



HFM 003 – The Five People with the Most Descendants Ever

Michael Rank: This is the History in Five Minutes Podcast, the #1 podcast for learning about anything in history in no time at all! I'm your host, Michael Rank.

Today's topic is The People on Earth with the Most Descendants. So nowadays, when you think about someone with a lot of kids, it's usually trashy, reality TV stars like Nadia Suleman, the Octomom, or Michelle and Jim Bob Duggar. You know, they're usually thought as people who aren't that educated, who live in the backwoods, and don't know how to manage families. But in the past, if you had a lot of kids, it meant the complete opposite. It meant that you were wealthy, that you had enough resources and food to prevent your kids from starving to death, and most importantly, people wanted to marry your children and they wanted to do that to secure a political relationship with you and this person would in turn go off and have a lot of descendants of their own.

In the past, having a lot of kids and propagating a huge line of descendants didn't mean that you were poor and uneducated or you were particularly charming, it meant that you were rich and powerful.

But the first person on our list actually gets honorary mention because she was born in the modern era and that is a woman named Yitta Schwartz who only died two years ago. She was a survivor of the Holocaust and she spent the rest of her life thumbing her nose at Hitler by replacing many of the Jews that he killed in the Holocaust. What's interesting is that by the time she died, she had over 2,000 living descendants by her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She was a member of the conservative Satmar Hasidic sect whose members often have nine kids, but she went way above and beyond this, having at least 15 kids who in turn had more than ten children of their own. In order to deal with such a huge family, she had to buy industrial baking equipment to make up enough ceremonial bread for the Sabbath.

Next on our list, number four is an Irish chieftain from the middle ages. His name was Niall of the Nine Hostages. Well, with a name like that, how could you not have plenty of kids with all the ladies that come to your side? So if you're Irish, there's more than a 10% chance that he is your forefather as are 3 million other men on earth and approximately 1 in 12 Irishmen. He was a warlord in the 5th century and he gained power after the Roman Empire collapsed and much of the Western World was thrown into chaos and a lot of small chieftainships rose up. Men like Niall were able to seize power in this vacuum. He was quite prolific and as were his descendants. One of the members of his dynasty who died 1423 had 18 different sons. So because of the large Irish immigration to America, a lot of Americans also carry his blood such as 2% of all New Yorkers.

Number three on this list is Charlemagne who was considered the first emperor of Western Europe after the collapse of Rome. He is considered the father of Europe because he united regions of Italy, France, Spain, and Germany in culture and religion, but this is also true in literal sense because he had 20 children of whom a few carried on his empire until it fell apart due to infighting. What's interesting is because of this fracturing and because of Viking invasions, a lot of his descendants were spread across Europe whether through migration, slavery, and/or intermarriage with other states and they married in the Slavic states, in Scandinavia, in Greece, and even the Middle East through the Crusades. Because



HFM 003 – The Five People with the Most Descendants Ever

of this, his number of descendants is as high as 600 million. That's 250 million in Europe, 100 million in the US, and 100 million and other 250 million across the world.

Number two on our list is Abraham, the founder of Judaism. When God blessed him in Genesis that his descendants would number the earth like the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore, he wasn't kidding. So he's the father of nearly every Jew who ever lived which is 14 million on earth, and according to the Genesis biblical account, he is also the father of Ishmael who is considered to be the progenitor of people belonging to the Arab race which numbers up to 500 million. Another thing which the Bible says is that his descendants were also able to breed rather quickly and multiple very fast. So in the 400 years between his grandson, Jacob, immigration to Egypt and Moses leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, his family grew from 72 to almost 3 million.

Number one on our list is Eve. According to the biblical account, she is the mother of all humanity which gives her almost 7 billion descendants, but this is also something that scientific papers have backed up due to a study that happened in 1980. Scientists found that an actual mitochondrial Eve lived 100,000 to 200,000 years ago in Africa. It analyzed mitochondrial DNA which passes from the mother to offspring and it found an unbroken line that went back to one female that lived somewhere in modern day Angola based on where we can get. So then her ancestors went out from Africa to Europe, Eurasia, Australia, America, and they're currently sitting right at your chair at this moment eating Red Vines and Cheetos.

So something in this list shows us that if you're just walking on the street and you pass by someone, there's a pretty good chance that you might be related to them. But for the case of Eve, that chance is 100%.

For more history like this that is offbeat, obscure, but most of all not boring, come check out my website at www.michaelrank.net. There, you can find podcasts and blog posts like this. I'll even throw in a free history Ebook that you can grab right now at www.michaelrank.net/freebook. Have a good day!