

## The Book of Genesis

### Chapter 12

***12:1 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. (NIV)***

#### Leaving His Country

Prior to being stoned to death, the deacon Stephen recounted the manner of Abram's calling in ACT 7:2-4, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran...So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land..."

***12:2-3 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."***

#### Promises to Abram

God promises Abram that he will become great nationally, as well as being the key to mankind's reconciliation with God. God promised to reward those who showed Abram favor, as well as punish those who treated Abram disrespectfully.

***12:4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.***

Since Abram was 75 at the time he left, which was immediately after his father died at the age of 205 (11:32), he would have been born when Terah was 130.

#### Lot

This was 1901 B.C. We are not told if Lot had his own inherited possessions, or if he was dependant upon Abram at this point. Since he went with Abram he shared in the great blessings from God.

***12:5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. (NIV)***

#### Travelling to Canaan

Abram travelled the caravan road, "Ridge Route," south from Damascus, which ran through Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba and on into Egypt.

***12:6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree [NIV: "great tree"; NRS: "oak"] of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.***

#### Shechem

Shechem was located in the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, in the northern part of the land. It was here that Jacob bought a field and erected an altar (33:18-20), where Joseph's bones were buried (JOS 24:32), and where God commanded the Israelites to set up stones in Mt. Ebal and to pronounce the blessings and cursings from Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, respectively (DEU 11:29; 27:12).

Terebinth Tree

The terebinth tree, or the area around it, plays an important role for almost 500 years:

- Jacob buried his family's idols under the oak tree at Shechem (35:4).
- Joshua set up a great stone under the oak which was by the sanctuary of the LORD at Shechem in about 1378 B.C. (JOS 24:25-27)

***12:7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.***

Altars

Throughout the land, the Canaanites had built cult centers, which consisted of stones representing their various gods; this location in Shechem housed many of these stones. Abram added his altar of worship to the many already located there.

***12:8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel 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.***  
(NIV)

Bethel

Bethel [known as Luz, until renamed by Jacob—28:19] was about 20 miles south of Shechem, 10 miles north of Jerusalem, and one of the highest points in the area.

***12:9 So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South*** [NIV: "Negev"].

Parallels

This is the third and final site mentioned as Abram enters the land, the same three locations visited by Jacob upon returning from Haran (GEN 34-35).

***12:10 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.***  
(NIV)

Abram entering Egypt is a type of what later happens to his descendants. A famine in the land drives them both into Egypt.

***12:11-13 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."*** (NIV)

Family Relationship

Sarai and Abram were both children of Terah, but had different mothers (20:12).

***12:14-16 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials*** [NKJ: "the princes of Pharaoh"] ***saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.*** (NIV)

Pharaoh of Egypt

Abram was recognized as a dignitary. Only a man of importance, or the family of a prince would receive this kind of reception, or be taken into the palace. The Pharaoh ruling Egypt at this time was Nebhepetre [also known as Mentuhotep], who was recognized as the greatest builder of the nation after the Flood, and of the 11<sup>th</sup> dynasty. He reigned from 1930 to 1879 B.C. This event probably occurred in 1901-1900 B.C.

**12:17 But the LORD inflicted serious diseases** [TAN: "mighty plagues"] **on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai.** (NIV)

God afflicted all of Egypt with plagues in the days of Abram's descendants.

**12:18-20 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? 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!" Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.** (NIV)

A later Pharaoh sent Abram's descendants out of Egypt. Abram was allowed to keep everything that he was given for Sarai, amounting to a significant fortune.