

Genesis

Chapter 11



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Theme: The building of the Tower of Babel; from Shem to Abraham

Genesis 11:1

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

[one language] There are evidences that Hebrew was the original language of the whole earth. God used it to give His revelation of the Old Testament to man; and Christ used it when speaking to Paul, although the apostle knew Greek well (Acts 21:40; Acts 22:2; Acts 26:14).

The whole earth was of one language—The whole earth—all mankind was of one language, in all likelihood the Hebrew; and of one speech—articulating the same words in the same way. It is generally supposed, that after the confusion mentioned in this chapter, the Hebrew language remained in the family of Heber. The proper names, and their significations given in the Scripture, seem incontestable evidences that the Hebrew language was the original language of the earth—the language in which God spake to man, and in which he gave the revelation of his will to Moses and the prophets. “It was used,” says Mr. Ainsworth, “in all the world for one thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven years, till Phaleg, the son of Heber, was born, and the tower of Babel was in building one hundred years after the flood, Genesis 10:25; 11:9. After this, it was used among the Hebrews or Jews, called therefore the Jews’ language, Isaiah 36:11, until they were carried captive into Babylon, where the holy tongue ceased from being commonly used, and the mixed Hebrew (or Chaldee) came in its place.” It cannot be reasonably imagined that the Jews lost the Hebrew tongue entirely in the seventy years of their captivity in Babylon; yet, as they were mixed with the Chaldeans, their children would of course learn that dialect, and to them the pure Hebrew would be unintelligible; and this probably gave rise to the necessity of explaining the Hebrew Scriptures in the Chaldee tongue, that the children might understand as well as their fathers. As we may safely presume the parents could not have forgotten the Hebrew, so we may conclude the children in general could not have learned it, as they did not live in an insulated state, but were mixed with the Babylonians. This conjecture removes the difficulty with which many have been embarrassed; one party supposing that the knowledge of the Hebrew language was lost during the Babylonish captivity, and hence the necessity of the Chaldee Targums to explain the Scriptures; another party insisting that this was impossible in so short a period as seventy years.¹

One of the problems in this passage is its connection with chapter 10. At the beginning of chapter 11 the whole world is of “one language” and one vocabulary. But chapter 10 has already divided the nations according to peoples and tongues. “Territories,” “clans,” “nations,” and “languages” occur three times, though not always in the same order (10:5, 20, 31). Probably 11:1-9 explains how the arrangement in chapter 10 came about. Genesis often goes outside the chronological order to arrange the material thematically.

¹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

The exact chronology is only hinted at in the expression about Peleg: “In his time the earth was divided” (10:25).

Common language tradition. The account of a time when all mankind spoke a single language is preserved in Sumerian in the epic entitled *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*. It speaks of a time when there were no wild beasts and only harmony among people: “The whole universe in unison spoke to Enlil in one tongue.” It then reports that speech was changed and “contention” was brought into it. There is nothing else in this account that parallels the Tower of Babel, but confusion of language by deity can be seen as an ancient theme.²

Genesis 11:2

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

[they journeyed from the east] In the hundred years after the flood, people traveled from Mt. Ararat in Armenia to the east of the Euphrates where they settled.

[Shinar] Babylonia (Genesis 14:1; Isaiah 11:11; Daniel 1:2; Zech. 5:11).

Shinar is one of the biblical designations for the lower region of the Tigris-Euphrates basin. It has long been identified as linguistically equivalent to “Sumer,” the designation for the same region that witnessed the earliest development of civilization. The principal cities of the region in earliest times were Ur, Eridu, Uruk and Nippur.

Torah Class: In Chapter 10, we had an expansive summary of the genealogical history of the earth’s nations. In Chapter 11, we take a step back, and begin by examining Nimrod, and WHY the earth’s people spread out so rapidly and thoroughly.

We’re told that up to the time of Nimrod, every person in the whole world spoke the same language. Apparently, people were dispersing at a very measured rate, and they stayed quite linked to the common language because they didn’t SEPARATE themselves from each other, they just expanded..... like so much urban sprawl.

Notice also, which direction they expanded..... EAST! There’s that “east” word again, a word of importance for us; and here it has the greatest of meaning. Notice that the wording says they (meaning the bulk of Noah’s descendants) came “*from*” the east to Shinar, rather than saying they moved *to* the east. That’s a tad confusing, because Shinar is south and EAST from where they came. Shinar is in modern day Iraq, near the Persian Gulf, in an area dominated by the city of Basra. Shinar and Sumer are the same place, just different languages. Here’s why the reference to moving FROM the east: by going east from where God had placed them, they in essence moved away from God. Now, we shouldn’t necessarily think of what they did, by moving, as evil per se.....after all, they were pretty much accomplishing that which God had instructed, to repopulate the planet. Rather, by the Biblical designation that they were going “away from East”, it was symbolic of they want to gain independence from God. A lot like some of us who

² Bible Background Commentary

couldn't wait to reach the age of majority so that we could move away from the authority of our parents!³

Augustine; Nimrod Is The Founder of Babylon:

This city named "Confusion" was none other than Babylon, to whose marvelous construction pagan history brings testimonies. For Babylon means "confusion." It would seem that the founder of the city was the giant Nimrod, as was noticed above. In mentioning him, the Scripture tells us that Babylon was the head of his kingdom, meaning the head of all the other cities, the capital where the government of the kingdom had its seat.⁴

Nachmanides/Ramban: According to our Rabbis, the men of the dispersion rebelled against their Creator. But those who pursue the plain meaning of Scripture say that their idea was only to be closely united, for Scripture declares their intention, *lest we be scattered*, and does not relate any other matter [motive] concerning them. But if it be as those commentators say, then the men of the dispersion were fools for how could one city and one tower suffice for all people of the world? Or perhaps they thought that they would not be fruitful and multiply, as it is written, *and the seed of the wicked will be cut off*.

However, he who knows the meaning of the word "name" – *as they said, and we will make for us a name* – will understand their intent and will know the extent of their evil intention in constructing the tower. And then he will understand the whole subject, namely, that theirs was an evil thought, and the punishment that came over them- to be dispersed in their languages and countries – was meted out measure for measure for "they mutilated the shoots" [of faith by seeking to undermine the principle of the Unity].⁵

Genesis 11:3

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

[make brick] The first brick making on record. Compare Exodus 1:14; Exodus 5:7,8,18-19; 2 Samuel 12:31.

Brick technology. The passage speaks of using kiln-baked bricks in place of stone. In Palestine readily available stone was used for the foundations of important buildings and sun-dried brick for the superstructure. Kiln-fired brick was unnecessary and is not attested in this region. In the southern plains of Mesopotamia, however, stone would have to be quarried some distance away and transported. The technology of baking brick was developed toward the end of the fourth millennium, and the resulting product, using bitumen as a mastic, proved waterproof and as sturdy as stone. Since it was an expensive process, it was used only for important public buildings.

³ Torahclass.com

⁴ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

⁵ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

[burn them] Bricks in Palestine were sun-dried. Here they burned them to quicken the process. People are usually in a hurry when in rebellion against God.

[slime] Slime (bitumen) pits are still found in Babylon. The slime used in those days was so tenacious that it is almost impossible, even today, to detach things which are found cemented with it.

Written Babylonian accounts of the building of the city of Babylon refer to its construction in heaven by the gods as a celestial city, as an expression of pride (*Enuma Elish* VI, lines 55-64). These accounts say it was made by the same process of brick-making described in verse 3, with every brick inscribed with the name of the Babylonian god Marduk.⁶

Genesis 11:4

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

[may reach] The Tower of Babel

There are no words in the Hebrew for "may reach," which means there is nothing in the text to suggest that its height was to be as high as heaven. Rather, the top would be dedicated to the heavens, with signs of the Zodiac portrayed as visible objects of worship. Up to this time the whole race not only had one language, but one form of idolatrous worship. When God confounded their language they began to disagree on religion and other matters, branching off into sects and parties.

A Babylonian description of the tower of Babel discovered in 1876 indicates there was a grand court 900' X 1,156', and a smaller one 450' X 1,056', inside of which was a platform with walls around it, having four gates on each side. In the center stood the tower with many small shrines at the base, dedicated to various gods. The tower itself was 300' high with decreased width in stages from the lowest to the highest point. Each stage was square. The first stage measured 300' square and 110' high; the second measured 260' square and 60' high; the third 200' square and 20' high; the fourth 170' square and 20' high; the fifth 140' square and 20' high; the sixth 110' square and 20' high; and the seventh 80' long, 60' wide, and 50' high. On the top platform measuring 60' X 80' was a sanctuary for the god Bel-Merodach.

The builders evidently finished the tower, because the work was stopped on the city only (Genesis 11:4,8). One ancient Babylonian tablet reads, "The building of this illustrious tower offended the gods. In a night they threw down what they had built. They scattered them abroad and made strange their speech. Their progress was impeded. They wept hot tears for Babylon."

