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## **Genesis 11**

(2019)

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## Genesis 11.

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### Topics.

- The people had one language and settled in Shinar to build a city and tower.
- The LORD came down to Babel and confused the language of all the earth.
- The generations of Shem and the significance of Peleg in the genealogy.
- Terah lived seventy years and fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran.
- Terah took Abram, lot, Sarai from Ur to Canaan, but settled in Haran.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

**The previous chapter:** in chapter ten the focus was upon the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth; Nimrod being the first mighty man on earth; the Tower of Babel and what happened at Babel.

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### GENESIS 11:1-4

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#### People had One Language, settled in Shinar and Built a Tower.

- **Genesis 11:1-4:** Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. <sup>2</sup>And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup>And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. <sup>4</sup>Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

The previous chapters completed the table of nations and now in this chapter we are taken back to a momentous and world changing event that shows the reason for the table of nations and for the future history of the human race.

**The whole earth had one language:** (v1) meaning all the inhabitants of the earth (i.e., all the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth). Though we are not told what language they spoke it is reasonable to suppose that the language Adam spoke was used by the following generations up until God confounded the languages. Many Hebrew, Christian and secular writers agree that this language was most likely the Hebrew language, but it matters not what the language was the fact remains that there was no difficulty in men, women and children, kings, princes and peasants and the wise and unwise understanding one another no matter where they were.

**The land of Shinar:** (v2) Shinar is the Hebrew name for Babylonia it is on the plain of Babylonia which was for many centuries considered the most fertile region on the earth. The name Shinar occurs eight times in the Bible in which it refers to Babylonia. This location of Shinar is evident since the Book of Genesis says the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was:

- Babel, Erech (Uruk), Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. (Gen. 10:10)

Here Shinar is described as encompassing both Babel (Babylon) (in northern Babylonia) and Erech (Uruk) (in southern Babylonia) (modern Iraq). Added to this the following chapter shows after the flood, the sons

of Shem, Ham and Japheth stayed first in the highlands of Armenia and then migrated to the land of Shinar which encompassed a plain that became the site of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-12). Shinar is also mentioned in (Josh. 7:21) (Isaiah 11:11) (Dan. 1:2) and (Zech. 5:11) as a general synonym for Babylonia.

**They said, "Come let us build ourselves a city and a tower,"** (v4) the descendants of Noah being united by the strong bond of a common language had not separated despite God's command to multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1) they were unwilling to separate. God's purpose was that mankind would form many nations and people in all lands throughout the earth, but rather than separate the majority of the people united together determined to please themselves and build a city and a tower so they could remain together.

**A tower whose top may reach unto heaven:** (v4) the expression reach up to heaven is a common figurative expression for great height (Deut. 1:28) (Deut. 9:1). The people were not trying to build a structure that would actually reach the heavens it is simply describe in this way because of its massive height, relative to the height of structures built in those ancient times. It was most likely a structure with a temple at its top, built to worship the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, the moon and stars etc.) perhaps much like a modern day sky scraper that is built to rise far above every other building within the city or country it is built in, so that it becomes a symbol of that city or of the country to all the world.

The difference between the modern day sky scraper and the tower of Babel is that Nimrod's tower was built to be a place that people of all nations would come to for the purpose of worshipping the host of heaven whereas no skyscraper is built for such purposes.

**NOTE:** building a city and a tower is not a sin, but to build it to stop the emigration of people at that time in history when the great majority of the earth was barren was foolish and an act of rebellion against God's will.

**The whole earth:** though all the inhabitants of the earth at this time were of one language it does not necessarily mean that they all held to the same doctrines, ideas or all believed the same things or had the same religion, but regardless of how they may have differed in these things the words, "Let us," show that they were all in one mind to build themselves a city and the tower of Babel.

**Lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth:** (v4) these words clearly show that these people did not want to separate and had determined to do as they pleased rather than obey the LORD'S command to go out and replenish all the earth.

**Let us make a name for ourselves:** (v4) man said, "let us let us build ourselves a city," and "let us make a name for ourselves," (Gen. 11:4), God responds to man's pride, self-will and rebellion, by saying, "let us go down and confuse their language." (Gen. 11:7). God could have wiped them from the face of the earth, but chose instead to divide mankind by confounding their language in this way He compelled mankind to obey His command to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." (Gen. 9:1). When mankind is united in one purpose there is no doubt, they are capable of accomplishing great things, but should mankind be united as one it would not be a magnificent kingdom that honours God that they would build, but one that honours and appeals to the pride of man.

