

Lesson 3: The Patriarchs (Part II)

Departure

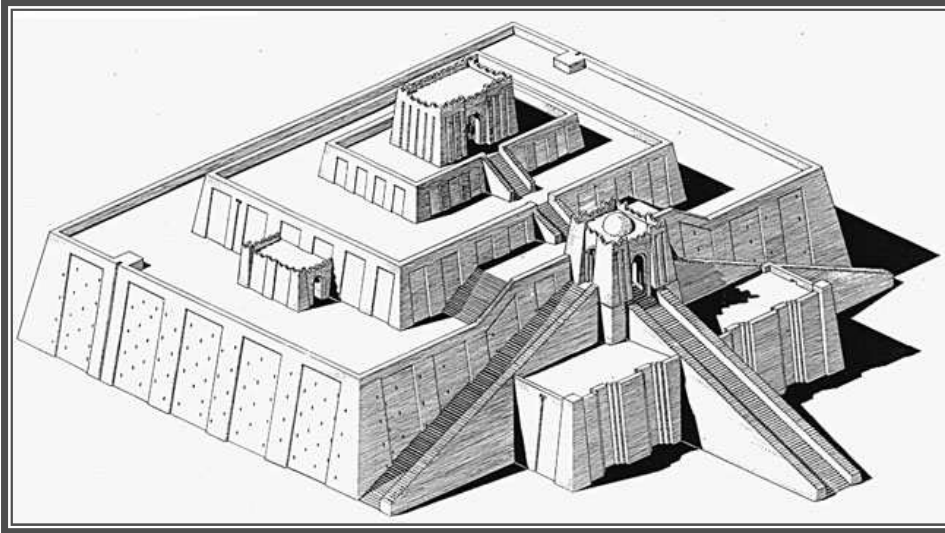


Fig. 1 Ziggurat at Ur

In [Genesis 11:31](#), we read that “Terah took his son Abram,” and departed “from Ur of the Chaldeans,” suggesting that Terah, the father, was the one who led in the departure rather than Abraham. However, Stephen ([Acts 7:2](#)) speaks of Abraham as the one to whom God appeared, not mentioning Terah. Likely the son persuaded the father to accompany him, and the father, then according to patriarchal propriety, became the official leader of the party.

[GE 11:31](#) Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.

Genesis 11:31 (NASB)

[AC 7:2](#) ...The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

[AC 7:3](#) and said to him, ‘LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.’

Acts 7:2-3 (NASB)

- Accompanying Terah and Abraham were Sarai, Abraham’s wife, and Lot, the son of Abraham’s brother, Haran.
- Haran died prior to this departure ([Gen. 11:28](#)).
- Abraham’s other brother, Nahor, did not join the party, though apparently he moved north to the city of Haran at some later time ([Gen. 24:10, 15](#)).

1. Stop at Haran

The party did not get to Canaan before stopping. They set up residence at the city of Haran along the Balikh River about 60 miles north of where the Balikh empties into the Euphrates. *Haran* means “road.”

- Haran was located on a main caravan road connecting Mesopotamian cities with Damascus and Egypt.

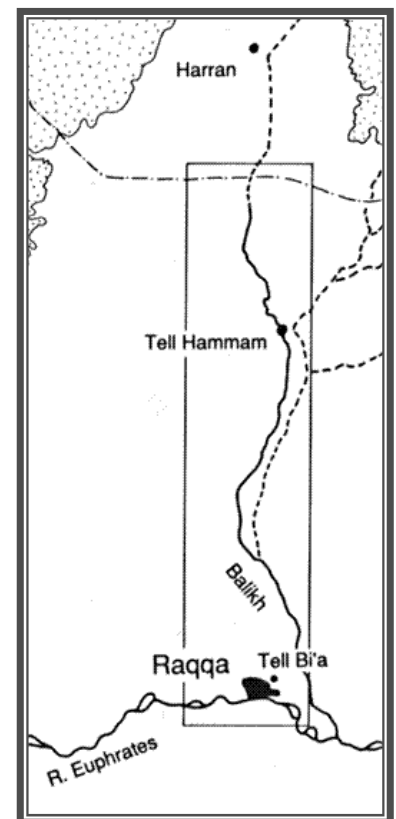


Fig. 2 Balikh Valley

- It was considered a strategic location and is often mentioned in letters and documents of that time.
- Excavations since 1951 indicate that it was occupied at least from the 3rd millennium. Similar to Ur it was a center of moon-god worship. Abraham stayed there until Terah died ([Acts 7:4](#)).
[AC 7:4](#) “Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.
[Acts 7:4 \(NASB\)](#)

2. Reason for stopping.

Since Abraham's destination was Canaan, and Haran was out of Abraham's way, why did he stop?

- One possible reason is that his father liked Haran and its moon-god (Nanna) worship similar to Ur.
 - This explanation assumes that Terah worshiped Nanna. This is supported by [Joshua 24:2](#), which states that Israel's “forefathers” (naming Terah specifically) “worshiped other gods.” Among these gods, it is asserted, would have been Nanna.
- Another possible reason is that Terah fell ill on the journey and could go no further than Haran.
 - At Haran, Terah could either regain his strength or else live out what might be only a few days.
 - In favor of this explanation is the fact that Terah was very old.
 - Terah did die in Haran at the age of 205 ([Gen. 11:32](#)), when Abraham was 75 ([Gen. 12:4](#)).

After Terah's death Abraham was ready to hear God's further call to move on to the land of His choice.

