

PART TWENTY-FIVE:
THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH
(Gen. 11:27-32)

The Central Theme (Motif) of the Bible

The Bible is not, was never intended to be, a book of science, or a book of philosophy (which is exclusively human speculation), or even a history of the human race. It is, rather, the history of a single genealogical Line, the Line that flowered and terminated in the story of Messiah, the Redeemer. It is, therefore, preeminently the Book of Redemption: its content is the story of the progressive unfolding (actualization) of the divine Plan of Redemption. It is in fact the record of the actualization of God's Cosmic Plan in its fulness, in which Redemption is revealed as the final phase of the Creation. As it is made clear in Biblical teaching throughout, our God, the living and true God, "declares the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:9-11). It is His Will, His Eternal Purpose (Eph. 2:8-12) that the Cosmic Process, which began when He first spoke the Word, "Light, be!" shall attain fulfilment in the Last Judgment, at which time His saints, the Sheep of His Pasture (Psa. 79:13; 100:3) shall be presented as "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:28-20) "clothed in glory and honor and incorruption" (Rom. 2:2-7; cf. Acts 17:31, Matt. 25:31-46, Rev. 20:11-15, 21:1-8, 22:1-5). As any plan is to be evaluated by its end product, the Divine Plan will be so evaluated in that last great Day, the "time of the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21) by its end-product, the glorified saint. And even if it should turn out that only one redeemed soul, only one "overcomer" (Rev. 3:5, 12, 21, etc.), will be presented as having ultimately "attained" (Phil. 2:10-15), the Cosmic Plan will be joyously acclaimed by all existing intelligences as victorious, indeed worth all it has cost Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not on the basis of the number redeemed, but on the ground of the ineffable quality of the redemption

that shall be disclosed (Rom. 8:23, 1 Thess. 5:23). We are assured, however, by the word of our God that the number of the glorified shall not be small, but shall come "out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9-10); and this is the Word that stands sure and steadfast (1 Pet. 1:25, 2 Pet. 1:19, 2 Tim. 2:9, Luke 21:33, etc.). These, we are told, "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. 12:23), shall constitute the glorious citizenry of the City of God, New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2).

We must never lose sight of the awesome truth that *eternity is timelessness*: it has been rightly said that time is the narrow vale between the mountain-peaks of two eternities. It follows, therefore, although our poor minds are unable to grasp it, that God does not, in the strict sense of the term, *foreknow*: rather, *He simply knows*. The whole temporal process is but His single Thought. In God essence IS existence: the essence of our God is *to be*: He dwells always in the present tense; with Him it is always NOW (2 Cor. 6:2, Luke 14:17; Isa. 49:8, 55:6; 2 Pet. 3:8); hence, the great and incommunicable Name of our God is I AM, HE WHO IS (Exo. 3:13-14). He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8, 17; 21:6, 22:13; cf. Isa. 41:4), the Beginning and the End, *only in the sense that He is without beginning or end*. This is not only the testimony of Scripture; it is that of reason as well. There must be back of all being, the very Creator and Preserver of it all, a Power that is without beginning or end; else our only alternative is the belief that sometime, somewhere, nothing created this vast something which we call the world, the cosmos, with its multifarious living creatures. Such a notion, however, is inconceivable: even the ancients were wise enough to know that *ex nihilo, nihil fit*. (Incidentally, the most ardent evolutionist, whether he admits it or not, cannot escape the fact that his theory is, after all, a theory of *creation*.)

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As Arthur Holly Compton, the eminent physicist and Nobel prize winner, once put it: "A God who can control a universe like this is mighty beyond imagination."

All this boils down to the fact which we emphasize here, that God's Cosmic Plan which had its beginning in the Paradise Lost of Genesis will have its fulfilment—by His own Eternal Purpose and Design—in the Paradise Regained so wondrously portrayed for us in the book of Revelation. The essence of this Plan is the redemption of the Faithful—the Overcomers (cf. Rev. 2:7, 17, etc.; 1 Cor. 15:58, Matt. 25:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:2, 4:7)—in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). We find the first intimations of it in the opening chapters of Genesis. Thus we emphasize the fact again that the Bible as a whole, primarily—it would not be amiss to say, it is exclusively—the Story of Redemption; and, as we shall now see, the motif of this entire story is set for us in the mysterious oracle of Genesis 3:15.

The Seed of the Woman

Gen. 3:15. The matter of supreme importance here is that of understanding what is implied in the phrase, the Woman's Seed. Here we are told that, in the spiritual conflict of the ages, the Old Serpent's seed shall bruise the *heel* of the Woman's Seed, signifying a mean, insidious, vicious, generally unsuccessful warfare (the heel is not a particularly important part of the anatomy), a kind of "guerilla warfare," let us say, whereas the Woman's Seed shall ultimately *crush* the Serpent-seed's *head* (the ruling part of the person and personality), signifying, as we know in the light of the New Testament fulfilment, the complete victory of Messiah (Christ) over all evil (Rom. 16:20, 1 Cor. 15:25-26, Phil. 2:9-11, Matt. 25:31-46, Rom. 2:4-11, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, 2 Pet. 3:1-13, Jude 6, Rev. 20:7-10, etc.). (See my *Genesis*, II, 150-156).

The story of this age-old conflict is presented in Scripture in a series of progressive limitations of the mean-

ing of the phrase, the Seed of the Woman, first from her generic seed, the whole human race as descended from Eve, "the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20), to her divinely selected *ethnic* seed, the fleshly seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the Children of Israel) to become the Old Covenant people of God. Little by little, however, as we read on through the testimony of the Hebrew prophets, the divinely intended limitation becomes clearer and clearer, until we finally realize that the Seed specifically designed to thwart, and ultimately to completely rout, Satan and his rebel host, is not a race nor a people, but a Person, *the* Person, Jesus, Messiah, Christ, God's Only Begotten (John 3:16). (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Phil. 2:7-10, Heb. 2:14-15). Moreover, because the Bible gives us the History of Redemption, it also identifies the genealogical Line through which this Plan of Redemption is effectuated, that is, the Line that culminates in Jesus the Messiah, commonly designated the Messianic Line. (Cf. Matt. 16:16, John 19:30, Heb. 1:1-4). It should be recalled here that God literally separated the Hebrew people, the Children of Israel, from the rest of mankind and put them into the pulpit of the world to do five things: (1) to preserve the knowledge of the living and true God, (2) to preserve the knowledge of the moral law, Gal. 3:19, (3) to prepare the world for the advent and ministry of the Messiah, and (4) to build up a system of metaphor, type, allegory, and prophecy to identify Messiah at His appearance in the flesh, and (5) actually to give the Messiah—Prophet, Priest and King—to the world.

Again, the progression of the spiritual conflict—the Great Controversy—which has been waged throughout time between the forces of evil, led by the Old Serpent, the Devil, and the forces of righteousness (redemption) under the leadership of the Seed of the Woman, the Son of God, has, generally speaking, paralleled the successive delimitations of the meaning of the phrase under considera-

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tion here. The oracle of Gen. 3:15 surely pointed forward to the successive phases of this Controversy, that is, the conflict (1) between the Devil and the whole human race (John 14:30, 2 Cor. 4:4); (2) between the Devil and God's Old Covenant people, the fleshly seed of Abraham (Job, chs. 1, 2; I Chron. 21:1; Zech. 3:1-5); (3) between the Devil and the Messiah Himself (Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 22:39-46, John 8:44, Heb. 2:14-16); (4) and finally, between the Devil and the New Covenant elect, the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16-19, 3:27-29; Eph. 3:8-11, 6:10-18; Jas. 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

In the book of Genesis the Story of Redemption is carried forward in the following prophetic references to Messiah, as follows: (1) He would be the Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:14-15, Matt. 1:18-23, Luke 1:26-28, Gal. 4:4-5); (2) He would ultimately triumph over the Old Serpent, the Devil (Gen. 3:14-15, Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 12:10-12, 20:7-10); (3) He would be of the Seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respectively (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:24; Acts 3:25-26; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 11:17-18); (4) He would be of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; Psa. 2:6-9, 60:7; Heb. 7:14, Rev. 5:5). The very heart of the Abrahamic Promise was the promise of the Reign of Messiah, the Redeemer.

