



"The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran." Stephen; Acts 7:2

The first 11 chapters of Genesis are global in nature. Though we read of individuals like Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah, their actions and their narratives had global consequences which affected all of mankind.

When we come to Genesis 12, there is a change. Though the person of Abraham will ultimately affect all of mankind, it is not immediately apparent as he is viewed within his circumstances. Because of this, the remaining chapters of Genesis are more PERSONAL in nature.

Our perspective shifts from the ancient world, to one small family. At the same time, it is important to widen our perspective to understand the world in which they lived to have a greater appreciation of how God has moved in history to use this one family as a fulcrum on which to move the world.

DATING THE PATRIARCHS

It is possible to determine the approximate date of Abraham's birth by examining certain chronological statements presented in the Scriptures.

1. From Solomon to the Exodus.

Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 6:1).

We are told here that from the exodus to the beginning of the construction of Solomon's Temple was a period of 480 years.

Exodus from Egypt ~ 480 years Building of
Solomon's Temple

With the help of archaeology and corresponding astronomical records, scholars have placed the building of Solomon's Temple at about 966 B.C. This would give us a date of 1446 B.C. for the Exodus. However, there are some textual problems of which we should be aware.

- The Septuagint translation of this passage lists the length of time as 440 years between the exodus and the building of the Temple (LXX - 3 Kings 5:17; in our English Bible this is 1 Kings 6:1). This would place the Exodus at 1406 B.C.

2. The Length of the Sojourn in Egypt.

The prophecy given to Abraham in Genesis 15:13 states that the Israelites would be enslaved and oppressed in Egypt for 400 years. This is repeated in Acts 7:6.

Exodus 12:40 specifically says that *the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years*. Galatians 3:17 repeats this period as Paul

speaks of the time between the ratification of God's covenant and the giving of the Law.

- The additional 30 years could be the time that the Israelites were in Egypt before the beginning of any oppression.
- It could be that we are meant to understand the first number as being rounded off. For example, I am not considered incorrect if I say that it has been 500 years since Columbus discovered America, even though the number is slightly higher.

Masoretic Text

Entrance into Egypt → 430 years Exodus from Egypt

Once again, there is a divergent reading in the Greek Septuagint. The Greek translation reads, *"And the sojourning of the children of Israel while they sojourned in the land of Egypt AND THE LAND OF CANAAN was four hundred and thirty years"* Exodus 12:40

Septuagint Text

Entrance into Canaan → 430 years Exodus from Egypt

The Septuagint reading makes for a much shorter period in Egypt while compressing both the period of the Patriarchs in Canaan as well as the sojourn in Egypt into a period of 40 years.

Josephus follows the Septuagint reading in his chronology of Jewish history.

They left Egypt in the month Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt. (Antiquities 2:15:2).

Both the prophecy of Abraham (Genesis 15:13) as well as the words of Stephen (Acts 7:6) support the Masorite reading. In addition to these, there is also the statement of Paul in Galatians 3:17.

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. (Galatians 3:16-17).

At first glance, Paul seems to be saying that the period between the giving of the promise to Abraham and the exodus from Egypt was 430 years.

- However, we need not read this into his testimony. He is speaking of the ratification of the covenant. When was the covenant ratified?
- Was it when Abraham first entered the land in Genesis 12?
- Was it when the promises were given and the animals cut in two in Genesis 15?
- Was it when the seal of circumcision was given in Genesis 17?
- Was it when the Lord appeared to Isaac and confirmed him as the heir of the promise in Genesis 26?
- Was it when Jacob saw the vision of the ladder reaching up to heaven and was given the promise for him and his descendants in Genesis 28?
- Was it when Jacob passed on the promises of God to his descendants in Genesis 49?
- There is a sense in which each of these instances was a ratification of the covenant. And there is also a final instance recorded in Genesis when Joseph passed on the promises of God to the next generation (Genesis 50).

3. The Days of the Patriarch.

The following passages assist us in developing a chronology of the period from Egypt to the Patriarchs.