The New Land

[Genesis 12:1-25:18](#)

The destination God intended for Abraham was the land of Canaan, named after the son of Ham who settled in the region ([Gen. 10:15-18](#)). This area is also identified by first century historian Philo of Byblos.

- Canaan includes the Syria-Palestine region, defined in [Genesis 10:19](#) as extending from Sidon south to Gaza, east to Sodom and Gomorrah, and north to Lasha (location unknown).
- In the Amarna Letters (fourteenth century B.C.), “Canaan” is referred to as equivalent to Egypt's Syro- Palestinian territories at the time, which would include land well north of Sidon.
 - An Egyptian peasant woman found the Amarna Letters in 1887 at Tell el-Amarna, Akhenaton's capital. The total collection now numbers 378 of which about 300 were written by Canaanite scribes in Palestine, Phoenicia, and southern Syria.
- The land to which Abraham came was southern Canaan, later called Palestine.



Fig. 3 Canaan

1. Canaan

The 3rd millennium was drawing to a close when Abraham arrived in Canaan.

- Excavation reveals that cities like Megiddo, Bethshan, Shechem, Ai, Jericho, and Lachish, later to be important in biblical events, already existed and were well built, with strong fortifications.
- However, many of these cities were destroyed and abandoned, beginning about 2200 B.C.

It is generally agreed that the period from about 2200 to 2000 B.C. is one of transition from an urban culture to the characteristic “Canaanite” culture.

- The decline of urban life during this period was apparently accompanied by a shift of the population to from an agrarian economy to one based on pastoral nomadism.
- Abraham arrived in Canaan c. 2091 B.C., in the middle of the deurbanized period.
- Archaeology has, to date, found an embarrassing absence of settlement at some of the major patriarchal sites at this time. If, however, Abraham is a pastoral nomad grazing his flock within the sphere of influence of the few remaining cities, or the scattered unwallled villages that characterized this period in the south, then many elements of the Genesis narrative are easily explained.

As in so many other areas of Old Testament research, it is a serious mistake to link the factuality of Scripture with prevailing scholarly opinion.

- What can be asserted is that the Canaan into which Abraham entered was a Canaan in transition.
- The urban society of the first three quarters of the third millennium had disintegrated, leaving a largely agrarian, decentralized land in which political power, where it existed, was never great and resided in the hands of local “kings” whose domains were geographically limited city states.
- Abraham, the herdsman, would have enjoyed relative freedom of movement with no major political entities in the areas where he established himself. This emerging picture of Canaan in the time of Abraham fits well with the narratives in Genesis.

2. Egypt

During the 3rd millennium, Egypt was growing in influence.

- From 2600 to 2200 B.C., the Third to the Sixth Dynasties ruled in the Old Kingdom Period.
- Egyptian culture was established, shown especially by the giant pyramids.
 - Sozer, founder of the Third Dynasty, built the Step Pyramid, the first pyramid.
 - Khafre, Khefren, and Menkure of the Fourth Dynasty built the three largest pyramids.
 - Other pyramids built during the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties were smaller.
 - Found in these pyramids is what is called The Pyramid Texts, incantations for assuring the Pharaoh safe passage into the afterlife.

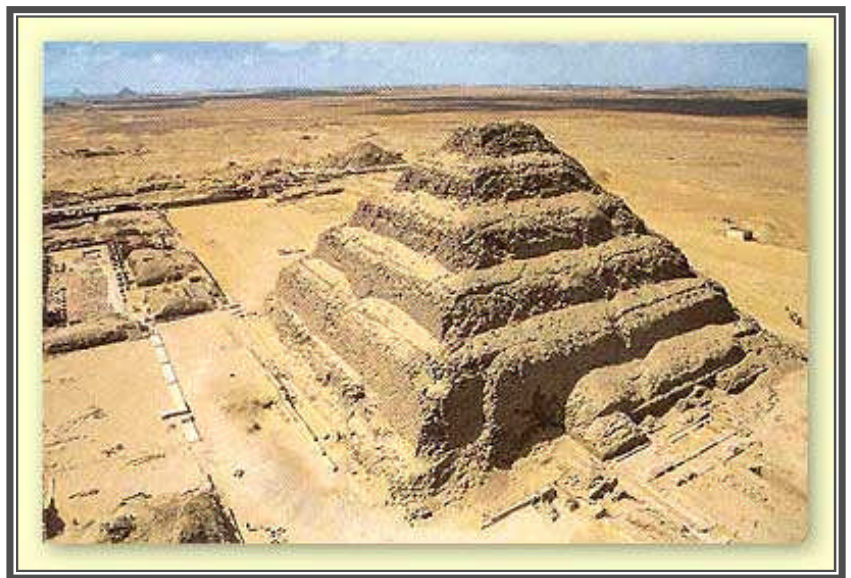


Fig. 4 The Step Pyramid

Like Canaan, Egypt too fell upon difficult days between 2200 and 2000 B.C., in what is called the First Intermediate Period.

- Rival Pharaohs claimed the throne and numerous cities began to act independent of any outside authority.
- Economic hardship and famine became widespread, and this resulted in a gloom of hopelessness and depression among the people.
- From this condition arose an appealing literature, however, among which are found *The Eloquent Peasant*, *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*, and *The Instruction for King Merikare*.

Shechem, Bethel, Egypt

(Genesis 12:4-13:18)

1. Arrival at Shechem (Genesis 12:4-9)

Abraham's journey into Canaan took him to Shechem.

