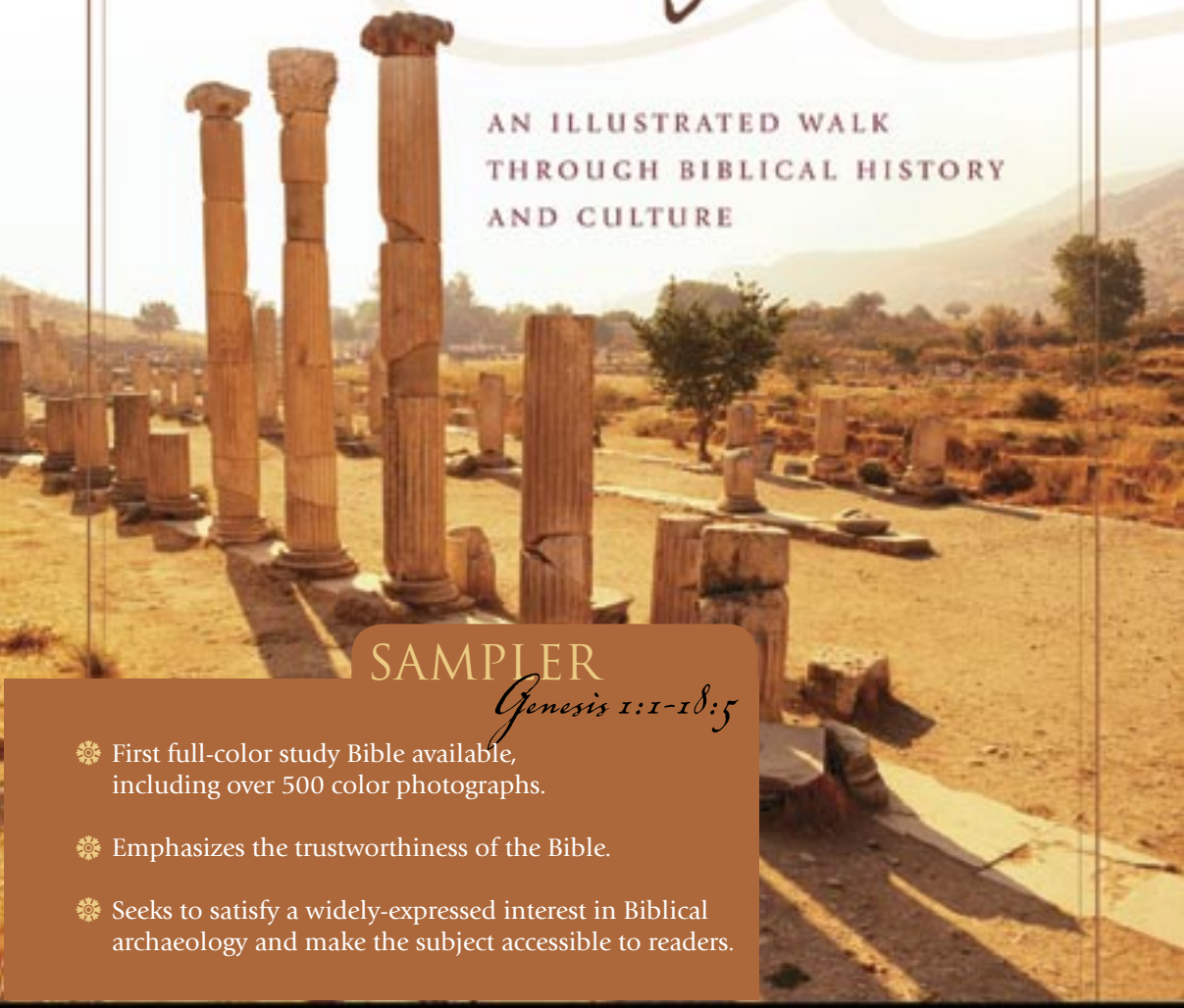
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The purpose and passion of International Bible Society is to faithfully translate, publish and reach out with God's Word so that people around the world may become disciples of Jesus Christ and members of his Body.

The Bible is not a book of abstract religious teaching. If it were, understanding its historical context would be of relatively minor importance, although even then questions about the circumstances of its composition could not be ignored. Furthermore, the Bible did not arise out of a single cultural and historical environment; it certainly is not the product of revelations given to a single man, as the Koran claims to be. If it were, understanding its historical background would be far simpler.

As it is, the writing of the Bible took place over a period of more than 1,000 years. Although most if not all the writers of Scripture were Israelite or Jewish, these authors lived in a wide variety of circumstances. The cultural backdrop to the Biblical stories includes Egypt of the pharaohs, Mesopotamia, Canaanite culture, Israel across the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, the royal court of Persia, the expansive Hellenistic civilization and the Roman Empire. The languages of the Bible are Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, but there are traces as well of the influence of Egyptian, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Sumerian, Persian and Latin. Portions of the Bible were composed in Israel, Egypt, Babylon, Asia Minor (Turkey), Greece and Rome. The writers of Scripture were sages, kings, farmers, exiles, governors, fishermen and traveling preachers.

The literature of the Bible is itself of a wide variety, and a given genre is likely to have much in common with the literature of its day. Narratives that tell the story of God's people in simple yet absorbing tales run through the Bible in books as diverse as Genesis, Judges, Ruth, Esther and Acts. Legislative texts that have parallels in the law codes of Mesopotamia emerge in books such as Numbers and Deuteronomy. Hymns and devotional songs appear in the Psalms, and when set in comparison to the hymns and religious poems of Egypt, Ugarit and Mesopotamia, they display both striking similarities and telling dissimilarities to their counterparts. The Bible even contains love poetry (Song of Songs), and this, too, is both like and unlike contemporary Egyptian love poetry. Like the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the people of Israel composed many proverbs.

Of course, differences can be as significant as similarities, and not every type of literature in the Bible has strong parallels outside its pages. The proclamations of the Hebrew prophets have limited parallels in ancient Mesopotamia, and it is difficult to find anything else that compares with the four Gospels of the New Testament. On the other hand, the apocalyptic visions of Revelation can be compared to the apocalyptic texts of "Second Temple" Judaism, just as the letters of Paul may be evaluated over against other epistolary literature of the Greco-Roman period. In short, the Bible is an amazingly diverse collection of texts, none of which originated in a vacuum.

The *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* focuses on the historical, literary and cultural context of the Bible. This context includes the history of peoples and places populating its pages, daily life in various periods and under widely diverse circumstances during Biblical times, and ancient texts that illuminate the Bible and the archaeology of the Biblical world. In addition, the articles in this Bible devote particular attention to challenges archaeologists and Biblical scholars face on the critical issue of the trustworthiness of Scripture. But why is there a need for a tool that focuses on historical context? Several answers apply:

1. *Context is crucial to interpretation.* Imagine reading the words of a political or religious debate without the benefit of any knowledge of the circumstances, customs or beliefs of those involved in the discussion/dispute. The reader would either be bewildered or would run the risk of grossly misinterpreting the issues and positions people were taking. It is foolish, even arrogant, to think that we can rightly understand the Biblical writers without knowing anything of their environment.
2. As described above, *the Biblical world is complex and spans a great deal of history.* The ancient world is simply too extensive and too diverse for us to expect a few passing comments on "background" to give us a meaningful awareness of the cultures that the Biblical writers inhabited.
3. *A study of the context of the Bible is an encouragement to faith.* Many modern Christians shun the study of the ancient world for fear that scholars will make them aware of troubling facts that will serve only to undermine their faith in the Bible. In reality, a careful study of the world of the Bible enhances our confidence in its historical accuracy and in its distinctiveness as the Word of God. Set against the astonishing variety of cultures that made up the Biblical world, the unity of the message of the Bible is remarkable. The writers of Scripture spoke in diverse times and places, but they were inspired by one changeless Spirit. And, of course, the only way to answer those who claim that historical facts undermine Biblical credibility is to take a firsthand look at those very facts.

4. A*wareness of the context of the Bible is an antidote to the dangerous dismissal of history that we see too often in both the church and the academy*. In our day the postmodern outlook all but rejects history and context. Under the influence of this movement readers simply refuse to hear the writers of Scripture on their own terms and instead assert that it is up to each reader to make whatever he or she will of the ancient texts. Many reject outright the suggestion that we are obligated to attempt to understand the objective of a passage's original writer. The author's intended meaning is thus rendered irrelevant to the modern reader, who feels free to interpret a text in any manner whatsoever. Such an approach makes a mockery of Biblical authority. Further, many well-intentioned Christian readers, although not fully committed to a postmodern way of thinking, tend to interpret the Bible strictly in terms of their own experiences and standards, without ever considering what a prophet or apostle was saying to the people of his own day. An awareness of the beliefs, conflicts, history and habits of the people of Biblical times forces us to confront questions like, "What did Paul actually mean when he wrote these words to the Corinthian church?"
5. *Awareness of the world of the Bible instills within us a deeper appreciation for the writers of Scripture and a deeper love for the Bible itself*. It is difficult for us to genuinely love someone we do not really know, and we cannot enter into the experiences and perspectives of Biblical people without first relating to their world. By looking at the tools with which they worked, the struggles they faced, the literature they knew and the customs under which they lived, we acquire a profound admiration for their faith and wisdom.

The *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* includes the following features:

- Over 500 insightful and accessible articles, many including full-color photographs, covering the following five general categories: Archaeological Sites; Cultural and Historical Notes; Ancient Peoples, Lands and Rulers; The Reliability of the Bible; and Ancient Texts and Artifacts.
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- Concordance.
- A glossary, cross-referenced to pertinent, bolded words within the articles.



THE Old Testament

INTRODUCTION TO *Genesis*

AUTHOR, PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING

Genesis is, strictly speaking, an anonymous work. Historical tradition, however, as well as Biblical attestation, assigns authorship to Moses (see, e.g., Mk 12:26; Lk 24:27; Jn 1:45; Ro 10:5; 2Co 3:15). Moses author ship would not have required him to write the entire book. In fact, all of the Genesis events took place long before Moses was born, indicating that he must have used sources. We might view Moses as an editor/historian who, in addition to receiving God's direct and supernatural communication, drew together details of the family histories of Abraham and his descendants, as they existed in the Israelite community in Egypt, into a single text.

Scholars who question Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Ge–Dt) generally support one or another variant of the Documentary Hypothesis (see "The Documentary Hypothesis" on p. 15).

If Moses did indeed write/compile Genesis, he must have done so during the Israelites' exodus wandering period, probably between 1440 and 1400 B.C. (see "The Store Cities of Pithom and Rameses" on p. 86, "The Pharaoh of the Exodus" on p. 98, "The Date of the Exodus" on p. 106, "The Hyksos and the Old Testament" on p. 121 and "The Conquest of Canaan" on p. 310). Those scholars who suggest that the Pentateuch was written as a single work during the exile typically place the date of authorship at about 550 B.C.

AUDIENCE

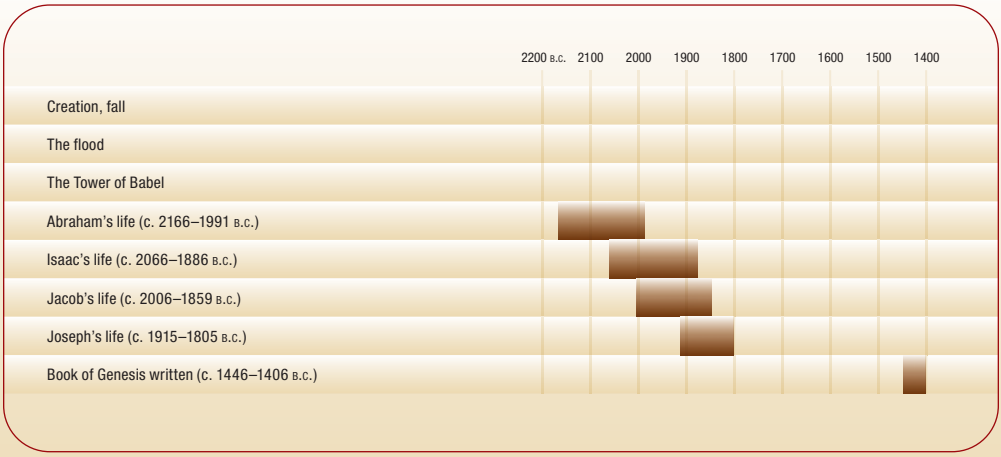
Genesis records the stories of the creation, the fall into sin, the flood, the call of Abraham and the early history of the ancestors of Israel. The Genesis stories were probably circulated among the Israelites living in Egypt, reminding them of their familial and spiritual heritage and explaining their current situation. Genesis preserved individual stories (like those about Joseph) that could afford hope to God's enslaved people. Promises to Abraham about the future of his progeny (e.g., 15:1–7) also would have encouraged them. Later, Israelites directly involved in the exodus, as well as their succeeding generations, no doubt read Genesis in order to understand this piece of the great saga of their national origin. The fulfillment of God's historical promises to the patriarchs served as a testimony to his continuing faithfulness.

CULTURAL FACTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Genesis records the birth and early history of humankind. Not only did God create the physical world, but he also formed man and woman in his own image and endowed them with the gift of free will. Over time changes took place, including humanity's fall into sin and the resultant great flood.

Tribes, cities and civilizations ebbed and flowed, rising and declining in a rhythm that has characterized human history ever since. Centuries passed, and at some point God chose to concentrate his particular attention on one individual from an ordinary, idol-worshiping family—who in his turn opted to listen and obey. From such unimpressive roots began the triumphant—if often temporarily tragic—saga of redemption history.

TIMELINE



AS YOU READ

Note how quickly and irreversibly the human race turned its back on Eden and on perfect fellowship with God (chs. 2–3) and how God responded (chs. 4–8). Then, through the unlikely choice of a still-childless patriarch, God began to form the family from which the Israelite nation would spring (chs. 11–30; 49). Study the life of Joseph, from his years of slavery to his meteoric rise to power in a strange land to his revelation to his unsuspecting brothers (chs. 42–45). This book explains how and why the Israelites came to live in Egypt, setting the stage for what would happen to this special people in Exodus and beyond.

DID YOU KNOW?

- An individual in the ancient Near East could claim rights to a well on someone else's land (21:25–30).
- The bride price paid by a husband's family was to be held in trust to provide for the wife if she were to find herself abandoned or widowed (31:14–16).
- A man's seal, cord and staff were symbols of his individual and corporate identity—the ancient equivalent of an I.D. card or signature (38:17–18).
- Both the Egyptians and the Babylonians compiled "dream books," containing sample dreams with keys to their interpretation (40:8).
- The philosophy behind the Egyptian practice of embalming was a belief that the body was to be preserved as a repository for the soul after death (50:2–3).

THEMES

Genesis, the book of beginnings, includes the following themes:

1. *Creation.* God created the world "very good" (1:31). There was wholeness and harmony between God and humanity, among humans and between people and the rest of the created order.

2. *Sin.* Sin entered the world through one man, Adam (3:1–19; Ro 5:12). Unbelief, human conflict, sickness and environmental degradation are its results.

3. *The image of God.* All human beings are created in the image of God; each person *is* God's likeness as a personal, rational, creative, moral being. Men and women were created equal.

4. *God's global plan of redemption.* Although God chose to work through one ethnic group in the Old Testament, his divine intention was that all nations would come to know him through Abraham's descendants (12:1–3). Abraham was chosen because of his faith, making him the father of all who come to God on the same basis.

OUTLINE

I. Primeval History: Four Great Events (1:1—11:26)
   A. The Creation of the Universe; Adam and Eve (1–2)
   B. The Fall and the Results of Sin (3–5)
   C. The Flood (6–9)
   D. The Scattering of the Nations (10:1—11:26)
II. Patriarchal History: Four Great Characters (11:27—50:26)
   A. Abraham (11:27—20:18)
   B. Isaac (21–26)
   C. Jacob (27:1—37:1)
   D. Joseph (37:2—50:26)



ANCIENT VOICES

Noble god of the first occasion,
who built people and gave birth
to the gods,
original one who made it possible for
all to live;
in whose heart it was spoken, who saw
them evolve,
who foretold what was not and thought
of what is.

—FROM A RAMESSIDE STELA
(INSCRIBED STONE MONUMENT)

See "Ancient Creation Narratives" article.

The Beginning

1 In the beginning[a] God created the heavens and the earth.[b]
2 Now the earth was[a] formless and empty,[c] darkness was over
the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God[d] was hovering over the
waters.

3 And God said,[e] "Let there be light," and there was light.[f] 4 God saw
that the light was good, and he separated the light from the
darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he
called "night."[g] And there was evening, and there was morn-
ing—the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse[h] between the waters to sep-
arate water from water." 7 So God made the expanse and sep-
arated the water under the expanse from the water above it.[i]
And it was so. 8 God called the expanse "sky." And there was
evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place,[j] and let dry ground appear." And
it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw
that it was good.

11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation:[k] seed-bearing plants and trees on the land
that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. 12 The land produced
vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it ac-
cording to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was
morning—the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights[l] in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let
them serve as signs[m] to mark seasons[n] and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse
of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light
to govern[o] the day and the lesser light to govern[p] the night. He also made the stars.[q] 17 God set
them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night,[r] and
to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there
was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the ex-
panse of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing
with which the water teems,[s] according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.
And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number
and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."[t] 23 And there was evening, and
there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that
move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. 25 God made

1:1 [a]Jn 1:1-2 [b]Job 38:4; Ps 90:2; Isa 42:5; 44:24; 45:12,18; Ac 17:24; Heb 11:3; Rev 4:11
1:2 [c]Jer 4:23 [d]Ps 104:30
1:3 [e]Ps 33:6,9; 148:5; Heb 11:3 [f]2Co 4:6*
1:5 [g]Ps 74:16
1:6 [h]Jer 10:12
1:7 [i]Job 38:8-11, 16; Ps 148:4
1:9 [j]Job 38:8-11; Ps 104:6-9; Pr 8:29; Jer 5:22; 2Pe 3:5
1:11 [k]Ps 65:9-13; 104:14
1:14 [l]Ps 74:16 [m]Jer 10:2 [n]Ps 104:19
1:16 [o]Ps 136:8 [p]Ps 136:9 [q]Job 38:7,31-32; Ps 8:3; Isa 40:26
1:18 [r]Jer 33:20, 25
1:21 [s]Ps 104:25-26
1:22 [t]ver 28; Ge 8:17

[a] *2* Or possibly *became*

1:1–31 The length of the creative days of Genesis 1 is not specified in the Bible. The Hebrew word for "day" may mean a period of light between two periods of darkness, a period of light together with the preceding period of darkness or a prolonged period of time. All three usages occur in the Bible. No one of them equates to exactly 24 hours, although the second one is near it. There is no indisputable indication as to which of the three is meant in Genesis 1. The Bible provides no specific statement as to how long ago matter was created, when the first day or creation began or when the sixth day ended.

1:1–2 Some scholars hold that there is a long gap between verses 1 and 2, during which God's perfect creation came into a period of chaos through a great catastrophe. Hebrew syntax, however, leaves no room for such a view.

1:5 In ancient times, when a king named something or someone, he was thereby claiming dominion or ownership over that possession or individual (see 17:5,15; 41:45; 2Ki 23:34; 24:17; Da 1:7).

1:12 There is much discussion about the question of "evolution" with relation to the creation, but the word *evolution* may be used in several different ways. If taken in the historical sense (the theory that everything now existing has come into its present condition as a result of natural development, all of it having proceeded by natural causes from one rudimentary beginning), such a theory is sharply contradicted by the divine facts revealed in Genesis 1–2. It is explicitly stated several times that plants and animals are to reproduce "according to their kinds." Moses nowhere stated how large a "kind" is, and there is no ground for equating it with any particular modern definition of "species." Yet Genesis teaches that there are a number (perhaps a large number) of "kinds" of plants and animals, which cannot reproduce in such a way as to evolve from one into another. Nothing in the Bible denies the possibility, however, of change and development within the limits of a particular "kind."

Moreover, the creation of Adam is sharply distinguished from other aspects of creation, and the creation of Eve is described as a distinct act of God. Genesis 2:7 (in the Hebrew) clearly teaches that Adam did not exist as an animate being before he was a man, created after the image of God.

1:21 The phrase "creatures of the sea" refers to the name of a dreaded sea monster in Canaanite mythology (see "The *Enuma Elish* and the Biblical Concept of Creation" on p. 888). Old Testament poetry often refers to him as one of God's most powerful opponents. In Genesis, however, the creatures of the sea are portrayed as part of God's good creation, all of which is to be appreciated.

1:25 [u] Jer 27:5

the wild animals[u] according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

1:26 [v] Ps 100:3 [w] Ge 9:6; Jas 3:9 [x] Ps 8:6-8

[26] Then God said, "Let us[v] make man in our image,[w] in our likeness, and let them rule[x] over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

1:27 [y] 1Co 11:7

[z] Ge 5:2; Mt 19:4*; Mk 10:6*

[27] So God created man in his own image,[y]
in the image of God he created him;
male and female[z] he created them.

[a] *26* Hebrew; Syriac *all the wild animals*

ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS

Ancient Creation Narratives

GENESIS 1 In contrast to the Biblical creation narratives, ancient creation stories from **Mesopotamia**,[1] Egypt and Syria-Palestine do far more than try to explain how the physical world came into being. Creation myths often elevated the particular god of a particular shrine to supremacy over all other gods in order to validate the prestige of that deity, that shrine or the city in which the shrine was located.

For example, Egyptian creation myths tend to assert that a primordial mound or "Island of Creation" arose from a primeval ocean and that a specific god created all things from that location. Several Egyptian shrines, however, claimed to be the site of that primordial mound and asserted that the god of their respective shrine was the great creator god.

At Memphis, it was Ptah. At Hermopolis, it was Thoth. At Heliopolis, it was Re-Atum. Here a sacred stone was said to mark the very spot where Re-Atum, in the form of a "Bennu" bird, alighted and initiated the creative process.

Common motifs in creation myths include a spontaneous generation of gods, sexual reproduction among gods and the deification of nature (e.g., of the sun and moon). A creation myth often focuses on geographic and other elements unique to the shrine associated with the myth. An Egyptian myth, for example, may pay special attention to the creation of the Nile.

Sometimes creation myths relate battles between gods and the monsters of a primeval, watery chaos, through which one or more deities rises to supremacy. Sometimes creation occurs when a god defeats a primeval monster and divides its body into two parts, which become heaven and earth or earth and sea, etc. The Babylonian creation myth *Enuma Elish* describes the god Marduk's defeat of Tiamat, the mother-goddess and sea monster.[2] After a terrible battle in which Marduk slays Tiamat, he cuts her body in half like "a fish for drying" and uses it to form the heavenly dome. This victory purportedly establishes Marduk's supremacy among the gods.

Greek creation myths are similar. After initial chaos, the primordial deities Gaia (earth-goddess) and Uranus (sky-god) emerge. A series of monster-like gods (such as Cronos, Typhon and the Titans) is born to them, but Zeus (son of Cronos) defeats these beings and establishes the present world order.

Humans in creation myths from various sources are typically created as drudges to perform the gods' "dirty work." Some myths depict humans as the gods' slaves, whose primary function it is to feed them with their sacrifices.[3]

The Genesis account implicitly challenges the claims of these ancient creation myths by affirming God's unity and sovereignty, by portraying the heavenly bodies and great sea creatures as his creations and by presenting humans as God's stewards—and indeed image bearers—rather than as an afterthought born of divine need or laziness.

The Genesis creation narrative refers to the sun and moon as the "great light" and the "small light." Why? By describing these celestial bodies in this way, the Bible reduces them to the status of mere physical objects that "rule" only in the sense that they emit light and demarcate the calendar. In contrast, in many ancient languages the words translated "sun" and "moon" also refer to the sun god(dess) or moon god(dess). For instance, the Hebrew word translated "sun" is *shemesh*, but *Shamash* is also the name of the Mesopotamian sun god. The Greek word translated "moon," *selene*, is also the proper name of a Greek moon goddess. Similarly, the ancients regarded the stars (or constellations) as divine beings. In contrast, the terse Biblical statement "He also made the stars" (Ge 1:16) demotes these bodies to the status of created objects.

The Genesis account rejects the central motif of pagan religion: the deification of nature. Interestingly, it does not seek to elevate Yahweh over other gods. Indeed, in the seven-day creation account (Ge 1:1—2:3) Yahweh is not named; the Creator is simply referred to as "God" (*Elohim*), a more generic term. Even Genesis 2–3 provides no sense that Yahweh needed to establish his supremacy over other deities. There is no conquest of other gods or monsters, and no shrine or city is said to be the place from which God began the creative process. No sacred object is mentioned. The God of Genesis 1 is indeed the universal God.

See also "Cosmology in the Ancient Near East" on page 1139.

[1] See Glossary on page 2080 for definitions of bolded words.

[2] See "The *Enuma Elish* and the Biblical Concept of Creation" on page 888.

[3] See "The Creation of Humans in the Sumerian Myth of Enki" on page 800.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth[a] and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.[b] 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.[c]" And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made,[d] and it was very good.[e] And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

1:28 [a]Ge 9:1,7; Lev 26:9
1:29 [b]Ps 104:14
1:30 [c]Ps 104:14, 27; 145:15
1:31 [d]Ps 104:24 [e]1Ti 4:4

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested[a] from all his work.[f] 3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,[g] because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

2:2 [f]Ex 20:11; 31:17; Heb 4:4*
2:3 [g]Lev 23:3; Isa 58:13

Adam and Eve

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

[a] *2* Or *ceased*; also in verse 3

2:2–3 On the seventh day God ceased from his labors, later referring to this as an example for Israel to follow six days of labor with one of rest (Ex 20:11). No end to the rest of the seventh day is mentioned. As far as what the Bible tells us is concerned, God's rest from creating still continues.

2:4–25 While Genesis 1 describes the creation of the universe as a whole, 2:4–25 covers one special segment of that creation. The linking word (v. 4) is translated in the NIV as "account," but it means more—something like "subsequent/emergent account": The Hebrew *tôledôth,* both in its individual meaning and in its Old



The Location of Eden

GENESIS 2 The name Eden might have had one of two origins: the **Sumerian** word *eden*, which means "steppe" or "open field," or the identical Semitic word, denoting "luxury" or "delight." In Scripture, Eden is not only the name of the garden in which the first humans resided but also a metaphorical representation of the Garden of God (i.e., **Yahweh**'s dwelling place; Isa 51:3; Eze 28:12–15; 31:8–18).

Eden's precise location remains a mystery. Genesis 2:8 indicates that the Lord planted the garden "in the east, in Eden." This suggests a location east of Canaan. In addition, the Bible associates four rivers with Eden: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris and the Euphrates (vv. 10–14).

The Tigris and Euphrates are undoubtedly the two **Mesopotamian** rivers that still bear those names today.[1] The Gihon (possibly Hebrew for "to gush") and Pishon (usually understood to be a form of the Semitic verb "to spring up") are more difficult to identify.

A spring named the Gihon waters Jerusalem, but this location does not match the description of its route through the land of Cush (v. 13). Many scholars identify the Gihon as the Nile, since Cush is sometimes associated with Nubia, south of Egypt. If this association is correct, it is all but impossible to make sense of the description of Eden's location, since this region nowhere converges with the Tigris and Euphrates.

Others identify Cush as the land of the Kassites, east of the Tigris, also known as Kush during ancient times. This theory makes better geographical sense. Finally, still other scholars posit that the Gihon and the Pishon were canals or tributaries of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Another challenge is determining the relationship of the four rivers to the single river that flowed through and watered Eden. Most scholars believe that they were downstream of the river of Eden, implying that all four rivers shared a common source and placing Eden in northern Mesopotamia or Armenia.

This supposition poses a problem, however, since the Tigris and Euphrates lack a common source. To suggest that the four rivers were upstream of the river of Eden makes some sense because these two rivers converge in southern Mesopotamia before emptying into the Persian Gulf. In this scenario Eden may still, as above, have been located in northern Mesopotamia or in the mountains in Armenia, from which the Tigris and Euphrates spring. Another possible setting would have been southern Mesopotamia, where they converge and end.

[1]See "The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers" on page 604.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—
5 and no shrub of the field had yet appeared
on the earth[a] and no plant of the field had yet sprung up,[h] for the LORD God had not sent rain on the
earth[a] [i] and there was no man to work the ground,
6 but streams[b] came up from the earth and watered
the whole surface of the ground—
7 the LORD God formed the man[c] from the dust[j] of the ground[k] and
breathed into his nostrils the breath[l] of life,[m] and the man became a living being.[n]

8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden;[o] and there he put the man he had
formed. 9 And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to
the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life[p] and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[q]

10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.
11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.
12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin[d] and onyx are also there.) 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.[e] 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris;[r] it
runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And
the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not
eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."[s]

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."[t]

19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field[u] and all the birds of the
air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each
living creature,[v] that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and
all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam[f] no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep
sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs[g] and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then
the LORD God made a woman from the rib[h][w] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

> "This is now bone of my bones
> and flesh of my flesh;[x]
> she shall be called 'woman,[i]'
> for she was taken out of man."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united[y] to his wife, and they will become
one flesh.[z]

25 The man and his wife were both naked,[a] and they felt no shame.

The Fall of Man

3 Now the serpent[b] was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to
the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You
must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will
die.' "

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.[c] 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it
your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,[d] knowing good and evil."

[a] *5* Or *land*; also in verse 6 [b] *6* Or *mist* [c] *7* The Hebrew for *man (adam)* sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground (adamah)*; it is also the name *Adam* (see Gen. 2:20). [d] *12* Or *good; pearls* [e] *13* Possibly southeast Mesopotamia [f] *20* Or *the man* [g] *21* Or *took part of the man's side* [h] *22* Or *part* [i] *23* The Hebrew for *woman* sounds like the Hebrew for *man.*

2:5 [h]Ge 1:11 [i]Ps 65:9-10 **2:7** [j]Ge 3:19 [k]Ps 103:14 [l]Job 33:4 [m]Ac 17:25 [n]1Co 15:45* **2:8** [o]Ge 3:23,24; Isa 51:3 **2:9** [p]Ge 3:22,24; Rev 2:7; 22:2,14, 19 [q]Eze 47:12 **2:14** [r]Da 10:4 **2:17** [s]Dt 30:15, 19; Ro 5:12; 6:23; Jas 1:15 **2:18** [t]1Co 11:9 **2:19** [u]Ps 8:7 [v]Ge 1:24 **2:22** [w]1Co 11:8, 9,12 **2:23** [x]Ge 29:14; Eph 5:28-30 **2:24** [y]Mal 2:15 [z]Mt 19:5*; Mk 10:7-8*; 1Co 6:16*; Eph 5:31* **2:25** [a]Ge 3:7,10-11 **3:1** [b]2Co 11:3; Rev 12:9; 20:2 **3:4** [c]Jn 8:44; 2Co 11:3 **3:5** [d]Isa 14:14; Eze 28:2

Testament use, tells how something emerges from what has preceded. Genesis 2:4, then, steps back into Genesis 1 to begin the study of what happened next, how out of God's creative work there came the beginnings of human life and creation on Earth. This explains the often-alleged differences and supposed contradictions between the chapters. It is reasonable that chapter 2 gives a more detailed account of the creation of man while saying nothing about that of matter, light, heavenly bodies, plants and other animals. See "The Documentary Hypothesis" on page 15.

2:8 At the site of Eridu, situated near what was considered to be an ancient shoreline at the head of the Persian Gulf, clay tablets have been found that tell of a garden in the neighborhood in which grew a sacred palm tree. Further upstream, a short distance north of ancient Babylon, the Tigris and Euphrates flow close together so that canals connect them. Some consider this area to be the location of ancient Eden. See "The Location of Eden" on page 6.

2:9 Adam and Eve possessed from God's hand both life and moral discernment. While ancient pagans believed that the gods intended for human beings to remain mortal, Adam and Eve's access to the tree of life revealed that God's will and intention for them was life. See "The Tree of Life in Jewish Imagery" on page 2075.

2:18–22 This is the only full account of the creation of woman in all of ancient Near Eastern literature.

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also
desirable[e] for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with
her, and he ate it. [f] 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they
sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking[g] in the garden in the
cool of the day, and they hid[h] from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called
to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded
you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I
ate it."

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me,[i] and I ate."

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed[j] are you above all the livestock
and all the wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust[k]
all the days of your life.
15 And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,

3:6 [e] Jas 1:14-15; 1Jn 2:16 [f] 1Ti 2:14

3:8 [g] Dt 23:14 [h] Job 31:33; Ps 139:7-12; Jer 23:24

3:13 [i] 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14

3:14 [j] Dt 28:15-20

3:14 [k] Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17

ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS

The Serpent Motif in Other Ancient Near Eastern Literature

GENESIS 3 Throughout most of the ancient Near East, people revered and often worshiped serpents as symbols of royalty, wisdom, healing,[1] fertility, death and other forces, both harmful and beneficent. However, in ancient writings serpents and serpentine creatures played their most prominent roles as adversaries of both humans and gods:[2]

✣ In the Egyptian Myth of Osiris[3] the sun god Ra (sometimes spelled Re) has to contend with Apophis, a demon serpent who attempts each morning to overthrow Ra and thereby enfold the world in darkness. Consequently, Egyptian texts liken the pharaoh's enemies to Apophis, thus calling down curses upon their heads.

✣ The snake of the **Sumerian** Epic of Gilgamesh is somewhat reminiscent of the serpent in Genesis 3 in that it deprives the hero, Gilgamesh, of immortality. While Gilgamesh is bathing in a pond, a serpent robs him of the Plant of Rejuvenation which, if eaten, would have granted him eternal life. The serpent devours the plant and is rejuvenated as it sheds its old skin. Gilgamesh, however, is consigned to die as a mortal.[4]

✣ Serpents similarly oppose humans and gods in other **Mesopotamian** stories, such as the Etana Myth, *Enuma Elish* and Inanna and the Huluppu Tree.[5]

✣ In **Ugarit**'s Baal-Anat Cycle, Baal and his consort, Anat,[6] defeat the seven-headed "twisting serpent," Lotan. The word *Lotan* is related to *Leviathan* (crushed by God at the time of creation [see Ps 74:14] but prophesied to reassert itself temporarily during the end times [Isa 27:1]). See a discussion of God's dealings with a similar monster, Rahab, in Job 9:13, 26:12, Psalm 89:10 and Isaiah 51:9.

✣ The serpent of Genesis 3 plays an adversarial role, as do those in other ancient Near Eastern literature, but it is introduced simply as one of the creatures "the LORD God had made" (v. 1). God the Creator is omnipotent; his purposes cannot be thwarted by any creature. Although the serpent or sea monster motif in the Bible reflects the fact that Biblical writers incorporated well-known images from the ancient world into their writings, other Biblical material clearly demonstrates that these inspired authors did not accept the mythology behind the Mesopotamian or Egyptian stories.

