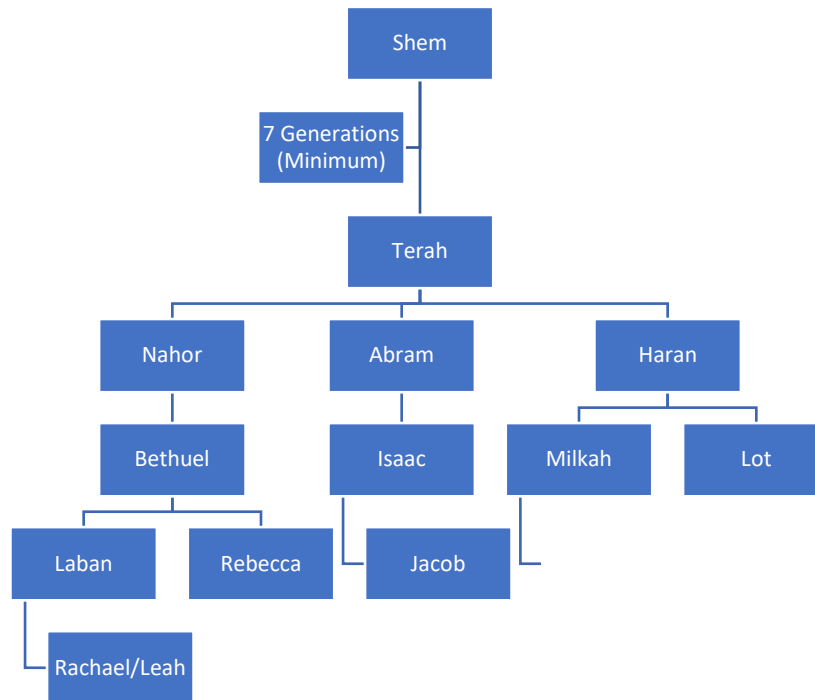


# Genesis 12:1-13:1 – The Call of Abraham

Brown Community Group October 7, 2018

This is the story of Abram and his beginnings. He is first mentioned in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis and then only as a background for the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter. His family history, compiled from various Biblical references, is as follows:



Chapter 11 of Genesis ends this way:

**Genesis 11:31-32** <sup>31</sup>Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there. <sup>32</sup>Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

The family lived in Ur of the Chaldees. His older brother Haran died there.

Other than the brief mention in chapter 11, we know nothing about Abram's early life from the Old Testament. However, there are ancient Jewish teaching, most notably the Midrash and Talmud, telling of his earlier life. The early story is summed up by the scholar and rabbi Maimonides as follows:

After this mighty man [Abraham] was weaned, he began to explore and think . . . "How is it possible for the sphere to continue to revolve without having anyone controlling it? Who is causing it to revolve? Surely, it does not cause itself to revolve."

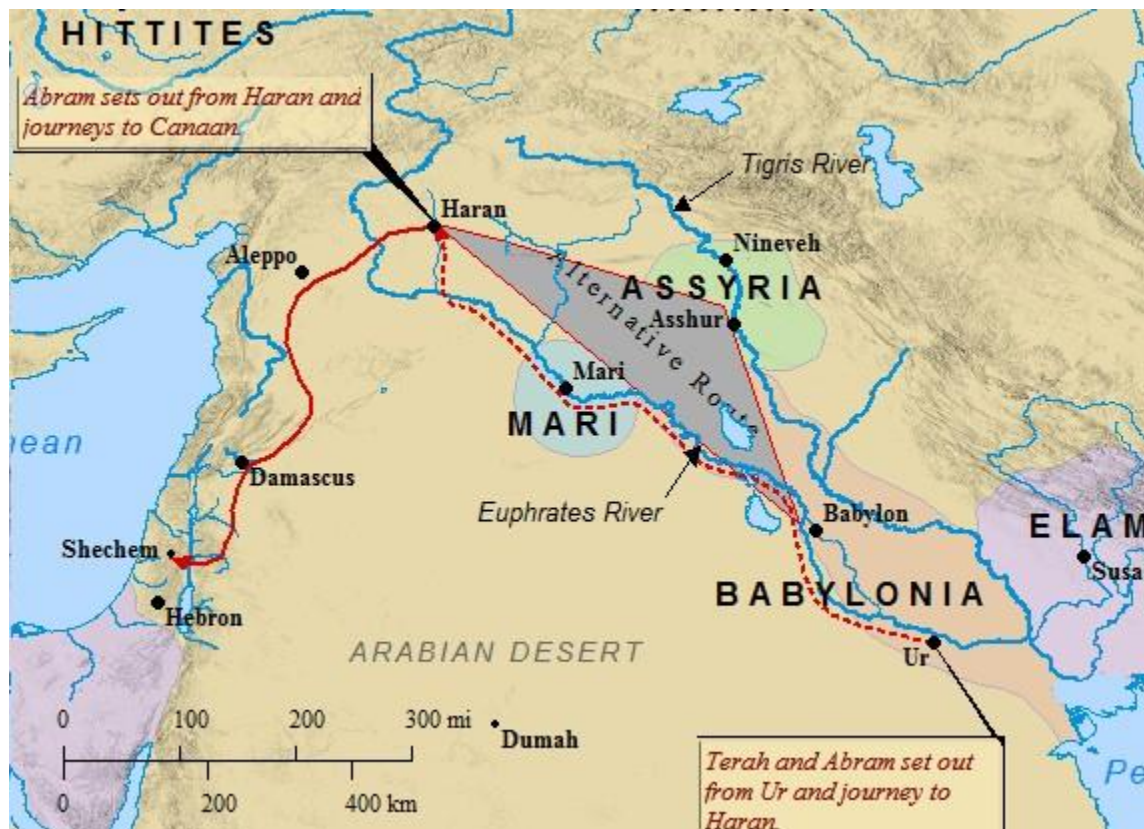
He had no teacher, nor was there anyone to inform him. . . . He realized that there was one G-d who controlled the sphere, that He created everything, and that there is no other G-d among all the other entities. . . .

