically denotes status rather than age, we can infer that Shem is not viewed as the greatest with respect to age: he is not the eldest brother.

ἀδελφῷ Ιαφεθ τοῦ μείζονος

"brother of Japhet the eldest"

READING: READING A

Disambiguation Expression: The disambiguation expression is morphological, with the form of the word indicating its syntactic function.: the genitive case endings of τοῦ and μείζονος match the grammatical role of "Japhet" in the verse, not "Shem"

[Genesis Rabbah](#) (5th century?)

[Gen Rab 37:7](#)

מדרש בראשית רבה לז:ז

וּלְשֵׁם יֻלַּד גַּם הוּא אֲבִי כָל בְּנֵי עֵבֶר וגו' (בראשית י, כא), אֵין אָנוּ יוֹדְעִין אִם שֵׁם הוּא הַגָּדוֹל אִם יֶפֶת הוּא הַגָּדוֹל, מִן מַה דִּכְתִיב (בראשית יא, י): אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת שֵׁם שֵׁם בֶּן מְאַת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת אַרְפַּכְשָׁד שְׁנָתַיִם אַחַר הַמַּבּוּל, הֱוֵי יֶפֶת הוּא הַגָּדוֹל. (בראשית י, כה):

And there was born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Ever etc. – We do not know if Shem is the eldest or if Japheth is the eldest; from that which is written (Gen 11:10), "these are the descendants of Shem, Shem was 100 and he fathered Arpachshad 2 years after the flood," it follows that Japheth is the eldest.

READING: READING A, Japhet the eldest.

Explicit statement about ambiguity: אֵין אָנוּ יוֹדְעִין אִם שֵׁם הוּא הַגָּדוֹל אִם יֶפֶת הוּא הַגָּדוֹל,

Disambiguation Strategy: Logical argument based on data from related biblical text: calculation and intertextuality show that Japheth must be the eldest brother; see bSan69a and Rashi on this verse.

Underlying assumption: perfectly unified Biblical text→ harmonization.

Disambiguation Expression: מִן מַה דִּכְתִיב ... הֱוֵי יֶפֶת הוּא הַגָּדוֹל.

Birth order: most likely, Jephet, Ham, Shem; the definite article of "the greatest" in the conclusion indicates that Jephet is the eldest; in other commentaries, the use of Gen 11:10 and the implied calculation of Noah's age of 500 when he began fathering children (Gen 5:32) and his age of 600 at the flood (Gen 7:6) is predicated on the understanding that the sons were born successively, one year after the other.

*[Bamidbar Rabbah 4:8](#) (on firstborns' garments)

מדרש במדבר רבה

מֵת נֹחַ וּמְסָרָן לְשֵׁם, וְכִי שֵׁם הָיָה בְּכוֹר וַהֲלֹא יֶפֶת הָיָה בְּכוֹר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בראשית י, כא): אֲחִי יֶפֶת הַגָּדוֹל, וּמִפְּנֵי מָה מְסָרָן לְשֵׁם מִפְּנֵי שֶׁצָּפָה נֹחַ שַׁלְשֶׁלֶת הָאָבוֹת עוֹמֶדֶת מִמֶּנּוּ.

Noah died and passed them [the firstborns' garments] to Shem. But was Shem the firstborn? Wasn't Japhet the firstborn?! As it is said (Genesis 10:21): "The elder brother of Japheth." So why did he pass [them] to Shem? Because Noah foresaw that the chain of the forefathers would emerge from him."

READING: READING A, Japhet the eldest.

This source uses Gen 10:21 as a prooftext for Japhet's status as the firstborn, without explanation or elaboration, as though it were straightforward rather than ambiguous. At the same time, it reflects a perception of Shem as the worthiest son–as he is the progenitor of Israel's patriarchs.

Yalkut Shimoni (11th - 14th centuries) = Genesis Rabbah

וּלְשֵׁם יֻלַּד גַּם הוּא. אֵין אָנוּ יוֹדְעִין אִם שֵׁם הוּא הַגָּדוֹל אִם יֶפֶת הוּא הַגָּדוֹל, [מִן מַה דִּכְתִיב (להלן י״א:י׳) "אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת שֵׁם שֵׁם בֶּן מְאַת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת אַרְפַּכְשָׁד שְׁנָתַיִם אַחַר הַמַּבּוּל" הֱוֵי יֶפֶת הוּא הַגָּדוֹל].

Rashi (1040 - 1105) ~ **Genesis Rabbah**

רש״י

אחי יפת הגדול – איני יודע אם שם הגדול או אם יפת הגדול. כשהוא אומר: שם בן מאת שנה שנתים אחר המבול (בראשית י״א:י׳), הוי [אומר] יפת הגדול. שהרי בן חמש מאות שנה היה נח כשהתחיל להוליד, והמבול בשנת שש מאות, נמצא שהגדול בבניו היה בן מאת שנה, ושם לא היה בן מאה עד אחר המבול שנתיים.

אחי יפת – ולא אחי חם. שאלו שניהם כבדו את אביהם, וזה בזהו

אחי יפת THE BROTHER OF JAPHETH – It does not state "brother of Ham", because those two honoured their father whereas Ham put him to shame (Genesis Rabbah 37:7).

alhatorah.org:

אחי יפת הגדול [SHEM …] THE BROTHER OF JAPHETH, THE ELDER – (The Hebrew is ambiguous: "the elder" may refer either to Shem or to Japheth). One cannot from here determine whether Japheth was the elder or Shem. Since, however, it states (10:10) "Shem was a hundred years old … two years after the flood" you must admit that Japheth was the elder. Because Noah was 500 years old when he first had children (5:32), and the Flood happened in the six hundredth year of his life (7:11), consequently the eldest of his sons was then one hundred years old, whereas Shem reached his hundredth year only two years after the Flood (and therefore there needs to be an older brother who was 100 at the end of the flood, and this must be Japheth, so that he was the elder of the two).

אחי יפת THE BROTHER OF JAPHETH – It does not state "brother of Ham", because those two honoured their father whereas Ham put him to shame (Genesis Rabbah 37:7).

READING A: Japhet, the elder

Explicit statement about ambiguity: איני יודע אם שם הגדול או אם יפת הגדול

Disambiguation Strategy: Logical argument based on data from related biblical text: calculation and intertextuality show that Japheth must be the eldest brother; following the midrash, Gen Rabba, and Talmud, bSan 69b.[3]

Underlying assumption: perfectly unified Biblical text→ harmonization.

Disambiguation Expression: מִן מַה דְּכְתִיב … הֱוֵי יֶפֶת הוּא הַגָּדוֹל.

Birth order: most likely, Japheth, Ham, Shem; the definite article of "הגדול" in the conclusion indicates that Japheth is the eldest; in other commentaries, the use of Gen 11:10 and the implied calculation of Noah's age of 500 when he began fathering children (Gen 5:32) and his age of 600 at the flood (Gen 7:6) is predicated on the understanding that the sons were born one year after the other.

Rashi's second comment, on "brother of Japhet," –that Shem and Japhet honored Noah, while Ham dishonored him, relates to other commentaries, which group Shem and Japhet as good. Some of these are associated with READING B, taking the "the great" as referring to stature/quality of character, and accordingly, to Shem. For Rashi, as for Ibn Ezra and Chizkuni, commenting upon Shem and Japhet's shared goodness is compatible with READING A–Japhet is eldest, and serves to explain why Shem was identified with respect to Japhet, i.e., because of their shared quality of goodness.

[**Babylonian Talmud**](#), [Sanhedrin 69b](#):

(In the English, the bold translates the Hebrew and Aramaic, and the non-bold is added explanation).

כמה קשיש אברהם משרה? עשר שנין, וקשיש מאבוה תרתין שנין. אשתכח כי אולדה הרן לשרה בתמני אולידה. ממאי? דלמא אברהם זוטא דאחוה הוה ודרך חכמתן קא חשיב להו.

תדע דקא חשיב להו קרא דרך חכמתן דכתיב (בראשית ה, לב) ויהי נח בן חמש מאות שנה ויולד נח את שם את חם ואת יפת שם גדול מחם שנה וחם גדול מיפת שנה נמצא שם גדול מיפת שתי שנים וכתיב

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[3] Kogut's comment: The Talmud's determination that Japhet was the eldest brother (bSan 69b) matches the cantillation, and it is possible that since the Talmud had already determined this, Rashi did not need to rely on the cantillation in his Torah commentary, for this matter; especially since he noted the syntactic problem in the verse: "I don't know"-- indicating that it's not possible to conclude on the basis of Scripture itself–"whether Japhet is the elder, or Shem." Rashi supported his interpretation with dates specified in Scripture, following the Sages.

(בראשית ז, ו) ונח בן שש מאות שנה והמבול היה מים על הארץ וכתיב (בראשית יא, י) (ו)אלה תולדות שם שם בן מאת שנה ויולד את ארפכשד שנתים אחר המבול בן מאה שנה בר מאה ותרתין שנין הוה

אלא דרך חכמתן קא חשיב להו הכא נמי דרך חכמתן קא חשיב להו

אמר רב כהנא אמריתה לשמעתא קמיה דרב זביד מנהרדעא אמר לי אתון מהכא מתניתו ואנן מהכא מתנינן לה (בראשית י, כא) ולשם יולד גם הוא אבי כל בני עבר אחי יפת הגדול יפת הגדול שבאחיו הוה

How much older was Abraham than Sarah? He was **ten years** older than her **and,** as stated above, he was **two years older than her father,** Haran. **It turns out** then that **when Haran begot Sarah, he begot her at** the age of **eight.** The Gemara refutes this proof: **From where** do you prove this? **Perhaps Abraham was the youngest of the brothers, and** not the oldest among them. The fact that Abraham is listed first is no proof that he was the oldest, as perhaps the verse **listed them in the order of their wisdom** and therefore Abraham, being the wisest, was mentioned first.

Know that it is true **that the verse** sometimes **lists** brothers not according to their birth order, but **in the order of their** degrees of **wisdom, as it is written: "And Noah was five hundred years old; and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth"** ([Genesis 5:32](#)). According to this, **Shem was** at least **one year older than Ham, and Ham one year older than Japheth,** so **it turns out** that **Shem was two years older than Japheth. And it is written: "And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth"** ([Genesis 7:6](#)). **And it is written: "These are the descendants of Shem; Shem was one hundred years old, and begot Arpachshad two years after the flood"** ([Genesis 11:10](#)). If Shem was the oldest brother, how could he be only **100 years old? He must have been** at least **102 years old,** as Noah was 500 years old when his third son was born, and he was 600 years old at the time of the flood.

Rather, the verse **listed them in the order of their** degrees of **wisdom,** Shem being the wisest. With regard to his age, Shem was the youngest of the brothers, having been born when Noah was 502 years old. Shem begot his son 100 years later, which was two years after the flood. **Here too,** then, with regard to the sons of Terah, it can be argued that the verse **lists them in the order of their** degrees of **wisdom.**

Rav Kahana says: I stated this discussion before Rav Zevid of Neharde'a. When he heard it, **he said to me: You learn** that Shem was not Noah's oldest son **from there, and we learn it from here: "And to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, to him also were children born"** (Genesis 10:21). This verse indicates that **Japheth,** rather than Shem, **was the oldest of the brothers.**

READINGS:

(1) The opinion of <u>R. Zevid</u>, to learn from Gen 10:21 that Japheth is the eldest brother: יפת הגדול שבאחיו הוה

READING A: Japheth, the eldest
Disambiguation Strategy: implies that the verse is unambiguous– the verse clearly indicates that Japhet is older, and is in fact, the eldest brother.
Disambiguation Expression: adds "of his brothers," and names Japheth specifically: יפת הגדול שבאחיו הוה

(2) The <u>unattributed tradition, reported by Rav Kahana</u> that Japheth is the eldest, based on calculation and intertextuality, and concluding that the list in Gen 5:32 is according to the sons' stature: תדע דקא חשיב להו קרא דרך חכמתן

Inconclusive:
- READING A: Japheth, the eldest
or
- READING B: Shem, the greatest
Disambiguation Strategy: This passage does not necessarily disambiguate.
- This view can fit Reading A: the text brings a logical argument based on data from related biblical text–calculation and intertextuality–to show that Japheth is the eldest brother. This would be like Genesis Rabbah. Japheth is the eldest
- This view can also fit Reading B: it concludes that the order in which the brothers are listed–Shem, Ham, Japheth–reflects the sons' stature. Shem is the greatest
Disambiguation Expression: although not intended to disambiguate Gen 10:21, it functions as disambiguation, to an extent: תדע דקא חשיב להו קרא דרך חכמתן

(Birth order: Japheth, Ham, Shem.
NB: This text not only argues that Yefet is the oldest, but directly argues against the supposition that Shem is oldest–which one might have assumed based on the order of the list in Gen 5:32. It excludes Reading B, with the meaning of "great" as referring to age; i.e., excludes "Shem, the elder.")

locate *Qirqisani, (c. 890-c. 960) pp. 33-34 "the elder brother of Jephet": "the elder" refers to "brother". i.e., Shem is older. (via Steiner class notes).

Lekah Tov (R. Toviah b. Eliezer) composed app. 1105-1115

לקח טוב

ולשם ילד גם הוא אבי כל בני עבר אחי יפת הגדול –למדנו[1] ליפת שהוא גדול מכולם.

READING A: Japhet, the eldest
Disambiguation Strategy: no explanation is offered; likely depending on an exegetical tradition: midrash, talmud, Rashi
Disambiguation Expression: גדול מכולם specifies absolute/superlative, not just relative/comparative.
למדנו: seems to imply that this is the "natural" way to read the adjective? Similar to Rav Zevid in b.San 69b.
Birth order: most likely, Japheth, Ham, Shem; the definite article of "the greatest" in the conclusion indicates that Japheth is the eldest; in other commentaries, the use of Gen 11:10 and the implied calculation of Noah's age of 500 when he began fathering children (Gen 5:32) and his age of 600 at the flood (Gen 7:6) is predicated on the understanding that the sons were born one year after the other.

Northern French Commentary Anthology

ליקוט מחכמי צרפת

אחי יפת הגדול – קש׳ וכי אינו יודע אם שם גדול או יפת הגדול. (כ״י אוקספורד 271/8)
This snippet preserves only the expression of ambiguity.