[1] See "Ugaritic Liturgy Against Venomous Snakes" on page 226. [2] See "The Hittite Storm Gods" on page 784. [3] See "The Mystery Religions" on page 1939. [4] See "Ancient Flood Narratives" on page 13 and "Ecclesiastes and the Epic of Gilgamesh" on page 1027. [5] See "The *Enuma Elish* and the Biblical Concept of Creation" on page 888. [6] See "The Queen of Heaven" on page 1267.

and between your offspring[a] and hers;[m]
he will crush[b] your head,[n]
and you will strike his heel."

16 To the woman he said,

"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
with pain you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.[o]"

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'

"Cursed[p] is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it
all the days of your life.[q]
18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.[r]
19 By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food[s]
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return."[t]

20 Adam[c] named his wife Eve,[d] because she would become the mother of all the living.

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life[u] and eat, and live forever." 23 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden[v] to work the ground[w] from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side[e] of the Garden of Eden cherubim[x] and a flaming sword[y] flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.[z]

Cain and Abel

4 Adam[c] lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.[f] She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth[g] a man." 2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.[a]

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.[b] 4 But Abel brought fat portions[c] from some of the firstborn of his flock.[d] The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,[e] 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right,

[a] *15* Or *seed* [b] *15* Or *strike* [c] *20, 1* Or *The man* [d] *20* *Eve* probably means *living.* [e] *24* Or *placed in front* [f] *1* *Cain* sounds like the Hebrew for *brought forth* or *acquired.* [g] *1* Or *have acquired*

3:15 [l]Jn 8:44; Ac 13:10; 1Jn 3:8 [m]Isa 7:14; Mt 1:23; Rev 12:17 [n]Ro 16:20; Heb 2:14
3:16 [o]1Co 11:3; Eph 5:22
3:17 [p]Ge 5:29; Ro 8:20-22
[q]Job 5:7; 14:1; Ecc 2:23
3:18 [r]Ps 104:14
3:19 [s]2Th 3:10
[t]Ge 2:7; Ps 90:3; 104:29; Ecc 12:7
3:22 [u]Rev 22:14
3:23 [v]Ge 2:8 [w]Ge 4:2
3:24 [x]Ex 25:18-22 [y]Ps 104:4 [z]Ge 2:9
4:2 [a]Lk 11:51
4:3 [b]Nu 18:12
4:4 [c]Lev 3:16 [d]Ex 13:2,12 [e]Heb 11:4

3:20 When God named what he had made, he described for man the essence of each thing (1:5,8,10; 2:11–14). By allowing Adam to assign names, God enabled him to express his relationships to his fellow creatures: Adam named the animals (2:19–20) and the woman (2:23). Eve's personal name stems from her function as mother of all "living" (human) beings (3:20).

In Hebrew *adam* is both a personal name and a general noun, standing for "mankind" or "humankind." The latter meaning is found over 500 times in the Old Testament. Both usages occur in Genesis 1–3, where Adam as a personal name appears at 2:20 (cf. 3:17,21; 4:25; 5:2–5; 1Ch 1:1).

3:24 This description of the cherubim is similar to that of the winged sphinxes that adorned the armrests of royal thrones in many parts of the ancient Near East, as well as of the statues of winged, human-headed bulls or lions that guarded the entrances to palaces and temples in ancient Mesopotamia (see "Angels and Guardian Spirits in the Bible and the Ancient Near East" on p. 1529).

4:4–5 The origin of sacrifice is a matter of dispute. The question is, Did sacrifice arise from the natural religious instinct of humankind, whether or not guided by the Spirit of God, or did it originate in a distinct divine appointment? Genesis records the first sacrifice, by Cain and Abel, but gives no account of the origin of the practice. The custom was clearly approved by God, and in the Mosaic Law it was adopted and elaborately developed. The view that the rite was initiated by an expressed command of God is based primarily on Genesis 4:4–5, which states that Abel offered God an acceptable sacrifice, as well as on Hebrews 11:4, which clarifies that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable to God because of his faith. It is argued that Abel's faith was based upon a specific command of God in the past, without which the sacrifice would have been a response to mere superstition.

4:7 The Hebrew word translated "crouching" is the same as an ancient Babylonian word used to describe a demon lurking behind a door, threatening the people inside. On the other hand, the term can simply mean to lie down.



ANCIENT PEOPLES, LANDS AND RULERS

Sumer

GENESIS 4 To the Israelites of Biblical times Sumer was an ancient, classical civilization, similar to what ancient Rome is to us. **Sumer** (Biblical Shinar) refers to that region of **Mesopotamia** ("Map 14" in the back of this Bible), south of modern Baghdad that enormously influenced the Biblical world. The term *Sumerian* applies to people who lived there from the mid-fourth millennium B.C. (and possibly much earlier). Their principle cities were **Uruk** (Biblical Erech), Agade (Biblical Accad), Ur, Nippur, Kish, Lagash, Isin and Larsa. Sumerian civilization and culture came to an end around 1750 B.C. The Sumerians' racial identity and origin are unknown, but they were not Semites (they did not belong to the racial group that included Israelites, Canaanites, **Assyrians**, Arameans and Arabs).

The Sumerians created the world's earliest writing system, **cuneiform**, a method also used with another ancient language, **Akkadian**. Sumerian cuneiform was in fact the basis for the creation of Akkadian cuneiform.[1] Cuneiform appears on about 250,000 known tablets dating from approximately 3200 B.C. to the first century A.D.[2]

Deciphering Sumerian has proven difficult because this language was linguistically isolated. Whereas English and German are related (an English speaker might guess that the German *apfel* means "apple"), there is no language related to Sumerian that helps to elucidate the meanings of its words. However, bilingual tablets containing both Akkadian and Sumerian have enabled scholars to gain a working knowledge of Sumerian.

Sumerians contributed in numerous other significant ways to other ancient Near Eastern cultures. They invented the wheel, the potter's wheel and the sexagesimal numbering system (based on the number 60) and compiled collections of laws. In architecture they developed the arch, dome and vault. Incredibly, 100-foot-tall (30.5 m) Sumerian ziggurats—pyramidal, multistoried temple towers—still survive. Their form seems similar to the structure described in the Tower of Babel narrative of Genesis 11, but a direct connection has not been established.

Sumerian mythology also strongly influenced ancient Near Eastern religion, including worship of the sun, moon, stars and several "dying gods," like Dumuzi (also called Tammuz).[3] Sumerian literature includes hymns,[4] proverbs, love poems, laments and epic myths,[5] and there are interesting Biblical parallels in these Sumerian texts.

[1]See "Languages of the Old Testament World" on page 672. [2]See "Cuneiform and Clay Tablets in the Ancient Near East" on page 1108. [3]See "Mourning for Tammuz" on page 1320. [4]See "Sexuality and Religion in the Sumerian Hymns to Ishtar" on page 1340. [5]See "The Sumerian *Eridu Genesis*" on page 576, "The Creation of Humans in the Sumerian Myth of Enki" on page 800 and "The Exaltation of a Holy City in the Psalms and in the Myths" on page 917.



Board game played at Ur, c. 2600 B.C.
Preserving Bible Times; © Dr. James C. Martin; permission of The British Museum



He-goat caught in thicket from Sumerian Ur
Preserving Bible Times; © Dr. James C. Martin; permission of The British Museum

will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door;[f] it desires to have you, but you must master it.[g]"

8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."[a] And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.[h]

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.[i] 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. 14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence;[j] I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."[k]

15 But the LORD said to him, "Not so[b]; if anyone kills Cain[l], he will suffer vengeance seven times over.[m]" Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. 16 So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod,[c] east of Eden.[n]

17 Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son[o] Enoch. 18 To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

19 Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute. 22 Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of[d] bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah.

23 Lamech said to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah, listen to me;
wives of Lamech, hear my words.
I have killed[e][p] a man for wounding me,
a young man for injuring me.
24 If Cain is avenged[q] seven times,[r]
then Lamech seventy-seven times."

25 Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth,[f][s] saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."[t] 26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

At that time men began to call on[g] the name of the LORD.[u]

From Adam to Noah

5 This is the written account of Adam's line.

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.[v] 2 He created them male and female[w] and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man.[h]"

3 When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image;[x] and he named him Seth. 4 After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. 5 Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.[y]

6 When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father[i] of Enosh. 7 And after he became the father of

4:7 [f]Nu 32:23 [g]Ro 6:16
4:8 [h]Mt 23:35; 1Jn 3:12
4:10 [i]Ge 9:5; Nu 35:33; Heb 12:24; Rev 6:9-10
4:14 [j]2Ki 17:18; Ps 51:11; 139:7-12; Jer 7:15; 52:3 [k]Ge 9:6; Nu 35:19,21,27, 33
4:15 [l]Eze 9:4,6 [m]ver 24; Ps 79:12
4:16 [n]Ge 2:8
4:17 [o]Ps 49:11
4:23 [p]Ex 20:13; Lev 19:18
4:24 [q]Dt 32:35 [r]ver 15
4:25 [s]Ge 5:3 [t]ver 8
4:26 [u]Ge 12:8; 1Ki 18:24; Ps 116:17; Joel 2:32; Zep 3:9; Ac 2:21; 1Co 1:2
5:1 [v]Ge 1:27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10
5:2 [w]Ge 1:27; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6; Gal 3:28
5:3 [x]Ge 1:26; 1Co 15:49
5:5 [y]Ge 3:19

[a] *8* Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Masoretic Text does not have *"Let's go out to the field."*
[b] *15* Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Hebrew *Very well* [c] *16* *Nod* means *wandering* (see verses 12 and 14). [d] *22* Or *who instructed all who work in* [e] *23* Or *I will kill* [f] *25* *Seth* probably means *granted.* [g] *26* Or *to proclaim* [h] *2* Hebrew *adam* [i] *6* *Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 7-26.

4:21–22 It is difficult to date the beginnings of art. If some human being found pleasure in the shape of a stone axe or flint sickle, this might be described as an awakening of aesthetic sensitivity. For many reasons it seems reasonable to date the beginnings of art in historical cultures to some point during the mid-fourth millennium. The origin of the arts may be intended in verses 21–22, where Jubal and Tubal-Cain are mentioned.

5:5 It is uncertain whether the large numbers describing human longevity in the early chapters of Genesis are literal, serve a literary function, or both. The fact that there are exactly ten names in the list (as in the genealogy of 11:10–26) indicates that it almost certainly contains gaps, the lengths of which are summarized in the large numbers. Other ancient genealogies outside the Bible exhibit similarly unrealistic figures and also contain exactly ten names (see "The Sumerian King List" on p. 12).

Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. 8 Altogether, Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

9 When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. 10 And after he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. 11 Altogether, Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

12 When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. 13 And after he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. 14 Altogether, Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

15 When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. 16 And after he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. 17 Altogether, Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

18 When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch.[z] 19 And after he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. 20 Altogether, Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. 22 And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God[a] 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. 24 Enoch walked with God;[b] then he was no more, because God took him away.[c]

25 When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. 26 And after he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. 27 Altogether, Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

28 When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. 29 He named him Noah[a] and said, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed.[d]" 30 After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. 31 Altogether, Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

32 After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.

5:18 [z] Jude 1:14

5:22 [a] ver 24; Ge 6:9; 17:1; 48:15; Mic 6:8; Mal 2:6
5:24 [b] ver 22 [c] 2Ki 2:1,11; Heb 11:5

5:29 [d] Ge 3:17; Ro 8:20

[a] *29 Noah* sounds like the Hebrew for *comfort.*

5:24 Abram would later walk "before" God (17:1), but of Enoch and Noah alone it is written that they walked "*with* God" (5:24; 6:9; emphasis added). Walking with God is a relic of the first Paradise when people walked and talked with God in holy familiarity, and it anticipates a new paradise (Rev 21:3; 22:3–40).

ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS



The Ur-Isin King List; Babylonia, c. 1812 B.C.
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The Sumerian King List

GENESIS 5 The Sumerian King List, an ancient record of the kings of **Sumer** and **Akkad**, was originally composed in the late third millennium B.C. during the reign of Utu-hegal of **Uruk** ("Map 1" in the back of this Bible), in order to legitimize the ruling dynasty. It displays striking similarities to the genealogies of Genesis.

The preamble begins with intriguing terminology: "when kingship was lowered from heaven." It goes on to list the succession of kings, the lengths of their reigns and the respective cities from which they ruled. The kings are recorded to have enjoyed extraordinarily long reigns. For example, "En-men-lu-Anna ruled 43,200 years; En-men-gal-Anna ruled 28,800 years." A great flood is then purported to have covered the land, after which kings were recorded as having significantly shorter reigns, though still of incredible duration (140 to 1,200 years). The genealogies in Genesis are also divided into pre- and post-flood periods, with longer life spans prior to the catastrophic deluge of Genesis 5 and significantly lesser longevity after it (ch. 11). Unlike the King List, however, the early Genesis genealogies do not serve to legitimate later kings.

The Flood

6 When men began to increase in number on the earth[e] and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. 3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with[a] man forever,[f] for he is mortal[b];[g] his days will be a hundred and twenty years."

4 The Nephilim[h] were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

6:1 [e]Ge 1:28
6:3 [f]Isa 57:16 [g]Ps 78:39
6:4 [h]Nu 13:33

[a] 3 Or *My spirit will not remain in* [b] 3 Or *corrupt*

ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS

Ancient Flood Narratives

GENESIS 6 The traditions of ancient peoples throughout the world share in common the inclusion of flood stories. The **Mesopotamian** accounts have garnered the most discussion since they are culturally closer to the Biblical material than any of the other non-Scriptural narratives. The most famous Mesopotamian flood account is the Babylonian version, found in the library of the **Assyrian** king Ashurbanipal (seventh century B.C.) as part of the larger Epic of Gilgamesh.[1]

In this epic, Gilgamesh searches for a man named Utnapishtum (the equivalent of the Biblical Noah), whose story is then recounted. When one of the highest gods, Enlil, becomes annoyed by the cacophony of noise coming from human beings, he decides to inundate and destroy them all in a catastrophic deluge. Enki, the god of waters, reveals Enlil's intent to the mortal Utnapishtum, directing him to construct an enormous boat and load it with pairs of animals. Instructed not to reveal the reason for this mystifying building project, Utnapishtum is further commanded at a critical point to take his wife on board with him. For seven harried days and nights Utnapishtum and his wife are tossed about in this vessel as floodwaters engulf the earth. When the waters finally subside, the boat lodges atop a tall mountain. Utnapishtum sends out a dove, a swallow and a raven, the last of which fails to return, apparently having located nourishment. The man then disembarks and offers lavish sacrifices to the gods, who in turn bestow eternal life upon him and his wife for having safeguarded the future of humans and animals.

An **Akkadian** account dating to around 1600 B.C. recounts basically the same tale as that embedded in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, except that the Noah-character is named Atra-hasis.[2] An even earlier **Sumerian** version, known as the *Eridu Genesis,* contains the stories of creation and the development of the first cities, along with an account of the great flood. Here the hero is Ziusudra.[3]



Sumerian flood story; Babylonia, 19th–18th centuries B.C.
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Bible readers will immediately recognize the similarities between the Mesopotamian and Biblical accounts. But there are significant differences, too. According to the Bible God was not simply irritated by the din of humanity; he was profoundly grieved, to the point that "his heart was filled with pain" by the magnitude of human sin (6:5–7). Nor was his plan thwarted by the cunning of another deity; God himself chose to preserve both humanity and animal life through Noah (vv. 13–22). Genesis also attests to a longer flood period and, although God made a covenant with Noah, he did not grant him immortality.

Assuming a later date for the Biblical composition, some scholars have suggested that Mesopotamian accounts may have served as a prototype for the narrative in Genesis. But most researchers believe that the Biblical account is not simply a modification of the Mesopotamian stories but one of several versions of a common story. The differences can be attributed to the special revelation God gave the Biblical authors, including the writer of Genesis, by which he made known his plan of redemption. The other versions provide extrabiblical confirmation of the story of a great flood rather than demonstrating, as some have suggested, that the Biblical account is a myth.

[1] See also "The Serpent Motif in Other Ancient Near Eastern Literature" on page 8 and "Ecclesiastes and the Epic of Gilgamesh" on page 1027. [2] See "Humanity and the Divine: Comparing the Bible to the Myth of Atra-Hasis" on page 1176. [3] See "The Sumerian *Eridu Genesis*" on page 576.

Ancient Voices

When the seventh day arrived,
I released a dove to go free,
The dove went and returned,
No landing place came into view,
it turned back.
I released a swallow to go free,
The swallow went and returned,
No landing place came to view,
it turned back.
I sent a raven to go free,
The raven went forth, saw the ebbing
of the waters,
It ate, circled, left droppings, did not
turn back.

—GILGAMESH

See "Ancient Flood Narratives" article on previous page.

5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.[i] 6 The LORD was grieved[j] that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.[k]

9 This is the account of Noah.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time,[l] and he walked with God.[m] 10 Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.[n]

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.[o] 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.[p] 13 So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.[q] 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress[a] wood;[r] make rooms in it and coat it with pitch[s] inside and out. 15 This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high.[b] 16 Make a roof for it and finish[c] the ark to within 18 inches[d] of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. 17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.[t] 18 But I will establish my covenant with you,[u] and you will enter the ark[v]—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. 19 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. 20 Two[w] of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. 21 You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.[x]

7 The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family,[y] because I have found you righteous[z] in this generation. 2 Take with you seven[e] of every kind of clean[a] animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, 3 and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. 4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."

5 And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.[b]

6 Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. 7 And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. 8 Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, 9 male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. 10 And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep[c] burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens[d] were opened. 12 And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.[e]

13 On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. 14 They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all live-

6:5 [i]Ge 8:21; Ps 14:1-3
6:6 [j]1Sa 15:11, 35; Isa 63:10
6:8 [k]Ge 19:19; Ex 33:12,13,17; Lk 1:30; Ac 7:46
6:9 [l]Ge 7:1; Eze 14:14,20; Heb 11:7; 2Pe 2:5 [m]Ge 5:22
6:10 [n]Ge 5:32
6:11 [o]Eze 7:23; 8:17
6:12 [p]Ps 14:1-3
6:13 [q]ver 17; Eze 7:2-3
6:14 [r]Heb 11:7; 1Pe 3:20 [s]Ex 2:3
6:17 [t]Ge 7:4,21-23; 2Pe 2:5
6:18 [u]Ge 9:9-16 [v]Ge 7:1,7,13
6:20 [w]Ge 7:15
6:22 [x]Ge 7:5,9, 16
7:1 [y]Mt 24:38 [z]Ge 6:9; Eze 14:14
7:2 [a]ver 8; Ge 8:20; Lev 10:10; 11:1-47
7:5 [b]Ge 6:22
7:11 [c]Eze 26:19 [d]Ge 8:2
7:12 [e]ver 4

[a] *14* The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. [b] *15* Hebrew *300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high* (about 140 meters long, 23 meters wide and 13.5 meters high) [c] *16* Or *Make an opening for light by finishing* [d] *16* Hebrew *a cubit* (about 0.5 meter) [e] *2* Or *seven pairs*; also in verse 3

7:11 To attribute volcanic activity to verse 11 is highly speculative. The fact that igneous rock (rock formed by the cooling of molten rock materials) is found between layers of sedimentary rock is not good evidence in and of itself for volcanic activity at the time of the flood. Sediments that have been laid down during historic time have been cut by lava from present-day volcanoes, and it has been observed that the oldest layers are also cut by igneous rocks. It is impossible to designate any particular rock body as being coincident with the flood.

THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

GENESIS 7 Until fairly recently a majority of scholars espoused the Documentary Hypothesis to explain the composition of the **Pentateuch**, the first five Old Testament books. This theory asserts that these writings were actually based on four books, none still extant, referred to (for ease of identification) as J (Yahwist or Jahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist) and P (Priestly Code). The main arguments for this theory are the existence of repetition and apparent contradiction within these five books, as well as the use of different names for God.

According to this hypothesis:

J, the oldest document, included large portions of Genesis, passages from Exodus and Numbers and a few short texts from Deuteronomy. In Genesis, J referred to God as **Yahweh** ("the LORD") because the Biblical author believed that people began using the name Yahweh early in human history (see 4:26, a "J" text).

E, written somewhat later, followed the same story line as J. In Genesis, E referred to God as **Elohim** (the more generic "God") rather than as Yahweh because, according to adherents of E, the name Yahweh was not revealed until the **exodus period** (see Ex 3:15, an "E" text).[1]

D was essentially the book of Deuteronomy. Second Kings records that Hilkiah the priest located a copy of the Law of Moses when the Jerusalem temple was being restored.[2] According to the Documentary Hypothesis, however, Deuteronomy was drafted at this time as a pious fraud to justify Josiah's reformation.

P, written during the **postexilic period** following the return from the exile, included large portions of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. In Genesis, P referred to God as Elohim since, like E, its author(s) assumed that the divine name, Yahweh, was first revealed at the time of the exodus (see Ex 6:3, a "P" text).

According to this theory the four documents were composed independently of one another but were over a prolonged period of time compiled and edited into the present Pentateuch, with much of the original E material deleted. Still, they argued, the Pentateuch retains significant redundancy and contradiction because the four documents often tell the same or similar stories with inconsistent details. Thus, for example, Genesis 1:1—2:4a was identified as the P account of creation, while the rest of Genesis 2 was seen as a throwback to the earlier J rendition.

In refuting these arguments it is helpful to recognize that repetition was an essential part of ancient Near Eastern narrative. Storytellers often repeated details two or more times (sometimes from a different perspective or with differing details), and narrators often recounted parallel stories (cf. the three instances of a **patriarch** passing off his wife as his sister: Abraham in chs. 12 and 20 and Isaac in ch. 26). For a much later example, see the accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, 22 and 26. In an ancient narrative, repetition was viewed not as evidence of multiple authorship but as confirmation of a single author.

The argument about the names Yahweh and Elohim may be based on a misunderstanding of certain passages, such as Exodus 6:2–3. This passage appears in the NIV as "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them." This rendering makes it sound (in line with the P portion of the Documentary Hypothesis) as though the patriarchs did not know the name Yahweh ("the LORD"), thus allowing such scholars to attribute to J the passages in Genesis referring to Yahweh. But the text may alternatively be translated, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty. And my name is the LORD. Did I not make myself known to them?" Rendered in this way, these verses do not assert that Abraham had never heard of "the LORD."

Many scholars today have abandoned the Documentary Hypothesis, agreeing that it is based on a faulty understanding of ancient Near Eastern literature and that it contributes nothing helpful to our understanding of the Pentateuch.

[1] See also "YHWH: The Name of God in the Old Testament" on page 89.

[2] See "The Huldah Delegation and Nathan-Melech, the Official" on page 567.

stock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. 15 Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark.[f] 16 The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

17 For forty days[g] the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. 18 The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. 19 They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered.[h] 20 The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet.[a,b] 21 Every living thing that moved on the earth perished — birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind.[i] 22 Everything on dry land that had the breath of life[j] in its nostrils died. 23 Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth.[k] Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.[l]

24 The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.[m]

8 But God remembered[n] Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth,[o] and the waters receded. 2 Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens[p] had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. 3 The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, 4 and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 5 The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

6 After forty days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark 7 and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. 8 Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. 9 But the dove could find no place to set its feet because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. 10 He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. 11 When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. 12 He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

13 By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. 14 By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.

15 Then God said to Noah, 16 "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.[q] 17 Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you — the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground — so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it."[r]

18 So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. 19 All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds — everything that moves on the earth — came out of the ark, one kind after another.

20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD[s] and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean[t] birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings[u] on it. 21 The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma[v] and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground[w] because of man, even though[c] every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.[x] And never again will I destroy all living creatures,[y] as I have done.

[a] *20* Hebrew *fifteen cubits* (about 6.9 meters) [b] *20* Or *rose more than twenty feet, and the mountains were covered*
[c] *21* Or *man, for*

7:15 [f]Ge 6:19
7:17 [g]ver 4
7:19 [h]Ps 104:6
7:21 [i]Ge 6:7,13
7:22 [j]Ge 1:30
7:23 [k]Mt 24:39; Lk 17:27; 1Pe 3:20; 2Pe 2:5 [l]Heb 11:7
7:24 [m]Ge 8:3
8:1 [n]Ge 9:15; 19:29; Ex 2:24; 1Sa 1:11,19 [o]Ex 14:21
8:2 [p]Ge 7:11
8:16 [q]Ge 7:13
8:17 [r]Ge 1:22
8:20 [s]Ge 12:7-8; 13:18; 22:9 [t]Ge 7:8; Lev 11:1-47 [u]Ge 22:2,13; Ex 10:25
8:21 [v]Lev 1:9,13; 2Co 2:15 [w]Ge 3:17 [x]Ge 6:5; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9 [y]Ge 9:11,15; Isa 54:9

7:19 Arguments for a universal flood have cited the inclusive language of verses 19 and 21 ("*all* the high mountains"; "*every* living thing"; emphasis added). Today, for various reasons, many conservative scholars defend a local flood. The crux of their arguments centers in the covenant relationship of God to people. Noah was not a preacher of righteousness (2Pe 2:5) to peoples of other areas but was concerned with the culture from which Abraham would eventually come. In addition, physical arguments have been raised against a universal flood: origin and disposal of the amount of water necessary to form a layer six miles (ten km) thick over the whole world; the effect on plant life of being covered for a year; the effect on fresh water life of a sea that contained salt from the ocean; and the fact that many topographical features of the earth (such as cinder cones) show no evidence of erosion by a flood and are thought to be much more ancient than the flood could possibly have been.

8:1 This verse implies that God did not leave the task of caring for the creatures aboard the ark entirely to Noah.

8:4 The name Ararat is related to the Assyrian region of Urartu, which became an extensive and mountainous kingdom (see Isa 37:38; Jer 51:27). It included much of the territory north of Mesopotamia and east of modern Turkey. The ark probably came to rest in southern Urartu.

8:13–14 The length of the flood is generally agreed upon within a few days. The Hebrews used a solar calendar, in contrast to the Babylonian lunar month and the Egyptian arbitrary 365-day year (see "The Jewish Calendar" on p. 241). Most authorities would put the number of days from the time the rain started (7:11) to the time Noah left the ark (8:14) between 371 and 376.

22 "As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night
will never cease."[z]

8:22 [z]Ge 1:14; Jer 33:20,25

God's Covenant With Noah

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.[a] 2The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. 3Everything that lives and moves will be food for you.[b] Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

9:1 [a]Ge 1:22

9:3 [b]Ge 1:29

4"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.[c] 5And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal.[d] And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.[e]

9:4 [c]Lev 3:17; 17:10-14; Dt 12:16,23-25; 1Sa 14:33

9:5 [d]Ex 21:28-32 [e]Ge 4:10

6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed;[f]
for in the image of God[g]
has God made man.

9:6 [f]Ge 4:14; Ex 21:12,14; Lev 24:17; Mt 26:52 [g]Ge 1:26

7As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."[h]

9:7 [h]Ge 1:22

8Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 9"I now establish my covenant with you[i] and with your descendants after you 10and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. 11I establish my covenant[j] with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.[k]"

9:9 [i]Ge 6:18

9:11 [j]ver 16; Isa 24:5 [k]Ge 8:21; Isa 54:9

12And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant[l] I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: 13I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, 15I will remember my covenant[m] between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. 16Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant[n] between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

9:12 [l]ver 17; Ge 17:11

9:15 [m]Ex 2:24; Lev 26:42,45; Dt 7:9; Eze 16:60

9:16 [n]ver 11; Ge 17:7,13,19; 2Sa 7:13; 23:5

17So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant[o] I have established between me and all life on the earth."

9:17 [o]ver 12; Ge 17:11

The Sons of Noah

18The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.)[p] 19These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth.[q]

9:18 [p]ver 25-27; Ge 10:6,15

9:19 [q]Ge 10:32

20Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded[a] to plant a vineyard. 21When he drank some of its wine, he

[a] *20* Or *soil, was the first*

9:1–17 The rainbow feature in the Biblical flood account is unique in that none of the stories from Babylon or elsewhere make mention of this covenantal sign. In the Bible the rainbow is the first of the covenant signs and provides the key to understanding all of them, including those of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the new covenant. The rainbow in the clouds speaks to humankind from God. God allowed Noah to understand what the bow meant to him: a visible declaration that the Lord will never again destroy the earth by flood. The rainbow, then, is God's promise made visible. Covenant signs express covenant promises to covenant people.

9:2–4 From now on animals would fear people and were given to be food for them, except for their blood.

9:5–6 Human government was instituted by the provision of capital punishment for murderers.

9:8–17 The sacrifices of Cain and Abel (4:4–5) demonstrate that the rite of sacrifice goes back almost to the beginnings of the human race. No priest was needed in these early sacrifices. The sacrifice of Noah after the flood (8:20–21) is called a burnt offering and is closely connected with the covenant of God described in 9:8–17. In the sacrifices of Abraham, several of which are mentioned (12:7–8; 13:4,18; 15:4ff), he acted as his own priest, making offerings to express his adoration of God and probably to atone for sin. In Genesis 22 God revealed to Abraham that he did not desire human sacrifices, a common practice in those days (see "Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East" on p. 182).

9:18–19 The term *Semite* is derived from Noah's son Shem (vv. 18–19; 10:21–31) and is used to identify a diverse group of ancient peoples whose languages were related. It is not certain, however, that they themselves were related by blood. See "The Hyksos and the Old Testament" on page 121 for a discussion of a particular Semitic people who settled in Egypt.

became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. 23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.

24 When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said,

"Cursed be Canaan![r] — **9:25** [r]ver 18
The lowest of slaves
will he be to his brothers.[s]" — [s]Ge 25:23; Jos 9:23

26 He also said,

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem!
May Canaan be the slave of Shem.[a]
27 May God extend the territory of Japheth[b];
may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,
and may Canaan be his[c] slave."

28 After the flood Noah lived 350 years. 29 Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died.

The Table of Nations

10 This is the account[t] of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood. — **10:1** [t]Ge 2:4

The Japhethites

2 The sons[d] of Japheth:
Gomer,[u] Magog,[v] Madai, Javan, Tubal,[w] Meshech and Tiras. — **10:2** [u]Eze 38:6 [v]Eze 38:2; Rev 20:8 [w]Isa 66:19
3 The sons of Gomer:
Ashkenaz,[x] Riphath and Togarmah.[y] — **10:3** [x]Jer 51:27 [y]Eze 27:14; 38:6
4 The sons of Javan:
Elishah, Tarshish,[z] the Kittim and the Rodanim.[e] 5 (From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.) — **10:4** [z]Eze 27:12, 25; Jnh 1:3

The Hamites

6 The sons of Ham:
Cush, Mizraim,[f] Put and Canaan.[a] — **10:6** [a]ver 15; Ge 9:18
7 The sons of Cush:
Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca.
The sons of Raamah:
Sheba and Dedan.

8 Cush was the father[g] of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon,[b] Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in[h] Shinar.[i c] 11 From that land he went — **10:10** [b]Ge 11:9 [c]Ge 11:2

[a] *26* Or *be his slave* [b] *27* *Japheth* sounds like the Hebrew for *extend.* [c] *27* Or *their* [d] *2* *Sons* may mean *descendants* or *successors* or *nations*; also in verses 3, 4, 6, 7, 20-23, 29 and 31. [e] *4* Some manuscripts of the Masoretic Text and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:7); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *Dodanim* [f] *6* That is, Egypt; also in verse 13 [g] *8* *Father* may mean *ancestor* or *predecessor* or *founder*; also in verses 13, 15, 24 and 26. [h] *10* Or *Erech and Akkad—all of them in* [i] *10* That is, Babylonia

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9:27 A tent was the typical dwelling of nomadic peoples. Tents in ancient times were of various shapes—round and tapering, flat and oblong. All of a nomadic family's belongings could normally be carried on one pack animal. A sheik would have had several tents. "Tent" in the Old Testament is often a reference to any habitation (v. 27; Job 8:22; Ps 84:10) and is frequently used figuratively as well (Isa 13:20; 54:2; Jer 10:20).

10:1 The list of Noah's descendants contains 70 names—a number that symbolized for the ancients totality and completion. It should be noted that the list is incomplete and apparently representative. The author penetrated selectively into various lines in order to achieve his final number.

Knowledge of the peoples and countries of the world was considered just as much an indication of wisdom for the ancients as knowledge of plants and animals. The "wisdom" represented by this catalog of known peoples was more than just academic. The point was that all these people groups had resulted from God's early blessing.

10:8–9 Nimrod is an enigma. Claims that he is to be equated with Gilgamesh or Hercules or other figures, or that he built the Tower of Babel (11:1–9), are without historical foundation. Some have suggested that Nimrod was a Mesopotamian god (such as Marduk) or king (such as Sargon), but this is pure speculation.

10:11 [d]Ps 83:8; Mic 5:6 [e]Jnh 1:2; 4:11; Na 1:1

to Assyria,[d] where he built Nineveh,[e] Rehoboth Ir,[a] Calah 12and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

13 Mizraim was the father of
the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, 14Pathrusites, Casluhites (from whom the Philistines[f] came) and Caphtorites.

10:14 [f]Ge 21:32, 34; 26:1,8
10:15 over 6; Ge 9:18
[h]Eze 28:21
[i]Ge 23:3,20
10:16 [j]1Ch 11:4

15 Canaan[g] was the father of
Sidon[h] his firstborn,[b] and of the Hittites,[i] 16Jebusites,[j] Amorites, Girgashites, 17Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, 18Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.

[a] *11* Or *Nineveh with its city squares* [b] *15* Or *of the Sidonians, the foremost*



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

EBLA

GENESIS 10 Excavating the city of **Ebla** (modern Tell Mardikh)—see "Map 1" in the back of this Bible—in northwestern Syria, archaeologists have discovered the single largest collection of third-millennium B.C. cuneiform tablets unearthed to date. Immensely important in the study of the ancient Near East, this site has yielded tens of thousands of complete texts and fragments. These texts, which include administrative, lexical, literary and diplomatic tablets, were discovered in the palace, which had been destroyed by fire. Ironically, the conflagration may have helped to preserve the tablets by baking them, although some more important tablets would have been purposely hard-baked when created in order to preserve their information for generations.[1]

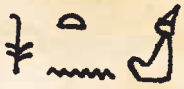
The Eblaites utilized the **Sumerian** cuneiform writing system, adapting it to their Semitic language.[2] This has made decipherment and translation of the texts both difficult and tedious. In fact, early translations often vary drastically from more recent ones as more is learned about the Eblaite language. As a result, earlier scholars believed they had found a text parallel to the familiar Biblical proverbs, while today this so-called proverbial text is considered to be merely a list of Sumerian terms for cuts of meat! Some scholars had thought they saw references to the **patriarchs** (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel) in the Ebla tablets, but this also has turned out to be a false lead. At one point, ancient historians believed that information in the Ebla texts indicated that the city, during its zenith, controlled a vast empire from Egypt to the Persian Gulf. Many of these early readings have now come under renewed scrutiny as well, with the result that the extent of Ebla's former power remains in question.