Different cultures and languages serve as a barrier that prevents mankind from attaining to such power since it is certain if all nations of the world were united in one language and culture and all were able to unite together in their efforts with one purpose they would again be as Nimrod was and say to the people of the earth, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4). The kingdom they would build would not glorify God, but themselves.

**The Day of Pentecost:** on the Day of Pentecost, (Acts Chapter 2), God lifted this language barrier so that people from all nations were able to hear the Gospel preached in their own tongue (language) and understand what was being spoken so that all could respond accordingly and be united as one nation and one people in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the confounding of languages divided the children of men, and scattered them abroad, so the gift of understanding languages contributed greatly to the gathering together of the children of God who took the Good News of the Gospel to nations, cities, villages and towns uniting men and women with one mind in Christ who received the message of the Gospel and glorified God. When the faithful of all nations and languages enter the next life and dwell directly in God's presence, they will again share a common language and a common purpose, but not to celebrate their own glory, but to honour God and to glorify their Saviour and celebrate with their King the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The wisdom of God:** the LORD compelled the people to fulfil His will to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1) not by violence or war, but by changing their language. Those who cannot understand each another cannot help or enjoy one another and in this way God by peaceful means compels them to separate and fill the earth. It is also certain that the people at this time recognized that the hand of the LORD had gone out against them.

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## GENESIS 11:5-9

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### **The LORD came to Babel and Confused the Language of all Earth.**

- **Genesis 11:5-9:** And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." <sup>8</sup>So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

**The LORD came down:** (v5) this expression carries the following ideas:

- The power of God came down, not by local and physical descent or visibly, for He is omnipresent (everywhere) and invisible, but by the manifestation of his presence and the effects of his power in that place.
- God saw this in heaven; but the author expresses after the manner of men in that God knew it as clearly as men know what they see with their own eyes when they come upon a place of magnificence.
- The effects and displays of God's power and His miraculous intervention that was manifested showed Him to be present.

**Come, let us go down and there confuse their language** (v5) to mankind's twice repeated statement "Let us," God responds "we will go down, and make their speech unintelligible to one another." Though there is no mention of a miracle associated with mankind's languages being changed it is clear that there was an extraordinary change in the natural law concerning language that existed from the beginning.

**Let us:** (v5) some have mistakenly taken the LORD'S words, "Let us go down," (v5) to mean that Jesus was with God before time began, certainly Jesus was in the eternal mind of God and was foreknown by God before time began, meaning he was the central focus of God's eternal plan for mankind's salvation that He purposed in His eternal mind before the foundations of the world were laid. It can be likened to an architect long before a building is constructed he plans the entire structure in his mind,

he sees every detail of it in vivid clarity long before the builders begin to construct it and long before the workers even set foot on the site where it is to be built. Likewise, an excited expectant mother plans in her mind her baby's room long before the baby is born, she not only sees in her mind the design and colours of that room, but also the lighting, furniture and clothing long before the child is born. In the same manner God planned and purposed in his timeless mind that Christ would be the central focus of His sovereign plan for mankind's eternal salvation long before Jesus came into the world. Most who believe that Jesus was with God before time began also believe that Jesus is God, since this teaching has such a strong hold on much of traditional Christianity the following will encourage and comfort faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who maybe in some doubt and unsure of what to believe concerning the Father and the Son. The Bible very clearly shows that even if Jesus was God no one has to know this to be saved to eternal life since there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states:

- We must believe that Jesus is God to be saved.

Nor is there one verse from Genesis to Revelations that says:

- Whoever believes that Jesus is God will be saved.

In total contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures throughout the pages of the New Testament that very clearly proclaim:

- We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved.

And that say:

- Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved.

Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God to be saved to eternal life Jesus, the apostles and Paul would have told us at least once in all their teaching concerning salvation, but all we hear from Paul, the apostles and Jesus himself is them saying that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life. Jesus himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). For further information see the title:

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity) in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

This raises the question, if Jesus was not with God who does His words, "Let us go down," (v5) apply to? Consider the following, the Bible tells us that the angels of God are:

- God has a company of destroying angels. (Psalm 78:49).
- The angels are mighty ones who do God's word and obey His voice. (Psalm 103:20).
- God will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from one end of heaven to the other. (Matt. 24:31).
- Jesus said, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53).
- Angels are ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:14).
- Around the throne and the living creatures and the elders John heard the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. (Revelation 5:11).