"Generations"

We have noted previously (Vol. I, pp. 46-47) that the book of Genesis divides readily into ten sections, each introduced by the word *toledoth*, translated "generations." (It must be recalled that this introductory term "generations," refers always to that which follows and never to that which precedes, in time.) These are as follows: (1) the generations of the heavens and of the earth (chs. 2:4—4:26); (2) the generations of Adam (chs. 5:1—6-8); (3) the generations of Noah (chs. 6:9—9:29); (4) the generations of the sons of Noah (chs. 10:1—11:9); (5)

the generations of Shem (ch. 11:10-26); (6) the generations of Terah (chs. 11:27—25:11); (7) the generations of Ishmael (ch. 25:12-18); (8) the generations of Isaac (chs. 25:19—35:29); (9) the generations of Esau (ch. 36); (10) the generations of Jacob (chs. 37:2—50:26). It will be noted that according to this schema the story is carried forward to the account of the death and burial of Abraham. The reason for this is, no doubt, the fact that Abraham is the chief character throughout: all that is told us about Terah, Nahor, Haran, Lot (the son of Haran), and Rebekah (the granddaughter of Nahor), is recorded only as the events in which these persons were involved are of significance in relation to the life of Abraham. It should be noted that the genealogical progression here follows the pattern set for the Generations of Noah (6:10), namely, that as the latter began with the naming of his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, so the Generations of Terah are introduced by the names of his three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. There is a kind of symmetry about these genealogical tables that is most interesting. Furthermore, the Call of Abraham (12:1) is related to the prophetic promise regarding Shem (9:26); indeed it is the beginning of the fulfilment of that promise.

The Progeny of Eber

This name becomes rather important in relation to the Semitic genealogical table. Eber is presented therein as the great-grandson of Shem, who at the age of thirty-four became the father of Peleg (Gen. 11:16, cf. 1 Chron. 1:18), and later of other sons and daughters, one of whom was Joktan (10:21, 25). His total life span was 464 years (11:16). It seems that Eber was the progenitor of a large segment of the Arabs of Arabia through Joktan (present-day Arabian tribes insist that pure Arabs descended from Joktan, and many are still known as "children of Joktan"), and of the Hebrews through Peleg (as the Table expressly asserts).

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There can be little doubt, however, that some correlation exists between the name Eber and the word *Hebrew*. Eber means "one who passes over." It is interesting to note that the name *Habiru* or *Hapiru* ("those who cross over") is used, apparently, throughout the archeological archives of the ancient Near East to designate Semitic nomads. (Note that the name *Arab* apparently is a dialectical variant for *Eber*, and hence may have come to distinguish the wandering tribes who descended through Joktan from those who descended through Peleg and who lived semi-sedentary lives on irrigated lands). These Habiru or Hapiru appeared in various parts of the Fertile Crescent in the second millenium B.C. They appeared at Larsa, Babylon, Mari, Alalakh, Nuzi, Boghazkoy, Ugarit, and even at Amarna in Egypt. In these records they are almost uniformly described as restless nomadic people. At Mari they operated as bands of semi-nomads. In the Amarna letters they are portrayed as lawless gangs who were joined by oppressed urban peoples in attacks on the established cities. Some hold that the name Habiru may have designated a social caste rather than an ethnic group.

Be this as it may, the consensus is, overwhelmingly, that from the eponym Eber came the name *Hebrew* as used in the Bible as a patronymic for Abraham and his seed. In this connection an excellent discussion of the name *Hebrew* and its relation to the name *Israelite* may be found in Fairbairn's *Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, p. 66. The article is by Duncan H. Weir. It goes substantially as follows: Herbrew, according to this writer, was a name of wider import at least in its earlier use. Every Israelite was a Hebrew, but every Hebrew was not an Israelite. In Genesis 15:13 Abraham the Hebrew is mentioned along with Mamre the Amorite. In Gen. 39:14, 40:15, and 41:12 Joseph is spoken of as a Hebrew and the land of Palestine as the land of the Hebrews. In Gen. 10:21, Shem is called "the father of all the children of Eber" or

Hebrews. In Num. 24:24, it is not probable that by Eber, who is mentioned along with Asshur, the children of Israel, and they only, are meant. After the conquest of Palestine by the Israelites the name *Hebrew* was no longer used with its original latitude. When it is used in preference to *Israelite*, there is always a reference to the foreign relations of Israel. It is used (1) by foreigners (Exo. 1:16, 2:7; 1 Sam. 4:6-9, 14:11, etc.); (2) by Israelites when addressing foreigners (Exo. 2:7, 3:18; Jonah 1:9); (3) when Israelites are opposed to foreign nations (Gen. 40:15, 43:32; Exo. 2:11, 21:2; Deut. 15:12; Jer. 34:9, 14). (1 Sam. 13:3 seems to be an exception). "*Hebrew* was the international designation, *Israelite* the local and domestic name, the family name, if we may so speak, surrounded with all the sacredness of home associations, and thus having attached to it a spiritual import which never was and never could be associated with the name *Hebrew*. Greek and Roman writers seem to have known nothing of the name *Israelite*. *Hebrew* and *Jew* are the names they employed." The name *Hebrew* is comparatively rare, even in the Old Testament, being found there only 32 times. The word never occurs in what we call Hebrew poetry. No Hebrew prophet ever prophesies of the Hebrews. (Found only in the story of Jonah 1:9 and in Jer. 34:9, 14, where the Pentateuch is quoted. *Hebrew* is not met with after the accession of David. "The reason is obvious: *Hebrew* is the name which linked the descendants of Jacob with the nations; *Israel* the name which separated them from the nations." In latter times, about the beginning of the Christian era, the use of the name *Hebrew* as an ancient and venerable name was revived (Acts 6:2, 2 Cor. 11:22, Phil. 3:5). There is disparity of this opinion—this author goes on to say—regarding the origin of the name *Hebrew*, whether as patronymic from Eber or Heber, or as an appellation from the term *Hebrew* as designating an immigrant "from beyond," that is, from beyond the river Eu-

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phrates. The two opinions are not necessarily incompatible. Indeed the name may have been prophetic, thus including a pre-intimation of the migratory tendencies and life of his (Eber's) posterity.

Perhaps it should be noted here that the name *Jew* came to be used to designate an inhabitant of the kingdom and land of Judah. It seems to have originated during and after the Captivity. It was commonly used by non-Jews to refer to the Hebrews, or descendants of Abraham in general. In Jeremiah 34:9, "Jew" is used to explain "Hebrew." (See Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel). It is also used to describe the local Semitic dialect spoken in Judah ("Jews' language," 2 Ki. 18:26, 28; Isa. 36:11, 13; Neh. 13:24). Similarly, in the A.V., "Jewry" stands for Judah (Dan. 5:13, Luke 23:5, John 7:1). By New Testament times the plural form "Jews" had become a familiar term for all Israelites. Note the feminine "Jewess" in 1 Chron. 4:18; Acts 16:1, 24:24; also the adjective "Jewish" in Gal. 2:14 (Gr.), Tit. 1:14.

The Patriarchal Dispensation

The name "patriarch" (from the Greek *patriarches*, "father rule") occurs only in the New Testament, and is given only to the heads or princes of the family group, with reference particularly to those who lived before the time of Moses. The family included, as a rule, some three or four generations, and with increase in number gradually developed into the *tribe*. (The Apostle's reference to "the patriarch David" (Acts 2:29) seems to be a recognition of David's primacy as the head of the monarchy. The Davidic reign was always held by the people of Israel to be the most glorious period of their history. The city of Jerusalem is repeatedly designated "the city of David" in the Old Testament historical books: cf. 2 Sam. 6:10, I Ki. 2:10, 1 Chron. 11:7, 2 Chron. 9:31, etc., cf. Luke 2:4, 11. Note also Psa. 48:2 and the Messianic prophecy, Isa. 9:6-7; also the words of Jesus, Matt. 5:35, "nor by Jerusalem, for

it is the city of the great King.”) (Note that “Abraham, the patriarch” is said to have paid tithes to Melchizedek, Heb. 7:4; also that “the twelve patriarchs” of Stephen’s *apologia*, were the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Jacob or Israel, Acts 7:8-9.)

