

Ur of the Chaldees

Where Is Abraham's Birthplace?

GARY A. RENDSBURG

What can we say about the geography of the site referred to in the Bible as Ur of the Chaldees? I start with the typical map that most of the textbooks and Bible atlases include. This is one example of it (see Figure 1), showing what is supposedly Abraham's home in Ur of southern Mesopotamia, which is known more objectively as Ur of Sumer. That's the land of the Sumerians, although the map also says Babylonians.

This map, to put it simply, is wrong. And it's not just this map. If you go into Google and ask for it to search for a map of the route of Abraham, you can see so many similar maps starting in the south of Mesopotamia, where Ur is located, and journeying through much of the Near East. I want to make it clear that there is a city called Ur exactly where this map shows you, and we will go look at, for it's a well-excavated site. It is a very important Near Eastern archeological site, but it is not the one from which Abraham came.

Editor's note: What follows is not an academic paper, per se, but rather the slightly edited transcription of Professor Rendsburg's lecture. Selected slides from his PowerPoint presentation are included below, by way of illustration.

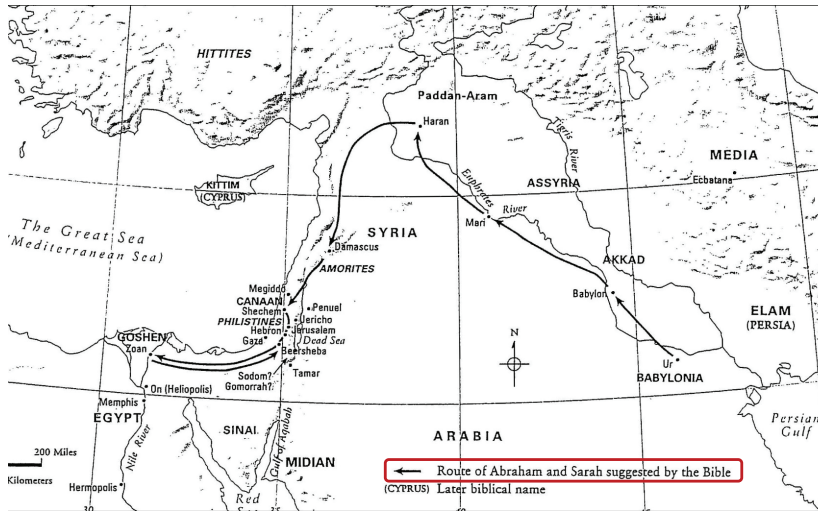


Figure 1. “Route of Abraham and Sarah suggested by the Bible,” per John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018).

So what are the problems if this is not the Ur of Abraham? The Bible tells us at the end of Genesis 11 that Abraham left Ur to travel to the land of Canaan. He stopped in Haran; when he got to Haran with Terah, his father, the journey stopped.

Now, if you were starting at Ur in the south of Mesopotamia (what is today southern Iraq) and you wanted to go to the land of Canaan, you had a couple of options (see Figure 2). The obvious route would be to go upstream on the Euphrates, and then when you got to Mari, you could head west across the desert, stopping at the great oasis site of Palmyra in modern-day Syria. Then you would reach the arable land around Damascus and arrive into the land of Canaan. Or you could continue up the Euphrates River to what we call the Great Bend. It would be a longer trek, and then from the Great Bend you could head west to Aleppo before heading south through Damascus to the land of Canaan.