- Presuming a 1446 date for the exodus and adding 430 years, this would place the entrance into Egypt at 1876 B.C.
- Jacob was 130 years old when his family entered Egypt (Genesis 47:9). This would make the date of his birth 2006 B.C.
- Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born (Genesis 25:26). This would make the date of Isaac's birth 2066 B.C.
- Abraham was 100 years old at the birth of Isaac (Genesis 21:5). This would put Abraham's birth at 2166 B.C.

2166 B.C. - Birth of Abraham

2091 B.C. - Abraham leaves Haran to enter Canaan

2066 B.C. - Birth of Isaac.

2006 B.C. - Birth of Jacob and Esau

1876 B.C. - Israel enters Egypt

1446 B.C. - The Exodus from Egypt

We are not told how old Abraham was when he and his family left Ur of the Chaldees, but in Genesis 12:4 we find that he was 75 years old when he departed from Haran to enter Canaan. This would have taken place in 2091 B.C. - in the days of the Third Dynasty of Ur.

UR OF THE CHALDEES

Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abraham, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot.

And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. (Genesis 11:27-28).

Sir Leonard Woolley spent from 1922 to 1934 excavating the city of Ur. He found an ancient metropolis numbering 34,000 people in the inner district and as many as a quarter of a million in the outlying districts.

1. The Political Situation in the Days of Abraham.

The Gutti were ruling over Mesopotamia when Abram was born in 2166 B.C.

- This was the darkest era of history for Sumer.
- It was during his lifetime that the Sumerians and the Akkadians sought to throw off the yoke of their Gutian oppressors.
- It is even possible that Abram fought in the Sumerian army against the Gutti.

2. The Third Dynasty of Ur.

Once again independent, Ur experienced a renaissance in art and culture.

- It was in the midst of this great economic prosperity that the Lord came to Abram and commanded him to leave his home in Ur and to travel to a faraway land.
- Abram was not called out of a country that was on the verge of destruction, but from one that was at its very peak of prosperity.

3. Social Conditions in Ur.

Ur contained a number of schools where students were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. They learned to write in Sumerian cuneiform, pressing their wedge-shaped markers into the lumps of soft clay.

The religion of Ur involved the entire pantheon of Sumer. The city itself was home to the patron god Nanna, the moon god. Abram and his family originally participated in this pagan worship.

"From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and THEY SERVED OTHER GODS." (Joshua 24:2b).

Even the name "Abram" reflects his pagan origins. It means "exalted father," or "father of high places." It is possibly a reference to the regular worship atop the Ziggurat of Ur.

Did Abram and his family move from polytheism to the worship of the Lord? We do not know. At some time and in some way, the Lord revealed Himself to Abram.

4. A Northern Location for Ur?

Several problems arise in the identification of Southern Ur as the city of Abram's birthplace.

Southern Ur was not associated with the Chaldeans until the 10th century B.C. It is possible that the mention of the Chaldeans in our Genesis text is a scribal insertion to assist us in determining the location of Ur (it would be like speaking of the Ancient Mayans of Mexico).

The Septuagint reading of Genesis 11:31 does not say that Abram came from Ur.

- Instead of *"they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans..."*
- The Greek reads *"led them out of the land of the Chaldeans..."*

Furthermore, when Abraham was going to send for a wife for his son Isaac, he gave his servant the following instructions:

- *"But you shall go to MY COUNTRY and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac." (Genesis 24:4).*

The phrase translated "my country" is *Al-Aretz* and refers to "my land." This was not just the people of Abraham. This was also his land! Where did the servant go? He went to Haran.

- Finds at Ugarit indicate that there was a city in Northern Mesopotamia also known as Ur.
- This area of Northern Mesopotamia is where the original Chaldeans are said to have come from.
- An examination of the Nuzi Tablets indicate that the Patriarchs reflect more of northern Mesopotamian culture than that of the Sumerians.

Both the southern and northern locations would qualify as "the land beyond the River."

ABRAHAM

Abram, or as he is later called, Abraham, is seen in history as the father of both the Jews and the Arab nations. Judaism, Christianity and Islam hold him up as a spiritual leader.