The importance of the Ebla documents for Biblical studies probably lies in what they can tell us in general about life in third-millennium B.C. Syria-Palestine, as opposed to their providing any specific parallels to the Bible, as had been hoped. The history of these documents again reminds archaeologists to exercise caution when attempting to link ancient historical and literary finds to Biblical material.

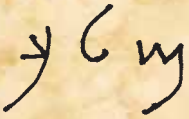
Words for "King" in Various Scripts



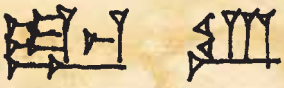
The word *king* (*lugal*) in Sumerian script



The word *king* (*nesu*) in Egyptian Hieroglyphic script



The word *king* (*melek*) in Iron Age Hebrew script



The word king (*šarru*) in Neo-Assyrian Akkadian script

Old Testament Today, p. 19.

[1] See "Cuneiform and Clay Tablets in the Ancient Near East" on page 1108. [2] See "Languages of the Old Testament World" on page 672.

Later the Canaanite[k] clans scattered [19]and the borders of Canaan[l] reached from Sidon[m] toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

[20]These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

10:18 [k]Ge 12:6; Ex 13:11
10:19 [l]Ge 11:31; 13:12; 17:8
[m]ver 15

The Semites

[21]Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was[a] Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.[n]

10:21 [n]ver 24; Nu 24:24

[22]The sons of Shem:
Elam,[o] Asshur, Arphaxad,[p] Lud and Aram.
[23]The sons of Aram:
Uz,[q] Hul, Gether and Meshech.[b]
[24]Arphaxad was the father of[c] Shelah,
and Shelah the father of Eber.[r]
[25]Two sons were born to Eber:
One was named Peleg,[d] because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.
[26]Joktan was the father of
Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, [27]Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, [28]Obal, Abimael, Sheba, [29]Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.

10:22 [o]Jer 49:34
[p]Lk 3:36
10:23 [q]Job 1:1
10:24 [r]ver 21

[30]The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country.
[31]These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

[32]These are the clans of Noah's sons,[s] according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth[t] after the flood.

10:32 [s]ver 1
[t]Ge 9:19

The Tower of Babel

11 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. [2]As men moved eastward,[e] they found a plain in Shinar[fu] and settled there.

11:2 [u]Ge 10:10

[3]They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks[v] and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar[w] for mortar. [4]Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens,[x] so that we may make a name[y] for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."[z]

11:3 [v]Ex 1:14
[w]Ge 14:10
11:4 [x]Dt 1:28; 9:1
[y]Ge 6:4 [z]Dt 4:27

[5]But the LORD came down[a] to see the city and the tower that the men were building. [6]The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. [7]Come, let us[b] go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."[c]

11:5 [a]ver 7; Ge 18:21; Ex 3:8; 19:11, 18, 20
11:7 [b]Ge 1:26
[c]Ge 42:23

[8]So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth,[d] and they stopped building the city. [9]That is why it was called Babel[ge]—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

11:8 [d]Ge 9:19; Lk 1:51
11:9 [e]Ge 10:10

[a] *21* Or *Shem, the older brother of* [b] *23* See Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:17; Hebrew *Mash* [c] *24* Hebrew; Septuagint *father of Cainan, and Cainan was the father of* [d] *25* *Peleg* means *division.* [e] *2* Or *from the east*; or *in the east* [f] *2* That is, Babylonia [g] *9* That is, Babylon; *Babel* sounds like the Hebrew for *confused.*

10:21 "Eber" is thought by some to be the origin of the word for "Hebrew." Although Eber was a distant descendant of Shem (see vv. 24–25; 11:14–17), his importance as the ancestor of the Hebrews is hinted at here. The Ebla tablets—(see "Ebla" on p. 19)—frequently refer to a king named Ebrium, who ruled Ebla for 28 years.

10:32 The text accounts only for people groups of which the Israelites were aware, with no hint at a world beyond the ancient Near East. The author made no attempt to provide a comprehensive list of all the peoples descended from Noah but addressed only how the known groups and nations of his day were related to Israel.

11:3 While stone and mortar were common building materials in Canaan, stone was scarce in Mesopotamia. Archaeological excavations indicate that mud brick and tar were more frequently utilized there.

11:4 Ancient cities were dominated by a temple complex, including a tower. The typical Mesopotamian temple tower, known as a ziggurat, was square at the base and had sloping, stepped sides that led upward to a small shrine at the top. Ziggurats were dedicated to particular deities. Their design made it convenient for a god to "come down" to his temple, receive worship from his people and bless them. In this case God did come down—and he was not pleased!

Mesopotamian ziggurats were given names demonstrating that they were intended to serve as staircases from Earth to heaven: The House of the Link between Heaven and Earth (at Larsa), The House of the Seven Guides of Heaven and Earth (at Borsippa), The House of the Foundation-Platform of Heaven and Earth (at Babylon) and The House of the Mountain of the Universe (at Asshur).

From Shem to Abram

10 This is the account of Shem.

Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father[a] of Arphaxad. 11 And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:12 [f]Lk 3:35

12 When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah.[f] 13 And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.[b]

14 When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. 15 And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

16 When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. 17 And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

18 When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. 19 And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:20 [g]Lk 3:35

20 When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug.[g] 21 And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

22 When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. 23 And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:24 [h]Lk 3:34

24 When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah.[h] 25 And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:26 [i]Lk 3:34 [j]Jos 24:2

26 After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram,[i] Nahor[j] and Haran.

27 This is the account of Terah.

11:27 [k]ver 31; Ge 12:4; 14:12; 19:1; 2Pe 2:7
11:28 [l]ver 31; Ge 15:7
11:29 [m]Ge 17:15 [n]Ge 22:20
11:30 [o]Ge 16:1; 18:11

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.[k] 28 While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans,[l] in the land of his birth. 29 Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai,[m] and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah;[n] she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. 30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no children.[o]

11:31 [p]Ge 15:7; Ne 9:7; Ac 7:4 [q]Ge 10:19

31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans[p] to go to Canaan.[q] But when they came to Haran, they settled there.

32 Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

The Call of Abram

12:1 [r]Ac 7:3*; Heb 11:8

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.[r]

12:2 [s]Ge 15:5; 17:2,4; 18:18; 22:17; Dt 26:5 [t]Ge 24:1,35

2 "I will make you into a great nation[s]
and I will bless you;[t]
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
3 I will bless those who bless you,

12:3 [u]Ge 27:29; Ex 23:22; Nu 24:9

and whoever curses you I will curse;[u]
and all peoples on earth

[v]Ge 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; Ac 3:25; Gal 3:8*

will be blessed through you.[v]"

12:4 [w]Ge 11:31

4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.[w] 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had

[a] *10 Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 11-25. [b] *12,13* Hebrew; Septuagint (see also Luke 3:35,36 and note at Gen. 10:24) *35 years, he became the father of Cainan.* 13 *And after he became the father of Cainan, Arphaxad lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan had lived 130 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and had other sons and daughters*

11:10–26 Pre-flood and post-flood genealogies seem to be schematic and incomplete. If 11:10–26 has no gaps, Shem outlived Abraham, but no other hint of this is given in the Biblical picture (see "Genealogies in Ancient Israel" on p. 1559).

In general, the time period from Adam to Abraham appears to have been extensive, and the genealogical lists in Genesis hardly serve as a timetable.

12:5 At a normal caravan pace of 20 miles (32 km) per day, the trip from Haran to Canaan (about 500 miles or 800 km) would have taken the better part of a month. Shechem and Bethel, located in the central hill country, were often rest stops along the way. They became major sacred sites in later Israelite history. See "Haran" on page 47, "Bethel" on page 59 and "Shechem" on page 340.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE

EVIDENCE FOR SERUG, NAHOR AND TERAH

GENESIS 12 According to the Old Testament the patriarchs' original homeland was in south-central Turkey, in an area known as Aram Naharaim (Ge 24:10) or Paddan-Aram (25:20).[1] Among the genealogical names of individuals listed in Genesis 11, three—Serug, Nahor and Terah—have survived from antiquity also as names of towns in this region. The names of these Biblical characters have been preserved in the very area from which the Bible specifies the patriarchs to have originated.[2]

Serug, Abram's great-grandfather, fathered Nahor at age 30 and died at age 230 (11:22–23). His name, which corresponds to the place called Sargi in **Assyrian** inscriptions of the seventh century B.C., lives on as modern Sürüç, 35 miles (56.5 km) northwest of Haran[3] (see "Map 1" in the back of this Bible).

Nahor, Abram's grandfather, fathered Terah at age 29 and died at age 148 (11:24–25). A town called Nahor is mentioned in 24:10 as the home of the descendants of Bethuel, another son of Nahor (24:24). This particular town also is mentioned in texts from **Mari**[4] and Cappadocia from the nineteenth through the eighteenth centuries B.C., as well as in Assyrian inscriptions from the fourteenth century B.C. Later Assyrian records from the seventh century B.C. refer to it as Til Nakhiri, which means "Mound of Nahor." Although Nahor's exact location is unknown today, numerous references in ancient texts place it in the Balikh River valley south of Haran.

Terah fathered Abram at age 70 and died at age 205 (11:26,32). A town named Til Turahi ("Mound of Terah") is mentioned in ninth-century B.C. Assyrian texts as being north of Haran ("Map 1"), also on the Balikh River.

[1]See "Paddan Aram" on page 48. [2]See also "The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives" on page 73. [3]See "Haran" on page 47. [4]See "Mari" on page 54.

accumulated and the people[x] they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

[6]Abram traveled through the land[y] as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh[z] at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites[a] were in the land. [7]The LORD appeared to Abram[b] and said, "To your offspring[a] I will give this land."[c] So he built an altar there to the LORD,[d] who had appeared to him.

[8]From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel[e] and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. [9]Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.[f]

12:5 [x]Ge 14:14; 17:23

12:6 [y]Heb 11:9 [z]Ge 35:4; Dt 11:30 [a]Ge 10:18
12:7 [b]Ge 17:1; 18:1; Ex 6:3 [c]Ge 13:15,17; 15:18; 17:8; Ps 105:9-11 [d]Ge 13:4
12:8 [e]Ge 13:3
12:9 [f]Ge 13:1,3

Abram in Egypt

[10]Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. [11]As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a

[a] *7* Or *seed*

12:6 A large tree was often a prominent feature at a sacred place, and the "great tree of Moreh" was located at a famous pagan sanctuary at Shechem in central Canaan. Abram built an altar to the true God there.
12:10 Famine was common in Canaan, since the region's productivity depended on rainfall. Egypt was less susceptible to drought and famine because of its dependence on the annual flooding of the Nile. Modern archaeologists and geologists have found evidence of a massive, 300-year drought cycle that occurred during the end of the third millennium B.C. and the beginning of the second—the time period to which Abram/Abraham traditionally is dated. See "Famine in the Ancient Near East" on page 70. See also the note on Ruth 1:1.
12:11 Sarai's beauty is praised in the Genesis Apocryphon (one of the Dead Sea Scrolls). The criteria for beauty, particularly in the case of older women, may have been substantially different in the ancient Near East from the standards we value today.

beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will
12:13 gGe 20:2; 26:7 kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister,g so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman. 15 And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. 16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.

12:17 h1Ch 16:21 17 But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household[h] because of Abram's wife Sa-
12:18 iGe 20:9; 26:10 rai. 18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?"[i] he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" 20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Abram and Lot Separate

13:1 jGe 12:9 13 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev,[j] with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. 2 Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

13:3 kGe 12:8 3 From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel,[k] to the place between Bethel and
13:4 lGe 12:7 Ai where his tent had been earlier 4 and where he had first built an altar.[l] There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

5 Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6 But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not
13:6 mGe 36:7 able to stay together.[m] 7 And quarreling[n] arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The
13:7 nGe 26:20, 21 oGe 12:6 Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land[o] at that time.

13:8 pPr 15:18; 20:3 qPs 133:1 8 So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me,[p] or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers.[q] 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

12:19 Absolute truthfulness was an important feature of Egyptian ethics.
13:2 Cattle are mentioned already in the first chapter of the Bible (1:24–26; "livestock" in the NIV), symbolic of their importance to the well-being of the human race. Eleven Hebrew and two Greek words are translated to indicate cattle, the species descended from wild members of the family *Bovidae*.



ANCIENT PEOPLES, LANDS AND RULERS

The Cities of the Plain

GENESIS 13 Sodom, where Lot chose to live, was one of five cities (Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, Admah and Zeboiim) referred to in the Old Testament as the "Cities of the Plain" (see Ge 13:12; 14:2). These cities were not mythical places but historical sites, and there is evidence of their destruction precisely as described in the Bible.[1]

Zoar ("Map 1") was the city to which Lot fled at the time of the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah (19:18–22). We know its location from the **Madaba map**, a mosaic map on the floor of a church in Madaba, Jordan, depicting the Holy Land (only much later called Palestine) during the sixth century B.C. Ancient Zoar was on the southeastern shore of the Dead Sea, just south of the Zared River (Wadi Hesa) near modern Safi. Zoar has a long history. It is mentioned a number of times in the Bible (e.g., Isa 15:5; Jer 48:34) and was the site of the prosperous, Arab-controlled city of Zugar during the Middle Ages.

Approximately 8 miles (13 km) north of Safi lies the archaeological site of Numeira, which was also occupied during the days of Lot. The consonants of the Arabic name Numeira are similar to those of the Hebrew name Gomorrah. Quite possibly the ancient Hebrew name is preserved in this modern Arabic name.

The archaeological site of Bab edh-Dhra, 10 miles (16 km) north of Numeira, also was occupied during the days of Lot. This location had a significant settlement during the Early Bronze period.[2] Since Bab edh-Dhra is the largest ancient ruin in the region, it stands to reason that it should be identified as Sodom, the most famous of the Cities of the Plain where Lot "pitched his tents" (Ge 13:12).

[1] See "The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah" on page 32. [2] See "Archaeological Periods" chart on page xx in the front of this Bible.

10 Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD,[r] like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar.[s] (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)[t]
11 So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: 12 Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain[u] and pitched his tents near Sodom.[v] 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.[w]

14 The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west.[x] 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring[a] forever.[y] 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. 17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land,[z] for I am giving it to you."

18 So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre[a] at Hebron,[b] where he built an altar to the LORD.[c]

13:10 [r]Ge 2:8-10; Isa 51:3 [s]Ge 19:22,30 [t]Ge 14:8; 19:17-29
13:12 [u]Ge 19:17, 25, 29 [v]Ge 14:12
13:13 [w]Ge 18:20; Eze 16:49-50; 2Pe 2:8
13:14 [x]Ge 28:14; Dt 3:27
13:15 [y]Ge 12:7; Gal 3:16*
13:17 [z]ver 15; Nu 13:17-25
13:18 [a]Ge 14:13, 24; 18:1 [b]Ge 35:27 [c]Ge 8:20

Abram Rescues Lot

14 At this time Amraphel king of Shinar,[bd] Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim 2 went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab

14:1 [d]Ge 10:10

[a] *15* Or *seed*; also in verse 16 [b] *1* That is, Babylonia; also in verse 9

13:10 Already in these ancient times the names of Sodom and Gomorrah had become synonymous with vile wickedness and divine judgment on sin. Archaeological evidence has confirmed that the now dry area east and southeast of the Dead Sea enjoyed an ample water supply and was well populated prior to this catastrophe. See "The Cities of the Plain" on page 23.
13:18 Regarding "great trees," see the note on 12:6.



ANCIENT PEOPLES, LANDS AND RULERS

The Coalition of Mesopotamian Kings

GENESIS 14 None of the invading kings or events mentioned in Genesis 14 have been identified or confirmed from archaeological evidence, but circumstantial evidence in extra-biblical sources does shed light on this text and supports its historicity. There is no reason to treat it as fiction, as many scholars do.[1]

"Amraphel, king of Shinar" (i.e., southern **Mesopotamia**) is no longer identified, as he once was, with **Hammurabi** of **Babylon**, but the area from which Amraphel is said to have come, Shinar, is Babylonia.[2]

The name Arioch is rendered as Arriyuk or Arriwuk in eighteenth- through fifteenth-century texts discovered at **Mari**[3] and **Nuzi**[4] in Mesopotamia. Both of these place-names are listed on "Map 1."

Ellasar may represent either Asshur or Larsa, a city in southern Mesopotamia.

Kedorlaomer, the Hebrew version of Kudur-Lagamar, is comprised of known **Elamite** elements. *Kudur* means "servant of" and is included in the names of five other Elamite kings, and Lagamar was an Elamite goddess. Thus Kedorlaomer may be interpreted as "servant of Lagamar."

Tidal is a form of Tudkhalia, the name of five **Hittite** kings who perhaps all lived later than this king. His title, "king of Goiim" (meaning "nations"), essentially means that he was the principal chief of a loose confederation of tribes, reflecting the decentralized nature of **Antatolian** politics in the nineteenth through eighteenth centuries B.C.

Contemporary records trace similar Mesopotamian confederations that formed after the fall of the Ur III Dynasty (c. 2000 B.C.) and before King Hammurabi rose to power (c. 1750 B.C.). Immediately thereafter **Assyria** and Babylon controlled the entire region.

Curiously, King Yahdun-Lim of Mari (c. 1820 B.C.) left behind an account of a series of raids he made into Syria-Palestine in order to enforce the submission of local kings to himself, and this record is quite similar to what we see in Genesis 14. This does not mean that the Biblical episode and the raids conducted by Yahdun-Lim are one and the same, but it does make the point that the Biblical narrative fits in well with what we see in the history of the time.

[1] See also "The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives" on page 73. [2] See "Sumer" on page 10 [3] See "Mari" on page 54. [4] See "Nuzi" on page 52.

king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim,[e] and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).[f] 3All these latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (the Salt Sea[g]). 4For twelve years they had been subject to Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

5In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him went out and defeated the Rephaites[h] in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites[i] in Shaveh Kiriathaim 6and the Horites[j] in the hill country of Seir,[k] as far as El Paran[l] near the desert. 7Then they turned back and went to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who were living in Hazazon Tamar.[m]

8Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah,[n] the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim[o] and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and drew up their battle lines in the Valley of Siddim 9against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. 10Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills.[p] 11The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. 12They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

13One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre[q] the Amorite, a brother[b] of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. 14When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household[r] and went in pursuit as far as Dan.[s] 15During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. 16He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

17After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).[t]

18Then Melchizedek[u] king of Salem[cv] brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19and he blessed Abram,[w] saying,

> "Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
> Creator[d] of heaven and earth.[x]
> 20And blessed be[e] God Most High,[y]
> who delivered your enemies into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.[z]

21The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself."

22But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand[a] to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,[b] and have taken an oath 23that I will accept nothing belonging to you,[c] not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' 24I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me—to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share."

14:2 [e]Ge 10:19 [f]Ge 13:10 **14:3** [g]Nu 34:3, 12; Dt 3:17; Jos 3:16; 15:2,5 **14:5** [h]Ge 15:20; Dt 2:11,20 [i]Dt 2:10 **14:6** [j]Dt 2:12,22 [k]Dt 2:1,5,22 [l]Ge 21:21; Nu 10:12 **14:7** [m]2Ch 20:2 **14:8** [n]Ge 13:10; 19:17-29 [o]Dt 29:23 **14:10** [p]Ge 19:17, 30 **14:13** [q]ver 24; Ge 13:18 **14:14** [r]Ge 15:3 [s]Dt 34:1; Jdg 18:29 **14:17** [t]2Sa 18:18 **14:18** [u]Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6 [v]Ps 76:2; Heb 7:2 **14:19** [w]Heb 7:6 [x]ver 22 **14:20** [y]Ge 24:27 [z]Ge 28:22; Dt 26:12; Heb 7:4 **14:22** [a]Ex 6:8; Da 12:7; Rev 10:5-6 [b]ver 19 **14:23** [c]2Ki 5:16

[a] *3* That is, the Dead Sea [b] *13* Or *a relative*; or *an ally* [c] *18* That is, Jerusalem [d] *19* Or *Possessor*; also in verse 22 [e] *20* Or *And praise be to*

14:10 Even today lumps of asphalt are often seen floating in the southern end of the Dead Sea. Flanked by hills on both sides, the Dead Sea is the lowest body of water on Earth (about 1,300 ft—396 m—below sea level).

14:13 Abram, the father of the Hebrew people, was the first Biblical character to be called a Hebrew (see the note on 10:21). Usually an ethnic term in the Bible, it was normally used by non-Israelites in a disparaging sense (see, e.g., 39:17). Outside the Bible, people known as the Habiru/Apiru (a word probably related to "Hebrew") are referred to as a property-less, dependent, immigrant (foreign) social class rather than as a specific ethnic group. The Amarna Letters (clay tablets found in Egypt) contain negative descriptions of them. See "The Amarna Tablets and the Habiru" on page 347.

14:14 The home was the first and most effective agency for religious training. During the nomadic life of the patriarchs education was purely a domestic activity, and the parents were the teachers. God called Abraham as the father of the chosen people and put upon him the responsibility of training his children and his household to walk in the ways of the Lord (18:19; cf. Ps 78:5–7). The reference in Genesis 14:14 to Abram's "trained men" implies a definite training program supervised by him. This is the only occurrence of the Hebrew term for "trained men" in the Bible. A related word used elsewhere in very ancient texts means "armed retainers."

14:19 In ancient times the chief Canaanite deity was frequently referred to as the "most high," "lord of heaven" and "creator of earth." Based upon the terminology and location (Jerusalem was in central Canaan), Melchizedek was probably a Canaanite king-priest. By identifying Melchizedek's "God Most High" with "the LORD" (v. 22), Abram bore testimony to the one true God, whom Melchizedek also had come to know.

14:22 In ancient times raising one's hand was a standard oath-taking practice (see Dt 32:40; Rev 10:5–6).

ANCIENT PEOPLES, LANDS AND RULERS

The Patriarchal Period: Mesopotamia During the Time of Abraham



A well and tamarisk tree at Beersheba
Photograph: © Todd Bolen/Bible Places.com

GENESIS 15 Near the end of the third millennium B.C., the **Sumerian** Third Dynasty of Ur lost the predominate influence it had enjoyed over most of **Mesopotamia**. The entire region experienced severe political instability as its city-states continually challenged one another, as well as those in northern Syria, and power frequently changed hands.

Kings with **Amorite** names ruled many of these city-states during the **patriarchal period**. The Amorites comprised a large and diverse group of northwestern Semitic tribes from Syria-Arabia. Many scholars once thought them to have been mostly nomadic invaders who brought with them the widespread political instability mentioned above, as well as the urban decline characterizing the end of the third millennium B.C. However, texts from **Mari**[1] and elsewhere indicate that the Amorites included both semi-nomadic pastoralists (raisers of livestock) and sedentary groups, generally organized around patriarchal figures who began settling in Mesopotamian villages and urban centers as early as the middle of the third millenium B.C. This cultural pattern is similar to the one we see occurring in portraits of the **patriarchs** of the Bible.

By the turn of the third millennium B.C. even larger numbers of Amorites had migrated south into **Canaan**[2] and southeast into Mesopotamia, perhaps pressured by the **Hurrians** from the north.[3] Many Amorites worked their way into positions of leadership. The most famous of these were Shamshi-Adad I in **Assyria** (late nineteenth to early eighteenth centuries B.C.) and **Hammurabi** in **Babylon** (early to mid eighteenth century B.C.).

The Biblical patriarchs most likely lived within this early second-millennium period. The cross-cultural interaction taking place among the Sumerians, **Akkadians** and Amorites, as well as the Hurrians and **Hittites** to the north, is clearly reflected in the patriarchal narratives in terms of social customs, laws and languages.[4] Far from being anachronistic, the details of the Biblical stories of the patriarchs fit well into the historical environment of the late second millennium B.C. There is no evidence that should lead scholars to question their authenticity.[5] See "Map 1" at the back of this Bible.

[1]See "Mari" on page 54. [2]See "Canaan" on page 324. [3]See "The Hurrians" on page 57. [4]See "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36. [5]See "The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives" on page 73.

God's Covenant With Abram

15 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram[d] in a vision:

"Do not be afraid,[e] Abram.
I am your shield,[a][f]
your very great reward.[b]"

2 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless[g] and the one who will inherit[c] my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant[h] in my household will be my heir."

4 Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.[i]" 5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars[j]—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."[k]

6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.[l]

7 He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

8 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know[m] that I will gain possession of it?"

9 So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other;[n] the birds, however, he did not cut in half.[o] 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep,[p] and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. 13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved[q] and mistreated four hundred years.[r] 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out[s] with great possessions.[t] 15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.[u] 16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites[v] has not yet reached its full measure."

17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.[w] 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land,[x] from the river[d] of Egypt[y] to the great river, the Euphrates— 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

Hagar and Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.[z] But she had an Egyptian maidservant[a] named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her."[b]

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. 3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan[c] ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

[a] *1* Or *sovereign* [b] *1* Or *shield; / your reward will be very great* [c] *2* The meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain.
[d] *18* Or *Wadi*

15:1 [d] Da 10:1
[e] Ge 21:17; 26:24; 46:3; 2Ki 6:16; Ps 27:1; Isa 41:10,13-14
[f] Dt 33:29; 2Sa 22:3,31; Ps 3:3
15:2 [g] Ac 7:5
15:3 [h] Ge 24:2,34
15:4 [i] Gal 4:28
15:5 [j] Ps 147:4; Jer 33:22
[k] Ge 12:2; 22:17; Ex 32:13; Ro 4:18*; Heb 11:12
15:6 [l] Ps 106:31; Ro 4:3*,20-24*; Gal 3:6*; Jas 2:23*
15:8 [m] Lk 1:18
15:10 [n] ver 17; Jer 34:18
[o] Lev 1:17
15:12 [p] Ge 2:21
15:13 [q] Ex 1:11
[r] ver 16; Ex 12:40; Ac 7:6,17
15:14 [s] Ac 7:7*
[t] Ex 12:32-38
15:15 [u] Ge 25:8
15:16 [v] 1Ki 21:26
15:17 [w] ver 10
15:18 [x] Ge 12:7
[y] Nu 34:5
16:1 [z] Ge 11:30; Gal 4:24-25
[a] Ge 21:9
16:2 [b] Ge 30:3-4, 9-10
16:3 [c] Ge 12:5

15:2 The term *servant* in ancient times applied to anyone under the authority of another, implying that not all servants were domestics or slaves. In some passages of Scripture the word properly means "young man" or "minister." It is applied to the relationship of men to others occupying high position—men such as Eliezer, whose place in the household of Abraham compared with that of a prime minister (v. 2; 24:2; Pr 14:35; Jn 18:20).

15:3 Ancient Nuzi law permitted a childless man to adopt one of his own male servants to be heir and guardian of his estate. It also allowed inheritance rights to be transferred to a son born to the primary wife *after* she had adopted her surrogate's son. See "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36, "The Rights of the Firstborn" on page 43 and "Nuzi" on page 52.

15:7 Ancient royal covenants often began with the self-identification of the king and a brief historical prologue.

15:17 In ancient times parties solemnized a covenant by walking down an aisle flanked by the pieces of slaughtered animals (see Jer 34:18–19), perhaps signifying a self-maledictory oath. See "The Hittite Ritual of Passing Between the Pieces of a Sacrifice" on page 146.

16:1–2 The privilege of childbearing was appropriately viewed to be in God's hands. Conversely, the inability to bear children was seen as his punishment. Ancient people often considered a barren woman accursed, and in some cases her condition served as ground for divorce. Marriage contracts of the time were based on the Code of Hammurabi (an ancient Babylonian law code) and stipulated that an infertile wife should provide her husband with a surrogate childbearer. See "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36 and "Nuzi" on page 52.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."[d]

16:5 [d]Ge 31:53

6 "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

7 The angel of the LORD[e] found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.[f] 8 And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

16:7 [e]Ge 21:17; 22:11,15; 31:11 [f]Ge 20:1

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

9 Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." 10 The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."[g]

16:10 [g]Ge 13:16; 17:20

11 The angel of the LORD also said to her:

"You are now with child
and you will have a son.
You shall name him Ishmael,[a]
for the LORD has heard of your misery.[h]

16:11 [h]Ex 2:24; 3:7,9

12 He will be a wild donkey of a man;
his hand will be against everyone
and everyone's hand against him,
and he will live in hostility
toward[b] all his brothers.[i]"

16:12 [i]Ge 25:18

13 She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen[c] the One who sees me."[j] 14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi[d]; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

16:13 [j]Ge 32:30

15 So Hagar bore Abram a son,[k] and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

16:15 [k]Gal 4:22

[a] *11 Ishmael* means *God hears.* [b] *12* Or *live to the east / of* [c] *13* Or *seen the back of* [d] *14 Beer Lahai Roi* means *well of the Living One who sees me.*



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

Naming of Children

GENESIS 16 Ancient Near Eastern peoples attached a deep significance to the naming of children. Unlike modern parents, who typically choose names, often long before a child's birth, on the basis of cultural popularity, family tradition, personal preference or sound, Israelite parents tended to select names based upon circumstances surrounding the birth or words spoken near the time of birth. For example, in Genesis 35:18 we read that Rachel, dying in childbirth, named her son Ben-Oni ("my painful son"), although Jacob renamed the baby Benjamin ("son of the right hand").

On rare occasions God revealed a name to a child's parents before birth, signifying the divinely established role that child would play in history. For example, God specified the name Isaac, meaning "he laughs." This name may reflect not only Abraham's and Sarah's laughter of disbelief upon learning that they were indeed to have a son in their old age (17:17; 18:12; 21:6) but also the ultimate joy Isaac would bring as the beginning of the fulfillment of God's longstanding promise to Abraham (17:4–8; 21:1–2). Another clear example of God naming a child is his own Son Jesus (the Greek version of Joshua, meaning "he saves"), whose divinely revealed purpose was to "save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:20–21). See also Hosea 1:4, 6 and 9 for some more sobering names God designated for the offspring of the prophet Hosea.

The Covenant of Circumcision

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty[a]; walk before me and be blameless.[m] 2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you[n] and will greatly increase your numbers."

3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you:[o] You will be the father of many nations.[p] 5 No longer will you be called Abram[b]; your name will be Abraham,[c][q] for I have made you a father of many nations.[r] 6 I will make you very fruitful;[s] I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.[t] 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God[u] and the God of your descendants after you.[v] 8 The whole land of Canaan,[w] where you are now an alien,[x] I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you;[y] and I will be their God."

9 Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.[z] 11 You are to undergo circumcision,[a] and it will be the sign of the covenant[b] between me and you. 12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised,[c] including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner — those who are not your offspring. 13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people;[d] he has broken my covenant."

15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her.[e] I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations;[f] kings of peoples will come from her."

17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed[g] and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son,[h] and you will call him Isaac.[d] I will establish my covenant with him[i] as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers.[j] He will be the father of twelve rulers,[k] and I will make him into a great nation.[l] 21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."[m] 22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

23 On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised,[n] 25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen; 26 Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day. 27 And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

The Three Visitors

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre[o] while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men[p] standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

17:1 [l]Ge 28:3; Ex 6:3 [m]Dt 18:13
17:2 [n]Ge 15:18
17:4 [o]Ge 15:18 [p]ver 16; Ge 12:2; 35:11; 48:19
17:5 [q]ver 15; Ne 9:7 [r]Ro 4:17*
17:6 [s]Ge 35:11 [t]Mt 1:6
17:7 [u]Ex 29:45, 46 [v]Ro 9:8; Gal 3:16
17:8 [w]Ps 105:9, 11 [x]Ge 23:4; 28:4; Ex 6:4 [y]Ge 12:7
17:10 [z]ver 23; Ge 21:4; Jn 7:22; Ac 7:8; Ro 4:11
17:11 [a]Ex 12:48; Dt 10:16 [b]Ro 4:11
17:12 [c]Lev 12:3; Lk 2:21
17:14 [d]Ex 4:24-26
17:16 [e]Ge 18:10 [f]Ge 35:11; Gal 4:31
17:17 [g]Ge 18:12; 21:6
17:19 [h]Ge 18:14; 21:2 [i]Ge 26:3
17:20 [j]Ge 16:10 [k]Ge 25:12-16 [l]Ge 21:18
17:21 [m]Ge 21:2
17:24 [n]Ro 4:11
18:1 [o]Ge 13:18; 14:13
18:2 [p]ver 16,22; Ge 32:24; Jos 5:13; Jdg 13:6-11; Heb 13:2

[a] *1* Hebrew *El-Shaddai* [b] *5* *Abram* means *exalted father.* [c] *5* *Abraham* means *father of many.* [d] *19* *Isaac* means *he laughs.*

17:5 Ancient Near Eastern peoples attached a deep significance to names, and Israelite parents tended to select a child's name based upon circumstances surrounding the birth or words spoken near the time of birth. By giving Abram a new name God marked him in a special way as his servant. See "Naming of Children" on page 28.

17:10 Although circumcision was practiced elsewhere in antiquity (see Jer 9:25–26; Eze 32:18–19), infant circumcision seems to have been unique. It was to be a sign of both the material and the spiritual aspects of God's covenant with Abraham (see "Circumcision in the Ancient World" on p. 1840).

18:1–33 In the early days of humanity, before people had the written Word, before the incarnation and before the Holy Spirit had come to make his abode in human hearts, God sometimes appeared and talked with people. One of the loveliest and most instructive of the theophanies (visible appearances of God) is found in Genesis 18. From Abraham's time on theophanies generally occurred when recipients were asleep, as in Jacob's vision at Bethel (28:10–17). But God addressed Moses "face to face" (Ex 33:11). There is good reason to believe that theophanies before the incarnation of Christ were visible manifestations of the pre-incarnate Son of God.

18:1–8 Hospitality was one of the most highly regarded virtues of the ancient world. Social protocol required an actual meal to exceed what was first offered. Thus Abraham ordered fresh bread, a calf and a mixture of milk and yogurt. The fresh meat was particularly generous—not a normal staple in the ancients' daily diet.