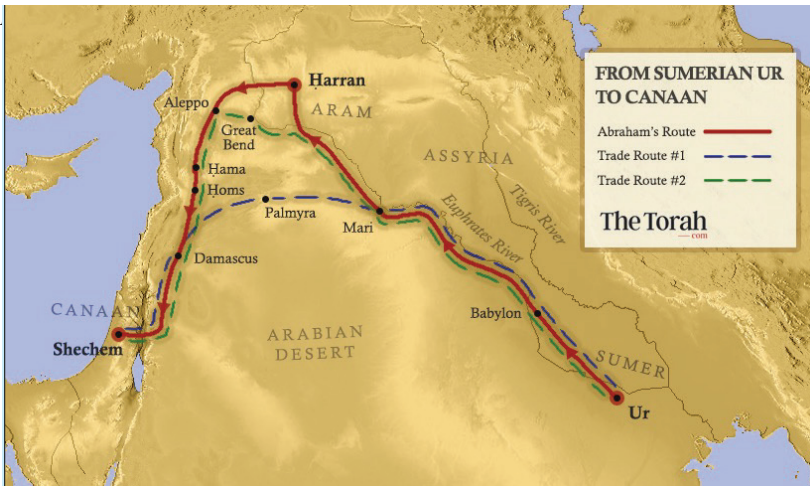


Figure 2. Map of the Near Eastern trade routes, available at <https://www.thetorah.com/article/ur-kasdim-where-is-abrahams-birthplace>, used with kind permission of TheTorah.com.

The one thing you would never do is somehow go up the Euphrates and, instead of heading west, head further north to the site of Ḥarran. To put this in twenty-first-century terms, if you entered into your GPS Ur to Shechem in the land of Canaan, it would not take you through Ḥarran. It would give you the usual GPS options, but none of them would lead that far north. So the geography simply makes no sense.

The biblical text reads, “And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, the son of his son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of Abram his son; and they went-out with him from Ur Kasdim [Ur of the Chaldees], to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to Ḥarran, and they settled there” (Genesis 11:31). The journey highlighted on the maps above (see Figures 1–2) makes no sense in light of Genesis 11:31. There is no way that you would go as far north as Ḥarran if you were journeying from Ur in the south of Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan.

Here are your GPS options, using Google Maps. The first one takes you to where Mari is located more or less and then across the Syrian desert with a stop in Palmyra, or the second option, noted above, which is to go further north along the Euphrates and then start heading west or southwest before you reach the land of Canaan. Located just north of the modern-day Syrian-Turkish border is the city of Ḥarran. Everybody agrees that this is the site of Ḥarran—it is still called that today. You simply would not go there. This map is an impossibility. This map and so many others that approach the subject this way are simply incorrect.

More biblical evidence is forthcoming when you look at the book of Joshua. When Joshua is about to die, in chapter 24, he gives a speech to the people of Israel: “Thus says Yhwh, the God of Israel: Beyond the River your fathers dwelled from of old. Teraḥ the father of Abraham and the father of Naḥor; and they worshipped other gods”—still in their polytheistic stage before Abraham became the worshipper of the one true God—“And I took your father, Abraham, from beyond the River” (Joshua 24:2–3). The phrase is repeated, which means that Abraham’s birthplace homeland must be beyond the river.

Looking again at the map (see Figures 1–2), we see that Ur in southern Mesopotamia is not beyond the Euphrates River, another problem for those who would place it there. It is on the Euphrates, though this map (see Figure 1) places it a little bit off the Euphrates. And in fact, to be pedantic, it’s on the same side of the Euphrates as the land of Canaan. Joshua would not be saying that Teraḥ and Abraham lived beyond the river, meaning the Euphrates, unless you were to place Ur in another location, as we are going to do by locating it north of Ḥarran in the area of Paddan Aram, a term we’ll come back to.

On our Google map just north of the Turkish-Syrian border is Ḥarran, and north of there is a city known today in Turkish as Şanlıurfa, known prior simply as Urfa (see Figure 3). It was the great center of Syriac Christianity during the time of the Byzantine Empire and beyond, when it was called Edessa. We know that this is the place called Ura in ancient times, or for short just Ur, with the syllable still embedded into the Turkish name Urfa, or more properly, Şanlıurfa. This site makes geographical sense. In other words, place Ur north of Ḥarran and now (a) it is beyond the River Euphrates and (b) you actually would go through Ḥarran if you left northern Ur and headed to the land of Canaan.