Ibn Ezra A (1088/89-1164 or 1092-1167) = Sefer HaYashar; "the Short Commentary"[4]

אבן עזרא א'
וטעם אבי כל בני עבר – להודיע אבי העבריים, כי אין למעלה ממנו, והשם אלהיו. וכן כתוב: כה אמר י״י אלהי העברים (שמות י״:ג׳). וכנען – אביו חם, שאין למטה ממנו, ואין ראוי להתערב קודש בחול.
וטעם **אחי יפת הגדול** – שהיה יפת טוב. והקדים הכתוב להזכיר שמא כי הוא קטן, קודם יפת שהוא הגדול, בעבור כבודו. והעד, שאמר הכתוב: כי נח היה בן חמש מאות שנה כשהחל להוליד (בראשית ה׳:ל״ב), ואין בזה לטוען מקום לטעון, כי אין פחות מחמש מאות שנהב ובשנת שש מאות שנה בא המבול, ובצאת נח מהמבול היה בן מאת שנה ושנה אחת, והכתוב אמר: שנתים אחר המבול (בראשית י״א:י׳).
ויש מפרש: כי אחי יפת הגדול ממנו הוא שם, על כן הזכירו הכתוב בתחלה. ואמר: כי כאשר נולד שם, לא נכנסו משנת חמש מאות שנה לנח כי אם ימים מועטים, כי יום בשנה חשוב שנה, ונח נולד באייר, ושם בסיון, וכשבא המבול היה לנח ת״ק ותשעים ותשע שנה וימים. והנה אין לשם תשעים ותשע שלימות לשנת

המבול, ויהיה כשנולד ארפכשד בן מאת שנה וחדשים. ופירוש שנתים (בראשית י״א:י׳) שנכנסה השנה השנית מחשבון ראשית המבול.

גם יש אומרים: כי אחר חמשה חדשים מיום המבול, שחסרו המים, הרתה אשת שם. והנה היה שם בן מאה שנה (בראשית י״א:י׳). וכחשבון הזה ימצא במלכים בעשרה מקומות.

alHatorah:

[THE FATHER OF ALL THE CHILDREN OF EBER.] Scripture informs us that Shem was the father of the Hebrews for no one was greater than he, and the Lord was his God. Similarly it is written, Thus saith the Lord, the God of the Hebrews (*ivrim*) (Ex. 10:3).1 On the other hand, the Bible tells us that Ham was the father of Canaan for no one was baser than he. It is unfitting for the holy and profane to intermingle.

Scripture notes that Shem was **the brother of Japheth the elder to teach us that Japheth, too, was a worthy person**. The Bible lists Shem, who was the youngest, before Japheth, who was the elder, out of respect to Shem. Proof that Japheth was the elder lies in Scripture's stating that Noah was five hundred years old when he begat his first son. There is no room for argument, for it is clear that Noah had no children prior to reaching the age of five hundred. The flood came when Noah was six hundred years old. Therefore if Shem was the eldest he would be one hundred and one years old when Noah and his sons came out of the ark. However, Scripture tells us Shem was a hundred years old, and begot Arpachshad two years after the flood (Gen. 11:10).

Others say that Shem was the elder brother of Japheth, and it is for this reason that Shem is mentioned first. They explain that Shem was born a few days after Noah entered his five hundredth year, for even a day in a year is considered a year. They say that Noah was born in Iyyar and Shem in Sivan. When the flood came Noah was five hundred and ninety-nine plus a number of days old. Hence Shem was not a full ninety-nine years old when the flood started and was a hundred and one years plus a number of months old when his son Arpachshad was born. The meaning of two years after the flood (Gen. 11:10) therefore is to be interpreted as meaning that Arpachshad was born in the second year following the beginning of the flood. There are also those who maintain that the wife of Shem conceived five months after the start of the flood when the waters started decreasing. Shem was thus one hundred years old when Arpachshad was born. There are ten similar instances in the Book of Kings.

READING: READING A: Japhet, the eldest, definitively, with a comment that "there is no room for argument," and yet Ibn Ezra cites an alternative opinion, of READING B: "some say."

Statement about ambiguity: Ibn Ezra presents alternative interpretations, "some explain" and "and also, some say" -- according to READING B– alongside his preferred understanding, in accord with READING A.

Interpretation 1
READING A: Japhet, the eldest
Disambiguation Strategy: Logical argument based on data from related biblical text: calculation and intertextuality show that Japheth must be the eldest brother. Like Rashi and prior rabbinic sources.
Disambiguation Expression: להזכיר שם כי הוא קטן, קודם יפת שהוא הגדול
והעד, שאמר הכתוב: introducing a reference to support from other biblical verses.

Interpretations 2 and 3, "some explain"
READING B: Shem, the eldest
Disambiguation Strategy: (Complex) logical argument based on <manipulation of> data from related biblical text: calculation and intertextuality; Interpretation 3: counting partial years as a year
Disambiguation Expression: changing word order, and adding "ממנו" –
אחי יפת הגדול ממנו הוא שם

[Ibn Ezra B](#) (1088/89-1164 or 1092-1167); "the Long Commentary"

אבן עזרא ב'
וטעם **אחי יפת הגדול** – שהיו צדיקים שניהם, להוציא חם.
ונראה הפשט: כי יפת הוא האח הגדול.

And the point of "the brother of Yefet, the elder" – that both of them were righteous, to exclude Ham.
And it appears that the *peshat* is that Japheth is the eldest brother.

The first comment is similar to what is written in the short commentary: – וטעם **אחי יפת הגדול** שהיה יפת טוב. "Scripture notes that Shem was the brother of Japheth the elder to teach us that Japheth, too, was a worthy person."

READING: READING A: Japhet, the eldest

Statement about ambiguity: ונראה הפשט indicates that this interpretation– that Japhet is the elder/eldest– is a preference over an alternative reading, not explicitly presented, which takes Shem as the eldest. It is possible that the force and motivation of the expression is to indicate

that this interpretation that Japhet is the elder/eldest–is the preferred *peshat*, over Ibn Ezra's first comment here, which might be seen as taking the adjective to refer to Japhet (and Shem's) virtue.

Disambiguation Expression: "and it appears that *the peshat* is." Maybe Ibn Ezra had concluded that this is the most natural reading, like Rav Zevid in b.San 69. Maybe he decided that the chronological gymnastics to get Shem to be the oldest did not have enough basis in text, to be taken as *peshat*.

[Bekhor Shor](#) 12th century

<div dir="rtl">

בכור שור
אחי יפת הגדול – לפי שבכל מקום מונה שם תחילה, וכאן מנאן דרך תולדתן – יפת וחם ושם, מגיד לך שזה דווקא, יפת הוא הגדול.

</div>

alhatorah.org:

<div dir="rtl">אחי יפת הגדול</div> – THE BROTHER OF YEFET THE OLDEST – Since in every place, Shem is enumerated first, and here they are enumerated in order of their birth – Yefet and Cham and Shem, it tells you that this is deliberate, Yefet is the oldest.

READING: READING A: Japhet, the eldest
Expression of Ambiguity: not stated, but implied.
Disambiguation Strategy: Logical argument based on variation in order of presentation of Noah's sons in Scripture. The argument is that since Shem is always named first, but this pericope, recording their genealogies, presents the brothers in the order Japheth, Ham, and Shem, this order must be deliberate, i.e., reflecting birth order, and indicating that Japheth is the eldest.
Disambiguation Expression: "it tells you that this is deliberate, Yefet is the oldest."

[Rabbi David Kimhi (Radak) 1160-1235](#)

<div dir="rtl">

רד״ק
ולשם – זכר שם באחרונה לפי שהיה עתיד לזכר ספור ענין האבות שהיו מזרע שם, ספר תולדות שם מאיש לאיש עד אברהם אבינו. ומה שאמר גם הוא – אל תחשבו לפי שלא זכרנו תולדותיו בראשונה כמו שנזכר הוא בכל הספורים בראשונה, שלא היו לו תולדות, כי גם הוא היו לו תולדות. והוא היה אבי כל בני עבר – שממנו יצאו האבות. ויותר היו חשובים תולדותיו מתולדות אחיו שהיה אבי כל בני עבר.
והיה גם כן הוא מעולה באחיו שהיה **אחי יפת הגדול** – כלומר אחיו היה במעלה, לא אחי חם שהיה פחות מאחיו ותולדותיו גם כן פחותים מתולדות אחיו.

</div>

וטעם הגדול – על יפת או על שם, ויהיה פירושו: הגדול בשנים, כי לדעתנו שם היה גדול בשנים, ולדעת רוב המפרשים יפת היה גדול בשנים כמו שכתבנו.

ויש לפרש גם כן הגדול במעלה, ויאמר גם כן על אחד משניהם.

ומה שאמר יֻלַּד ולא אמר ילדו – אמר כן על דרך כלל, כמו, ולעבר יֻלַּד שני בנים (בראשית י׳:כ״ה).

alhatorah.org with modification:
"And to Shem":, the reason that Shem is listed last [in this genealogical list] is that the story will continue with the lives of the patriarchs, all of whom are descended from Shem. The Torah tells the genealogy of Shem, from man to man, until our father Abraham. [The Torah is trying to preserve continuity].

As to the unusual phrase "also he": the Torah adds these words as if to say that we should not think that seeing that up to now we always heard about Shem first, that the fact that we had not heard about him in this chapter means that he had not been blessed with offspring. Not only did he have sons, but he became the founding "father of all the [tribes] descended from Eber," who in turn became the ancestor of the patriarchs. And his genealogy is more important than the genealogies of his brothers, for he was the "father of all the sons of Eber."

He also was the greatest among his brothers, for he was the brother of "Japheth, the great one." That is to say that [Shem] was [Japheth's] brother in greatness, and not the brother of Ham, who was less than his brothers, and his progeny were also lesser than his brothers' progeny.

The point of הגדול – [this] may refer to Japheth or to Shem, and its meaning should be understood as: the one greatest in years. For, in our opinion, Shem was the greater in years, but according to the opinion of most exegetes, Japheth was the oldest in years, as we have written. (See Radak on Gen 5:32). And it is also to be explained as greatest in stature, and it would again apply to one of the two of them.

From alhatorah.org footnote on Ramban:

==Ramban, in this final paragraph, sets forth his principle that Shem was really the oldest of the three brothers. The order of their birth was thus: Shem, Japheth and Ham. This is completely unlike the theory of Rashi (5:32; 9:24) who holds that they were born in this order: Japheth, Ham and Shem. Radak here conforms with Ramban's theory, as is clear from Radak's following words: "The word *hagadol (the elder)* is descriptive either of Japheth or of Shem. If so, *the elder* refers to age in years for in my opinion Shem was the oldest of the brothers while, in the opinion of most commentators, Japheth was the oldest. It is also possible to explain *the elder* as referring to distinction, and it may also be descriptive of either of them."==

READING: READING B is Radak's preferred understanding, but he notes that this is a minority view and most exegetes prefer READING A: "For, in our opinion, Shem was the greater in years, but according to the opinion of most exegetes, Japheth was the oldest in years."

Expression of Ambiguity: Radak notes the lexical ambiguity and observes that the syntactic ambiguity is present whether "הגדול" refers to age or status/character:

וטעם הגדול – על יפת או על שם, ויהיה פירושו: הגדול בשנים…

כי לדעתנו שם היה גדול בשנים, ולדעת רוב המפרשים יפת היה גדול בשנים
ויש לפרש גם כן הגדול במעלה ויאמר גם כן על אחד משניהם.

Disambiguation Strategy:

One consideration is that Shem is generally named first

נזכר הוא בכל הספורים בראשונה and Radak has a good reason for the exception in this pericope, where his genealogies are listed last– for narrative continuity, to segue into the narrative of the patriarchs, who are Shem's progeny. In his [comment on Gen 5:32](#), Radak explains his reasoning–it is the usual listing of the sons' names, which he thinks should be according to birth order; he gets around the arithmetic calculations in the rabbinic sources by adopting the stance rejected in Ibn Ezra's short commentary, as "some say"--manipulating the calculations and scriptural references to dates of the deluge and the sons' births.

See Radak on [Genesis 5:32](#)

וַיְהִי־נֹ֔חַ בֶּן־חֲמֵ֥שׁ מֵא֖וֹת שָׁנָ֑ה וַיּ֣וֹלֶד נֹ֔חַ אֶת־שֵׁ֖ם אֶת־חָ֥ם וְאֶת־יָֽפֶת

[Radak comments](#):

ויולד נח את שם את חם ואת יפת, **דעת רז"ל כי יפת הוא הגדול**, ולמדו זה ממה שאמר "ויהי שם בן מאה שנה ויולד את ארפכשד שנתים אחר המבול" ואם שם היה גדול הרי היה לו מאה אחר המבול, נחשוב, כי הילד נולד בשנה אחת וחמש...אלא יפת היה הגדול, וכן אמר "אחי יפת הגדול" **ואף על פי שרז"ל אמרו כך יש לתמוה**, איך כתב בכל מקום שזכר שלשתן שם וחם ויפת דמשמע כי שם היה הגדול ויפת הקטן?

Sefaria translation:

ויולד נח את שם, את חם, ואת יפת, in the opinion of our sages (Sanhedrin 69) Yaphet was the oldest. They derived this from Genesis 11,10 where the Torah writes ויהי שם בן מאה שנה ויולד את ארפחשד שנתים אחר המבול, "Shem was 100 tears old when he begat Arpachshad 2 years after the deluge." If Shem had been the eldest, he would have been 100 years old already at the end of or during the deluge, not 2 years later. We think that Shem was born during Noach's 501st year, allowing for the fact that the year was a leap year, and his wife had become pregnant when Noach married her when he was 500 years old. The deluge commenced in the 600th year of Noach's life. As a result, Shem was 99 years old when he entered the ark at the start of the deluge. After the deluge he was only 100 years old. How could the Torah describe him as 100 years old 2 years after the deluge? We must therefore conclude that Yaphet was the eldest. This is also how we must understand Genesis 10,21 אחי יפת הגדול, "the brother of Yaphet, the senior." Even though our sages have arrived at this conclusion, we must wonder why, every time, the three brothers are mentioned together, Shem is always mentioned as the first one. Surely, this suggests that Shem was the oldest. The words "2 years after the deluge," may be understood as "2 years after the beginning of the deluge." At that time Shem would have been 99 years old as we have mentioned already. When the Torah speaks of his son being born 2

years after the deluge, we must understand this as at the beginning of the second year after the deluge.

Disambiguation Expression:

הגדול בשנים…כי לדעתנו שם היה גדול בשנים… ויש לפרש גם כן הגדול במעלה

In Gen 5:32, he goes so far as to say, "Even though our sages have arrived at this conclusion, we must wonder why, every time, the three brothers are mentioned together, Shem is always mentioned as the first one.