⁶ Bible Knowledge Commentary

The builders were supposed to have been giants who waged war with the gods. Nimrod himself is called "a mighty one" and the giants in Genesis 6:4 are called "mighty men." These came from the fallen angels and daughters of men after the flood (*Genesis 6:4, notes).

[let us make us a name] Five decisions:

1. Let us make brick (Genesis 11:3).
2. Let us burn them thoroughly (Genesis 11:3).
3. Let us build us a city (Genesis 11:4).
4. Let us build us a tower (Genesis 11:4).
5. Let us make us a name (Genesis 11:4).

The purpose was "lest we be scattered abroad," as God had planned (Genesis 11:4,9; Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26).

Making a name: The people were interested in making a name for themselves. This is a desire that God recognized as legitimate in other contexts, saying that he will make a name for Abraham and David. Having descendants was one way of making a name. While there need not be anything evil or sinful about wanting to make a name for oneself, we must also acknowledge that this desire may become obsessive or lead one to pursue wicked schemes.

The sin of the Shinarites (people in a plain in Shinar) appears to be immense pride. They said, Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves. This was open rebellion against God, an independence of God. Humility is often equated with trust and obedience, and conversely pride is related to independence and disobedience. Here the people came together to strengthen themselves and in pride to make a reputation for themselves lest they be scattered over the face of the whole earth. This appears to be in direct opposition to God's command to spread out and fill up the whole earth (9:1).⁷

Torah Class: Now, did Nimrod found the city of Bavel, which we now call Babylon, in the sense that it was he who planted a stake in the ground and said, "build here"? Probably not. He likely took over ruler ship at some point in the city's early development.....a common practice... and took it to another level. And, in time Bavel became a huge city, with the smallest estimates being a mile square inside its walls, and the larger estimates at 5 times that size! And, of course, there's that Tower..... the Tower of Babel. Technically, the tower was a Ziggurat, kind of a step pyramid. Several ancient Ziggurats have been discovered in modern day Iraq and Iran. And, this particular Ziggurat was built for two stated purposes: a) to reach up to heaven, so they could make a *name* for themselves and b) to make sure that they weren't scattered. Bottom line: rebellion of an enormous scale.

As we saw in the last couple of weeks, Shem means *name*; and the word SHEM is used here when it refers to Nimrod's followers wanting to make a *name* for themselves. But,

⁷ Bible Knowledge Commentary

recall that the word “name” is not referring to Bob, or Elizabeth, or Fred; this Hebrew word *shem* would be better translated as “reputation” as it carries with it the sense of power and authority. For instance, Nimrod means “mighty hunter”; that was his reputation. So, they built a tower up to the heavens to make a reputation of having power and authority in themselves. And, the REASON they wanted the reputation was to show God that they were NOT going to be obedient to Him and scatter as they fully understood they were to do. Further, anyone planning to be a dictator (as was Nimrod) has to demonstrate that he is all-powerful, so that the people will submit to him. That was very much a part of what Nimrod was doing.

It is apparent from the wording that even from the days of Noach, man was to scatter, to disperse, to repopulate the whole world..... those were God’s instructions. Those orders hadn’t been lost or forgotten, they had simply been ignored. But, now, at Nimrod’s leadership, they set out to openly DEFY God’s order to disperse. As it says in verse 4 “..... that we *not be scattered* over all the earth”.

The idea in these early Babylonian brains was this: God lives in heaven? No big deal, we, man, with our wonderful intelligence, can invent a way to build a tower right up to heaven...so, we can live up there too, if we wish. And, when we get there, we’re going to tell God that WE have decided we like all the power, knowledge, wealth, and comforts we have attained by staying together..... by NOT scattering..... and that’s just the way we’re gonna keep it, and there’s nothing you can do to stop it! And, BTW, when everybody else hears about this, we’ll really make a reputation for ourselves and nobody would ever want to come against us.⁸

Is this far from where we stand today, as humankind? Isn’t man currently saying: “God, your ways are old and obsolete. We have amassed such superior knowledge, that we can not only solve our own problems, we can do it better than you can. In fact, you and those backwards people who stay stuck to you and your ways are just a hindrance to where we, mankind, want to go and CAN go..... Without any help from you, thank you very much. We don’t need YOUR silly moral directives..... we can make our own, as we need them, and relevant for each situation. Life? We can produce life, and manufacture it to OUR specifications. Marriage? Only between male and female? Great for times long past, not necessary for today.” What Nimrod did is nothing different from what our secular humanistic culture is leading us to do, today. Rebellion, pure and simple.

Sparks of Chasidus: Why was the “generation of dispersion,” who built the Tower of Bavel, so afraid of becoming,” scattered upon the face of the entire earth”. What would be the problem with inhabiting the world with people?

The people of that generation wanted to draw down God’s blessings without following God’s will. They understood that Divine energy will always flow into a place of peace and harmony, so they figured that by keeping together, in one giant community where harmony prevails, they would bring down sufficient Divine energy to grant them physical blessings of prosperity. Therefore, their primary fear was that of being scattered, for the destruction of their community would stop the flow of “easy’ blessings from above.

⁸ Torahclass.com

The key to their unity was the language that they spoke – Hebrew. Being the language of the Torah and language with which God created the world; the “holy tongue” provided them with a powerful tool to unify themselves together.

So, to thwart their plan, God took away the power that was unifying them – “Let us descend and confuse their language, so that they will not understand each other’s language”.⁹

Chrysostom; Those Who founded Babylon Led by Ambition:

“When they traveled from the east, they found open country in the land of Sennar [Shinar] and settled there.” Notice how the human race, instead of managing to keep to its own boundaries, always longs for more and teaches out for greater things. This is what the human race has lost in the limitations of its own condition but always lusting after more, entertaining ambitions beyond its capacity. In this regard, too, when acquire for themselves much wealth and status, they lose sight of their own nature, as it were, and aspire to such heights that they topple into the very depths.¹⁰

Augustine; The Builders of the Tower Defy God:

After the flood, as if striving to fortify themselves against God, as if there could be anything high for God or anything secure for pride, certain proud men built a tower, ostensibly so that they might not be destroyed by a flood if one came later. For they had heard and recalled that all iniquity had been destroyed by the flood. They were unwilling to abstain from iniquity. They sought the height of a tower against a flood; they built a lofty tower.¹¹

Genesis 11:5

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

[the LORD came down] We have many examples of God traveling like other persons (Genesis 3:8; Genesis 11:5; Genesis 18:1-22,33; Genesis 32:24-32; Genesis 35:13)

[see] Exodus 3:7,9,16; Psalm 14:2; cp. Genesis 6:5, etc.

[came down to see] The ziggurat would have been built so that God could come down into their midst to be worshiped and bring blessing with him. God indeed “came down” to see. But rather than being pleased at their provision of this convenience, he was distressed by the threshold of paganism that had been crossed in the concepts represented by the ziggurat.¹²

⁹ Chumash, Book of Genesis, The Gutnick Edition, Rabbi Chaim Miller

¹⁰ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

¹¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

¹² Bible Background Commentary

Torah Class: In verse 5 we come to one of those “figurative” expressions, in that “God came down to look at the tower”. God certainly didn’t have to “move” to know what was happening.

But, and I really love this, God put down this rebellion in an absolutely brilliant stroke: he gave everybody different languages. Try putting together a team, building anything, when nobody speaks anybody else’s language.

By the way, paleo-linguists, that is, scientists who research the history of language, have come to the conclusion recently that all language sprang from ONE source. They’re working hard to discover which one, and from where. Talk about a waste of time.... all they have to do is read this chapter.¹³

Genesis 11:6

And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

[one] One, in unity

Torah Class: Verse 6, when we look at the Hebrew, gives us some interesting insight. It says that what God saw when he looked upon these people, was unity. They were united, and they had a single language....they all spoke as one. In the Hebrew, it says they were *echad*.....which is an attribute attached to God himself. That is, the people were organically connected and inseparable. And, God didn’t like this. But, what is so bad about their being united? All for one, one for all? Is this not the cry from every pulpit, in every church, in our land? Unity, unity!

You see, unity in the sense mankind...including the church....defines it, is a false doctrine. Here in Babel the people had a leader, and they had a vision and a purpose that they thought was good; and so, since they ALL thought it, and ALL wanted it, they had unity. Yet, when we examine the Scriptures, we don’t see God unifying; we see God dividing, and electing, and separating. In fact, later when we see Israel wind up in Egypt, and then when we study the laws of Leviticus, we’ll see Yahweh constantly telling the people to separate themselves from unclean and unholy people; to separate pure and impure things like food, and animals, and behavior; Separation was His intention for Nimrod and his followers. Unity in itself is not a bad thing; the key is what or who the unifying agent is. Consensus and compromise is man’s kind of unity. It is the kind that we see throughout Christendom and the world in general. It is men, holding hands, saying we are one.

God’s type of unity is unity in Him. It is each individual holding Christ’s hand. And, like the hub of a spoked wheel, Christ is the point of unity. It has nothing to do with consensus, compromise or even majority rules.