- Shechem lay between the twin peaks of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim about 35 miles north of Jerusalem. Toward the east stretches a small plain in which Joshua later heard Abraham's posterity respond to blessings and curses of the law (Josh. 8:30-35), and here also Jesus met a woman of Samaria at Jacob's well and led her to faith in Himself (John 4).
- Here God told Abraham he had arrived at the intended destination ("To your offspring I will give this land," Gen. 12:7). Abraham thus learned that he was where God had planned for him to come. Reassured at the good news, he built an altar.

2. Down to Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20)

When a famine developed in Canaan, Abraham journeyed southwest to Egypt.

- Once in Egypt, Abraham told a half-truth concerning his wife Sarai, a deception probably devised when he had first left Ur (Gen. 20:13).
 - He presented her to the Egyptians as his sister (she was, in fact, his half-sister, Gen. 20:12), for he feared that the Pharaoh, seeing the attractiveness of Sarai, might so desire her for himself that, in order to get her, she might have taken the life of any husband.
 - Pharaoh, one of the rival rulers of the First Intermediate Period, did want her and did take her to the palace, but God intervened; he sent plagues on Pharaoh's house. This served to bring Abraham's deception to the ruler's attention, and he then dismissed Abraham from the land, though he gave him parting gifts.

3. Separation from Lot (Genesis 13:1-18)

When Abraham returned to Canaan (Gen. 13:1-18) he and Lot owned too much livestock between them to find adequate pasture.



Fig. 5 Ebal and Gerizim

- They dealt with the situation in a traditional way. They divided their herds and agreed on separate grazing areas.
- Abraham gave his nephew first choice as to which part of the land he would choose. Lot took the valley region of the Jordan.



Fig. 6 Sodom and Gomorrah

city of Sodom on the eastern edge of the Dead Sea near the Lisan, in an Eblaite geographical text. It is still too early, unfortunately, to place credence in readings of the Ebla texts. It may eventually be proven that Shea is right, but for the time being his suggestion is more tantalizing than conclusive.

While it is not possible to change the reading of the biblical text to accommodate archaeological findings, it may well be that the archaeological data, when better understood, will support this identification. Until then, it seems best to not follow the current trend but to admit that there is no certainty regarding the location of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Rescue of Lot

1. Abraham's courageous rescue (Genesis 14:1-16)

A confederacy of four kings from Mesopotamia, far to the east, led by Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, attacked Sodom, Gomorrah, and other cities of the area, taking many people, including Lot and his family, captive.

Scholars have long debated the location of the notorious "Cities of the Plain."

- It is proposed that the sites of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim were located along four of the fresh-water streams that flow into the Dead Sea at its southeast edge and had, at some time in the past, been submerged in the rising waters of the sea.
- Zoar, the fifth city (also called Bela in the biblical text) has been identified with modern Zoar, also located on the bank of one of the many *wadis* that flows down from the Plains of Moab, almost a mile above the Dead Sea.
- Bab edh-Dhra was a heavily populated area, as were its four neighboring cities, Numeira (suggested by some as the site of Gomorrah), Safi, Feifah, and Khanazir. Bab edh-Dhra was apparently the largest and most important of these cities, but all share similar occupation histories, town plans, location, and (in three of the five cities) destruction by burning. The excavators, while not claiming a positive identification, have acknowledged possible connections with the biblical Cities of the Plain.
- In addition to the archaeological evidence that has been advanced for a southwestern location, the documents from Ebla have been used to validate this location.
- Of possibly greater significance is an article by William H. Shea that claims to have identified the

- Abraham, 318 of his servants and men from Mamre, Aner, and Eschol, gave pursuit. This coalition overtook and defeated the four-king confederacy at Dan, set free those taken captive, and recovered a large amount of booty.

2. Extrabiblical evidence

Biblical critiques challenge the historical value of this event stating that kings as far away as Mesopotamia did not make military expeditions this far from home. However, archaeological findings do in fact support this practice. The biblical facts are now found to fit the conditions of Abraham's time. For example:

- Both Sargon and his grandson, Naramsin, conquered all the way to the Mediterranean and held substantial territory along its coast three centuries before Abraham.
- One Akkadian text from the time, concerning a condition for renting a wagon, is particularly significant for indicating frequency of travel to the west. The condition was that the renter not drive the wagon "*unto the land of Kittim*," meaning the Mediterranean coastland.
- Further, the names of the kings involved are all compatible with known names from that period.

Some have pointed out that the mention of Dan as the place where Abraham caught the retreating kings must be anachronistic, and so, in this sense, an exception.

- It is true that the name *Dan* was not given to the city formerly called "*Laish*" until the migration of the Danites in the days of the Judges ([Judg. 18:29](#)), but the reference may be to another Dan.
- In [2 Samuel 24:6](#), a Dan-jaan in the Gilead area is mentioned, and Gilead is more likely to have provided the path these eastern kings would have taken as they headed home than Coele-Syria (where the better known Dan was, located).
- It might also be argued that a later scribe, in the interest of clarity, substituted Dan for the city's older, less familiar, name.

3. Kings of Sodom and Salem ([Genesis 14:17-24](#))

When Abraham returned from his victory over these armies, two kings of his own region met him.

- One was the king of Sodom, who urged Abraham to retain the booty recovered and return only the people to their king and city.
- The other was Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem).
 - His name means "king of righteousness." Melchizedek brought bread and wine to Abraham's weary troops, and Abraham in turn gave him, as "priest of God Most High," a tenth of the booty.
 - By this gesture Abraham recognized Melchizedek to be a priest of the true God, which is significant in illustrating that there did exist in the world a few beside God's chosen line who continued to worship Him.
 - Abraham's act also demonstrated that the principle of tithing was recognized this early as a



FIG. 7 Melchizedek and Abraham

proper basis for giving to God.