Which means the expression: the LORD said, "Come, let us go down and confuse their language, includes His angels since they were most likely involved in some supernatural way in the miracle of altering human language.

**The children of men:** (v5) is an often used as expression that makes an emphatic distinction between the secular world and the faithful of God (i.e., the sons of God). However, in this context it could apply to the whole body of the people, but more likely applies to the great majority, distinguished by their rebellious character against God as distinct from the sons of God, a title that applies to the faithful.

**This is only the beginning of what they will do:** (v6) this is an amazing statement the LORD is saying that should mankind be of one language nothing that they plan and purpose to do would be impossible for them to achieve. This firstly applies to the building of the city and the tower of Babel, but since God says it is only the beginning of what mankind could do it can apply to future generations especially when we look and what man has achieved on earth today and this amongst foreign languages, wars, violence and all types of confusion amongst governments and nations. Imagine what could be achieved if all nations spoke one language and were all one people with one mind with a set purpose and freely shared their knowledge, but should mankind be united as one it would not be a magnificent kingdom that honours God that they would build, but one that honours and appeals to the pride of man.

**The builders were scattered:** (v8) upon the face of the whole earth, families departed in companies according to the languages they spoke, the lands and regions they settled in are listed in Genesis chapter ten.

**Its name was called Babel:** (v9) Babel comes from the Hebrew word (*balal*) it literally means confusion. It includes Babylonia and the Babylonian empire. It was from Babel that the LORD dispersed all people over the face of all the earth by giving them different languages. (Genesis 11:5-9).

**Nimrod and the tower of Babel:** though the Bible never actually states that Nimrod was the leader of those who built the Tower of Babel in the land of Shinar, Hebrew and Christian tradition and many writings of historians agree that Nimrod stood as the head of the builders of Babel and was the primary force that influenced the people of the land to build Babel. This idea is especially supported by the fact the Bible states:

- Nimrod was the first on earth to be a mighty man. <sup>9</sup>He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." <sup>10</sup>The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. (Gen. 10:8-10)

Here we are told that Nimrod's kingdom began in the land of Shinar and that he was the first to be a mighty hunter before the LORD. This expression does not mean that Nimrod was a good and great man before the LORD, but rather signifies that he was mighty in opposition to the LORD. Based upon these facts it is reasonable to suppose that Nimrod was the head ruler leading the people in the building of the tower of Babel and the city. Today the entire world is affected by what happened at Babel, much time, study and trouble is taken to learn the language of a foreign country and the diversity of language is a powerful factor in keeping nations apart and in hindering mankind from building another tower of Babel.

God's divine purpose in changing the languages was to counteract man's ambitious and ever-recurring dream of universal sovereignty over the entire world. Throughout history this same spirit to create a new world order that controls the world with one powerful man at its head, is still very much alive today and has at certain periods of time throughout history been manifested in certain kings and rulers of nations and countries. The children of men never did and never will come together again in peace until that glorious day, when the Lord Jesus Christ sits upon the throne of his glory and all nations are gathered before him.

## Generations of Shem and Significance of Peleg in the Genealogy.

- **Genesis 11:10-25:** These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. <sup>11</sup>And Shem lived after he fathered Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>12</sup>When Arpachshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah. <sup>13</sup>And Arpachshad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber. <sup>15</sup>And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>16</sup>When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg. <sup>17</sup>And Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>18</sup>When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu. <sup>19</sup>And Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Serug. <sup>21</sup>And Reu lived after he fathered Serug 207 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>22</sup>When Serug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. <sup>23</sup>And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>24</sup>When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah. <sup>25</sup>And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

### The generations of Shem:

**Shem:** was a son of Noah, his name comes from the Hebrew word (*shem*) it carries the idea of someone notable in individuality and having a character of honour and a position of authority and a name of fame and renown as a mark or memorial. Shem consists of ten generations the names in this genealogy are all Hebrew with the exception of Arphaxad.