What is also fascinating is that we get a wonderful demonstration of this principle, in the form of the OPPOSITE thing happening thousands of years later. Remember our principle of opposites. Everything in our Universe has an opposite, or, for you scientists,

¹³ Torahclass.com

a reverse corollary. Here in the story of the Tower of Babel, God is once again demonstrating how He will divide and separate that which man wants to unify. And, the dividing mechanism He used on this occasion was language.¹⁴

Genesis 11:7

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

[us] Plural pronouns show the plurality of persons in the Godhead, The Trinity.

[language] Meillet and Cohen in "Languages of the World" list 6,760 tongues and systems of writing. The number of languages computed by the French Academy is 2,796. Tongues were confounded in judgment here. They were given as a sign for unbelievers in the church (Isaiah 28:11; 1 Cor. 14:21-22).

Ausustine; God Refers to the Trinity When He Says "Let Us Go Down."

It is conceivable that here there may have been an allusion to the Trinity, if we suppose that the Father said to the Son and the Holy Spirit, "Come, let us descend and confound their tongue." The supposition is sound. But if so we must rule out the possibility that angels were meant. And surely it is more proper for the angels to come to God unbidden, moved by grace, that is, by the thoughts that make them devoutly submissive to unchanging truth, as to the eternal law that rules their heavenly court. The angels are not their own criterion of truth, but, depending on creative truth, they move unbidden toward it as toward a fountain of life from which they must imbibe what they do not have of themselves. And their motion is without change, since they keep coming, never to depart.¹⁵

Genesis 11:8

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Genesis 11:9

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

[Babel] Means "confusion."

The word "Babel" is a transliteration of an Akkadian word which the Babylonians understood to mean "gate of the god." The biblical writer makes a play on the Hebrew

¹⁴ Torahclass.com

¹⁵ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intersity Press, Thomas C. Oden

word “confuse,” indicating that unified “Babel” disintegrated into confusion. Divine reaction to the pride and ambition of the people caused the confusion of language and the scattering of the people.

Ancient Babylon: The ancient history of Babylon is difficult to recover. Excavations at the site cannot go back further than the beginning of the second millennium because the water table of the Euphrates has shifted over time and destroyed the lower levels. In the literature of Mesopotamia there is no significant mention of Babylon until it is made the capital of the Old Babylonian empire in the eighteenth century B.C.

Book of Jasher: 9:23-39 (Tower of Babel)

23 And all the families assembled consisting of about six hundred thousand men, and they went to seek an extensive piece of ground to build the city and the tower, and they sought in the whole earth and they found none like one valley at the east of the land of Shinar, about two days' walk, and they journeyed there and they dwelt there.

24 And they began to make bricks and burn fires to build the city and the tower that they had imagined to complete.

25 And the building of the tower was unto them a transgression and a sin, and they began to build it, and whilst they were building against the Lord God of heaven, they imagined in their hearts to war against him and to ascend into heaven.

26 And all these people and all the families divided themselves in three parts; the first said We will ascend into heaven and fight against him; the second said, We will ascend to heaven and place our own gods there and serve them; and the third part said, We will ascend to heaven and smite him with bows and spears; and God knew all their works and all their evil thoughts, and he saw the city and the tower which they were building.

27 And when they were building they built themselves a great city and a very high and strong tower; and on account of its height the mortar and bricks did not reach the builders in their ascent to it, until those who went up had completed a full year, and after that, they reached to the builders and gave them the mortar and the bricks; thus was it done daily.

28 And behold these ascended and others descended the whole day; and if a brick should fall from their hands and get broken, they would all weep over it, and if a man fell and died, none of them would look at him.

29 And the Lord knew their thoughts, and it came to pass when they were building they cast the arrows toward the heavens, and all the arrows fell upon them filled with blood, and when they saw them they said to each other, Surely we have slain all those that are in heaven.

30 For this was from the Lord in order to cause them to err, and in order; to destroy them from off the face of the ground.

31 And they built the tower and the city, and they did this thing daily until many days and years were elapsed.

32 And God said to the seventy angels who stood foremost before him, to those who were near to him, saying, Come let us descend and confuse their tongues, that one man shall not understand the language of his neighbor, and they did so unto them.

33 And from that day following, they forgot each man his neighbor's tongue, and they could not understand to speak in one tongue, and when the builder took from the hands of

his neighbor lime or stone which he did not order, the builder would cast it away and throw it upon his neighbor, that he would die.

34 And they did so many days, and they killed many of them in this manner.

35 And the Lord smote the three divisions that were there, and he punished them according to their works and designs; those who said, We will ascend to heaven and serve our gods, became like apes and elephants; and those who said, We will smite the heaven with arrows, the Lord killed them, one man through the hand of his neighbor; and the third division of those who said, We will ascend to heaven and fight against him, the Lord scattered them throughout the earth.

36 And those who were left amongst them, when they knew and understood the evil which was coming upon them, they forsook the building, and they also became scattered upon the face of the whole earth.

37 And they ceased building the city and the tower; therefore he called that place Babel, for there the Lord confounded the Language of the whole earth; behold it was at the east of the land of Shinar.

38 And as to the tower which the sons of men built, the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up one third part thereof, and a fire also descended from heaven and burned another third, and the other third is left to this day, and it is of that part which was aloft, and its circumference is three days' walk.

39 And many of the sons of men died in that tower, a people without number.¹⁶

Torah Class: In the book of Acts, however, we see Man being unified in God's way, at the day of Pentecost. In effect unifying that which He had divided and separated over 2000 years earlier.

READ ACTS 2:1 – 21

Do you see this fascinating connection between Pentecost and the Tower of Babel? At the Tower, God broke up man's type of unity by giving them different languages, so they couldn't communicate....so that man's kind of unity was undone and limited. The HUMAN spirit was what was driving mankind at the Tower of Babel, and the HUMAN spirit was what was defining unity. Now, at Pentecost, Shavuot, God puts the *Holy* Spirit into man, and unifies them BY MEANS OF GOD'S SPIRIT.....not by means of compromise and consensus. The unity was not a physical type of unity; it was a spiritual type of unity. He even gives them the ability to understand and speak languages they never understood or spoke before....the exact opposite of what happened at the Tower of Babel when he gave them each languages that they could NOT understand.¹⁷

Torah Class: Let's talk about Nimrod a little bit. Nimrod was a real, literal man, but he was also a type.

He is the *first* of a type of man who wanted to rule the world, and represents all the attributes of he who will become the LAST man who wants to rule the world: the Anti-Christ. Nimrod is the "Man of Sin" who was fully possessed of Satan, by the complete agreement of his own evil inclination. So will many who come after Nimrod be of the

¹⁶ Book of Jasher, Published by JH Parry & Company, 1887

¹⁷ Torahclass.com

same type.....Pharaoh, Antiochus Epiphanies, Nero, and Hitler to name but a few; culminating in the Lawless One, that Man of Sin, the Beast called the Anti-Christ. And, of course, this is to oppose the man who is the exact opposite, Yeshua....Jesus the Christ...who is fully possessed, and is one with, Yahweh.

Nimrod, of the cursed line of Ham, son of Cush, is credited with being the first empire builder in history. He is the first to want to dominate not just the animals, but men. He is the first to build a walled city; this is a clue as to why he is thought to be the inventor of warfare. That is, there is only one reason to build a wall around where you live: selfprotection.

And, if you were the first to think of the idea, imagine how you could go out and raid and conquer others, and retreat to safety behind the walls so that others could not do the same to you.

Nimrod married Semiramis. After he died, his wife declared him to be God. Further, as the earthly wife of God, she made herself Queen of Heaven. They had son, named Tamuz. Tamuz was considered to be the rebirth.....or reincarnation...of Nimrod. So, now, we had a man-god ruler.....Tamuz, who's essence was Nimrod. This formulation of God the father, Queen of Heaven mother, and a son who's essence was the rebirth of the father, became the basis for all future false religions; those religions that God calls "Mystery Babylon" religions. They all have their starting point with Nimrod.

Ever since that day, both Nimrod and Semiramis (now deified as god and goddess) have appeared by different names.....names reflecting the language and culture that adopted them. Semiramis, as the mother of all mothers, was therefore the fertility goddess. In Egypt, her name was Isis. In India, Indrani; in Asia, Cybille, later, particularly in the area of the Holy Land, she will be called Ashteroth. Her oldest known name was Astarte. As for Nimrod, his god image became known as the Biblical Ba'al, and as the god-man Ninus who built Ninevah. Later, Nimrod would also be known as Marduk, and then Molech.

I show you this so you can see the tangle of evil that shows up in our Scriptures from beginning to end; and what it is that makes up the "Mystery Babylon" religions....at least foundationally....and from where it came. And, how the prophetic curse of the line of Ham, by Noah, is playing out. You can be your boots that the Anti-Christ will be from the line of Ham.

Interestingly, the name of the city Nimrod first built, Bavel, had in more ancient times a different meaning than it does now. Notice the spelling of Bav-el. The EL indicates the word "God".....the highest god, actually. Originally, Bav-el meant *the city of God*. Eventually, it's meaning got changed to reflect what happened there; and the word Bavel came to mean *confusion*.