The New Testament word “dispensation” (Gr. *oikonomia*, “household management,” whence our English term, “economy”) may also be rendered ‘stewardship.’ (Eph. 1:10, 3:2; Col. 1:25). In these Scriptures it is God Himself who is regarded as Steward. Steward of *what*? Of the gracious favors which he bestows upon His people, the sheep of His pasture. (In 1 Cor. 9:17, the Apostle Paul, in defending his apostleship, declares Himself to have been entrusted with this Divine stewardship, the stewardship of the Gospel: cf. 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 1:6-17). The *modus operandi* (system) of this Divine stewardship has been actualized and revealed in three successive Dispensations. Hence, in harmony with the essential elements of Biblical religion (altar, sacrifice, and priesthood) it will be noted that Dispensations changed as the successive priesthoods were changed. The Patriarchal Dispensation, extending, from Adam to Moses, was the period in which the father acted as priest (mediator) for his entire household (his living progeny). Throughout this Dispensation, God revealed His laws, established His institutions, and dispensed the benefits and blessings of His grace, through the fathers or heads of families, who were known as patriarchs. When the respective families had grown into tribes, this Dispensation gave way to the Mosaic or Jewish Dispensation. This occurred with the giving of the Law at Sinai through the mediatorship of Moses. Here the Abrahamic Covenant was enlarged into the Sinaitic Covenant, the Patriarchal priesthood was abrogated and the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood was instituted. This, which was essentially a national covenant with a national priesthood, continued in force to the death of Christ at Calvary. By the shedding of His

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blood, He abrogated the Old Covenant and its Dispensations, and at the same time ratified the New Covenant and instituted the Christian Dispensation. At this time the old Levitical national priesthood gave way to the universal priesthood of the saints. Under this New Covenant all Christians are priests unto God and Christ Himself is their sole Mediator and High Priest. (Cf. Exo. chs. 28, 29, 30; Lev. chs. 8, 9; Heb. chs. 7, 8, 9, 10; Rom. 12:1, Heb. 13:15, 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6, 22:17, etc.) The Patriarchal Dispensation was essentially the age of the Father, the Jewish Dispensation the age of the Son, and the present Christian Dispensation is the age of the Spirit who came on Pentecost to incorporate the Body of Christ and to dwell therein unto the time of the Glorious Consummation (John 7:39, 14:16-17, 15:26-27, 16:7-12, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, Phil. 2:5-11, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, etc.)

The Generations of Terah (Gen. 11:27-32)

Let us keep in mind the fact that this introductory term, *toledoth*, "generations," refers always to that which follows, and never to that which precedes, in time.

"27 Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram, Nabor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. 29 And Abram and Nabor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nabor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah, 30 and Sarai was barren; she had no child. 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. 32 And the days of Terah

were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."

The Migration From Ur to Haran

(1) Having traced the descendants of Eber down to Nahor, now the Messianic genealogy is narrowed down specifically from the *generic* to the *ethnic* ("chosen") seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), namely the posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exo. 3:6, 15:16; Matt. 22:32, Mark 12:26, Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13, 7:32). (Note Terah's name in the Lineage as given by Luke (3:34). Note also that Matthew introduces the Line with Abraham, obviously because Matthew's primary objective was to present Jesus as Messiah identified by Old Testament prophecy, hence his oft-recurring clause, "that it might be fulfilled," as first used in Matt. 1:22-23). (2) It should be noted, too, that the Line is given in more detail at this point with the view to introducing the two parents, Abram and Sarai whose names are changed later to Abraham and Sarah (17:5, 15—from Abram, "exalted father," to Abraham, "father of a multitude"; from Sarai, "my princess," to Sarah, "princess": according to Gesenius, whereas formerly she was Abram's princess only, she was now to become princess in a more exalted sense, princess of a people: the name indicates she was a woman of some social standing). EG, Vol. I, 399: "'Sarai,' according to its root, cannot be the same as *Sharra* and so related to *Sharratu*, the goddess of Charran, the wife of the moon-god Sin. Such efforts to make historical personages identical with mythological figures degrade Biblical history." (3) This section also introduces Nahor (cf. 1 Chron. 1:26), Rebekah's grandfather (24:24), and Lot, the ancestor of the Moabites and the Ammonites (19:30-31). (4) Note also Abraham's explanation (Gen. 20:12) that Sarah was his half-sister (his father's daughter, but not the daughter of his mother). Despite some fantastic conjectures as to the

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meaning of this statement, the most likely explanation is that of the text itself, meaning that she was Terah's daughter by another wife than Abraham's mother. It should be noted that Milcah, the wife of Nahor and mother of Bethuel, was Nahor's *niece* (Gen. 11:29, 22:20-23; 24:15, 24, 47). Again, if Sarai was daughter of the father of whom Abram was son, she could not have been identified with Iscah for the simple reason that Iscah's father, we are told expressly, was Haran. Marriage with a half-sister or niece was forbidden later by the Mosaic Code (Lev. 18:6-18). Leupold (EG, I, 399): "We dare not judge relations such as these—which would now be properly termed incestuous—according to the standards of the present time. As long as it pleased God to let the human race descend from one pair, it must be conceded that for a time marriage between brothers and sisters was a necessity. It may well have taken quite a time before a sense of the impropriety of such a relation arose" (cf. Acts 17:30). (Father-daughter, mother-son, brother-sister sexual relationships are radically different from the type of affection on which the conjugal union is based, and hence can hardly become the bases on which domestic society is constructed. The overwhelming testimony of anthropology is that incest was frowned upon very early in the history of man, or even prohibited outright, by human societies generally, whether primitive, prehistoric, or historic.) *It should be noted here that Iscah never appears again in the Biblical story.*

(5) It is most significant that to Sarah's barrenness, which was to figure prominently in the story of the chosen seed, attention is drawn emphatically at this point, by the parallel statement, "she had no children." This is the first intimation of the birth of the Child of Promise, which, like the conception and birth of Jesus from the virgin womb of Mary, was surely an event outside the course of what we call the operations of "nature."

(6) "Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran." The order of the sons' names as given here parallels that of the sons of Noah (Gen. 6:10). It is prophetic in the sense that it is not the order in time, but in the relative eminence to be accorded them in the history of redemption. From this latter point of view, the name of Abram necessarily came first because it was at this point that all facets of the Biblical motif converged upon him. That Haran was the eldest of the three sons seems evident from the fact that Nahor married his daughter. That Abram was the youngest seems equally obvious from the rather clear indication that he was born sixty years after the date given for the actualization of Terah's paternity (70 years), and that he was seventy-five years old when his father died in Haran at the age of 205. (Cf. 11:26, 11:32, 12:4). The problem involved here is that of determining whether Abram was born when Terah was 70 years old or when he was 130 years old.

(7) The first stage of the migration—the pilgrimage to the Promised Land—is described in the section quoted above (11:27-32). This was the journey from Ur in Lower Mesopotamia, near the head of the Persian Gulf, northward about 600 miles through the Fertile Crescent to Haran (also known as Charran) in Northwest Mesopotamia, in the heart of what was at a later time the kingdom of the Mitanni (of the Hurrians or Biblical Horites, Gen. 14:6, 36:30). Haran was the chief city of the region which came to be known as Padan-Aram, "the field of Aram" (Gen. 25:20). Aram was the old name of Syria and Mesopotamia; sometimes, however, the name was used for Syria alone (cf. Gen. 25:20, 28:5, 31:20, 24; Deut. 26:5; in all these passages the word "Syrian" as used in KJV and ASV is "Aramean" in the Hebrew, and is so rendered in the RSV). Cornfeld (AtD, 49): "The general location of Haran has never been lost and a town by this name still exists on the Balikh, a tributary of the

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Euphrates. . . . Hebrew tradition considered Abram's kinsmen in Mesopotamia as nomadic Arameans. This is how they are called in the subsequent stories of Genesis and in Deut. 26:5."

(8) The chronological problem here is rather involved. Thus writes Speiser (ABG, 79): "The Samaritan version gives Terah a total of only 145 years (cf. Acts 7:4). On this reckoning the year of Terah's death would be the same as that of Abraham's departure from Haran (cf. Gen. 12:4)." Whitelaw presents the case with considerable clarity as follows (PCG, 175-176): "'*And they came into Haran . . . and dwelt there.*' Probably in consequence of the growing infirmity of Terah, the period of their sojourn being differently computed according as Abram is regarded as having been born in Terah's 70th or 130th year. . . . '*And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years.*' So that if Abram was born in Terah's 70th year, Terah must have been 145 when Abram left Haran, and must have survived that departure sixty years (Kalisch, Dykes); whereas if Abram was born in his father's 130th year, then Terah must have died before his son's departure from Haran, which agrees with Acts 7:4"). Cf. Jamieson (CECG, 127): "It appears that Terah did not acquire the paternal character till he reached the age of seventy, and that although in the enumeration of his sons, Abram, like Shem (ch. 5:32, 6:10, 7:13), is, from his great eminence, mentioned first, he was not the eldest of the family. That honor belonged not to him, but to Haran (v. 29); and Abram, who seems to have been the youngest son, was not born till sixty years after: for by comparing v. 32 with ch. 12:4, and subtracting 75 from 205, Terah must have been one hundred and thirty years old at Abram's birth. This is the explanation given by *Chrysostom* amongst the Fathers, *Calvin* and *Musculus* amongst the Reformers, *Usber*, *Clinton*, and others in later times, of a very perplexing difficulty; and it seems to be in accordance with