Abraham was 40 years old when he became aware of his Creator. When he recognized and knew Him, he began to formulate replies to the inhabitants of Ur Kasdim [where he lived] and debate with them, telling them that they were not following a proper path. He broke their idols and began to teach the people that it is fitting to serve only the G-d of the world. . . .

When he overcame them through the strength of his arguments, the king [Nimrod] desired to kill him. He was [saved by] a miracle and left for Charan. [There,] he began to call in a loud voice to all people and inform them that there is one G-d in the entire world and it is proper to serve Him.

This teaching should be taken for what it is: interpretation of thousand-year-old writings which were based on events happening thousands of years before being recorded. However, it is interesting to think about what Abraham must have thought in the many years before the law or any writings of the Bible.

However, there is one thought on why this story COULD be true: the Hebrews and the Jews were VERY good and maintaining oral history over the generations. It tended to stay extremely accurate ever over the spread of time and of miles. As we shall see in the book of Acts, that will be born out.



## The Call of Abram

**12** The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

<sup>2</sup>"I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you."

<sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. <sup>5</sup>He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

<sup>6</sup>Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup>The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

As we mentioned earlier, the Hebrews were excellent at oral histories. Proof of that is when Stephen is about to be stoned in the book of Acts and he recounts the story in his appeal:

**Acts 7:2-5** <sup>2</sup>To this he (Stephan) replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. <sup>3</sup>'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.'  
<sup>4</sup>"So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living.<sup>5</sup>He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child.

While this is still the same story, it is not told verbatim from the Old Testament. It was also told so that the Sanhedrin would have accepted it which meant it coincided with the oral histories. While it appears to contradict the order of Genesis, it, in fact, does not. Stephen says that God sent him to Canaan before his father died and he had gone to Harran. However, the Old Testament has Terah dying in chapter 11 and God comes to Abram in chapter 12. However, on closer reading, chapter 12 only says that the Lord "had said" to Abram, which means it could have happened any time in the past. This is repeated again in verse 7 and will happen again in Abram's life.

## Abram in Egypt

<sup>10</sup>Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. <sup>11</sup>As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. <sup>12</sup>When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. <sup>13</sup>Say you are my sister so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

<sup>14</sup>When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. <sup>15</sup>And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. <sup>16</sup>He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

<sup>17</sup>But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. <sup>18</sup>So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup>Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" <sup>20</sup>Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram

to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had. **13** So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him.

Three observations:

1. At this time it was common for the Pharaoh to take a woman into his harem but, in order to do that, her husband could not be alive.
2. It seems odd that Abram would be afraid of being killed when God had promised him that he would have to be alive to be a great nation. Perhaps he did not understand that that meant a nation of descendants.
3. This trip to Egypt would have been familiar to his grandson, Jacob, who, in a similar famine, sent his sons to Egypt for food.

## Closing Thought

God's promise had seven parts:

1. I will make you into a great nation.
2. I will bless you.
3. I will make your name great.
4. You will be a blessing.
5. I will bless those who bless you.
6. Whoever curses you I will curse.
7. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

All of these will happen during the lives of the patriarchs. Except the last one. That will not happen until the New Testament.

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## Questions

1. How are we descendants of Abraham? Do we have to be Jews to receive the same promises found in Genesis?
  2. How does God's promise to Abram make you feel? Comforted? Jealous? Confused? How would Abram have felt? How do you think he felt when nothing changed?
  3. Why did Abram build an altar (he actually built two in this chapter)? How do we build altars today? How should we?
  4. Why did Abram lie? Was it fear or survival or strategy or ...? Did he do wrong or right? Hint: the Bible is silent as to his guilt.
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