In the end, as a result of the confusion of languages, the city of Bavel, Babylon, stopped its expansion; and the people moved out, and now at a much faster pace began to repopulate far-flung places in the world. Isn't it curious how at that point in man's history God judged man by confusing human language, and forced us to disperse; but then, at Pentecost, thousands of years later, God blessed man through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when God's Truth could be understood by everyone, of every language. And, as marvelous was that event, it was to point to *yet another* time in the future when the people of God, in all the nations of the world, would come back from their dispersion, to unite in one spirit, under our present and future king, Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus Christ.

We call this united kingdom of God the Millennial Kingdom. But, wouldn't you know that just like everything else Satan has planned, he is quickly working towards a counterfeit of this..... In the form of *his own* one-world government. We today, are in that generation that is actively reincarnating what Nimrod tried to do..... to bind all the world into one people, echad, under one rule, and one ruler.....a man. And, large segments of the church are blindly leading the way preaching tolerance, world harmony, peace at any price, and the end of Torah such that *instead* we should trust the goodness of our hearts.

From V 10 to the end of this chapter the lineage of Shem, beginning with him and taking us all the way to Abraham, is recounted. We are also given some good basic information about Abraham and his family. For instance, his father was Terach, and Abraham had two brothers..... at least two..... and their names were Nachor and Haran. Haran had a son named Lot, but Haran died. We see that Abraham married a woman named Sarai (we later find out that she was the daughter of another of his father's wives..... so Sarai would have been Abraham's half-sister). And, we are told that for some reason, Sarai couldn't seem to have children.¹⁸

Chrysostom; The Doom of the Tower Must be Regarded as a Warning:

There are many people even today who in imitation of them want to be remembered for such achievements, by building splendid homes, baths, porches and avenues. I mean, if you were to ask each of them why they toil and labor and lay out such grate expenses to no good purpose, you would hear nothing but these very words. They would be seeking to ensure that their memory survives in perpetuity and to have it said that "this is the house belonging to so-and-so," "this is the property of so-and-so." This, on the contrary, is worthy not of commemoration but of condemnation.¹⁹

Genesis 11:10

These *are* the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood:

[**These are the generations of Shem**] This may he called the holy family, as from it sprang Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs, David, Solomon, and all the great progenitors of the Messiah. We're following the line of Shem, and we are actually going right through the Bible following this line. The Word of God will follow this line directly to the cross of Christ.

[**Arphaxad**] a healer; a releaser

¹⁸ Torahclass.com

¹⁹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Geneses, Intervarstiy Press, Thomas C. Oden

Genesis 11:11

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

[Shem] Shem was the eleventh generation from Adam to Abraham. Methuselah was contemporary with Adam for 243 years (Genesis 5:1-32); Shem was contemporary with Methuselah for 97 years (Genesis 5:32; Genesis 11:10-11); Abraham was contemporary with Shem for 150 years (Genesis 11:10-32); and Jacob was contemporary with Abraham for 15 years. Information could be easily passed from Adam to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis 11:12

And Arphaxad lived five and thirty years, and begat Salah:

[Salah] mission; sending

Genesis 11:13

And Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:14

And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber:

The Septuagint brings in here a second Cainan, with an addition of one hundred and thirty years. St. Luke follows the Septuagint, and brings in the same person in the same way Luke 3:36. But the Hebrew text, both here and in 1 Chronicles 1:1-28, is perfectly silent on this subject, and the best chronologists have agreed in rejecting this as a spurious generation.

[Eber] one that passes; anger

Genesis 11:15

And Salah lived after he begat Eber four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:16

And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg:

[Peleg] means division; Born fourteen years before the happenings of Genesis 11:9. In his days the events of Genesis 11:1-9 took place, the nations were scattered, and the earth was divided into continents and islands (Genesis 11:16; Genesis 10:25; 1 Chron. 1:19).

Genesis 11:17

And Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:18

And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu:

[Reu] his friend; his shepherd

Genesis 11:19

And Peleg lived after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters.

[two hundred and nine year] Human longevity gradually decreased. Before the flood men lived nearly 1,000 years (Genesis 5). The first generations after that lived over 400 years (Genesis 11:10-17). Later generations lived 200-250 years (Genesis 11:18-32), and still later ones, 100-200 years (Genesis 23:1; Genesis 25:7,17; Genesis 35:28; Genesis 47:28; Genesis 50:22; Deut. 31:2; Deut. 34:7).

Genesis 11:20

And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug:

[Serug] branch; layer; twining; Ragau (Luke 3:35)

Genesis 11:21

And Reu lived after he begat Serug two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:22

And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor:

[Nahor] hoarse; dry; hot; Saruch (Luke 3:35).

Genesis 11:23

And Serug lived after he begat Nahor two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:24

And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah:

[Terah] to breathe; scent; blow; Thara (Luke 3:34).

Genesis 11:25

And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:26

And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

[Abram, Nahor, and Haran] The fourth instance of God choosing the younger over the older. He is mentioned first here because his history as the father of the Hebrews is the subject of this part of Genesis. Terah was 130 when Abraham was born (Genesis 11:26-12:5).

And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran—Haran was certainly the eldest son of Terah, and he appears to have been born when Terah was about seventy years of age, and his birth was followed in successive periods with those of Nahor his second, and Abram his youngest son. Many have been greatly puzzled with the account here, supposing because Abram is mentioned first, that therefore he was the eldest son of Terah: but he is only put first by way of dignity. An instance of this we have already seen, Genesis 5:32, where Noah is represented as having Shem, Ham, and Japheth in this order of succession; whereas it is evident from other scriptures that Shem was the youngest son, who for dignity is named first, as Abram is here; and Japheth the eldest, named last, as Haran is here. Terah died two hundred and five years old, Genesis 11:32; then Abram departed from Haran when seventy-five years old, Genesis 12:4; therefore Abram was born, not when his father Terah was seventy, but when he was one hundred and thirty.

When any case of dignity or pre-eminence is to be marked, then even the youngest son is set before all the rest, though contrary to the usage of the Scriptures in other cases. Hence we find Shem, the youngest son of Noah, always mentioned first; Moses is mentioned before his elder brother Aaron; and Abram before his two elder brethren Haran and Nahor. These observations are sufficient to remove all difficulty from this place.

[Abram] high father; Evidence is not yet available for setting a precise date for the life of Abram. Some conservative scholars place him as early as 2200 B.C.; others, as late as

1650. In this edition of the Bible, an estimate of approximately 2100 B.C. for the birth of Abram is used. c. 1950 B.C. Later called *Abraham*, Gen 17:5

[**Nahor**] hoarse; dry; hot

[**Haran**] mountainous country

Augustine; Scripture Reverts to Shem and His Descendants:

It is necessary, therefore, to preserve the series of generations descending from Shem, for the sake of exhibiting the city of God after the flood. As before the flood it was exhibited in the series of generations descending from Seth, now it is descending from Shem. And therefore divine Scripture, after exhibiting the earthly city as Babylon or “Confusion,” revert to the patriarch Shem and recapitulate the generations from his to Abraham, specifying the year in which each father gave birth to the son that belonged to this line and how long he lived. And unquestionably it is this that fulfills the promise I made, that it should appear why it is said of the sons of Ever, “The name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided.” For what can we understand by the division of the earth, if not the diversity of languages?²⁰

The Book of Jasher: Chapter 8 – Birth of Abram

- 1 And it was in the night that Abram was born, that all the servants of Terah, and all the wise men of Nimrod, and his conjurors came and ate and drank in the house of Terah, and they rejoiced with him on that night.
- 2 And when all the wise men and conjurors went out from the house of Terah, they lifted up their eyes toward heaven that night to look at the stars, and they saw, and behold one very large star came from the east and ran in the heavens, and he swallowed up the four stars from the four sides of the heavens.
- 3 And all the wise men of the king and his conjurors were astonished at the sight, and the sages understood this matter, and they knew its import.
- 4 And they said to each other, This only betokens the child that has been born to Terah this night, who will grow up and be fruitful, and multiply, and possess all the earth, he and his children for ever, and he and his seed will slay great kings, and inherit their lands.
- 5 And the wise men and conjurors went home that night, and in the morning all these wise men and conjurors rose up early, and assembled in an appointed house.
- 6 And they spoke and said to each other, Behold the sight that we saw last night is hidden from the king, it has not been made known to him.
- 7 And should this thing get known to the king in the latter days, he will say to us, Why have you concealed this matter from me, and then we shall all suffer death; therefore, now let us go and tell the king the sight which we saw, and the interpretation thereof, and we shall then remain clear.
- 8 And they did so, and they all went to the king and bowed down to him to the ground, and they said, May the king live, may the king live.

²⁰ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intersity Press, Thomas C. Oden

9 We heard that a son was born to Terah the son of Nahor, the prince of thy host, and we yesternight came to his house, and we ate and drank and rejoiced with him that night.

