

The Call of Abraham the Father of the Faithful

Genesis 11:10 These [are] the generations of Shem: Shem [was] an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad (ar-FAX-ad) two years after the flood:

“Generations of Shem ...”, this is the 5th section, outline, division or book Hebrew Toledoth (to-led-AH) “of Shem Genesis 11:10-26

Genesis 11:11 And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

Only one branch of the “sons and daughters” Shem begat called the Shemitic line that the Messiah is to come through has been given, that of Arphaxad, for the purpose of introducing Abram or Abraham.

Genesis 11:24-26 And Nahor (NA-hor) lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah (TE-rah): 25 And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters. 26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Genesis 11:27 Now these [are] the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran (HER-an); and Haran begat Lot.

“Generations of Terah ...”, This is the 6th section, outline, division or book Hebrew The Toledoth (to-led-AH) of Terah beginning in V:27

Verse 27 provides the additional information that Terah had two other sons besides Abraham, Nahor (named after his uncle) and Haran, the father of Lot. This was probably given to explain the association of Lot with Abraham in following chapters of Genesis. He apparently became, in fact, a kind of adopted son of Abraham, following the death of Haran in Ur of the Chaldees.

28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

Abram was born in Ur which means “fire or kindling to make fire” in Hebrew of the Chaldees which means “destruction” in Hebrew and called to go to the promise land but he stopped short at Haran which means “fruitless” and he wasted 5 years there in fruitlessness.

29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife [was] Sarai (SAR-i); and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah (MIL-ca), the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah (ISS-ca).

Verses 28-29 relates the marriages of Nahor who married the daughter of Haran, and that of Abraham who married Sarah (Sarai), the daughter of Terah evidently by a second marriage, making her thus his half-sister or sister.

This helps explain other later events mentioned in Genesis.

30 But Sarai was barren; she [had] no child.

The barrenness of Sarah will be changed by God's Divine plan.

Genesis 11:31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there! What happened? We don't know.

Why did they not go where they started to go?

In any case, Abram was unable to leave Haran until Terah died.

God first called Abram while he was living in the pagan city of Ur of the Chaldees. Stephen the 1st Christian martyr said cf:

Acts 7:2-4 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, 3 And said unto him, Get

thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

Although the Genesis does not give the specific nature and wording of the first but Acts does and it was exactly like the second call which came in Haran. It should not be thought strange that the call came twice. "The word of the Lord came the second time unto Jonah" (Jonah 3:1), and, of course, it was exactly the same word that came the first time. We are therefore fully justified in the conclusion that God did not vary the call, and there was no need to change or amend it, and that the account of it in the record of the second call in Haran likewise describes the first call. Such a conclusion also serves to explain why the second call became necessary. In the first, God had commanded Abram to leave his native land, his kindred, and his father's house, etc., but, for some reason, Terah was not left in Ur, but accompanied Abram. This would appear to be the reason why, instead of going to Canaan as was their stated intention upon their departure from Ur, they went to Haran and settled there!

Terah was an idolater cf:

Joshua 24: 2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (Figure of speech for Ur & the Tigris & Euphrates rivers) in old time, [even] Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

Unger gives the following on the cultural and religious makeup of Ur and Haran:

"When Abraham migrated from Ur, the city was idolatrous, given over to the worship of the moon deity Nannar (NAN-er) and his consort Nin-

Gal (NIN-gal); a sacred area with a ziggurat (ZIG-er-at) were devoted to this idolatry ... Nannar (NAN-er) was also worshipped at Haran to which Terah migrated."

Genesis 11:32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

Here begins the history of the O.T. Israel, the Chosen People, through whom God would bring in the Messiah to make an atonement for sin and to establish the spiritual kingdom of heaven, the heavenly device by which God would enable fallen mankind to renew fellowship with their Creator and escape the judgment of death, the sentence already imposed upon Adam's rebellious race following the disaster in Eden. All of this began with the call of Abraham related in this 12th chapter.

The Second Call of Abraham is obvious in the fact of his family of emigrants settled down in Haran. Up to this point, Abram had NOT fully obeyed the commandment of God in the first call. So there was the necessity for the second call which apparently came following the death of Terah. Abram no doubt found it extremely difficult to say "goodbye" to his father's and all those in his house. Here seems to have been a special dispensation of mercy on God's part that he delayed the second call until after Terah died. Such a delay affords a strong presumptive evidence that Terah was the big hindrance. After all, he was an idolater (Joshua 24:2). That was not the last time that God's plans for humanity was to be forced into a period of waiting until after some human hindrance had been laid to rest in the grave!

Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

The ascending and climactic nature of this commandment reveals what an act of faith it was on Abraham's part that he promptly obeyed it, however imperfectly, he obeyed the first call.

