

Genesis 11:27-32

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These verses tell the story of Abram's father Terah and the family leaving Ur for Canaan only to go as far as Haran where Terah dies.

God's redemptive plan now focuses on telling the story of the family and descendants of one individual. From here on, God's redemptive dealings with humanity recorded in the Bible will largely be related to the covenant God will make with Abraham ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). The redemption of the entire world is demonstrated, as is God's great care for each individual. The story of the human race consists of the stories of each person. We get a "zoom in" of a particular family, from which we are invited to draw lessons. [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) says that all these stories were written down for our benefit, so we don't have to make the same mistakes. [Matthew 10:6](#) says God numbers the very hairs on our head. So, while we zoom in on the story of Abraham and family, their story is our story.

Terah's three sons are named, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Abram's name will later be changed to Abraham ([Genesis 17:5](#)). The name Abram means "exalted father" or "the father is exalted." "Father" also can be taken as an allusion to God, as in, "my father [God] is exalted." Abraham, on the other hand, means "father of many nations." God renaming Abram made clear that God was confirming His commitment to Abraham and ensuring his future. Haran was the father of three children, a son named Lot, and two daughters, Milcah and Iscah.

Lot was the son of Haran and grandson of Terah. After Lot's father Haran dies prematurely, he aligns himself with his uncle, Abram, and accompanies him on his migrations. Lot is characterized by the questionable choices he makes which are in contrast to Abram's persistent faith. Abram's other brother Nahor, married *the daughter of Haran*, which would mean he married his niece.

The call of Abram occurred at *Ur of the Chaldeans*, ([Genesis 15:7](#); [Nehemiah 9:7](#)) which was in Mesopotamia ([Acts 7:2-4](#)) Centuries later, the Chaldean ruler Nabopolassar (625–605 B.C.), father of the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar, will launch the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire in the seventh through sixth centuries. The Babylonians were *Chaldeans*. Much of the territory occupied by the Babylonian empire is now in modern day Iraq.

The city of Ur is likely the modern-day city of *Tell el-Muqayyar* located by the Euphrates river in southern Iraq. It is 186 miles southeast of modern Bagdad. The King of Ur during its third dynasty was a man named Ur-Nammu (c. 2113-2095 B.C.). At some point, Terah and the family had moved and settled in Ur. This was considered their ancestral home or native country ([Genesis 12:1](#)). It was the birthplace of Abram.

Abram's wife's name, Sarai means "princess" in Hebrew. Later, God changed Sarai's name to Sarah, which means "noble woman," assigning her the role as the mother of "nations" ([Genesis 17:5,15-16](#)). Sarah becomes the matriarch of all Israel ([Isaiah 51:2](#)). There is no mention of her parents here, although she was Abram's half-sister having the same father (Terah) but a different mother ([Genesis 20:12](#)). Later such a marriage would be prohibited ([Leviticus 18:9, 20:17; Deuteronomy 27:22](#)).

Milcah was Haran's daughter and therefore both Abram and Nahor's niece. She married her uncle Nahor and eventually produced eight sons ([Genesis 11:29, 22:20-23](#)). The name *Iscah* comes from the root meaning "to watch or to see." Therefore, her name means "one who looks forth." Not much else is known about Iscah.

The first three women of the Abraham story suffered infertility: Sarai, Rebekah, and Rachel. ([Genesis 25:21, 29:31](#)). The Israelite nation's origin from barren women begins with God, who miraculously gives children to barren women ([1 Samuel 1:2, 2:5; Psalm 113:9; Isaiah 54:1](#)). This might foreshadow our new birth in Jesus, which is something done by God's intervention for those who believe, making a new creation of those who otherwise would have no hope of a new birth.

After the death of Abram's brother Haran, *they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan*. Abram's father Terah sets out from Ur for Canaan, with his grandson Lot, Abram and Sarai, *they went as far as Haran and settled there*. We are told that Terah left Ur *in order to enter the land of Canaan*. However, we are told in [Acts 7:3](#) that God appeared to Abraham while he was still in Ur and commanded Abram *Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you*. Abram did not fully obey this command. He left his country but not his relatives. He allowed his father Terah and his nephew Lot, among others, to follow along.

Further, it seems that Abram deferred to his father Terah to lead the expedition, as Genesis tells us *Terah took Abram and they went out together from Ur*. We will soon see that Abram's partial obedience becomes a stumbling block. But God still rewards his partial obedience greatly.

This should be of great encouragement to any follower of Jesus. We are all partial obeyers at best. The story of Abraham demonstrates that we can still be rewarded greatly for obeying some. God is very merciful.

The journey to Haran was 560 miles northwest, following the River Euphrates (near the current Syrian-Turkish border). They settle in Haran, an important City and the meeting place of caravan routes between Mesopotamia in the west and the Mediterranean Sea. The phrase "*settled there [at Haran]*" indicates a continued residency on Terah's part. The name Haran means "crossroads or highway." The location of ancient Haran is in modern Turkey and now called Eski-harran which means "old Haran." Haran is mentioned later in the list of places conquered by Sennacherib, king of Assyria ([2 Kings 19:12](#)).

Terah dies in Haran at the age of *two hundred and five years* setting the stage for the story of Abraham which begins in chapter 12. Abram's father Terah was 145 years of age when Abram left Haran for Canaan. Therefore, Terah lived in Haran for another sixty years after Abraham's departure.

Biblical Text:

²⁷ Now these are *the records of* the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. ²⁸ Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ²⁹ Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰ Sarai was barren; she had no child. 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. ³² The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.