10 And when thy servants went out from the house of Terah, to go to our respective homes to abide there for the night, we lifted up our eyes to heaven, and we saw a great star coming from the east, and the same star ran with great speed, and swallowed up four great stars, from the four sides of the heavens.

11 And thy servants were astonished at the sight which we saw, and were greatly terrified, and we made our judgment upon the sight, and knew by our wisdom the proper interpretation thereof, that this thing applies to the child that is born to Terah, who will grow up and multiply greatly, and become powerful, and kill all the kings of the earth, and inherit all their lands, he and his seed forever.

12 And now our lord and king, behold we have truly acquainted thee with what we have seen concerning this child.

13 If it seemeth good to the king to give his father value for this child, we will slay him before he shall grow up and increase in the land, and his evil increase against us, that we and our children perish through his evil.

14 And the king heard their words and they seemed good in his sight, and he sent and called for Terah, and Terah came before the king.

15 And the king said to Terah, I have been told that a son was yesternight born to thee, and after this manner was observed in the heavens at his birth.

16 And now therefore give me the child, that we may slay him before his evil springs up against us, and I will give thee for his value, thy house full of silver and gold.

17 And Terah answered the king and said to him: My Lord and king, I have heard thy words, and thy servant shall do all that his king desireth.

18 But my lord and king, I will tell thee what happened to me yesternight, that I may see what advice the king will give his servant, and then I will answer the king upon what he has just spoken; and the king said, Speak.

19 And Terah said to the king, Ayon, son of Mored, came to me yesternight, saying,

20 Give unto me the great and beautiful horse that the king gave thee, and I will give thee silver and gold, and straw and provender for its value; and I said to him, Wait till I see the king concerning thy words, and behold whatever the king saith, that will I do.

21 And now my lord and king, behold I have made this thing known to thee, and the advice which my king will give unto his servant, that will I follow.

22 And the king heard the words of Terah, and his anger was kindled and he considered him in the light of a fool.

23 And the king answered Terah, and he said to him, Art thou so silly, ignorant, or deficient in understanding, to do this thing, to give thy beautiful horse for silver and gold or even for straw and provender?

24 Art thou so short of silver and gold, that thou shouldst do this thing, because thou canst not obtain straw and provender to feed thy horse? and what is silver and gold to thee, or straw and provender, that thou shouldst give away that fine horse which I gave thee, like which there is none to be had on the whole earth?

25 And the king left off speaking, and Terah answered the king, saying, Like unto this has the king spoken to his servant;

26 I beseech thee, my lord and king, what is this which thou didst say unto me, saying, Give thy son that we may slay him, and I will give thee silver and gold for his value;

what shall I do with silver and gold after the death of my son? who shall inherit me? surely then at my death, the silver and gold will return to my king who gave it.

27 And when the king heard the words of Terah, and the parable which he brought concerning the king, it grieved him greatly and he was vexed at this thing, and his anger burned within him.

28 And Terah saw that the anger of the king was kindled against him, and he answered the king, saying, All that I have is in the king's power; whatever the king desireth to do to his servant, that let him do, yea, even my son, he is in the king's power, without value in exchange, he and his two brothers that are older than he.

29 And the king said to Terah, No, but I will purchase thy younger son for a price.

30 And Terah answered the king, saying, I beseech thee my lord and king to let thy servant speak a word before thee, and let the king hear the word of his servant, and Terah said, Let my king give me three days' time till I consider this matter within myself, and consult with my family concerning the words of my king; and he pressed the king greatly to agree to this.

31 And the king hearkened to Terah, and he did so and he gave him three days' time, and Terah went out from the king's presence, and he came home to his family and spoke to them all the words of the king; and the people were greatly afraid.

32 And it was in the third day that the king sent to Terah, saying, Send me thy son for a price as I spoke to thee; and shouldst thou not do this, I will send and slay all thou hast in thy house, so that thou shalt not even have a dog remaining.

33 And Terah hastened, (as the thing was urgent from the king), and he took a child from one of his servants, which his handmaid had born to him that day, and Terah brought the child to the king and received value for him.

34 And the Lord was with Terah in this matter, that Nimrod might not cause Abram's death, and the king took the child from Terah and with all his might dashed his head to the ground, for he thought it had been Abram; and this was concealed from him from that day, and it was forgotten by the king, as it was the will of Providence not to suffer Abram's death.

35 And Terah took Abram his son secretly, together with his mother and nurse, and he concealed them in a cave, and he brought them their provisions monthly.

36 And the Lord was with Abram in the cave and he grew up, and Abram was in the cave ten years, and the king and his princes, soothsayers and sages, thought that the king had killed Abram.²¹

Genesis 11:27

Now these *are* the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

Book of Jasher: Jasher 9:1-22 (Story of Abram)

1 And Haran, the son of Terah, Abram's oldest brother, took a wife in those days.

²¹ Book of Jasher, Published by JH Parry & Company, 1887

2 Haran was thirty-nine years old when he took her; and the wife of Haran conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Lot.

3 And she conceived again and bare a daughter, and she called her name Milca; and she again conceived and bare a daughter, and she called her name Sarai.

4 Haran was forty-two years old when he begat Sarai, which was in the tenth year of the life of Abram; and in those days Abram and his mother and nurse went out from the cave, as the king and his subjects had forgotten the affair of Abram.

5 And when Abram came out from the cave, he went to Noah and his son Shem, and he remained with them to learn the instruction of the Lord and his ways, and no man knew where Abram was, and Abram served Noah and Shem his son for a long time.

6 And Abram was in Noah's house thirty-nine years, and Abram knew the Lord from three years old, and he went in the ways of the Lord until the day of his death, as Noah and his son Shem had taught him; and all the sons of the earth in those days greatly transgressed against the Lord, and they rebelled against him and they served other gods, and they forgot the Lord who had created them in the earth; and the inhabitants of the earth made unto themselves, at that time, every man his god; gods of wood and stone which could neither speak, hear, nor deliver, and the sons of men served them and they became their gods.

7 And the king and all his servants, and Terah with all his household were then the first of those that served gods of wood and stone.

8 And Terah had twelve gods of large size, made of wood and stone, after the twelve months of the year, and he served each one monthly, and every month Terah would bring his meat offering and drink offering to his gods; thus did Terah all the days.

9 And all that generation were wicked in the sight of the Lord, and they thus made every man his god, but they forsook the Lord who had created them.

10 And there was not a man found in those days in the whole earth, who knew the Lord (for they served each man his own God) except Noah and his household, and all those who were under his counsel knew the Lord in those days.

11 And Abram the son of Terah was waxing great in those days in the house of Noah, and no man knew it, and the Lord was with him.

12 And the Lord gave Abram an understanding heart, and he knew all the works of that generation were vain, and that all their gods were vain and were of no avail.

13 And Abram saw the sun shining upon the earth, and Abram said unto himself Surely now this sun that shines upon the earth is God, and him will I serve.

14 And Abram served the sun in that day and he prayed to him, and when evening came the sun set as usual, and Abram said within himself, Surely this cannot be God?

15 And Abram still continued to speak within himself, Who is he who made the heavens and the earth? who created upon earth? where is he?

16 And night darkened over him, and he lifted up his eyes toward the west, north, south, and east, and he saw that the sun had vanished from the earth, and the day became dark.

17 And Abram saw the stars and moon before him, and he said, Surely this is the God who created the whole earth as well as man, and behold these his servants are gods around him: and Abram served the moon and prayed to it all that night.

18 And in the morning when it was light and the sun shone upon the earth as usual, Abram saw all the things that the Lord God had made upon earth.

19 And Abram said unto himself Surely these are not gods that made the earth and all mankind, but these are the servants of God, and Abram remained in the house of Noah and there knew the Lord and his ways' and he served the Lord all the days of his life, and all that generation forgot the Lord, and served other gods of wood and stone, and rebelled all their days.

20 And king Nimrod reigned securely, and all the earth was under his control, and all the earth was of one tongue and words of union.

21 And all the princes of Nimrod and his great men took counsel together; Phut, Mitzraim, Cush and Canaan with their families, and they said to each other, Come let us build ourselves a city and in it a strong tower, and its top reaching heaven, and we will make ourselves famed, so that we may reign upon the whole world, in order that the evil of our enemies may cease from us, that we may reign mightily over them, and that we may not become scattered over the earth on account of their wars.

22 And they all went before the king, and they told the king these words, and the king agreed with them in this affair, and he did so.²²

Genesis 11:28

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

[Ur of the Chaldees] Now known as Mugheir on the western bank of the Euphrates.