<mark>????maybe what Radak says about agreement of verbs with the nomen regens, as a general rule, is a rule that he also applies to adjectives? E.g. on [1 Kings 17:16](), **וצפחת השמן לא חסר**.
[Radak comments]:</mark>

<mark>ואמר: **חסר** – לשון זכר, כי טעמו אל **השמן**, ולמעלה אמר: לא תחסר (מלכים א י״ז:י״ד) – לשון נקבה, טעמו על **הצפחת**. והענין אחד, כמו שאמר למעלה הוא **מנהג הלשון ברוב להיות טעם הפעל אל הדבק, וכמעט יהיה הפעל אל הנדבק.** כמו: כי היתה אליו פני המלחמה (שמואל ב י״ט:ט׳), קול נגידים נחבאו (איוב כ״ט:י׳), קשת גבורים חתים (שמואל א ב׳:ד׳).</mark>

<mark>(compare Ramban?)</mark>

[Chizkuni] (R. Chizkiyah b. Manoach; 13th century)

חזקוני

ולשם יולד וכו׳ – כאן מונה אותם דרך תולדותם: בני יפת וגומ׳ (בראשית י׳:ב׳), ובני חם וגומ׳ (בראשית י׳:ו׳), ולשם יולד וגומ׳ – מגיד לך שזהו הסדר דוקא, ולכך נכתב כאן: יפת הגדול. ומה שהזכירו הכתוב כמה פעמים קודם אחיו, דרך חשיבותן קחשיב.1 אחי יפת – שנעשה עמו שותף לכבד את אביו.

alhatorah.org, modified:

ולשם יולד וגו', "and for Shem were born, etc." Here, Scripture lists [the three sons] according to their genealogies:: "the sons of Yephet etc." (Gen 10:2), "and the sons of Ham etc." (Gen 10:6), "and to Shem were born etc." (Gen 10:21)-- this indicates that this is the actual precise order [of their births]. And therefore it is written here, "Yephet הגדול." And as for the fact that Scripture sometimes mentioned [Shem] before his brother, that was calculated according to their importance.

אחי יפת: For he became a partner to him to honor his father.

READING: READING A.

Expression of Ambiguity: implied, not stated; Chizkuni is entering a prior discourse, transmitting explanations, and interacting with arguments, that we have seen in earlier sources.

Disambiguation Strategy: Chizkuni states that his reason is based on the order of the presentation of the genealogies in this pericope. And he has a way to account for the

alternative cases where Shem is listed first. Presumably, he also relies on tradition, especially in citing the ambiguous text as though it clearly describes Japheth as the eldest. He responds to the counter-argument, that Shem is always listed first when the sons are named, by saying that those lists are according to importance, not age.

Disambiguation Expression:

כאן מונה אותם דרך תולדותם...– מגיד לך שזהו הסדר דוקא... ולכך נכתב כאן: יפת הגדול

[Nahmanides](#) (Ramban; 1194 - 1270)

Ramban's comments on our ambiguity and on the birth order of Noah's son raise some complications. His comments in this verse are usually understood as indicating that he views Shem as the eldest son, which would be inconsistent with his comments on other verses on Genesis. This is the understanding in the initial translation presented here, of C. Chavel (as well as in alhatorah.org.,) Chavel's translation is followed by my critique and some suggested emendations.

רמב״ן

ולשם יולד גם הוא – בעבור שאיחר תולדות שם, וסיפר תולדות אחיו הקטן ממנו כאלו לא היו לו בנים, אמר בכאן גם הוא.

וטעם **אבי כל בני עבר** – שהוא אבי כל יושבי עבר הנהר, שהוא מקום יחוס אברהם. ולא יתכן שיהיה עבר במקום הזה שם האיש אבי פלג, כי למה ייחס אותן אליו.

אחי יפת הגדול – דרך הכתוב ליחס הקטן אל הגדול באחים ולא אל הנולד אחריו, וכן: מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן (שמות ט״ו:כ׳). וטעם להזכיר זה הכלל לומר כי הוא אחי הנכבד, שוה אליו בכבודו, להגיד שלא איחר אותו מפני מעלת חם עליו.

והנראה אלי שיהיה הגדול תואר לשם, לומר שהוא האח הגדול של יפת, כי חם קטן מכולם ואם הקדים אותו. **וכן בכל מקום התואר למדובר בו**, כגון: ישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא ([מלכים ב כ״:א׳](#)), חנניה בן עזור הנביא ([ירמיהו כ״ח:א׳](#)), לחובב בן רעואל המדיני חתן משה ([במדבר י״:כ״ט](#)). ורבינו שלמה כתב: אחי יפת ולא אחי חם, שאלו שניהם כבדו אביהם וזה בזהו. גם זה לומר שהוא אחי הצדיק ולא אחי הרשע, אף על פי שנמנה אחריו. ולשם יולד גם הוא – בשביל שאיחר תולדות שם וסֶפר תולדות אחיו הקטן ממנו כאלו לא היו לו בנים אמר גם הוא: אבי כל בני עבר – שהוא אבי כל יישובי עבר הנהר שהוא מקום יחוס של אברהם: אחי יפת הגדול – דרך הכתוב לייחס הקטן אצל הגדול באחים ולא אל הנולד אחריו וכן מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן וטעם להזכיר כלל לומר כי אחיו הנכבד שוה אליו בכבודו להגיד שלא איחר אותו מפני מעלת חם עליו. והנראה בעיני שהגדול הוא תאר לשם כלומר שהוא אח הגדול של יפת כי חם קטן מכול׳ אע״פ שהקדימו לו וכן בכל מקום התואר למדובר בו כגון ישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא חנני׳ בן עזור הנביא:

[Translation of Chavel][5]:

AND UNTO SHEM, TO HIM ALSO WERE CHILDREN BORN. Since Scripture delayed the narration of the generations of Shem and related the generations of his younger brother as if Shem had no children, it therefore says here, to him also.

THE FATHER OF ALL THE CHILDREN OF 'EBER.' This means that he was the father of all who dwelled beyond (eber) the Euphrates River, which was the place of Abraham's family. But it is not possible that Eber in this context be the name of the person who was the father of Peleg1 for why would Scripture connect the children of Eber with Shem [more so than with any of his other offspring]?

THE BROTHER OF JAPHETH THE ELDER. It is the way of Scripture to record a younger brother beside the oldest of his brothers, and not beside a younger one than himself.[6] And similarly, we find the verse, "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron."[7] The reason for mentioning this altogether is to state that he [Shem] is the brother of the honorable Japheth, comparable to him in distinction. Scripture thus declares that the reason it delayed telling of his genealogy is not because Ham was more distinguished than he. It appears to me that "the elder" is descriptive of Shem,[8] meaning that he was the older brother of Japheth, as Ham was the youngest of all, even though Scripture mentioned Japheth first. So, likewise, in all places in Scripture, the descriptive noun refers to the subject spoken of, such as: Isaiah the son of Amoz the prophet,5 [the term "the prophet" refers to Isaiah, who is the subject of the narration]; Unto Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law,6 [here, "Moses' father-in-law" refers back to Hobab]. But Rashi wrote: "The brother of Japheth. It does not state "the brother of Ham" because these two [Shem and Japheth] honored their father whereas Ham put him to shame." This interpretation also declares that the sense of the verse is that Shem is the brother of the righteous brother, and not the brother of the wicked brother even though he is counted after him.

NOTES and alternative translation:

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[6] Alhatorah.org, footnote. 2: See above, 6:10, that Ramban's opinion is that Noah's children were born in this order: Japheth, Shem, and Ham. Ramban thus says here that it is customary for Scripture to record a second son (Shem) beside the oldest (Japheth) even though Shem had a younger brother, Ham. Thus Scripture writes, *the brother of Japheth the elder*, rather than "the elder brother of Ham."

[7] In his comment on Exod 15:20, Ramban puzzles over Miriam's identification relative to Aaron. Perhaps his point here is that Miriam is identified relative to Aaron rather than Moses, even though Moses' was presumably of higher stature than Aaron, because Aaron was older than Moses (though probably younger than Miriam herself). Alhatorah.org footnote: Exodus 15:20. Even though Moses was younger than Miriam, Scripture records the younger Miriam beside the elder Aaron, rather than say, "the older sister of Moses."

[8] Alhatorah.org footnote: Ramban, in this final paragraph, sets forth his principle that Shem was really the oldest of the three brothers. The order of their birth was thus: Shem, Japheth and Ham. This is completely unlike the theory of Rashi (5:32; 9:24) who holds that they were born in this order: Japheth, Ham and Shem. Radak here conforms with Ramban's theory, as is clear from Radak's following words: "The word *hagadol (the elder)* is descriptive either of Japheth or of Shem. If so, *the elder* refers to age in years for in my opinion Shem was the oldest of the brothers while, in the opinion of most commentators, Japheth was the oldest. It is also possible to explain *the elder* as referring to distinction, and it may also be descriptive of either of them."

Chavel thus takes Ramban to be saying that **Shem is the eldest of the brothers**, even though the genealogy of Japhet is placed first in this genealogical pericope. "It appears to me that "the elder" [**הגדול**] is descriptive of Shem, meaning that he was the older brother [**האח הגדול**] of Japheth, as Ham was the youngest [**קטן מכולם**] of all, even though Scripture mentioned Japheth first." Similarly, this footnote in alhatorah.org: Ramban, in this final paragraph, sets forth his principle that Shem was really the oldest of the three brothers. The order of their birth was thus: Shem, Japheth and Ham. This is completely unlike the theory of Rashi (5:32; 9:24) who holds that they were born in this order: Japheth, Ham and Shem. Radak here conforms with Ramban's theory…

The interpretation that Chavel, <mark style="background-color:#33ff33">and others</mark>, attribute to Ramban here is not only unlike that of Rashi, but also inconsistent with Ramban's own view in his comments to [Gen 6:10](#) and [Gen 10:2](#) (in our chapter, just 8 verses before ours), that the birth order was Japhet, Ham, Shem. I do not think it is necessary to view the Ramban here as reversing his opinion in those comments. I therefore suggest the following alternative translation, taking *gadol* as referring to stature, which would accommodate retaining the view of Jepheth as the eldest son:

It appears to me that "the greater" [**הגדול**] is descriptive of Shem, meaning that he was the greater brother [**האח הגדול**] of Japheth, as Ham was the least of all of them [**קטן מכולם**], even though Scripture mentioned Ham first [i.e., before Jephet; repeatedly, when Scripture lists the three sons, typically in the order: Shem, Ham, and Japhet].

Here are some notes and questions embedded in a translation of Ramban's commentary.:

THE BROTHER OF JAPHETH THE *gadol*. It is the way of Scripture to record a younger brother beside the oldest of his brothers, and not beside one who was born after him. And similarly, we find the verse, *Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron*. **<<ST: What is this intended to prove? Miriam here is named according to a sibling who is younger than her, though Ramban presumably sees him as greater in stature; the alternative option was to identify her relative to Moses, who was younger than both of them and presumably considered by Ramban to be greater than both of them. Is the description of Miriam mentioned as an example ("and similarly" of usual Scriptural practice, or as an example of a similar case to our verse, where there is an unexpected identification relative to a younger/lesser sibling?)>>** The reason for mentioning this altogether is to state that he [Shem] is the brother of the honorable [Japheth], comparable to him in his honor. **<<so far, it seems that Jephet is the referent of *gadol*, high-statured; maybe elder/eldest>>** Scripture thus declares that the reason it delayed telling of his [Shem's] genealogy is not because Ham was more distinguished than he.

It appears to me that <mark>*gadol* is descriptive of Shem</mark>, <mark>meaning that he was the greater/greatest brother of Japheth,</mark>**<<As noted above, Chavel's translation of "eldest" would be inconsistent with Ramban on Gen 6:10; 10:2, where he says clearly that Japhet is eldest– "firstborn". See** [CHESHVAN supplement GENESIS 5:32; GEN 6:10; GEN 10:2; + GEN 11:10](#)**. An additional reason to see Ramban as taking this phrase to be about honor/merit/stature, not age, is that this statement follows from Ramban's previous point– that this verse comes to show that Ham was not more distinguished than Shem–and thus, it makes sense that its intent would be to show that Shem was the most distinguished. >>** as Ham was the youngest of all **<<again, age is less relevant to the context. Unfortunately, Ramban does not comment on *haqatan* in Gen 9:24, about Ham, ad loc., though in Gen 6:10 he seems to cite the verse as being about age and in [9:25](#) he makes very disparaging remarks about Canaan,>>** even though Scripture mentioned Japheth first. So, likewise, in all places in Scripture, the descriptive noun refers to the subject spoken of, such as: *Isaiah the son of Amoz the prophet*, [the term "the prophet" refers to Isaiah, who is the subject of the narration]; *Unto Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law*, [here, "Moses' father-in-law" refers back to Hobab]. And Rashi wrote **<<"and", instead of Chavel's "but">>**: "*The brother of Japheth*. It does not state "the brother of Ham" because these two [Shem and Japheth] honored their father whereas Ham put him to shame." This interpretation also declares that the sense of the verse is that Shem is the brother of the righteous brother, and not the brother of the wicked brother even though he is counted after him.

READING: READING B

<div dir="rtl"><mark>והנראה אלי שיהיה הגדול תואר לשם, לומר שהוא האח הגדול של יפת</mark></div>

It is unfortunate that Ramban re-uses Scripture's lexically ambiguous terms הגדול and הקטן in his presentation of his view, that Shem is הגדול relative to Japhet and that Ham is הקטן. He makes effective use of disambiguating terms in other parts of this comment, for example, in his preceding paraphrase, "דרך הכתוב ליחס הקטן אל הגדול באחים ולא <mark>אל הנולד אחריו</mark>"-where *qatan* and *gadol* are clearly about age, and when he states אחי <mark>הנכבד</mark>- where he is clearly talking about honor.

I initially tried to understand Ramban's comment according to Chavel's translation, such that he takes הגדול in this verse to refer to age, hence, READING B– and specifically that Shem was the eldest brother. Thus, my initial understanding was that Ramban first presented the Sages' reading– that it is customary to identify a person by his older brother, and therefore they take this verse as following that custom, with Japheth as eldest; Reading a– and then he presented his own, different reading–that Shem is the eldest; Reading B. (= Chavel: "<mark>It appears to me that</mark>

==the elder" is descriptive of Shem==, ==meaning that he was the older brother of Japheth")==. This would align with Radak, as noted in the alhatorah.org footnotes.

Upon reflection, I've concluded that it is preferable to read this comment as consistent with Ramban's view in Gen 6:10 and Gen 10:2 that Japheth is the oldest brother. My first inclination is to translate/interpret as I did above– such that Ramban takes the verse as saying that Shem was the greatest brother. This reduces the contradiction with Ramban's comment on Gen 6:10, but it does not resolve it. In Gen 6:10, Ramban not only states decisively that Jepheth is the eldest son– **he also uses our verse as a prooftext for this!**

הנראה אלי כי יפת הוא הגדול שנאמר: אחי יפת הגדול

It seems unavoidable that there is an inconsistency between his comments here and in 6:21, about the referent of *hagadol*. There, he seems to take the word as referring to Japhet, and he takes the phrase to mean that Japhet is the eldest brother. Here, he says that the word modifies Shem–a contradiction. But does he mean age?

The approach that I tried above, to harmonize Ramban's comments, is to say: Ramban thinks Japhet as the eldest, but (at least in this comment), he takes *hagadol* in this verse to be about stature and character, not age. Towards this end, I tried to understand Ramban's reading of this verse as "Shem, the great, the brother of Japeth". But he clearly says "האח הגדול של יפת"-- the great(er/est) brother of Japhet. If he understands הגדול as indicating honor, then we could explain this statement as saying that Shem is more honorable than Japhet– contra Chavel's translation of "older brother" so that his view here could be consistent with his comment on Gen 6:10. This might be how נפתלי הרץ וייזל reads the Ramban.[9]

Statement about ambiguity: implied, e.g., "it appears to me."

