

Coastal Notes: Genesis 11:27-12:5 (July 27, 2025)

Terah and Abram: Two Journeys of a Father and a Son

1. Terah: Life in the Hot Oven (Genesis 11:27-28)

27 Now **these are the generations** (“birthings”) of **Terah**.

Terah **fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran,**

and **Haran** **fathered** **Lot.**

28 **Haran died in the presence of his father Terah**

in the land of his kindred (birth-family),

in Ur (= “fire”) **of the Chaldeans** (Babylon)

a. **A Tragic Death:** Haran dies in the Presence of Terah. How terrible that must have been. The hope is that children will outlive the parents. We grieve them not reaching their potential. We are not told how Haran died, just all the information we are supposed to know.

It is worth noting that when Joshua mentions Terah and his sons (Joshua 24:2), he does NOT mention Haran. Why? Haran does not play a key role in the story of Abraham, with the exception that he was the father of Lot, who will become a negative character in Abram’s story. Ultimately, this is why Haran is even mentioned in the genealogies.

b. **He Worshipped other gods.** Joshua 24:2 - And 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.**

Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac.

c. **Ur of the Chaldeans.** Ur was the name of the city, and it means “hot” and can be used as a word play. “oven” in Hebrew. The Chaldeans are another name for the Babylonians. In the Book of Habakkuk (which we went through during Covid) the minor prophet wonders why God has not answered his prayers because of all the evil and injustice of Israel.

God responds by saying, I have heard your prayers, I am sending the Chaldeans to judge, destroy, and overthrow Israel. Habakkuk is baffled. He wonders why God would send a wicked nation to judge those more righteous than Israel.

But that is the whole point. Though Israel was a chosen people, they were not more righteous.

When Habakkuk grieves and ponders this future prophecy, the Lord tells him about the correct posture for God’s people in difficult and tragic times, “the righteous shall live by his faith.”

This is a lesson for us today. When hard times or tragedy strikes, the righteous person must live by their faith.” When the culture we reside in is evil and practicing injustice, the righteous person must live by his faith.

As I mentioned Ur can be translated as fire or a hot oven. Can you think of a story in the book of Daniel when three young men were about to be thrown into a hot oven? These three youths informed Nebuchadnezzar that God could rescue them from the fiery furnace, but even if He does not, they will never bow down to the statue. There is another story where in hard times in a wicked culture, the righteous live by their faith. This is an important posture for God’s people.

2. Royalty and Barrenness (Genesis 11:29-30)

29 And **Abram** and **Nahor** took wives.

The name of **Abram's** wife was **Sarai** (princess),
and the name of **Nahor's** wife, **Milcah** (queen),
the daughter of **Haran** the father of **Milcah** and Iscah.

30 Now **Sarai** was barren; she had **no child**.

- a. **Why did Nahor marry his niece?** Earlier, we read that Haran, the son of Terah died in his presence. We do not know how the details of his death. What we know is that Haran had two kids, Milcah and Iscah. While the biblical account does not provide any details on Iscah, which means to “look upon,” we do know that Nahor, Haran’s brother, married his brother’s daughter, Milcah, who was his niece. Many wonder why, and if this incestuous marriage was forbidden?
- **The Law of Moses had not yet come into effect that prohibited such marriages within families.** Galatians 3:17 informs us that the law of Moses didn’t come into effect for another four hundred and thirty years when Moses received it on Mount Sinai.
 - **Maintaining Family Lines and Inheritance:** Marrying within the family helped maintain kinship lines and ensured the preservation of family property and heritage. This was particularly crucial in societies where lineage and tribal identity were paramount.
 - **Limited Pool of Partners:** In the early days of humanity, the population was smaller, and the pool of potential marriage partners was limited to tribes, making marriages between close relatives more common.
 - **Abraham and His Family main occupation was raising livestock, including sheep and cattle.** As a result, they moved and wandered around as nomadic people looking for the best fertile fields for their flocks. The daughters were limited in their potential marital husbands. Later we find out in the Abrahamic account, during a crisis of faith, Abram tells the Pharaoh that Sarai is his half-sister.
- b. **The Barrenness of Sarai will be the ultimate crisis of faith,** their “Testing Tree”
- **Abraham and Sarai’s early encounter with the Pharaoh.** Abram is 75, afraid for his life.
 - **Sarai’s plan for her maidservant Hagar** to produce children for her by sleeping with her husband.
 - **After God tells Abraham that he will have Isaac the following year** (Genesis 18), he moves to Gerar (Genesis 20), where Abimelech is the King of Gerar. Abraham is afraid for his life, so he offers Sarai, his half-sister to the king as a wife, at this point Abe is ninety-nine.
 - **After Isaac becomes a Young Man,** God tells Abraham to Sacrifice Him at Mount Moriah.