Destruction of Sodom

(Genesis 18: 1-19:38)

1. Abraham intercedes for Lot (Genesis 18)

The occasion concerned God's destruction of Sodom and surrounding cities.

- We know the time when Sodom was destroyed, namely when Abraham was 99 (Gen. 18:10; 21:5).
- Three "men" came to Abraham as he sat at the entrance to his tent in Mamre. As the account later indicates, two were angels (Gen. 18:22; 19:1), and one was the "Angel of God."
- The Angel of God, indicated here directly as "God" (Gen. 18:1, 13, 17, 20), warned Abraham about the plan for destruction, which prompted the patriarch to intercede for the city (Gen. 18:23-33). He urged that if there were even only a few righteous in the city, the city might be spared.
- Abraham was assured that if there were only ten his request would be granted.

2. Lot delivered from Sodom (Genesis 19)

While Abraham made this intercession, the two angels, who earlier had departed, were making their way toward Sodom and were eventually received by Lot into his house.

- After a night in which men of the city gave shocking witness to the grave wickedness of Sodom, Lot, his wife, and his two daughters were persuaded to leave the city.
- There were not ten righteous people there, as Abraham had hoped, and so the city had to be destroyed.
- But God showed favor toward Abraham's entreaty in at least having these four led to safety. The city was consumed as the four moved away, and Lot's wife, in a gesture of longing and regret, turned to look back, for which God brought death by changing her into a "pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:26).



Fig. 8 Pillar of Salt

Later, Lot's two daughters, apparently under the false impression that they were the last people alive on earth, tricked their father into having incestuous relations, which issued in the births of Moab and Ben-ammi.

- These became fathers of the Moabites and Ammonites, enemies of Israel in later years

3. Destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19:24-25, 27-28)

The destruction of Sodom was effected by a rain of “burning sulfur.”

- In examining the meaning of this expression, scholars have ruled out volcanic action because the geology of the region does not lend itself to this type of activity.
- Many believe that it refers to an earthquake resulting in an enormous explosion. Several factors favor this view. The idea of brimstone and fire (KJV) suggests incendiary materials raining upon the city as the result of an explosion.
- Another descriptive word used is “overthrew” ([Gen. 19:29](#)), and this fits the thought of an earthquake.
- That Abraham saw smoke rising in the direction of the city indicates that there was fire.
- Inflammable asphalt has long been known in the area and records from ancient writers speak of strong sulphuric odors, which suggest that quantities of sulphur were there in past time. Further, the whole Jordan Valley constitutes an enormous fault in the earth’s surface, given to earthquake conditions.

It is possible that God miraculously timed an earthquake at this precise moment, which could have released great quantities of gas, mixed sulphur with various salts found in abundance, and measurably increased the flow of asphalt seepage. Lightning could have ignited all, the entire country being consumed as indicated. The Bible is clear that God does sometimes use natural means to accomplish His purpose. He may have done so in this instance. Whatever the method employed, God did bring the destruction.

Waiting the Promised Child



Fig. 9 Sarah Laughs

God, told him concerning Isaac ([Gen. 17:15-19](#); [18:10-15](#)).

- So many years had passed that both Abraham ([Gen. 17:17](#)) and Sarah ([Gen. 18:12-15](#)) laughed in their hearts.
- Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 ([Genesis 21:1-21](#)).

It was at this time that God also directed Abraham that every male of his household should be circumcised as a “sign of the covenant.”

([Genesis 16:1-18:15](#))

God’s promise to Abraham that he would have a large posterity came the first time just before he entered Palestine at the age of 75.

- After waiting ten years ([Gen. 16:3](#)), Sarah suggested that Abraham take Hagar as a secondary wife to have a child ([Gen. 16:1-4](#)). Abraham’s actions, obviously not God’s will, must be understood and judged in terms of customs of the day.
- Hagar bore a son, Ishmael.
- After the birth, Sarah became bitter and wanted Abraham to drive Hagar with her son from the household.

Abraham thought he had a long wait before Ishmael was born, he had 14 more years to wait for Isaac.

- When Abraham was 99 ([Gen. 17:1](#)),

- Circumcision was not unique to Israel. Arabians, Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, and Egyptians all practiced it. An Egyptian tomb has a picture of a circumcision operation.

Abimelech and the Philistines

1. Second half-truth regarding Sarah ([Genesis 20](#))

Between the time of the announcement of Isaac's birth and the birth itself, Abraham was again guilty of telling a half-truth regarding his wife; this time to Abimelech, King of Gerar, a city west of Beersheba.

- About 25 years had elapsed since the similar occasion in Egypt.
- Abimelech took Sarah to his palace, as Pharaoh had earlier, but God once more intervened to protect her.
- God revealed to Abimelech her true relationship to Abraham through a dream.

2. Early Philistines

The land where Abimelech lived is called "the land of the Philistines" ([Gen. 21:32, 34](#)). Also, later when Isaac had further dealings in the area, the people themselves are called Philistines ([Gen. 26:1,8, 14, 15, 18](#)). Were these people indeed the ancestors of those of the same name following Israel's conquest?