3 He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,[a] do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water
be brought, and then you may all wash your feet[q] and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to
eat,[r] so you can be refreshed and then go on your way — now that you have come to your servant."
"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."
6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs[b] of fine flour and knead
it and bake some bread."
7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to pre-
pare it. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before
them.[s] While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.
9 "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.
"There, in the tent," he said.
10 Then the LORD[c] said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will
have a son."[t]
Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were
already old and well advanced in years,[u] and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.[v] 12 So Sarah laughed[w]
to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master[d][x] is old, will I now have this pleasure?"
13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that
I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD?[y] I will return to you at the appointed time next year and
Sarah will have a son."
15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh."
But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

18:4 [q]Ge 19:2; 43:24
18:5 [r]Jdg 13:15
18:8 [s]Ge 19:3
18:10 [t]Ro 9:9*
18:11 [u]Ge 17:17 [v]Ro 4:19
18:12 [w]Ge 17:17; 21:6 [x]1Pe 3:6
18:14 [y]Jer 32:17, 27; Zec 8:6; Mt 19:26; Lk 1:37; Ro 4:21

[a] 3 Or *O Lord* [b] 6 That is, probably about 20 quarts (about 22 liters) [c] 10 Hebrew *Then he* [d] 12 Or *husband*



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

The Role of the Patriarch in Family Life

GENESIS 18 In order to understand the description of Abraham as the founding father of Israel's faith, we do well to recognize the key role a **patriarch** such as Abraham played in family life during this **pre-monarchic period**. The social structure of the time had three tiers: tribe, clan and family/household (Jos 7:14). The fundamental unit was the household (Hebrew *bet av*, meaning "house of a father"). It consisted of a patriarch — responsible adult male — his wife, his sons and their wives, his grandchildren and various other dependents. Since lineage/descent in patriarchal societies was passed along through sons, married daughters joined their husbands' households.

Exploration of **Iron Age I**[1] settlements, although they existed later than the patriarchal period, tells us much about Israelite patriarchal society. They indicate that such social units likely inhabited clusters of compounds with a few houses around a courtyard, encircled by a low wall. The elder patriarch and his immediate descendants would occupy one of the homes, with his married sons and their families living in other houses within the compound. In like manner Jacob, along with his sons and their families, sojourned as a small, patriarchal clan (Ge 46:5–7).

Various Biblical passages reveal much about Abraham's patriarchal household. The patriarch was responsible for the socioeconomic and religious well-being of his entire household (14:13–16). In Genesis 18, for example, Abraham's hospitality toward his three visitors reflected kinship responsibilities that even included the protection of vulnerable sojourners or resident aliens (cf. Lev. 19:33–34). Providing water for dusty feet and serving an elaborate meal conferred honor upon guests, and, as in Abraham's case, indicated his generosity.

At the same time, Abraham in Genesis 18 may have realized that he was entertaining heavenly guests and thus have been especially hospitable. The bond established during their subsequent table fellowship engendered a blessing from one of the guests and established a basis for Abraham's intercession for Sodom.[2]

The sacrosanct nature of patriarchal hospitality recurs as a metaphor for God as the host of a feast in Psalm 23:5–6 (cf. Mt 8:11; Lk 13:29).

[1] See "Archaeological Periods" chart on page xx in the front of this Bible. [2] See "The Cities of the Plain" on page 23 and "The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah" on page 32.

Abraham Pleads for Sodom

16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with
18:17 [z]Am 3:7 [a]Ge 19:24 them to see them on their way. 17 Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham[z] what I am about to do?[a]
18:18 [b]Gal 3:8* 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation,[b] and all nations on earth will be blessed
18:19 [c]Dt 4:9-10; 6:7 [d]Jos 24:15; Eph 6:4 through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children[c] and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD[d] by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

20 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous
18:21 [e]Ge 11:5 21 that I will go down[e] and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."

18:22 [f]Ge 19:1 22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom,[f] but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.[a]
18:23 [g]Nu 16:22 23 Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?[g] 24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare[b] the place for
18:24 [h]Jer 5:1 the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?[h] 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing — to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge[c] of all
18:25 [i]Job 8:3, 20; Ps 58:11; 94:2; Isa 3:10-11; Ro 3:6 the earth do right?"[i]

18:26 [j]Jer 5:1 26 The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.[j]"

27 Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am
18:27 [k]Ge 2:7; 3:19; Job 30:19; 42:6 nothing but dust and ashes,[k] 28 what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?"

"If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."

29 Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?"

He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it."

30 Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?"

He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

31 Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?"

He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it."

18:32 [l]Judg 6:39 32 Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more.[l] What if only ten can be found there?"

[m]Jer 5:1 He answered, "For the sake of ten,[m] I will not destroy it."

33 When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

19:1 [n]Ge 18:22 [o]Ge 18:1 19 The two angels arrived at Sodom[n] in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city.[o] When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. 2 "My
19:2 [p]Ge 18:4; Lk 7:44 lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet[p] and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning."

"No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."

3 But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for
19:3 [q]Ge 18:6 them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.[q] 4 Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — surrounded the house. 5 They called to Lot, "Where are
19:5 [r]Jdg 19:22; Isa 3:9; Ro 1:24-27 the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."[r]

19:6 [s]Jdg 19:23 6 Lot went outside to meet them[s] and shut the door behind him 7 and said, "No, my friends. Don't do

[a] *22* Masoretic Text; an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition *but the* LORD *remained standing before Abraham* [b] *24* Or *forgive*; also in verse 26 [c] *25* Or *Ruler*

18:27 The expression "dust and ashes" is a play on words (*aphar* and *epher*) that signifies the origin of the human body from the ordinary chemical elements, contrasting the lowliness of a human being with the dignity of God.

19:1 The city gateway served as the administrative and judicial center where legal matters were discussed and prosecuted (see Ru 4:1–12; Pr 31:23; see also "The City Gate" on p. 392). Treaties witnessed by the city elders at the gate were as legally binding as written contracts are today.

19:2 The square was a large, open space near the main city gateway used for public gatherings. Important cities could have two or more squares (see Ne 8:16).

19:5 A sodomite was one who practiced that unnatural vice for which Sodom became noted. Although not named as such, the practice is referred to in Romans 1:27, and God strictly forbade it (Dt 23:17). Usually the practice was in connection with heathen worship, and its presence was a sign of departure from the Lord (1Ki 14:24).

THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

GENESIS 19 According to Genesis 19:24 burning sulfur "rained down" on Sodom and Gomorrah, obliterating both of these cities, as well as the surrounding region (vv. 25,29). To date, the location of Sodom is still disputed (but note possible location of Sodom and Gomorrah indicated by a box and arrow on "Map 1" in the back of this Bible). Some people place it on the southwestern side of the Dead Sea, others on the north side of this body of water near the mouth of the Jordan and still others at modern Bab edh-Dhra on the southeastern side of the Dead Sea.[1]

Recently archaeologists have focused significant attention upon Bab edh-Dhra, where they have found evidence of several **Early Bronze Age**[2] occupation levels. Although a layer of ash and burned debris has been discovered in excavations there, the most dramatic evidence that this may indeed be the site of ancient Sodom comes from a nearby cemetery. The dead had been interred in charnel houses, or mausoleums, constructed above ground. Five of these structures were excavated and found to have been burned. A detailed examination of the largest of these (26 ft x 51 ft [8 m x 15.5 m]) indicated that the fire had begun on the roof. Geological investigations determined that an earthquake had added to the devastation.

Since there were several distinct occupation levels at Bab edh-Dhra (evidence of habitation at the site during various time periods), evidence had to be handled carefully. For example, there is a substantial ash layer associated with the occupation in Early Bronze I (the oldest of the Early Bronze occupation levels), but this cannot be associated with the Biblical destruction of Sodom because its ruins point to a date far earlier than the time of Abraham. In fact, this earlier, fire-related damage appears to have been the work of invaders. The Early Bronze III city is more likely to be the Biblical Sodom. A much larger city, evidence points to its destruction by a combination of earthquake and fire in approximately 2350 B.C. People evidently reoccupied this site in Early Bronze IV, but it appears to have been permanently abandoned for some reason around 2150 B.C.

[1]See "The Cities of the Plain" on page 23. [2]See "Archaeological Periods" chart on page xx in the front of this Bible.

this wicked thing. [8]Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."[t]

[9]"Get out of our way," they replied. And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge![u] We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

[10]But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. [11]Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness[v] so that they could not find the door.

[12]The two men said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you?[w] Get them out of here, [13]because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it."[x]

[14]So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry[a] his daughters. He said, "Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the city![y]" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.[z]

[15]With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away[a] when the city is punished.[b]"

19:8 [t]Jdg 19:24

19:9 [u]Ex 2:14; Ac 7:27

19:11 [v]Dt 28:28-29; 2Ki 6:18; Ac 13:11

19:12 [w]Ge 7:1

19:13 [x]1Ch 21:15

19:14 [y]Nu 16:21

[z]Ex 9:21; Lk 17:28

19:15 [a]Nu 16:26 [b]Rev 18:4

[a] *14* Or *were married to*

19:8 In ancient times a host was obliged to protect his guests in every situation.

16 When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters
and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them. 17 As soon as they had brought
19:17 [c] Jer 48:6 [d] ver 26 them out, one of them said, "Flee for your lives![c] Don't look back,[d] and don't stop anywhere in the plain!
Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!"

18 But Lot said to them, "No, my lords,[a] please! 19 Your[b] servant has found favor in your[b] eyes, and you[b]
have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will
overtake me, and I'll die. 20 Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it—
it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared."

21 He said to him, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. 22 But
flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." (That is why the town was called Zoar.[c])

23 By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. 24 Then the LORD rained down burn-
19:24 [e] Dt 29:23; Isa 1:9; 13:19 [f] Lk 17:29; 2Pe 2:6; Jude 7 19:25 [g] Ps 107:34; Eze 16:48 19:26 [h] ver 17 [i] Lk 17:32 19:27 [j] Ge 18:22 19:28 [k] Rev 9:2; 18:9 19:29 [l] 2Pe 2:7 ing sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah[e]—from the LORD out of the heavens.[f] 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land.[g]
26 But Lot's wife looked back,[h] and she became a pillar of salt.[i]

27 Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the
LORD.[j] 28 He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense
smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.[k]

29 So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of
the catastrophe[l] that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Lot and His Daughters

19:30 [m] ver 19 30 Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains,[m] for he was afraid to stay in Zoar.
He and his two daughters lived in a cave. 31 One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father
is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. 32 Let's get our
father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father."

33 That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him. He
was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

34 The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night I lay with my father. Let's get him
to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and lie with him so we can preserve our family line through
our father." 35 So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went and
lay with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

36 So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. 37 The older daughter had a son, and she
19:37 [n] Dt 2:9 named him Moab[d]; he is the father of the Moabites[n] of today. 38 The younger daughter also had a son, and
19:38 [o] Dt 2:19 she named him Ben-Ammi[e]; he is the father of the Ammonites[o] of today.

Abraham and Abimelech

20:1 [p] Ge 18:1 [q] Ge 26:1,6,17 20 Now Abraham moved on from there[p] into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and
Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar,[q] 2 and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sis-
20:2 [r] ver 12; Ge 12:13; 26:7 [s] Ge 12:15 ter."[r] Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.[s]

20:3 [t] Job 33:15; Mt 27:19 [u] Ps 105:14 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream[t] one night and said to him, "You are as good as dead because
of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman."[u]

20:4 [v] Ge 18:25 4 Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?[v] 5 Did
he not say to me, 'She is my sister,' and didn't she also say, 'He is my brother'? I have done this with a clear
conscience and clean hands."

6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have
20:6 [w] 1Sa 25:26, 34 kept[w] you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. 7 Now return the man's wife,
20:7 [x] ver 17; 1Sa 7:5; Job 42:8 for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you[x] and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be
sure that you and all yours will die."

8 Early the next morning Abimelech summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had

[a] *18* Or *No, Lord*; or *No, my lord* [b] *19* The Hebrew is singular. [c] *22* *Zoar* means *small.* [d] *37* *Moab* sounds like the Hebrew for *from father.* [e] *38* *Ben-Ammi* means *son of my people.*

19:31–38 Entirely unsupported is the critical view held by some scholars that this infamous incident in the cave was "created" by a later writer to justify the inferior position of the Moabites and Ammonites in their relationship with Israel (see "Moab" on p. 292 and "Ammon" on p. 364). At any rate, the almost buried faith of Lot reappeared much later in Ruth, the Moabitess who was also the great-grandmother of David and thus a member of the Messianic line (Ru 1:16–18; 4:13–21).

happened, they were very much afraid. 9Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said, "What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should not be done.[y]" 10And Abimelech asked Abraham, "What was your reason for doing this?"

11Abraham replied, "I said to myself, 'There is surely no fear of God[z] in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'[a] 12Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not

20:9 [y]Ge 12:18; 26:10; 34:7
20:11 [z]Ge 42:18; Ps 36:1
20:11 [a]Ge 12:12; 26:7

20:12 The word for "sister" (Hebrew *'âhôth,* Greek *adelphē*) is used in the Bible with varying meanings. In the Old Testament it refers to females having the same parents, females having one parent in common, a female relative or a woman of the same country (v. 12;



The Negev: Its Climate and Features

GENESIS 20 For thousands of years people have grazed their flocks and herds seasonally in the Negev (see "Map 2" in the back of this Bible), the southern region of Israel sandwiched between the hill country of Judah to the north and the deserts of Zin, Shur and Paran to the south. In fact, the semi-nomadic **patriarchs** (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel) grazed their livestock in the desert-like Negev during the winter and migrated north to Judah's hill country, around Bethel and Shechem, for the summer months ("Map 1").[1] During the New Testament period the Negev was known as **Idumea** (Mk 3:8).

In Biblical times the Negev was mostly south of the Dead Sea, some 30 miles (48 km) from east to west and centered around Beersheba (again see "Map 1"). Open, rugged and sparsely populated, the region supports scrub brush but no forests. It has two seasons: a milder winter with periodic rains and a hot, dry summer. Because less than 8 inches (200 mm) of rain falls annually in the Negev, the area is unsuitable for farming.

[1]See "Bethel" on page 59 and "Shechem" on page 340.



Negev landscape
Photograph courtesy of © Dr. Gary Pratico

of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 And when God had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother." ' "

20:14 [b]Ge 12:16 14 Then Abimelech brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham,[b] and
20:15 [c]Ge 13:9 he returned Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelech said, "My land is before you; live wherever you like."[c]

16 To Sarah he said, "I am giving your brother a thousand shekels[a] of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated."

20:17 [d]Job 42:9 17 Then Abraham prayed to God,[d] and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again, 18 for the LORD had closed up every womb in Abimelech's household because of Abra-
20:18 [e]Ge 12:17 ham's wife Sarah.[e]

The Birth of Isaac

21:1 [f]1Sa 2:21 [g]Ge 8:1; 17:16, 21; Gal 4:23 21:2 [h]Ge 17:19 [i]Gal 4:22; Heb 11:11 21:3 [j]Ge 17:19 21:4 [k]Ge 17:10, 12; Ac 7:8 21:6 [l]Ge 17:17; Isa 54:1

21 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah[f] as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.[g] 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son[h] to Abraham in his old age,[i] at the very time God had promised him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac[bj] to the son Sarah bore him. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him,[k] as God commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter,[l] and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." 7 And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. 9 But
21:9 [m]Ge 16:15 [n]Gal 4:29 Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham[m] was mocking,[n] 10 and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the
21:10 [o]Gal 4:30* inheritance with my son Isaac."[o]

21:11 [p]Ge 17:18 11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.[p] 12 But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it
21:12 [q]Ro 9:7*; Heb 11:18* is through Isaac that your offspring[c] will be reckoned.[q] 13 I will make the son of the maidservant into a
21:13 [r]ver 18 nation[r] also, because he is your offspring."

14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the
21:14 [s]ver 31,32 desert of Beersheba.[s]

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she[d] began to sob.

21:17 [t]Ex 3:7 17 God heard the boy crying,[t] and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. 18 Lift the boy up and
21:18 [u]ver 13 take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.[u]"

21:19 [v]Nu 22:31 19 Then God opened her eyes[v] and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

21:20 [w]Ge 26:3, 24; 28:15; 39:2, 21,23 21:21 [x]Ge 24:4, 38 20 God was with the boy[w] as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. 21 While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him[x] from Egypt.

[a] *16* That is, about 25 pounds (about 11.5 kilograms) [b] *3* *Isaac* means *he laughs.* [c] *12* Or *seed* [d] *16* Hebrew; Septuagint *the child*

Lev 18:18; Nu 25:18; Job 42:11). In the New Testament it is used of girls belonging to the same family or simply of female blood relatives (Mt 13:56; Mk 6:3; Lk 10:39). The word is also used figuratively in Scripture (Eze 16:45; Ro 16:1; 2Jn 13).

In this case Sarah was Abraham's half sister, the daughter of his father but not of his mother. Marriage to half sisters was not uncommon in ancient times.

20:16 The word "shekels," though not included in the Hebrew text, is correctly supplied here as the most common unit of weight in ancient times. Originally the shekel was only a weight, not a coin, since coinage was not invented until the seventh century B.C.

21:8 In the ancient Near East many children died before they reached the age of two or three (the usual age for a child to be weaned), so a child's weaning was a celebrated rite of passage.

21:11 Abraham's distress was due not only to love but also to legal custom. The tradition of his day, illustrated later in the Nuzi tablets, prohibited the arbitrary expulsion of a servant girl's son (whose legal status was relatively weak in any case). See "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36, "The Rights of the Firstborn" on page 43 and "Nuzi" on page 52.

The Treaty at Beersheba

22 At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, "God is with you
in everything you do. 23 Now swear[y] to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my
children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you are living as an alien the same kind-
ness I have shown to you."
24 Abraham said, "I swear it."

21:23 [y]ver 31; Jos 2:12

21:25–30 In a land of seasonal rainfall, wells were extremely important to the welfare of the human population and of their flocks and herds. The area in which Abraham had dug a well was under Abimelech's political control but was owned by no one. Abraham



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia

GENESIS 21 Laws from ancient **Mesopotamia** provide various interesting parallels to the Genesis stories. In particular, numerous regulations illustrate the marriage and inheritance issues found in the accounts of the **patriarchs**. For example:

Just as Sarai procured an heir for Abram through her maid (Ge 16; cf. ch. 30), the **Sumerian** laws of Ur-Nammu (founder and ruler of Ur's Third Dynasty, c. 2044–2007 B.C.) allowed a husband to take a concubine after waiting in vain for his primary wife to bear children. As in Sarai's case, the primary wife might even have initiated the arrangement.

Hurrian law at **Nuzi**[1] (mid-second millennium B.C.) and the **Code of Hammurabi** in **Babylonia** (early eighteenth century B.C.) allowed a man to adopt as legitimate heirs any children he may have fathered through a slave woman (see 17:18).

In Sumer, the eldest son inherited the whole of his father's estate and assumed responsibility for his siblings. But in **Assyria** and Nuzi brothers divided their father's estate, with the eldest son receiving a double portion.[2]

Nuzi law permitted inheritance rights to be transferred to a son born to the primary wife *after* she had adopted her surrogate's son. In a similar manner Isaac (although born after Ishmael) had the right to be Abraham's chief heir (21:12).

Neo-Babylonian law included the provision that sons born to a concubine would be subordinate to any sons born to the primary wife and that the combined sons of the primary wife would inherit two-thirds of the estate.

The disinheritance of a son, a practice allowed in certain societies, generally required a court order that might be officially overturned if the father were found to have acted unfairly. Some scholars, based upon such a prohibition in Nuzi law, have questioned the legality of Sarah's demand to expel Hagar and Ishmael (ch. 21), which by analogy may indicate that Abraham lived under similar customs and laws. Indeed, Abraham was hesitant to comply with Sarah's wish and did so only after divine intervention (vv. 10–13).[3]

In addition to family legislation, certain laws and customs concerning contracts and other agreements mentioned in Genesis had parallels in Mesopotamia. Treaties discovered at **Mari**[4] and modern Tell Leilan (from the early second millennium B.C.) are strikingly similar to the treaty reports in Genesis 21, 26 and 31:

In each case a formal oath was requested and given.

The oaths were followed by reports of stipulations, frequently including a pledge of nonhostility.

The oaths generally involved ceremonial feasts or sacrifices (26:30) and a gift exchange of sorts, particularly if the parties to the agreement had met in person (cf. 21:27–30).



The Ur-Nammu Law Code (oldest known code of laws; Sumer, twenty-first century B.C.)
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The Mesopotamian cultural milieu from which the patriarchs emerged helps us to understand patriarchal social structures and practices reported throughout Genesis.[5]

[1]See "Nuzi" on page 52. [2]See "Inheritance in the Ancient Near East" on page 250. [3]See "The Rights of the Firstborn" on page 43. [4]See "Mari" on page 54.
[5]See "The Patriarchal Period: Mesopotamia During the Time of Abraham" on page 26 and "The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives" on page 73.

[25] Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had
21:25 [z] Ge 26:15, 18,20-22 seized.[z] [26] But Abimelech said, "I don't know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today."

[27] So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a treaty.[a]
21:27 [a] Ge 26:28, 31 [28] Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, [29] and Abimelech asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?"

[30] He replied, "Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness[b] that I dug this well."
21:30 [b] Ge 31:44, 47,48,50,52

[31] So that place was called Beersheba,[a][c] because the two men swore an oath there.
21:31 [c] Ge 26:33

[32] After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. [33] Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called
21:33 [d] Ge 4:26 [e] Dt 33:27 upon the name of the LORD,[d] the Eternal God.[e] [34] And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

Abraham Tested

22:1 [f] Dt 8:2,16; Heb 11:17; Jas 1:12-13 **22:2** [g] ver 12,16; Jn 3:16; Heb 11:17; 1Jn 4:9 [h] 2Ch 3:1

22 Some time later God tested[f] Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"
"Here I am," he replied.

[2] Then God said, "Take your son[g], your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah.[h] Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

[3] Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. [4] On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. [5] He said to

[a] *31 Beersheba* can mean *well of seven* or *well of the oath.*

was claiming ownership not of the land but of the right to the water in the well. Such squatter's rights were available to a resident alien. See "The Negev: Its Climate and Features" on page 34 and "Wells, Cisterns and Aqueducks in the Ancient World" on page 1259.

21:31 Beersheba, an important town in the northern Negev, marked the southernmost boundary of the Israelite monarchy in later times (see, e.g., 2Sa 17:11; see also "Beersheba" on p. 518). Though its authenticity is uncertain, there is an ancient well there called "Abraham's well" (see Ge. 21:25).

21:32 Abimelech is a Semitic, not a Philistine name. So it may be that the reference to the "land of the Philistines" is anachronistic and merely intended to indicate the location, not the race of Abimelech.

22:2 The author of Chronicles identified the "region of Moriah" as the temple mount in Jerusalem (2Ch 3:1). Today Mount Moriah is occupied by the Dome of the Rock, an impressive Muslim structure erected in A.D. 691. A large outcropping of rock inside the building is still pointed to as the traditional site of the intended sacrifice of Isaac. See "Mount Moriah" on page 37.



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

Mount Moriah

GENESIS 22 "Mount Moriah," according to 2 Chronicles 3:1, was the location in Jerusalem where **Yahweh** appeared to David, inspiring him to build an altar and make a sacrifice. Solomon later constructed the temple on the same site.[1]

Some scholars are hesitant to identify this location as being synonymous with the site where God tested Abraham's faith by the near-sacrifice of Isaac because Genesis 22:2 names Moriah as a region, not a specific mountain. Also, it seems incongruous that Abraham would have carried wood to Jerusalem, a forested area, rather than gathering it at the site of the planned sacrifice. On the other hand, it may not seem surprising that Abraham would have gone prepared to make the sacrifice and would not have wanted to go to the trouble of seeking out suitably dried wood after his arrival. Also, Moriah at Jerusalem can reasonably be described as about a three-day trek from Beersheba (see vv. 4,19).

Genesis 22:14 indicates that later generations would know this site as "the mountain [or hill] of the LORD," language commonly used elsewhere for Zion/Jerusalem (see Ps 24:3; Isa 2:3; Zec 8:3). The name Moriah might be associated with a Hebrew verb meaning "to see" or "to provide," a theologically significant term appearing repeatedly throughout Genesis 22:1–19. In Jerusalem, as in no other place, the Lord would subsequently be "seen" and would "provide" for his people through the benefits of the sacrifices he would ordain. Based upon this association the Biblical authors may have assumed that Abraham was prepared to offer his sacrifice on the same mountain on which the Israelites would later offer theirs—Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

[1] See "Solomon's Temple and Other Ancient Temples" on page 620.

his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac,[i] and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb[j] for the burnt offering?"

8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar,[k] on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God,[l] because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.[m]"

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram[a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.[n] 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.[o]"

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself,[p] declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants[q] as numerous as the stars in the sky[r] and as the sand on the seashore.[s] Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,[t] 18 and through your offspring[b] all nations on earth will be blessed,[u] because you have obeyed me."[v]

19 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

22:6 [i] Jn 19:17

22:7 [j] Lev 1:10

22:9 [k] Heb 11:17-19; Jas 2:21

22:12 [l] 1Sa 15:22; Jas 2:21-22 [m] ver 2; Jn 3:16

22:13 [n] Ro 8:32

22:14 [o] ver 8

22:16 [p] Lk 1:73; Heb 6:13

22:17 [q] Heb 6:14* [r] Ge 15:5 [s] Ge 26:24; 32:12 [t] Ge 24:60

22:18 [u] Ge 12:2, 3; Ac 3:25*; Gal 3:8* [v] ver 10

[a] *13* Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint and Syriac; most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *a ram behind him* [b] *18* Or *seed*



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH

GENESIS 23 Until his wife's death Abraham wandered through **Canaan** as a nomadic herdsman.[1] Needing a burial plot for Sarah, he purchased his first small slice of the vast territory God had promised his descendants (Ge 15:18). The purchase included the burial cave and the field in which it was located, both known as Machpelah and located in Hebron[2] (see "Map 1" in the back of this Bible). The writer of Genesis carefully noted that Sarah, Abraham (25:9–10) and Isaac (35:27–29) were all buried in this cave. Later, upon his deathbed in Egypt, Jacob/Israel instructed that his bones were to be brought to Canaan and buried at this location along with those of his grandfather (Abraham), grandmother (Sarah), father (Isaac), mother (Rebekah) and wife (Leah). See 49:29–32; 50:13.

Not surprisingly, the Israelites remembered this cave throughout the ages. A monumental enclosure was built over the site during the days of Herod the Great.[3] This beautiful 200 by 110 foot (61 x 33.5 m) structure, bearing a remarkable architectural similarity to Herod's temple mount in Jerusalem,[4] is still intact today. Inside it, above ground, six large, medieval cenotaphs (empty tombs serving as monuments) commemorate the **patriarchs** and **matriarchs** buried there.

A **Byzantine** church later constructed inside this enclosure has been converted back and forth from church to mosque following successive changes of rule (and thereby of religion) in the area. During the fourteenth century A.D. Muslims sealed the subterranean structures beneath the compound, but clandestine investigations have since been carried out. One twentieth-century examination, under the direction of Israel's Moshe Dayan, involved the nighttime lowering of a twelve-year-old girl, equipped with a camera, into the tomb area! Investigators reported the existence of a staircase, a long hallway and a simple room.

[1] See "Canaan" on page 324. [2] See "Hebron" on page 446. [3] See "Herod the Great" on page 1627. [4] See "Herod's Temple" on page 1648.

Nahor's Sons

20 Some time later Abraham was told, "Milcah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Na-
22:20 [w]Ge 11:29 hor:[w] 21 Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), 22 Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and
22:23 [x]Ge 24:15 Bethuel." 23 Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.[x] Milcah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Na-
hor. 24 His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.

The Death of Sarah

23:2 [y]Jos 14:15; [z]ver 19; Ge 13:18

23 Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. 2 She died at Kiriath Arba[y] (that is, Hebron)[z] in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.

3 Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites.[a] He said, 4 "I am an alien and
23:4 [a]Ge 17:8; 1Ch 29:15; Ps 105:12; Heb 11:9,13 a stranger[a] among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

5 The Hittites replied to Abraham, 6 "Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince[b] among us. Bury your
23:6 [b]Ge 14:14-16; 24:35 dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."

7 Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. 8 He said to them,
23:8 [c]Ge 25:9 "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar[c] on my behalf 9 so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you."

10 Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the
23:10 [d]Ge 34:20-24; Ru 4:4 Hittites who had come to the gate[d] of his city. 11 "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give[b] [e] you the field,
23:11 [e]2Sa 24:23 and I give[b] you the cave that is in it. I give[b] it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."

12 Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land 13 and he said to Ephron in their hearing,
"Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there."

14 Ephron answered Abraham, 15 "Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels[c] of sil-
23:15 [f]Eze 45:12 ver,[f] but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead."

16 Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing
23:16 [g]Jer 32:9; Zec 11:12 of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver,[g] according to the weight current among the merchants.

23:17 [h]Ge 25:9; 49:30-32; 50:13; Ac 7:16 17 So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre[h]—both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field—was deeded 18 to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. 19 Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20 So the field and the cave
23:20 [i]Jer 32:10 in it were deeded[i] to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

Isaac and Rebekah

24:1 [j]ver 35

24 Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way.[j]
24:2 [k]Ge 39:4-6; [l]ver 9; Ge 47:29
24:3 [m]Ge 14:19; [n]Ge 28:1; Dt 7:3; [o]Ge 10:15-19
24:4 [p]Ge 12:1; 28:2

2 He said to the chief[d] servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had,[k] "Put your hand under my thigh.[l] 3 I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth,[m] that you will not get a wife for my son[n] from the daughters of the Canaanites,[o] among whom I am living, 4 but will go to my country and my own relatives[p] and get a wife for my son Isaac."

5 The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?"

6 "Make sure that you do not take my son back there," Abraham said. 7 "The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised

[a] *3* Or *the sons of Heth*; also in verses 5, 7, 10, 16, 18 and 20 [b] *11* Or *sell* [c] *15* That is, about 10 pounds (about 4.5 kilograms) [d] *2* Or *oldest*

22:20–24 Abraham's brother Nahor (11:26) fathered eight sons by his wife and four by his concubine. They would become the ancestors of 12 Aramean tribes, just as Abraham's son Ishmael would become the ancestor of 12 tribes (17:20; 25:12–16) and his grandson Jacob the ancestor of the 12 tribes of Israel (35:22–26; 49:28). See "Evidence for Serug, Nahor and Terah" on page 22.

23:4 Land suitable for farming was so precious in the ancient world that owners typically refused to sell it outside the family. But Abraham was not trying to buy farmland, only a burial site.

Village cultures used burial chambers (see "The Cave of Machpelah" on p. 38). A family tomb was used by several generations. A body was laid on a shelf along with grave goods (food, pottery, trinkets, weapons, tools). Later the skeletal remains were placed in another chamber or box to accommodate another burial.

23:9 Abraham wanted to buy only a small part of the field because purchasing the entire field would have entailed certain additional financial and social obligations. Hittite laws stipulated that if a property owner sold only part of his property, he (the original and principal landowner) was still required to pay all dues (taxes) on the land. But if he sold the entire tract, the new owner had to pay the dues.

24:2 One of the most frequently used words in Scripture, occurring over 1,600 times, is "hand." Besides its literal use, it occurs in numerous figurative senses as well. To put one's hand under another's thigh as in verses 2, 9 and 48:29 meant to take a solemn oath, evidently related to covenant obligations.

me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring[a][q] I will give this land'[r]—he will send his angel before you[s] so that you can get a wife for my son from there. 8 If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh[t] of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim[b] and made his way to the town of Nahor. 11 He had the camels kneel down near the well[u] outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.[v]

12 Then he prayed, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham,[w] give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. 14 May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know[x] that you have shown kindness to my master."

15 Before he had finished praying,[y] Rebekah[z] came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah,[a] who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.[b] 16 The girl was very beautiful,[c] a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

17 The servant hurried to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar."

18 "Drink,[d] my lord," she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

19 After she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels too,[e] until they have finished drinking." 20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. 21 Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.[f]

22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring[g] weighing a beka[c] and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels.[d] 23 Then he asked, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

24 She answered him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor.[h]" 25 And she added, "We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night."

26 Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD,[i] 27 saying, "Praise be to the LORD,[j] the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness[k] to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey[l] to the house of my master's relatives."[m]

28 The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. 29 Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban,[n] and he hurried out to the man at the spring. 30 As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. 31 "Come, you who are blessed by the LORD,"[o] he said. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels."

32 So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet.[p] 33 Then food was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say."

"Then tell us," ⌞Laban⌟ said.

34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. 35 The LORD has blessed my master abundantly,[q] and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys.[r] 36 My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her[e] old age,[s] and he has given him everything he owns.[t] 37 And my master made me swear an oath, and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live,[u] 38 but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.'[v]

24:7 [q]Gal 3:16* [r]Ge 12:7; 13:15 [s]Ex 23:20,23
24:9 [t]ver 2
24:11 [u]Ex 2:15 [v]ver 13; 1Sa 9:11
24:12 [w]ver 27, 42, 48; Ge 26:24; Ex 3:6,15,16
24:14 [x]Jdg 6:17, 37
24:15 [y]ver 45 [z]Ge 22:23 [a]Ge 22:20 [b]Ge 11:29
24:16 [c]Ge 26:7
24:18 [d]ver 14
24:19 [e]ver 14
24:21 [f]ver 12
24:22 [g]ver 47
24:24 [h]ver 15
24:26 [i]ver 48,52; Ex 4:31
24:27 [j]Ex 18:10; Ru 4:14; 1Sa 25:32 [k]ver 49; Ge 32:10; Ps 98:3 [l]ver 21 [m]ver 12,48
24:29 [n]ver 4; Ge 29:5,12,13
24:31 [o]Ge 26:29; Ru 3:10; Ps 115:15
24:32 [p]Ge 43:24; Jdg 19:21
24:35 [q]ver 1
[r]Ge 13:2
24:36 [s]Ge 21:2, 10 [t]Ge 25:5
24:37 [u]ver 3
24:38 [v]ver 4

[a] *7* Or *seed* [b] *10* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia [c] *22* That is, about 1/5 ounce (about 5.5 grams) [d] *22* That is, about 4 ounces (about 110 grams) [e] *36* Or *his*

24:10 Naharaim was the northern part of the area later called Mesopotamia by the Greeks (lit., "between the rivers"). Perhaps named after Abraham's brother (see v. 15; 11:26), the town of Nahor is mentioned in clay tablets excavated by the French beginning in 1933 at the ancient city of Mari on the Euphrates River. Nahor was located in the Haran district and was ruled by an Amorite prince in the eighteenth century B.C. See "Evidence for Serug, Nahor and Terah" on page 22, "Haran" on page 47 and "Mari" on page 54.

24:14 An oracle posed a yes/no question to a deity, and a mechanism (cf. Jdg 6:36–40; 1Sa 6:7–12) was provided so that the deity could answer.

A camel (see "Camels" on p. 41) that has gone a few days without water can drink as much as 25 gallons (23.7 l; up to 100 drawings from the well for all the servant's camels). It is evident that Abraham's servant intentionally selected an extreme action as a sign to avoid any doubt that God was controlling the situation.