1. The Family of Abram.

And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milah and Iscah. (Genesis 11:28-29).

The laws of incest in that day were not nearly so strict as they are today. It was considered commonplace for an uncle to marry his niece.

2. Haran.

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out

together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.

And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran." (Genesis 11:31-32).

Haran was at the crossroads of the main highways from Mesopotamia to the west. Indeed, the name Haran means "crossroads." The city sits at the crossroads of three different continents. It is a central hub with spokes leading out to Europe, Asia and Africa. From Haran, a traveler desiring to go down into Canaan can take two different roads.



a. The King's Highway.

- This road ran down through Damascus. From there, its course ran along the west bank of the Jordan River Valley, past the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and down into the Sinai Desert, which it reached Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba.

b. The Way of the Philistines.

- This route ran along the Mediterranean Sea, past the Phoenician cities of Sidon and Byblos, along the Plains of Sharon and the cities of the Philistines, and then into Egypt.

The central location of Haran made it a major trading city. It was also a center of worship of Nanna, the moon god which was also worshiped at Ur.

THE LAND OF CANAAN

And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. (Genesis 12:5).

If Haran is the hub of the wheel, then Canaan is one of the major spokes of that wheel.

- The land of Canaan acts as a narrow land-bridge between Mesopotamia and the continent of Africa.
- This is a relatively small area of land, no larger in area than Lake Erie or the state of Maryland.
- The name Palestine takes its name from the ancient name Peleset, meaning "land of the Philistines."



1. The Topography of Canaan.

Canaan is one of the most diverse lands in the world. Within its small area, one can find snow-capped mountains, fertile plains, steaming deserts and lush forests. It is home both to sparkling waterways full of fish as well as the most desolate body of water in the world.

a. The Coastal Plain.

The coastline of Canaan is devoid of any natural harbors from Tyre all the way

down to Egypt. The plain itself is generally low, fertile and open. It is broken only once where the Mount Carmel Promontory juts out into the Mediterranean.

b. The Central Mountain Range.

A long ridge of mountains run parallel to the Coastal Plain from the Mountains of Lebanon all the way down to the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The lowest point of this ridge is 1500 feet and many of its segments rise to twice that height.

This Central Spine is a natural impediment to east-west travel. At some places it consists of up to five parallel ridges, each separated by deep valleys.



This Mountain Range is broken only once by the long Valley of Jezreel, also known by the more popular name of Armageddon.

c. The Jordan River Valley.

This valley is a part of the Afro-Arabian Rift Valley, one of the longest and the deepest fissures in the world, following a geological fault line from the Amanus Mountains of southeastern Turkey through Syria, Lebanon and Israel, down the Gulf of Aqaba and then running the entire length of the Red Sea to Ethiopia and then continuing southward to become a part of the Great African Rift Valley.

The Jordan River finds its major source in the melting snows of Mount Hermon which towers 9,200 feet above sea level. Hundreds of small streams cascade down to flow into Lake Hula. In Abram's day, Lake Hula was a shallow marsh. Since the formation of the nation of Israel in 1948, the lake has been drained for farmland. This has created an ecological imbalance in the Sea of Galilee. The swamp used to act as a natural filter, straining out any impurities from the waters which flowed southward into the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee rests in the crater of an extinct volcano which, in ages past, spewed out its lava over the Golan Heights to the east. The Sea is 600 feet below sea level and is surrounded on all sides by steep hills.



From the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River runs south down the sunken rift. This narrow valley used to be a fertile forest full of wildlife, including lions and boar.

The name Jordan derives from a verb meaning "to descend." It flows downhill in its long, meandering course until it reached the Dead Sea.

The shore of the Dead Sea is the lowest point on the surface of the earth, lying 1300 feet below sea level. The salt level of this sea is six times that of the ocean and, as a result, no fish can live in its waters.

d. The Transjordan Plateau.

Rising up sharply from the Jordan Valley is a high, fertile tableland between 30 to 80 miles in width and stretching from Damascus to the Gulf of Aqaba. The northern regions of this tableland are well-watered and fertile.