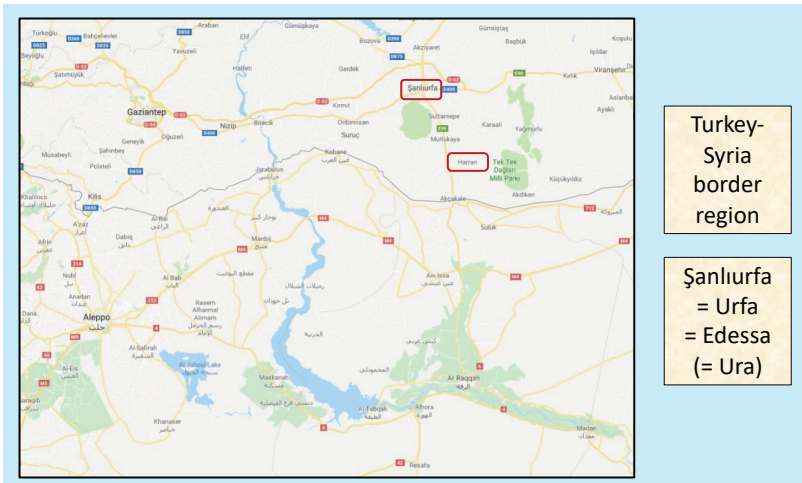


Figure 3. Google map with highlighted items and text boxes. Created by Gary A. Rendsburg.

Moreover, in Genesis 24:4, when Abraham commands his servant to go back to the land to obtain a bride for Isaac, Abraham says to the servant, “For unto my land and unto my birthplace you should go; and you shall take a wife for my son Isaac.” And where does he go? The servant goes to the area called Aram Naharaim (see Genesis 24:10), which means “Aram of the two rivers,” or to put that in our terms, Aram of Mesopotamia—*Mesopotamia* being the Greek word for “between the two rivers.” Aram of the two rivers is later on called Paddan Aram ten times in the book of Genesis. And Aram, everybody agrees, is not in southern Mesopotamia but is the area more or less of modern-day Syria, spilling over across the modern political boundary into Turkey.

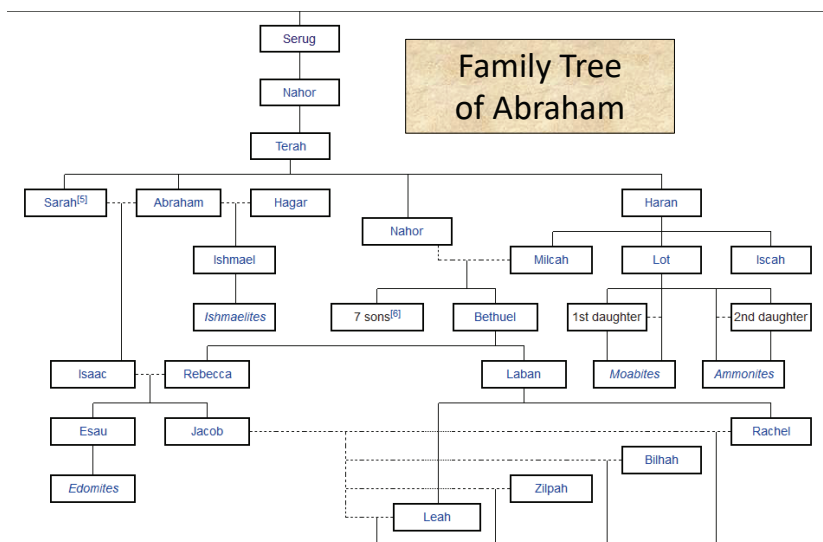


Figure 4. Family Tree of Abraham, captured from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham's_family_tree, even as a newer version appears to be posted there now.