**Salah:** comes from the Hebrew word (*Shelach*) it literally means a missile of attack, (i.e. spear or sword) and figuratively a shoot of growth, (i.e. a branch or plant etc.). It carries the idea of sending out men in colonies to occupy new lands.

**Eber:** (Heber) is the name of two patriarchs and four Israelites the name comes from the Hebrew word (*`ebe*) it literally means a region across or beyond (i.e., on the opposite side) especially of the Jordan River (usually meaning the east). This passage marks the migration of the headquarters of the race, and the crossing of some great obstacle in its way, most probably the river Tigris. This event would begin the long struggle between the Semitic and Hamitic races in Mesopotamia. Eber lived 464 years (Gen. 11:14-17) the longest of all those born after the flood which perhaps was his reward for his strict adherence to the ways of God.

**Peleg:** a son of Shem his name comes from the Hebrew word (*palag*) it can carry the idea of an earthquake or a small channel of water (as in irrigation) or a river or stream as a division. Genesis chapter ten says, in the days of Peleg the earth was divided, (Gen. 10:25) showing that the division between mankind speaking one language and being one family prior to the tower of Babel and being divided into many languages and many families and nations began when Peleg was born or sometime during his lifetime.

**Reu:** comes from the Hebrew word (*Re`uw*) it literally means an associate (i.e., closer to or depart further away) from a brother, companion, fellow, friend, husband, lover or neighbour.

**Serug:** comes from the Hebrew word (*Serug*) it literally means to interwine and wrap together (i.e., as a wreath).

**Nahor:** is the name of the grandfather of Abraham and of one of Abraham's brothers. The name comes from the Hebrew word (*Nachowr*), it literally means to snort as a snorting of the nostrils and carries the idea of panting during an earnest struggle. Nahor's two other brothers were Aram and Haran (Gen. 11:26-32). He married Milcah his niece the daughter of his brother Haran. Nahor Aram and Haran were all born and raised in the city of Ur, but when God directed Abram to leave their native land and go to the land of Canaan Terah his father gathered his family and they journeyed west to their destination. They followed the Euphrates River, with their herds, to the Paddan Aram region. This was about

halfway along the Fertile Crescent between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean in what is now southeastern Turkey. In this region, Nahor and his family settled except for his brother Haran, who had died sometime ago back in Ur. After Terah's death in Haran Nahor continued his own journey and settled in the region of Aram Naharaim where he founded the town, Nahor, (Gen. 24:10) it was here he had eight sons to Milcah (Gen. 22:19-23).

**Terah:** was the father of Abraham. He had three sons, Haran, Nahor and Abram (probably his youngest son) and one daughter Sarah. His name comes from the Hebrew word (Terach) though the meaning of his name is unclear the most common suggestion is a wild goat with the idea of a wander which would signify the commencement of his and his families separation from Ur and journey to Canaan caused by his new found faith in the God of Abraham and the religious differences of those of Ur. The following verse shows that Terah and his family served other gods while living in Ur.

- Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. (Josh. 24:2).

Terah's son Haran had died in Ur prior to Terah migrating with Abraham and Lot (his grandson) and their families from Ur with the intention of going to Canaan, but when they reached Haran Terah rested and spent the remainder of his days here and died at the age of two hundred and five years (Gen. 11:24-32) (Joshua 24:2). Ponder for a moment the amazing part Terah (a Chaldean shepherd) descendants have played in the history of mankind and the world.

**Abram:** this is the original name of Abraham. His name comes from the Hebrew word (*'Abiyram*) it literally means high father and the father of height. This is a prophetic name symbolic of the high purpose for which the father of the faithful was chosen. In the book of Hebrews, it is written: By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance and he went out, not knowing where he was going. (Heb. 11:8). It is interesting to notice the following three things:

1. It is almost as though the Holy Spirit speeds through the names to quickly tell the story of Abraham since nothing is recorded except their names and ages.
2. There is a gradual decrease in the years of their lives. Shem lived to six hundred years, which was short of the age of the earlier patriarchs prior to the flood; the next three lived to less than five hundred, the next three did not live to three hundred and after them none reached to two hundred except Terah. Sometime after this Moses considered seventy or eighty to be the normal and maximum age of mankind.
3. Men's lives began to be quickly shortened as the earth began to be replenished and flourish showing that the decrease in mankind's age should be attributed to the purposes of God rather than to any decay of nature.
4. Eber lived 464 years (Gen. 11:14-17) the longest of all those born after the flood which perhaps was his reward for his adherence to the ways of God.