To the east of this plateau, the land gives way to the impassible Desert of Arabia.

2. The Climate of Canaan.

In Egypt, the chief deities were the sun and the Nile River. The most important deity of the Canaanites was Baal, the storm god of wind and rain.

- It never needed to rain in Egypt or Mesopotamia, since their river systems were fed by mountains hundreds of miles away. Canaan, on the other hand, had no great rivers and depended heavily upon the regular rainfall to feed the small mountain streams which irrigated the land. The chief deity of the Canaanites was Baal, the god of rain and thunder.
- The "Early Rains" begin in October and the rainy season continues through until the "Latter Rains" of April and May. The heaviest rainfall comes during the winter months. There is not a drop of rain from June to September.



- The topography of the country is broken enough to provide some striking local variations in temperature. In summer along the Coastal Plains, the winds tend to hold down temperatures from reaching oppressive levels. Further inland, where the wind has lost its affect, the temperatures can rise to stifling degrees.
- In the winter months along the Coastal Plain the climate is mild and frost is virtually unknown, due to the incoming wind of the Mediterranean Sea. As one travels up into the mountains, temperatures decrease markedly with height. The winter months in the mountain region produce a long-lying snow cover.

ABRAHAM IN CANAAN

As Abraham first entered the land of Canaan, he traveled down the Central Mountain Ridge to the site of the ancient town of Shechem.

And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land." (Genesis 12:6).

The town of Shechem would later be built in the pass that runs between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It would be on this site that Jesus would later hold an afternoon discussion with a woman by the well.

When the Scriptures says that *the Canaanite was then in the land*, it is a reminder that the land of Canaan was not some uninhabited wilderness. It was a land of cities and towns, of merchants and farmers and shepherds.

Abraham came into this land as a nomadic shepherd-merchant. He did not take up residence in any of the Canaanite cities, but remained a pilgrim and a nomad. This led to some seasonal migrations, especially in times of famine.

ABRAHAM IN EGYPT

Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. (Genesis 12:10).

Upon finding a famine in the land of Canaan, Abraham moved his family south to Egypt. The pyramids and the Great Sphinx were already hundreds of years old as Abraham entered Egypt.

This was the First Intermediate Period of Egypt's history. It was a time of disunity as Egypt was broken up into several small feudal kingdoms, each attempting to gain power over its neighbor. During this period, it was not uncommon for foreigners to be permitted entrance into the country.

While Abraham is in Egypt, he falls into sin. Fearful of his life, he plots with his wife, Sarai, to pretend that she is his sister.



The reason for this deception is understood when we examine an Egyptian papyrus which records a pharaoh murdering the husband of a beautiful woman so that he could marry her.

SODOM & GOMORRAH

Upon returning to Canaan, Abraham has a falling out with his nephew, Lot. They go their separate ways and Lot moves down to the southern part of the Jordan Valley.

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere - this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah - like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. (Genesis 13:10).

The implication of this and other passages of the Bible is that the area of the Dead Sea was not the desolate wasteland that it is today. In that day, it was a fertile land.

Genesis 14 records the military campaign of an alliance of kings from the east.

- Amraphel, king of Shinar. Shinar was the general term for Mesopotamia. This may have been an Akkadian king.
- Arioch, king of Ellasar: Ellasar was another name of Larsa, a Sumerian city to the east of Ur.
- Chedorlaomer, king of Elam: The Elamites were located to the east of Sumer and were one of the most powerful countries in the world at this time.
- Tidal, king of Goiim: "Goyim" is the Hebrew word for "nations." Tidal, on the other hand, is a Hittite name and might reflect an early Hittite alliance.

A coalition of these kings from the east invaded Canaan, conquering the cities of the Jordan Valley, and taking Abraham's nephew, Lot, in the process.

Abraham gathered his own alliance of Canaanite chieftains and set out in pursuit, catching the invaders in a pincer movement in what is the first night attack recorded in history. Lot was rescued along with the spoils of the kings of the Jordan Valley. However, this served as only a temporary respite for the cities of the plain.