Now, if we look at the family tree of Abraham (see Figure 4), we see Abraham and his father, Terah, as well as other names about which we can say something quite important to our subject. The great-grandfather of Abraham, or the grandfather of Terah, was a man named Serug. Serug, or Suruç in its Turkish pronunciation, is actually the name of a city just to the west of Harran and Şanlıurfa. It is still called that name in variant ways in Syriac and in Greek (see Figure 5). In fact, one of the most famous of all the Syriac Christian Church fathers is Jacob of Serug, who came from this town. So when we see Abraham's family tree with Serug in it, we should think about the fact that that's the city in the very region where we are now locating Abraham.

And then there's Nahor, the name of both Abraham's grandfather and brother (see Genesis 11:22–29). We have numerous attestations, in Akkadian, of a city called Naḥur in that region, even though no one has been able to determine its precise location. But we know where it has to be: in what we call the upper Balikh River Valley, which is the area around Harran and Urfa (see Figure 6). In the standard work on Mesopotamian geography, *Les toponymes paléo-babyloniens de la Haute-Mésopotamie*, we find about forty attestations of Naḥur in the Mari texts, which is one of the great archival collections of several

thousand cuneiform tablets.¹ Again, we do not know exactly where Naḥur is, but it must be somewhere in the region of the upper Balikh Valley.

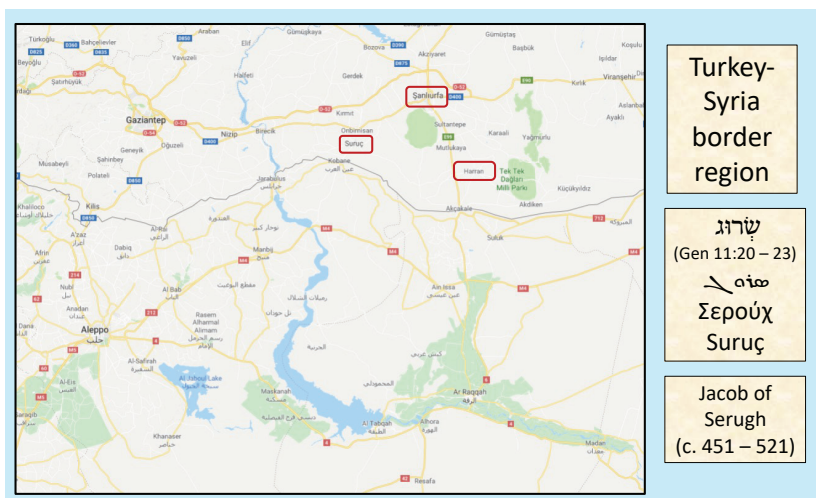


Figure 5. Google map with highlighted items and text boxes. Created by Gary A. Rendsburg.

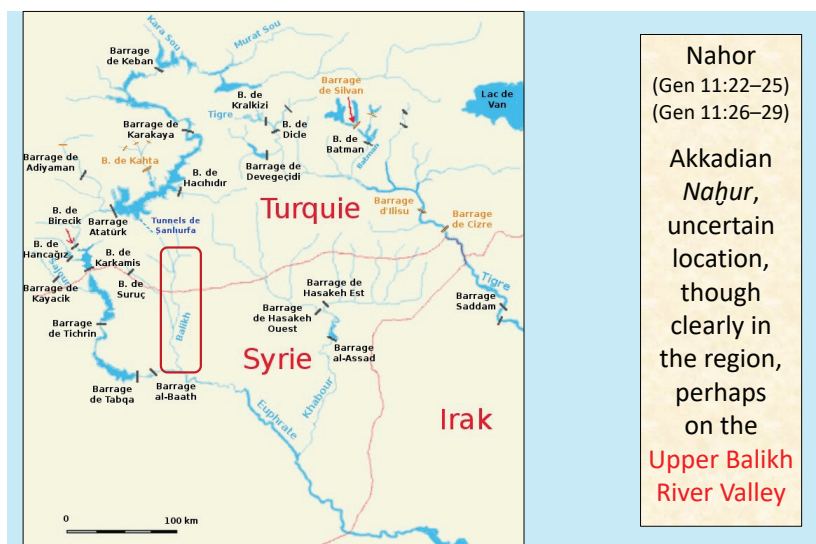


Figure 6. Map of the Balikh River with highlighting and text box. Created by Gary A. Rendsburg. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balikh_River#/media/File:Bassin_Tigre_Euphrate.jpg. CC BY-SA 3.0.