24:39 [w]ver 5
24:40 [x]ver 7
24:41 [y]ver 8
24:42 [z]ver 12
24:43 [a]ver 13
[b]ver 14

39 "Then I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?'[w]
40 "He replied, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you[x] and make your journey a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father's family. 41 Then, when you go to my clan, you will be released from my oath even if they refuse to give her to you — you will be released from my oath.'[y]
42 "When I came to the spring today, I said, 'O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success[z] to the journey on which I have come. 43 See, I am standing beside this spring;[a] if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar,"[b] 44 and if she says to me, "Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels too," let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master's son.'



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

Camels

GENESIS 24 The first Biblical references to domesticated camels occur in the stories of Abraham. He owned them (Ge 12:16), and his servant used them as pack animals (24:10). Camels are also mentioned in the stories of Jacob (30:43; 31:34; 32:15) and Joseph (37:25) and were found among the Amalekites, Ishmaelites and Midianites.[1]

Scholars have debated the historicity of these references to camels because most believe that these animals were not widely domesticated until approximately 1200 B.C., long after the time of Abraham. Arguments in support of later domestication of the camel include:

Neither the **Mari** tablets from the eighteenth century B.C. nor the fourteenth-century B.C. **Amarna** correspondence mentions domesticated camels.[2]

During the patriarchal period the donkey appears to have been the animal primarily used for transport. For example, the "Beni Hasan painting," which depicts Semites bringing goods to Egypt during the Twelfth Dynasty (1900 B.C.), pictures donkeys rather than camels being used in caravans.[3]

On the other hand, we do see clear evidence of camel domestication in the first millennium, much later than the time of the patriarchs. For example, Assyrian wall relief artwork depicts men riding camels into war.

Other evidence does suggest that at least some camels were domesticated earlier. Bone fragments and other archaeological remains have led some scholars to postulate a third millennium date for camel domestication. Although many scholars regard this evidence as inconclusive because it is difficult to distinguish wild from domesticated animals using only bone samples, other evidence, as described below, suggests that people were relying on camels in some manner:

- A braided cord of camel hair from predynastic Egypt has been discovered.
- A **Sumerian** text refers to camel's milk.
- An **Old Babylonian** text from the early second-millennium **Ugarit** describes the camel as a domestic animal.

Thus, the evidence does not force us to regard the appearance of domesticated camels in Genesis as anachronistic. Such tamed animals probably were rare during the second millennium, however, and may have been owned almost exclusively by wealthy people.

[1] See "The Amalekites" on page 120 and "Midian" on page 92. [2] See "Mari" on page 54 and "The Amarna Tablets and the Habiru" on page 347. [3] See "Caravan Trading and Routes in the Ancient Near East" on page 63.



Camels in the first millennium B.C. in an Assyrian battle scene
Preserving Bible Times; © Dr. James C. Martin; permission of The British Museum

45 "Before I finished praying in my heart,[c] Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder.[d] She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'[e]

46 "She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too.'[f] So I drank, and she watered the camels also.

47 "I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?'[g]

"She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.'[h]

"Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms,[i] 48 and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD.[j] I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son.[k] 49 Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness[l] to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn."

50 Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD;[m] we can say nothing to you one way or the other.[n] 51 Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."

52 When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD.[o] 53 Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts[p] to her brother and to her mother. 54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

When they got up the next morning, he said, "Send me on my way[q] to my master."

55 But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you[a] may go."

56 But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master."

57 Then they said, "Let's call the girl and ask her about it." 58 So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," she said.

59 So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse[r] and Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

> "Our sister, may you increase
> to thousands upon thousands;[s]
> may your offspring possess
> the gates of their enemies."[t]

61 Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

62 Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi,[u] for he was living in the Negev.[v] 63 He went out to the field one evening to meditate,[b w] and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. 64 Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel 65 and asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?"

"He is my master," the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

66 Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. 67 Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah.[x] So she became his wife, and he loved her;[y] and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.[z]

24:45 [c] 1Sa 1:13 [d] ver 15 [e] ver 17
24:46 [f] ver 18-19
24:47 [g] ver 23 [h] ver 24 [i] Eze 16:11-12
24:48 [j] ver 26 [k] ver 27
24:49 [l] Ge 47:29; Jos 2:14
24:50 [m] Ps 118:23 [n] Ge 31:7,24,29, 42
24:52 [o] ver 26
24:53 [p] ver 10,22
24:54 [q] ver 56,59
24:59 [r] Ge 35:8
24:60 [s] Ge 17:16 [t] Ge 22:17
24:62 [u] Ge 16:14; 25:11 [v] Ge 20:1
24:63 [w] Ps 1:2; 77:12; 119:15,27, 48,97,148; 143:5; 145:5
24:67 [x] Ge 25:20 [y] Ge 29:18,20 [z] Ge 23:1-2

The Death of Abraham

25 Abraham took[c] another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah.[a] 3 Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

5 Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac.[b] 6 But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines[c] and sent them away from his son Isaac[d] to the land of the east.

25:2 [a] 1Ch 1:32, 33
25:5 [b] Ge 24:36
25:6 [c] Ge 22:24 [d] Ge 21:10,14

[a] *55* Or *she* [b] *63* The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. [c] *1* Or *had taken*

25:5 The law of primogeniture provided that a double share of a father's property be given to the firstborn son when the father died (Dt 21:15–17). Parallels to this practice come from Nuzi, from Larsa in the Old Babylonian period and from Assyria in the Middle Assyrian period. Isaac was Abraham's firstborn son according to law. See "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36, "The Rights of the Firstborn" on page 43 and "Nuzi" on page 52.

25:6 A concubine in Old Testament times was not a paramour or

7 Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. 8 Then Abraham breathed his last and
25:8 [e]Ge 15:15 [f]ver 17; Ge 35:29; 49:29,33 died at a good old age,[e] an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.[f] 9 His sons Isaac
25:9 [g]Ge 35:29 [h]Ge 50:13 and Ishmael buried him[g] in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the
25:10 [i]Ge 23:16 Hittite,[h] 10 the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites.[a i] There Abraham was buried with his wife Sar-
25:11 [j]Ge 16:14 ah. 11 After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.[j]

Ishmael's Sons

25:12 [k]Ge 16:1 [l]Ge 16:15 12 This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar[k] the Egyptian, bore to Abraham.[l]

13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah.
25:16 [m]Ge 17:20 16 These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers[m] according to their set-
25:17 [n]ver 8 tlements and camps. 17 Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and
died, and he was gathered to his people.[n] 18 His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near
25:18 [o]Ge 16:12 the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward[b] all their brothers.[o]

[a] *10* Or *the sons of Heth* [b] *18* Or *lived to the east of*

illicit lover but a woman lawfully united in marriage to a man in a relationship inferior to that of a regular wife. No moral stigma was attached to this status, which was considered a natural part of a polygamous social system. Concubines enjoyed no other right than that of lawful cohabitation. They exercised no authority within the family or in household affairs, and their husbands could send them away at any time with a small present. Their children as well, by means of small presents, could be excluded from the family heritage (v. 6), even though they were regarded as legitimate. In patriarchal times, at least, the immediate cause of concubinage was often the barrenness of the lawful wife, who would herself suggest that her husband have children by her maidservant (chs. 16; 30).

25:12–18 Many of the names of Ishmael's sons are Arabic, giving credence to the Arab tradition that Ishmael was their ancestor.



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

The Rights of the Firstborn

GENESIS 25 The Hebrew term *bet av* ("paternal household") reflects the fact that in ancient Israel the family was patrilineal: Inheritances were passed through the male line. The **patriarch** had authority over the entire household, including sons, daughters-in-law, unmarried daughters and grandchildren.[1] Upon the patriarch's death the firstborn son became the new head of the family, and the paternal lineage of the extended family continued through him. This firstborn son, therefore, exercised both special privileges and unique responsibilities.

Several Biblical texts stipulate that the firstborn belonged to the Lord and needed to be redeemed (since all firstborn sons belonged to God after the plague on the firstborn in Egypt, Israelites had to symbolically buy them back with animal sacrifices, according to Ex 13:2,12–16; 22:29; Nu 3:13). The firstborn took precedence over his younger brothers (Ge 43:33) and received a double portion of the inheritance,[2] as well as a special blessing (ch. 27; 48:14ff.).

The patriarch/father was not free to arbitrarily assign the first son's birthright to a younger sibling (Dt 21:15–17), although the birthright could pass to another son in exceptional circumstances (e.g., Reuben lost his birthright because he had defiled his father's bed; cf. 1Ch 5:1–2). Documents from **Nuzi** and **Mari**[3] reveal that if a concubine bore the first son, his birthright could be withdrawn if the primary wife subsequently gave birth to a son. This occurred in the case of Ishmael and Isaac.[4]

We also have access to Nuzi documents called "tablet of brotherhood" contracts. These concern the sale of a birthright to someone outside the family (based on a legal loophole of adopting the outsider as a family member) for the purpose of transferring property. Although not identical in concept to what we see in Genesis 25:27 and following, these Nuzi texts do indicate that the birthright could be sold or traded and provide some precedent for Esau's sale of his birthright to Jacob.

The concept underlying the rights of the firstborn son has theological implications. The nation of Israel enjoyed a special relationship with the Lord as his firstborn (Ex 4:22ff.). But Psalm 89:27 indicates that Christ is the Lord's firstborn. This is not to be seen as a contradiction. Believers who are in Christ share in the privileges his intimate relationship with the Father entails (Heb 12:23–24), and we are warned not to spurn or devalue our birthright as Esau did (Heb 12:16–17).

[1] See "The Role of the Patriarch in Family Life" on page 30. [2] See "Inheritance in the Ancient Near East" on page 250. [3] See "Nuzi" on page 52 and "Mari" on page 54.
[4] See "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36.

Jacob and Esau

19 This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old[p] when he married Rebekah[q] daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram[a] and sister of Laban[r] the Aramean.

21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer,[s] and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. 22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.[t]

23 The LORD said to her,

> "Two nations[u] are in your womb,
> and two peoples from within you will be separated;
> one people will be stronger than the other,
> and the older will serve the younger.[v]"

24 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. 25 The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment;[w] so they named him Esau.[b] 26 After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel;[x] so he was named Jacob.[c][y] Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country,[z] while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game,[a] loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.[b]

29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. 30 He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.[d])

31 Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

32 "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

33 But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright[c] to Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

25:20 [p]ver 26; Ge 26:34 [q]Ge 24:67 [r]Ge 24:29
25:21 [s]1Ch 5:20; 2Ch 33:13; Ezr 8:23; Ps 127:3; Ro 9:10
25:22 [t]1Sa 9:9; 10:22
25:23 [u]Ge 17:4 [v]Ge 27:29,40; Mal 1:3; Ro 9:11-12*
25:25 [w]Ge 27:11
25:26 [x]Hos 12:3 [y]Ge 27:36
25:27 [z]Ge 27:3,5
25:28 [a]Ge 27:19 [b]Ge 27:6
25:33 [c]Ge 27:36; Heb 12:16

Isaac and Abimelech

26 Now there was a famine in the land[d]—besides the earlier famine of Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar.[e] 2 The LORD appeared[f] to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live.[g] 3 Stay in this land for a while,[h] and I will be with you and will bless you.[i] For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands[j] and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky[k] and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring[e] all nations on earth will be blessed,[l] 5 because Abraham obeyed me[m] and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws." 6 So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

7 When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister,[n]" because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful."

8 When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. 9 So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her."

26:1 [d]Ge 12:10 [e]Ge 20:1
26:2 [f]Ge 12:7; 17:1; 18:1 [g]Ge 12:1
26:3 [h]Ge 20:1; 28:15 [i]Ge 12:2; 22:16-18 [j]Ge 12:7; 13:15; 15:18
26:4 [k]Ge 15:5; 22:17; Ex 32:13 [l]Ge 12:3; 22:18; Gal 3:8
26:5 [m]Ge 22:16
26:7 [n]Ge 12:13; 20:2,12; Pr 29:25

[a] *20* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia [b] *25* *Esau* may mean *hairy*; he was also called Edom, which means *red*. [c] *26* *Jacob* means *he grasps the heel* (figuratively, *he deceives*). [d] *30* *Edom* means *red*. [e] *4* Or *seed*

25:23 The ancient law of primogeniture (see note on v. 5) also provided that, under ordinary circumstances, the younger of two sons would be subservient to the older. See also the note on verse 5.
25:26 Jacob's name was an old one among the Semitic people. As early as 2000 B.C. it occurs among writings of Hammurabi as *Yakibula*. That it was a well-known name among the Canaanites of pre-Abrahamic days is attested by records in the temple at Karnak. The name of a city captured by Thutmose III is similar to the Hebrew word: Jakob-el.
25:31 The birthright was the oldest son's share of the family's estate. In the ancient world the firstborn typically received a double share of the inheritance (see the note on v. 5). See "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36, "The Rights of the Firstborn" on page 43 and "Nuzi" on page 52.
25:34 A lentil is a small, pea-like, annual plant that grows well even in nutrient-poor soil. Its pods turn reddish-brown when boiled. It has provided an important source of nourishment in the Near East since ancient times (see 2Sa 17:28; 23:11; Eze 4:9).

26:10 [o]Ge 20:9

[10]Then Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us?[o] One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us."

26:11 [p]Ps 105:15

[11]So Abimelech gave orders to all the people: "Anyone who molests[p] this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

26:12 [q]ver 3; Job 42:12
26:13 [r]Pr 10:22
26:14 [s]Ge 24:36 [t]Ge 37:11
26:15 [u]Ge 21:30 [v]Ge 21:25
26:16 [w]Ex 1:9

[12]Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him.[q] [13]The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy.[r] [14]He had so many flocks and herds and servants[s] that the Philistines envied him.[t] [15]So all the wells[u] that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up,[v] filling them with earth.

[16]Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.[w]"

26:18 [x]Ge 21:30

[17]So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. [18]Isaac reopened the wells[x] that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.

26:20 [y]Ge 21:25

[19]Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. [20]But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen and said, "The water is ours!"[y] So he named the well Esek,[a] because they disputed with him. [21]Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah.[b] [22]He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth,[c] saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish[z] in the land."

26:22 [z]Ge 17:6; Ex 1:7

26:24 [a]Ge 24:12; Ex 3:6 [b]Ge 15:1 [c]ver 4 [d]Ge 17:7
26:25 [e]Ge 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; Ps 116:17

[23]From there he went up to Beersheba. [24]That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham.[a] Do not be afraid,[b] for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants[c] for the sake of my servant Abraham."[d]

[25]Isaac built an altar[e] there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

26:26 [f]Ge 21:22
26:27 [g]ver 16

[26]Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces.[f] [27]Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?[g]"

26:28 [h]Ge 21:22

[28]They answered, "We saw clearly that the LORD was with you;[h] so we said, 'There ought to be a sworn agreement between us'—between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you [29]that you will do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD."[i]

26:29 [i]Ge 24:31; Ps 115:15

[a] *20 Esek* means *dispute.* [b] *21 Sitnah* means *opposition.* [c] *22 Rehoboth* means *room.*

ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS

The Tale of Appu's Two Sons

GENESIS 26 In many respects the Neo-**Hittite** Tale of Appu's Two Sons is similar to the Biblical story of Isaac's twins, Jacob and Esau. Like Isaac (Ge 25:24), Appu, wealthy but aging and childless, prayed for an heir. The sun god granted the request, but Appu named the child Wrong because the gods in his opinion had unjustly withheld a child from him for so long. When Appu's wife became pregnant a second time and bore another son, he named the infant Right, implying that the gods had acted fairly this time.

When the boys had matured, Wrong attempted to defraud Right of his legitimate portion of the estate by giving him the sick livestock and keeping the healthy animals for himself. Upon perceiving Wrong's actions, the sun god summoned the brothers before him for judgment, awarding the legal settlement to the younger.

In both the Appu and Isaac narratives the younger son emerged the victor. In Appu's tale the deceptive elder brother was punished but his honest younger sibling appropriately rewarded. In the Genesis account the younger brother was the deceptive one, but he nevertheless came away with both the birthright and the blessing because, despite his character flaws, he was God's chosen.[1]

Although Jacob and Esau reconciled years later, Genesis 27 clearly demonstrates that God's choice was not based on any merit Jacob had to offer but solely upon God's plan for his people. The Tale of Appu's Two Sons appears to have been a kind of morality play, as indicated by the sons' artificial names. In contrast, the Biblical story of Isaac and his sons is historically true and strangely counterintuitive. Similarly, a first-time reader would not expect the saga of Jacob and Esau to turn out as it does; indeed, it reveals a surprising look at our God, whose unexpected and seemingly "upside-down" value system continues to amaze us anew.

[1]See "The Rights of the Firstborn" on page 43.

30 Isaac then made a feast[j] for them, and they ate and drank. 31 Early the next morning the men swore an oath[k] to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace.

32 That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" 33 He called it Shibah,[a] and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.[b][l]

34 When Esau was forty years old,[m] he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite.[n] 35 They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.[o]

Jacob Gets Isaac's Blessing

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see,[p] he called for Esau his older son[q] and said to him, "My son."

"Here I am," he answered.

2 Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death.[r] 3 Now then, get your weapons — your quiver and bow — and go out to the open country[s] to hunt some wild game for me. 4 Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing[t] before I die."

5 Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob,[u] "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 7 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.' 8 Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you:[v] 9 Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. 10 Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies."

11 Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man,[w] and I'm a man with smooth skin. 12 What if my father touches me?[x] I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing."

13 His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me.[y] Just do what I say;[z] go and get them for me."

14 So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. 15 Then Rebekah took the best clothes[a] of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. 16 She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. 17 Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.

18 He went to his father and said, "My father."

"Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?"

19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing."[b]

20 Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?"

"The LORD your God gave me success,[c]" he replied.

21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you,[d] my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not."

22 Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau;[e] so he blessed him. 24 "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked.

"I am," he replied.

25 Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing."[f]

Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me."

27 So he went to him and kissed him[g]. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes,[h] he blessed him and said,

"Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a field
that the LORD has blessed.[i]

26:30 [j]Ge 19:3
26:31 [k]Ge 21:31
26:33 [l]Ge 21:14
26:34 [m]Ge 25:20 [n]Ge 28:9; 36:2
26:35 [o]Ge 27:46
27:1 [p]Ge 48:10; 1Sa 3:2 [q]Ge 25:25
27:2 [r]Ge 47:29
27:3 [s]Ge 25:27
27:4 [t]ver 10,25, 31; Ge 49:28; Dt 33:1; Heb 11:20
27:6 [u]Ge 25:28
27:8 [v]ver 13,43
27:11 [w]Ge 25:25
27:12 [x]ver 22
27:13 [y]Mt 27:25 [z]ver 8
27:15 [a]ver 27
27:19 [b]ver 4
27:20 [c]Ge 24:12
27:21 [d]ver 12
27:23 [e]ver 16
27:25 [f]ver 4
27:27 [g]Heb 11:20 [h]SS 4:11
[i]Ps 65:9-13

[a] *33 Shibah* can mean *oath* or *seven.* [b] *33 Beersheba* can mean *well of the oath* or *well of seven.*

27:1 Blindness and near-blindness were common conditions among elderly persons in ancient times (see 48:10; 1Sa 4:15).

27:4 Oral statements, including deathbed bequests (see 49:28–33), were legally enforceable by ancient Near Eastern law.

28 May God give you of heaven's dew[j]
and of earth's richness[k]—
an abundance of grain and new wine.[l]
29 May nations serve you
and peoples bow down to you.[m]
Be lord over your brothers,
and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.[n]
May those who curse you be cursed
and those who bless you be blessed.[o]"

30 After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. 31 He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."[p]

32 His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"[q]

"I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau."

33 Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed![r]"

34 When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry[s] and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father!"

35 But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully[t] and took your blessing."

36 Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob[a]?[u] He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright,[v] and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"

37 Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine.[w] So what can I possibly do for you, my son?"

[a] *36 Jacob* means *he grasps the heel* (figuratively, *he deceives*).

27:28 [j]Dt 33:13 [k]ver 39 [l]Ge 45:18; Nu 18:12; Dt 33:28
27:29 [m]Isa 45:14,23; 49:7,23 [n]Ge 9:25; 25:23; 37:7
[o]Ge 12:3; Nu 24:9; Zep 2:8
27:31 [p]ver 4
27:32 [q]ver 18
27:33 [r]ver 29; Ge 28:3,4; Ro 11:29
27:34 [s]Heb 12:17
27:35 [t]Jer 9:4; 12:6
27:36 [u]Ge 25:26 [v]Ge 25:33
27:37 [w]ver 28

27:33 Peoples of the ancient world believed that blessings and curses had a kind of magical power to accomplish what they pronounced (see "Curses and Imprecations" on p. 883. But Isaac, as heir and steward of God's covenant blessing, acknowledged that he had solemnly transmitted that heritage to Jacob by way of a legally binding bequest (see the note on v. 4). See "The Rights of the Firstborn" on page 43 and "The Tale of Appu's Two Sons" on page 45.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

HARAN

GENESIS 27 The ancient city of Haran ("Map 1"), which probably derived its name from the Akkadian word *harranu* ("highway"), is located in modern-day Turkey about 10 miles (16 km) north of the Syrian border. Strategically situated on the historic east-west trade route that linked the Tigris, River with the Mediterranean Sea, Haran was one of northern **Mesopotamia**'s important commercial and religious centers, widely known for its dedicated worship of the moon god, Sin.

Occupied from the mid-third millennium B.C. until several centuries after the New Testament period, this city is best known for its links with the Biblical patriarchs, who lived during the **Middle Bronze Age** (first half of the second millennium B.C.). **Mari** texts attest that Haran was thriving[1] during this time. En route to Canaan[2] Abram and his family lived there for a time, perhaps to care for Terah, Abram's ailing father who eventually died there (Ge 11:31–32).[3] Abram (now Abraham) later found a wife for his son Isaac from among relatives in Haran (cf. 24:1–7,24), and Isaac's son Jacob eventually secured refuge in the region with his uncle Laban (27:42—28:5), for whom he worked for 20 years. Before returning to Canaan Jacob married both Leah and Rachel (Laban's two daughters) and fathered 11 sons in Haran (chs. 29–31).

For approximately one thousand years after the patriarchs, Haran continued to flourish on the basis of its trade with other nations and activities related to the moon god, Sin. Following a civic revolt, **Assyrian** forces captured the city in 763 B.C. Assyrian officials later used this victory to intimidate the Judean king Hezekiah, after which Assyria destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel (Isa 37:11–12). Haran became the last capital of Assyria in 612 B.C. but was captured in 609 B.C. by the **Babylonians**, who revived the declining worship of Sin and restored Haran as a thriving trade center (cf. Eze 27:23).

[1]See "Mari" on page 54. [2]See "Canaan" on page 324. [3]See "Evidence for Serug, Nahor and Terah" on page 22.

38 Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud.[x]

39 His father Isaac answered him,

"Your dwelling will be
away from the earth's richness,
away from the dew[y] of heaven above.
40 You will live by the sword
and you will serve[z] your brother.[a]
But when you grow restless,
you will throw his yoke
from off your neck.[b]"

27:38 [x]Heb 12:17
27:39 [y]ver 28
27:40 [z]2Sa 8:14 [a]Ge 25:23
[b]2Ki 8:20-22

Jacob Flees to Laban

41 Esau held a grudge[c] against Jacob[d] because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning[e] for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."[f]

42 When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you. 43 Now then, my son, do what I say: [g]Flee at once to my brother Laban[h] in Haran.[i] 44 Stay with him for a while[j] until your brother's fury subsides. 45 When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him,[k] I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

46 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living."[l]

28 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed[a] him and commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman.[m] 2 Go at once to Paddan Aram,[b] to the house of your mother's father Bethuel.[n] Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. 3 May God Almighty[c] [o]

27:41 [c]Ge 37:4 [d]Ge 32:11 [e]Ge 50:4,10 [f]Ob 1:10
27:43 [g]ver 8 [h]Ge 24:29 [i]Ge 11:31
27:44 [j]Ge 31:38, 41
27:45 [k]ver 35
27:46 [l]Ge 26:35
28:1 [m]Ge 24:3
28:2 [n]Ge 25:20
28:3 [o]Ge 17:1

[a] *1* Or *greeted* [b] *2* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia; also in verses 5, 6 and 7 [c] *3* Hebrew *El-Shaddai*

27:45 Because the nostrils quiver in anger, the word for nostril is rendered in 171 Old Testament instances as "anger," almost akin to "snorting." This applies not only to Esau (v. 45) but also to Moses (Ex 32:19) and even to the Lord (Nu 11:1,10). A tempestuous wind is described poetically in the Old Testament as "the blast of [God's] nostrils" (Ex 15:8; cf. 2Sa 22:16).



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

PADDAN ARAM

GENESIS 28 The geographical name Paddan Aram has been found only in Genesis (e.g., 28:2), and its meaning and exact location are uncertain. Many scholars believe that Paddan Aram is an alternate name for Aram Naharaim ("Aram of the two rivers"; 24:10), the northern region of the Euphrates River, in the vicinity of Haran, which figures prominently in Genesis as the patriarchs' ancestral home[1] ("Map 1").

The prophet Hosea referred to Jacob's journey to the "country [or field] of Aram" (Hos 12:12). Some scholars believe this phrase to be Hosea's translation of *Paddan Aram,* based upon the facts that a **Ugaritic** text refers to "fields of Aram" and that an Arabic noun, *paddan*, sometimes means "field." This argument remains, however, inconclusive.

Others suggest that *Paddan* means "road," based on the similar Akkadian word *paddanu* ("highway"). Thus Paddan Aram would mean "road of Aram." A synonym of *paddanu* is the word *harranu*, which may have been the source of Haran, the city from which Abram departed for Canaan[2] (see Ge 12:4–5). Understood in this light, Paddan Aram would in fact be an alternative name for Haran. Although uncertainty about the name remains, scholars are confident that Paddan Aram refers either to the region around Haran or to Haran itself.

[1]See "The Patriarchal Period: Mesopotamia During the Time of Abraham" on page 26. [2]See "Haran" on page 47.

bless you and make you fruitful[p] and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.
4 May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham,[q] so that you may take possession
of the land where you now live as an alien,[r] the land God gave to Abraham." 5 Then Isaac sent Jacob on
his way, and he went to Paddan Aram,[s] to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah,[t]
who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

6 Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from
there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, "Do not marry a Canaanite woman,"[u] 7 and that
Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. 8 Esau then realized how displeas-
ing the Canaanite women[v] were to his father Isaac;[w] 9 so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the
sister of Nebaioth[x] and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.[y]

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.[z] 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the
night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to
sleep. 12 He had a dream[a] in which he saw a stairway[a] resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heav-
en, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.[b] 13 There above it[b] stood the LORD,[c] and
he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.[d] I will give you and your
descendants the land[e] on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and
you[f] will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south.[g] All peoples on earth will
be blessed through you and your offspring.[h] 15 I am with you[i] and will watch over you[j] wherever you go,
and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you[k] until I have done what I have promised you."[l]

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware
of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place![m] This is none other than the house of God;
this is the gate of heaven."

18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar[n]
and poured oil on top of it.[o] 19 He called that place Bethel,[c] though the city used to be called Luz.[p]

20 Then Jacob made a vow,[q] saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me[r] on this journey I
am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely[s] to my father's house,
then the LORD[d] will be my God[t] 22 and[e] this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house,[u] and
of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.[v]"

Jacob Arrives in Paddan Aram

29 Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples.[w] 2 There he saw
a well in the field, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from
that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. 3 When all the flocks were gathered there, the
shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return
the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

4 Jacob asked the shepherds, "My brothers, where are you from?"

"We're from Haran,[x]" they replied.

5 He said to them, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?"

"Yes, we know him," they answered.

6 Then Jacob asked them, "Is he well?"

"Yes, he is," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep."

7 "Look," he said, "the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and
take them back to pasture."

8 "We can't," they replied, "until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the
mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep."

9 While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep,[y] for she was a shepherdess.

[a] *12* Or *ladder* [b] *13* Or *There beside him* [c] *19* *Bethel* means *house of God.* [d] *20,21* Or *Since God . . . father's house, the* LORD
[e] *21,22* Or *house, and the* LORD *will be my God,* [22] *then*

28:11 In ancient times people were accustomed to sleeping on the ground. Their headrests were often quite hard and were sometimes made of metal.

28:12 This "stairway" was probably not a ladder with rungs but was more likely similar to the steps mounting the sloping side of a ziggurat (see the note on 11:4).

28:18 In ancient times memorials of worship or of communion with God were common.

28:3 [p]Ge 17:6
28:4 [q]Ge 12:2,3 [r]Ge 17:8
28:5 [s]Hos 12:12 [t]Ge 24:29
28:6 [u]ver 1
28:8 [v]Ge 24:3 [w]Ge 26:35
28:9 [x]Ge 25:13 [y]Ge 26:34
28:10 [z]Ge 11:31
28:12 [a]Ge 20:3 [b]Jn 1:51
28:13 [c]Ge 12:7; 35:7,9; 48:3 [d]Ge 26:24 [e]Ge 13:15; 35:12
28:14 [f]Ge 26:4 [g]Ge 13:14 **28:14** [h]Ge 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; Gal 3:8
28:15 [i]Ge 26:3; 48:21 [j]Nu 6:24; Ps 121:5,7-8 [k]Dt 31:6,8 [l]Nu 23:19
28:17 [m]Ex 3:5; Jos 5:15
28:18 [n]Ge 35:14 [o]Lev 8:11
28:19 [p]Jdg 1:23, 26
28:20 [q]Ge 31:13; Jdg 11:30; 2Sa 15:8 [r]ver 15
28:21 [s]Jdg 11:31 [t]Dt 26:17
28:22 [u]Ge 35:7, 14 [v]Ge 14:20; Lev 27:30
29:1 [w]Jdg 6:3,33
29:4 [x]Ge 28:10
29:9 [y]Ex 2:16

10 When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and Laban's sheep, he went over and
rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep.[z] 11 Then Jacob kissed Ra-
chel and began to weep aloud.[a] 12 He had told Rachel that he was a relative[b] of her father and a son of
Rebekah. So she ran and told her father.[c]
13 As soon as Laban[d] heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he hurried to meet him. He em-
braced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things.
14 Then Laban said to him, "You are my own flesh and blood."[e]

29:10 [z]Ex 2:17

29:11 [a]Ge 33:4
29:12 [b]Ge 13:8; 14:14,16
[c]Ge 24:28
29:13 [d]Ge 24:29

29:14 [e]Ge 2:23; Jdg 9:2; 2Sa 19:12-13

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, 15 Laban said to him, "Just because you are a rel-
ative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."
16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was
Rachel. 17 Leah had weak[a] eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. 18 Jacob was in love with Ra-
chel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel."[f]

29:18 [f]Hos 12:12

19 Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." 20 So Jacob
served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.[g]

29:20 [g]SS 8:7; Hos 12:12

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her.[h]"

29:21 [h]Jdg 15:1

22 So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast.[i] 23 But when evening came,
he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. 24 And Laban gave his servant
girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant.

29:22 [i]Jdg 14:10; Jn 2:1-2
29:25 [j]Ge 12:18

25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me?[j]
I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?[k]"

[k]Ge 27:36

26 Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older
one. 27 Finish this daughter's bridal week;[l] then we will give you the younger one also, in return for an-
other seven years of work."

29:27 [l]Jdg 14:12

28 And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to
be his wife. 29 Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah[m] to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant.[n] 30 Jacob lay
with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah.[o] And he worked for Laban another seven years.[p]

29:29 [m]Ge 30:3
[n]Ge 16:1
29:30 [o]ver 16
[p]Ge 31:41

Jacob's Children

31 When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved,[q] he opened her womb,[r] but Rachel was barren. 32 Leah
became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,[b] for she said, "It is because the LORD
has seen my misery.[s] Surely my husband will love me now."

29:31 [q]Dt 21:15-17 [r]Ge 11:30; 30:1; Ps 127:3

29:32 [s]Ge 16:11; 31:42; Ex 4:31; Dt 26:7; Ps 25:18

33 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the LORD heard that I am
not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon.[c][t]

29:33 [t]Ge 34:25; 49:5

34 Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will be-
come attached to me,[u] because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.[d][v]

29:34 [u]Ge 30:20; 1Sa 1:2-4
[v]Ge 49:5-7

35 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the LORD."
So she named him Judah.[e][w] Then she stopped having children.

29:35 [w]Ge 49:8; Mt 1:2-3

30 When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children,[x] she became jealous of her sis-
ter.[y] So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

30:1 [x]Ge 29:31; 1Sa 1:5-6
[y]Lev 18:18

2 Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having
children?"[z]

30:2 [z]Ge 16:2; 20:18; 29:31

3 Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me
and that through her I too can build a family."[a]

30:3 [a]Ge 16:2

4 So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife.[b] Jacob slept with her,[c] 5 and she became pregnant and
bore him a son. 6 Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me;[d] he has listened to my plea and given me a
son." Because of this she named him Dan.[f][e]

30:4 [b]ver 9,18
[c]Ge 16:3-4

30:6 [d]Ps 35:24; 43:1; La 3:59
[e]Ge 49:16-17

[a] *17* Or *delicate* [b] *32* *Reuben* sounds like the Hebrew for *he has seen my misery*; the name means *see, a son.* [c] *33* *Simeon* probably means *one who hears.* [d] *34* *Levi* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *attached.* [e] *35* *Judah* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *praise.* [f] *6* *Dan* here means *he has vindicated.*

29:24 This wedding custom is well documented in Old Babylonian marriage contracts. See "Nuzi" on page 52.

7 Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 Then Rachel said, "I have had
30:8 [f] Hos 12:3-4 [g] Ge 49:21 a great struggle with my sister, and I have won."[f] So she named him Naphtali.[a g]

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her
30:9 [h] ver 4 to Jacob as a wife.[h] 10 Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. 11 Then Leah said, "What good fortune!"[b] So
30:11 [i] Ge 49:19 she named him Gad.[c i]

12 Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will
30:13 [j] Ps 127:3 [k] Pr 31:28; Lk 1:48 [l] Ge 49:20 call me[j] happy."[k] So she named him Asher.[d l]

14 During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants,[m] which
30:14 [m] SS 7:13 he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

30:15 [n] Nu 16:9, 13 15 But she said to her, "Wasn't it enough[n] that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?"

"Very well," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

16 So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. "You must sleep with me," she said. "I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night.