Sodom was the major city of the Jordan Valley in the days of Abraham. It was a beautiful, well-watered area. It had been for this reason that Lot had chosen to live there.

- *Some distance from the shore and clearly visible under the surface of the water, are stretched the outlines of forests which the extraordinarily high salt content of the Dead Sea has kept in preservation.* (Werner Keller, The Bible as History, pg 56).
- The Bible records that Lord destroyed both these cities and everything else in the Valley.

Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, 25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground. (Genesis 19:24-25).

The Dead Sea today in the lowest spot on the face of the earth. The north part of the Sea is 1300 feet deep. Today the southern part has dried up completely.

Scholars generally place the location of Sodom and Gomorrah in what is today this shallow, southern part of the Dead Sea.

a. The evidence from Scripture.

The Bible speaks of the Jordan Valley, but seems to carefully avoid describing the Dead Sea as a geographical body in Abraham's day.

- Instead, it speaks of "the valley of Siddim which is the Salt Sea" as being the location of the battle with the eastern alliance (Genesis 14:3).

b. The evidence from Archaeology.

A Phoenician inscription had this to say about the destruction of the "Vale of Sidimus."

The Vale of Sidimus sank and became a lake, always evaporating and containing no fish, a symbol of vengeance and of death for the transgressor. (Attributed to Sanchuniathon, prior to the Trojan War).

This indicates that there was a time when the Dead Sea was not there and when the Jordan Valley was unbroken.

c. The evidence from Geology.

Genesis 14:10 says that the valley was full of "tar pits." Petroleum and asphalt deposits still exist around the Dead Sea today. This is a burnt-out region where nothing grows.

We have already mentioned that this area holds a massive fault zone. Throughout its history, it has been the scene of many severe earthquakes. It is possible that an earthquake combined with the explosive petroleum and asphalt deposits to cause a great explosion of "brimstone and fire."

OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES FROM ABRAHAM'S DAY

1. Lot's Door.

In Genesis 19:6, 9-10 we find several mentions of the door to Lot's house in Sodom. It is described in terms of having been shut to keep out the men of Sodom.

Houses within cities did not always have doors in antiquity. A door would interfere with any cool breeze, making the heat of the land intolerable. Archaeologists have noted that there are different styles of doors for differing eras:

Middle Bronze (2200-1600 B.C.)	Strong, sturdy wooden doors	No strong, centralized government
Early Iron II (800-600 B.C.)	Doorways consisted of archways and curtains	Kings of Judah and Israel provided centralized government

The smaller the police force, the greater the need for a stout wooden door.

2. Abraham's Purchase of a Tomb.

In Genesis 23:16 we read that Abraham paid 400 shekels of silver. While today a shekel is a form of currency, in that day it was a weight designation. We think in terms of pounds or kilograms, they weighed in terms of shekels. It was not until around 700 B.C. that money began to be coined.

ISAAC

The name Isaac means "laughter." It points to the laughter of Sarah when she first was given the promise of a son. Hers was the laughter of unbelief. But it was God who had the last laugh.

1. Quest for a Bride.

When it came time for Isaac to marry, Abraham sent his servant back to the city of Haran to find a wife from his own kindred. Abraham's brother, Nahor, had continued to live here after Abraham's departure. Rebekah, the sister of Laban was chosen to be Isaac's bride.

Why was Abraham so insistent that his son's wife be from his kinsmen and not from the Canaanites?

I want to suggest that it was because of the peculiar promise of a seed that God had given to Abraham. For Isaac to intermarry with the Canaanites would be for him to be quickly amalgamated into their culture and people, instead of becoming the beginning of a separate and distinct nation of people.

2. In the Land of the Philistines.

When famine came over the land of Canaan, Isaac moved down into the south coastal plain. This area was home to a settlement of non-Semitic people known as the Philistines.

This brings up a problem. The Philistines are known to us through archaeological digs.

- They did not enter Canaan until much later.
- During the days of Rameses 3, they were a part of the "Sea Peoples" who attempted to invade Egypt.
- They were fought to a standstill and, as a result, were permitted to settle along the coast of what is today known as the Gaza Strip.
- But there were no Philistines as we know them in Isaac's day.