IN EACH OF THESE EXAMPLES, THERE IS A CRISIS OF FAITH FOR ABRAM AND SARAI, WHETHER TO BELIEVE IN THEIR OWN REASONING OR GOD’S WISDOM.

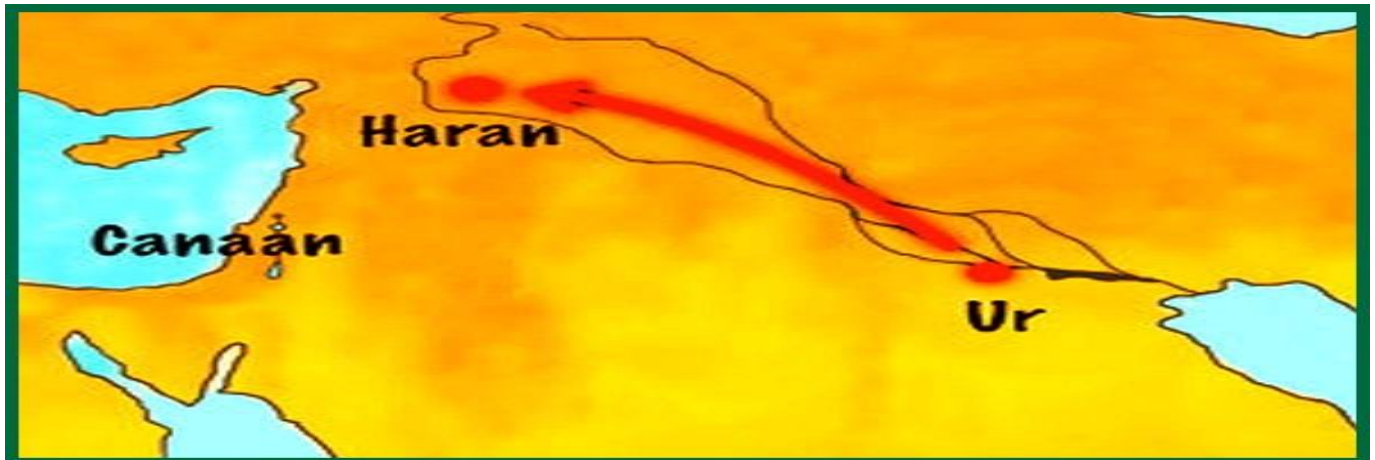
LOGICALLY, THEIR WISDOM APPEARS TO BE THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS FOR THEIR SURVIVAL. LIKE THE FIRST HUMANS, THEY MUST CHOOSE WHICH TREE, THE ONE THAT BRING LIFE, OR THE OTHER THAT LOOKS GOOD FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT ULTIMATELY BRINGS DEATH.

THIS IS OUR OWN JOURNEY IN LIFE AS WELL. WHO’S WISDOM DO I TRUST?

3. Terah Settles Short (Genesis 11:31-32)

- 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 forth together from Ur (Fire) of the Chaldeans (Babylon) to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.
- 32 The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran

- a. **What Propelled Terah to want to move to Canaan?** Though we are not told specifically, perhaps the death of his son, Haran, and the bareness of Sarai, signaled it was time to move out of the "hot oven" of Ur of the Chaldeans. Why Terah chooses Canaan as their ultimate landing spot we are not told. One thing is certain; God was calling on Terah's family to separate.
- b. **Terah Settles for Haran, which was just short of Canaan.**



