

Terah Became the Father of Abram, Nahor and Haran

11: 27-32

DIG: Why do you think Abram and Terah settled in Haran instead of Canaan? What kind of a turn does the book take at this point?

REFLECT: Is there a *delay* in your spiritual life? How so? Does there need to be a funeral in your life before you can move on to what the Lord wants you to do?

ADONAI puts the spotlight on one particular family. Terah kept the patriarchal records received from Shem, and he completed his family record when he wrote: **This is the account of Terah (11:27a)**. The next writer, presumably Isaac (25:19), continued the family tree with information he received from his father Abraham.

Terah was a descendant of Shem and the father of Abram (whose name will later be changed to Abraham in 17:5), Nahor and Haran. Abram was the youngest son, born sixty years after Haran, the eldest. But he is placed first in this list because of his importance (like Ephraim before Manasseh), since Abram was the LORD's chosen instrument. The analogy of ADONAI's choice of the younger of the sons of Adam, Isaac, Joseph, and Jesse suggests the probability that Abram was Terah's youngest son.²¹⁹ And Haran became the father of Lot (11:27b). Lot is mentioned here because of the role that he will play later in Genesis.

While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died prematurely in Ur of the Chaldeans, or the capital of Sumer, in the land of his birth (11:28). This is mentioned because it emphasizes the relationship that developed between Abram and Lot. When his father died, Lot came under the authority of his uncle. Therefore, Lot became very attached to his Uncle Abram, and Abram became his guardian.

Abram and his brother Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai (whose name will later be changed to Sarah). She was the daughter of Terah by another woman, so she was Abram's half sister (20:12). She was named after *Sharratu, the Queen wife of the moon god named sin*. And the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. She was his niece, the daughter of his brother Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah (11:29).

Sarai makes **her** first appearance near the end of one of those long genealogies we tend to skip over when reading through the Bible. We see that **her** name drops early clues that **Sarai** was lost.

With the words: **This is the account of Terah (11:27a)**, the focus of the biblical history narrows to a single family in **Ur of the Chaldeans**, in Mesopotamia, which is somewhere in southern Iraq. From there, the story fans out in three directions through **Terah's** sons, **Abram**, **Nahor** and **Haran**, and **their** descendants. This is a genealogy of hope because, through **Abraham**, **God** began **his** plan of redemption that would eventually culminate in the birth of the Messiah. **The sons** separated and went their separate ways only to be reunited generations later when **Abraham's** male descendants (Isaac, Jacob and Boaz) married female descendants of **his** brothers (Rebekah, Leah, Rachel and **Ruth**).

You would think **Terah** would have something positive to say about what appears to be **his** only daughter, his *princess*, or **Sarai**. Instead, **she** is only identified as **Abram's wife**, not **her** higher ranking position as **Terah's daughter**, implying that **her** only connection to the family was by marriage. This reflected the patriarchal culture, where daughters had less value than sons and a woman's identity was tied to her husband. **Sarah's** true place in the family wasn't revealed until some twenty-four years later when **her** husband got into a tight spot and spread the word that **she** was **his** half sister (which was a half lie because they were half siblings with different mothers).

Then in words that send a dagger right through her heart, **the Holy Spirit** inspired the human author Moses to write: **Now Sarai was barren; she had no children (11:30)**. This statement defined **Sarai**. It exposed an open wound and at the same time fundamentally eliminating **her** from the big things **the LORD** was doing in **her** family. As we learned from Mrs. Noah (**6:18b**), in the ancient world the value of a woman was measured merely by counting her sons. By this measurement, **Sarai** scored a big zero. According to the family genealogy **Sarai** had two strikes against her. **She** was a woman in a man's world, and **she was barren**. Everyone seemed to have a role in **ADONAI's** plan except **Sarai**. **She** was lost.

Sarai's barrenness is noted at this time, so it can be shown that **Abram**, unlike **Haran** and **Nahor (22:20-24)**, **had no children** in either **Ur** or Mesopotamia. The child of promise, **Isaac**, must be born in the Land of Promise.²²⁰

Probably after Haran's death and the marriage of Abram, 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. Nahor apparently stayed behind in Ur with Milcah. Later Nahor founded a city near Haran (22:20-24, 24:10 and 15, 27:43, 28:2, and 29:4). **This was the first crisis in the life of Abraham.** There can be no doubt that the LORD had called Abram to go to Canaan and leave Ur of the Chaldeans (12:1). **But he** obeyed only in part because **he settled in the city of Haran instead of going to the Promised Land (11:31).** Terah means *delay*, and his accompanying Abram resulted in a *delay* of at least five years in Haran, which means *parched*. This is the first of four failures by Abram. The time **he** spent in Haran was time wasted. ADONAI never appeared to **him** again until **he** had moved into the Promised Land of Palestine.

Islam teaches that the first Muslim on earth was not Muhammad but Abraham, who was totally submitted to Allah. They also teach that Islam, as a way of life, had also been revealed to Adam and Noah. They teach that Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldeans and could not be a Jew. First, because Ur of the Chaldeans was in Mesopotamia, which is now part of Iraq. Secondly, they say the name Jew came after the existence of Judah, the great-grandson of Abraham. For these reasons, they say that Abraham was more of an Arab than he was a Jew. In Surah 3:67 it says, "Abraham was neither a Jew or a Christian, but he was a true Muslim and he worshiped none other but Allah alone."

Haran was apparently a settlement that had been established by Terah's son Haran, or to which at least his name had become attached. The family was originally from there before they moved to Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur was in the lower reaches of the Euphrates, on the Persian Gulf. Originally, before the centuries of delta deposits that have since formed downstream, it was actually a great seaport. Haran was perhaps six hundred miles northwest, whereas Canaan was about six hundred miles due west.²²¹ Ur means *flame* and Chaldeans means *destruction*. Abram was called from the *flame of destruction* to the Land of Promise. But he *delayed* and moved to Haran where it was spiritually *parched*.

When the family got to Haran, Terah didn't want to leave it again and he chose to go no further. The family stayed there until his death. Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran (11:32). It is not unusual for Moses to phase out someone who is no longer relevant to the story before proceeding to the main character. This bit of history is given to let us know that we are now going to follow Abram, who is now the main character.

It is at this point that the book of Genesis, and for that matter the entire Bible, takes a turn. There is a great Grand Canyon that goes right down through the book of Genesis. The first eleven chapters are on one side, and the last thirty-nine chapters are on the other side.

The first eleven chapters cover over 2,000 years and are extremely condensed. They are the foundation on which the rest of the book is built. The last thirty-nine chapters cover only about 350 years. Now Moses puts the spotlight on the origin of one nation, the Jewish nation of Isra'el.²²²