Disambiguation Strategy: Logical argument based on biblical tendencies in similar cases: identifications of siblings; referents of modifier following genitive construct pair.

Disambiguation Expression: "it appears to me that *hagadol* is a modifier of Shem, meaning that he was האח הגדול של יפת" (= "the greater (???) brother of Japheth.") In trying to disambiguate, Ramban converted the biblical genitive construct to the later Hebrew construction "של" and in so doing, he was able to move the modifier adjacent to the *nomen regens*– the *gadol* brother of

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[9] The alhatorah.org English translation of Shada"l on Gen 5:32 offers a paraphrase of Ramban's comment here, which might offer assistance in clarifying the Ramban's reading of שם…אחי יפת הגדול: "Nachmanides correctly explains that Japheth was the eldest, as it is written, "He [Shem] who of the eldest brother, Japheth, was [the worthy] brother [aḥi Yefet ha-gadol]" (Gen. 10:21)." Shadal on Genesis; translation by Daniel A. Klein (New York, 2019). Unfortunately, this English paraphrase uses the word "brother" twice, and also uses both "eldest" and ["the worthy"], seemingly having אחי and הגדול do double duty, referring to both of the two brothers.

Japhet. Changing word order is a common disambiguating technique. The technical term "**תואר**" in **שיהיה הגדול תואר לשם achieves the same disambiguation as the re-ordering, by means of a descriptive comment.**

My class notes on Gen 10:21, describe Ramban as taking the modifier as functioning in "**extra-wide**" scope– referring back to Shem, the subject in the verse. The subject will be the entity referred to in the *nomen regens*, נסמך, in the construct pair– the term in construct form; this term is modified, or restricted, by the *nomen rectum*, סומך. The נסמך is the מדובר בו, the main noun, which is being modified by the סומך and, according to Ramban, also by the additional modifiers that follow. In our verse, אחי stands in for Shem. But Ramban seems to deliberately state that haggadol refers to "Shem", not just to "brother"; hence– extra-wide, going back to a word in the beginning of the verse.

*Ramban on Gen 6:10 and Gen 10:2.

[Gen 6:10](Gen 6:10): וַיּוֹלֶד נֹחַ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת

את שם את חם ואת יפת – הנראה אלי כי יפת הוא הגדול שנאמר: אחי יפת הגדול (בראשית י׳:כ״א), וכן ימנם בתולדותם בני יפת תחלה (בראשית י׳:ב׳). וחם הוא הקטן בכולם, כאשר אמר: וידע את אשר עשה לו בנו הקטן (בראשית ט׳:כ״ד). אבל הקדים שם בעבור מעלתו, והזכיר חם אחריו כי כן נולדו, והנה נתאחר יפת, ולא רצה הכתוב לומר: שם ויפת וחם, כי היו כולם נזכרים שלא כסדר תולדותם, ואין ליפת מעלה שיבטל הסדר בעבורו, אבל שם הקדים אותו בעבור מעלתו אף על פי שהוא מאוחר בספור התולדות (בראשית י׳:כ״א). וכן: בני אברהם יצחק וישמעאל (דברי הימים א א׳:כ״ח), וכן: ואתן ליצחק את יעקב ואת עשו (יהושע כ״ד:ד׳).

Chavel:

SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH. It appears to me that Japheth was the **oldest**, as it is said, the brother of Japheth the elder, and so in counting their generations, Scripture mentions the children of Japheth first. Ham was the youngest of all, as it is said, And [Noah] knew what his youngest son had done unto him. Here, however, Scripture mentions Shem first because of his superiority and then Ham, for they were born in that order. Thus Japheth is left at the end. But Scripture did not want to say, "Shem and Japheth and Ham," because in that case all of them would have been mentioned out of the order of their birth, and Japheth had no outstanding quality to merit that the order of birth be dispensed with on his account. Shem, however, is mentioned here first because of his superiority even though in the account of the generations he is last. Similarly, [we find the verses]: The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael; And I gave to Isaac Jacob and Esau.

Here: birth order is Japheth, Ham, Shem. Shem is named first because of his superiority. Then Ham, who was second-born. Then Japhet, because there's no reason to move him earlier based

on merit, as his merit was not so great as to warrant displacement from birth order.

Also: Ramban says that Gen 10:21: (1) the phrase <mark>אחי יפת הגדול</mark> and (2) the fact that Japhet's genealogy is listed first both prove that Japhet is eldest: This understanding of <mark>יפת הוא הגדול</mark> is <mark>difficult to harmonize with his comment in Gen 10:21, and how this comment is cited by later commentators. It seems that</mark> Mecklenburg and Hoffmann both understand Ramban as taking Shem as the oldest brother and the referent of *hagadol*. (נפתלי הרץ וייזל might read him as saying that *haggadol* applies to Shem, who was more meritorious than Japheth? Whereas וייזל himself takes the verse as indicating that Shem was the eldest. צריך עיון).

One possible approach: Ramban means that אחי יפת הגדול shows that Japhet was eldest because in this phrase, Shem was identified with respect to Japhet, and it is usual for a person to be identified in terms of his older sibling. As he stated in Gen 10:21, Ramban thinks that Shem is being described as "the great(er) brother of Japheth"; and this description, i.e., the identification of Shem with respect to Jepheth, shows that Jepheth was his eldest brother, even though "*haggadol*" refers to Shem, the great/er/est brother.

Gen 10:2

בני יפת – החל ממנו כי הוא הבכור, ונתן אחריו חם כי רצה לאחר תולדות שם לקרב שני הפרשיות בתולדותיו, כי יש להאריך בתולדות אברהם.

THE SONS OF JAPHETH: GOMER…. [Scripture] begins with [Japheth] for he was the firstborn. And it places Ham after him, for [Scripture] wanted to delay the account of the generations of Shem in order to place side by side the two sections dealing with Shem's children, since it is important to dwell at length on the generations of Abraham.

Here, the term "firstborn" makes very clear that Ramban sees Jepheth as the eldest brother.

R. Yaakov b. Asher (Tur; 1269-1343)

טור הפירוש הארוך

ולשם יולד גם הוא – בשביל שאיחר תולדות שם וספר תולדות אחיו הקטן ממנו כאלו לא היו לו בנים אמר גם הוא: אבי כל בני עבר – שהוא אבי כל יישובי עבר הנהר שהוא מקום יחוס של אברהם: אחי יפת הגדול – דרך הכתוב לייחס הקטן אצל הגדול באחים ולא אל הנולד אחריו וכן מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן וטעם להזכיר כלל לומר כי אחיו הנכבד שוה אליו בכבודו להגיד שלא איחר אותו מפני מעלת חם עליו. והנראה בעיני שהגדול הוא תאר לשם לומר שהוא אח הגדול של יפת כי חם קטן מכול' אע״פ שהקדימו לו **וכן בכל מקום התואר למדובר בו כגון ישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא חנני׳ בן עזור הנביא:**

alhatorah.org, modified:

ולשם יולד גם הוא, "also for Shem offspring had been born": [The Torah chose this unusual syntax] so that we would not think, seeing that Shem's offspring had not been mentioned up until now, that he had been childless during the time Canaan had produced all these nations.

אבי כל בני עבר the founding father of all the "Ivrim": He was the founder of all the clans settling west of the river Euphrates, the region from which Avraham stemmed.

אחי יפת הגדול "the brother of the senior Yephet": It is the custom of the Torah to relate the younger brother always by comparing him to the oldest, not to the one who had been born immediately after to him. This is why we have the prophetess Miriam described as Aaron's sister and not as Moses' sister (Exodus 15,20) The reason why this comparison is mentioned altogether, is to inform us that his distinguished brother [Shem] was equal to him [Yephet], and that Shem's being mentioned last does not suggest that he was less distinguished or worthy of mention. Ham was certainly not more distinguished than Shem.
Personally, I believe that the word הגדול in our verse is an adjective that applies to Shem, [he was the "great one"] i.e. he was greater than Yephet, Ham being least of all of them, although he was listed in an order that suggests otherwise. **It is the custom of the Torah to apply the modifier to the noun that is being spoken about.**

Statement about ambiguity: והנראה בעיני שהגדול הוא תאר לשם implies that others judge otherwise.
Disambiguation Strategy: The Tur cites and follows the Ramban, stating that there is a general rule in biblical Hebrew, that the referent of a modifier following a genitive construct pair is the *nomen regens*.
In my understanding, R. Yaakov b. Asher states clearly his view that Jephet is the eldest of the brothers, but that Shem is the greatest. He takes the adjective *haggadol* as modifying Shem for grammatical reasons, and he explains the contextual reason for including the adjective–to ensure that Shem's greatness is recognized despite the fact that his genealogies appear last in the list here.
Disambiguation Expression: "It appears to me that 'the greater' is a modifier of Shem, i.e. he was greater than Jepheth, Ham being the least, although he was listed in an order that suggests otherwise."
It is possible that the Tur also believes that the Ramban understood the verse the way he interprets it.

My understanding differs from the translation and explanation in alhatorah.org. The translation there reads: "Personally, I believe that the word הגדול in our verse is an adjective that applies to Shem, [he was the "great one"] **i.e. he was senior to Yephet**, Cham being **the youngest**,

although he was listed in an order that suggests otherwise. So, likewise, in all places in Scripture, the adjective refers to the subject spoken of."

[R. Joseph ibn Caspi](#) (1280-1340)

ר' אבן כספי

ולשם יולד גם הוא אבי כל בני עבר אחי יפת הגדול – שני היחוסים האלה לשם הוא לשבח, הפך שני היחוסים שכתו׳ בחם. ואולם הגדול היה כונת נותן התורה כי הוא תואר ליפת כאשר העידו עליו עדים נאמנים, אנשי כנסת הגדולה. ואין תימה מאמרינו "הגדול", כי אין הכרח שיהיה הצרוף לחָם ושֵם, כל שכן שכיון לבאר זה כי עיקר הדבוק בענין האדם בקטן וגדול הוא מצד הנפש, כי "לא בשוקי האיש ירצה" ([תהלים קמ״ז:י׳](#)), וכתו׳ "אל תבט אל מראהו ואל גבוה קומתו כי מאסתיו" ([שמואל א ט״ז:ז׳](#)), כלומר כי מאוס הוא לשם מצד נפשו, והוא ית׳ יודע נפש כל חי.

translation: modified chatgpt:

ולשם יולד גם הוא אבי כל בני עבר אחי יפת הגדול

Both of these identifying attributions for Shem [i.e., father of all sons of *eber* and brother of Japhet], are for his praise.. The opposite of the two attributions written for Ham. However, the intention of Scripture ("the Giver of the Torah") is that **הגדול is a modifier of Japhet, as attested by reliable witnesses, the men of the Great Assembly.** But there is no need to wonder about our statement about הגדול, for it is not necessary for the term to be relative to Ham and Shem. Certainly, the intention of this explanation is that the primary connection in terms of a person, whether smal[l](#) or great, is from the aspect of the soul. As it is said, 'He does not desire the strength of a man' ([Psalms 147:10](#)), and it is also stated, 'Do not look at his appearance and the height of his stature, for I have rejected him' ([1 Samuel 16:7](#)), meaning that he is rejected by God from the perspective of his soul. And He, may He be blessed, knows the soul of every living being.

READING: READING A

Statement about ambiguity: "Both of these identifying attributions for Shem are for his praise. The opposite of the two attributions written for Ham. However, the intention of Scripture ("the Giver of the Torah") is that הגדול is a modifier of Japhet, as attested by reliable witnesses, the men of the Great Assembly. But there is no need to wonder about our statement about הגדול."
Ibn Caspi sees the point of the modifier, אחי יפת הגדול, as praising Shem, and yet he takes the adjective as referring to Japhet, following rabbinic tradition; he indicates that there is some tension present in his understanding.

Disambiguation Strategy: He explicitly refers to the authority of the Men of the Great Assembly, by which he presumably means the cantillation marks. He may also take this reading as more natural, as some other sources have done, with the cantillation as confirmation. I don't think Ibn Caspi disambiguates lexically. Since the praise for Shem is his association with Japhet, Ibn

Caspi might understand the phrase to say that Shem is associated (1) with Japhet, his older brother, who is known to be a positive figure; or (2) with Japhet, the great, i.e., somebody similar to Shem.

Disambiguation Expression: "However, the intention of Scripture ("the Giver of the Torah") is that הגדול is a modifier of Japhet, as attested by reliable witnesses, the men of the Great Assembly."

[R. Levi ben Gershom](#) (Ralbag; 1288- 1384)

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רלב״ג ביאור המילות

אבי כל בני עבר – הם ישראל, כי הם נקראו עברים, אמר: 'ה' אלהי העברים' (שמות ז, טז, ועוד), וייחסו להם לפי שהם היותר נכבדים מזרעו.

אחי יפת הגדול – ידוע שיפת היה הגדול, לפי שנח היה בן חמש מאות שנה כשהוליד, ולזה היה לגדול שבבניו מאה ושתים שנה שנתים אחר המבול, והנה מצאנו שהיה שֵם בן מאת שנה שנתים אחר המבול (יא, י). ועוד, שהתורה הקדימה לספר תולדות יפת קודם תולדות שֵם. והנה ייחס שֵם אל יפת שהוא הגדול, להיותם יחד טובים כמו שנתבאר בסיפור הקודם (ט, כג), ולזה לא ייחסו שיהיה אחי חם.

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"The father of all the sons of Eber" – these are the Israelites, for they are called Hebrews, as it says, 'the God of the Hebrews' (Exodus 7:16 etc.). And he is identified by attribution to them because they are the most distinguished of his lineage.

"The brother of Japheth the elder" – It is known that Japheth was the eldest, since Noah was five hundred years old when he begat him. Therefore, the oldest among his children was one hundred and two years old after the Flood. We find that Shem was one hundred years old two years after the Flood (Genesis 11:10). Furthermore, the Torah preceded recounting the genealogy of Japheth before that of Shem. Yet, Shem is attributed to Japheth, who is the elder, because they were joined in goodness, as explained in the previous narrative (Genesis 9:23). For this reason, he is not attributed as the brother of Ham.