Augustine; The Time Span Between the Flood and Abraham:

There are thus from the flood to Abraham 1,072 years, according to the common or Septuagint versions. In the Hebrew copies far fewer years are given, and for this either no reason or a not very credible one is given.²³

Jerome; The Family of Abraham Was Persecuted for Its Piety:

“And Aran [Haran] died before his father in the land in which he was born in the territory of the Chaldeans.” In place of what we read [in the LXX] as “in the territory of the Chaldeans,” in the Hebrew it has “in *ur Chesdim*,” that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” Moreover the Hebrews, taking the opportunity afforded by this verse, hand on a story of this sort to the effect that Abraham was put into the fire because he refused to worship the fire, which the Chaldeans honor, and that he escaped through God’s help and fled from the fire of idolatry. What is written [in the LXX] in the following verses, that Thara [Terah] with his offspring “went out from the territory of the Chaldeans,” stands in place of what is contained in the Hebrew, “from the fire of the Chaldeans.” And they maintain that this refers to what is said in this verse: Aran died before the face of Thara in the land of his birth in the fire of the Chaldeans;; that is because he refused to worship fire, he was consumed by fire.²⁴

²² Book of Jasher, Published by JH Parry & Company, 1887

²³ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

²⁴ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

Nachmanides/Ramban: In accordance with the words of our Rabbis, Rashi wrote, “Terah accused his son Abram before Nimrod of having broken his idols, and he cast him into a fiery furnace. Meanwhile Haran waited and said to himself, “if Abram proves triumphant I will be on his side, and if Nimrod wins I shall be on his.” When Abram was saved they said to Haran, “On whose side are you?” He replied, “I am on Abram’s side.” They therefore cast him into the fiery furnace, and he was burnt to death. It is to this event that the name Ur Kasdim (fire of the Chaldees) alludes.

Our father Abraham was not born in the land of Chaldaea. His ancestors were descendants of Shem, and Chaldaea and the whole land of Shinar were countries inhabited by the sons of Ham, and Scripture states, *And he told to Abram the Hebrew*, not Abram the Chaldean.²⁵

Genesis 11:29

And Abram and Nahor took them 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 the father of Iscah.

[Sarai] Mentioned 59 times. Her biography is found in Genesis 11:29-31; Genesis 12:1-23:19. Elsewhere referred to in Genesis 24:36; Genesis 25:10; Genesis 49:31; Isaiah 51:2; Romans 4:19; Romans 9:9; Hebrews 11:11; 1 Peter 3:6. One other person so named (Numbers 26:46). Later called *Sarah*, Gen 17:15. Sarai means “Princess,” implying a person of noble birth. Sarah (as she is later called; see 17:15) has the same meaning.

[Milcah] Mentioned 7 times (Genesis 11:29; Genesis 22:20-24:47). One other person so named (Numbers 26:33; Numbers 27:1; Numbers 36:11; Joshua 17:3). Ancestress of Rebekah; cp. Gen 22:20; 24:15. The name Milcah is related to the verb that would be translated “to reign” and means “Queen.”

[Iscah] Josephus identifies Iscah as Sarah, but this can't be as is clear from Genesis Genesis 11:27,29; Genesis 14:12; Genesis 20:12. Sarah was Abraham's half-sister, not his niece, as was Iscah.

Many suppose Sarai and Iscah are the same person under two different names; but this is improbable, as Iscah is expressly said to be the daughter of Haran, and Sarai was the daughter of Terah, and half sister of Abram.

Genesis 11:30

But Sarai was barren; she *had* no child.

The sad fact that Sarai was barren marred her life and yet led to an opportunity for God to accomplish a miracle on her behalf (see 21:1–5).

²⁵ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

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.

Abram only partially obeyed the Lord's command. For when he left Ur of the Chaldeans, his father, Terah, was in charge and went with him as far as Haran, which was only part of the way to Canaan. It appears that the Lord did not allow Abram to even enter Canaan until after his father died in Haran. God wanted Abraham to be in charge of his own household. Ancient tradition has always established the eldest male as the chief of the family.

[Terah took Abram] It was Abram that had received the call, not Terah (Genesis 12:1; Acts 7:2).

[Haran] Haran was in northeast Mesopotamia on the river Belias, about sixty miles above its confluence with the Euphrates. It was a trade center on the route from Ninevah to Carchemish (Ezekiel 27:23), and the chief seat of worship of the moon god Sin. Here is where Isaac and Jacob got their wives and where the latter brought up most of his family (Genesis 24:1-35:29). See 2 Kings 19:12; Isaiah 37:12; Acts 7:2,4. The name *Haran* means delay.

Torah Class: A curious thing, often overlooked, is told in V 31. It seems that it was initially Terach, not Abraham, who **FIRST** got the call to take his family and move to the land of Canaan.

When Terach got that call he and his family were living in the city of Ur of the Chaldees.

The Chaldees was an ancient culture of that area; Sumer was the region's name, and Ur was in essence the capital city. It was also a very wicked place; in fact it was the cultural center for the worship of the moon-god Hurki, who is today known as Allah.

Interestingly, for some reason, Terach did leave Ur, but instead of heading southwest to Canaan, he went northwest to Mesopotamia. When they arrived at a certain city, they decided to stay instead of going on to Canaan. Why, we're not told. But, it was there that Abraham's brother, Haran, died. And, the city was named after him sometime later.

BTW: technically, at this time, Abraham was not yet called Abraham..... he was called Abram, or in Hebrew, Avram, which meant "exalted father". It would be several years before God changed his name from Avram to Avraham, which meant "father of many".²⁶

Augustine; Terah, Abraman and Their Family Leave Ur.

Next it is related how Terah with his family left the region of the Chaldeans and came into Mesopotamia and dwelt in Haran. But nothing is said about one of his sons called Nahor, as if Abram had not taken him along with him. For the narrative runs thus: "And

²⁶ Torahclass.com

Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarah his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and led them forth out of the region of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan; and he came into Haran, and dwelt there." Nahor and Milch his wife are nowhere named here.²⁷

Jerome; Relationships Within the Emigrating Family:

Aran [Haran] was the son of Thara [Terah], the brother of Abram and Nachor [Nahor], and he fathered two daughters, Melcha [Milcha] and Sarai who, surnamed Jesca [Iscah], had two names. Of these, Nachor took Melcha as wife, and Abram took Sarai, because marriages between uncles and brothers' daughters had not yet been forbidden by the law. Even marriages between brothers and sisters were contracted among the first human beings.²⁸

Augustine; Nahor Later Joins His Relatives in Mesopotamia:

But afterwards, when Abraham sent his servant to take a wife for his son Isaac, we find it thus written: "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his lord, and of all the foods of his lord, with him and arose, and went into Mesopotamia, into the city of Nahor." This and other testimonies of this sacred history show that Nahor, Abraham's brother, had also left the region of the Chaldeans and fixed his abode in Mesopotamia, where Abraham dwelt with his father. Why, then, did the Scripture not mention him when Terah with his family went forth out of the Chaldean nation and dwelt in Haran, since it mentions that he took with him not only Abraham his son but also Sarah his daughter-in-law and Lot his grandson? The only reason we can think of is that perhaps he had lapsed from the piety of his father and brother, and adhered to the superstition of the Chaldeans and had afterwards emigrated there, either through penitence or because he was persecuted as a suspected person.²⁹

Nachmanides/Ramban: Because Abram was more important than his father and those that followed his counsel and for whose sake they went, Scripture says, *And they went forth*, [rather than "he went forth"] even though it says at the beginning of the verse, *And Terah took*. Lot and Sarai, however, went with them to the land of Canaan on account of Abram, for even after Abram separated from his father they went along with him.³⁰

²⁷ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

²⁸ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

²⁹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas C. Oden

³⁰ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 11:32

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

Nachmanides/Ramban: (In talking about when Terah died) And as for that which the Rabbis also said in Bereshith Rabbah – “First you interpret that the wicked, even while alive, are called dead” – this too I find surprising, for the Sages have already deduced from the verse, “And thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace, (Gen 15:15). [His father was a idolater, and yet G-d informed Abraham that after death he would go to him! Clearly the verse teaches you] that He announced to Abraham that his father would have a portion in the World to Come.” Perhaps the intent of the Rabbis was that Terah repented at the time of death, but he lived all his days in wickedness and therefore was called “dead.” In the words of Rashi: “Scripture teaches you that Terah did repentance at the time of death.” Perhaps it may be that our Sages, of blessed memory, say that Terah has a portion in the World to Come by virtue of his son. And that was the announcement, for Abraham did not know it until he was informed of it at the time G-d told him, And thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace.³¹

The building of Babel, the confusion of tongues, and the first call of Abram, are three remarkable particulars in this chapter; and these led to the accomplishment of three grand and important designs:

1. The peopling of the whole earth;
2. The preservation of the true religion by the means of one family; and
3. The preservation of the line uncorrupted by which the Messiah should come.