So once again, the traditional map mentioned above is wrong. The map is simply incorrect. Now, how did we get to that map accordingly? If it's all so simple, why is that scholars are so misguided?

The Akkadian language was deciphered during the late 1840s, and from that point numerous—literally tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands—cuneiform documents came to our disposal, starting with the ones excavated by A. H. Layard in the 1840s. If you were to go back to the time prior to this period, we should look at a standard commentary on the book of Genesis. For example, we will consider this one published by George Bush in 1839 (see Figure 7).

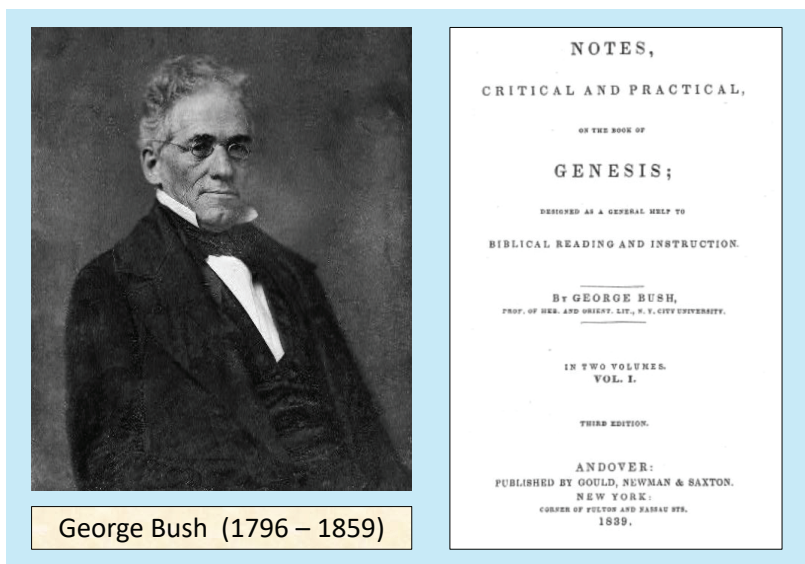


Figure 7. George Bush and the title page of his book, *Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Genesis* (1839). The photo on the left is in the public domain, credit to the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division. The book is available at Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/notescriticalan11bushgoog>.

This George Bush taught at my alma mater, New York University, and was the great professor of biblical studies there in the nineteenth century. (And yes, he is related to the Presidents Bush.)² And this great scholar of the nineteenth century, in his commentary on the book of Genesis, says exactly what I have been telling you right now. If we start there on the upper left, “As to the city here mentioned [with reference

to Ur of the Chaldees at the end of Genesis 11] in the east it is generally identified with the present town of Orfah in upper Mesopotamia two days' journey east of the Euphrates, sixty-seven miles north-east of Beer. The Jews [meaning the local Jews in that town], according to Mr. Wolff [Joseph Wolff (1795–1862), who traveled extensively in the Near East], still call the place by the name in the text Ur Kasdim or Ur of the Chaldees. And it is a place of pilgrimage as the birth-place of Abraham, in whose honour the Moslems have a fine mosque, in the court of which is a lake teeming with fish which are held sacred to the patriarch and not permitted to be caught" (see Figure 8).³