The original inhabitants of this area started as coastal trading colonies of the Minoan Civilization. Indeed, there are several times in the Scriptures that the Philistines are referred to as "Cherethites" or "Cretans" (1 Samuel 30:14; Ezekiel 25:16; Zephaniah 2:5). It was the later Sea Peoples who came in and amalgamated this group into their own and who adopted the same name.

- Isaac's life among the Philistines was difficult and trying at times. The Bible records several conflicts that arose over water-rights.
- Throughout these times, Isaac remained faithful to the Lord and saw an increasing prosperity.

JACOB

The story of Jacob is, on the one hand, a story of a conniving scoundrel, and on the other hand, the story of God's chosen one.

1. Jacob & Esau.

- Isaac's two sons by Rebekah were twins. The Bible tells us that these two brothers began their struggle in the womb. It was a struggle that was to continue through their descendants for two thousand years.

a. Esau.

Even though they were twins, it was Esau who was born first. He grew up to be a hunter, an outdoorsman. From his descendants would come the Edomites.

b. Jacob.

When the two brothers were born, the second-born son was holding onto the heel of the first-born. This was considered to be a significant omen and this child was named Jacob, meaning "heel-grabber." This was an idiom for a con-artist. We have a similar idiom today when we speak of pulling someone's leg.

If Esau was a hunter and an outdoorsman, then Jacob was a "mamma's boy."

Jacob's role as a heel-grabber is seen in his bargaining away the birthright from his older brother and then stealing his father's blessing at the urging of his mother. The result of this deception was that Jacob was forced to leave his home, fleeing from the wrath of Esau, never to see his beloved mother again.

On the way to Haran, Jacob stops for the night at a place called Luz. It is here that he has a vision of a ladder reaching to heaven.

And he came to a certain place, and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven: and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Genesis 28:11-12).

This picture of the angels of God ascending and descending is found in only one other place in the Bible. It is John 1:51 when Jesus speaks to Nathanael.

And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51).

In the words of Jesus, there is no mention of the ladder. The angels are ascending and descending on the Son of Man. He IS the ladder. Thus, if the ladder represents God's presence upon earth, then Jesus is seen as the One who is "God with us."

God goes on to pass on his covenant with Jacob. This is the SAME covenant which he made with Abraham and Isaac.

Abraham	Isaac	Jacob
"I am God Almighty" (Gen 17:1).	"I am the God of your father Abraham" (Gen 26:24).	"I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac" (Gen

		28:13).
"For all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever" (Gene 13:15).	"For to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands" (Gen 26:3).	"The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants" (Gen 28:13).
"And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth" (Gen 13:16).	"And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven" (Gen 26:4).	"Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth" (Gen 28:14).
"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3).	"And by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 26:4).	"And in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 28:14).
"Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you" (Gen 15:1).	"Do not fear, for I am with you" (Gen 26:24).	"And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go" Gen 28:15).

However, there are also some differences. Isaac had been told by God to stay in the land (Genesis 26:2). Jacob, on the other hand, is told that the Lord will be

with him and shall accompany him on his extended journey out of the land and that ultimately he shall be brought back to the land of promise. At the end of the night, Jacob names the place *Beth-el*, "House of God."

2. Jacob in Haran.

Jacob found temporary refuge with his uncle Lagan in Haran. This was a time when Jacob the con-artist was conned himself as he sought to marry Rachel and was given her sister Leah instead. He finally ended up marrying both of Lagan's daughters.

Jacob worked for Laban for 21 years. During the last seven years, Jacob managed to maneuver Laban out of a great deal of his wealth. Following this, Jacob left Haran with his family and possessions and returned to Canaan. In the process, Rachel had stolen her father's household gods.

- These gods had more than just a religious significance. According to the Nuzi Tablets, they were also used to establish the family inheritance. A son-in-law who possessed his father-in-law's images could go to court and claim his father-in-law's estate.
- Laban followed Jacob and even searched his caravan, but was unable to find them. They parted on semi-cordial terms, making a covenant in which each party agreed to stay in his own land.