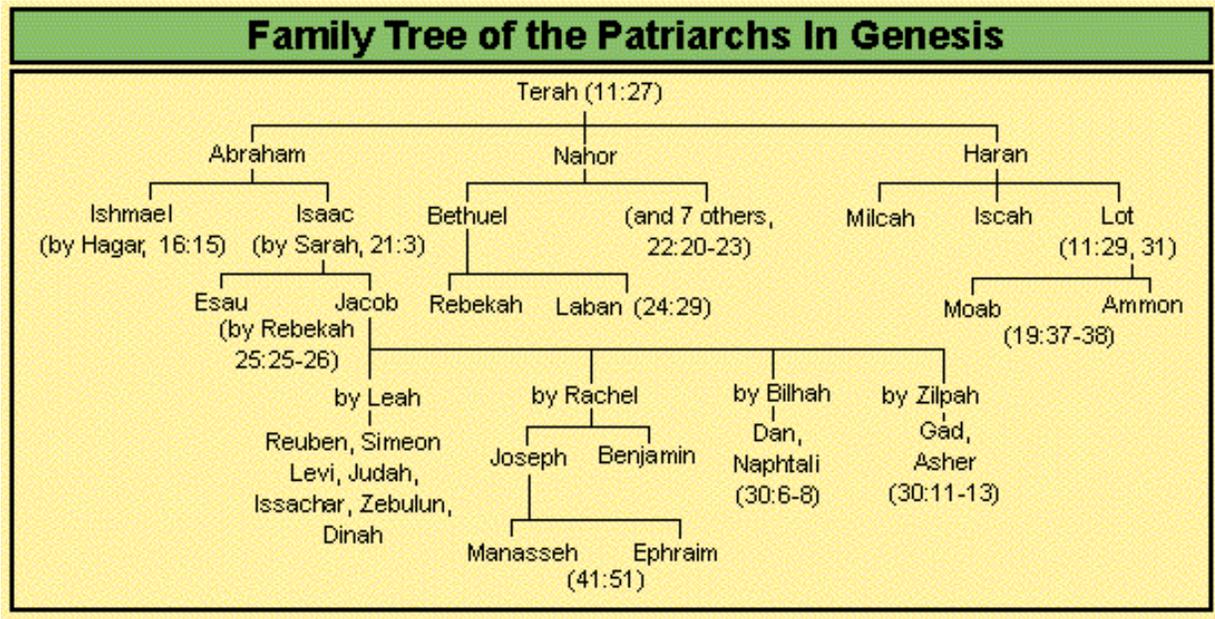
When God makes a discovery of himself by a particular revelation, it must begin in some particular time, and be given to some particular person, and in some particular place. Where, when, and to whom, are comparatively matters of small importance. It is God’s gift; and his own wisdom must determine the time, the person, and the place. But if this be the case, have not others cause to complain because not thus favored? Not at all, unless the favoring of the one for a time should necessarily cut off the others for ever. But this is not the case. Abram was first favored; that time, that country, and that person were chosen by infinite wisdom, for there and then God chose to commence these mighty operations of Divine goodness. Isaac and Jacob also received the promises, the twelve patriarchs through their father, and the whole Jewish people through them. Afterwards the designs of God’s endless mercy were more particularly unfolded; and the word, which seemed to be confined for two thousand years to the descendants of a single family, bursts forth on all hands, salvation is preached to the Gentiles, and thus in Abram’s seed all the nations of the earth are blessed.

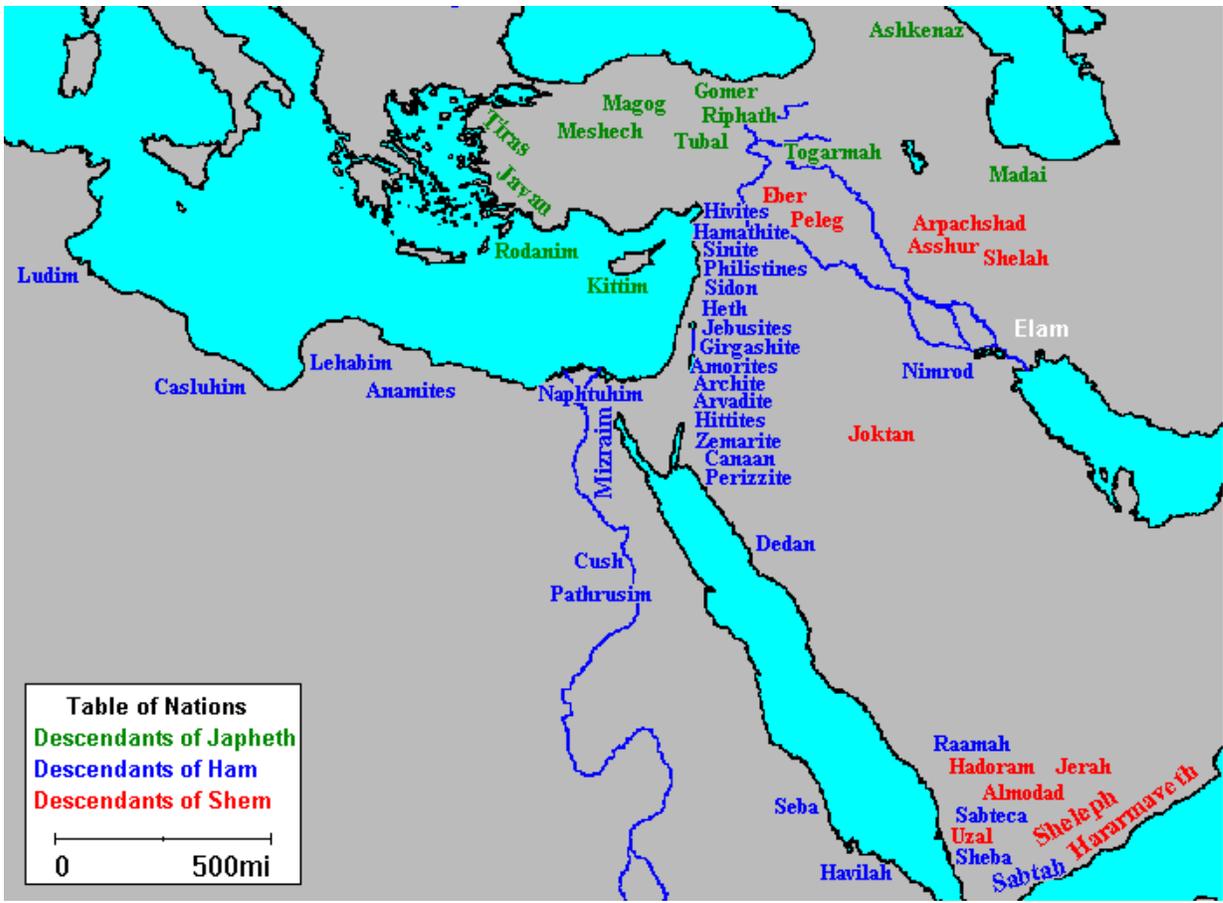
Hence none can find fault, and none can have cause to complain; as the salvation which for a time appeared to be restricted to a few, is now on the authority of God, liberally offered to the whole human race!

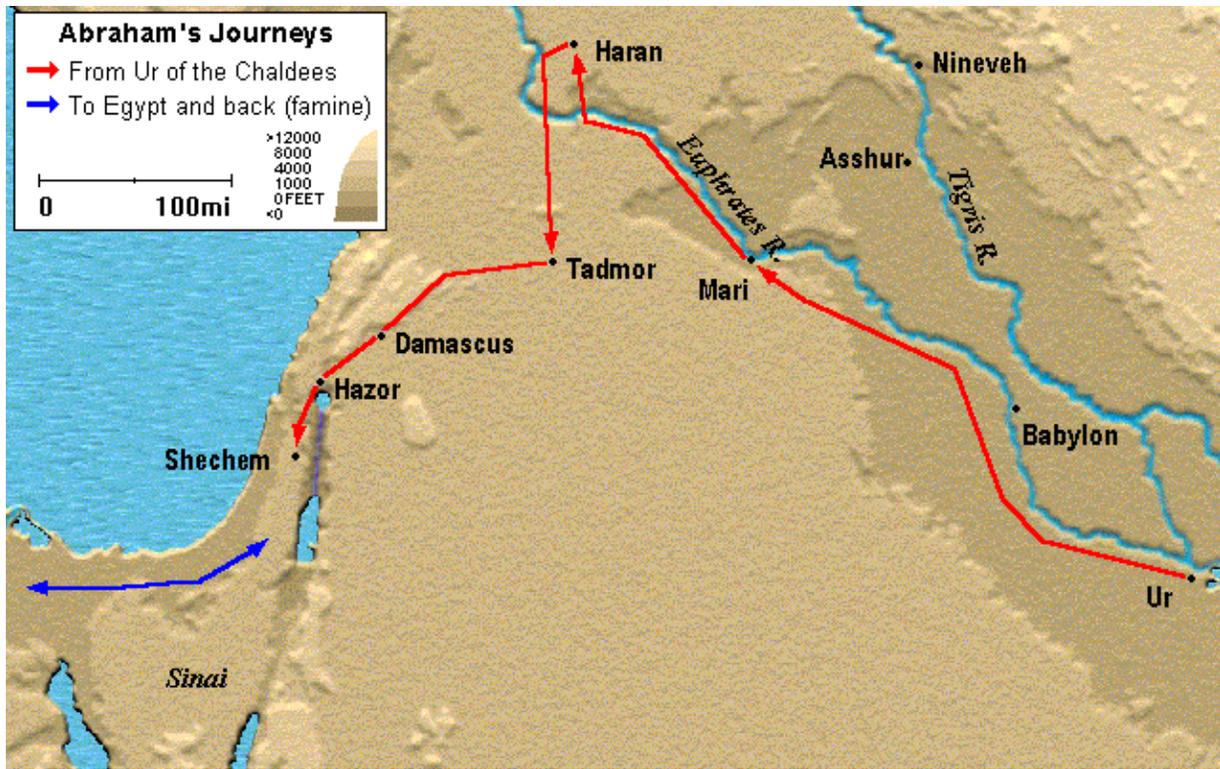
³¹ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

This narrative provides a fitting conclusion for the primeval events. It describes the families of the earth hopelessly scattered throughout the then-known world. There was then no record of a mark for the fugitive (cf. 4:15), no rainbow in the clouds (9:13), no ray of hope or token of grace. This leaves the reader looking for a solution. After a connecting genealogy (11:10-26), that solution is provided: out of the scattered nations God formed one nation which became His channel of blessing. So God was not done with the human race. This chapter simply prepares the reader for His work.