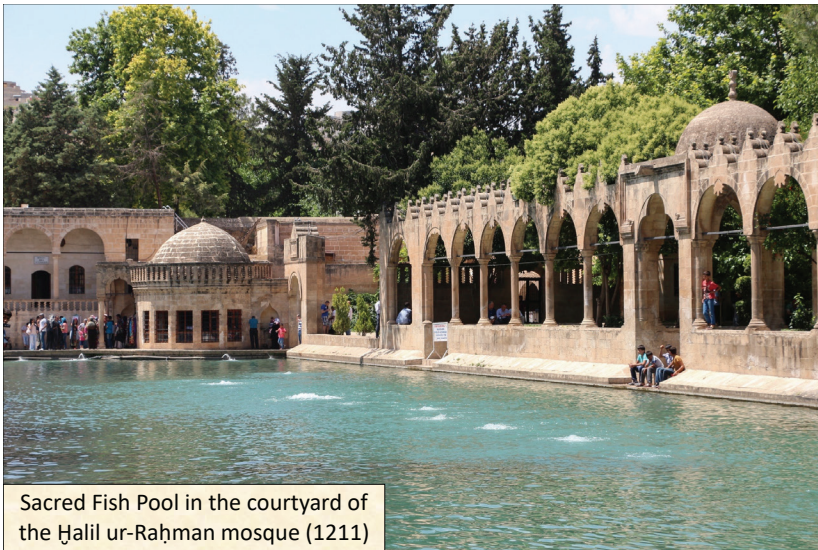


Figure 8. Abraham's Pool, at the Mosque of Halil ür-Rahman, Urfa, Turkey. Photo by Bernard Gagnon / CC BY-SA 3.0, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urfa#/media/File:Balikli_G%C3%B6l_03.jpg.

In other words, the Jews and Muslims of the city of Urfa in the nineteenth century and, in fact, into the twentieth century, held that their city was the birthplace of Abraham. They never engaged in scholarship; there was no Akkadian to be read yet. They simply knew the local tradition that had been passed down from antiquity, which I think should be accorded a correctness, not out of any naivete or blind faith, but simply because it matches the geography that I have been describing here.

Accordingly, this town has numerous names. In the Ebla texts, it is called Uru. Hebrew tends to drop final short vowels, so it's simply Ur. In Greek, it was Edessa, named that way by Seleucus I. The Syriac name Urhai continues the tradition; in Arabic it is called ar-Ruhā, a slight change in the pronunciation, and in Turkish, as I said, Şanlıurfa.

I just mentioned Ebla, which is in northern Syria, not far from Aleppo (see Figure 9). In the 1970s several thousand cuneiform documents were found there. These documents are mainly economic and administrative texts, without much great literature. The same is true at Mari: we just get the typical administration and economic texts, trade documents, political documents, and sometimes legal documents. And in the course of those documents, we find multiple references to a place called Uru. And in several texts, Uru is mentioned in the same breath, as it were, as the city of Ḫarran. They are therefore in close proximity to one another.

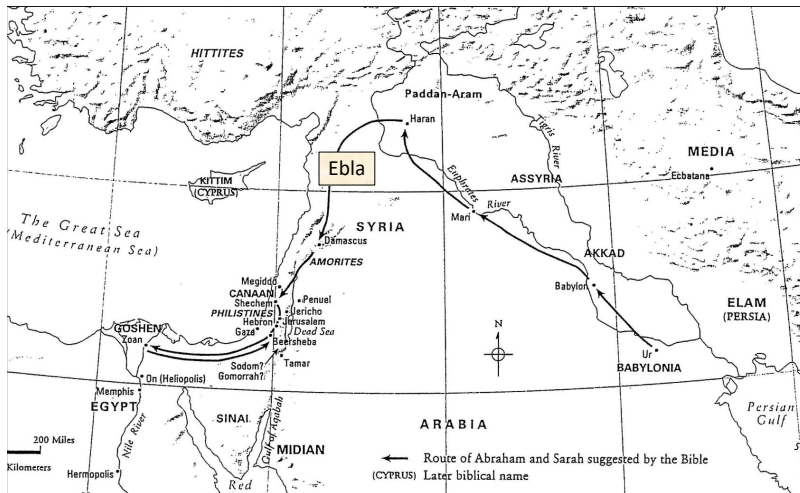


Figure 9. “Route of Abraham and Sarah suggested by the Bible,” per John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), with location of Ebla, added by Gary A. Rendsburg.