READING: READING A
Statement about ambiguity: Ralbag seems to state that there's no ambiguity–saying that Japhet is described here as the eldest and that this is also known by other means. And yet, he's continuing a discourse of resolution of ambiguity.
Disambiguation Strategy: as above: no disambiguation, but exegetical strategy seems to be that the verse obviously describes Japhet as the elder brother, reinforced by the traditional calculation in the midrash, talmud, and other commentaries, as well as the fact that the genealogies in the pericope commence with Japhet.
Disambiguation Expression: "It is known that Japheth was the eldest, since…"

מזרחי

אבי כל בני עבר הנהר היה שם. לא בני עבר בן בנו דמאי רבותיה דעבר כל או״א אבי כל המשפחות היוצאות ממנו הוא ומכיון שאבי כל בני עבר הוא שם יחוייב שיהי׳ פי׳ כל בני עבר עבר הנהר: היה שם. פי׳ מלת **אבי** דבק עם ולשם לא עם יולד כי למה יתיחסו אל בנו ולא אליו שהוא אבי הכל ולמה לא הודיענו הכתוב איזה מבניו הוא המתיחסים אליו כל בני עבר אבל סתם ולא פירש ומה תועלת בזה אחר שאין נזכר: שהרי בן ת״ק שנה היה נח. כשהתחיל להוליד דליכא למימר כשכלה להוליד דאם כן יהיו שני בני נח הגדולים בעת בא המבול יותר מבני מאה שנה ואי אפשר זה שהרי לא כבש הקב״ה את מעיינו של נח מלהוליד עד בן חמש מאות שנה אלא כדי שלא יהא שום אחד מבניו ראוי לעונשין בעת המבול כדלעיל ועוד דאם כן יהיה הקטן שבבניו בן מאה שנה כשבא המבול. וא״א זה שהרי שם לא היה בן מאה שנה רק שנתים אחר המבול. ואם תאמר אכתי איך ידע מזה שיפת הוא הגדול משם דילמא מבן חמש מאות התחיל נח להוליד ולא נולד יפת עד אחר ג׳ שנים משהתחיל להוליד שהיה אז נח בן תק״ג שנה ושם נולד אחר ב׳ שנים משהתחיל נח להוליד שהיה אז נח בן תק״ב שנה שנמצא בזה ששם היה בן ק׳ שנה שנתיים אחר המבול ויפת היה בן מאה שנה בשלש שנים אחר המבול. יש לומר שמאחר שסתם הכתוב זמן לידתכם למדנו שלא נולדו אלא שנה אחר שנה על הסדר הראשון בשנת ת״ק השני בשנת תק״א השלישי בשנת תק״ב ואחר שהודיענו שנולד שם בשנת תק״ב כדמשמע משם בן ק׳ שנה שנתים אחר המבול למדנו ששם היה הוא האחרון ויפת הגדול ממנו ובסנהדרין בפ׳ בן סורר ומורה אמרו שלשה בני נח דכתיב ויולד את שם ואת חם ואת יפת ושלשה בני תרח דכתיב בהו ויולד את אברם את נחור ואת הרן כל אחד מהם גדול מאחיו שנה אחת:

"The father of all the sons of eber" was Shem. Not the sons of Eber, son of his son. For how was Eber greater than every other one? He is the father of all the families that descend from him.. And since Shem is the "father of all the sons of eber," the meaning of "all the sons of eber" must be, [the farther of all of those from] across the river, was Shem.This means: the word "the father of" refers to "and to Shem" and not to "was born". For why would they identify him by attribution to his son and not to him, who was the father of everybody, and would would Scripture not tell us which of his sons he is being attributed to? "all the sons of eber", but generically, and it does not specify, and what would be the point of this if he is not named?

["The brother of Japheth the elder"] For indeed Noah was five hundred years old when he began to have sons born to him. For you cannot say it was when he ceased having children. For, if so, then both of Noah's elder two children would have been more than one hundred years old at the time when the flood came and this is not possible. Because, God did not impede Noah's childbearing ability until he was 500 years old; but, in order that none of his sons would be culpable for punishment at the time of the flood, as above. And further, for if so, then the youngest of his sons would have been 100 when the flood came. But this is impossible Because Shem was 100 years old only 2 years after the flood. And if you would say, but we still don't know from this that Japheth was the elder. From there. If Noah began to have children at the age of 500, and Japheth was only born after 3 years, when Noah was 103, and Shem was born 2 years after Noah began to have children, when Noah was 102, then we would find that Shem was 100 years old, 2 years after the flood, and Japhet was 100 years old, 3 years after the flood.

Then it must be said that after Scripture concealed the time of their births, we learn that they were born year after year consecutively; the first in the 100th year [of Noah's life], the second in the 101st year, the third in the 102nd year. And after we've been informed that Shem was born in the 102nd year, as emerges from the fact that Shem was 100 years old, 2 years after the flood, we learn that Shem was the last, and Japhet is "the elder" relative to him.

In Sanhedrin, in the chapter about the stubborn and rebellious son, they said that Noah's three sons were mentioned together, and the text reads, "And he bore Shem, and Ham, and Japheth" (Genesis 5:32). And Terach's three sons [are mentioned together]: "And he bore Abram, and Nahor, and Haran." (Genesis 11:26). Each one of them was greater than his brother by one year.

READING: READING A
Statement about ambiguity: even after presenting the argument from calculation, Mizrahi states:

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ואם תאמר אכתי איך ידע מזה שיפת הוא הגדול

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"And if you would say, 'but we still don't know from this that Japheth was the elder?'"
indicating that doubt remains– the doubt that the calculation was intended to resolve.
Disambiguation Strategy: intertextuality and calculation
Disambiguation Expression: למדנו ששם היה האחרון ויפת הגדול ממנו

R. Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1509)

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אברבנאל

ואולם אמרו **ולשם יולד אבי כל בני עבר אחי יפת הגדול** כתב הרמב״ן שבעבור שאחר ספור תולדות שם וזכרו באחרונה אמר אל תחשוב שבעבור שזכרתי תולדות יפת ותולדו׳ חם ולא נזכרו עדינה תולדות שם שלא היו לו בנים ושלהיות אלהי ועיוני תמיד לא נזדווג לאשה אין הדבר כן כי **לשם יולד גם הוא** ושאמרו **אבי כל בני עבר** אין הרצון על עבר בן שלח בן ארפכש׳ הנזכר בפרשה אלא שהיה **אבי כל בני עבר** הנהר מקום אברהם ואינו נכון כי מה צורך באמרו **ולשם יולד גם הוא**. להודיע שהיו לשם תולדות אחרי שזכרה התור׳ תולדותיו וגם אמרו שהיה אבי כל בני עבר הנהר היא באמת הודעה שאין בה תועל׳ ולמה לא זכר חרן ושאר הארצות שהם ג״כ בניו של שם כ״ש שהכתוב לא אמר אבי כל בני עבר הנהר אלא **אבי כל בני עבר** והוא עבר בן שלח באמת. והנראה׳ לי בזה הוא שבעבור שהיו לשם בני׳ ובני בנים רבי׳ וכן היו לו אחים יפת וחם ובניהם לכן רצת׳ התורה להגיד מתכונ׳ שם ויושר מזגו שלא היתה אהבתו תלויה באחד מבניו ולא מבני בניו כ״א בעבר בן שלח בן ארפכשד ובכל זרעו כי אותו ראה צדיק לפניו ובר חכים הוא ליה יושב אוהלים ומדרשות כמוהו. ושכמו כן לא היתה אהבתו עם חם ולא עם בניו אלא עם יפת גדול המעלה והשלמות וכאלו לא היו לשם בנים אחרים כי אם בני עבר ולא היה לו אח כי אם יפת והוא אמרו **ולשם יולד גם הוא אבי כל בני עבר** ר״ל לשם גם כן יולדו בנים הרבה כמו שיולדו לשאר אחיו אבל עכ״ז לא היה בעיניו כי אם אבי **כל בני עבר** שלהם היתה אהבתו כרחם אב על בנים כאלו לא היה אביהם של שאר הבנים. וכן בענין האחים כאלו היה **אחי יפת** בלבד וגם אחיו **הגדול** כי האח הגדול ירחם על אחיו הקטנים כאלו הם בניו וכן היה שם אחיו הגדול של יפת בלבד כי כן היה ענינו באהבתו אותו וכל זה לאות ששאר בניו ושאר אחיו לא היו נחשבים אצלו לכלום ועם מה שפירשתי בפסו׳ זה הותרה השאלה הז׳.

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Indeed, it is said, "And to Shem was born the father of all the sons of Eber, the brother of Japheth, the elder." The Ramban wrote that since the genealogy of Shem was mentioned and his memory was recorded at the end, the Torah declared: Do not think that since I mentioned the genealogy of Japheth and the genealogy of Ham, but did not yet mention the genealogy of Shem, that he did not have children, and that in order to always be godly and focused, he did not marry any woman. The matter is not so, for what was the need to say "to Shem was born also." It is in order to inform that Shem had offspring, after the Torah had mentioned his offspring, and also, saying that he was the father of all the sons across the river would really be information without a purpose, and why did he not name Haran and the other lands, which were also his sons? Especially as Scripture did not say" the father of all the sons across *the river,*" but " the father of all the sons of Eber", and this is truly Eber the son of Shelah. And what seems to me, in this, is that since Shem had many sons and sons of sons, and he also had brothers, Japheth and Ham, and their sons–therefore, the Torah wanted to tell Shem's virtue and integrity, that his love was not attached to any of his other children or grandchildren, but only to Eber, son of Shelah, son of Arpachshad, and his lineage, for him did he see as righteous before him, and wise, dwelling in tents, and study houses, like himself. Similarly, his affection wasn't with Ham or his sons but with Japheth, who was greater in virtue and perfection. This is as if Shem had no other children but the sons of Eber and he had no brother other than Japheth.

Therefore, it was stated, "And to Shem was born, the father of all the sons of Eber,"' meaning that to Shem also were born many children, as to his other brothers, but even so, in his eyes, he regarded himself only as the father of "all the sons of Eber", for his love was for them, in the manner of how a father loves sons, as though he were not the father of the other children.

Similarly, concerning his brothers, it was as if he was "the brother of Japheth" alone, and also, his elder brother. For the older brother loves his younger siblings as if they were his own children. This was also the case with Shem, the elder brother of Japheth alone, for he was his focus, in his love for him. All of this was as a sign that his other sons and other brothers had no value for him at all. (With my explanation for this verse, the seventh question is resolved.)

READING: READING B: Shem is the greatest and oldest of the brothers, but the verse identifies him specifically as the greater brother of Japhet, because Japhet was the only brother who was a true brother to him.

Statement about ambiguity: despite his interaction with Ramban, Abarbanel does not address the issues in the verse from the standpoint of syntactic ambiguity; he addresses the lexical ambiguity of whether or not *eber* is a proper name and determines, against the Ramban, that it is. He participates in the discussion of the referent of **הגדול**, but does not address this as an ambiguity; he merely states that Shem's concern for Japhet was the concern of an older brother for a younger.

Disambiguation Expression:

וכן בענין האחים כאלו היה **אחי יפת** בלבד וגם אחיו **הגדול** כי האח הגדול ירחם על אחיו הקטנים כאלו הם בניו

[R. Naftali Herz Wessely](#) 1725-1805

נפתלי הרץ וייזל

לשם יולד גם הוא – [כתב רמב״ן] ״בעבור שֶׁאֵחֵר [לכתוב] תולדות שם, וְסִפֵּר תולדות אחיו הקטן ממנו כאילו לא היו לו [לשֵׁם] בנים, אמר בכאן ׳גם הוא׳". מפי׳ רמב״ן ז״ל, ואינו <mark>רואה</mark> הצורך הזה אחר שפרט תולדותיו ואין לטעות. גם לדעתי יפת [הוא] הקטן, ושם הבכור כמו שאפרש בעז״ה בפרשה הסמוכה, וזְכָרָם מן הצעיר אל הבכור לפי שרוצה לפרש בסמוך תולדות שם׳ בניו ובני בניו הניחו באחרונה, שכן דרך הכתובים לפרש במה שסיים כמו שפרשנו בפירוש ״תהו ובהו וחושך״. ולדעתי אמר ״גם הוא״ כמו ״והבל הביא גם הוא״ שהוא לרבות, שמנחתו היתה טובה ממנחת אחיו. וכן כאן אעפ״י שאמרתי לך תולדות יפת וחם, שהקימו מבניהם שָׂרים ומלכים יורשי ארצות, למעלה מהן שֵׁם, כי תולדותיו נכבדות יותר בירושת הארצות והעמיד מלכים גדולים ונכבדים; וביותר שמחלציו יצא אברהם וזרע הסגולה, כי הוא היה ״אבי כל בני עבר״ וכמו שאפרש.

אבי כל בני עבר – הוא היה אבי כל הממלכות שבעבר הנהר, והוא נהר פרת, ולכן תולדותיו חשובים יותר מתולדות חם ויפת. כי מלכיות חלק העולם שמעבר נהר פרת עד המזרח גדולים ועצומים ממלכויות שלפני נהר פרת, כי שם בבל ופרס ואשור והודו וסינא. וכל אלה התישבו מבני שם, וכן ארם נהרים, ועילם, והן ארצות חשובות יותר מאותן שלקחו בני חם ויפת. גם הוא אבי זרע הסגולה שהן פרי העולם. ורמב״ן ז״ל אמר ״טעם אבי כל בני עבר, שהוא אבי כל יושבי עבר הנהר שהוא מקום יחוס אברהם. ולא יתכן שיהיה עבר במקום הזה שם האיש אבי פלג. כי למה ייחס אותן אליו?״ [עכ״ל]. ונכון הוא.

אחי יפת הגדול – [כתב רמב״ן] ״הנראה אלי כי ׳הגדול׳ תואר לשם... וכן בכל מקום תאר למדובר בו, כגון ׳ישעיה בן אמוץ הנביא׳, ׳חנניה בן עזור הנביא׳, ׳לחובב בן רעואל המדיני חותן משה׳." [עכ״ל] גם זה מפירוש רמב״ן ז״ל. ויפה דקדק אלא שאמר כי הוא האח הגדול של יפת, כי חם קטן מכולם ואם [ש]הקדים אותו. וכבר אמרנו שאינו נראה כן, אלא שם הגדול שבאחים והכתוב כפשוטו. וטעם שקראו כאן אחי יפת, לדעתי לפי שקראו ״אבי כל בני עבר״, לפי שיצאו מזרעו אנשים חכמים, יראי ה׳ וחושבי שמו והוא אביהם. והוא צדיק ומורה דרך לבניו, כדרך שפרשנו ״אבי כל יושב אהל ומקנה״, הודיע עוד שהיה נוהג באחוה עם אחיו יפת, ומעלת שֵׁם היתה גדולה בעיני יפת, וקבל ממנו דברי מוסר וחכמה. על כן הוא אחיו הגדול, כי גדלה מעלתו בעיני יפת. אבל חם לא נשמע לעצתו, ולא נהג בו אחוה, ועל כן הוליד רשעים כנען ובניו ונמרוד בן כוש, והמצריים שטמאו בני אדם בהבליהם. ועל זה אמר ג״כ ״יפת אלהים ליפת וישכון באהלי שם״, כי היה כרוך אחריו ולומד מדרכיו.