- Liberal scholars commonly answer no, stating that the Bible mentions these as anachronistic.
- However, evidence does exist that they are the same people.
- It is true that the major number of Philistines came to Palestine as a member group of the Sea Peoples that were repulsed by Rameses III of Egypt c. 1190 B.C. (the Sea Peoples consisted of at least five different ethnic groups who moved from the Aegean area, particularly Crete). This does not eliminate the possibility that some ancestors came many years before. Archaeological evidence shows they did.
 - Caphtorian type pottery, like that which Philistines left later in Palestine, since their earlier home had been the region of Caphtor, has been found both in Philistia proper and as far inland as Bethshan and Jericho, dating at least to 1500 B.C.
 - Furthermore, evidence that there was communication in patriarchal times between Canaan and Caphtor has been found through the discovery of Middle Minoan II pottery at both Hazor and Ugarit and by an 18th century Mari document that mentions the king of Hazor sending gifts to Kaptara (Caphtor).

Near Sacrifice of Isaac

(Genesis 22:1-14)

Abraham's most severe test came when God called him to sacrifice Isaac.

- Abraham must have wondered how a nation could be formed through him if Isaac were sacrificed?
- Still Abraham was able to obey.

God had designated the place for the sacrifice as Mount Moriah.

- The term "Moriah" occurs only twice in the Old Testament: here and in [2 Chronicles 3:1](#) as "on Mount Moriah," where the reference is to the mountain where Solomon built the temple.
- Not until Isaac had been bound and Abraham had raised the knife to perform the actual sacrifice did God intervene.
 - He told Abraham that he should substitute for Isaac a ram caught in a nearby thicket.
 - God let Abraham go this far, to prove his sincerity of faith.



Fig. 10 Near Sacrifice of Isaac

Death and Burial of Sarah



Fig. 11 Cave of Machpelah

(Genesis 23)

Sarah died at the age of 127. Isaac was 37 at the time; Abraham still had 38 years to live.

- Sarah had been married to Abraham while they were yet in Ur of the Chaldees ([Gen. 11:29-31](#)).
- She was Abraham's half-sister, the daughter of his father, but not of his mother ([Gen. 20:12](#)).

A Hittite named Ephron sold Abraham the cave of Machpelah at Hebron as a burial place for Sarah. The business transaction is described in [Gen. 23:3-16](#).

- When Abraham asked to buy only the cave of Machpelah, Ephron urged him to take the whole field in which it was located. If he was to be rid of a part of his property, he apparently wanted to be rid of it all

and so avoid his military obligation.

- Abraham paid four hundred shekels for it, weighing the money to Ephron. The transaction was effected before the “children of Heth” (KJV) and so made public and binding. This was the only real estate that Abraham purchased of the total land God had promised to give him for his posterity.

A Bride for Isaac

(Genesis 24:1-25:11)

1. Rebekah is found (Genesis 24)

Three years after Sarah’s death, when Isaac was forty years old (Gen. 25:20), Abraham sought a bride for his son. He did not want Isaac to marry a Canaanite daughter. Abraham thought of his relatives living in “the town of Nahor.”

- So decided, Abraham sent his senior servant, probably Eliezer (Gen. 15:2), on the long journey to find the one whom Abraham believed God Himself would select (Gen. 24:7).
- Persons indicated as living there are those of Nahor’s family, particularly his son, Bethuel, and two children of Bethuel, Rebekah and Laban. Nahor had either accompanied Terah and Abraham in going there or else made the journey from Ur himself later.
- The servant went and arrived at the “town of Nahor” (likely Haran), so called in the account because Nahor, Abraham’s brother, now lived there.
 - It could also mean a city named Nahor because a Mari text speaks of a city of this name near Haran.
- Under God’s blessing and guidance, the servant met Rebekah, Nahor’s granddaughter, at a well on the edge of town as she came to draw water. The servant went with the young lady into the city, met her family (Gen. 24:29-50)-including Bethuel (her, father) and Laban (her brother)- told of his mission, and received consent for Rebekah to accompany him to become Isaac’s wife.

2. Abraham’s marriage to Keturah (Genesis 25:1-11)

Abraham still lived thirty-five years after Isaac’s marriage. He married Keturah, of whom nothing is known before this time.

- Six sons were born to them: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah, all of whom became ancestors of various Arabian peoples.
- Nothing is known of Abraham’s life during this period. He died at the advanced age of 175 (Gen. 25:7), and Isaac and Ishmael buried him next to Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

Isaac

(Genesis 25:9-26:35)

One tends to think of Isaac as either the son of Abraham or the father of Jacob. Isaac was the least conspicuous of the patriarchs. He was not given to daring action or unusual exploits. But he still constituted an important link in the ancestral chain of Israel and is honored throughout Scripture in parallel with Abraham and Jacob.

1. Jacob and Esau born (Genesis 25:21-34)

The first matter recorded is the birth of Isaac's twin sons, Jacob and Esau, born when Isaac was 60 ([Gen. 25:26](#)), 20 years after his marriage to Rebekah.

- Even before birth, the twins struggled within the womb of Rebekah. She inquired as to the significance and God told her that this was a sign that the two, followed in turn by their lineage, would struggle with each other in years to come, with the elder being made to serve the younger. Esau was born first, with Jacob grasping his heel.
- Jacob was fair, a man of the house, beloved of his mother. Esau was rugged, a man of the outdoors, favored by his father.
- In keeping with God's prediction, they did clash ([Gen. 25:27-34](#)). Having been born first, Esau enjoyed the inheritance rights of the eldest son. Jacob wanted these rights and persuaded Esau to exchange them for a portion of food Jacob was preparing.
 - Nuzi tablets give instances of similar negotiations in inheritance rights between brothers. In one case a brother sells a grove, which was his inheritance, to another brother for three sheep.
 - Esau, having been in the field, was hungry and foolishly made the trade urged by Jacob.