In the book of Genesis God said to the serpent:

- I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:14-15)

This chapter contains the bloodline of Adam through Abram and through his son Shem (not of all of them, but only of those by which the true line in which the Messiah sprung up). It shows that the seed of the woman that is prophetically said to bruise the serpent's head should be expected to come from the line of Shem.

**In Peleg's days the earth was divided:** (Gen. 10:25). Peleg is a striking character because this statement is associated with his name, which raises the following two questions: -

1. What is the meaning of the earth being divided?
2. What time does, "his days," refer to?

**The earth being divided:** some suggest that this expression refers to the continents of the earth being divided at this time. But should this be so it would have to have occurred within a very small period of time and this type of catastrophic and world changing event would result in such enormous geological and cataclysmic violence that it would be like another Noahic Flood all over again. It is far more likely that all continental separation occurred during the Great Flood and that the expression, "The earth being divided," refers to the inhabitants of the earth being divided when God changed their languages and the people of the earth separated from each other into their various nations and tribes according to the language they spoke at the time God miraculously altered their language at Babel as recorded in (Gen. 11). This is also supported by the fact that it is in this context that the statement is made and it is hard to find any other event in Peleg's life in which the expression, "the earth was divided," could apply to more than the scattering of mankind into their separate nations because of their altered languages. This singular event explains the nature of that momentous change by which mankind passed from being one family speaking the same language into many nations of different languages and lands. The following verse shows that even though God had to compel the people to separate by changing their languages they departed (knowingly or unknowingly) according to His will to the countries and places He had allotted to them.

- God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. (Acts 17:26).

**What time does, "his days," refer to?** Some commentators believe that the actual time refers to the time of Peleg's birth when he was named, while others believe it applies to sometime during his life. Both scenarios have valid points so we will look at the two of them.

1. **At Peleg's birth:** after the flood (Gen. 11:10-16) the descendants of Noah settled and enjoyed the produce of the undivided land. But according to God's instruction the inhabitants of the earth were divided by the different languages. It is believed by many that Eber gave his son the name Peleg (meaning divided) when he was born in memory of this momentous event. Some feel that there would not be enough families on earth to form tribes and nations because Peleg was born in the one hundred and first year after the flood. However, we are told that Peleg was born four generations after Noah (Gen. 10:25). If we suppose there were only a few families on the earth and each averaged an increase of ten children over the four generations it would result in hundreds of families at the time of Peleg's birth. We also know that Heber is the fifty-fifth name, and all the others are descended from him which means that there could be no more than fifty-five individual nations different from one another at the scattering and dividing of the people. Added to this, if three families (Shem Ham and Japheth) were sufficient to propagate the race after the flood, nine or ten families would be more than enough to establish tribes and nations. Based upon these facts it seems reasonable to accept that at the time God altered the languages at Babel Peleg was born and his parents gave him a name that would forever stand as a memorial or reminder of this world changing event.
2. **During Peleg's life:** others believe that Eber Peleg's father gave him his name by the Spirit of prophecy, foreseeing that this great event would come sometime in the future since it is not unusual for biblical children to be given prophetic names. The primary support for this scenario is that it allows for a longer space of time for the population

to increase before being divided into nations and tribes. Supporters of this scenario feel that the one hundred and one years from the flood to Peleg's birth and even after it does not seem long enough for the population to have grown large enough to allow a separation into nations. Whether languages were changed at Peleg's birth or sometime afterward during his lifetime cannot be stated with absolute confidence and certainty however what we do know for certain is that the earth was divided firstly by language into nations and tribes. It should also be noted, whether Peleg was given his name at his birth or later in life does not affect the chronological order of things.

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## GENESIS 11:26-30

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### **Terah lived Seventy Years and Fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran.**

- **Genesis 11:26-30:** When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. <sup>27</sup>Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. <sup>28</sup>Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. <sup>29</sup>And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. <sup>30</sup>Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

**Terah had lived 70 years:** (v26) Abram is first named because of God's call on his life and his standing as the father of faith. Shem is put before Ham and Japheth because it is from his line the Messiah came. Likewise, Moses is put before Aaron for the call of God was on him to lead the people out of Egypt. Nahor married Haran's daughter which means he was most likely the older brother with Nahor being the second and Abram the youngest.