The great test in such a commandment consisted, not merely in the leaving of loved ones and kindred, but in the uncertainty of going "not knowing whither he went." The grand dimensions of Abraham's faith appear in the fact that "he went out." "Abraham, when he was called, obeyed!" The silly notion that Abraham pleased God "by faith only," as actually stated in some of the current, corrupt translations of the N.T. is denied by everything concerning this patriarch. True, his faith saved him; but it was always and ever an OBEDIENT faith.

Genesis 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Genesis 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

In this verse God alludes to the coming blessing that we will see unfold through the ages when he says: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". Two points we need to remember: "In thee", most important – it has not yet been revealed what it means but it will be of paramount importance! cf:

Galatians 3:29 And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Notice the Seven-fold promise in these verses. This great compound of seven elements is referred to above in the passage from Hebrews as "the promise," that is the great, universal and perpetual promise (Galatians 3:29).

The elements of the promises are:

I will make of thee a great nation.

And I will bless thee.

And make thy name great.

And thou shalt be a blessing;

And I will bless them that bless thee.

And I will curse him that curseth thee,

And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed

This blessing will come upon the gentiles, "to all families of the earth" regarding the conversion of the Gentiles Paul said cf:

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Genesis 12:4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram [was] seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

God called this great man of faith. He heard the call (Word) of God and believed the word. This belief brought on the corresponding action of him doing something about what he believed. He "departed" (v.4) and went on a long walk to the promise land that was a lot of work ... the work did not save him, the belief in God's word and obedience which led to faithfulness saved him. Such was Abraham's kind of faith.

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in

the land of promise, as [in] a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God.

Saving faith is to hear, believe, do and trust as James says cf:

James 2:19-24 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

At the call of Abraham, all other families on the earth became gentiles, which means, "nations", and also, "without God" because those nations chose not to follow God. Romans 1:18-32 last week.

It should be noted here that the benefit and blessing of all men was the clearly stated objectives of this call from its inception. There was never anything purely racial in God's election of the Chosen People.

Why did God Chose Abraham? In God's choice of Abraham, the principle of election is discernible. The theory held by some to the effect that God's election is in any sense hap-hazard, irrational or capricious is untenable. We have studied how God elected Noah to provide a new beginning for sinful humanity. And why did God do that? Because of the kind of man that Noah was. He walked with God; he was a preacher of righteousness; he was obedient to God's instructions, etc. In the same manner, God's election of Abraham as a means leading to the salvation of all people must undoubtedly be

understood as having been founded in the very best of logical and compelling reasons. Where was there another in all the world whose shoulders were broad enough to carry such a load as would rest upon the shoulders of Abraham? In him there was also the ability to rear a family who would respect and honor, not merely himself, but the God of heaven whom he loved and worshipped. The Bible emphatically states as much:

Genesis 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Thus, God chose Abraham, because, among other reasons, Abraham would be able to keep alive, through his descendants, the knowledge of God upon the earth. It need hardly be said that such a quality is sadly lacking among the Gentiles of that age, and indeed among all men even today.

Ephesians 2:11-13 Wherefore remember, that ye [being] in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Genesis 12:5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

Genesis 12:6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem (SIC-am a place of strength), unto the plain of Moreh (MOR-eh

a place of instruction). And the Canaanite (bow the knee) [was] then in the land.

Genesis 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Genesis 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel (House of God), and pitched his tent, [having] Bethel on the west, and Hai (HI) on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

This becomes a great parable for all future believers to follow ... Just like Abraham we are called from: Fire (Ur), destruction (Chaldees) and fruitlessness (Haran), to a place of strength (Moreh), a place of instruction (Sichem Sic-am), where we might bow the knee (Canaan) and that place is the House of God (Beth El), known today as the Churches of Christ and the Kingdom of God ... which is not a building nor a denomination but rather the world wide people of God who came to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ and were added to the Church by the Lord Himself Acts 2:47.

Genesis 12:9-10 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. 10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine [was] grievous in the land.

God did not commanded Abram to go down into Egypt, and it must be concluded that he decided to do this on his own, the same being true also of verse 9, where it is stated that he kept traveling southward. One can hardly blame Abram. The promised land was already occupied by a ruthless pagan society of the Canaanites, and as Abram moved southward the famine closed in upon him. It is ever thus with those who would follow the Lord. After one has taken the step and made the move, the problems often seem to multiply. Leaving Canaan

and going down into Egypt, however, would not provide the solution for the problems. Many a Christian has left the kingdom and "gone down into Egypt," only to learn as would Abraham that no child of God belongs there. "The Egyptians, like the Canaanites, were descendants of Ham just not through Canaan and were also polytheistic, cruel, and immoral.