2. Relations With Philistines ([Genesis 26:1-33](#))

A famine in the land prompted Isaac to move. They moved near the city of Gerar where Philistines lived, an area where Abraham had similarly sojourned ([Gen. 20:1-18](#)).

- Gerar is thought to be one of two places, Tell Jemmeh eight miles south of Gaza, or Tell Abu Hureira eleven miles southeast of Gaza.
- Isaac followed in the sin which his father had twice committed saying that Rebekah was his sister.
- It was sometime later that Abimelech, probably a descendant of the Abimelech visited by Abraham, the Gerar ruler, learned of the deception, warned his people against familiarity with Rebekah, and permitted Isaac to remain in his land.

3. The stolen blessing ([Genesis 27:1-46](#))

At the age of 137, Isaac took steps to bestow the parental blessing on his eldest son. (Isaac would live to be 180 years old ([Gen. 35:28](#)), so he still had 43 years to live, but he could not know this. His age here is figured on the basis that Jacob was now 77 and he was born when Isaac was 60.)

- In spite of God's clear indication at the birth of the two boys that the elder should serve the younger ([Gen. 25:23](#)), Isaac determined to perform the rite in favor of Esau.
- However, Rebekah wanted it for Jacob. She persuaded Jacob to disguise himself as his brother in order to procure it.
- Isaac bestowed the blessing on Jacob, calling for the recipient to receive abundant material provisions and rule over his household.
- Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence when Esau came expecting to receive the blessing. When both father and son realized the deception that had been perpetrated, each experienced remorse and anger. But what had been done, even though in this



Fig. 12 Jacob Deceives Isaac

manner, was binding, and all Isaac could do for Esau was grant a secondary blessing, promising all that was left, the and lands out of reach of the winter rains and subservience to his younger brother.

- Esau resolved to kill Jacob as soon as their father died. Accordingly, at Rebekah's urging, Jacob made ready to flee north to the home country of Rebekah in Haran.

Jacob

(Genesis 28:1-36:43)

Jacob, like Abraham, was a man of action, but unlike him, Jacob was a man whose recorded actions demonstrate a consistent deceitfulness; his schemes against his brother, deceiving his father, and he would later take advantage of his uncle Laban. In later life, however, God changed him, and he became truly devoted.

1. The flight to Haran (Genesis 28:1-29:13)

Before Jacob departed for Rebekah's homeland, Isaac summoned him. Though Jacob had wronged his father, Isaac loved him and had his best interest in mind.

- Isaac bestowed further blessing on him and then charged him not to take a wife from the Canaanites, but rather from his mother's relations in Haran.
- It should be noted that Jacob at this time was no longer young. A comparison of Scriptures reveals that he was 77 years of age.
 - When Jacob was 130 at his descent to Egypt (Gen. 47:9), Joseph was 39 (41:46, 47, 54; 45:11), which means that Jacob was 90 when Joseph was born. Joseph was born 14 years after Jacob's arrival in Haran (31:41; 30:25), which, subtracted from 91, leaves 77.)

Jacob departed and had proceeded as far as Bethel when, resting for the night, he had a dream of a ladder reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending upon it (Gen. 28:10-22).

- In the morning he poured oil on the stone that he used for a pillow and called the place Bethel (house of God).

Jacob met Rachel, his bride-to-be, as she came to water her flock of sheep at a well near Haran.

- Jacob had arrived somewhat sooner and found shepherds awaiting removal of the well's covering stone. He now proceeded to move the stone himself so that he could water Rachel's flock.
- Jacob told her who he was; she in turn called her father, Laban, who came and greeted Jacob; and then all went to the uncle's house. Here Jacob was to spend the next 20 years.

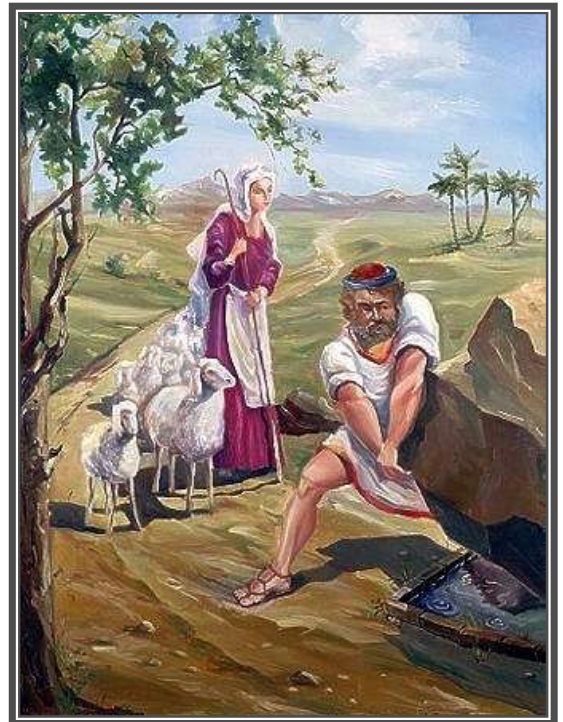


Fig. 13 Jacob and Rachel

2. Twenty years in Haran (Genesis 29:14-31:20)

a. Jacob's two wives (Gen. 29:14-31). Jacob loved Rachel and agreed with Laban to serve him seven years for her hand in marriage. When the seven years were completed, Laban showed his deceitfulness by giving Leah, his eldest daughter, to Jacob in place of Rachel.