30:17 [o] Ge 25:21 17 God listened to Leah,[o] and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18 Then Leah said, "God
30:18 [p] Ge 49:14 has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband." So she named him Issachar.[e p]

19 Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. 20 Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons." So she
30:20 [q] Ge 35:23; 49:13; Mt 4:13 named him Zebulun.[f q]

21 Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

30:22 [r] Ge 8:1; 1Sa 1:19-20 [s] Ge 29:31 22 Then God remembered Rachel;[r] he listened to her and opened her womb.[s] 23 She became pregnant
30:23 [t] ver 6 [u] Isa 4:1; Lk 1:25 and gave birth to a son[t] and said, "God has taken away my disgrace."[u] 24 She named him Joseph,[g v] and
30:24 [v] Ge 35:24; 37:2; 39:1; 49:22-26 [w] Ge 35:17 said, "May the LORD add to me another son."[w]

Jacob's Flocks Increase

30:25 [x] Ge 24:54 25 After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way[x] so I can go back to my
30:26 [y] Ge 29:20, 30; Hos 12:12 own homeland. 26 Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you,[y] and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you."

27 But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination
30:27 [z] Ge 26:24; 39:3,5 that[h] the LORD has blessed me because of you."[z] 28 He added, "Name your wages,[a] and I will pay them."
30:28 [a] Ge 29:15
30:29 [b] Ge 31:6 [c] Ge 31:38-40 29 Jacob said to him, "You know how I have worked for you[b] and how your livestock has fared under my care.[c] 30 The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?[d]"
30:30 [d] 1Ti 5:8

31 "What shall I give you?" he asked.

"Don't give me anything," Jacob replied. "But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: 32 Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them
30:32 [e] Ge 31:8, 12 every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat.[e] They will be my wages. 33 And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen."

34 "Agreed," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said." 35 That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them)
30:35 [f] Ge 31:1 and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons.[f] 36 Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks.

37 Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. 38 Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they

[a] *8 Naphtali* means *my struggle.* [b] *11* Or *"A troop is coming!"* [c] *11 Gad* can mean *good fortune* or *a troop.* [d] *13 Asher* means *happy.* [e] *18 Issachar* sounds like the Hebrew for *reward.* [f] *20 Zebulun* probably means *honor.* [g] *24 Joseph* means *may he add.* [h] *27* Or possibly *have become rich and*

30:14 Mandrakes were thought to induce pregnancy when eaten (see SS 7:13).

30:32 Ancient shepherding contracts provided for a share of between 10 and 20 percent of the flock, along with a percentage of the wool and milk by-products. Dark and spotted animals typically represented a smaller proportion, ostensibly giving Laban the better deal. Jacob proposed to remove the designated sheep from Laban's flock for his wages, so Laban's actions (vv. 35–36) appeared to violate the agreement.

came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, [39]they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. [40]Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. [41]Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, [42]but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob. [43]In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys.[g]

30:43 [g]ver 30; Ge 12:16; 13:2; 24:35; 26:13-14



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

NUZI

GENESIS 30 The ancient city of **Nuzi** (modern Yorghan Tepe; find Nuzi on "Map 1"), located a few miles southwest of Kirkuk in Iraq, has provided archaeologists with a wealth of material. Estates of the nobility have yielded exquisite wall paintings, figurines, cylinder seals[1] and ceramics in a style dubbed "Nuzi ware." The most significant discovery to date, however, has been extensive archives dating to approximately 1500–1350 B.C., during which the **Mitanni** kingdom controlled Nuzi. Most of the 3,500 tablets in these archives originated from private homes and document the lives of the city's ruling families, as well as providing information regarding the political structure and social conditions of this region and time.

Several Nuzi texts parallel and illuminate Biblical accounts of the **patriarchs**. Not all of the alleged correspondences between the Bible and information gleaned from Nuzi are certain, but at the very least they demonstrate that the context of Genesis is in fact rooted in ancient customs. Some of the more famous of the proposed congruencies include:

A childless couple in Nuzi could adopt a servant as an heir (cf. Abram's assumption that his slave, Eliezer, would inherit his estate since Abram had not yet sired a son; 15:2–3).

Legal tablets demonstrate that an infertile primary wife could give her maidservant to her husband for the expressed purpose of providing him an heir, who could subsequently be adopted by the primary wife. According to these texts, if she later gave birth to her own son, he would displace the maidservant's son, as the rightful heir (cf. the accounts of Sarah and Hagar in 16:1–4; 21:8–10 and of the maidservants of Leah and Rachel in 30:1–13).

Marriage contracts discovered in Nuzi demonstrate that brothers could arrange for their sister's marriage, although she often had the option to agree or disagree with the proposed union (cf. 24:29–60). Marriage contracts formulated by a father, however, did not require his daughter's consent (cf. 29:16–30). There are also parallels to the institution of levirate marriage[2] (cf. Judah and Tamar's story).

Prior to discovery of the Nuzi tablets, scholars had assumed that a later editor had added the notes that Laban gave named maidservants to his daughters when they married (29:22–24,28–29). But researchers have discovered Nuzi marriage contracts stipulating that the bride was to be given a handmaiden, whose name was duly recorded in the contract.

An individual family's household idols were considered highly important in Nuzi and were handed down to the principal heir. If the inheritance were disputed in court, possession of the family idols could be accepted as proof that the deceased had intended the possessor to be his heir. Thus, Rachel's theft of the family idols could have been construed as a serious crime, an attempt to secure Laban's wealth for her husband and possible future children (31:22–37).

Some historians have argued that Nuzi arrangements allowing a man to adopt a young woman as his daughter for the purpose of giving her in marriage to his son shed light upon Abraham's two separate protestations that his wife was in reality his sister (12:10–20; 20:1–18). There is some doubt that this is a true parallel, but these incidents at least suggest that the patriarchs' stories likely had roots in ancient customs of which we may now know little or nothing.

Although the city of Haran ("Map 1"), in which Abraham had lived before journeying to Canaan,[3] is some distance from Nuzi, the Hurrians controlled both cities during the second millennium B.C.[4] Therefore it is not surprising that the Nuzi archives and the Biblical stories of the patriarchs reflect common customs and legal arrangements. Future discoveries of relics such as these tablets may shed additional light on some perplexing Biblical issues.[5]

[1]See "Signet Rings" and photographs of a cylinder seal impressions on page 728. [2]See "Levirate Marriage" on page 64. [3]See "Haran" on page 47 and "Canaan" on page 324. [4]See "The Hurrians" on page 57. [5]See "The Patriarchal Period: Mesopotamia During the Time of Abraham" on page 26, "Custom and Law in Ancient Mesopotamia" on page 36 and "The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives" on page 73.

Jacob Flees From Laban

31 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." 2 And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.

3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back[h] to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."[i]

4 So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. 5 He said to them, "I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me.[j] 6 You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength,[k] 7 yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times.[l] However, God has not allowed him to harm me.[m] 8 If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,'[n] then all the flocks bore streaked young. 9 So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.[o]

10 "In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. 11 The angel of God[p] said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.' 12 And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.[q] 13 I am the God of Bethel,[r] where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.[s]' "

14 Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? 15 Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us.[t] 16 Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you."

17 Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, 18 and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram,[a] to go to his father Isaac[u] in the land of Canaan.[v]

19 When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods.[w] 20 Moreover, Jacob deceived[x] Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away.[y] 21 So he fled with all he had, and crossing the River,[b] he headed for the hill country of Gilead.[z]

Laban Pursues Jacob

22 On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. 23 Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. 24 Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him,[a] "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."[b]

25 Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. 26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You've deceived me,[c] and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war.[d] 27 Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of tambourines[e] and harps?[f] 28 You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters good-by.[g] You have done a foolish thing. 29 I have the power to harm you;[h] but last night the God of your father[i] said to me, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' 30 Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's house. But why did you steal my gods?[j]"

31:3 [h]ver 13; Ge 32:9 [i]Ge 21:22; 26:3; 28:15
31:5 [j]Ge 21:22; 26:3
31:6 [k]Ge 30:29
31:7 [l]ver 41; Job 19:3 [m]ver 52; Ps 37:28; 105:14
31:8 [n]Ge 30:32
31:9 [o]ver 1, 16; Ge 30:42
31:11 [p]Ge 16:7; 48:16
31:12 [q]Ex 3:7
31:13 [r]Ge 28:10-22 [s]ver 3; Ge 32:9
31:15 [t]Ge 29:20
31:18 [u]Ge 35:27 [v]Ge 10:19
31:19 [w]ver 30, 32, 34-35; Ge 35:2; Jdg 17:5; 1Sa 19:13; Hos 3:4
31:20 [x]Ge 27:36 [y]ver 27
31:21 [z]Ge 37:25
31:24 [a]Ge 20:3; Job 33:15 [b]Ge 24:50
31:26 [c]Ge 27:36 [d]1Sa 30:2-3
31:27 [e]Ex 15:20 [f]Ge 4:21
31:28 [g]ver 55
31:29 [h]ver 7 [i]ver 53
31:30 [j]ver 19; Jdg 18:24

[a] *18* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia [b] *21* That is, the Euphrates

31:14–16 In ancient times contracts for marriages were formal business transactions. The groom usually paid the father of the bride the bride price, which was supposed to be held in trust to provide for the wife if she were abandoned or widowed. In this case Jacob had given no bride price, so Laban should have set aside the equivalent of his wages for the women. If their father's house held no economic security for them, Laban's daughters had no reason to stay.

31:19 These "household gods" were small, portable idols, probably images of either ancestors or the patron gods of ancestors, believed to bring prosperity and protection. Such gods had no temples but were likely provided with a shrine area in the home. Rachel may have wanted something tangible to worship on the long journey ahead, a practice referred to much later in the writings of Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian. A family's household idols were considered highly important in Nuzi and were handed down to the principal heir. If the inheritance were disputed in court, possession of the family idols could be accepted as proof that the deceased had intended the possessor to be his heir (see "Nuzi" on p. 52).

31:30–31 It appears that according to Nuzian customs (see "Nuzi" on p. 52), Jacob had become Laban's male heir after Laban had adopted him as his son. Laban had then given Jacob both Leah and her sister Rachel as his wives. After having become prosperous, Jacob took his departure (v. 21). One reason "Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been" (v. 2) is that Laban by now apparently had sons by birth, who regarded Jacob as an interloper (v. 1). Thus arose the dispute over the right of the possession of the teraphim, the household gods that Rachel concealed in the baggage as she, together with her husband and Jacob's extended family, fled (vv. 30–31). These household deities, about the size of miniature dolls, were regarded as indisputable evidence of the rights and privileges of family ownership and inheritance. Note Laban's indignant query, "But why did you steal my gods?" (v. 30).

31 Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from
me by force. 32 But if you find anyone who has your gods, he shall not live.[k] In the presence of our rela-
tives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it." Now Jacob did
not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.
33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but
he found nothing. After he came out of Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent. 34 Now Rachel had taken the
household gods and put them inside her camel's saddle and was sitting on them. Laban searched[l] through
everything in the tent but found nothing.
35 Rachel said to her father, "Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence;[m] I'm
having my period." So he searched but could not find the household gods.
36 Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "What sin have I
committed that you hunt me down? 37 Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you
found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives[n] and mine, and let them judge
between the two of us.
38 "I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I
eaten rams from your flocks. 39 I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And
you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night.[o] 40 This was my situation: The
heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. 41 It was like this
for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters[p] and
six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times.[q] 42 If the God of my father,[r] the God of
Abraham and the Fear of Isaac,[s] had not been with me,[t] you would surely have sent me away empty-
handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands,[u] and last night he rebuked you."

31:32 [k]Ge 44:9

31:34 [l]ver 37; Ge 44:12

31:35 [m]Ex 20:12; Lev 19:3,32

31:37 [n]ver 23

31:39 [o]Ex 22:13

31:41 [p]Ge 29:30
[q]ver 7

31:42 [r]ver 5; Ex 3:15; 1Ch 12:17
[s]ver 53; Isa 8:13
[t]Ps 124:1-2
[u]Ge 29:32



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

MARI

GENESIS 31 **Mari** ("Map 1"), known today as Tell Hariri, is located on the Euphrates River just downstream from its confluence with the Habur River.[1] Ideally situated at the convergence of several trade routes connecting **Sumer** to **Assyria** and **Mesopotamia** to Syria-Palestine, cosmopolitan Mari was an ideal spot for trade and communications between kingdoms. The city served as a buffer zone between the Sumerian city-states to the southeast and the lands of the pastoral tribes, called **Amorites**, to the north. These livestock-raising nomads seem to have been particularly concentrated around the city of Haran (cf. Abram's sojourn there mentioned in Ge 11:31—12:5).[2] Swarming in from Mesopotamia, they settled down there between 2400–2200 B.C. In fact, people from northwestern Syria ruled Mari after this period, so the city's most famous kings were of Amorite descent.

Much of Mari's early history is obscure. Founded around 2900–2700 B.C., the city acquired wealth and importance but periodically was controlled by such great third-millenium B.C. powers as Sargon of Akkad and the Third Dynasty of Ur.[3] In 1775 B.C. Zimri-Lim of Mari broke free of Assyrian domination, but Hammurabi of Babylon burned the city in 1761 B.C.

Begun in 1933, excavations of Mari have uncovered a large palace and several temples, including a ziggurat. The excavations have also yielded tens of thousands of clay, **cuneiform** tablets that had become hardened from the heat of conflagrations inflicted by the Babylonians. Well preserved, these tablets address a wide variety of issues, such as palace administration, provincial administration, harems, expenses, gift registries, literary works, letters and treaties.

These Mari documents shed light upon Old Testament study in several ways:

They describe the Amorites and their culture, helping us to understand the broader cultural environment of the early Israelites.

They showcase similarities between many Amorite and Biblical names, although there are few, if any, direct links to specific Biblical characters.

They mention the towns of Laish, which the Danites destroyed and rebuilt (Jdg 18), and **Hazor**, an important city even before the Israelites entered the promised land (Jos 11:10).[4]

They refer to pagan prophets who functioned in some ways similarly to their Biblical counterparts.[5]

[1]See "The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers" on page 604. [2]See "Haran" on page 47. [3]See "Ur" on page 705. [4]See "Hazor" on page 322. [5]See "Prophets in the Bible and Pagan Nations" on page 1457.

43 Laban answered Jacob, "The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are
my flocks. All you see is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children
31:44 [v]Ge 21:27; 26:28 [w]Jos 24:27 they have borne? 44 Come now, let's make a covenant,[v] you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us."[w]
31:45 [x]Ge 28:18 45 So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.[x] 46 He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they
took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. 47 Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha,[a]
and Jacob called it Galeed.[b]

48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed. 49 It
31:49 [y]Jdg 11:29; 1Sa 7:5-6 was also called Mizpah,[c y] because he said, "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are
away from each other. 50 If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even
31:50 [z]Jer 29:23; 42:5 though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness[z] between you and me."
31:51 [a]Ge 28:18 **31:52** [b]Ge 21:30 [c]ver 7; Ge 26:29 51 Laban also said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, and here is this pillar[a] I have set up between you and
me. 52 This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness,[b] that I will not go past this heap to your side to
harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me.[c] 53 May the God of
31:53 [d]Ge 28:13 [e]Ge 16:5 [f]Ge 21:23,27 [g]ver 42 Abraham[d] and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us."[e]

So Jacob took an oath[f] in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.[g] 54 He offered a sacrifice there in the
hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.
31:55 [h]ver 28 [i]Ge 18:33; 30:25 55 Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters[h] and blessed them. Then
he left and returned home.[i]

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

32:1 [j]Ge 16:11; 2Ki 6:16-17; Ps 34:7; 91:11; Heb 1:14 32 Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God[j] met him. 2 When Jacob saw them, he said,
"This is the camp of God!"[k] So he named that place Mahanaim.[d][l]
32:2 [k]Ge 28:17 [l]2Sa 2:8,29 **32:3** [m]Ge 27:41-42 [n]Ge 25:30; 36:8,9 3 Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau[m] in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.[n]
4 He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my master Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have
been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. 5 I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats,
32:5 [o]Ge 12:16; 30:43 [p]Ge 33:8, 10,15 menservants and maidservants.[o] Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in
your eyes.[p]' "

6 When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is
32:6 [q]Ge 33:1 coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."[q]
32:7 [r]ver 11 7 In great fear[r] and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups,[e] and the
flocks and herds and camels as well. 8 He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group,[f] the group[f] that
is left may escape."

32:9 [s]Ge 28:13; 31:42 [t]Ge 31:13 9 Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac,[s] O LORD, who said to me,
'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,'[t] 10 I am unworthy of all the kind-
32:10 [u]Ge 24:27 ness and faithfulness[u] you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but
now I have become two groups. 11 Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will
32:11 [v]Ps 59:2 [w]Ge 27:41 come and attack me,[v] and also the mothers with their children.[w] 12 But you have said, 'I will surely make
32:12 [x]Ge 22:17 [y]Ge 28:13-15; Hos 1:10; Ro 9:27 you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand[x] of the sea, which cannot be counted.[y]' "
32:13 [z]Ge 43:11, 15,25,26; Pr 18:16 13 He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift[z] for his brother Esau:
14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty female
camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.
16 He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go ahead of me,
and keep some space between the herds."

17 He instructed the one in the lead: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'To whom do you be-
long, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?' 18 then you are to say,
32:18 [a]Ge 18:3 'They belong to your servant[a] Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.' "

19 He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: "You are to say the
same thing to Esau when you meet him. 20 And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.' "
For he thought, "I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps
32:20 [b]Ge 33:10; Pr 21:14 he will receive me."[b] 21 So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

[a] *47* The Aramaic *Jegar Sahadutha* means *witness heap.* [b] *47* The Hebrew *Galeed* means *witness heap.* [c] *49* *Mizpah* means *watchtower.* [d] *2* *Mahanaim* means *two camps.* [e] *7* Or *camps*; also in verse 10 [f] *8* Or *camp*

31:47 A western Semitic language, Aramaic is closely related to Hebrew and developed various dialects. Verse 47, while not explicitly stating Laban's use of Aramaic, calls attention to the fact that he used different wording than Jacob did.

Jacob Wrestles With God

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and
crossed the ford of the Jabbok. [c] 23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his posses-
sions. 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man[d] wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that
he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip[e] so that his hip was wrenched as he
wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."[f]

27 The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,[a g] because you have struggled
with God and with men and have overcome."

29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."[h]

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?"[i] Then he blessed[j] him there.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel,[b] saying, "It is because I saw God face to face,[k] and yet my life was
spared."

31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel,[c] and he was limping because of his hip. 32 Therefore to
this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Ja-
cob's hip was touched near the tendon.

32:22 [c]Dt 2:37; 3:16; Jos 12:2
32:24 [d]Ge 18:2
32:25 [e]ver 32
32:26 [f]Hos 12:4
32:28 [g]Ge 17:5; 35:10; 1Ki 18:31
32:29 [h]Jdg 13:17 [i]Jdg 13:18 [j]Ge 35:9
32:30 [k]Ge 16:13; Ex 24:11; Nu 12:8; Jdg 6:22; 13:22

Jacob Meets Esau

33 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men;[l] so he divided the chil-
dren among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants. 2 He put the maidservants and their chil-
dren in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. 3 He himself went on ahead
and bowed down to the ground[m] seven times as he approached his brother.

4 But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him.

33:1 [l]Ge 32:6
33:3 [m]Ge 18:2; 42:6

[a] *28 Israel* means *he struggles with God.* [b] *30 Peniel* means *face of God.* [c] *31* Hebrew *Penuel*, a variant of *Peniel*

33:3 Bowing down to the ground seven times was a sign of total submission, documented also in texts found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt and dating to the fourteenth century B.C.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

SUCCOTH/TELL DEIR ALLA

GENESIS 33 Succoth, located just east of the Jordan River, is mentioned in several Biblical contexts (but note that the Succoth of Ex 12–13 and Nu 33 ["Map 1"] was a different place):

After meeting Esau near the Jabbok River, Jacob proceeded toward the Jordan River near Penuel and built livestock enclosures there (Ge 33:17; the rivers, but not the names of these towns, are indicated on "Map 2"). Jacob named this place Succoth ("shelters").

Gideon followed Jacob's route in reverse (Jdg 8) while pursuing Midianite raiders.[1] The people of Succoth refused to feed his troops, and in retaliation they later sacked the town (Jdg 8:13–17).

Most scholars identify Succoth with modern Tell Deir Alla. A significant temple existed here during the **Late Bronze Age**.[2] Remains discovered at Succoth include jar fragments from 1209–1201 B.C., ornamented with a **cartouche** of an Egyptian queen, and three clay tablets in a script yet to be deciphered.

The Late Bronze-era Succoth was destroyed around 1200 B.C., possibly by Gideon and his troops. Excavation of **Iron Age** I strata offers no evidence of a permanent settlement there at that time (with the exception of minor structures dated near the end of this period), but remains do exist of furnaces used to smelt bronze. According to 1 Kings 7:46 Solomon arranged for bronze-casting in the Succoth area for the making of items designated for the temple.

The site was once again built up during the **Iron Age** II. A plastered wall from this era contains an **Aramaic** inscription in ink mentioning Balaam.[3] An earthquake probably destroyed the city during the eighth century B.C. (cf. Am 1:1). The site was inhabited, however, until the late **Persian period**, perhaps only seasonally due to the extreme summer temperatures.

[1] See "Midian" on page 92. [2] See "Archaeological Periods" chart on page xx in the front of this Bible. [3] See "Balaam, the Son of Beor" on page 229.

33:4 [n]Ge 45:14-15

And they wept.[n] 5Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked.

Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant.[o]"

33:5 [o]Ge 48:9; Ps 127:3; Isa 8:18

6Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. 7Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

33:8 [p]Ge 32:14-16 [q]Ge 24:9; 32:5

8Esau asked, "What do you mean by all these droves I met?[p]"

"To find favor in your eyes, my lord,[q]" he said.

9But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

10"No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God,[r] now that you have received me favorably.[s] 11Please accept the present[t] that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me[u] and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

33:10 [r]Ge 16:13 [s]Ge 32:20
33:11 [t]1Sa 25:27 [u]Ge 30:43

12Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."

13But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. 14So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.[v]"

33:14 [v]Ge 32:3

15Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you."

"But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord."[w]

33:15 [w]Ge 34:11; 47:25; Ru 2:13

16So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. 17Jacob, however, went to Succoth,[x] where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Succoth.[a]

33:17 [x]Jos 13:27; Jdg 8:5,6,8,14-16; Ps 60:6

18After Jacob came from Paddan Aram,[by] he arrived safely at the[c] city of Shechem[z] in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. 19For a hundred pieces of silver,[d] he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem,[a] the plot of ground[b] where he pitched his tent. 20There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.[e]

33:18 [y]Ge 25:20; 28:2 [z]Jos 24:1; Jdg 9:1
33:19 [a]Jos 24:32 [b]Jn 4:5

[a] *17 Succoth* means *shelters.* [b] *18* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia [c] *18* Or *arrived at Shalem, a* [d] *19* Hebrew *hundred kesitahs*; a kesitah was a unit of money of unknown weight and value. [e] *20 El Elohe Israel* can mean *God, the God of Israel* or *mighty is the God of Israel.*

33:19 Modern Bir Ya'kub is doubtless the well mentioned in John 4:6 as the well of Jacob. For many centuries Samaritans and Jews have believed this to be the case. The ground mentioned by John had been purchased by Jacob (v. 19). The area was later wrested by



ANCIENT PEOPLES, LANDS AND RULERS

The Hurrians

GENESIS 34 The **Hurrians** entered northern **Mesopotamia**, apparently from the Caucasus region, during the third millennium B.C. and scattered across the ancient Near East. They were well established in the area by the eighteenth century B.C. and created the kingdom of **Mitanni** in the northern territory between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers by the mid-sixteenth century B.C.[1] This kingdom became a major international player during the mid-second millennium B.C., but its location between the areas inhabited by the Egyptians, **Hittites** and **Assyrians** rendered it vulnerable to attack. By about 1250 B.C. Mitanni had ceased to exist as a kingdom.

Little is known about the Hurrian language because most of the documents these people left behind are in **Akkadian**[2] rather than in their own language. It is certain, however, that the Hurrians were not Semitic.

In **Nuzi**, a Hurrian city east of the Tigris River, archaeologists have discovered an archive of **cuneiform** texts that reveal much about ancient Mesopotamian culture.[3] The Hurrians worshiped such deities as a storm god, a sun god and a moon god in a Mesopotamian temple/pantheon (temple dedicated to multiple gods). Excelling in metallurgy and glassmaking, they also were known for an intricately decorated pottery now called "Nuzi ware." Some scholars have suggested that the Biblical Horites (Ge 36:20–21; 14:6) were Hurrians, but this is most likely incorrect. The Horites were a late third-millennium tribal group indigenous to the region of Seir, south of the Dead Sea, whereas the Hurrians were a people who entered northern Mesopotamia from the north during the second millennium.

[1]See "The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers" on page 604. [2]See "Languages of the Old Testament World" on page 672. [3]See "Nuzi" on page 52.

Dinah and the Shechemites

34 Now Dinah,[c] the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. **34:1** [c]Ge 30:21
2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. 3 His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. 4 And Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife."

5 When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he kept quiet about it until they came home.

6 Then Shechem's father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob.[d] 7 Now Jacob's sons had come in from the **34:6** [d]Jdg 14:2-5
fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were filled with grief and fury, because Shechem had done a disgraceful thing in[a] Israel[e] by lying with Jacob's daughter—a thing that should not be done.[f] **34:7** [e]Dt 22:21; Jdg 20:6; 2Sa 13:12 [f]Jos 7:15

8 But Hamor said to them, "My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. 9 Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. 10 You can settle among us;[g] the land is open to you.[h] Live in it, trade[b] in it,[i] and acquire property in it." **34:10** [g]Ge 47:6, 27 [h]Ge 13:9; 20:15 [i]Ge 42:34

11 Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. 12 Make the price for the bride[j] and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I'll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife." **34:12** [j]Ex 22:16; Dt 22:29; 1Sa 18:25

13 Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. 14 They said to them, "We can't do such a thing; we can't give our sister to a man who is not circumcised.[k] That would be a disgrace to us. 15 We will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males.[l] 16 Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We'll settle among you and become one people with you. 17 But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we'll take our sister[c] and go." **34:14** [k]Ge 17:14; Jdg 14:3 **34:15** [l]Ex 12:48

18 Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. 19 The young man, who was the most honored of all his father's household, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter.[m] 20 So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city[n] to speak to their fellow townsmen. 21 "These men are friendly toward us," they said. "Let them live in our land and trade in it; the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. 22 But the men will consent to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are. 23 Won't their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us give our consent to them, and they will settle among us." **34:19** [m]ver 3 **34:20** [n]Ru 4:1; 2Sa 15:2

24 All the men who went out of the city gate[o] agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised. **34:24** [o]Ge 23:10

25 Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords[p] and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male.[q] 26 They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's house and left. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where[d] their sister had been defiled. 28 They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields. 29 They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses. **34:25** [p]Ge 49:5 [q]Ge 49:7

30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench[r] to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land.[s] We are few in number,[t] and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed." **34:30** [r]Ex 5:21; 1Sa 13:4 [s]Ge 13:7 [t]Ge 46:27; 1Ch 16:19; Ps 105:12

31 But they replied, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"

Jacob Returns to Bethel

35 Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel[u] and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau."[v] **35:1** [u]Ge 28:19 [v]Ge 27:43

2 So Jacob said to his household[w] and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods[x] you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.[y] 3 Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will **35:2** [w]Ge 18:19; Jos 24:15 [x]Ge 31:19 [y]Ex 19:10,14

[a] *7* Or *against* [b] *10* Or *move about freely*; also in verse 21 [c] *17* Hebrew *daughter* [d] *27* Or *because*

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force from the Amorites (48:22). The well is near the base of Mount Gerizim, whose bluffs may have been intended in Jesus' phrase "this mountain" (Jn 4:21). A narrow opening 4 feet (1.2 m) long led from the floor of the vault into the well, which had been dug through limestone. The depth of the well has not been determined. For centuries tourists cast pebbles into it, until Greek Catholics purchased the site and put it under guard.

34:20 See the note on 19:1.

build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress[z] and who has been with me wherever I have gone.[a]" [4]So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.[b] [5]Then they set out, and the terror of God[c] fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

[6]Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz[d] (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. [7]There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel,[a] because it was there that God revealed himself to him[e] when he was fleeing from his brother.

[8]Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse,[f] died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So it was named Allon Bacuth.[b]

35:3 [z]Ge 32:7
35:4 [a]Ge 28:15,20-22; 31:3,42 [b]Jos 24:25-26
35:5 [c]Ex 15:16; 23:27; Jos 2:9
35:6 [d]Ge 28:19; 48:3
35:7 [e]Ge 28:13
35:8 [f]Ge 24:59

[a] *7 El Bethel* means *God of Bethel.* [b] *8 Allon Bacuth* means *oak of weeping.*



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

BETHEL

GENESIS 35 The holy site of Bethel ("Map 1") played an important role in the lives of Abraham and Jacob/Israel, as well as in later Israelite history. Abraham built an altar between Bethel and Ai (Ge 12:8), and Jacob, en route to Haran while fleeing from Esau, experienced a vivid dream at Bethel[1] (28:10–17). Before moving on, he set up a commemorative stone at the spot. In addition to serving as places of remembrance, such stones occasionally marked burial sites (35:20).

Biblical scholars have long debated Bethel's precise location. Most have placed it at modern Tell Beitin, 8 miles (13 km) north of Jerusalem, but el Bireh, a few miles farther south, has also been suggested. Clearly Bethel was located within the area north of Jerusalem now referred to as the West Bank.

Tell Beitin, which shows signs of occupation beginning with the **Chalcolithic** period,[2] was continuously occupied during the **Middle Bronze Age**s I and II, until the city was destroyed around 1550 B.C. A **Late Bronze Age** city located on the same site, dating from the fourteenth century B.C., boasted high-quality houses, streets with flagstone pavements, and sewers. There is evidence of its destruction at the end of the Bronze Age, and a later, **Iron Age** I settlement at the location reflects an impoverished community. This city continued to exist through the Iron Age, but no remains of Jeroboam's temple—which the Babylonian army destroyed in 586 B.C.—have been found here.

According to the *Onomasticon*, written by Eusebius (A.D. 269–339) and revised by Jerome (A.D. 345–419), Bethel was located at the twelfth Roman milestone on the eastern side of the road leading north to Neapolis (called Shechem in the Old Testament; modern Nablus). In this ancient manuscript Tell Beitin is described as being located at the fourteenth milestone, indicating that, if Eusebius's information was correct, it could not have been Bethel. Bethel may, then, have been situated a little to the south, at modern el Bireh, near the city of Ramallah. No excavation has been done at el Bireh, a town currently occupied by Palestinians.

During the period of Israel's monarchy, Bethel ("house of God") came to be embroiled in a controversy. Associations with its sacred history and monuments led the people to transform it into a center of idolatrous worship.

Jeroboam I, for example, took advantage of the holy traditions associated with Bethel and, against God's will, set up a shrine there to serve as an alternative worship site to Solomon's temple[3] (1Ki 12:26–30). As a result the prophets severely censured worship at Bethel. Hosea (Hos 4:15; 5:8; 10:5) went so far as to refer to Bethel as *Beth Aven*, a disparaging pun meaning "house of wickedness."[4] Such texts indicate that there was a debate during ancient times over whether Bethel was a sacred site or a center of apostasy.

The name Bethel was at the center of debate in another context. Bethel appears as a god's name in a seventh-century B.C. **Assyrian** treaty and in some texts from Elephantine, located in southern Egypt.[5] Based upon these discoveries, some scholars have argued that the word *Bethel* is used in the Old Testament as a divine name rather than as a place-name. Most interpreters remain unconvinced of the validity of this theory, since it appears quite evident that the Biblical Bethel was a specific place. In fact, certain Biblical texts seem to attest that Bethel in its early days was a city formerly known as Luz (mentioned in Ge 28:19; 35:6; 48:3) but renamed by Jacob (Jdg 1:23).

[1]See "Haran" on page 47. [2]See "Archaeological Periods" chart on page xx in the front of this Bible. [3]See "The High Place at Dan" on page 504. [4]See "Beth Aven: A Lesson in the Difficulty of Biblical Geography" on page 1417. [5]See "The Elephantine Community" on page 1264.

9 After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram,[a] God appeared to him again and blessed him.[g] 10 God said to him, "Your name is Jacob,[b] but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel."[c][h] So he named him Israel.

11 And God said to him, "I am God Almighty;[d][i] be fruitful and increase in number. A nation[j] and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body.[k] 12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you." 13 Then God went up from him[l] at the place where he had talked with him.

14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.[m] 15 Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.[e][n]

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

16 Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. 17 And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid, for you have another son."[o] 18 As she breathed her last — for she was dying — she named her son Ben-Oni.[f] But his father named him Benjamin.[g]

19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem[p]). 20 Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel's tomb.[q]

21 Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder. 22 While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine[r] Bilhah,[s] and Israel heard of it.

Jacob had twelve sons:

23 The sons of Leah:

Reuben the firstborn[t] of Jacob,
Simeon, Levi, Judah,[u] Issachar and Zebulun.[v]

24 The sons of Rachel:

Joseph[w] and Benjamin.[x]

25 The sons of Rachel's maidservant Bilhah:

Dan and Naphtali.[y]

26 The sons of Leah's maidservant Zilpah:

Gad[z] and Asher.[a]

These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram.

27 Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre,[b] near Kiriath Arba[c] (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. 28 Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years.[d] 29 Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people,[e] old and full of years.[f] And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.[g]

Esau's Descendants

36 This is the account of Esau (that is, Edom).[h]

2 Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan:[i] Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite,[j] and Oholibamah daughter of Anah[k] and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite — 3 also Basemath daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.

4 Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel,[l] 5 and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the sons of Esau, who were born to him in Canaan.