“To Shem was born as well.” [The Ramban wrote:] “Because [Scripture] delayed [writing] the genealogy of Shem, and described the genealogy of his brother who is younger than him, as though [Shem] had no children, it says here, 'as well.'” – according to the commentary of the <mark>Ramban, blessed be his memory, and he does not see this necessity, after specifying his genealogy, there is no room for the error</mark>. In my opinion, <mark>also,</mark> **Japheth is the youngest, and Shem is the firstborn**, as I will explain, God willing, in the following passage; and [Scripture] mentioned them from the youngest to the firstborn because: [Scripture] wants to lay out, adjacently, the genealogy of Shem: his sons and his sons' sons, it placed him last. For this is the way of writings, to expand upon that with which it concluded, as we explained in the commentary on “a vacant void and darkness” (Genesis 1:2).

And in my opinion, “also”' is like “And Abel also brought” (Genesis 4:4), which is for [the purpose of] augmenting, as his offering was better than the offering of his brother. Similarly,

here, even though I have told you the genealogy of Japheth and Ham, who established princes and kings among their offspring, conquerors of lands, Shem's descendants were superior to them, in acquisition of lands, and he established great and honorable kings. And most of all, that from [Shem]'s loins came Abraham and the chosen seed, for he was "the father of all the sons of Eber," and as I will explain.

"The father of all the sons of Eber" – he was the father of all the kingdoms across the river, which is the Euphrates river, and therefore, all of his descendants are more important than the descendants of Ham and Japheth. Because the kingdoms of the part of the world that was across the Euphrates river, until the East, are greater and mightier than the kingdoms before the Euphrates river, for there is Babylonia, and Persia, and Assyria, and India, and China. And all of these were settled by the sons of Shem. And so, Aram Naharayim, and Elam, and they are more important lands than those which the sons of Ham and Japhet took. He also was the father of the chosen seed, and they are the fruit of the world. And Ramban, of blessed memory, said, "the meaning of "the father of all the sons of Eber, that he is the father of all the inhabitants across the river, which is Abraham's place of origin. And it is not plausible that "*eber*" here would be the name of the man [Eber], the father of Peleg, for why would they be identified by attribution to him?"

And this is correct.

אחי יפת הגדול [The Ramban writes]: "It appears to me that the term 'the elder' is an appellation for Shem... and likewise in every instance, the modifier is for the subject that is spoken of, like 'Isaiah the son of Amoz, the prophet'; 'Hananiah the son of Azur, the prophet; and 'Reuel the Midianite, the father-in-law of Moses.'" This is also from the explanation of the Ramban. He did well to examine closely, but he said that he was the elder brother of Japheth, and that Ham was the youngest of all of them, even though he was placed first. But, as we have already said, it does not seem so; Rather, Shem is the greatest among his brothers, and the verse is according to its plain meaning. The reason that [Scripture] called him here "the brother of Japheth"' is, in my opinion, because it called him "'the father of all the sons of Eber," because there descended from him wise men, God-fearing, and those who consider His Name (???), and he is their father. And he is righteous, and an instructor for this children, as we explained,

אחי יפת הגדול – [כתב רמב״ן] ״הנראה אלי כי 'הגדול' תואר לשם... וכן בכל מקום תאר למדובר בו, כגון 'ישעיה בן אמוץ הנביא',4 'חנניה בן עזור הנביא',5 'לחובב בן רעואל המדיני חותן משה'.״6 [עכ״ל] גם זה מפירוש רמב״ן ז״ל. ויפה דקדק אלא שאמר כי הוא האח הגדול של יפת, כי חם קטן מכולם ואם [ש]הקדים אותו. וכבר אמרנו שאינו נראה כן, אלא שם הגדול שבאחים והכתוב כפשוטו. וטעם שקראו כאן אחי יפת, לדעתי לפי שקראו ״אבי כל בני עבר״, לפי שיצאו מזרעו אנשים חכמים, יראי ה' וחושבי שמו והוא אביהם. והוא צדיק ומורה דרך לבניו, כדרך שפרשנו ״אבי כל יושב אהל ומקנה,״7 הודיע עוד שהיה נוהג באחוה עם אחיו יפת, ומעלת שֵם היתה גדולה בעיני יפת, וקבל ממנו דברי מוסר וחכמה. על כן הוא אחיו הגדול, כי גדלה מעלתו בעיני יפת. אבל חם לא נשמע לעצתו, ולא נהג בו אחוה, ועל כן הוליד רשעים כנען ובניו ונמרוד

בן כוש, והמצריים שטמאו בני אדם בהבליהם. ועל זה אמר ג״כ ״יפת אלהים ליפת וישכון באהלי שם״,8 כי היה כרוך אחריו ולומד מדרכיו.

"[Yaval was] the first of those who dwell in tents and raise livestock" ([Genesis 4:20]). [Scripture] further informed that he conducted himself in fraternity with his brother Japhet, and Shem's virtue was great in Japhet's regard, and he received words of morality and wisdom from him. Therefore, he is his "greater" brother, for his stature/virtue was great in the eyes of Japhet. But Ham did not listen to his counsel, and did not conduct himself towards him with fraternity, and therefore he gave birth to wicked people like Canaan and his sons, and Nimron the son of Cush, and the Egyptians, who debased human beings with their idolatry. Therefore, it also says, "God shall beautify Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." ([Genesis 9:27]) Japheth followed him closely and learned from his ways.

READING: READING B: Shem is the greater, and in fact the greatest, brother in terms of virtue.
Statement about ambiguity: [Ramban] did well to examine closely, but he said that he was the elder brother of Japheth, and that Ham was the youngest of all of them, even though he was placed first. But, as we have already said, it does not seem so; Rather, Shem is the greatest among his brothers, and the verse is according to its plain meaning.
Disambiguation Expression: "In my opinion, also, **Japheth is the youngest, and Shem is the firstborn**"; "Rather, Shem is the greatest among his brothers, and the verse is according to its plain meaning."

[R. Yehuda Leib Frankfurter Spira](1743-1836)

הרכסים לבקעה
יפת הגדול – אין דרך הכתוב לכנות הבכור ״גדול״. גם, אם הוא הבכור, למה מנה תמיד חם תחלה אף אחר שקלקל. על כן יתכן לפרש שהיה נודע בדורו בכנוי ״יפת הגדול״, על שם מעשיו או חכמתו, כמו שנהוג בדורות אחרים, כגון ״ר׳ אליעזר הגדול״, וכיוצא. וחם הבכור, לכך מנאו לפני יפת, ושם ראשון, לחשיבותו ולכבוד אברהם וזרעו.

Japhet הגדול – It is not customary in Scripture to call the firstborn the "elder"/"eldest" (הגדול). Additionally, if he is the firstborn, why would Ham always be listed before him, even after he sinned? Therefore, it is plausible to explain that he was known in his generation by the epithet "Japhet the Great," due to his actions or his wisdom, as is customary in other generations, like "Rabbi Eliezer the Great" and the like. And Ham was the firstborn, and that is why Scripture listed him before Japheth, and Shem [was listed] first, due to his significance and the honor of Abraham and his descendants.

READING: An idiosyncratic variation of READING A: Japhet the Great. Narrow-scope, but neither comparative nor superlative adjective.

Statement about ambiguity: indirect reference to uncertainty about birth order, with respect to this verse: "It is not customary in Scripture to call the firstborn "elder"/"eldest". Additionally, if he is the firstborn, why would Ham always be listed before him."

Disambiguation Strategy: customary use of scripture; comparison to other biblical texts; comparison to other language usage.

Disambiguation Expression: על כן יתכן לפרש שהיה נודע בדורו בכנוי "יפת הגדול", על שם מעשיו או חכמתו

R. Yitzchak Shemuel Reggio (Yashar; 1784-1855)

ר' י.ש. ריגיין

ולשם ילד גם הוא – בעבור שאיחר תולדות שם וספר תולדות אחיו הקטן ממנו כאילו לא היו לו בנים אמר בכאן גם הוא:

אבי כל בני עבר – הוא עבר בן שלח הנזכר בסמוך, ולהיותו גדול המעלה כי חז"ל קבלו שהיה נביא ושיעקב למד בביתו י"ד שנה, לכן אליו יוחסו אנשי המעלה והזרע הנבחר, ובכל מקום שנקראו בני ישראל בשם עבריים הכונה על שנולדו מעבר שהיה גדול בדורו. והנה גם שם בן נח גדול בדורו היה, כמו שזכרו חז"ל מדרשו של שם ועבר, אולם לא נקראו בני ישראל על שמו אולי לפי שהוליד בנים רבים שהיו ראשי אומות אחרות, כמו עילם אשור וארם, אבל עבר לא הוליד כי אם שני בנים פלג ויקטן, פלג הוליד הזרע הנבחר, ובני יקטן זכר הכתוב שנתישבו במדינות רחוקות למזרח א"י, ולפיכך לא יחשבו עוד לעבריים, והנה עבר דומה במעלה לאברהם שהוליד יצחק וישמעאל וגם ליצחק שהוליד יעקב ועשו, ולכן זכה להזכר שמו על האומה הנבחרת:

אחי יפת הגדול – גדול הוא תואר ליפת, וענינו שיפת היה הגדול מכל אחיו:

ולשם ילד גם הוא – Since [Scripture] delayed the genealogy of Shem and first recounted the genealogy of his younger brothers, it [could seem] as though he did not have children, so it stated here "also he."

אבי כל בני עבר –
This is Eber, the son of Shelah who is mentioned shortly afterward. As for his elevated status, our Sages had a tradition that he was a prophet and that Jacob studied in his study house for fourteen years. Therefore, those of high stature and the chosen seed are listed in attribution to him. Wherever the Children of Israel are called "Hebrews," the intention is to refer to their having descended from Eber, who was prominent in his generation. Now, Shem the son of Noah was also a prominent figure in his generation, as our Sages mention in their midrash on Shem and Eber. However, the children of Israel were not called by his name, perhaps because he gave birth to many children, who were the heads of other nations, such as Elam, Ashur, and Aram, while Eber only bore two sons, Peleg and Yoktan; Peleg bore the chosen seed, and of the sons of

Yoktan, Scripture mentioned that they settled in countries far to the east of the land of Israel and therefore they are no longer considered Hebrews. And behold Eber was similar in stature/virtue to Abraham who bore Isaac and Ishmael, and also to Isaac who bore Jacob and Esau. Therefore he merited having his name commemorated in the name of the chosen nation. אחי יפת הגדול – *gadol* is a modifier of Japheth, and its point is that Japheth was the oldest of all his brothers.

READING: READING A
Statement about ambiguity: perhaps implicit, in the statement of disambiguation:
אחי יפת הגדול – גדול הוא תואר ליפת, ועניינו שיפת היה הגדול מכל אחיו
Disambiguation Strategy and Expression:
R. Reggio uses the grammatical term "תואר ל"; he does not state his reasoning explicitly. Earlier in his comment he stated, "Therefore, those of high stature and the chosen seed are listed in attribution to him." This could indicates that he sees the description of Japhet as גדול as contextually relevant, and indicating his high stature; however, that would not be fully compatible with his explanation that גדול means that Japhet was the most גדול of all the brothers; in this statement, גדול almost certainly has to mean eldest, as Reggio certainly would have considered Shem to be greater than Japhet.

R. Yaakov Mecklenburg (1785-1865)

הכתב והקבלה

ולשם יולד גם הוא – בעבור שיאחר תולדות שם וסיפר תולדות אחיו הקטן ממנו כאלו לא היו לו בנים, אמר בו גם הוא (רמב״ן) ורי״א אמר להיות שם עוסק תמיד בעיונים אלהיי׳ היה עול׳ על הדעת שלא נזדווג לאשה כלל. לכן אמר בו גם הוא, ויש מן המפרשים שמחברים מלות גם הוא למה שאחריו, והאתנח במלת הוא לא יאבה בזה. ול״נ אחרי שידענו מקבלת רבותינו כי שם היה אחד מאנשי מעלה הגדולים, עד שאמרו יעקב אבינו למד בבית מדרשו של שם ועבר, ומלכי צדק מלך שלם והוא כהן לאל עליון הוא שם בן נח (ע״ש רש״י ויב״ע) ואמרו שם במדרש גלה שם תורה לאברהם, ובתנא דב״א (ח״א פי״ח) שם התנבא ארבע מאות שנה בכל ארצות, אומר לי לבי כי גם הכתוב לא העלים מלהודיע מעלתו וכללו במלת, גם הוא, וזה מלת גם כפי מה שגדרוה בעלי לשון הוא לשון תוספות ורבוי, אם להוסיף נושא על נושא, או נשוא על נשוא, גם הצאן והבקר אל ירעו, הוא תוספי׳ נושא, ויאכל גם אכל את כספינו הוא תוספות נשוא, ולפי שעיקר הוראתו הוא תוספות ורבוי, לכן אומר אני שלא ישמש גם כאן רק למלה בעלמא, אבל ישמש גם לתואר השם, ויורה על תוספות ורבוי מעלה שישנו בדבר, וטעם גם יתרון מעלה (פּאָרצוג), ואחר שהתחיל לומר ולשם ילד להודיע תולדותיו, הודיע גם שבח עצמו, עז״א גם הוא ר״ל זה האיש שם הוא מופלג ביתרון מעלותיו (ער דער פּאָרצוגליכער) בכל אנשי דורו, ועל כונה זו יש לפרש גם בשת שנאמר בו (בראשית ד׳ כ״ו) ולשת גם הוא, כי גם שת היה מופלג ביתרון מעלה, כעדות הכתוב עליו (שם ה׳ ג׳) שנולד בדמותו כצלמו, שכתב בו הגר״א, אף שכל מין אדם הם בצלם, מ״מ בעצם לא נבראו בצלם רק אדם ושת, ולכן יצא בת קול (ב״ב נ״ח א׳) אם בדמות דיוקני וכו׳, אבל מאנוש ואילך לא נולדו עוד בדמותו וצלמו רק כקוף בפני אדם, ולכן נקראו כל אדם אחריו אנשים לשון רבים על שמו, וכן כשרוצים לגנות אדם קורין אותו אנוש, מה אנוש כי תזכרנו (תהלים

ח״ה׳), ועי״ש ברמב״ן ואמרו במ״ר פכ״ג בעון קומי אבא כהן ברדלא שת אנוש ושתק (ר״ל פסק בו פסקא) אמר ע״כ בצלם ובדמות מכאן ואילך נתקלקלו הדורות ונבראו קטורון (שאינם אלא דמות אדם, לכן עשה בו פיסקא כי בו בעצמו היה פיסקא בצלם), הנה ליתרון מעלת שת בעצם הצלם אמר עליו גם הוא - ואמר עוד ממעלות שם: אבי כל בני עבר: כלומר כל התלמידים שהיו בבית מדרשו של עבר, הוא היה המלמד והמורה אותם, שם היה המשתדל להבינם ולהורותם הידיעות האמתיות; והמלמד והמורה יקרא אב, כמו (שמואל א יו״ד ומי אביהם וכמו (מלכים ב י״ב) אבי אבי רכב ישראל. והתלמידים נקראו בנים, ככתוב בני הנביאים, ועבר במקום זה הוא אבי פלג המפורסם מאד במעלתו, כקבלת חכמינו שנביא גדול היה, ואברהם בעת ברחו מנמרוד למד מעבר דרכי ה׳ ומוסרים, הנה בבית מדרשו היה שם המלמד והמורה, והוסיף לומר ממעלות שם, אחי יפת הגדול: ר״ל לא היה לו אחוה וקרבות עם שאר אחיו רק עם יפת שהיה גדול המעל׳ והשלמות, כמו שתיב״ע אחיו דיפת רבא בדחלתא דהשם, הגדול הוא תואר ליפת, כי אם היה תואר לשם, צריך להיות אחי יפת במרכא טפחא, ודלא כרמב״ן.