- Jacob did not have to wait seven years before Rachel was given to him, however. He waited only one week, while wedding festivities for Leah were completed (Gen. 29:27-28). He was then permitted to marry Rachel, but he was expected to work seven additional years in payment for her, which he did.

b. Jacob's children (Gen. 29:32-30:24). It was at this point that the promise to Abraham of more than a century and a half earlier began to be fulfilled in greater degree. Jacob was now given a large family (Gen. 29:31-30:24).

- Through Leah God gave Jacob his first and most children. Leah bore in succession Reuben (*see, a son*), Simeon (*hearing*), Levi (*joining*), and Judah (*praise*).
- Rachel, who continued to be barren, now urged Jacob to raise up children unto her through her handmaid, Bilhah. Jacob did so, and Bilhah gave birth to Dan (*judge*) and Naphtali (*wrestling*).
- Leah then countered by giving her handmaid, Zilpah, to Jacob; and to her were born Gad (*troop*) and Asher (*gladness*).
- God again blessed Leah with children, and she bore Issachar (*he brings wages*) and Zebulun (*dwelling*). She also gave birth to a daughter, Dinah (*judgment*).
- Finally, God permitted Rachel to conceive, and she bore Joseph (*adding*). This gave Jacob eleven sons and one daughter. The twelfth son, Benjamin (*son of my right hand*), was born to Rachel, but not until the family had moved back to Canaan (Gen. 35:16-20).

c. The last six years (Gen. 30:25-31:21). Following Joseph's birth, and with the completion of the fourteen years of service owed, Jacob asked permission of Laban to leave the land; but Laban persuaded him to remain longer (Gen. 30:25-34).

- Jacob set as his new wage all Laban's sheep and goats that were other than solid white or solid black (or dark brown), including those living and those to be born while he worked. Laban agreed, since he knew that normally few animals were born spotted.
- Jacob sought to better his own interests through selective breeding measures (Gen. 30:40) and devices for prenatal influence.
- God prospered Jacob, and the spotted animals became unusually numerous. Laban, probably pressured by his sons, countered by changing the agreement, as Jacob later says, ten times (Gen. 31:7, 41), but still Jacob prospered.

Recognizing that his prosperity at his father-in-laws expense did not endear him to the Haran relation, Jacob left after six years, for a total of 20, (Gen. 31:1-20).

- Jacob waited until a day when Laban was away for sheep shearing. Then Jacob took his two wives, twelve children, servants, and abundant livestock, and departed for home.
- Unknown to Jacob, Rachel took the family idols also, which were significant for symbolizing inheritance rights.
- As he left, Jacob recognized that God had been good to him. Jacob had come to Haran as one person alone and now, after twenty years, was departing as wealthy man with a large family (Gen. 32:10).

3. Return to Canaan (Genesis 31:21-33:20)

a. Laban's pursuit (Gen. 31:22-55). Laban was angry when he discovered Jacob's secret departure. He immediately pursued Jacob's slower moving company, but was unable to catch the group until it had reached Mount Gilead, at least 275 miles from Haran.

- God warned Laban in a dream not to speak harshly to Jacob, and his own daughter tricked him so that

he was unable to locate the idols ([Gen. 31:32-35](#)). The matter ended with an agreement that neither he nor Jacob would impose on the other again.

b. Jacob's wrestling match ([Gen. 32:24-32](#)). Jacob feared an inevitable meeting with Esau; but before that meeting could occur, he experienced another confrontation of much greater significance. This came in the form of a wrestling match with the Angel of God.

- Jacob was alone on the north bank of the Jabbok River. He had sent his family and possessions across the stream the prior evening and had remained by himself apparently for a time of private devotion.
- During the night, the Angel drew near and began to wrestle with him. Jacob was now 97 years old but evidently still in good physical condition. He realized as the match progressed that his opponent was more than human, and accordingly he asked for a blessing.
- The Angel gave this assurance. As tangible evidence, he changed Jacob's name to Israel and touched his thigh, apparently dislocating the hip. From now on, Jacob would limp, but it would be a constant reminder of both God's gracious favor and his own responsibility for proper life conduct. From this time on, Jacob is not seen scheming or deceiving.



Fig. 14 Jacob Wrestles Angel of God

c. Jacob's meeting with Esau ([Gen. 32:1-23](#); [33:1-17](#)). On the next day, Jacob received clear evidence that God indeed was blessing him. He met Esau, and no bitterness was shown ([Gen. 33: 1-17](#)). Jacob had dreaded this meeting, especially after having learned that Esau, accompanied by four hundred men, was coming to meet him ([Gen. 32:3-6](#)). Jacob had sent three droves of animals as presents in an attempt to appease his brother's anticipated anger, but these presents proved to be unnecessary.

- Somehow Esau's heart had mellowed through the intervening 20 years. The brothers embraced each other warmly, exchanged pleasantries, and parted-with all previous barriers removed. Jacob's heart was now much lighter for moving on. Esau returned to his chosen territory of Mount Seir, south of the Dead Sea, and Jacob continued across the Jordan to Shechem.
- Jacob here purchased a tract of land from Hamor ([Gen. 33:18-20](#)). Today one can view a site known to tradition as Jacob's well just outside old Shechem, supposedly located on the tract that Jacob bought. Here Jesus met the woman of Samaria years later ([John 4](#)).

4. Back in Canaan ([Genesis 34-36](#))

Arriving at Shechem, Jacob was unable to remain long as a result of the slaughter of Shechemites by two of his sons, Simeon and Levi ([Gen. 34:1-31](#)).

- A young man, Shechem, son of Hamor, leader in the city of Shechem, took Dinah, violated her, and requested permission of Jacob to marry her.