6 Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, as well as his livestock and all his other animals and all the goods he had acquired in Canaan,[m] and moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. 7 Their possessions were too great for them to remain together; the land where they were staying could not support them both because of their livestock.[n] 8 So Esau[o] (that is, Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.[p]

35:9 [g] Ge 32:29
35:10 [h] Ge 17:5
35:11 [i] Ge 17:1; Ex 6:3 [j] Ge 28:3; 48:4 [k] Ge 17:6
35:12 [l] Ge 13:15; 28:13 [m] Ge 12:7; 26:3
35:13 [n] Ge 17:22
35:14 [o] Ge 28:18
35:15 [p] Ge 28:19
35:17 [q] Ge 30:24
35:19 [r] Ge 48:7; Ru 1:1,19; Mic 5:2; Mt 2:16
35:20 [s] 1Sa 10:2
35:22 [t] Ge 49:4; 1Ch 5:1 [u] Ge 29:29; Lev 18:8
35:23 [v] Ge 46:8 [w] Ge 29:35 [x] Ge 30:20
35:24 [y] Ge 30:24 [z] ver 18
35:25 [a] Ge 30:8
35:26 [b] Ge 30:11 [c] Ge 30:13
35:27 [d] Ge 13:18; 18:1 [e] Jos 14:15
35:28 [f] Ge 25:7, 20
35:29 [g] Ge 25:8; 49:33 [h] Ge 15:15 [i] Ge 25:9
36:1 [j] Ge 25:30
36:2 [k] Ge 28:8-9 [l] Ge 26:34 [m] ver 25
36:4 [n] 1Ch 1:35
36:6 [o] Ge 12:5
36:7 [p] Ge 13:6; 17:8; 28:4
36:8 [q] Dt 2:4 [r] Ge 32:3

[a] *9* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia; also in verse 26 [b] *10* *Jacob* means *he grasps the heel* (figuratively, *he deceives*). [c] *10* *Israel* means *he struggles with God.* [d] *11* Hebrew *El-Shaddai* [e] *15* *Bethel* means *house of God.* [f] *18* *Ben-Oni* means *son of my trouble.* [g] *18* *Benjamin* means *son of my right hand.*

35:22 Slaves, servants and concubines were considered part of the inheritance passed along from father to son. The oldest son would inherit with his birthright the human members of the household. When inheritance was seized prior to a father's death, the father's role was usurped (cf. e.g., 49:3–4 with 35:22).

36:8 Seir is another name for Edom (see "Edom" on p. 1467).

9 This is the account of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.

10 These are the names of Esau's sons:
Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.
11 The sons of Eliphaz:[s]
Teman,[t] Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz.
12 Esau's son Eliphaz also had a concubine named Timna, who bore him Amalek.[u] These were grandsons of Esau's wife Adah.[v]
13 The sons of Reuel:
Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.
14 The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon, whom she bore to Esau:
Jeush, Jalam and Korah.

15 These were the chiefs[w] among Esau's descendants:
The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau:
Chiefs Teman,[x] Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, 16 Korah,[a] Gatam and Amalek. These were the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in Edom; they were grandsons of Adah.[y]
17 The sons of Esau's son Reuel:[z]
Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the chiefs descended from Reuel in Edom; they were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.
18 The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah:
Chiefs Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah.
19 These were the sons of Esau (that is, Edom),[a] and these were their chiefs.

20 These were the sons of Seir the Horite,[b] who were living in the region:
Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, 21 Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These sons of Seir in Edom were Horite chiefs.
22 The sons of Lotan:
Hori and Homam.[b] Timna was Lotan's sister.
23 The sons of Shobal:
Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.
24 The sons of Zibeon:
Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs[c] in the desert while he was grazing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.
25 The children of Anah:
Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah.
26 The sons of Dishon[d]:
Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Keran.
27 The sons of Ezer:
Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan.
28 The sons of Dishan:
Uz and Aran.
29 These were the Horite chiefs:
Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, 30 Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These were the Horite chiefs, according to their divisions, in the land of Seir.

The Rulers of Edom

31 These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king[c] reigned[e]:
32 Bela son of Beor became king of Edom. His city was named Dinhabah.
33 When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah[d] succeeded him as king.
34 When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites[e] succeeded him as king.

36:11 [s]ver 15-16; Job 2:11 [t]Am 1:12; Hab 3:3
36:12 [u]Ex 17:8, 16; Nu 24:20; 1Sa 15:2 [v]ver 16
36:15 [w]Ex 15:15 [x]Job 2:11
36:16 [y]ver 12
36:17 [z]1Ch 1:37
36:19 [a]Ge 25:30
36:20 [b]Ge 14:6; Dt 2:12,22; 1Ch 1:38
36:31 [c]Ge 17:6; 1Ch 1:43
36:33 [d]Jer 49:13, 22
36:34 [e]Eze 25:13

[a] *16* Masoretic Text; Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Gen. 36:11 and 1 Chron. 1:36) does not have *Korah*. [b] *22* Hebrew *Hemam,* a variant of *Homam* (see 1 Chron. 1:39) [c] *24* Vulgate; Syriac *discovered water;* the meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. [d] *26* Hebrew *Dishan,* a variant of *Dishon* [e] *31* Or *before an Israelite king reigned over them*

35 When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab,[f] succeeded him as king. His city was named Avith.
36 When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him as king.
37 When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river[a] succeeded him as king.
38 When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Acbor succeeded him as king.
39 When Baal-Hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad[b] succeeded him as king. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab.

40 These were the chiefs descended from Esau, by name, according to their clans and regions:
Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, 41 Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, 42 Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, 43 Magdiel and Iram.
These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land they occupied.

This was Esau the father of the Edomites.

36:35 [f]Ge 19:37; Nu 22:1; Dt 1:5; Ru 1:1,6

Joseph's Dreams

37 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed,[g] the land of Canaan.[h]

37:1 [g]Ge 17:8 [h]Ge 10:19

2 This is the account of Jacob.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks[i] with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah[j] and the sons of Zilpah,[k] his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report[l] about them.
3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons,[m] because he had been born to him in his old age;[n] and he made a richly ornamented[c] robe[o] for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him[p] and could not speak a kind word to him.
5 Joseph had a dream,[q] and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: 7 We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."[r]
8 His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?"[s] And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.
9 Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."
10 When he told his father as well as his brothers,[t] his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"[u] 11 His brothers were jealous of him,[v] but his father kept the matter in mind.[w]

37:2 [i]Ps 78:71 [j]Ge 35:25 [k]Ge 35:26 [l]1Sa 2:24
37:3 [m]Ge 25:28 [n]Ge 44:20 [o]2Sa 13:18-19
37:4 [p]Ge 27:41; 49:22-23; Ac 7:9
37:5 [q]Ge 20:3; 28:12
37:7 [r]Ge 42:6,9; 43:26,28; 44:14; 50:18
37:8 [s]Ge 49:26
37:10 [t]ver 5 [u]ver 7; Ge 27:29
37:11 [v]Ac 7:9 [w]Lk 2:19,51

Joseph Sold by His Brothers

12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, 13 and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them."
"Very well," he replied.
14 So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.[x]
When Joseph arrived at Shechem, 15 a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"
16 He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"
17 "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'[y]"
So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. 18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.[z]
19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. 20 "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns[a] and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."[b]
21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said.[c] 22 "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.
23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe

37:14 [x]Ge 13:18; 35:27
37:17 [y]2Ki 6:13
37:18 [z]1Sa 19:1; Mk 14:1; Ac 23:12
37:20 [a]Jer 38:6,9 [b]Ge 50:20
37:21 [c]Ge 42:22

[a] *37* Possibly the Euphrates [b] *39* Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac (see also 1 Chron. 1:50); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *Hadar* [c] *3* The meaning of the Hebrew for *richly ornamented* is uncertain; also in verses 23 and 32.

37:24 [d]Jer 41:7

he was wearing— [24]and they took him and threw him into the cistern.[d] Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

37:25 [e]Ge 43:11 [f]ver 28

[25]As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh,[e] and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.[f]

37:25 The caravan was made up of Midianites and Ishmaelites. Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah, Ishmaelites his descendants through Hagar. The forebears of these two peoples were Jacob's uncles, making these traders second or third cousins to Joseph and his brothers. See "Caravan Trading and Routes in the Ancient Near East" on page 63.

The "balm" was an oil or gum used for its healing properties. The balm of Gilead was especially effective (see Jer 8:22; 46:11). See "Perfumes and Anointing Oils" on page 1746.



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

Caravan Trading and Routes in the Ancient Near East

GENESIS 37 According to Genesis 37 Joseph found his brothers near Dothan[1] (see "Map 1" at the back of this Bible). Overcome by jealousy based on their father's favoritism of this younger brother, they seized him and eventually sold him to a passing caravan of Ishmaelites bound for Egypt. Such a caravan probably was headed toward the "Way of the Sea" (**Via Maris**), an ancient roadway that began in Egypt, hugged the Mediterranean coast of **Canaan** as it meandered north, then passed just west of Dothan and on to Megiddo.[2] From there travelers could continue north beyond the coastal areas of **Phoenicia** or veer to the northeast toward Damascus[3] and on to **Mesopotamia**. The **King's Highway**, another great roadway during Old Testament times, allowed people to travel from north to south through the **Transjordan** and connected Damascus to the Gulf of Aqaba.



Ancient Babylonian map
Preserving Bible Times; © Dr. James C. Martin; permission of The British Museum

During ancient times merchants usually traveled in caravans, seeking protection in numbers on account of the many dangers and the lack of accommodations along the way. Caravans tended to be quite large (a column with three hundred donkeys was not extraordinary) and often included armed guards. Ancient texts from the Assyrians, Egyptians and **Hittites**[4] often refer to the hardships of travel. Wild animals, including lions, were a source of danger,[5] and a lone merchant transporting his wares was a tempting target for bandits. Extreme weather conditions, from drought to snow, also made travel hazardous.

The Romans' elaborate road system (exemplified by the celebrated Appian Way) did not yet exist during Old Testament times.[6] Roads were unpaved, often little more than dirt tracks from earlier caravans. Indeed, for many years scholars could only surmise the precise locations of these paths, making assumptions from the shape of the terrain and drawing from references to routes found in ancient documents. Recently, however, satellite photography has proven to be a useful tool for locating these beaten paths. Understandably, merchants transported their goods by sea or on navigable rivers whenever possible.

Despite all these difficulties merchants traded over great distances in the ancient Near East; goods found their way to the land of Israel from as far away as India and southern Arabia.

[1]See "Dothan, Ben-Hadad and a Chronological Problem" on page 536. [2]See "Megiddo" on page 1541. [3]See "Damascus" on page 1087. [4]See "Anatolia and the Hittites" on page 144. [5]See "Lions and Other Wild Beasts in Ancient Israel" on page 813. [6]But see "Travel in the Greco-Roman World" on page 1946.

26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?[g] 27 Come,
let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother,[h] our own flesh
and blood." His brothers agreed.

28 So when the Midianite[i] merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and
sold him for twenty shekels[a] of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.[j]

29 When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.[k] 30 He
went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"[l]

31 Then they got Joseph's robe,[m] slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They took the
ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's
robe."

33 He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal[n] has devoured him. Joseph
has surely been torn to pieces."[o]

34 Then Jacob tore his clothes,[p] put on sackcloth[q] and mourned for his son many days.[r] 35 All his sons
and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I
go down to the grave[b][s] to my son." So his father wept for him.

36 Meanwhile, the Midianites[c] sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain
of the guard.[t]

37:26 [g]ver 20; Ge 4:10
37:27 [h]Ge 42:21
37:28 [i]Ge 25:2; Jdg 6:1-3
[j]Ge 45:4-5; Ps 105:17; Ac 7:9
37:29 [k]ver 34; Ge 44:13; Job 1:20
37:30 [l]ver 22; Ge 42:13,36
37:31 [m]ver 3,23
37:33 [n]ver 20
[o]Ge 44:20,28
37:34 [p]ver 29
[q]2Sa 3:31
[r]Ge 50:3,10,11
37:35 [s]Ge 42:38; 44:22,29,31
37:36 [t]Ge 39:1

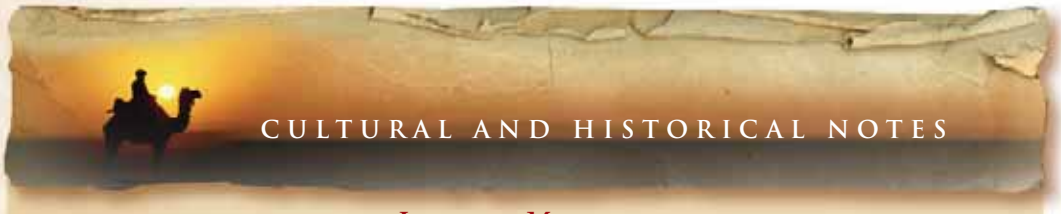
Judah and Tamar

38 At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hi-
rah. 2 There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua.[u] He married her and lay
with her; 3 she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er.[v] 4 She conceived again and
gave birth to a son and named him Onan. 5 She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It
was at Kezib that she gave birth to him.

38:2 [u]1Ch 2:3
38:3 [v]ver 6; Ge 46:12; Nu 26:19

[a] *28* That is, about 8 ounces (about 0.2 kilogram) [b] *35* Hebrew *Sheol* [c] *36* Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac (see also verse 28); Masoretic Text *Medanites*

38:3–4 Mesopotamian documents of this time include the tribal names Er and Onan.



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

Levirate Marriage

GENESIS 38 The "duty . . . as a brother-in-law" mentioned in Genesis 38:8 refers to the social and legal obligations of the *levir* (Latin for "husband's brother") to marry his widowed sister-in-law in the event his brother had died and left her childless.

This otherwise forbidden marriage arrangement (see Lev 18:16; 20:21) secured the inheritance of the deceased husband[1] and perpetuated his name (see Dt 25:6), thus reflecting the common desire among ancient Israelites to maintain a presence in the land after their deaths in the persons of their offspring.

In addition, this arrangement provided "social security" for the childless widow, who was effectively helpless and socially disadvantaged in the ancient Near East.[2] The **Hittites** and **Assyrians** also practiced levirate marriage.

In the event the deceased husband had no brothers (Ru 1:10–13), or if they had declined to fulfill their duty (Ge 38), other relatives might elect to assume the responsibility of the levir. It appears that this regulation was more strictly applied during the **patriarchal period** than it was several centuries later under the Mosaic Law (Dt 25:5–10). This is not surprising, since Genesis 38 narrates a period in Israel's history when "being fruitful" and "multiplying" were critical to the young nation's existence. Consequences for a brother-in-law's failure to fulfill this duty in these early days were severe (e.g., Onan's death; vv. 8–10). Tamar, in desperation, used her father-in-law to provide a legitimate heir. It is possible that her culture regarded her act as legally justified; by analogy, Hittite law stipulated that should the brother of a deceased man also perish and so be unable to fulfill his duty to the widow, she should marry her late husband's father.

[1] See "Inheritance in the Ancient Near East" on page 250.
[2] See "The Kinsman-Redeemer" on page 391.

6 Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. 7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death.[w]

38:7 [w]ver 10; Ge 46:12; 1Ch 2:3

8 Then Judah said to Onan, "Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother."[x] 9 But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. 10 What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also.[y]

38:8 [x]Dt 25:5-6; Mt 22:24-28

38:10 [y]Ge 46:12; Dt 25:7-10

11 Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up."[z] For he thought, "He may die too, just like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

38:11 [z]Ru 1:13

12 After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah,[a] to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him.

38:12 [a]ver 14; Jos 15:10,57

13 When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep," 14 she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah[b] had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife.

38:14 [b]ver 11

15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. 16 Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law,[c] he went over to her by the roadside and said, "Come now, let me sleep with you."

38:16 [c]Lev 18:15; 20:12

"And what will you give me to sleep with you?" she asked.

17 "I'll send you a young goat[d] from my flock," he said.

38:17 [d]Eze 16:33 [e]ver 20

"Will you give me something as a pledge[e] until you send it?" she asked.

18 He said, "What pledge should I give you?"

38:18 [f]ver 25

"Your seal[f] and its cord, and the staff in your hand," she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. 19 After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes[g] again.

38:19 [g]ver 14 38:21

20 Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her. 21 He asked the men who lived there, "Where is the shrine prostitute[h] who was beside the road at Enaim?"

[h]Lev 19:29; Hos 4:14

"There hasn't been any shrine prostitute here," they said.

22 So he went back to Judah and said, "I didn't find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, 'There hasn't been any shrine prostitute here.' "

23 Then Judah said, "Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn't find her."

24 About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant."

Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!"[i]

38:24 [i]Lev 21:9; Dt 22:21,22

25 As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are."[j]

38:25 [j]ver 18

26 Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I,[k] since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah.[l]" And he did not sleep with her again.

38:26 [k]1Sa 24:17 [l]ver 11

27 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.[m] 28 As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, "This one came out first." 29 But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, "So this is how you have broken out!" And he was named Perez.[a][n] 30 Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah.[b][o]

38:27 [m]Ge 25:24

38:29 [n]Ge 46:12; Nu 26:20,21; Ru 4:12,18; 1Ch 2:4; Mt 1:3

38:30 [o]1Ch 2:4

[a] *29 Perez* means *breaking out.* [b] *30 Zerah* can mean *scarlet* or *brightness.*

38:6–10 If a man died childless, his brother was duty bound to raise heirs to him by his widow (the Levirate law of Dt 25:5; see also "Levirate Marriage" on p. 64). Onan's action and resulting punishment had nothing to do with contraception or masturbation but everything to do with rightful inheritance.

38:11–14 A Hittite law stipulated that when a widow married her late husband's brother and *he* died, she was to marry his father. This was apparently the procedure Tamar was following. See the note on verses 6–10; see also "Nuzi" on page 52 and "Levirate Marriage" on page 64.

38:17–18 When Tamar accepted as guarantee of payment Jacob's seal, cord and staff, she held symbols of his individual and corporate identity—the equivalent of an I.D. card or signature.

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

39 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard,[p] bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.[q]
2 The LORD was with Joseph[r] and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the LORD was with him[s] and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did,[t] 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.[u] 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph.[v] The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,[w] 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"[x]
8 But he refused.[y] "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am.[z] My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"[a] 10 And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.
11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak[b] and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.
13 When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, 14 she called her

39:1 [p]Ge 37:36 [q]Ge 37:25; Ps 105:17
39:2 [r]Ge 21:20, 22; Ac 7:9
39:3 [s]Ge 21:22; 26:28 [t]Ps 1:3
39:4 [u]ver 8, 22; Ge 24:2
39:5 [v]Ge 26:24; 30:27
39:6 [w]1Sa 16:12
39:7 [x]2Sa 13:11; Pr 7:15-18
39:8 [y]Pr 6:23-24
39:9 [z]Ge 41:33, 40 [a]Ge 20:6; 42:18; 2Sa 12:13
39:12 [b]Pr 7:13



ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS

The Two Brothers

GENESIS 39 An Egyptian text called Papyrus D'Orbiney, dating to approximately 1225 B.C., contains a story titled The Two Brothers. Vividly illustrating the fantastic nature of ancient storytelling, this tale is a curious example of a nonbiblical story having striking similarities to a Biblical text.

In this fictional account, Bata lived with and faithfully served his older brother, Anubis. One day Anubis's wife tried to seduce Bata, who rejected her advances. Furious, she accused him of attempted rape, and the enraged Anubis prepared to kill Bata. But Bata, forewarned by a cow, fled in the nick of time. A lake filled with crocodiles magically appeared between the brothers, cutting off Anubis's pursuit. Anubis returned home—and proceeded to kill his wife!

Meanwhile, Bata cut out his own heart and placed it high in a pine tree, an act rendering him nearly immortal. The gods fashioned a beautiful wife for Bata. An immoral woman, however, she entered Pharaoh's harem and divulged to the Egyptians that Bata could be killed by cutting down the pine tree. They followed through, but Anubis, apparently prepared to reconcile with Bata, found his brother's heart and restored him to life.

Bata in turn transformed himself into a bull and carried Anubis to Pharaoh's court, where Bata's alarmed wife persuaded Pharaoh to sacrifice the bull. Its blood caused two trees to sprout. Realizing that Bata still lived, his wife arranged to have the trees cut down, but a splinter flew into her mouth and she became pregnant. She bore a son, whom Pharaoh raised as his crown prince. The boy—Bata himself—in due course became the pharaoh and appointed Anubis to be his viceroy.

Outlandish as this tale may seem to us, many scholars have noted the amazing similarities between it and the Biblical account of Joseph. Obvious parallels include a rivalry between brothers, a false accusation of rape and an ascent to power in Egypt. There is no reason, however, to surmise that the Biblical story may have been derived from this Egyptian tale. The bizarre quality of the Egyptian story contrasts strongly with the factual tone of the historical, Biblical narrative. At the same time, parallels between the stories may not have been accidental.

If composed after the time of Joseph, the Egyptian tale may have been influenced by the Biblical reality.

If the Egyptian story existed prior to the time of Joseph (assuming that Papyrus D'Orbiney was not its earliest iteration), the obvious parallels included in the Joseph narrative may have been intended to signal the fact that the God of Israel could elevate a son of Israel to power, even in an Egyptian context. The argument could be made that the Biblical account shows that Joseph fulfilled even the Egyptian ideal of a hero.

It is impossible, in the final analysis, to speak definitively of literary dependence going in either direction in this instance; there is simply not enough evidence to make an accurate judgment.

For another parallel to a Biblical story, see "The Tale of Appu's Two Sons" on page 45.

household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed.[c] [15]When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

[16]She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. [17]Then she told him this story:[d] "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. [18]But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

[19]When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger.[e] [20]Joseph's master took him and put him in prison,[f] the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, [21]the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.[g] [22]So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.[h] [23]The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.[i]

The Cupbearer and the Baker

40 Some time later, the cupbearer[j] and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. [2]Pharaoh was angry[k] with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, [3]and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard,[l] in the same prison where Joseph was confined. [4]The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph,[m] and he attended them.

After they had been in custody for some time, [5]each of the two men — the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison — had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.[n]

[6]When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. [7]So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"[o]

[8]"We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them."[p]

Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God?[q] Tell me your dreams."

[9]So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, [10]and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. [11]Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand."

[12]"This is what it means,[r]" Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days. [13]Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. [14]But when all goes well with you, remember me[s] and show me kindness;[t] mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. [15]For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews,[u] and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

[16]When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread.[a] [17]In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

[18]"This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days.[v] [19]Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head[w] and hang you on a tree.[b] And the birds will eat away your flesh."

[20]Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday,[x] and he gave a feast for all his officials.[y] He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: [21]He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand,[z] [22]but he hanged[c] the chief baker,[a] just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.[b]

[23]The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.[c]

[a] *16* Or *three wicker baskets* [b] *19* Or *and impale you on a pole* [c] *22* Or *impaled*

39:14 [c]Dt 22:24, 27
39:17 [d]Ex 23:1,7; Ps 101:5
39:19 [e]Pr 6:34
39:20 [f]Ge 40:3; Ps 105:18
39:21 [g]Ex 3:21
39:22 [h]ver 4
39:23 [i]ver 3
40:1 [j]Ne 1:11
40:2 [k]Pr 16:14, 15
40:3 [l]Ge 39:20
40:4 [m]Ge 39:4
40:5 [n]Ge 41:11
40:7 [o]Ne 2:2
40:8 [p]Ge 41:8,15 [q]Ge 41:16; Da 2:22,28,47
40:12 [r]Ge 41:12, 15,25; Da 2:36; 4:19
40:14 [s]Lk 23:42 [t]Jos 2:12; 1Sa 20:14,42; 1Ki 2:7
40:15 [u]Ge 37:26-28
40:18 [v]ver 12
40:19 [w]ver 13
40:20 [x]Mt 14:6-10 [y]Mk 6:21
40:21 [z]ver 13
40:22 [a]ver 19 [b]Ps 105:19
40:23 [c]Job 19:14; Ecc 9:15

40:8 In the ancient Near East great significance was given to dreams, and dream interpretations were sought from experts trained in the techniques and methods of the day. Both the Egyptians and the Babylonians compiled "dream books," which contained sample dreams with a key to their interpretation. These books preserved the data concerning past dreams and interpretations, providing the security of "scientific" documentation. Joseph consulted God, but his interpretation followed the way Egyptian dream literature interpreted comparable symbols. See "Dream Oracles in the Ancient World" on page 741.

40:20 The date of one's birth is, in a sense, the most important day of one's life, for without it the individual would not have experienced life in the world. So the celebration of birthdays goes back to very ancient times (cf. Mt 14:6).

Pharaoh's Dreams

41 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream:[d] He was standing by the Nile, 2when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat,[e] and they grazed among the reeds.[f] 3After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. 4And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

5He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. 6After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. 7The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

8In the morning his mind was troubled,[g] so he sent for all the magicians[h] and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

9Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. 10Pharaoh was once angry with his servants,[i] and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard.[j] 11Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.[k] 12Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.[l] 13And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged.[a][m]"

14So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon.[n] When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

15Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."[o]

16"I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."[p]

17Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, 18when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. 19After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. 20The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. 21But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

22"In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. 23After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. 24The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me.[q]"

25Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.[r] 26The seven good cows[s] are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. 27The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.[t]

28"It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29Seven years of great abundance[u] are coming throughout the land of Egypt, 30but seven years of famine[v] will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land.[w] 31The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. 32The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided[x] by God, and God will do it soon.

33"And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man[y] and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. 34Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth[z] of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance.[a] 35They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food.[b] 36This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt,[c] so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

37The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.[d] 38So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God[b]?"[e]

[a] *13* Or *impaled* [b] *38* Or *of the gods*

41:1 [d]Ge 20:3
41:2 [e]ver 26 [f]Isa 19:6
41:8 [g]Da 2:1,3; 4:5,19 [h]Ex 7:11, 22; Da 1:20; 2:2, 27; 4:7
41:10 [i]Ge 40:2
41:11 [j]Ge 39:20 [k]Ge 40:5
41:12 [l]Ge 40:12
41:13 [m]Ge 40:22
41:14 [n]Ps 105:20; Da 2:25
41:15 [o]Da 5:16
41:16 [p]Ge 40:8; Da 2:30; Ac 3:12; 2Co 3:5
41:24 [q]ver 8
41:25 [r]Da 2:45
41:26 [s]ver 2
41:27 [t]Ge 12:10; 2Ki 8:1
41:29 [u]ver 47
41:30 [v]ver 54; Ge 47:13 [w]ver 56
41:32 [x]Nu 23:19; Isa 46:10-11
41:33 [y]ver 39
41:34 [z]1Sa 8:15 [a]ver 48
41:35 [b]ver 48
41:36 [c]ver 56
41:37 [d]Ge 45:16
41:38 [e]Nu 27:18; Job 32:8; Da 4:8-9,18; 5:11,14

41:14 Egyptians were normally smooth-shaven, while Hebrews/Israelites wore beards (see 2Sa 10:5; Jer 41:5). See "Beards and Hairstyles in the Biblical World" on page 1084.

41:30 The Nile was the lifeline of Egypt; its annual flooding provided essential water and produced the only fertile soil there. Long famines were therefore rare in Egypt, but not uncommon elsewhere. See "Famine in the Ancient Near East" on page 70.

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders.[f] Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

41:40 [f]Ps 105:21-22; Ac 7:10

Joseph in Charge of Egypt

41:41 [g]Ge 42:6; Da 6:3
41:42 [h]Est 3:10 [i]Da 5:7,16,29

41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."[g] 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring[h] from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.[i] 43 He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command,[a] and men shouted before him, "Make way[b]!"[j] Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

41:43 [j]Est 6:9

44 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt."[k] 45 Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On,[c] to be his wife.[l] And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

41:44 [k]Ps 105:22

41:45 [l]ver 50; Ge 46:20,27
41:46 [m]Ge 37:2 [n]1Sa 16:21; Da 1:19

46 Joseph was thirty years old[m] when he entered the service[n] of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. 47 During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. 48 Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. 49 Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

50 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.[o] 51 Joseph named his firstborn[p] Manasseh[d] and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." 52 The second son he named Ephraim[e][q] and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful[r] in the land of my suffering."

41:50 [o]Ge 46:20; 48:5
41:51 [p]Ge 48:14, 18,20
41:52 [q]Ge 48:1, 5; 50:23 [r]Ge 17:6; 28:3; 49:22
41:54 [s]ver 30; Ps 105:11; Ac 7:11
41:55 [t]Dt 32:24 [u]ver 41

53 The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began,[s] just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. 55 When all Egypt began to feel the famine,[t] the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."[u]

56 When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine[v] was severe throughout Egypt. 57 And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph,[w] because the famine was severe in all the world.

41:56 [v]Ge 12:10
41:57 [w]Ge 42:5; 47:15

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

42:1 [x]Ac 7:12

42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt,[x] he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" 2 He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."[y]

42:2 [y]Ge 43:8

3 Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him.[z] 5 So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain,[a] for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.[b]

42:4 [z]ver 38
42:5 [a]Ge 41:57 [b]Ge 12:10; Ac 7:11
42:6 [c]Ge 41:41 [d]Ge 37:7-10
42:7 [e]ver 30

6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land,[c] the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.[d] 7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them.[e] "Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

42:8 [f]Ge 37:2

8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.[f] 9 Then he remembered his

42:9 [g]Ge 37:7

dreams[g] about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

[a] *43* Or *in the chariot of his second-in-command*; or *in his second chariot* [b] *43* Or *Bow down* [c] *45* That is, Heliopolis; also in verse 50 [d] *51* *Manasseh* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *forget.* [e] *52* *Ephraim* sounds like the Hebrew for *twice fruitful.*

41:40–43 There were three symbols of power in the ancient Near East: the signet ring (Est 3:10), the robe (Est 6:11) and the gold chain (Da 5:7,16,29).

41:41–57 In the years that followed, Joseph brought about a permanent change in the Egyptian system of land tenure because of the famine and the consequent poverty of the people: Almost all the land became the property of the pharaoh, and the previous owners became his tenants.

41:56 See the note on famine at Ruth 1:1. Also see "Famine in the Ancient Near East" on page 70.

42:9 The custom of sending secret agents to discover facts about an enemy is age-old. The Hebrew word for a spy is suggested by the secrecy with which such an individual did his work. In this verse Joseph accused his brothers of being spies.

10 "No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. 11 We are all the sons of one
man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."
12 "No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected."
13 But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of
Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."[h]
14 Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies! 15 And this is how you will be tested: As
surely as Pharaoh lives,[i] you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. 16 Send one
of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be test-
ed to see if you are telling the truth.[j] If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" 17 And
he put them all in custody[k] for three days.

42:13 [h]Ge 37:30, 33; 44:20
42:15 [i]1Sa 17:55
42:16 [j]ver 11
42:17 [k]Ge 40:4



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

Famine in the Ancient Near East

GENESIS 42 Subsistence farming and chronic malnutrition were common in the ancient world, and many people perceived themselves at any given time as being only a step ahead of starvation. Natural causes (drought, locusts and blight) brought about frequent famines, as did human actions, from siege warfare to destruction of fields by invading armies to the exacerbating of food shortages by hoarding.[1] Joel 1 recounts the desolation brought about by a locust plague,[2] while Isaiah 7 records the devastation of Judah's agricultural economy by invading Assyrians.

Usually famines in this part of the world were temporary and local, but some long-term and widespread occurrences have been recorded. A protracted and extensive drought and consequent intermittent famines centered in Egypt occurred from the twenty-second to the twentieth centuries B.C., as Egyptian texts from this time period attest. For example, The Admonitions of Ipuwer describes famine-related social chaos in Egypt, indicating that during this time people languished from thirst and desert-like conditions prevailed.[3] This period of frequent famines corresponds to the **patriarchal age**; the Bible records famines during the lifetimes of Abraham (Ge 12:10), Isaac (26:1) and Joseph[4] (chs. 41–42).

Centuries later, according to Acts 11:28, Agabus predicted a worldwide famine, which did indeed occur between A.D. 44 and 48, during Claudius's reign. This is attested by extra-biblical sources. For example, Tacitus, in *The Annals*, 12.43, mentioned "scanty crops" during that period.[5]

[1]See "Siege Warfare" on page 465. [2]See "Locusts in the Ancient Near East" on page 1438. [3]See "Calamity and Distress in Ipuwer" on page 1309. [4]See also "Food and Agriculture" on page 390. [5]See "Claudius, Emperor of Rome" on page 1788.



The region of Edom
Photograph courtesy of © Dr. Gary Pratico

18 On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God:[l] 19 If you are honest
men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your
starving households. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me,[m] so that your words may be
verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

21 They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother.[n] We saw how dis-
tressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress[o] has
come upon us."

22 Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?[p] But you wouldn't listen! Now we must
give an accounting[q] for his blood."[r] 23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he
was using an interpreter.

24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He
had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.[s]

25 Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain,[t] to put each man's silver back in his sack,[u] and to give
them provisions for their journey.[v] After this was done for them, 26 they loaded their grain on their don-
keys and left.

27 At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his don-
key, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack.[w] 28 "My silver has been returned," he said to his broth-
ers. "Here it is in my sack."

Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done
to us?"[x]

29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to
them. They said, 30 "The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us[y] and treated us as though we
were spying on the land. 31 But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies.[z] 32 We were twelve
brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.'

33 "Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are hon-
est men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go.[a]
34 But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I
will give your brother back to you, and you can trade[a] in the land.[b]' "

35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver! When they and
their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.[c] 36 Their father Jacob said to them, "You have
deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Ben-
jamin.[d] Everything is against me!"

37 Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back
to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back."

38 But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead[e] and he is the only one
left. If harm comes to him[f] on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave[b][g]
in sorrow.[h]"

The Second Journey to Egypt

43 Now the famine was still severe in the land.[i] 2 So when they had eaten all the grain they had
brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food."

3 But Judah said to him, "The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your
brother is with you.'[j] 4 If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you.
5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face
again unless your brother is with you.'[k]' "

6 Israel asked, "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?"

7 They replied, "The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. 'Is your father still liv-
ing?'[l] he asked us. 'Do you have another brother?'[m] We simply answered his questions. How were we to
know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here'?"

8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we
and you and our children may live and not die.[n] 9 I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me per-
sonally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the
blame before you all my life.[o] 10 As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice."

42:18 [l] Ge 20:11; Lev 25:43
42:20 [m] ver 15, 34; Ge 43:5; 44:23
42:21 [n] Ge 37:26-28 [o] Hos 5:15
42:22 [p] Ge 37:21-22 [q] Ge 9:5 [r] 1Ki 2:32; 2Ch 24:22; Ps 9:12
42:24 [s] ver 13; Ge 43:14,23; 45:14-15
42:25 [t] Ge 43:2 [u] Ge 44:1,8 [v] Ro 12:17,20-21
42:27 [w] Ge 43:21-22
42:28 [x] Ge 43:23
42:30 [y] ver 7
42:31 [z] ver 11
42:33 [a] ver 19,20
42:34 [b] Ge 34:10
42:35 [c] Ge 43:12, 15,18
42:36 [d] Ge 43:14
42:38 [e] Ge 37:33 [f] ver 4 [g] Ge 37:35 [h] Ge 44:29,34
43:1 [i] Ge 12:10; 41:56-57
43:3 [j] Ge 42:15; 44:23
43:5 [k] Ge 42:15; 2Sa 3:13
43:7 [l] ver 27 [m] Ge 42:13
43:8 [n] Ge 42:2; Ps 33:18-19
43:9 [o] Ge 42:37; 44:32; Phm 1:18-19

[a] *34* Or *move about freely* [b] *38* Hebrew *Sheol*

11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of
the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift[p]—a little balm[q] and a little honey, some
spices[r] and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. 12 Take double the amount of silver with you, for
you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks.[s] Perhaps it was a mistake.
13 Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. 14 And may God Almighty[a][t] grant you mercy be-
fore the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you.[u] As for me, if I am
bereaved, I am bereaved."[v]

15 So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried[w] down
to Egypt and presented themselves[x] to Joseph. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the
steward of his house,[y] "Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner;[z] they are
to eat with me at noon."

