

“And now, Moses, my son, I will speak unto you concerning this earth upon which you stand; and you shall write the things which I shall speak.” (D&C 22:24a)

Abraham – Friend of God, Old Testament Study

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Lesson I: Laying the groundwork -- Heritage, Geography, Peoples

Lesson II: Abraham – Pilgrim, Altar Builder

Lesson III: Abraham -- Man of Covenant

Lesson IV: Abraham – Father of Nations

Lesson V: Abraham -- Blessings of the Friend of God to all Nations

Heritage, Geography, Peoples

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (II Corinthians 4:3-4)



Modern names and boundaries are shown in gray.

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 144

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Romans 1:21-25)



The exact location of the Tower of Babel is disputed. It is traditionally located at or near the ruins of the city of Babylon. The Greek word for “Babel” (confusion) is “Babylon” although the latter city was built many centuries after the confounding of languages and by a later culture. The Sumerians called the earlier city on the site that would become Babylon, Ka-dingirra or Babili “gate of god.”¹

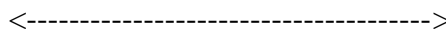
THE TOWER OF BABEL



[Genesis 11:1-9](#)

The plain between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers offered a perfect location for the city and tower “that reaches to the skies.”

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 5



¹ The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands, Pfeiffer & Vos, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, pg. 21.



The Assyrians were known as fierce and ruthless warriors who at various times dominated the peoples of the Fertile Crescent. Their name may have been derived from Asshur, son of Shem brother of Arphaxad. They worshipped Asshur as their chief god at the latter part of their history.² The beginning of the Assyrian nation is uncertain but there is archeological evidence of them as far back as 1200 BC. Genesis 10:6-7 states that Asshur went out of Shinar (the plain area of Sumer - Babel) and built Nineveh. Nineveh was one of three capitals the Assyrians had at various times (see Jonah & Nahum). Much later, the Assyrians conquered Israel, the Northern Kingdom known as Samaria, in 721 BC. Consistent with Assyrian policy, they deported the Hebrew people from the cities and replaced them with captured peoples from other areas they had conquered. This is when the northern tribes became “ten lost tribes.” The peoples the Assyrians brought in intermarried with those who had escaped deportation and became known as the Samaritans of Jesus’ time. Babylon and the Medes conquered Assyria destroying Nineveh in 612 BC. By 609 BC, the Assyrian empire had come to an end.

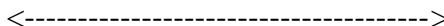
THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE



[2 Chronicles 32:1-33](#)

The mighty Assyrian Empire extended from the Persian Gulf, across the Fertile Crescent, and south to Egypt. Shalmaneser III extended the empire toward the Mediterranean Sea by conquering cities as far west as Qarqar. Tiglathpileser extended the empire south into Aram, Israel, Judah, and Philistia. It was Shalmaneser V who destroyed Samaria, Israel's capital.

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 144



² Smith's Bible Dictionary, William Smith, L.L.D., Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1986, pg. 61.

The Babylonian empire began in an area just north of Sumer between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers south of modern day Baghdad. Nimrod, son of Cush and grandson of Ham, is credited with beginning the kingdom of Babylon in Genesis 10:5-6. Babylon eventually conquered Sumer and incorporated its culture into its own. Eventually the names Chaldean and Babylonian became closely associated. Two of the greatest of Babylon's kings were Hammurabi, also known as Amraphel (Gen. 14:1), and Nebuchadnezzar. Hammurabi is best known for The Code of Hammurabi, which was a set of legal procedures designed to standardize the rights of government and individuals. Many Biblical scholars consider Nebuchadnezzar as Babylon's greatest ruler. Judah was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. He was responsible for three deportations during his campaigns against Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Daniel and Ezekiel were included in these deportations. The Medes and Persians conquered Babylon in 539 BC, which allowed the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem.

EXILE TO BABYLON



[2 Chronicles 36:17-23](#)

Despite Judah's few good kings and timely reforms, the people never truly changed. Their evil continued, and finally God used the Babylonian Empire, under Nebuchadnezzar, to conquer Judah, destroy Jerusalem, and take the people captive to Babylon.