Genesis 12:11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou [art] a fair woman to look upon: 12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This [is] his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13 Say, I pray thee, thou [art] my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

This was no imaginary danger that Abram confronted; but the patriarch's sinful efforts to protect himself appear here in a very unfavorable light. This has been called the "low-point" in the life of Abraham. And some have registered surprise that this shameful event should have been related in the same chapter that records the glorious promises to "The Father of the Faithful," but there was a lesson in this for the "Chosen People" that would inspire them throughout their history. The Bible, unlike any other book ever written, tells it all, the good, the bad and the ugly alike, and the sins of its heroes are related in the same unimpassioned words as those that give their deeds of glory and triumph. We Love our Bible all the more for its candor in not hiding the faults of its greatest characters.

Genesis 12:14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she [was] very fair. 15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

What a disaster this was! The mother of "the Chosen People" was at this point committed to the harem of Pharaoh and, without divine intervention, ALL of the promises to Abraham would have been lost. It was a situation that required and received a heavenly veto, something that has occurred again and again in the history of both Israels.

Genesis 12:16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

Pharaoh loaded Abram with great wealth, intended no doubt as a kind of dowry, for the beautiful Sarai. This is an angle of the narrative that seems to be somewhat ignored. In view of the way that this episode turned out for Abraham, one can well understand why, later on, he did it again! Critics have been quick to allege that camels were not known in Egypt until a period long after the usual date assigned to Genesis, but they have been completely frustrated by the excavation of bones of camels from Mesopotamia dating from the 18th century B.C

Genesis 12:17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. 18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What [is] this [that] thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she [was] thy wife? 19 Why saidst thou, She [is] my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take [her], and go thy way.

There are many questions that rise with reference to this, but the Sacred Scriptures supply none of the answers. Josephus has this:

God's plague upon Pharaoh was a serious physical disorder, a distemper, and also a sedition against his government. Whereupon, he inquired of the priests how he might be freed of such calamities, and

they told him that they were due to the wrath of God caused by his taking the stranger's wife.

Evidently, something of that nature happened, and, if so, it might account for the fact that Pharaoh took no vengeance against Abram nor did he take back the gifts.

"What is this that thou hast done ..." This is almost verbatim the same language used by the sailors to Jonah (Jonah 1:10). The mighty patriarch cuts a sorry figure indeed in this. He is rebuked and reprimanded and sent out of the country by the pagan Pharaoh.

Genesis 12:20 And Pharaoh commanded [his] men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

This is viewed as a military escort for the protection and safe passage of Abram's company, Pharaoh evidently fearing God's vengeance against him for any harm that might come to Abram.

One of the great curiosities of the O.T. is the appearance of two other very similar stories, although different, from the one related here. One of the others likewise involved Abraham in Gerar (Genesis 20), and the other is related about Isaac in Gerar (Genesis 26:7-11). Of course, we reject the critical thesis that this event really could never have happened three times. They resolve the problem, of course, by supposing the confusion of different sources, or "different traditions" that the narrator combined into a single record. However, as Willis said:

Since Abram lied about his wife once, he could have done so twice; and if Abram did it, his son may have imitated his father under similar circumstances.

It should be remembered too that Abram was greatly enriched on the occasion of this first lapse; and that might have influenced him to

repeat it. The ancient people of God fully learned that they could presume upon the providence of God to prevent any fatal destruction of the Chosen People until the Messiah should arrive. The leaders of the Jews upon the occasion of the destruction of their temple in 70 A.D., rallied the people by saying, "Do not be afraid; we cannot be destroyed until the Messiah comes!" Human weakness being what it is, such guesses as these are far preferable to the "separate traditions" postulated by guessing scholars. We believe that all three events occurred as related in Genesis.

Genesis 13:1-8 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. 2 And Abram [was] very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; 4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. 5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. 8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we [be] brethren.

9 [Is] not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if [thou wilt take] the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if [thou depart] to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it [was] well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom

and Gomorrah, [even] as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched [his] tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom [were] wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, [then] shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed [his] tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which [is] in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Genesis 14:1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; 2 [That these] made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar. 3 All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea. 4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they

rebelled. 5 And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that [were] with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim, 6 And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which [is] by the wilderness 7 And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which [is] Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar. 8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same [is] Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim; 9 With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five. 10 And the vale of Siddim [was full of] slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain. 11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. 12 And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. 13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these [were] confederate with Abram. 14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained [servants], born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued [them] unto Dan. 15 And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which [is] on the left hand of Damascus. 16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. 17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that [were] with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which [is] the king's dale. 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he

[was] the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed [be] Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. 21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, 23 That I will not [take] from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that [is] thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: 24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

Sources: KJV Bible, theWord.com, Burton Coffman, BW Johnson, Adam Clark, FF Bruce, McKnight and JW McGarvey, George Faull Commentaries, Google Images, Halleys Handbook, Wikipedia.