3. Jacob in Canaan.

Returning to Canaan, Jacob was intercepted by Esau at the Jabbok River. The name "Jabbok" means "to wrestle." It was here that Jacob wrestled with an angel.

- The two brothers made their peace together and Jacob settled in the area of central Canaan. The descendants of Esau would eventually become known as the "Edomites" and would settle in the arid lands to the south of the Dead Sea.
- By this time, Jacob had sired a rather large family by his two wives and their handmaidens.

MOTHER	SON	Meaning of Name
Leah	Reuben	"Behold, a Son"
	Simeon	"Hearing"
	Levi	"Attachment"
	Judah	"Praise"
Bilah	Dan	"Judgment"
	Naphtali	"Wrestle"
Zilpah	Gad	"Good Fortune"
	Ashur	"Happy"
Leah	Issachar	"Reward"
	Zebulun	"Abode"
Rachel	Joseph	"He adds"
	Benjamin	"Son of the right hand"

For the most part, these sons were jealous, self-seeking, hateful and murderous. This is a picture of the destructive effects of polygamy. The exception to the lack was Joseph.

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Genesis sets forth a contrast between Joseph and Judah, the fourth son of Jacob who eventually received the leadership of the Israelites.

Judah	Joseph
Went to a foreigner of his own will.	Taken to Egypt against his will.
Sexual immorality: went in to his daughter-in-law (38:12-18).	Sexual morality: resisted seduction (39:6-12).
Left his seal & his cord.	Left his garment.
Accuser (38:24).	Falsely accused (39:13-20).
Judgment of God (38:6-10).	Blessing of God (39:20-23).
True accusation of woman (28:25).	False accusation of woman (39:13-20).

Moses is contrasting the moral character of Judah as the head of his tribe with the moral character of Joseph as the head of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Why is this important for the Israelites in the Wilderness to know? Because it explains why Joseph's tribes receive a double portion, both here in the Wilderness and when they enter the promised land.

1915 B.C. - Birth of Joseph.

1898 B.C. - Joseph sold into Egypt.

1885 B.C. - Joseph exalted.

1876 B.C. - Israel enters Egypt.

1446 B.C. - The Exodus.

Jacob demonstrated that Joseph was his favorite son and heir to the double-portion inheritance by awarding him a "coat with sleeves." This was the sign of one who was to be the leader of the clan.

1. Sold into Egypt.

The hatred of the brothers had its climax in a murderous plot which ended only when Joseph had been sold to some passing slavers. Joseph found himself being sold to an official of Egypt.

- *Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard. (Genesis 37:36).*

The word translated "officer" is (*seriys*) and is usually translated "eunuch." The problem with this is that eunuchs were not married men and Potiphar clearly had a wife.

However, seems to be an Akkadian loan-word which went through a change of meaning between the first and second millennia.

- In the 2nd millennia is described a court official.

- By the 1st millennia it had come to mean a eunuch.

2. Egypt in the Days of Joseph.

Joseph entered Egypt in the days of the Middle Kingdom. Pharaoh Amenemhat II was upon the throne of both Upper and Lower Egypt.

- Egypt during this period was ruled by a strong, centralized government. The pharaohs of this period had their power held somewhat in check by the individual governors.
- Mines in the Sinai and in Ethiopia brought precious metals and ivory to the courts of the pharaoh and a line of military fortresses were established around the borders of Egypt to protect from outside invaders.
- Just prior to Joseph entering Egypt, the capital was moved from Thebes to Ith-tawi, near the Delta.

3. Joseph's Imprisonment.

For a time, Joseph prospered in the house of Potiphar. This time of prosperity was brought to a close in the attempted seduction by Potiphar's wife. When Joseph rebuffed her, she falsely accused him of attempted rape.

- Joseph was taken and thrown into the royal prison where political prisoners were held. It was there that he befriended the pharaoh's butler.
- This friendship, along with a God-given gift of interpreting dreams, would result in Joseph's promotion to the Court of Pharaoh.

