

## TERAH

Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

*Excerpt from Apples of Gold*

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

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Terah, the son of Nahor, lived most of his life in Ur on the lower Euphrates near the Persian Gulf. He was the father of three sons: Abram (Abraham), Nahor, Haran (Gen. 11:26) and also had a daughter named Sarai (Sarah) by a different wife (Gen. 20:12).

Genesis 11:

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

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

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

27 Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, 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 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.

30 But 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.

Verse 26 tells us Terah was 70 when he had his first son. Although Abraham is listed first, he was not the firstborn son. Comparing Genesis 11:32 with 12:4, we find that Abraham was 75 when Terah died at age 205. Thus, Terah was 130 ( $205 - 75 = 130$ ) when Abraham was born.<sup>1</sup> This logically shows him to be the youngest of the three sons.

From Gen. 11:31 we learn that even though “Terah took” his family some 500 miles along the Euphrates from Ur to Haran (c. 275 miles NNE of Damascus) “to go into the land of Canaan”, the call from God to leave Ur was addressed to Abraham, not Terah (Acts 7:2–4). According to Joshua 24:2 and 15, previous to this call Terah and his family were idolaters.<sup>2</sup> From this, nearly all academicians indicate that Terah so remained. However, as it was Terah who took Abraham and others from Ur to go into Canaan, such must be seen as a significant implication that he converted to Abraham's God and determined to depart from the land of idolatry.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the *context* of Genesis 31:53 (The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, **the God of their father**, judge betwixt us) supports this conclusion, for the father referred to here is Terah.

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<sup>1</sup> As Haran died before the family moved northward (Gen. 11:28), he was most likely the eldest. Of course, this places Nahor as the middle son. Haran's son Lot eventually journeyed into Canaan with his uncle Abraham.

Moreover, one of the main reasons God removed Abraham from Ur was that if he remained there, he would never become the head of the family clan for, by the law of primogeniture, the firstborn son would have so been. Why then is Abraham listed first – because he received the blessing and the birthright. Hence, Messiah Jesus of Nazareth came through his lineage.

<sup>2</sup> Sin (same as the Sumerian god Nanna), the crescent moon (seen on nearly all Muslim flags), was the principal deity worshiped at Ur as well as at Haran during the time of Terah. Indeed, these two cities were the chief seats of Sin's worship.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus completely misses the mark when he says that it was Terah's grief over the loss of his son Haran that provoked him to leave Ur of the Chaldees (*Antiq.* i.6.6).

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Stephen states that the journey to continue from Haran to the land of Canaan did not take place until after Terah died (Acts 7:4). At that time God *repeated* the call to the 75 year old patriarch which He had first given at Ur of the Chaldees: “Now the LORD **had said** unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee” (Gen. 12:1 & 4). The order for Abraham to proceed to Canaan immediately after Terah’s death strongly suggests that the pause at Haran (Gen. 11:31) was due to Terah’s failing health and not that he wished to remain where a temple to the moon god stood, as so many scholars and commentaries would have it.

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