- Jacob's sons devised a plan for revenge. All Shechemites would have to be circumcised if Shechem's request were granted. Hamor and Shechem agreed, and all Shechemites were circumcised. Then, while they were incapacitated and unable to defend themselves, they were killed by Simeon and Levi. Dinah was brought home. Jacob, fearing reprisal from other inhabitants of the area, quickly moved further south.

Jacob now came again to Bethel, where he had experienced his memorable dream ([Gen. 35:1-10](#)). Once more God appeared to him, this time renewing the promises given to both Abraham and Isaac concerning a large posterity and the land of Canaan as an inheritance ([Gen. 35:11-13](#)).

- He traveled farther south. When he drew near Bethlehem, Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin ([Gen. 35:16-20](#)), and Jacob set a monument on the grave of this one whom he dearly loved.
 - A grave for her is still marked today by a small Moslem mosque on the northern outskirts of Bethlehem, but the actual site is probably farther north ([see 1 Sam. 10:2](#)).
- He then moved on to Hebron where he found his father yet living. Jacob now seems to have lived with, or at least near, his father for the remainder of Isaac's life. When Isaac died, Esau came to join Jacob for his burial ([Gen. 35:27-29](#)).

At this point in the record, Esau's generations are listed, closing with the words, "[This was Esau the father of the Edomites](#)" ([Gen. 36:1-43](#)). In later years Edom proved to be a perennial enemy of Israel.

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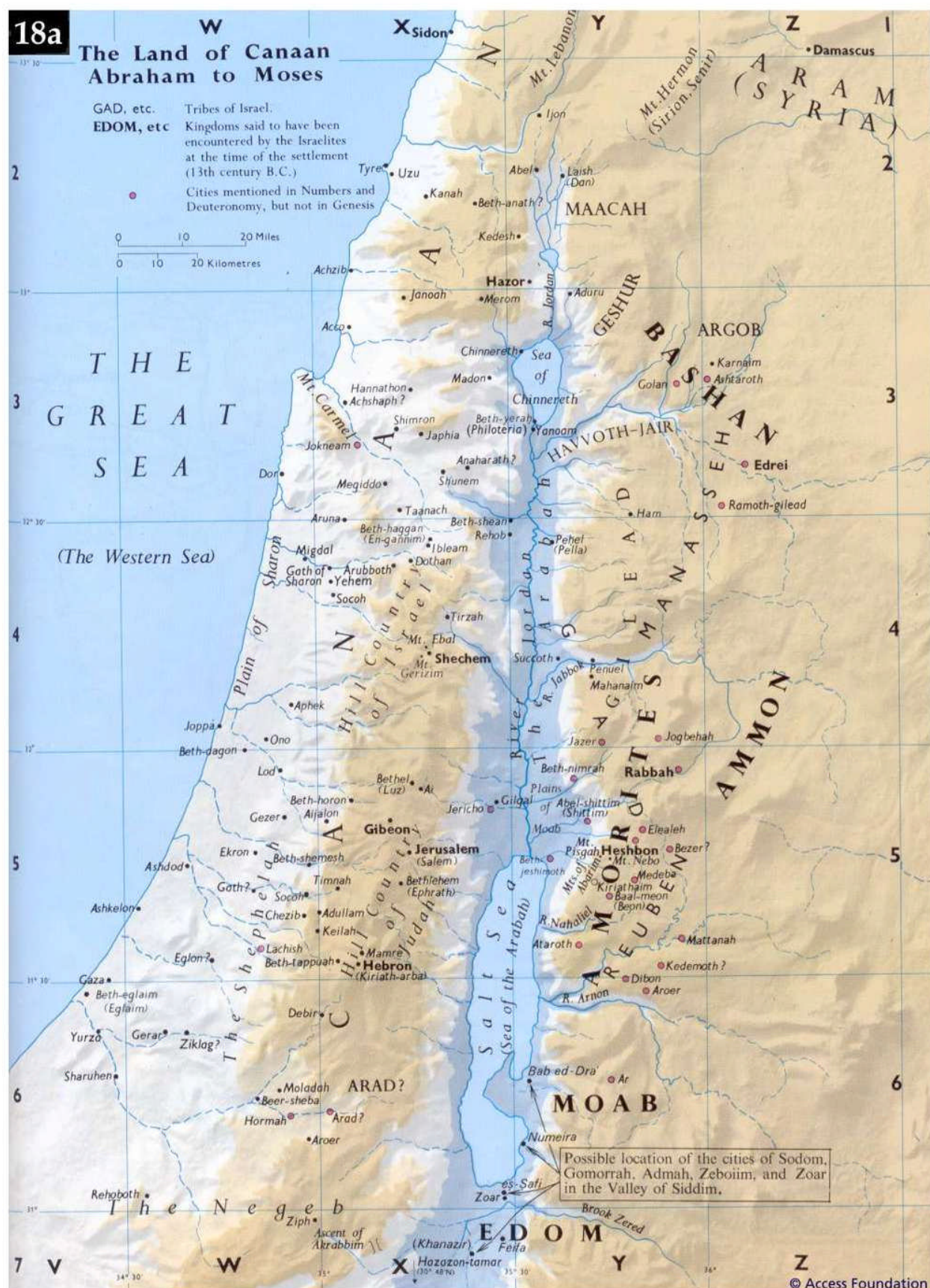
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18a

The Land of Canaan Abraham to Moses

GAD, etc. Tribes of Israel.
EDOM, etc. Kingdoms said to have been encountered by the Israelites at the time of the settlement (13th century B.C.)
Cities mentioned in Numbers and Deuteronomy, but not in Genesis

0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometres



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