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The screenshot shows a web interface for NewsBank. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the NewsBank logo and navigation links: 'New Search', 'A-Z Source List', and 'Session Folder'. On the right side of the header, there is a 'Share Feedback' link. Below the header, the article title 'THE BIRTHPLACE OF ABRAHAM' is prominently displayed in a large, bold, black font. Above the title, the source information 'Jerusalem Post, The (Israel) April 8, 1991' is visible, along with navigation links: 'Back to Issue', 'Previous', '67 of 68', and 'Next'. Below the title, there is a row of icons for various actions: a magnifying glass, a printer, a mail icon, a download icon, a share icon, and a link icon. Below the icons, the article details are listed: 'April 8, 1991 | Jerusalem Post, The (Israel)', 'Author: Gary A. Rendsburg | Page: 04 | Section: Op-Ed', and '393 Words'.

## **THE BIRTHPLACE OF ABRAHAM**

Newspaper April 8, 1991 | Jerusalem Post, The (Israel)

Author: Gary A. Rendsburg | Page: 04 | Section: Op-Ed

393 Words

To the Editor of The Jerusalem Post:

Sir, - On February 15, you published an article and a picture of the ziggurat at Ur in southern Iraq, with the comment that U.S. satellites have spotted two MIG-21 planes stationed next to this historical site. My letter concerns not the accuracy of this report, which is certainly believable, rather the additional statement you made that this Ur is the birthplace of Abraham.

There is considerable debate among biblical scholars as to the location of Abraham's Ur, called Ur of the Chaldees in the Bible. Although the great excavator of Ur in southern Iraq, Sir Leonard Woolley, claimed that this site was the home of Abraham, there is absolutely no evidence to substantiate this identification.

Instead, the Ur of Abraham is most likely another site called Ur in antiquity, now known as Urfa in southern Turkey. Genesis states that when Terah and his family left Ur for Canaan, they came to Harran and stopped there. No route from Ur in southern Iraq to Canaan would take one via Harran. But the journey from Urfa to Canaan would very clearly go via Harran.

Secondly, the biblical tradition is clear that Abraham came from beyond the Euphrates. Ur in southern Iraq is on the Euphrates, and in fact is on the western side of the Euphrates, so that the river needs to be crossed to travel from this city to Canaan. By contrast, from the perspective of Canaan, Urfa is beyond the Euphrates.

Finally, Moslem tradition has always held that Urfa is the birthplace of Abraham (there are even street signs which welcome you to the birthplace of Abraham as you enter the town). This belief was commonly accepted among 19th century scholars, and it was only Woolley's misidentification of his excavated site with the Ur of Abraham that changed the equation.

Today, more and more biblicalists recognize the error committed by Woolley, and fewer and fewer of them identify the Ur in southern Iraq with the birthplace of Abraham. This does not lessen the importance of the site, which remains one of the great cities of antiquity. Nor should it lessen our horror at Saddam Hussein for placing his military hardware in the shadow of ancient Sumer.

GARY A. RENDSBURG, Associate Professor of Biblical and Semitic Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

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