17 The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house. 18 Now the men were frightened[a]
when they were taken to his house. They thought, "We were brought here because of the silver that was
put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and
take our donkeys."

19 So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. 20 "Please, sir," they
said, "we came down here the first time to buy food.[b] 21 But at the place where we stopped for the night
we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So
we have brought it back with us.[c] 22 We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't
know who put our silver in our sacks."

23 "It's all right," he said. "Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in
your sacks;[d] I received your silver." Then he brought Simeon out to them.[e]

24 The steward took the men into Joseph's house,[f] gave them water to wash their feet[g] and provided fod-
der for their donkeys. 25 They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard
that they were to eat there.

26 When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts[h] they had brought into the house, and
they bowed down before him to the ground.[i] 27 He asked them how they were, and then he said, "How is
your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?"[j]

28 They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well." And they bowed low to pay him
honor.[k]

29 As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your
youngest brother, the one you told me about?"[l] And he said, "God be gracious to you,[m] my son." 30 Deeply
moved[n] at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his
private room and wept[o] there.

31 After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself,[p] said, "Serve the food."

32 They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by
themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews,[q] for that is detestable to Egyptians.[r] 33 The
men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they
looked at each other in astonishment. 34 When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benja-
min's portion was five times as much as anyone else's.[s] So they feasted and drank freely with him.

43:11 [p]Ge 32:20; Pr 18:16 [q]Ge 37:25; Jer 8:22 [r]1Ki 10:2
43:12 [s]Ge 42:25
43:14 [t]Ge 17:1; 28:3; 35:11 [u]Ge 42:24 [v]Est 4:16
43:15 [w]Ge 45:9, 13 [x]Ge 47:2,7
43:16 [y]Ge 44:1, 4,12 [z]ver 31; Lk 15:23
43:18 [a]Ge 42:35
43:20 [b]Ge 42:3
43:21 [c]ver 15; Ge 42:27,35
43:23 [d]Ge 42:28 [e]Ge 42:24
43:24 [f]ver 16 [g]Ge 18:4; 24:32
43:26 [h]Mt 2:11 [i]Ge 37:7,10
43:27 [j]ver 7
43:28 [k]Ge 37:7
43:29 [l]Ge 42:13 [m]Nu 6:25; Ps 67:1
43:30 [n]Jn 11:33, 38 [o]Ge 42:24; 45:2,14,15; 46:29
43:31 [p]Ge 45:1
43:32 [q]Gal 2:12 [r]Ge 46:34; Ex 8:26
43:34 [s]Ge 37:3; 45:22

A Silver Cup in a Sack

44 Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: "Fill the men's sacks with as
much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack.[t] 2 Then put my
cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain." And he
did as Joseph said.

3 As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. 4 They had not gone far
from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with
them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil?[u] 5 Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and
also uses for divination?[v] This is a wicked thing you have done.' "

44:1 [t]Ge 42:25
44:4 [u]Ps 35:12
44:5 [v]Ge 30:27; Dt 18:10-14

[a] *14* Hebrew *El-Shaddai*

43:29 For a discussion of salutations in the Bible, see the note at Ruth 2:4.
43:32 The taboo against eating with Hebrews was probably based upon ritual or religious reasons (see Ex 8:26), unlike the Egyptian refusal to associate with shepherds (see Ge 46:34), which was more likely tied to social custom.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE PATRIARCHAL NARRATIVES

GENESIS 44 No mention of the **patriarchs** (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel) has been found in extrabiblical documents from their era (c. 1950–1550 B.C.), nor should we expect to find such references. Living as nomads on the fringes of populated areas, the patriarchs wandered between the great empires of **Mesopotamia** and Egypt, and their activities would have been insignificant to scribes and annalists of that period. The Biblical narratives, which from their side make few references to political events of those times, nevertheless are historical, not myth or fiction. Biblical writers simply selected material appropriate to their theological objectives.

There are various reasons (above and beyond basic faith commitment) for us to accept the Biblical accounts as historically reliable, among them:

Because writing systems were in use by the third millennium B.C., it is unnecessary to assume that a long period of oral transmission existed between the events themselves and their documentation in written records. People of the late third millennium and early second millennium B.C. maintained written records and did not depend on memory for matters they considered to be important.[1] The events of the **patriarchal period** may have been recorded soon after their occurrence in texts that the Biblical writer later utilized as sources.

Names similar to Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abram/Abraham (Ge 11) and Jacob (ch. 25) appear in documents of the first half of the second millennium B.C., showing that these names were common during that period.[2] The names of the kings mentioned in Genesis 14 are difficult to account for, but evidence does collaborate the story itself.[3]



The homilies of Origen on Genesis and Exodus (Austria: twelfth century A.D.)

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Apparently some locations mentioned in the patriarchal narrative were sparsely inhabited during the time of the patriarchs and thus are difficult to account for archaeologically.[4] Other locations, however, had larger populations and are known from archaeology and/or texts contemporary to the lives of the patriarchs.[5] There is strong evidence, for example, related to the location of the cities of the plain.[6]

The patriarchs' travel is not to be regarded as improbable. Texts from **Ebla** (c. 2300 B.C.; see "Ebla" on p. 19) and Cappadocia (c. 2000 B.C.) indicate that travel, commerce and trade regularly occurred throughout the ancient Near East.

Hurrian family law, in force in Haran (see chs. 12; 24) and **Nuzi**, shed light on some of the activities of Abraham's family that might otherwise perplex us.[7] Another parallel has been found in a letter from Larsa (an ancient **Sumerian** city on the Euphrates River), indicating that a childless man could indeed adopt his slave as his heir (see 15:2).

The patriarchal stories faithfully reflect customs that were not practiced and institutions that did not exist during later periods, some of which were even prohibited under the religious norms of later Israel. For example, marriage to a half sister (cf. Lev 18:9) or to two sisters simultaneously (cf. Lev 18:18) was permissible during patriarchal times but forbidden in later Israelite society. This fact argues against the idea claimed by some critics that these stories were invented during the period of the Israelite **monarchy**.

Thus, various contemporary Near Eastern sources lend support to the historicity of the Genesis narrative. God, as we know and believe, revealed himself to real persons within the contexts of time and space.

[1]See "Cuneiform and Clay Tablets in the Ancient Near East" on page 1108. [2]See "Evidence for Serug, Nahor and Terah" on page 22. [3]See "The Coalition of Mesopotamian Kings" on page 24. [4]See "Beersheba" on page 518. [5]See "Haran" on page 47. [6]See "The Cities of the Plain" on page 23. [7]See "Nuzi" on page 52.

6 When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. 7 But they said to him, "Why does
my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! 8 We even brought back to
you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks.[w] So why would we steal
silver or gold from your master's house? 9 If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die;[x] and the
rest of us will become my lord's slaves."

10 "Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the
rest of you will be free from blame."

11 Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. 12 Then the steward proceeded
to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's
sack.[y] 13 At this, they tore their clothes.[z] Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

14 Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to
the ground before him.[a] 15 Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man
like me can find things out by divination?[b]"

16 "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence?
God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves[c]—we ourselves and the one who was
found to have the cup.[d]"

17 But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup
will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace."

18 Then Judah went up to him and said: "Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do
not be angry[e] with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. 19 My lord asked his servants,
'Do you have a father or a brother?'[f] 20 And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son
born to him in his old age.[g] His brother is dead,[h] and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his
father loves him.'[i]

21 "Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.'[j] 22 And we said
to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.'[k] 23 But you told your ser-
vants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.'[l] 24 When we
went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.

25 "Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.'[m] 26 But we said, 'We cannot go down.
Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest
brother is with us.'

27 "Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons.[n] 28 One of them went
away from me, and I said, "He has surely been torn to pieces."[o] And I have not seen him since. 29 If you take
this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave[a] in misery.'[p]

30 "So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose
life is closely bound up with the boy's life,[q] 31 sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring
the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. 32 Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my
father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'[r]

33 "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave[s] in place of the boy,[t] and let the
boy return with his brothers. 34 How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let
me see the misery that would come upon my father."[u]

Joseph Makes Himself Known

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself[v] before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have
everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to
his brothers. 2 And he wept[w] so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard
about it.[x]

3 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?"[y] But his brothers were not able to
answer him,[z] because they were terrified at his presence.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your
brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt![a] 5 And now, do not be distressed[b] and do not be angry with
yourselves for selling me here,[c] because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.[d] 6 For two
years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and
reaping. 7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant[e] on earth and to save your lives
by a great deliverance.[bf]

[a] *29* Hebrew *Sheol*; also in verse 31 [b] *7* Or *save you as a great band of survivors*

44:8 [w]Ge 42:25; 43:21
44:9 [x]Ge 31:32

44:12 [y]ver 2
44:13 [z]Ge 37:29; Nu 14:6; 2Sa 1:11

44:14 [a]Ge 37:7, 10
44:15 [b]ver 5; Ge 30:27

44:16 [c]ver 9; Ge 43:18 [d]ver 2

44:18 [e]Ge 18:30; Ex 32:22
44:19 [f]Ge 43:7

44:20 [g]Ge 37:3 [h]Ge 37:33 [i]Ge 42:13

44:21 [j]Ge 42:15

44:22 [k]Ge 37:35

44:23 [l]Ge 43:5

44:25 [m]Ge 43:2

44:27 [n]Ge 46:19

44:28 [o]Ge 37:33

44:29 [p]Ge 42:38

44:30 [q]1Sa 18:1

44:32 [r]Ge 43:9

44:33 [s]Ge 43:18 [t]Jn 15:13

44:34 [u]Est 8:6

45:1 [v]Ge 43:31

45:2 [w]Ge 29:11 [x]ver 16; Ge 46:29

45:3 [y]Ac 7:13 [z]ver 15

45:4 [a]Ge 37:28
45:5 [b]Ge 42:21 [c]Ge 42:22 [d]ver 7-8; Ge 50:20; Ps 105:17

45:7 [e]2Ki 19:4, 30, 31; Isa 10:20, 21; Mic 4:7; Zep 2:7 [f]Ex 15:2; Est 4:14; Isa 25:9

45:8 [g]Judg 17:10 [h]Ge 41:41
45:9 [i]Ge 43:10
45:10 [j]Ge 46:28, 34; 47:1
45:11 [k]Ge 47:12
45:13 [l]Ac 7:14
45:15 [m]Lk 15:20 [n]ver 3
45:16 [o]Ac 7:13
45:18 [p]Ge 27:28; 46:34; 47:6,11, 27; Nu 18:12,29 [q]Ps 37:19
45:19 [r]Ge 46:5
45:21 [s]Ge 42:25
45:22 [t]Ge 37:3; 43:34
45:24 [u]Ge 42:21-22
45:26 [v]Ge 44:28
45:27 [w]ver 19

8 "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father[g] to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.[h] 9 Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.[i] 10 You shall live in the region of Goshen[j] and be near me — you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. 11 I will provide for you there,[k] because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

12 "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. 13 Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.[l]"

14 Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. 15 And he kissed[m] all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.[n]

16 When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come,[o] Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. 17 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, 18 and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt[p] and you can enjoy the fat of the land.'[q]

19 "You are also directed to tell them, 'Do this: Take some carts[r] from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. 20 Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.' "

21 So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey.[s] 22 To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels[a] of silver and five sets of clothes.[t] 23 And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. 24 Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way!"[u]

25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. 26 They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them.[v] 27 But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts[w] Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob Goes to Egypt

46:1 [x]Ge 21:14; 28:10 [y]Ge 26:24; 28:13; 31:42
46:2 [z]Ge 15:1; Job 33:14-15 [a]Ge 22:1; 31:11
46:3 [b]Ge 28:13 [c]Ge 12:2; Dt 26:5 [d]Ex 1:7
46:4 [e]Ge 28:15; 48:21; Ex 3:8 [f]Ge 50:1,24
46:5 [g]Ge 45:19
46:6 [h]Dt 26:5; Jos 24:4; Ps 105:23; Isa 52:4; Ac 7:15
46:7 [i]Ge 45:10
46:8 [j]Ex 1:1; Nu 26:4
46:9 [k]1Ch 5:3
46:10 [l]Ge 29:33; Nu 26:14 [m]Ex 6:15
46:11 [n]Ge 29:34; Nu 3:17

46 So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba,[x] he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.[y]

2 And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night[z] and said, "Jacob! Jacob!"

"Here I am,"[a] he replied.

3 "I am God, the God of your father,"[b] he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation[c] there.[d] 4 I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again.[e] And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes.[f]"

5 Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts[g] that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. 6 They also took with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan, and Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt.[h] 7 He took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters — all his offspring.[i]

8 These are the names of the sons of Israel[j] (Jacob and his descendants) who went to Egypt:

Reuben the firstborn of Jacob.

9 The sons of Reuben:[k]
Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi.

10 The sons of Simeon:[l]
Jemuel,[m] Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

11 The sons of Levi:[n]
Gershon, Kohath and Merari.

[a] *22* That is, about 7 1/2 pounds (about 3.5 kilograms)

45:19 Ancient wagons or carts were crude, with wheels made of wood. They were covered or uncovered, usually drawn by oxen but sometimes by horses. Carts are first mentioned in 45:19—46:5, when Pharaoh sent them to help move Jacob and his family.

12 The sons of Judah:[o]
Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan).
The sons of Perez:[p]
Hezron and Hamul.
13 The sons of Issachar:[q]
Tola, Puah,[ar] Jashub[b] and Shimron.
14 The sons of Zebulun:[s]
Sered, Elon and Jahleel.
15 These were the sons Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram,[c] besides his daughter Dinah. These sons and daughters of his were thirty-three in all.

16 The sons of Gad:[t]
Zephon,[du] Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli.
17 The sons of Asher:[v]
Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah.
Their sister was Serah.
The sons of Beriah:
Heber and Malkiel.
18 These were the children born to Jacob by Zilpah,[w] whom Laban had given to his daughter Leah[x]—sixteen in all.

19 The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel:
Joseph and Benjamin.[y] 20 In Egypt, Manasseh[z] and Ephraim[a] were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.[e]
21 The sons of Benjamin:[b]
Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard.
22 These were the sons of Rachel who were born to Jacob—fourteen in all.

23 The son of Dan:
Hushim.
24 The sons of Naphtali:
Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem.
25 These were the sons born to Jacob by Bilhah,[c] whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel[d]—seven in all.

26 All those who went to Egypt with Jacob—those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives—numbered sixty-six persons.[e] 27 With the two sons[f] who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy[g] in all.[f]

28 Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen.[g] When they arrived in the region of Goshen, 29 Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father[h] and wept for a long time.[h]
30 Israel said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."
31 Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me.[i] 32 The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.' 33 When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, 'What is your occupation?'[j] 34 you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen,[k] for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.[l]"

46:12 [o]Ge 29:35 [p]1Ch 2:5; Mt 1:3
46:13 [q]Ge 30:18 [r]1Ch 7:1
46:14 [s]Ge 30:20
46:16 [t]Ge 30:11 [u]Nu 26:15
46:17 [v]Ge 30:13; 1Ch 7:30-31
46:18 [w]Ge 30:10 [x]Ge 29:24
46:19 [y]Ge 44:27
46:20 [z]Ge 41:51 [a]Ge 41:52
46:21 [b]Nu 26:38-41; 1Ch 7:6-12; 8:1
46:25 [c]Ge 30:8 [d]Ge 29:29
46:26 [e]ver 5-7; Ex 1:5; Dt 10:22
46:27 [f]Ac 7:14
46:28 [g]Ge 45:10
46:29 [h]Ge 45:14-15; Lk 15:20
46:31 [i]Ge 47:1
46:33 [j]Ge 47:3
46:34 [k]Ge 45:10 [l]Ge 43:32; Ex 8:26

[a] *13* Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac (see also 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text *Puvah* [b] *13* Samaritan Pentateuch and some Septuagint manuscripts (see also Num. 26:24 and 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text *Iob* [c] *15* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia [d] *16* Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Num. 26:15); Masoretic Text *Ziphion* [e] *20* That is, Heliopolis [f] *27* Hebrew; Septuagint *the nine children* [g] *27* Hebrew (see also Exodus 1:5 and footnote); Septuagint (see also Acts 7:14) *seventy-five* [h] *29* Hebrew *around him*

46:32 The shepherd's equipment consisted of a bag made of goat's skin with legs tied, in which food and other articles were placed; a sling for protection against wild animals; a rod (stick) about 30 inches (77 cm) in length with a knob on one end; a staff, usually with a crook on one end; a flute made of reeds for entertainment and for calming the sheep; and a cloak used for bedding at night.

47 Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen."[m] 2He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh.

3Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?"[n]

"Your servants are shepherds," they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our fathers were." 4They also said to him, "We have come to live here awhile,[o] because the famine is severe in Canaan[p] and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen."[q]

5Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you, 6and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land.[r] Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability,[s] put them in charge of my own livestock."

7Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed[a] Pharaoh,[t] 8Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?"

9And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty.[u] My years have been few and difficult,[v] and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers."[w] 10Then Jacob blessed[b] Pharaoh[x] and went out from his presence.

11So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses,[y] as Pharaoh directed. 12Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children.[z]

Joseph and the Famine

13There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine.[a] 14Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace.[b] 15When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes?[c] Our money is used up."

16"Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone." 17So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses,[d] their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

18When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. 19Why should we perish before your eyes — we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

20So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, 21and Joseph reduced the people to servitude,[c] from one end of Egypt to the other. 22However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment[e] Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

23Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. 24But when the crop comes in, give a fifth[f] of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children."

25"You have saved our lives," they said. "May we find favor in the eyes of our lord;[g] we will be in bondage to Pharaoh."

26So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt — still in force today — that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.[h]

27Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.[i]

47:1 [m]Ge 46:31
47:3 [n]Ge 46:33
47:4 [o]Ge 15:13; Dt 26:5 [p]Ge 43:1 [q]Ge 46:34
47:6 [r]Ge 45:18 [s]Ex 18:21,25
47:7 [t]ver 10; 2Sa 14:22
47:9 [u]Ge 25:7 [v]Heb 11:9,13 [w]Ge 35:28
47:10 [x]ver 7
47:11 [y]Ex 1:11; 12:37
47:12 [z]Ge 45:11
47:13 [a]Ge 41:30; Ac 7:11
47:14 [b]Ge 41:56
47:15 [c]ver 19; Ex 16:3
47:17 [d]Ex 14:9
47:22 [e]Dt 14:28-29; Ezr 7:24
47:24 [f]Ge 41:34
47:25 [g]Ge 32:5
47:26 [h]ver 22
47:27 [i]Ge 17:6; 46:3; Ex 1:7

[a] *7* Or *greeted* [b] *10* Or *said farewell to* [c] *21* Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Vulgate); Masoretic Text *and he moved the people into the cities*

47:5–6 The district of Goshen is not large, covering an area of some 900 square miles (2,368 sq km), but because of irrigation it is considered some of the best land in Egypt, excellent for grazing and for certain types of agriculture.

28 Jacob lived in Egypt[j] seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven.
29 When the time drew near for Israel to die,[k] he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found
favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh[l] and promise that you will show me kindness and faith-
fulness.[m] Do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury
me where they are buried."[n]

"I will do as you say," he said.

31 "Swear to me,"[o] he said. Then Joseph swore to him,[p] and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top
of his staff.[a][q]

47:28 [j]Ps 105:23
47:29 [k]Dt 31:14 [l]Ge 24:2 [m]Ge 24:49
47:30 [n]Ge 49:29-32; 50:5,13; Ac 7:15-16
47:31 [o]Ge 21:23 [p]Ge 24:3 [q]Heb 11:21 *fn* 1Ki 1:47

Manasseh and Ephraim

48 Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephra-
im[r] along with him. 2 When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel rallied his
strength and sat up on the bed.

3 Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty[b] appeared to me at Luz[s] in the land of Canaan, and there he
blessed me[t] 4 and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers.[u] I will
make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descen-
dants after you.'

5 "Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt[v] before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine;
Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine,[w] just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. 6 Any children born to you
after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their
brothers. 7 As I was returning from Paddan,[c] to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we
were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath"
(that is, Bethlehem).[x]

8 When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?"

9 "They are the sons God has given me here,"[y] Joseph said to his father.

Then Israel said, "Bring them to me so I may bless[z] them."

10 Now Israel's eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see.[a] So Joseph brought his
sons close to him, and his father kissed them[b] and embraced them.

11 Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see
your children too."[c]

12 Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. 13 And
Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left to-
ward Israel's right hand,[d] and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel reached out his right hand and put
it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manas-
seh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.[e]

15 Then he blessed[f] Joseph and said,

> "May the God before whom my fathers
> Abraham and Isaac walked,
> the God who has been my shepherd[g]
> all my life to this day,
> 16 the Angel who has delivered me from all harm
> —may he bless these boys.[h]
> May they be called by my name
> and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,[i]
> and may they increase greatly
> upon the earth."

17 When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head[j] he was displeased; so he took
hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 Joseph said to him, "No,
my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

48:1 [r]Ge 41:52
48:3 [s]Ge 28:19 [t]Ge 28:13; 35:9-12
48:4 [u]Ge 17:6
48:5 [v]Ge 41:50-52; 46:20 [w]1Ch 5:1; Jos 14:4
48:7 [x]Ge 35:19
48:9 [y]Ge 33:5 [z]Ge 27:4
48:10 [a]Ge 27:1 [b]Ge 27:27
48:11 [c]Ge 50:23; Ps 128:6
48:13 [d]Ps 110:1
48:14 [e]Ge 41:51
48:15 [f]Ge 17:1
[g]Ge 49:24
48:16 [h]Heb 11:21
[i]Ge 28:13
48:17 [j]ver 14

[a] *31* Or *Israel bowed down at the head of his bed* [b] *3* Hebrew *El-Shaddai* [c] *7* That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

48:5 Jacob "adopted" Ephraim and Manasseh, in a sense replacing Reuben and Simeon (his oldest sons). A literal translation of the final Hebrew clause in this verse might read: "Like Reuben and Simeon they will be to me." Joseph's sons "became" Jacob's firstborn sons.

19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will
48:19 [k]Ge 17:20 [l]Ge 25:23 become great.[k] Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he,[l] and his descendants will become a group of nations." 20 He blessed them that day and said,

"In your[a] name will Israel pronounce this blessing:
48:20 [m]Nu 2:18 [n]Nu 2:20; Ru 4:11 'May God make you like Ephraim[m] and Manasseh.[n]' "

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

48:21 [o]Ge 26:3; 46:4 [p]Ge 28:13; 50:24 48:22 [q]Ge 37:8 [r]Jos 24:32; Jn 4:5 21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you[b][o] and take you[b] back to the land of your[b] fathers.[p] 22 And to you, as one who is over your brothers,[q] I give the ridge of land[cr] I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

Jacob Blesses His Sons

49 Then Jacob called for his sons and said: "Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you
49:1 [s]Nu 24:14; Jer 23:20 in days to come.[s]

2 "Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob;
49:2 [t]Ps 34:11 listen to your father Israel.[t]

3 "Reuben, you are my firstborn,[u]
49:3 [u]Ge 29:32 [v]Dt 21:17; Ps 78:51 my might, the first sign of my strength,[v]
excelling in honor, excelling in power.
4 Turbulent as the waters,[w] you will no longer excel,
49:4 [w]Isa 57:20 [x]Ge 35:22; Dt 27:20 for you went up onto your father's bed,
onto my couch and defiled it.[x]

5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers—
49:5 [y]Ge 34:25; Pr 4:17 their swords[d] are weapons of violence.[y]
6 Let me not enter their council,
49:6 [z]Pr 1:15; Eph 5:11 [a]Ge 34:26 let me not join their assembly,[z]
for they have killed men in their anger[a]
and hamstrung oxen as they pleased.
7 Cursed be their anger, so fierce,
and their fury, so cruel!
I will scatter them in Jacob
49:7 [b]Jos 19:1,9; 21:1-42 and disperse them in Israel.[b]

8 "Judah,[e] your brothers will praise you;
your hand will be on the neck of your enemies;
49:8 [c]Dt 33:7; 1Ch 5:2 your father's sons will bow down to you.[c]
49:9 [d]Nu 24:9; Eze 19:5; Mic 5:8 [e]Rev 5:5 9 You are a lion's[d] cub, O Judah;[e]
you return from the prey, my son.
Like a lion he crouches and lies down,
like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?
49:10 [f]Nu 24:17, 19; Ps 60:7 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah,[f]
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs[f]
[g]Ps 2:9; Isa 42:1,4 and the obedience of the nations is his.[g]
11 He will tether his donkey to a vine,
his colt to the choicest branch;
he will wash his garments in wine,
his robes in the blood of grapes.
12 His eyes will be darker than wine,
his teeth whiter than milk.[g]

[a] *20* The Hebrew is singular. [b] *21* The Hebrew is plural. [c] *22* Or *And to you I give one portion more than to your brothers—the portion* [d] *5* The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. [e] *8* *Judah* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *praise.* [f] *10* Or *until Shiloh comes*; or *until he comes to whom tribute belongs* [g] *12* Or *will be dull from wine, / his teeth white from milk*

13 "Zebulun[h] will live by the seashore
and become a haven for ships;
his border will extend toward Sidon.

14 "Issachar[i] is a rawboned[a] donkey
lying down between two saddlebags.[b]
15 When he sees how good is his resting place
and how pleasant is his land,
he will bend his shoulder to the burden
and submit to forced labor.

16 "Dan[c j] will provide justice for his people
as one of the tribes of Israel.
17 Dan[k] will be a serpent by the roadside,
a viper along the path,
that bites the horse's heels
so that its rider tumbles backward.

18 "I look for your deliverance, O LORD.[l]

19 "Gad[d m] will be attacked by a band of raiders,
but he will attack them at their heels.

20 "Asher's[n] food will be rich;
he will provide delicacies fit for a king.

21 "Naphtali[o] is a doe set free
that bears beautiful fawns.[e]

22 "Joseph[p] is a fruitful vine,
a fruitful vine near a spring,
whose branches climb over a wall.[f]
23 With bitterness archers attacked him;
they shot at him with hostility.[q]
24 But his bow remained steady,
his strong arms[r] stayed[g] limber,
because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob,[s]
because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,[t]
25 because of your father's God,[u] who helps you,
because of the Almighty,[h] who blesses you
with blessings of the heavens above,
blessings of the deep that lies below,[v]
blessings of the breast and womb.
26 Your father's blessings are greater
than the blessings of the ancient mountains,
than[i] the bounty of the age-old hills.
Let all these rest on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the prince among[j] his brothers.[w]

27 "Benjamin[x] is a ravenous wolf;
in the morning he devours the prey,
in the evening he divides the plunder."

49:13 [h]Ge 30:20; Dt 33:18-19; Jos 19:10-11
49:14 [i]Ge 30:18
49:16 [j]Ge 30:6; Dt 33:22; Jdg 18:26-27
49:17 [k]Jdg 18:27
49:18 [l]Ps 119:166,174
49:19 [m]Ge 30:11; Dt 33:20; 1Ch 5:18
49:20 [n]Ge 30:13; Dt 33:24
49:21 [o]Ge 30:8; Dt 33:23
49:22 [p]Ge 30:24; Dt 33:13-17
49:23 [q]Ge 37:24
49:24 [r]Ps 18:34 [s]Ps 132:2,5; Isa 1:24; 41:10 [t]Isa 28:16
49:25 [u]Ge 28:13
[v]Ge 27:28
49:26 [w]Dt 33:15-16
49:27 [x]Ge 35:18; Jdg 20:12-13

[a] *14* Or *strong* [b] *14* Or *campfires* [c] *16* *Dan* here means *he provides justice.* [d] *19* *Gad* can mean *attack* and *band of raiders.* [e] *21* Or *free; / he utters beautiful words* [f] *22* Or *Joseph is a wild colt, / a wild colt near a spring, / a wild donkey on a terraced hill* [g] *23,24* Or *archers will attack . . . will shoot . . . will remain . . . will stay* [h] *25* Hebrew *Shaddai* [i] *26* Or *of my progenitors, / as great as* [j] *26* Or *the one separated from*

49:13 The territory of Zebulun, though landlocked by the tribes of Asher and Manasseh, was within 10 miles (16 km) of the Mediterranean.
49:19 Gad was located east of the Jordan River (see Jos 13:24–27). The Mesha (see 2Ki 3:4) Stele (a Moabite inscription dating from the late ninth century B.C.) describes the vulnerability of the descendants of Gad to raids by the Moabites to the south.

THE SONS OF JACOB

Mother	Son	*Meaning of Name	Reference of Birth (Genesis)	Order of Blessing	Symbol of Blessing	Reference of Blessing (Genesis)
Leah	Reuben	Behold, a son	29:32	1	Reckless	49:3–4
	Simeon	Hearing	29:33	2	Violence	49:5–7
	Levi	Attachment	29:34	3	Violence	49:5–7
	Judah	Praise	29:35	4	Lion	49:8–12
Bilhah	Dan	Judgment	30:6	7	Serpent	49:16–18
	Naphtali	Wrestle	30:8	10	Doe	49:21
Zilpah	Gad	Good fortune	30:11	8	Raider	49:19
	Asher	Happy	30:13	9	Rich food	49:20
Leah	Issachar	Reward	30:18	6	Donkey	49:14–15
	Zebulun	Abode	30:20	5	Ships	49:13
Rachel	Joseph	May he add	30:24	11	Fruitful	49:22–26
	Benjamin	Son of the right hand	35:18	12	Wolf	49:27

*See "Naming of Children" on page 28.

Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament, p. 18

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him.

The Death of Jacob

29 Then he gave them these instructions:[y] "I am about to be gathered to my people.[z] Bury me with my fathers[a] in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 the cave in the field of Machpelah,[b] near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field.[c] 31 There Abraham[d] and his wife Sarah[e] were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah[f] were buried, and there I buried Leah. 32 The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.[a]"

33 When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.[g]

50 Joseph threw himself upon his father and wept over him and kissed him.[h] 2 Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him,[i] 3 taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.[j]

4 When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favor in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, 5 'My father made me swear an oath[k] and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself[l] in the land of Canaan."[m] Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.' "

6 Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear to do."

49:29 [y] Ge 50:16; [z] Ge 25:8; [a] Ge 15:15; 47:30; 50:13; **49:30** [b] Ge 23:9; [c] Ge 23:20; **49:31** [d] Ge 25:9; [e] Ge 23:19; [f] Ge 35:29; **49:33** [g] ver 29; Ge 25:8; Ac 7:15; **50:1** [h] Ge 46:4; **50:2** [i] ver 26; 2Ch 16:14; **50:3** [j] Ge 37:34; Nu 20:29; Dt 34:8; **50:5** [k] Ge 47:31; **50:5** [l] 2Ch 16:14; Isa 22:16; [m] Ge 47:31

[a] *32* Or *the sons of Heth*

50:2–3 Although it was common practice in Egypt, embalming of Israelites is found only in this chapter. The philosophy behind the Egyptian practice of embalming was a belief that the body was to be preserved as a repository for the soul after death. See "The Khu-Sebek Inscription and the Burial of Jacob" on page 82.

7 So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh's officials accompanied him—
the dignitaries of his
court and all the dignitaries of Egypt— 8 besides all the members of Joseph's household and his brothers and those belonging to his father's household. Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen. 9 Chariots and horsemen[a] also went up with him. It was a very large company.

10 When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly;[n] and there Joseph observed a seven-day period[o] of mourning for his father. 11 When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning." That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim.[b]

50:10 [n]2Sa 1:17; Ac 8:2 [o]1Sa 31:13; Job 2:13

[a] 9 Or *charioteers* [b] 11 *Abel Mizraim* means *mourning of the Egyptians.*

ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS

The Khu-Sebek Inscription and the Burial of Jacob

GENESIS 50 The Khu-Sebek inscription, discovered at Abydos in Egypt, dates to the reign of Senwosret III (mid-nineteenth century B.C.) during the **Middle Kingdom** period of Egyptian history. It contains a first-person account of the career of Khu-Sebek, who rose to power while in the pharaoh's service (apparently as a member of his bodyguard). Khu-Sebek boasts of his zealous service to the pharaoh, particularly highlighting his heroic bravery during a campaign in **Canaan** against the city of Shechem.[1]

The inscription justifies Khu-Sebek's cenotaph (memorial monument) at the Osiris shrine in Abydos,[2] while also shedding light on two aspects of the Biblical account of Joseph's career. First, someone whose outstanding service caught the pharaoh's eye could be elevated to a high rank within the Egyptian government or military. Second, the most conclusive verification that an individual had earned the pharaoh's favor was a distinguished burial or a memorial erected in his honor. Fittingly, Genesis 50 describes the elaborate funeral of Joseph's father, Jacob/Israel, and mentions the embalming of Joseph.

[1] See "Shechem" on page 340. [2] For a brief description of the Osiris cult, see "The Mystery Religions" on page 1939.



Egyptian sarcophagus
Preserving Bible Times; © Dr. James C. Martin

12 So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them: 13 They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought as a burial place
50:13 [p] Ge 23:20; Ac 7:16 from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field.[p] 14 After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge
50:15 [q] Ge 37:28; 42:21-22 against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"[q] 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

50:18 [r] Ge 37:7 [s] Ge 43:18 **50:19** [t] Ro 12:19; Heb 10:30 **50:20** [u] Ge 37:20 [v] Mic 4:11-12 [w] Ro 8:28 [x] Ge 45:5 **50:21** [y] Ge 45:11; 47:12

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him.[r] "We are your slaves,"[s] they said.
19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?[t] 20 You intended to harm me,[u] but God intended[v] it for good[w] to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.[x] 21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.[y]" And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

The Death of Joseph

50:22 [z] Ge 25:7; Jos 24:29 **50:23** [a] Job 42:16 [b] Nu 32:39, 40

22 Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years[z] 23 and saw the third generation[a] of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir[b] son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees.[a]

50:24 [c] Ge 48:21 [d] Ex 3:16-17 [e] Ge 15:14 [f] Ge 12:7; 26:3; 28:13; 35:12 **50:25** [g] Ge 47:29-30; Ex 13:19; Jos 24:32; Heb 11:22 **50:26** [h] ver 2

24 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die.[c] But God will surely come to your aid[d] and take you up out of this land to the land[e] he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."[f] 25 And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."[g]

26 So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him,[h] he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

[a] *23* That is, were counted as his

50:24–26 Joseph died at age one hundred ten. Egyptians considered this an ideal length of life, even though mummies have demonstrated that the average life expectancy in Egypt was between 40 and 50 years. To the Egyptians, Joseph's ripe old age would have been a witness of divine blessing.

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