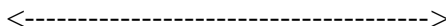
Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 145



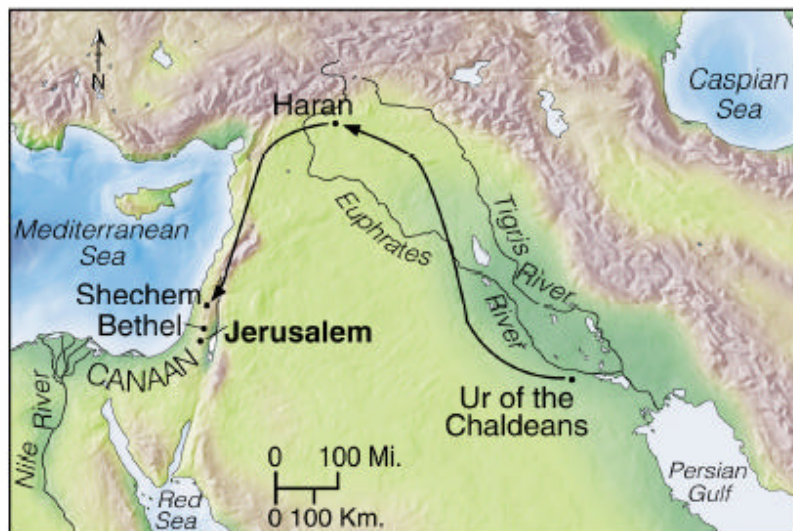
Ancient drawing of Hammurabi receiving the "Code of Hammurabi" from his god.

"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation; And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my

kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” (Daniel 4:34-37)



ABRAM'S JOURNEY TO CANAAN



[Genesis 11:31–12:9](#)

Abram, Sarai, and Lot traveled from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan by way of Haran. Though indirect, this route followed the rivers rather than attempting to cross the vast desert.