Certainly there is much more here than an account of what happened to explain the table of nations (chap. 10). If Moses simply wanted to trace the development of God’s program, he could have done it straightforwardly. But his word-plays, repetitions, characterizations, and moralizations—all with the torah (“law”), the ethical standard, in mind—teach a lesson.







It is at this point that the book of Genesis—and, for that matter, the Bible as a whole—takes a turn. There is a great Grand Canyon which goes right down through the Book of Genesis. The first eleven chapters are on one side, and the last thirty-nine chapters are on the other side. In the first eleven chapters we cover over 2,000 years, as long a period as the rest of the Bible put together. Contrast that 2,000 years with the 350 years from Genesis 12 through 50. In these first eleven chapters of Genesis we have seen the Creation, the fall of man, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. These are four great events which covered that long span of years.³²

³²McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

Notes on Babylon:

The Tower of Bab-El

- One Language: Hebrew.
- Godless Confederacy: 1st World Dictator –Nimrod – (“We will rebel”).
- Plain of Shinar: Bab-El “Tower to Heaven”: (astrological temple; zodiac corrupted).
- Tale of Two Cities: Babylon (the City of Man) and Jerusalem (the City of God).

(Isa 13:19-20) And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

(Jeremiah 50:39-40) Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

The Doom of Babylon

- Destruction of Babylon (Isaiah 13, 14; Jeremiah 50, 51): “Never to be inhabited”; “Building materials never reused”; “Like Sodom and Gomorrah.”
- Fall of Babylon (539 B.C.): Without a battle; Became Alexander’s capital; Atrophied over the centuries; Presently being rebuilt.
- “Mystery Babylon?” (Revelation 17-18).

Destruction Literal? Pride of the Chaldeans; city on the Euphrates; etc.

Atrophy and Decay: The city subsequently underwent a gradual decay, even though the ruins remained occupied. Documents on clay from a school for priests in the city continued at least until 100 A.D. Early in the first century A.D. a colony of merchants from Palmyra brought brief prosperity, but they left about 75 A.D. (Garner, p 7-8.)

The city was visited by Trajan in 115 A.D. Babylon was first reported deserted by Septimus Severus 84 years later. As recently as the 1800s the village of Hillah, containing over 10,000 inhabitants, stood on the site of ancient Babylon. (Rich, p.157.)

In the late 19th century, the German archeologist Robert Koldewey conducted extensive studies at Babylon and the four Arab villages situated on the site. Babylon had been inhabited for some time even before his arrival.

The great prophecies concerning the city of Babylon in Isaiah chapters 13 and 14 and Jeremiah 50 and 51 *have never been fulfilled*. In Isaiah 13 and 14, the destruction of Babylon is predicted. In vigorous terms, Isaiah describes how Babylon will be destroyed and then will *never again be inhabited*. This identifies the *time* of the destruction as that particular period known as the “Day of The Lord” that is mentioned throughout the scripture and is associated with the final day of God’s vengeance. (Joel 2:10; Mal 4:5; Dan 12:1; Mt 24:21-22.) When God destroys Babylon, he will destroy all the evil in the world.

The destruction of Babylon predicted by both Isaiah and Jeremiah has never been fulfilled.

In the Book of Jasher, before Abram left for Canaan he had some problems with King Nimrod after destroying the idols that were gods to his father Terah. Abram was thrown into prison and after some time brought before the king. In telling Nimrod the truth about the one true God, Nimrod became angry and threw Abram into a fiery furnace. This is very similar to the incident in Daniel Chapter 3 when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace. I thought it would be interesting to include this incident.

The Book of Jasher: Jasher 12:17-43

17 But Haran did not advise his father to anything, for Terah said this to the king in order to deliver his soul from the king, for he feared greatly; and the king said to Terah, Haran thy son who advised thee to this shall die through fire with Abram; for the sentence of death is upon him for having rebelled against the king's desire in doing this thing.

18 And Haran at that time felt inclined to follow the ways of Abram, but he kept it within himself.

19 And Haran said in his heart, Behold now the king has seized Abram on account of these things which Abram did, and it shall come to pass, that if Abram prevail over the king I will follow him, but if the king prevail I will go after the king.

20 And when Terah had spoken this to the king concerning Haran his son, the king ordered Haran to be seized with Abram.

21 And they brought them both, Abram and Haran his brother, to cast them into the fire; and all the inhabitants of the land and the king's servants and princes and all the women and little ones were there, standing that day over them.

22 And the king's servants took Abram and his brother, and they stripped them of all their clothes excepting their lower garments which were upon them.

23 And they bound their hands and feet with linen cords, and the servants of the king lifted them up and cast them both into the furnace.

24 And the Lord loved Abram and he had compassion over him, and the Lord came down and delivered Abram from the fire and he was not burned.

25 But all the cords with which they bound him were burned, while Abram remained and walked about in the fire.

26 And Haran died when they had cast him into the fire, and he was burned to ashes, for his heart was not perfect with the Lord; and those men who cast him into the fire, the flame of the fire spread over them, and they were burned, and twelve men of them died.

27 And Abram walked in the midst of the fire three days and three nights, and all the servants of the king saw him walking in the fire, and they came and told the king, saying, Behold we have seen Abram walking about in the midst of the fire, and even the lower garments which are upon him are not burned, but the cord with which he was bound is burned.

28 And when the king heard their words his heart fainted and he would not believe them; so he sent other faithful princes to see this matter, and they went and saw it and told it to the king; and the king rose to go and see it, and he saw Abram walking to and fro in the midst of the fire, and he saw Haran's body burned, and the king wondered greatly.

29 And the king ordered Abram to be taken out from the fire; and his servants approached to take him out and they could not, for the fire was round about and the flame ascending toward them from the furnace.

30 And the king's servants fled from it, and the king rebuked them, saying, Make haste and bring Abram out of the fire that you shall not die.

31 And the servants of the king again approached to bring Abram out, and the flames came upon them and burned their faces so that eight of them died.

32 And when the king saw that his servants could not approach the fire lest they should be burned, the king called to Abram, O servant of the God who is in heaven, go forth from amidst the fire and come hither before me; and Abram hearkened to the voice of the king, and he went forth from the fire and came and stood before the king.

33 And when Abram came out the king and all his servants saw Abram coming before the king, with his lower garments upon him, for they were not burned, but the cord with which he was bound was burned.

34 And the king said to Abram, How is it that thou wast not burned in the fire?

35 And Abram said to the king, The God of heaven and earth in whom I trust and who has all in his power, he delivered me from the fire into which thou didst cast me.

36 And Haran the brother of Abram was burned to ashes, and they sought for his body, and they found it consumed.

37 And Haran was eighty-two years old when he died in the fire of Casdim. And the king, princes, and inhabitants of the land, seeing that Abram was delivered from the fire, they came and bowed down to Abram.

38 And Abram said to them, Do not bow down to me, but bow down to the God of the world who made you, and serve him, and go in his ways for it is he who delivered me from out of this fire, and it is he who created the souls and spirits of all men, and formed man in his mother's womb, and brought him forth into the world, and it is he who will deliver those who trust in him from all pain.

39 And this thing seemed very wonderful in the eyes of the king and princes, that Abram was saved from the fire and that Haran was burned; and the king gave Abram many presents and he gave him his two head servants from the king's house; the name of one was Oni and the name of the other was Eliezer.

40 And all the kings, princes and servants gave Abram many gifts of silver and gold and pearl, and the king and his princes sent him away, and he went in peace.

41 And Abram went forth from the king in peace, and many of the king's servants followed him, and about three hundred men joined him.

42 And Abram returned on that day and went to his father's house, he and the men that followed him, and Abram served the Lord his God all the days of his life, and he walked in his ways and followed his law.

43 And from that day forward Abram inclined the hearts of the sons of men to serve the Lord.³³

One of the reasons God may have caused Abram to flee was to avoid problems with King Nimrod.

³³ Book of Jasher, Published by JH Parry & Company, 1887