the Scripture (see on v. 32), although it makes Abram's exclamation of surprise (ch. 17:17) at the announcement of his own paternity at a less advanced age than Terah's not a little remarkable." Again, on v. 32, Jamieson says: "This has long been regarded as a difficulty, for the solution of which various explanations have been offered, but all of them are unsatisfactory; and certainly it would be an insuperable difficulty if Abram were the eldest son, born in his father's seventieth year; for adding 70 to 75, Abram's age on his departure 'out of Haran,' would make Terah's age only one hundred and forty-five years, the number assigned for it in the Samaritan Pentateuch. But according to the exposition given above of v. 26, together with the asserted brevity of the sojourn at Haran, which, though an hypothesis, meets all the conditions of the narrative, all difficulties are removed: for 130 plus 75 equals 205 years, Terah's age when he died." J. W. Charley (NBD, 1253): "Terah emigrated from Ur of the Chaldees and settled in Harran, where he died long after Abram's departure (Acts 7:4 is an oral slip)." (To the present author, this appears to be a very dogmatic statement and one without any supporting evidence: as a matter of fact, Stephen's testimony in Acts 7:4 is not to be dismissed so lightly, for the simple reason that the teaching of the Bible as a whole, on any controverted question, is to be preferred—on the ground of its greater reliability—above the exegesis of any particular section per se.) Again, as a matter of fact, *Why should not the names of Shem and Abram appear first in these enumerations? Did they not play pre-eminent roles in the actualization of the Messianic Development, and hence of the Plan of Redemption? And is not this Development the over-all theme of the Bible from the beginning to the end?* Note this comment from JB, p. 27, on v. 32, as to Terah's age at death: "Only 145 according to the Samaritan Pentateuch; this would mean that Abraham left Haran only when his father died

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(cf. 11:26, 12:4, and Acts 7:4).” Note this final summation to Haley (ADB, 392-393): “In the twenty-sixth verse Abraham may be mentioned first, simply on account of his *theocratic* importance; as Moses is usually named before Aaron, who was the elder. So that Abraham may have been the *youngest* son, born when Terah was 130 years old. It would then follow that Abraham left Haran at the age of 75, his father having previously died at the age of 205 years. This removes the difficulty. Some Jewish interpreters, however, think that Abraham actually left Haran sixty years *before* his father’s death. On this theory, Stephen, in asserting that Abraham left *after* his father’s death, simply followed the then commonly received, though inaccurate, chronology. So Ewald, Keil, Kurtz, Lange, Murphy, and others.” The Graf-Wellhausen (Composite, Documentary) Theory of the Pentateuch would have us try to find the solution of these troublesome problems of time and place in the history of ancient Israel by attributing the verses and parts of verses involved to alleged different sources (Codes), intervening redactors, etc. Unfortunately, the result is what might properly be designated analytical chaos, a rather common phenomenon of the Teutonic mentality. The simple fact is that the “critics” are unable to reach any notable measure of agreement among themselves as to the identity and proper allocation of these alleged sources. This entire complex theory depends on *internal* evidence alone; it lacks any convincing measure of support by *external* evidence of any kind, and in the final analysis must be labeled a crazy quilt of academic conjecture.

(9) Eminent Jewish authorities inform us that tribal movements southward into Babylonia have always occurred annually and continue to do so in our own time. It is quite probable that Abraham’s patriarchal ancestors followed the nomadic life and were themselves accustomed to making these migrations. Kraeling, for example, writes

(BA, 55-56): "Where the migration account begins in 11:31 f., we find Terah in the territory of Ur of the Chaldees or Chaldeans. Since all the family names point to Mesopotamia we may imagine Terah and his sons as nomads who had previously traveled to Chaldea from their northern home before the story of their further migrations opens. Such a southward movement of tribesmen from Mesopotamia to Babylonia takes place annually to this day. Mesopotamian winters are hard, and so the Bedouin go down to pasture their flocks in the Babylonian area during that season . . . In times when there was no strong government these nomads were wont to rob the farming population en route or levy on it at will." Again: "The Terah clan was certainly only a sojourner in the Ur vicinity, lingering there by treaty or agreement with the local authorities. Their sheep or goats would not have been permitted to invade these well-irrigated, fertile lands on which the life of Ur depended. From afar these shepherds, however, could see the mighty ziggurat or tower of the city—today the best-preserved ziggurat of Babylonia—like a great landmark (cf. Gen. 11:3), and it may have made them feel at home that the god Nannar or Sin, the moon-god who was so prominently worshiped at Haran, was revered there also."

(10) What prompted Terah to make the movement northward? (a) Was it just the customary return to the north characteristic of the nomads? If so, it was only a return to familiar territory. Religiously both Ur and Haran had much in common, especially in the fact that both were centers of the worship of the moon-god Sin. It is significant, it would seem, that the descendants of Nahor, Abraham's brother, elected to settle permanently in Haran; that to this region Abraham later sent his servant Eliezer to seek a bride for his son Isaac; that here Jacob married Leah and Rachel, the daughters of Laban "the Aramean," and that from this region he fled to escape the

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wrath of his brother Esau. (b) Or, was it the death of Haran in the territory of Ur that provided the impetus for this migration? (c) Or, was the first move made with the ultimate goal in mind of the journey all the way to the Land of Promise? This suggestion would necessarily imply that Terah was cognizant of the Call of Abram, and that this was the first step in the projected Abrahamic pilgrimage. Some authorities hold that Terah sought to make the long trek to the Promised Land in the anticipation of sharing the inheritance which had been promised to Abram and his seed: a point not beyond the range of probability. At any rate, the journey was interrupted for a time by the "stop-over" at Haran. As noted above, some authorities think that Terah died in Haran long after Abram's departure.

(11) The influence of paganism seems already to have corrupted Abram's ancestry. It is explicitly stated, on Divine authority, in Joshua's farewell address, that the "fathers"—and Terah is mentioned specifically—"served other gods" (Josh. 24:2). This fact is corroborated by the evidence that Laban was wont to make some ritual or magical use of *teraphim* (Gen. 31:19, 30-32). This passage indicates that these were small objects (figurines), but First Sam. 19:13-16 suggests a life-size figure or bust (perhaps, however, Michal in this instance placed the *teraphim* *beside* rather than in the bed). (Corruption with paganism is also indicated by the pairing of the ephod and the *teraphim* in the idolatrous cult of Micah (Judg. 18:14-20). At any rate, when these objects are mentioned they are always condemned (cf. Judg., chs. 17, 18; 1 Sam. 15:23, 19:13-16; 2 Ki. 23:24 [in this passage they are categorized as "abominations"]; Hos. 3:4). They are frequently directly associated with divination (by chance drawing from a quiver of arrows, *belomanteia*, or by hepatoscopy: see Ezek. 21:21, Zech. 10:2, 2 Ki. 23:24). Considering the environment in which they had been sojourning, one might

well say, for centuries, no great difficulty is encountered in accepting as true the fact that Abram's ancestral family had drifted into the corruption of their original faith (monotheism) with pagan superstitions. History testifies to the fact that this deterioration of original idealism has repeated itself again and again on contact with degrading social pressures. It is a prime characteristic of our common human depravity. The wonder of it all is that out of the depth of this environmental background there emerged one who was destined to prove himself to be the Friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7, Isa. 41:8, Jas. 2:23) and the Father of the Faithful (Gal. 3:9, 27-29; Rom. 5:16). (It should be noted here that sorcery—defined as the attempt to influence events and people by occult means—was punishable by stoning to death under the Old Covenant (Exo. 22:18; Lev. 20:6, 20:27; Deut. 18:10; cf. Exo. 7:11, 1 Sam. 28:3-19, Jer. 27:9-10: under the New Covenant it is a sin that will damn the soul [1 Cor. 10:19-23, Gal. 5:20, Rev. 21:8, 22:15; cf. Luke 16:27-31; Acts 13:8-12, 16:16-18]. In fact, throughout the Bible, all forms of occultism are regarded as of *diabolical* origin.) This drift into pagan idolatry by Abram's ancestry becomes all the more understandable when we take into consideration the fact, abundantly proved by archeological discoveries, that both Haran and Ur were the prominent centers of the worship of the moon-god Sin. Simpson (IBG, 568): "In the pantheon of Haran, Sharratu was the title of the moon-goddess, the consort of Sin, Malkatu a title of Ishtar, also worshiped there." Under "Ur," Wiseman writes (NBD, 1305): "The history and economy of the city is well known from thousands of inscribed tablets and the many buildings found at the site. The principal deity was Nannar (Semitic Sin or Su'en), who was also worshiped at Harran." Smith-Fields (OTH, 64) on Ur: "While its culture was amazing, its religion had degenerated into the deepest idolatry and superstition. It was necessary that the chosen family should

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separate themselves from this contaminating environment until God's provisions for the salvation of the whole world were ready to be proclaimed." To what extent Abram himself was affected by this pagan environment, and by the tendency of his forebears to yield to it, partially at least, we do not know. We feel justified, however, from the story of the life of Abraham as a whole, in believing that to this great man of faith it must have been irksome probably to the point of utter disgust.