ולשם יולד גם הוא – This is because the account of Shem's genealogy is delayed, and [Scripture] recounted the genealogy of his younger brothers, so it [could seem] as if he had no children, so it is stated of him, "he too" (Ramban). And Abarbanel said that since Shem was constantly engaged in divine contemplation, it might have been thought that he did not marry at all. Therefore it is stated about him "he too." And there are some among the commentators who attach the words "he too" to that which follows; but the *etnah* on the word "he" will not allow this. And it seems to me that after we know from the tradition of our Sages that Shem was one of the great figures of his time – to the extent that our forefather Jacob studied in Shem and Eber's house of study, and King Melchizedek, who was a priest to the Most High God, was Shem, the son of Noah (see <mark>Rashi and Rabbi Ishmael???</mark>) and they said there in the Midrash that Shem revealed Torah to Abraham, and in the Tanna de'vei Eliyahu (1:18), Shem prophesied for four hundred years in all the lands– my heart says to me that the verse also does not omit to inform us of his greatness and it included this in the expression "he too." And this word, "also", as it has been defined by language experts, is an expression of supplementation and augmentation, whether to add a subject to a subject, or an object to an object: "also the sheep and cattle should not graze" (Exodus 34:3, this is an addition of a subject; "he has also totally consumed our money" (Genesis 31:15), this is an amplification of an object. And since the primary meaning is supplementation and augmentation, therefore I say that it does not function here as an insignificant word, but [the word] "also" functions as a modifier of Shem, and it points to his additional qualities and the greatness of his stature, and the meaning of "also" is a superiority of virtue/stature (Vorzug). And after it started to say that "to Shem were born", to inform about his genealogy, it also communicated praise of him; and on this account, it says, "he too", that this man Shem, he is outstanding in his superior virtue (he is the most outstanding, the Vorzuglicher) among all the men of his generation. This interpretation should be applied to the use of "'also" about Seth, as it says about him, "And to Seth also [was born a son]" (Genesis 4:26), for Seth too had exceptional qualities and was outstandingly righteous, as the testimony

of Scripture about him ([Genesis 5:3](#)), that he was born "in his likeness, in his image," as the Vilna Gaon wrote about him. Even though every one of the human species is "in the [divine] image", nevertheless, only Adam and Eve were created in divine image. Therefore a heavenly voice went forth (<mark>b.Bava Batra 58a</mark>): If in the image of my …. etc.

<div dir="rtl">אם בדמות דיוקני וכו',</div>

But from Enosh forward none others were born in His likeness and Image, but only like a monkey with the face of a human, and therefore every human after him, people, in the plural, are called by his name, and so when somebody wants to denigrate a human, they call him "man" (*enosh*), like, "what is man (*enosh*), that You are mindful of him?" ([Psalm 8:5](#)).

And see there, in the Ramban, and it says in <mark>במ"ר פכ"ג</mark>,

<div dir="rtl"><mark>בעון קומי אבא כהן ברדלא אדם שת אנוש ושתק (ר"ל פסק בו פסקא)</mark></div>

He said: until here, "in likeness and in image"; from here on, the generations declined, and קטורון were created (which are only the appearance of Adam, therefore he made a break with him, because with him, himself, there was an end of the image). Behold it is to the superiority of the virtue of Seth, in the essence of the image, it says upon him "he too"-- and it says further the virtues of Shem: "the father of all the sons of Eber," that is, all of the students who studied in Eber's house of study–he was their teacher and instructor, Shem strove to impart understanding to them and to instruct them in true knowledge. And a teacher and instructor is called "father," like "who is their father?" ([1Sam 10:12](#)) and like "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel" ([2Kings 2:12](#)). And the students are called "sons," as is written, "the sons of the prophets". And Eber, in this place, is the father of Peleg, who was very renowned for his virtue, in accord with the tradition of our Sages that he was a great prophet, and that Abraham, in his flight from Nimrod, learned the ways of God and ethics from Eber; indeed, Shem was the teacher and instructor in his study house, and it adds, about the virtues of Shem, "the brother of Japheth, the elder." – This phrase indicates that he had no brotherhood with the rest of his brothers, only with Japheth, who was great in his virtues and perfection. **This is akin to how Jonathan ben Uzziel translated, ** ‬**דיפת רבא בדחלתא דהשם**, **that Japheth was great in the fear of God. הגדול is a modifier of Japheth, for if it were a modifier of Shem, then אחי יפת would have to be [marked] with the cantillation marks *merha tipha,*** <mark>And it is not like Ramban.</mark>

READING: A variation of READING A: Japhet the great, in virtue, not comparative or superlative.
Disambiguation Strategy: cites cantillation and Targum pseudo-Jonathan
Statement of Ambiguity and Disambiguation Expression: Shem is identified with reference to his brother Japhet the great, because only with Japhet did he have a true fraternal relationship, due to Japhet's greatness.

והוסיף לומר ממעלות שם, אחי יפת הגדול: ר״ל לא היה לו אחוה וקרבות עם שאר אחיו רק עם יפת שהיה גדול המעל׳ והשלמות, כמו שתיב״ע אחוי דיפת רבא בדחלתא דהשם, הגדול הוא תואר ליפת, כי אם היה תואר לשם, צריך להיות אחי יפת במרכא טפחא, ודלא כרמב״ן.

S.D. Luzzatto (Shadal; 1800-1865)

<div dir="rtl">

שד״ל

ולשם ילד גם הוא – אמר לשון זה בשם לפי שהזכירו באחרונה (רמב״ן) כדי שלא יֵחָשֵׁב שלא היה נכבד כאחיו, או שלא היה מרובה באכלוסין כמוהם. ולפי שאֵחֵר אותו הוסיף בשבחו כי הוא אבי כל בני עבר וגו׳.
אבי כל בני עבר – הנכון כדעת רש״י ורמב״ן וקלעריקוס וראזנמילר וגעזעניוס שהטעם אנשי עבר הנהר, כלומר השוכנים למזרחו של פרת, כטעם בעבר הנהר ישבו אבותיכם מעולם תרח אבי אברהם (יהושע כ״ד:ב׳)...
אחי יפת הגדול – הגדול כנוי ליפת, והנה כבר ידענו כי שם ויפת אחים, והנכון כפי רש״י כי כאן הכוונה במלת אח שוה, כמו שמעון ולוי אחים (למטה מ״ט:ה׳), אח הייתי לתנים (איוב ל׳:כ״ט), אח הוא לבעל משחית (משלי י״ח:ט׳), והטעם שהיה נכבד כיפת שהיה הגדול; וכל זה אמנם להבזות את חם שיצאו ממנו מצרים וכנען.

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alhatorah.org, modified:
"Shem, too, had [numerous] descendants". This language is used with Shem because he is mentioned last (Nachmanides), so that it would not be thought that he was not as worthy of honor as his brothers, or was not as populous as them. Again because he is mentioned last, there is augmentation of his praise, as "the father of all the sons of *eber*., etc."
" the father of all the sons of *eber*" The correct explanation is that of Rashi, Nachmanides, Clericus, Rosenmueller, and Gesenius, that "sons of *eber*" means "the people from across the river," i.e., those who live east of the Euphrates…

אחי יפת הגדול –
הגדול is an epithet for Japhet. And, of course, we already know that Shem and Japhet are brothers, and the correct [explanation] is, like Rashi, that here, the intention of the word "brother" is "equal", like "Simeon and Levi are brothers" (Genesis 49:5); "I have become a brother to jackals" (Job 30:29); "[He who is slothful] is brother to him who destroys" (Proverbs 18:9). The meaning is that [Shem] was as respected as **Japheth, who was the eldest**. And [the purpose of] all this is to denigrate Ham, from whom descended Egypt and Canaan [see also above at Gen. 5:32].

READING: READING A: Japhet is the oldest; though Shadal takes "brother" as a means to praise Shem, somewhat through extension of the word "great" that is used for Japheth.
Disambiguation Strategy: reliance on Rashi; reading meaning into the word "brother"

הגדול כנוי ליפת...והטעם שהיה נכבד כיפת שהיה הגדול: **Disambiguation Expression**
***See also, Shadal's, את שם את חם ואת יפת – היה יפת גדול מאחיו שכן הוא אומר אחי יפת הגדול
וחם הקטן שנאמר וידע את אשר עשה לו בנו הקטן אבל הקדים שם למעלתו, והזכיר אחריו חם כי כן נולדו,
 וע״כ הוצרך להזכיר יפת באחרונה. See comment on Gen 5:32.

[R. Samson Raphael Hirsch](…) (1808-1888)

From [sefaria.org](…)

לשם ילד גם הוא. Auch dem Schem, auf welchem nach dem Prophetenspruche des Vaters das letzte Ziel der Menschheit ruhte, wurden Nachkommen geboren. Er wird hier in doppelter Beziehung hervorgehoben. Erstens als Vater aller Kinder יעבר Obgleich עבר Schems Urenkel war, und dessen Kinder ja gerade zuerst den Ausspruch Noachs וישכן באהלי שם zu verwirklichen begannen, so war doch Schem zugleich deren geistiger Vater. Selbst יעקב lernte ja noch von Schem. Daß im Hause Terachs ein Abraham geboren werden konnte und dessen Söhne das weiter tragen konnten, was Gott dem Abraham als Kleinod für die Menschheit überantwortet, das haben wir Schem zu verdanken. Es weiß es oft keiner, was er dem זכות seiner Väter und Großväter zu verdanken hat, deren Standpunkt er vielleicht verhöhnt und belächelt, und fragt sich nicht, wie viel solch geistiges und sittliches זכות er seinen Kindern und Enkeln denn vererben werde.
Zweitens war er zugleich אחי יפת הגדול. יפת war sein **älterer Bruder** und ging ihm der Bestimmung nach als Herold voran, der Menschen Herz für die einstige Aufnahme der Lehren Schems empfänglich zu machen. Ganz natürlich, daß auf lange hinaus Schem nicht als der גדול auf Erden anerkannt werden konnte. Für japhetische Kunst und Wissenschaft sind die Menschen leicht empfänglich. Das stille Licht, als dessen Träger Schem zu wandeln, die Wahrheit, die er zu bringen haben sollte, der Begriff, den man nur leugnen kann oder erfüllen muss — einen Mittelweg gibt es nicht — der muß auf lange Zeit hinaus auf Anerkennung im großen verzichten.

רש״ר הירש

ולשֵׁם יֻלד גם הוא – נולדו צאצאים גם לשֵׁם, שדרכו עתידה להתקיים התכלית הסופית של האנושות. הכתוב מדגיש זאת משתי בחינות:
האחת, שֵׁם היה "אבי כל בני עֵבֶר". ועל אף שעֵבֶר היה נינו הגדול של שֵׁם, ורק בניו של עֵבֶר החלו לממש את מאמר נח "וישכן באהלי שם", בכל זאת, גם שם היה אביהם הרוחני. אחרי הכל, יעקב גם הוא למד תורה משֵׁם (בראשית רבה סג, י). אנחנו רואים שאברהם יצא מביתו של תרח, ובני אברהם קיבלו מידיו את הפקדון היקר שנמסר לו למען האנושות – וכל זה לא היה אפשרי אלמלא זכותו של שֵׁם. יתכן מצב שאדם לועג על אבותיו ובז למסורתם, ואין עולה על דעתו שזכותם שמורה בידיו להוריש לבניו אחריו.
שנית, שֵׁם היה "אחי יפת הגדול", היינו [עיין פירוש לעיל ט, כד] שיפת היה אחיו הגדול. ייעודו של יפת היה לעבור לפני שֵׁם, ולהכשיר את לבות בני האדם להיות כלי קיבול לתורת שם. טבעי הדבר, ששם לא הוכר מיד כַּ"גדול" על הארץ [אלא שהחשיבו את יפת לגדול האחים]. האמנויות והמדעים של יפת נוחים יותר להתקבל בלבות האנשים. אך האור השָׁלֵו ששם הוא נושאו, והאמת שהוא מבשר, התורה, שאותה אפשר רק או לדחות או לקבל (אין דרך אמצעית), זמן רב עוד יעבור עד שיזכו להכרה כללית.

"And to Shem was born also he" – Descendants were born to Shem as well, through whom the ultimate purpose of humanity will be fulfilled in the future.
The text emphasizes this from two perspectives:

Firstly, Shem was the "father of all the Hebrews"... the spiritual father…

Secondly, "Shem was the brother of Japheth, the elder." That is, [see comment on Gen 9:24 above] that Japheth was his elder brother. Japheth's destiny was to go before Shem and prepare humanity to become vessels to receive Shem's Torah. Naturally, Shem wasn't immediately recognized as "great" upon the Earth [as they considered Japheth to be the greatest among his siblings]. The arts and sciences of Japheth were more easily received in people's hearts. However, the serene light that Shem carried and the truth he conveyed, namely, the Torah, which can only be accepted or rejected (there is no middle ground)--it will take much more time until it gains general recognition.

READING: READING A: in the German, it is not clear whether R. Hirsch takes הגדול in the sense of age. He discusses "greatness" in stature and qualities, separately from the question of the syntactic ambiguity. R. Hirsch notes that Shem was great, but people did not realize it and it will take a long time until Shem's teachings will be generally accepted.

Disambiguation Expression: יפת war sein **älterer Bruder.**

[R. Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin](#) (Netziv; 1816-1893)

נצי״ב

אבי כל בני עבר אחי יפת הגדול – יחס זה אומר פרשני, ומהו "הגדול". והענין, שבא הכתוב להודיע דזרע שם היו לשני מינים, האחד, האומה הנבחרת שנתייחדה בשמה 'בני עבר', כדכתיב "אברם העברי" (להלן יד,יג), ועם ישראל נקראו 'עברים', וזה המין היה מופלג ונעלה מבני יפת. והשני היו ככל אומות העולם בערך בני יפת, אבל בזה היו בני יפת מצוינים מבני שם, ומשום הכי כתיב "אחי יפת הגדול". {וכן מי מבני ישראל שיוצא מתורת בני עבר, נכלל בתוך הגרועים מבני יפת, ועוד לחרפה הוא לו שהוציא עצמו ממעלתו, ועיין מה שכתבתי בספר שמות (יג,יג) בבאור המקרא "ואם לא תפדה וערפתו"}.

וכיוצא בזה היה בבני יוסף מנשה ואפרים, דאפרים היה גדול ממנשה בעניני אלקות, ומנשה היה גדול בהויות העולם, כאשר יבואר במקומו בפרשת ויחי.