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 6

BIBLE NATIONS DESCENDED FROM NOAH'S SONS

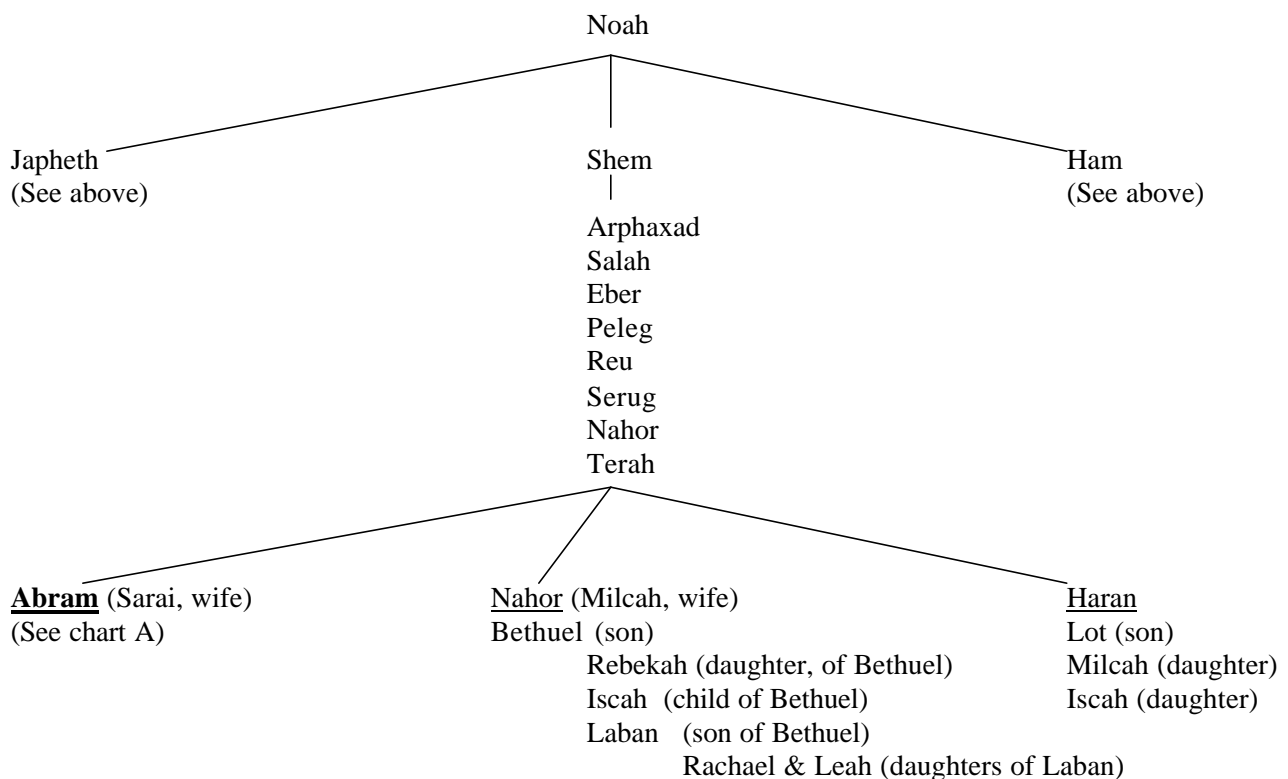
Genesis 10:1

Shem's descendants were called Semites. Abraham, David, and Jesus descended from Shem. Ham's descendants settled in Canaan, Egypt, and the rest of Africa. Japheth's descendants settled for the most part in Europe and Asia Minor.

Shem	Ham	Japheth
Hebrews	Canaanites	Greeks
Chaldeans	Egyptians	Thracians
Assyrians	Philistines	Scythians
Persians	Hittites	
Syrians	Amorites	

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 6

Abraham's Lineage



Ur of the Chaldees,
Sumer or Shinar (country of two rivers)

The Sumerian history dates back to approximately 2900 BC. It was the most civilized society of the eastern world in its day. The Greeks called it Mesopotamia “land between the rivers.” It had a high degree of industry and wealth. They built at least twelve large city-states. One of those cities was Ur. During Abraham’s day, it was a cultural center, which traded with Egypt, Ethiopia and India. They developed one of the earliest post-flood written languages (cuneiform). The art of writing was considered the most important of skills to learn. They created a calendar, introduced the wheel and the arch, and had a system of mathematics³.



They developed irrigation canals for their fields and clay drainage pipes connected to sewer systems for their buildings. Many had bathtubs in their homes. They managed their rich land very carefully and harvested bountiful crops for their own use and for exportation. Fishing was an important trade and they even trained Pelicans to catch fish for them. They were great craftsmen working in copper and clay. They studied medicine and for their day were well cared for by doctors. Perhaps their greatest achievement was in architecture. They built great buildings and walls. They perfected a sun-dried brick that was so hard that even those found today are extremely difficult to damage. During a dig at one site, an English architect who was visiting wanted to take home an inscription on a twelve-inch square by three-inch thick brick. Since he only wanted the inscription, he thought he could use an ax to break away the part he wanted. “After half an hour’s strenuous effort, the brick was still intact and the architect had to give up.”⁴

The early Sumerians had strong armies and were able to defend themselves from aggressor nations and tribes for many years. Unlike the later Assyrians who glorified war and were savage to their foes, they did not hold the soldier or military commander in the highest regard. Their art most often shows honor being given to the scholar, architect, and laborer. Their conquered foes were forced to pay tribute or become slaves but they were not shown excessive cruelty or used as sacrifices.

Their culture centered around their polytheistic religion. They built large, many tiered edifices called ziggurats as places of worship. They rose to great heights and had a temple at the top and a reception ramp for the gods to descend to earth. They stored grain in the lower levels and had workshops for craftsmen in weaving, brewing, carpentry, metalwork, stonecutting, and the making of jewelry. The study of astrology and astronomy was practiced above. The chief god of Ur was the moon god Nanna and his consort Ningal although they worshipped many others as well (Joshua 24:2).

³ The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands, Pfeiffer & Vos, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, pg. 6.

⁴ In the Land of Ur, Hans Baumann, Pantheon Books, NY, 1968, pg. 93.

They chose a “great man”⁵ from among them to be their king. Sometimes he was also the high priest in the temple. Every thing belonged to the local god and all the people were to work for him as his servants including this king and high priest. They believed that everything had the “spark of life”⁶ even inanimate objects. They would speak directly to them as having a spirit, bidding them to do their will.

Ur moved in and out of political importance as different nations controlled this area. Finally in about 316 B.C., the final blow came when the Euphrates River changed course and city was too far from a sustained water source to support its people. The land in this area today is desert with searing heat and an annual rainfall of about 6 inches. The ruins or “tells” dot the landscape enticing archeologists from all over the world to discover its history.