**Terah had lived seventy years and fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran:** (v26), though Abram, is named first he was not the oldest, but rather Haran. Abram was not born until the one hundred and thirtieth year of his father's life, we know this because Terah died when he was two hundred and five years old (Gen. 11:32) and Abram was only seventy five years old when he went out of Haran to Canaan (Gen. 12:4) and this was not until his father died in Haran, so if seventy five years are taken from Terah's two hundred and five years one hundred and thirty remain and it is in this year and not before that Abram must have been born. The following verse shows that Terah served other gods:

- Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. (Josh. 24:2).

**Sarai was barren; she had no child:** (v30) from this statement it is evident that Abram had been married for some time before he left Ur to journey to the land of Canaan. Incredibly, some say that rather than Sarai being barren Abram was impotent (the very reverse of what the Scriptures state) and is easily proved false by the birth of Ishmael Abram's son and his sons by Keturah.

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## GENESIS 11:31-32

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### **Terah took Abram, Lot, Sarai from Ur and Settled in Haran.**

- **Genesis 11:31-32:** 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 forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. <sup>32</sup>The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

**NOTICE:** though God's call came to Abram the honour is given to Terah, because he was the father and head of the family.

**Haran:** (called Charran in Acts 7:4 KJV) which is Carrhae in North-west Mesopotamia about twenty geographical miles south-east of Edessa. The name must not be confused with Haran the father of Lot.

**Ur** was the central seat of the worship of the moon-god named Sin. Though the inhabitants served other gods (Josh. 24:2) and Terah had not attained to the purity of Abraham's faith it is very clear that he repented and turned to the true God when Abram shared his revelations and God's call to leave Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia. The following verses show that God's call came to Abram in Ur.

- He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." (Gen. 15:7).
- You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. (Neh. 9:7).
- Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran." (Acts 7:2).

**Terah took Abram:** Terah being the head of the family takes the lead in leaving with Abram, Lot and the other companions of their journey. Following are three most likely reasons Terah was motivated to leave the land of his birth:

- 1 The fact that Haran his oldest son had died which would have lessened his attachment to the land.
- 2 It is certain Abram and Sarai were especially dear to him, and he did not wish to lose them.
- 3 When Abram shared the revelation he had received from God with his father, Terah's mind would have not only been opened to the knowledge of the true God, but also opened to the truth that the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., sun, moon and stars etc.), and other gods that the inhabitants of Ur practiced was a false religion.

As Abram went throughout the land of Canaan the report of him and his God was not only revered (at least in outward form), but also instilled a certain amount of fear in many of the surrounding nations. This would have also been an ongoing incentive to the newly enlightened family of Terah to accompany Abram in obedience to wherever God called him. The boundaries of Canaan are given in the table of nations (Gen. 10:19).

**Terah died in Haran:** Abram may have stopped at Haran to allow his ailing and frail father to rest and build up strength to be fit to continue travelling to the land of promise, but whatever the reason Abram and his family never left his father's side until he had died and was taken by God to a better country. The order of events as mentioned in this chapter is confirmed by Stephen in the following verses:

- The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,<sup>3</sup> and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.'<sup>4</sup> Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. (Acts 7:2-4).

**They came to Haran:** (called Charran in Acts 7:4 KJV) from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran is about 600 miles. The average walking speed is around 3 to 5km per hour, if we suppose they travelled at 3km per hour (allowing for the older folk) which is 1km every 20minutes. Then 600 multiplied by 20 = 12000 minutes divided by 60 = 200 hours divided by 24 = about 8 to 9 days.

Now allowing extra time to rest, eat and sleep it would take somewhere around 16 days to travel from Ur to Haran. Note the name Haran must not be confused with Haran the father of Lot.

**Summary:** they journey from the east (v1) settle in a plain in the land of Shina (v2) and made bricks which they burned and used with slime (v3) to build a city and tower so that they would not be scattered (v4). God sees it (v5) and disapproves of their goals (v6) and therefore brings their efforts to an end by confounding their language and scattering them (v7-8). For this reason, the place was called Babel (v9). Future generations of Shem to Abram are spoken of (v10-26). Abram takes Sarai to wife (v29) she is barren (v30). Terah, Abram and those with him leave Ur and rest in Haran (v31) where his father dies (v32),

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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