(12) *The Cult of Fertility.* The *teraphim* mentioned above are said to have been small objects (figurines), probably images of gods or goddesses undoubtedly suggestive of the Cult of Fertility which dominated the "religious" theory and ritual of the ancient pagan world. This Cult was characterized by ritual prostitution, phallic worship, and all kinds of sex perversion. Nearly all of the non-Hebrew peoples made a fetish of any object that might represent the reproductive powers of living things. Permeating this Cult was the motif—on the basis of sympathetic (homeopathic) magic—that human coition of male and female enhanced the fertility of the soil. (This explains why many of these practices are categorized as "vegetative" or "agricultural" rites and festivals). Hence the veneration given to bulls and snakes (species reputedly noted for their powers of procreation) in many areas, particularly in Crete. In recent times archaeologists have dug up in Mediterranean lands, and in Crete in particular, which seems to have been one of the chief centers of diffusion of this Fertility Cult, hundreds of so-called "Venus figurines," figurines or idols of pregnant women. The most prominent feature of this Cult was the worship of the Earth-Mother, along with that of the Sun-Father: this practice seems to have been nearly universal, except of course among the Hebrews who were constantly exposed to it and finally in some measure succumbed to it. In Babylonia, *Terra Mater* was known as Ishtar; in Egypt,

her name was Isis; in Syria, Atargatis; in Phrygia, Cybele; among the Germanic tribes, Oestra; in Phoenicia, Astarte; in Canaan, Ashtoreth, etc. The Sun-Father in Egypt was at first the great god Re (at Heliopolis), and later Aton of the reformatory effort of the Pharaoh Ikhnaton; in the Sanskrit, he was known as Dyaus Pitar, that is, "father of light"; in Greece he became Zeus pater, and in Rome, Iuppiter. In every instance ritual prostitution in the name of "religion" was a prominent phase of the worship of these "goddesses": in their temples thousands of priestesses were dedicated to this form of "sanctified harlotry." Phallic worship (veneration of icons of the male reproductive organs) was equally widespread; in various localities, it was an integral part of the worship of Apollo, Artemis (the Roman Diana), Demeter, and especially of that of Dionysos (Bacchus, in Latin). In most of the festivals of ancient Greece, including even those of the athletic games, there was this undercurrent of eroticism present. Replicas of the phallus, even as late as the so-called "Enlightenment," were carried through the streets of many of the Greek cities in solemn processions. As Dr. Will Durant has written: "The phallus, symbol of fertility, was frankly honored by crowds of men and women." It is interesting to note also that, at the same time, homosexuality was rampant, in all circles of society. So-called "orgiastic" religion was invariably characterized by wanton dances, gross erotic practices, and all forms of sex perversion. (See the *Bacchae* of Euripides. Incidentally, this correlation of "orgiastic" religious frenzy with sexual excess is the element of truth in Sinclair Lewis' novel, *Elmer Gantry*; otherwise, the book is an utter travesty in its implied treatment of Biblical evangelism.) This Cult of Fertility became a prominent phase of the Roman state "religion," with the coming in of the Empire: indeed the Saturnalia was a time of generally uninhibited sexual promiscuity. (Cf. Paul's enumeration of the vices and sins of the Gen-

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tile world, in Romans 1:18-32; also the Old Testament story of the conflict between Jezebel and the prophet Elijah, in 1 Kings, chs. 18, 19, 21, and 2 Kings, ch. 9:30-37; cf. Rev. 2:20). (A word of caution at this point: as an established custom the year round there is no evidence that any people, primitive, prehistoric, or historic, ever practised complete sexual promiscuity.)

(13) *Ur of the Chaldees* (11:28, 31). The text clearly indicates that the first stage of the migration was from Ur to Haran. It was in Haran that Terah died, and from Haran that Abraham went forth on his divinely commissioned pilgrimage ("he went out, not knowing whither he went," Heb. 11:8). It was in Haran that Nahor settled, influenced probably by the fertility of the land and exercising the prerogative of a first choice (cf. again Gen. 31:19, 30-32). And, as noted above, from Gen. 31:19, 30-32, we must conclude that his descendants perpetuated some of the idolatry to which Terah and his generation had become addicted (cf. Josh. 24:2). On Josh. 24:2, Lias (PCS, 349) comments as follows: "The Rabbinic tradition has great probability in it, that Abraham was driven out of his native country for refusing to worship idols. . . . No doubt his great and pure soul had learned to abhor the idolatrous and cruel worship of his countrymen. By inward struggles, perhaps by the vague survival of the simpler and truer faith which has been held to underlie every polytheistic system, he had 'reached a purer air,' and learned to adore the One True God. His family were led to embrace his doctrines, and they left their native land with him. But Haran, with its star-worship, was no resting-place for him. So he journeyed on westward, leaving the society of man, and preserving himself from temptation by his nomad life. No wandering Bedouin, as some would have us believe, but a prince, on equal terms with Abimelech and Pharaoh, and capable of overthrowing the mighty conqueror of Elam. Such an example might well

be brought to the memory of his descendants [that is, through Joshua], who were now to be sojourners in the land promised to their father. Guided by conscience alone, with every external influence against him, he had worshiped the true God in that land. No better argument could be offered to his descendants, when settled in that same land, and about to be bereft of that valuable support which they had derived from the life and influence of Joshua."

(14) *Is there a time problem here, that is, in relation to the Mosaic authorship?* It is said that "the ancient and renowned city of Ur is never ascribed expressly, in the many thousands of cuneiform records from that site, to the Chaldean branch of the Aramean group," that, moreover, "the Chaldeans were late arrivals in Mesopotamia, and could not possibly be dated before the end of the second millenium." (But, cf. Acts 7:4, Neh. 9:7, Gen. 15:7—in this last-named reference it is Jehovah Himself who is represented as reemphasizing the fact, to Abraham, that He had brought the patriarch out of "Ur of the Chaldees.") As a matter of fact, no one seems to know precisely when the Aramean peoples began to penetrate the Mesopotamian region. The question here is: Had the Chaldean branch come to be known as dwelling in the vicinity of Ur as far back as in the time of Moses. The best archaeological evidence seems to indicate that they were in possession of some parts of the land known as Lower Mesopotamia as early as 1200 or 1100 B.C., a date but little later than that indicated for the time of Moses. Moreover, the chronology of both the third and second milleniums of Mesopotamian history can hardly be described as more than approximate: its lack of preciseness certainly does not permit dogmatic conclusions. On this subject, Speiser writes as follows (ABG, 80-81): "How then did such an anachronism originate? Any explanation is bound to be tenuous and purely conjectural. With these reservations, the following possibility may be hazarded.

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Both Ur and Haran were centers of moon worship, unrivaled in this respect by any other Mesopotamian city. It is remotely possible, therefore, that this religious distinction, which was peculiar to Ur and Haran, caused the two cities to be bracketed together, and then to be telescoped in later versions, at a time when the Chaldeans had already gained prominence. At all events, the correction required affects only incidental passages that are not more than marginal footnotes to the history of the Patriarchs. That history starts at Haran (12:5) as is evident from its very first episode." Murphy (MG, 256) writes as follows: "*In Ur of the Kasdim.* The Kasdim, Cardi, Kurds, or Chaldees are not to be found in the table of nations. They have been generally supposed to be Shemites. This is favored by the residence of Abram among them, by the name Kesed, being a family name among his kindred (Gen. 22:22), and by the language commonly called Chaldee, which is a species of Aramaic. . . . The Chaldees were spread over a great extent of surface; but their most celebrated seat was Chaldea proper, or the land of Shinar. The inhabitants of the country seem to have been of mixed descent, being bound together by political rather than family ties. Nimrod, their centre of union, was a despot rather than a patriarch. The tongue of the Kaldees, whether pure or mixed, and whether Shemitic or not, is possibly distinct from the Aramaic, in which they addressed Nebuchadnezzar in the time of Daniel (1:4, 2:4). The Kaldin at length lost their nationality, and merged into the caste or class of learned men or astrologers, into which a man might be admitted, not merely by being a Kaldai by birth, but by acquiring the language and learning of the Kasdim (Dan. 1:4, v:11)." Cf. also Adam Clarke (CG, 39): "The Chaldees mentioned here, had not this name in the *time of which Moses speaks*, but they were called so in the *time in which Moses wrote*. Chesed was the son of Nahor, the son of Terah, ch. 22:22. From

Chesed descended the *Chasdim*, whose language was the same as that of the *Amorites*, Dan. 1:4, 2:4. These *Chasdim*, whence the *Chaldaioi* (Gr.); Chaldeans of the Septuagint, Vulgate, and all later versions, afterward settled on the south of the Euphrates. Those who dwelt in Ur were either priests or astronomers, Dan. 2:10, and also idolaters (Josh. 24:2, 3, 14, 15. And because they were much addicted to astronomy, and probably to judicial astrology, hence all astrologers were, in process of time, called Chaldeans (Dan. 2:2-5).” There are others who think that the name *Chaldea* or *Chaldee* was applied to a people who were of a nomadic race originally, occupying the mountains where the Kurds are now found, and that the name was altered, through the interchange of letters, which was a common occurrence, into *Chaldaioi* by the Greeks. Rawlinson and others derive the name from *Khaldi* which in the old Armenian tongue denotes moon-worshippers. Ur of the Chaldees, then, they argue, was so named as a city dedicated to the moon (cf. Job 31:26-28), in conformity with the Zabian idolatry that early prevailed in Chaldea.