"Father of all the children of Eber, brother of Japheth the elder" – This identifying attribution says, "explain me!" And what is "הגדול"? The issue is, that Scripture comes to inform that Shem's seed were of two types.

One: the chosen nation, which was distinguished by the name "sons of *eber*" as it is written, "Abram the Hebrew (*ivri*)"(Genesis 14:13), and the people of Israel were referred to as Hebrews (*Ivrim*). And this type was more exceptional and exalted than the sons of Japheth.

And the second were like all the nations of the world, approximately valued like the sons of Japheth. But in this, the sons of Japheth excelled beyond the sons of Shem, and because of this, it is written "the brother of Japheth the greater (הגדול)."

 {And thus, whomever of the children of Israel departs from the Torah of the Hebrews, is counted among the worst of the sons of Japheth, and it is a greater disgrace for him, for he

removed himself from his elevated status; and see what I have written in the book of Exodus ([13:13](#)) in explanation of the verse, "and if you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck." A similar situation can be found with the sons of Joseph – Manasseh and Ephraim. For Ephraim was greater than Manasseh in matters of spirituality, while Manasseh excelled in worldly matters, as explained in its proper place in the portion of Vayechi."

READING: READING A: Japhet the greater. Narrow-scope, comparative. Japhet's descendants are greater than Shem's ordinary descendants in worldly matters, though inferior to Shem's spiritually-inclined descendants.

Disambiguation Expression:

השני היו ככל אומות העולם בערך בני יפת, אבל בזה היו בני יפת מצוינים מבני שם, ומשום הכי כתיב "אחי יפת הגדול".

[R. David Zvi Hoffmann](#) (1843 - 1941)

רד״צ הופמן

ילד גם־הוא – כמו לעיל ד׳:כ״ו אצל שת. כמי שנועד להיות אבי כל בני עבר, מגעת לו לשם תשומת לב מיוחדת. אבי כל־בני עבר – אין הכוונה לומר ששם הוא אבי עבר ממש, שכן מיד נאמר (פסוק כ״ד) ששלח הוא אבי עבר. אבל הכוונה לומר ששם הוא אבי כל בני עבר, כלומר העברים, ויחד עם זאת ייאמר שאמנם העברים קרובים הם לכל העמים המוזכרים כאן.

אחי יפת הגדול – לפי טעמי המקרא, וכן גם לפי המדרש,1 הרי "הגדול" מוסב על יפת, וכן משמע להלן י״א:י׳, והשווה להלן מ״ד:י״ב ושמואל א י״ז:י״ג, שם ברור שגדול הוא הגדול בשנים, ובדומה לכך להלן מ״ח:י״ט, שם פירושו של "אחיו הקטן" הוא — הקטן בשנים. ואכן, אי אפשר לפרש כאן אחרת, שכן לא מצינו בשום מקום אלא שהאח הצעיר יתייחס אל המבוגר ממנו, ולא להיפך (פרט ליוצא מן הכלל אחד — אצל נשים "מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן"2). אך השווה תרגום יונתן, המפרש את המלה "הגדול" — "רבא בדחלתא דה׳", וזאת משום שלדעתו שם הוא הגדול שבאחים, וכן גם דעת הרמב"ן כאן.

"were born, he too" – as mentioned above in Genesis 4:26 regarding Seth. As the one destined to be the father of all the descendants of Eber, special attention is drawn to Shem.

"father of all the sons of *eber*" – the intention is not to say that Shem is the literal father of Eber, for it is immediately stated (verse 24) that Shelah is the father of Eber. Rather,, the intention is to say that Shem is the father of all the sons of Eber, that is, the Hebrews. At the same time, it is said that the Hebrews are indeed closely related to all the peoples named here.

"the brother of Japheth, the elder" – according to the cantillation of the verse, and also according to the Midrash, "*hagadol*" refers to Japheth, and this also is implied below, in [Genesis 11:10](#); and compare below, [Genesis 44:12](#) and [1Samuel 17:13](#); there, it is clear that *hagadol* means greater in years, i.e., older. Similarly, below, in [Genesis 48:19](#); there, the meaning of "his brother, *haqatan*" means smaller in years, i.e., older. Indeed, it is impossible to interpret it differently here, as we find in every instance that the younger sibling is referred to in relation to

the older one, rather than the opposite (except for one exception – with regard to women: "Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister.") However, contrast [my interpretation against]]the Targum of Yonatan, who explains the word "*hagadol*"-- "greater in the fear of God," and this is because in his view, Shem is the oldest (*hagadol*) among the brothers. <mark>This is also the view of the Ramban here.</mark>

READING: READING A: Japhet the Great. Narrow-scope; comparative, meaning "older" or possibly "eldest".

Statement about ambiguity: "refers to Japheth…. However, contrast: the Targum of Yonatan; This is also the view of the Ramban here."

Disambiguation Strategy and Expression: "according to the cantillation of the verse, and also according to the Midrash, "*hagadol*" refers to Japheth, and this also is implied below, in Genesis 11:10;" + other scriptural instances of "great" with siblings referring to age.

Baruch HaLevi Epstein (Torah Temimah; 1860 - 1942)

תורה תמימה

אחי יפת הגדול – יפת גדול שבאחיו היה, [וכתיב (פ׳ בראשית) ויולד נח את שם את חם ואת יפת, מלמד שדרך חכמתם השיב להו].1 (סנהדרין ס״ט:)

"The brother of Japheth, the eldest" – Japheth was the eldest of his brothers [and it is written, "And Noah bore Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, this teaches that they were ordered according to their wisdom (bSan 69b).]

READING: READING A: Japhet the eldest.. Narrow-scope, superlative.

Statement about ambiguity: implied in reference to lists that begin with Shem and name Japheth last; with an explanation that those verses are not according to birth order.

Disambiguation Expression: יפת גדול שבאחיו היה

See *** for supplementary material: [select] commentaries on: Genesis 5:32, <mark>Genesis 9:24 GENESIS 10:2</mark>
<mark>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QYc7YnIC-6403XEQm6XIAqi23jti3d4IfA9g2KL1oiU/edit</mark>

COMMENTATORS on RASHI:
Gur Aryheh
Siftei Hachamim

[R. Judah Loew of Prague](#) (Maharal; ~1520 - 1609)

אבי כל בני עבר – הנהר היה שם. דאין פירושו שהוא "אבי כל בני עבר" שהוא בן בנו, כדכתיב (ר' פסוק כד) "ושלח הוליד את עבר" (קושית הרא"ם), דמאי שנא עבר דנקט, שהוא אחד מבני שם, משאר יוצאי חלציו של שם, שיאמר שהוא 'אבי כל בני עבר' – משיאמר שהוא 'אבי בני ארפכשד', או שאר שהם מיוצאי חלציו של שם. ומה שהוסיף 'היה שם', שלא תאמר "ולשם ילד" פירושו דנולד לו בן שהיה אותו בן אבי כל בני עבר הנהר, דזה אינו, דזה להזכיר את הנולד קודם ואחר כך יאמר "אבי כל בני עבר", ועוד – דלא ידענו מי הוא אותו הנולד, שלא הזכירו הכתוב, אלא "אבי כל בני עבר" קאי על שם, ולשון "ילד" דכתיב בלשון יחיד – רצה לומר ילד זרע – עד שהיה אבי כל בני הנהר: שהרי בן ת"ק שנה וכו'. פירוש דאין לומר דהא דכתיב (ר' לעיל ה, לב) "ויהי נח בן ת"ק שנה" היינו כשפסק להוליד (הערת הרא"ם), דאם כן יהיה הקטן שבבניו כשבא המבול בן ק' שנה, וזה לא יתכן, דהא שם היה בן מאה – שנתיים אחר המבול (להלן יא, י). ואין לומר דחם נולד בן ת"ק, ושם בן תק"ב, ויפת בן תק"ג, ושם גדול מיפת (קושית הרא"ם), דודאי או יפת הגדול או שם הגדול, אבל שיהיה חם הגדול זה לא יתכן, דהא כאן כתיב "אחי יפת הגדול", וסתמא כתיב, דמשמע הגדול בכל הבנים, כיון דלא כתיב 'אחי יפת הגדול ממנו'. והרא"ם תירץ דודאי כיון דסתם כתב לך תולדותיו, אם כן לא היו גדולים זה מזה רק שנה מחבירו, ומכיון דהיה שם בן מאה – שנתיים אחר המבול, אם כן נולד בן תק"ב, וממילא למדנו כי יפת הגדול – בשנת ת"ק, ואחריו חם בשנת תק"א, ושם היה הקטן – בשנת תק"ב. וכן אמרינן בסנהדרין (סט ע"ב) דכל אחד היה גדול מחבירו שנה. והאמת שכך איתא בגמרא בפרק בן סורר ומורה (סנהדרין סט ע"ב), אלא שאני אומר דהא דקאמר שם 'שם גדול מחם שנה וחם גדול מיפת שנה' זהו באשר היינו סוברים דחשיב להו תנא דרך תולדותן, אז אמרינן דכל אחד ואחד גדול מחבירו שנה כמשמעות הכתוב, אבל לפי המסקנא דחשיב להו דרך חכמתן, והא דכתיב (ר' לעיל ה, לב) "ויהי נח בן ת"ק ויולד את שם ואת חם ואת יפת", ושם נולד בן תק"ב לנח, ויפת נולד בן ת"ק, שפיר מצינו למימר דחם נולד אחר שם, ולא ידענו מתי. וכן [נראה] מדברי רש"י, דכתב רש"י למעלה (ט, כה) 'ארור בנך הרביעי שיהיה משמש זרעם של אלו הגדולים', משמע דאלו ב' הם הגדולים, וכך היה; דיפת נולד בשנת ת"ק, ושם בשנת תק"ב, ובשנת תר"ב לנח היה שם בן מאה שנה, וזה "שנתיים אחר המבול":

שפתי חכמים

נמצא שהגדול בבניו הי' בן ק' שנה. וא"ת ומה הוכחה זו דלמא חם היה בן ק' שנה כשבא המבול ושם היה בן ק' ב' שנה אחר המבול ויפת היה בן ק' ג' או ארבע שנה אחר המבול וי"ל משום דבדורות הראשונים כל בנים שהולידו היו מולידין שנה אחר שנה כדאמרינן בפרק בן סורר ומורה (סנהדרין סט:) ואחר שהודיענו שנולד שם בשנת תק"ב שהוא שנתים אחר המבול למדנו ששם היה האחרון כי יפת נולד בשנת תק"א וחם נולד בשנת ת"ק לחיי נח וק"ל:

[Judges 3:9](#)

וַיִּזְעֲקוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה, וַיָּקֶם יְהוָה מוֹשִׁיעַ לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵם--אֶת עָתְנִיאֵל בֶּן-קְנַז, אֲחִי כָלֵב הַקָּטֹן מִמֶּנּוּ

Kind of funny: מִמֶּנּוּ clarifies that we are dealing with a relative modifier. But it remains uncertain whether the referent is Caleb or Kenaz.

מִמֶּנּוּ

 Seems inserted in order to disambiguate? But doesn't?

SOURCE	JEPHET is referent: narrow scope	SHEM is referent: wide scope	

Maybe explore the possibility of DELIBERATE Ambiguity/Multivalence?

of Eber which he was at a loss to connect with the name of Shem. Hence he avoids the direct assertion that Shem begat Eber, and bridges over the gap by the vague hint that Shem and Eber stand for the same ethnological abstraction.—*the elder brother of Yepheth*] The Heb. can mean nothing else (*v.i.*). The difficulty is to account for the selection of Japheth for comparison with Shem, the oldest member of the family. Unless the clause be a gloss, the most obvious inference is that the genealogy of Japheth had immediately preceded; whether because in the Table of J the sequence of age was broken (Bu. 305 f.), or because Japheth was really counted the second son of Noah (Di.). The most satisfactory solution is undoubtedly that of Gu., who finds in the remark an indication that this Table followed the order: Canaan—Japheth—Shem (see p. 188).— 24 is an interpolation (based on 11[12-14]) intended to harmonise J with P. It cannot be the continuation of [21] as it stands (since we have not been informed who Arpakšad was), and still less in the form suggested below. It is also obviously inconsistent with the plan of P's Table, which deals with

with the subj. nor does the Hoph. ; the Niph. does so once (Gn. 17¹⁷ [P]) ; but there the ellipsis is explained by the emphasis which lies on the fact of birth. Further, a הוא is required as subj. of the cl. 'אבי ונו. The impression is produced that originally עֵבֶר was expressly named as the son of Shem, and that the words 'הוא אבי ונו referred to him (perhaps 'ולשם יֻלַּד אתעֵבר הוא אבי ונו). Considering the importance of the name, the tautology is not too harsh. It would then be hardly possible to retain the clause 'אחי ונו ; and to delete it as a gloss (although it has been proposed by others : see OH) I admit to be difficult, just because of the obscurity of the expression.—[נם הוא cf. 4²⁶.—[אחי יפת הנדול Ⴎ correctly *fratre J. majore.* The Mass. accentuation perhaps favours the grammatically impossible rendering of Ⴚ (ἀδελφῷ 'I. τοῦ μείζονος), Σ, al. ; which implies that Japheth was the oldest of Noah's sons,—a notion extorted from the chronology of 11¹⁰ cpd. with 5³² 7¹¹ (see Ra. IEz.). It is equally inadmissible (with IEz.) to take הנדול absolutely (=Japheth the great). See Bu. 304 ff.—**24.** [את־שלח Ⴚ pref. ילר וקינן את־קינן.

Florentino García Martínez, "Geography as Theology: From the Book of Jubilees to the Phaleg by Arias Montano," in *Between Philology and Theology: Contributions to the Study of Ancient Jewish Interpretation* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 2012). https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004243941/B9789004243941_004.xml

(summarized in this review by Pieter W. van der Horst, 2013:

García Martínez turns to Genesis 10 in "Geography as Theology: From the *Book of Jubilees* to the *Phaleg* by Aria Montano," demonstrating how later Jewish writers updated its geographical and ethnic data to keep in step with their contemporaries. To that end, Josephus used the knowledge produced by Greek geographers; the author of the Aramaic Bible translation that goes by the name of *Targum Neofiti* used cartographic knowledge current in the Roman Empire of the third century; and, by way of Christian example, in his *Phaleg* of 1572, Arias Montano interpreted Genesis 10 in light of the discovery of the Americas (Parwaim is Peru [in the dual]!). Other early Jewish writings, however, such as *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon*, do not modernize the biblical text but try to use the geographical knowledge of their time to reinterpret it theologically. For example, *Jubilees* explicitly emphasizes that Shem's God-given inheritance is the central part of the earth that belongs to

his descendants forever, a clear theologico-political statement. Conversely, Ham's son Canaan has no right whatsoever to Palestine: the *Genesis Apocryphon* assigns the right to the land of Israel unequivocally to the descendants of Shem alone. It is striking that here Israel is presented as the rightful possessors of the very land that in Genesis 10 is allocated to Canaan and his descendants!)