- **The journey from Ur to Haran was roughly six hundred miles** upward from the Euphrates River. Canaan, the final destination was roughly another four hundred miles south of Haran. In total, the entire journey from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan would have roughly been one thousand to twelve hundred miles. No doubt, without a plane, car, and with flock and family, this would have taken several months, maybe close to a year depending on many variables.
- **Terah decides to settle in Haran.** The Hebrew Bible does not tell us why. Some scholars have speculated that Terah named this city after this son, though there is no specific mention. Haran was a major crossroads and trade center: It was strategically positioned on key trade routes and facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas across the ancient Near East.
- **It was also a Religious Hub,** especially for the moon god Sin: Its main temple, Ekhulkhul, meaning "House of Rejoicing" was a major religious sanctuary in the ancient Near East and attracted Mesopotamian kings who sought blessings and confirmations of their rule. It was most likely a ziggurat.
- **A place with a Rich biblical history:** Haran is frequently mentioned in the Bible, particularly in the Book of Genesis. It was the city where Terah settled with his family after leaving Ur of the Chaldeans, and where Yahweh called Abram to continue his journey to the land of Canaan. It was also where Jacob found refuge when fleeing from Esau, ultimately marrying his two wives, Rachel and Leah. Through his wives and their maidservants, he had eleven kids there.

c. The Two Names (The son and the City)

- **The Personal name Haran:** In Hebrew, the personal name Haran (הָרָן) is believed to mean "mountaineer" or "mountain". This suggests a connection to elevated terrain or perhaps a strong, resilient character.
- **The City of Haran:** The city of Haran, its name in Hebrew (חָרָן) can be transliterated as Ḥārān. The name of the City means, "Parched": This interpretation suggests a dry or arid landscape.

Another possible meaning is connected to the Akkadian language, meaning journey, caravan, or crossroad, possibly connected with the trade route.

- d. **The story of Terah begins with the death of his son (11:28)**, Haran, in the middle is a barren daughter, Sarai (11:30), and at the end of the genealogy, his own death as he settles outside of Canaan, the Promised Land.

The ending is sad, but it depicts real time life. Life as we all know never really follows our planned-out course. In all of our planning there are interruptions like having to move, the loss of a family member, a lack of proper resources, and of course a change of mind. This also describes the life of Terah. In the end, he settled. The next section, God speaks. He intervenes.

4. God Speaks a Promise (Genesis 12:1-3)

1. Now the LORD said (spoke) to Abram,

“Go

from **your country** (land)

and **your kindred** (Birth family)

and your **father's house**

to the land that I will show you.

- 2 And I will make of you a **great nation**,
and **I will bless you**
and make your name great,
so that you will be a blessing.

- 3 **I will bless those who bless you,**
and him who dishonors you **I will curse,**
and **in you all the families of the earth**
shall **be blessed.**”

- a. **God Speaks:** Noah was the fifth person God directly spoke to so far in the book of Genesis. Can you name the first four people? This encounter with Abram is just another example of God's mercy and grace. Abram was not serving Yahweh at the time, he was focused on the gods of his father, Terah (Joshu 24:2-3). Yet despite that reality, God initiates an opportunity not only to be known by Abram, but also to be blessed.
- b. **Abram is to Leave Everything Behind:** He is to leave the land of Ur of the Chaldeans, his birth family, his father's household because he is to be the Patriarch of a new generation, even though he is seventy-five years young. Yahweh wants a fresh beginning, with no ties to the past. He is to go by faith to a land he does not yet know, that being Canaan, the future Promised Land.

- c. **The Promise: This is NOT a covenant at this time, it is a Personal OF God.** In this verbal encounter God makes this promise “**unilaterally**”, meaning it will be completely accomplished by Yahweh Himself.
- I Will Make Abram a Great Nation
 - I Will Make Abram a Great Name
 - I Will Bless those who Bless Abram
 - I Will Curse those who Dishonor (curse) Abram
 - I Will Make all the Nations of the Earth to be Blessed through Abram.
- d. **The Question:** What will Abram do? Follow God or Settle like his Father ?

5. Abram's Response (Genesis 12:4-5)

⁴ So **Abram** went, as the LORD had told him,
and **Lot** went with him.
Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

⁵ And **Abram took Sarai his wife,**
and Lot his brother's son,
and all their possessions that they had gathered,
and the people that they had acquired in Haran,
and they set out
to go to the land of Canaan.