It should be recalled, in this connection, that Mosaic authorship of Genesis—and of the entire Pentateuch—does not necessarily exclude (1) the use of both oral tradition and written sources by the great Lawgiver Himself (cf. Acts 7:22, Num. 21:14-15, Josh. 10:13, 2 Sam. 1:18); (2) explanatory names, words, and phrases (“interpolations”) inserted by later scribes. To accept these statements as facts is not to downgrade in any respect the fundamental Mosaic origin and authority. It can hardly be denied that Moses was the one man of his own time most surely qualified to give us the greatest book of his time, that which we now recognize as the part of the Hebrew Scriptures which is designated the Torah. Nor is any necessity laid upon anyone to resort to a highly complex conjectural theory of Composite authorship, plus

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an undetermined number of unidentified and unidentifiable "redactors" to provide a solution for these problems. The problems themselves are relatively trivial, of the kind that usually attach to documents of historical interest extending into the ancient past. Cornfeld (AtD, 49) comments on this problem interestingly, as follows: "Hebrew tradition does not ascribe a written record to Abraham but to Moses (we use the term 'tradition' in the sense of 'what was handed down'). It is fairly certain that the patriarchal narratives, for the most part, derive from oral traditions, many of which were written after the time of Moses. But such oral traditions of pre-literary times are not to be spurned. The reliability of transmission was assured by the incredible memories of the Orientals. Hermann Gunkel remarks that these traditions in Genesis break up into separate tales, each unit characterized by a few participants and the affairs of a few families, simple descriptions, laconic speech, all welded into big bold strokes of narration with artful use of suspense. This colorful and memorable mode of narration is a vehicle for family and tribal traditions especially suited to oral transmission. The extraordinary feature is that Hebrew memory had preserved such pre-literary traditions for more than a thousand years and set them down in writing so faithfully." (It will be noted that any special inspiration of the Spirit of God in the preservation and presentation of these "traditions" in the Old Testament Scriptures, is carefully ignored in the foregoing statements, even though repeatedly affirmed for these Scriptures by the Bible writers themselves; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12, 2 Pet. 1:21, 2 Sam. 23:2, Acts 3:22-25). The whole Documentary Theory of the Pentateuch rests upon the basic assumption that the cultural background disclosed in the Biblical accounts of the Patriarchal Age reflect a milieu that would be appropriate only to a much later period, probably as much later as that of the Exile: as Wellhausen himself puts it: "We attain to no historical

knowledge of the patriarchs, but only of the time when the stories about them arose in the Israelite people; this latter age is here unconsciously projected, in its inner and in its outward features, into hoary antiquity, and is reflected there like a glorified image." This view is today thoroughly exploded by archeological evidence. For example, Muilenburg (IBG, 296) writes: "Archaeology has revealed an extraordinary correspondence between the general social and cultural conditions portrayed in Genesis and those exposed by excavations. Discoveries from such sites as Nuzi, Mari, and elsewhere, provide the geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious background against which the stories of the patriarchs are laid." (See my *Genesis*, Vol. I, pp. 55-70).

The Patriarchal Narratives.

We have already taken note of Cornfeld's suggestions as to the relation between "the oral traditions of pre-literary times" and the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. Several fantastic theories, conjectural to the point of absurdity, have been put forward in recent times as to the character of these narratives. Leupold (EG, 405-409) has stated these views, and pointed up the fallacies in them with great clarity, as follows: 'Unfortunately, much confusion has been introduced into the subject of the lives of the patriarchs by certain untenable theories on the basis of which far-reaching reconstructions have been attempted. We shall list the major of these theories and indicate briefly how they do violence to the available evidence. . . . One more general mode of approach is that which roughly classifies all the historical material of Genesis as *purely legendary*. Dillman gives a somewhat naive statement of the case when he says: 'Nowadays, of course, everyone quite takes it for granted that all these tales about the fathers do not belong into the realm of strict history but into that of legend.' Aside from the presumption which regards all the opponents of this view as nobodies, the

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assumption prevails that Israel must in all respects be like other nations. If other nations had tales from their early history which were purely legendary, so must Israel's record be. Aside from being a begging of the principle, critics of this stripe are ready to concede Israel's distinct superiority in the matter of religion. Why cannot the rest of the life of this people furnish material superior to that found in other nations.

"One of the most popular methods of dealing with patriarchal history is to approach it on the basis of the so-called *tribal theory* (*Stammtheorie*). This theory assumes that the patriarchs were not actual historical characters but fictitious characters which are to serve to explain the origin of certain tribes. When Abram goes to Egypt, the tribe in reality went in its earlier days, etc. The patriarchs are eponymous characters to whom is ascribed what befell the tribe. The grain of truth involved in this theory is that, in reality, certain of the names mentioned in the Table of Nations, chapter ten, are tribal names and not names of persons. However, in such cases (10:13, 14, 16, 17, 18) tribal names are used ("Amorite, Girdashite," etc.), and no attempt is made to make them appear as individuals. The claim by which the tribal theory is chiefly supported is that ethnology has no instances on record where nations descended from an individual, as, for example, Israel from Abram. However, on this score the Biblical records happen to have preserved facts which ethnology no longer has available. But how a nation may descend from an individual is traced step by step in the Biblical record.

"Besides, the Genesis records in their detailed accounts bear too much of the stamp of records concerning characters of flesh and blood as we have it. Dillmann may make light of this fact and say: 'We need nowadays no longer prove that the wealth of picturesque details of the narrative is not in itself a proof of the historicity of the things

narrated, but is, on the contrary, a characteristic mark of the legend.' But though legends do usually abound in picturesque details, the things narrated in Genesis very evidently bear the stamp of sober truth. Christ and the apostles recognized the patriarchs as historical characters; cf. such remarks as John 8:56 and the almost two dozen references of Christ to Abraham alone.

"More farfetched than either of the two theories described thus far is the *astral-myth theory*. Briefly stated, it amounts to this: even as Greek mythology had certain tales by way of explanation of the origin of the signs of the zodiac, so did the Babylonians, and so, of necessity, must Israel. An illustration: Sarah's going down into Egypt as a sterile woman is the Israelitish way of stating the Babylonian myth of the descent of the goddess Ishtar into the underworld to receive the boon of fertility. Even though the story primarily tells of Abram's going into Egypt, and though Egypt has to be taken to signify the underworld—a thing utterly without parallel in the Scriptures—and even though Sarai must be interpreted to be an adaptation of the name of the Babylonian goddess *Sharratu*, the wife of the moon god, in spite of all these forms of unwarranted treatment of the text, the adherents of this theory fail to see its folly. We cannot but label such a theory as an attempt to discredit Scripture.

"A fourth mode of misinterpreting the sacred narrative is the attempt to account for it on the basis of what we might term *the Beduin-ideal theory*. Briefly, this involves the notion that the writer or the writers of the patriarchal history were in reality setting forth the type of Beduin life as found in patriarchal times as an ideal for a later more civilized and more degenerate age. The writer is supposed to be enthusiastic for the Beduin type of life and to see in it the cure for the social ills of his time. So the Beduin religion is also set forth as an ideal of monotheistic religion. Incidentally, that utter simplicity sup-

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posed to be set forth by this type of life is hardly characteristic of the patriarchs, for already men like Abram are in possession of much goods and great wealth and are in a position to give rich gifts such as jewels to close friends or prospective wives.

"In reading how Gunkel, an ardent advocate of the purely legendary or mythical theory, manipulates his theory, one is tempted to speak of still another theory, namely the theory which glorifies the clever pranks of the patriarchs. For in writing particularly of the devices employed by Jacob in taking advantage of Esau or of Laban, he writes as if the readers of these tales gloated over them as a humorous glorification of a crafty ancestor. On other occasions he writes with pitying disdain of the very crude and elementary conceptions of the deity held by these early writers. Again the effort to deflate the conception of the Scriptures is manifest, and a Biblical book is reduced to the level of a collection of amusing anecdotes."

(See my Genesis, Vol. I, pp. 57-62, for a more detailed account of this academic nit-picking indulged by the "analytical critics" in their treatment of all ancient writings. As a matter of fact, archeology already has exploded these fabulous creations—myths, if you please—of the seminarian mentality.)