4. Joseph's Exaltation.

In a single day, Joseph found himself propelled up to the position of Viceroy over all Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. Joseph's economic plan called for him to store up grain and food supplies for a coming time of famine. When that time came, Joseph was able to heighten the Pharaoh's political hold over the

nobility and the landowners of Egypt by allowing the people to sell all of their lands to him in return for food.

So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh's.

And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other.

Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land. (Genesis 47:20-22).

From this time on, Egypt became a virtual feudal state with the Pharaoh owning the land and allowing the people to work it and keep 80% of the profit.

5. Israel's Entrance into Egypt.

After several dramatic encounters with his brothers, Joseph invited the entire clan to move into Egypt.

The immediate reason for Israel's entrance into Egypt was because of the famine; but there were some underlying reasons. God's plan and purpose for Israel was to maintain a pure people, set apart for the purpose of loving and serving Yahweh as their God, eventually spreading His name throughout all the earth.

When we examine the Patriarchs with this concept in mind, we are able to note a startling contrast among them.

a. Altars & Worship.

- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob each would move to a new place within the land and build an altar there, proclaiming the name of the Lord.

b. A Sense of Purpose.

- Each of these Patriarchs had a sense of purpose, a sense of destiny because of the promises that God had given. The altars were symbolic of that purpose in the land.

c. Unity.

- Because of that distinctive purpose, they also had a sense of unity that there would be no division between the worshipers of Yahweh. Thus, when strife arose between the servants of Abraham and the servants of Lot, a peaceful means was found to co-exist.

d. Racial & Religious Purity.

Their sense of unity led them to a realization of the need for separation from the Canaanites in whose midst they were dwelling.

- This unity was a part of the purpose of God that they would be a distinct and separate people from the nations around them.

Thus, when it came time for Isaac to take a wife, Abraham took great pains to make certain that it would not be a Canaanite woman.

And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of the household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh. 3 And I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that YOU SHALL NOT TAKE A WIFE FOR MY SON FROM THE DAUGHTERS OF THE CANAANITES, among whom I live." (Genesis 24:2-3).

In the same way, Jacob was sent to Haran with the express purpose of finding a wife from his own people.

So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from

there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Lagan your mother's brother." (Genesis 28:1-2).

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob each followed these principles. However, when you come to the sons of Israel, you find a very big generation gap.

They built no altars and are never said to proclaim the name of Yahweh. They show no sense of purpose. They seem only interested in filling their own fleshly desires. They have absolutely no concern for the unity among their family. Quite the contrary, they are motivated by jealousy and strife. This is best demonstrated when they sell their own brother into slavery.

They recognize no need for separation from the Canaanites. Instead, we see them intermarrying with the people of Canaan and going off to live with them. This manifests itself in a number of ways.

- (1) Lack of chastity in Dinah.
- (2) Simeon & Levi murder the population of an entire city.
- (3) Reuben sleeps with his father's concubine.
- (4) Judah has a child by his own daughter-in-law.

Only in Joseph do we find anyone within that generation who demonstrates a sense of unity and purpose and faith.

Therefore, God moves in history to bring the Israelites out of Canaan and into Egypt. Why Egypt? Aside from the obvious fact that Egypt was the breadbasket of the world and could support and feed the growing embryo of the nation that would one day be Israel, there was a very significant reason for Egypt to be the host-mother of Israel.

The Canaanites followed a policy of integration. They were constantly seeking to intermarry and form family alliances with those around them (Genesis 19:14, 26:10; 26:34; 27:46; 34:8-103). This would have resulted in the breakdown and the absorption of the Jewish nation before it had even begun.

The Egyptians, on the other hand, were extremely strict segregationists (Genesis 43:32; 46:34). They would have made all of the Jews ride in the back of the bus, or Perhaps made them ride in separate buses.

Thus the Israelites in Egypt would have no choice but to remain a pure and undefiled and separated nation as God prepared them in Egypt. Four hundred years later, God would lead them out of Egypt and into the land that He had prepared for them.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13).