“And the whole earth was of the same language, and of the same speech. And it came to pass, that many journeyed from the east, and as they journeyed from the east they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and dwelt there in the plain of Shinar. And they said one to another, Come, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and they had slime for mortar. And they said, Come, go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top will be high, nigh unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down, beholding the city and the tower which the children of men were building; And the Lord said, Behold, the people are the same, and they all have the same language; and this tower they begin to build, and now, nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined, except I, the Lord, confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So I, the Lord, will scatter them abroad from thence, upon all the face of the land, and unto ever quarter of the earth. And they were confounded, and left off to build the city, and they hearkened not unto the Lord, therefore, is the name of it called Babel, because the Lord was displeased with their works, and did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face thereof.” (Genesis 11:1-6)

⁵ In the Land of Ur, Hans Baumann, Pantheon Books, NY, 1968, pg. 49.

⁶ In the Land of Ur, Hans Baumann, Pantheon Books, NY, 1968, pg. 52.

Chaldeans or Chaldees (Sumerians)

The Chaldean people possibly descended from Ham's son Cush*. People who "journeyed from the east" (Genesis 11:1) settled in the southern part of the Land of the Two Rivers (the Euphrates and the Tigris). In ancient times, this was a rich, well watered plain about 400 miles long and 100 miles wide. This culture was well known for their scholar class. They were priests, magicians and astronomers. They were sought after for their knowledge and wisdom. Even after the Sumerians or Chaldeans were conquered by other nations, their language and learning was still coveted and held in high regard. Their scholars were placed in positions of influence in the new ruling governments (Daniel 1:3-4; 2:1-12)

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them who believe, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are chosen; For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are mighty; That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (I Corinthians 1:19-31)

*The Tyndale Handbook chart, Bible Nations Descended from Noah's Sons, shows the Chaldeans descending from Shem. Most of the references used in this study show the Chaldeans descended from Ham. This points out that many authors and scholars have differing understanding of history; and that we have much to discover about the people of the scriptures.

Contemporaries of Abraham through whom or to whom God spoke:

Melchizedek (Genesis 14)

Abimelech, Philistine king (Genesis 20)

Job

PURPOSE

“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

The purpose for studying the word of God is to help us come into a closer relationship with God through Christ. This class will be an overview of the life of one of the most important persons in the Old Testament - Abraham. It will take a look at the people and cultures of his day, Abraham's calling by God, and his response. The Old Testament accounts are background for understanding the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. It points us clearly to the Redeemer and the way in which He interacts with us -- His creation. God's covenant relationship with Abraham influences Christian doctrine and world politics today, and gives hope and encouragement to the believer in these latter days.

How do we know the account of Abraham and his children is historically true? Read Section 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Here we find the experience of Moses as God allowed him to see creation and all the people of the earth. God prepared Moses to be able to give us the early history of mankind. We need to take advantage of the wonderful insights and additional history in the Inspired Version of the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants. We need to be a people who ask many questions – for God answers those who are asking. Peter, James, and John asked Jesus many questions and therefore were privileged to experience many things the other disciples did not (Mark 9:1). God delights in talking to His people. Seriously ask, read, and ponder God's word. Ask God to enlighten your mind through the Holy Spirit. The word of God was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and so we need the gift and insight of the Holy Spirit to fully understand the scriptures. Moses saw everything and everyone, which gave him a unique ability to write the early history of this earth. We have it on good authority that Moses knew what to write. God can reveal the truth of all things by the power of His Holy Spirit (Moroni 10:5). We need to be a people who ask, seek, and knock.

“And all scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17). In order for the study of the scriptures to be edifying, it must be applicable to the reader. Knowledge without application is fruitless. Understanding and application can only come through the Holy Spirit. Worship, prayer, fasting, and study are all components in our spiritual growth. They are not separate compartments of our Christian walk but essential components of our everyday experiences. We are instructed to pray always (2 Nephi 14:12) and to daily meditate on God's word (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:1-2). We are called to fast before the Lord as rejoicing unto Him (D&C 59:2e-3b). And over all is a compelling need for us to worship and adore our God. This need cannot be satisfied with the vain offerings of this world. Only as we become submissive and obedient can we hope to be called His children and inherit a place in His kingdom. Only by knowing our Redeemer can we find true joy and peace through the hope He gives. It is my hope that this class encourages the participant to prayerfully study God's word and be ready to follow wherever the Lord leads.