Leupold goes on to discuss briefly erroneous conceptions of the patriarchal religion. He writes: "Parallel with these faulty theories runs the erroneous conception of the patriarchal religion. Here again we may refer to prevalent theories. We shall do no more, however, than to list briefly the erroneous conceptions we are referring to. Prominent among these is the attitude which describes the early religion of Israel as *totemism*. This endeavors to prove that certain types of creatures were deemed sacred and were worshiped by certain tribes. Proof for this view is deduced, for example, in the case of Terah from the fact that his name may signify a type of mountain goat. This proof

grows very top-heavy, when so elaborate a conclusion is built upon an accidental possibility.

"A second equally grievous misconception is that which describes the religion of the patriarchs as *ancestor* worship. In proof of this, mention is made, for example, of the fact that certain graves are mentioned, like that of Deborah (Gen. 35:8) in connection with which an "oak of weeping" is referred to, or where, it is asserted, sacrifices to the dead were made. Nowhere are the statements found, however, that would actually prove that the spirits of the dead were thought of as gods. The whole conception is as shallow and as unscientific as it can be.

"Then even *fetishism* has been attributed to the patriarchs. Israel's religion is supposed to give indication that holy hills were revered as a fetish; so, too, fountains, trees, and stones. Yet even the unlearned will be able to detect quite readily that these strange reconstructions of the text must be read into the text in a manner which does violence to all sober and honest interpretation of the text. The thought lying behind all such attempts is, of course, this: since such lower levels of religion are seen on the part of many other nations, therefore they must be characteristic of Israel's religion in its earlier stages—a faulty style of argument."

We may summarize all this, and refute forever the implications involved, by affirming the fact which the Biblical content emphasizes from beginning to end, namely, that God called the fleshly seed of Abraham out of the nations and put them in the pulpit of the world for the specific twofold purpose of preserving the knowledge of the living and true God and preparing mankind for the advent and ministry of His Son, Messiah. And even though they yielded at times to the temptation to adopt the coarse notions and licentious practices of their pagan neighbors, it must be admitted that they did accomplish the dual task to which God called them. Christians must

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never lose sight of the fact that their God—the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—is the very God who revealed Himself to Moses in the Sinai desert, and that for their knowledge of this God—the one true God—they are forever indebted to His ancient people, the Children of Israel. (Cf. Exo. 3:14, Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5, 46:9-11; Matt. 16:16; John 3:16, 5:23; Eph. 1:3, 1 Thess. 1:9, etc.).

The Problem of Ur versus Haran

The fact has been emphasized in all three volumes of the present textbook on Genesis that any Scripture text must be interpreted, not only in relation to its immediate context, *but also in its relation to the teaching of the Bible as a whole*. Let it be emphasized again, at this point, that this is a norm which must be followed in order for one to arrive at any correct understanding of any segment of Scripture. In no area of the Biblical content is the application of this norm more necessary than in resolving the difficulty which commentators seem to manifest in trying to determine whether God's call came to Abraham in Ur or in Haran: indeed some speculate that two calls may have been involved. Of course, the *modus operandi* of the "analytical critics" is to resort to the unproved hypothesis of separate Documentary sources. To the present writer, this seems wholly unnecessary, for the simple reason that other Scriptures alluding to the event resolve the apparent uncertainty. Clearly the Mosaic narrative does not even intimate the possibility of a call prior to that which is specified in Gen. 12:1. The entire Scripture tradition concurs in reporting that this first call came to Abraham in Ur. The language of Gen. 15:7 and Neh. 9:7 might be construed to be somewhat indefinite; however, all these passages certainly involve no disagreement with the positive statement of Stephen in Acts 7:2 to the effect that God's first call to Abram came to him in Ur "before he dwelt in Haran," and that pursuant to this call Abram "came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt

in Haran, and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell," that is, Canaan. It must be admitted that Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin bears the stamp of accuracy throughout. Of course there could have been a repetition of the Divine call in Haran after Terah's death, but any positive evidence of this is lacking in the Scripture story. It would seem that immediately after the death of Terah, Abram set forth on his long pilgrimage with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. The Divine call as stated in Gen. 12:1 was definitely a call to Abram to separate himself from his "kindred," which may have had reference to Nahor or other members of Terah's household. Terah may well have had other offspring who are not mentioned because they had no subsequent interrelationships with Nahor, Bethuel and Laban, all three of whom are mentioned later in the patriarchal narratives (Gen. 22:20-23, 24:15, 25:20, 28:1-2). The Divine call was much more than a call to Abram to separate himself from his kindred—it was a Divine call to separate himself from the idolatrous tendencies which had developed in Terah's household.

We may safely conclude, I think, that the Call to Abram for his pilgrimage of Faith was first made to him in Ur; that his father Terah and brother Nahor and their households, for whatever reason or reasons that may seem possible, accompanied him to Haran; that Abram lingered there until Terah died, at which time Nahor elected to remain in that region, but Abram set out for the Land of Promise with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. We are told explicitly that Abram was 75 years old when he entered upon this pilgrimage.

This was the second landmark in the progressive actualization of God's Eternal Purpose, the first having been the pronouncement of the mysterious oracle of Gen. 3:15 *in re* the Seed of the Woman. It has been rightly stated that Abram's journey to the Promised Land was "no

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routine expedition of several hundred miles," but "the start of an epic voyage," of "a quest that was to constitute the central theme of all biblical history." The third landmark in this actualization, as we know well, was the organization of the Israelite Theocracy at Sinai through the mediatorship of Moses (John 1:17, Gal. 3:24-25, Col. 2:14, 2 Cor. 3:2-15, etc.).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-FIVE

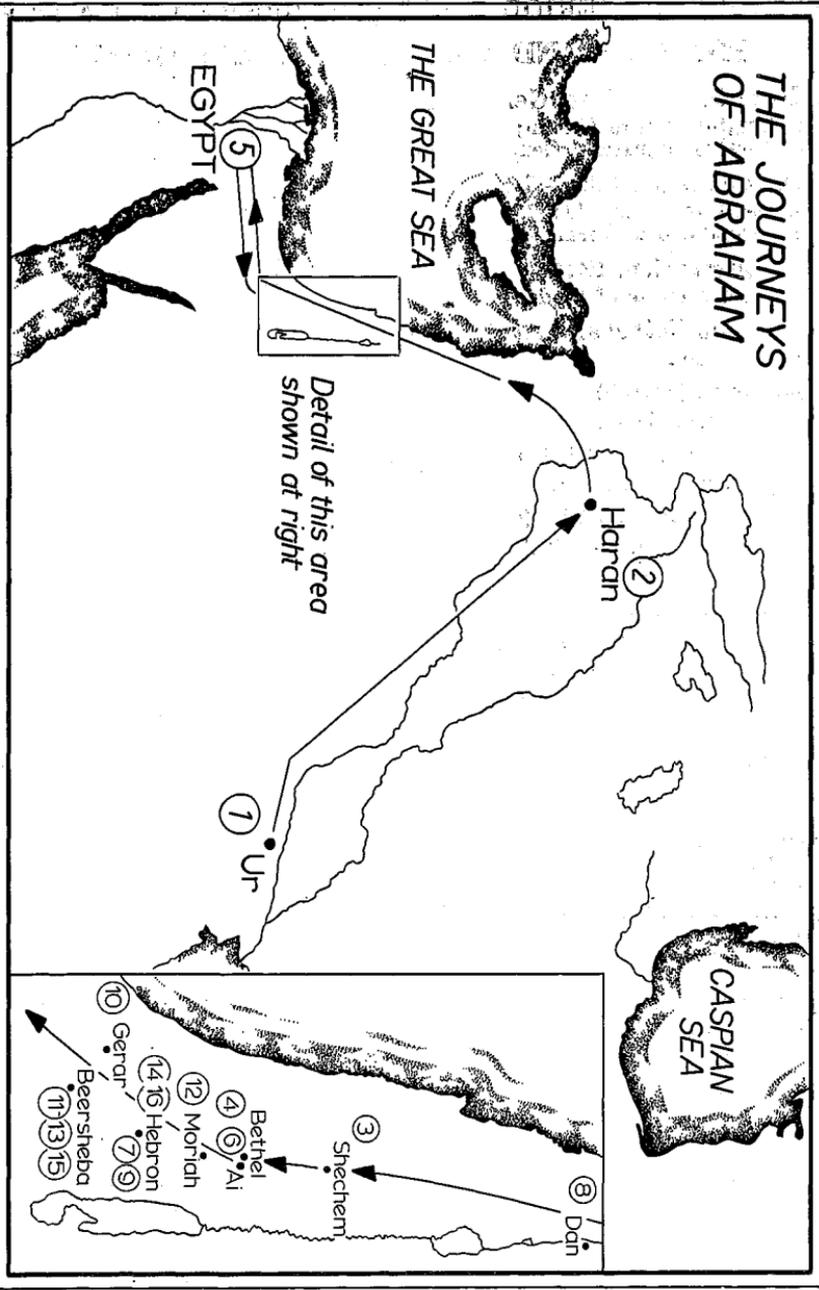
1. What is the central theme of the Bible?
2. How is redemption related to God's Cosmic Plan?
3. How and when will this Cosmic Plan be consummated?
4. What is the purpose of the Last Judgment?
5. State the probable explanation of I Cor. 6:2-3.
6. Explain in what sense Jesus is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.
7. What do we mean by saying that God does not *foreknow*, but simply *knows*?
8. Explain the mysterious oracle of Gen. 3:15.
9. Show how the Scripture content is the record of the successive limitations of the meaning of the phrase, "The Seed of the Woman."
10. In whom is it finally and fully actualized?
11. What significant role does the word "generations" have in the story of the patriarchs?
12. What relation does this word have to the text material which follows it? What does it have to that which precedes it?
13. What are the suggested origins of the word "Hebrew"?
14. What are the suggested uses of the terms "Hebrew" and "Israelite"?
15. What difference developed in the use of these terms in the later history of the Jews?
16. How and when did the name "Jew" originate?