- a. **Abram's Response:** He goes to the Land of Canaan. He does NOT settle short of Canaan like Terah, his father did. He does NOT say he is too old for this. He departs from Haran at seventy-five years of age and takes Sarai, Lot, all their possessions, and the people they had acquired in Haran. Without any hesitation, Abram leaves for the land of Canaan.
- b. **One Mistake?** Though the Bible does NOT state Abram should not have brought Lot since Yahweh specified not to bring anyone from his birth family and his father's house, Lot's inclusion will make Abram's life and the future enemies of Israel a complicated reality.
- **There is not enough land for them to share for their combined livestock**, so they had to separate to avoid their herdsmen from quarreling. Abram gave Lot his choice of the land. This ultimately led to Lot choosing the most fertile land, the Jordan Valley, comparing it to the Garden of the Lord (Eden).
 - **Ultimately, Lot chose to pitch his tent close to Sodom**, the wicked city that God would one day destroy because of their wickedness. Abram would have to go to great lengths to petition to the Lord not to destroy it since Lot had at a later time become a resident.
 - **Abram would have to fight four kings from the east**, including Babylon, to rescue Lot from captivity.
 - **Before Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim were destroyed**, Lot and his family fled Zoar, but his wife looked back toward Sodom and was consumed by a pillar of salt. This led to a drunken Lot to sleep with his daughters, who had seduced him. The result. Israel's future enemies came from their offspring, Moab and Edom. In short, taking Lot was a big mistake.

- c. **Abram was like a third Adam.** Yahweh had brought him to a new land, sparing him from the chaos disorder, and death that represented Ur of the Chaldeans. He was the hope for not only a new nation, but the one that would lead to the future blessing of all nations. The question the ancient reader wondered was if Abram was the promised seed that would crush the head of the snake.

How Does Abram's Story Connect to Jesus?

In several ways, Abraham's life serves as a foreshadow of the Father and His son, Jesus. Although Abraham was imperfect, he became a model example of what it means to trust God, even in the most difficult of times. He became stronger as he matured in his faith.

- **Leaving Home and Blessings:** God called Abraham to leave his homeland and go to a land that He would show him. In the same way, Jesus left the glory of heaven to come to earth. God promised that through Abraham, all the families of the earth would be blessed. This is seen as being fulfilled through Jesus, who offers salvation to all people regardless of background.
- **Covenant Relationship:** The covenant God made with Abraham, promising him descendants and land, is seen as mirroring the New Covenant established through Christ. Jesus is considered the Seed of Abraham through whom these promises are fulfilled.
- **The Sacrifice of Isaac:** This event is seen as foreshadowing God's sacrifice of his own son, Jesus, for humanity's salvation. Abraham's willingness to offer his only son is seen as reflecting God's love for humanity in giving his Son. However, in contrast to Abraham, God did not spare his Son but allowed him to die.
- **Righteousness by Faith:** Abraham's belief in God, credited to him as righteousness, is viewed by some theologians as an example of justification by faith, a core Christian teaching about salvation through belief in Jesus.

While some see parallels between Abram's life and the life of Jesus, it is important to remember that Abraham was a human figure who made mistakes and had limitations. Jesus, on the other hand, is considered by Christians to be the perfect Son of God and the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. He is viewed as superior to Abraham in every way.

- b. **Quote of the Day: Divine Promises in Scripture assure their recipients of many spiritual and temporal benefits, including sonship** (2 Cor 6:16–7:1), **forgiveness of sin** (1 Jn 1:9), **answer to prayer** (Lk 11:9), **deliverance from temptations** (1 Cor 10:13), **sustaining grace for difficult times** (2 Cor 12:9), **provision for all needs** (Phil 4:19), **reward for obedience** (Jas 1:12), and **eternal life** (Lk 18:29–30; Jn 3:16; Rom 6:22–23). God's promises are certain and sure, but participation in their blessing often requires that certain conditions on which they are predicated be met.

Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In Tyndale Bible dictionary (p. 1080). Tyndale House Publishers.