17. Name the three Dispensations of Biblical history, and state the extent of each chronologically.
18. By what were the changes of Dispensation determined?
19. What is the meaning of the word "dispensation"?
20. Summarize the "generations of Terah" as given in Gen. 11:27-32.
21. How and when did the change from the generic seed to the ethnic seed of the Woman take place?
22. What was the first stage of the pilgrimage to the Land of Promise?
23. What type of pagan "religion" prevailed both in Ur and in Haran?
24. What evidences do we have that Terah's house had become corrupted by pagan idolatry?
25. What are our reasons for believing that Abram was Terah's youngest son?
26. When and where did Haran die, in relation to the migrations of Terah and Abram?
27. What members of Terah's household remained in Haran and settled there?
28. What was the region designated Padan-aram in Genesis?
29. What subsequent events related in Genesis indicate continued intercourse between Abraham in Palestine and his relatives in the region of Haran?
30. What kind of life did the members of Terah's house apparently live? Why are we justified in thinking that these patriarchs were accustomed to frequent migrations between Northern and Southern Mesopotamia?
31. Explain the chief features of the ancient pagan Cult of Fertility.
32. Where are the practices of this Cult alluded to especially in the New Testament?
33. What was the name of the Earth-Mother in Babylon? In Phoenicia? In Syria? In Palestine? In Egypt?

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34. What was the principle of imitative magic which characterized this Cult?
35. Explain the following practices: ritual prostitution, phallic worship, orgiastic religion, ecstatic religion.
36. What was the Roman Saturnalia?
37. What was the essential character of these ancient "agricultural" or "fertility" rites and festivals?
38. What evidence do we have from archaeology that the cultural background portrayed in the book of Genesis, in the patriarchal narratives, is historically correct?
39. Review the critical theories of the patriarchal narratives as given by Leupold and the objections to each of them.
40. Discuss the chronological problem of the Abrahamic Pilgrimage in relation to the Mosaic authorship of the Torah. How may the problem be resolved?
41. State clearly the problem of Ur and Haran in relation to the Call of Abram.
42. For what especially are all Christians indebted to the ancient Children of Israel?
43. How account for the fact that Children of Israel succeeded in large measure in resisting the inroads of the pagan Cult of Fertility?
44. How old was Abram when he left Haran for the Land of Promise. Whom did he take with him?

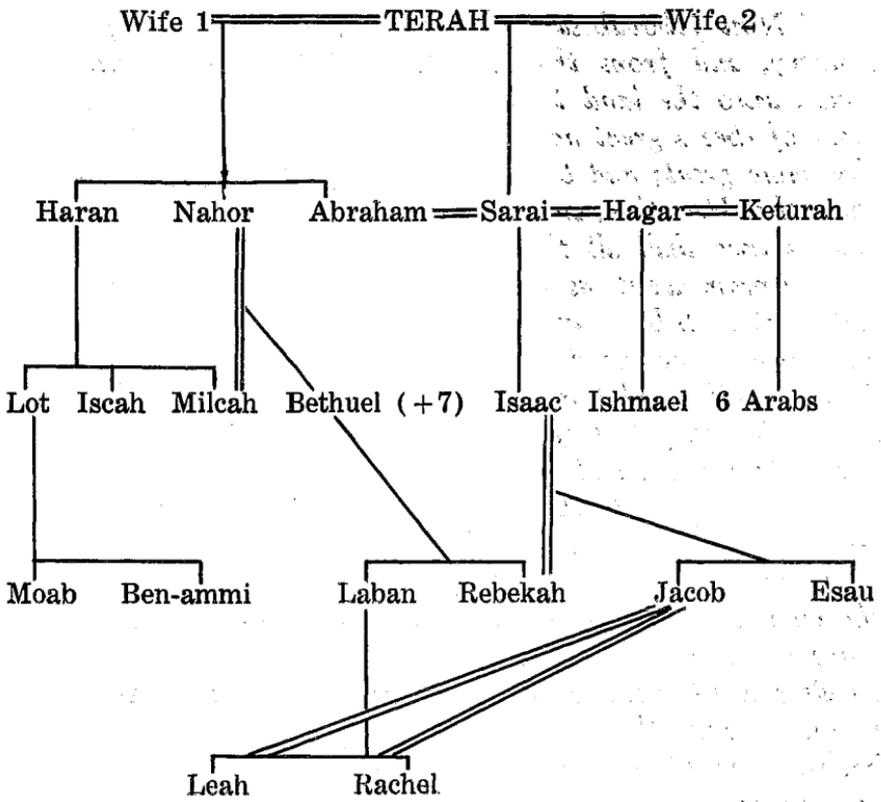
THE JOURNEYS OF ABRAHAM



THE LIFE AND JOURNEYS OF ABRAHAM

1. *Ur* of the Chaldees; Gen. 11:27-31.
 - a. Original call to Abram; Acts 7:2-3.
 - b. Terah's migration; Gen. 11:27-31.
2. *Haran*; Gen. 11:32—12:3.
 - a. Death of Terah; 11:32.
 - b. Second call to Abram; 12:1-3.
3. *Shechem*; Gen. 12:4-7.
 - a. First promise of land.
4. Between *Bethel* and *Ai*; 12:8-9.
 - a. Altar built.
5. *Egypt*; 12:10-20.
 - a. Lie about Sarai.
6. Back at *Bethel*; 13:1-17.
 - a. Separation from Lot.
7. *Hebron*; 13:18—14:12.
 - a. Invasion from the East.
8. *Dan*; 14:13-16.
 - a. Rescue of Lot.
9. Returning to *Hebron* and at *Hebron*; 14:17—19:38.
 - a. Meeting with King Sodom and Melchizedek; 14:17-24.
 - b. God's covenant with Abram; Ch. 15.
 - c. Hagar and Ishmael; Ch. 16.
 - d. Covenant of circumcision; 17:1-14.
 - e. Promise of Isaac; 17:15-21.
 - f. Circumcision of household; 17:22-27.
 - g. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; Chs. 18-19.
10. *Gerar*; Gen. 20:1—21:20.
 - a. Lie about Sarah to Abimelech; Ch. 20.
 - b. Birth of Isaac; 21:1-7.
 - c. Removal of Hagar and Ishmael; 21:8-21.
11. *Beersheba*; 21:22-34.
 - a. Covenant of Abraham and Abimelech.
12. Land of *Moriah*; 22:1-18.
 - a. Offering of Isaac.
13. *Beersheba*; 22:19-24.
 - a. Abraham learns of Nahor's family.
14. *Hebron*; Ch. 23.
 - a. Death and burial of Sarah.
15. *Beersheba*; 24:1—25:8.
 - a. Wife for Isaac; Ch. 24.
 - b. Marriage to Keturah; 25:1-4.
 - c. Last days of Abraham; 25:5-8.
16. *Hebron*; 25:9-10.
 - a. Burial of Abraham.

FAMILY OF TERAH



- NOTES—
- a. The above information is taken from Gen. 11:27, 29; 19:37-38; 20:12; 22:20-28; 24:15; 28:2, 5.
 - b. A double line indicates a marriage.
 - c. Gen. 20:12 indicates that Sarai was half-sister to Abram. The language of this verse could indicate that she was Abram's niece, but the fact that there was but ten years difference between his age and hers (Gen. 17:17) renders this hypothesis less probable.
 - d. Tradition has identified Iscah with Sarai, Abram's wife, but there is no real basis for such a supposition.