When we go to Genesis 22, right after the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac, the Aqedah, we find another genealogy which tells that the brother of Abraham, Nahor, also has fathered children, and one of them Qemu’el is called the father of Aram. And then in the next

verse one finds mention of a person called Kesed in Hebrew, although it's usually transliterated Chesed in the English. Aram and Kesed are juxtaposed in these two verses, one coming at the end of verse 21, the other coming at the very beginning of verse 22 (see Figure 10).

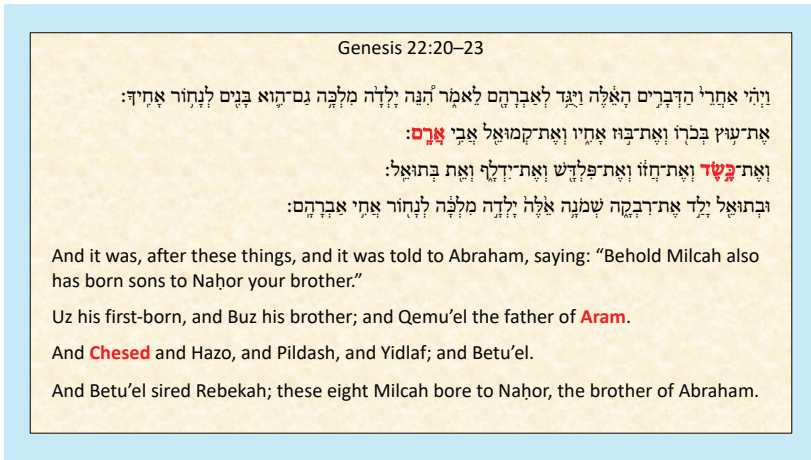
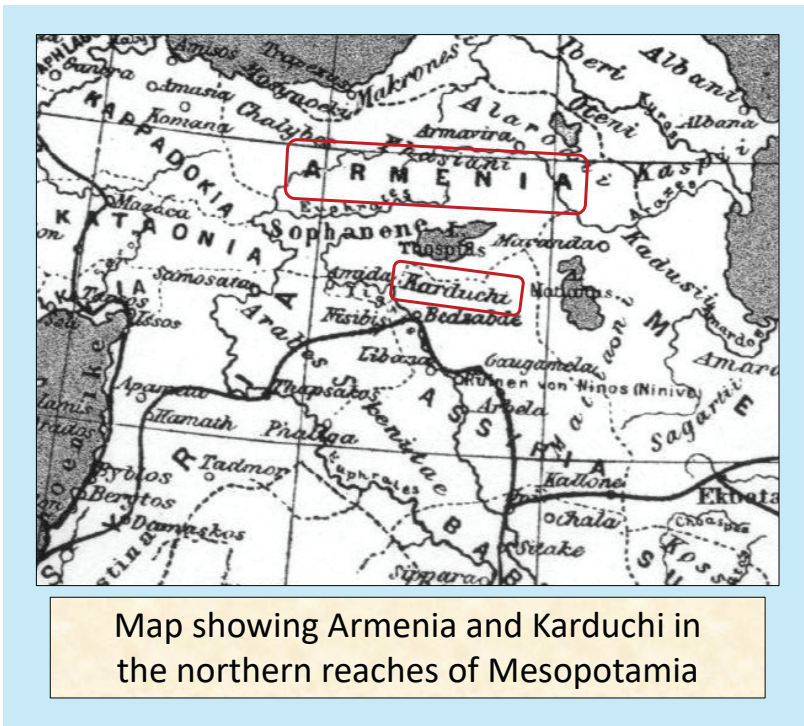


Figure 10. Genesis 22:20–23. Text box created by Gary A. Rendsburg.

A word about some arcane Hebrew phonology: The /s/ sound that you see in Kesed is not the standard /s/; rather it has a bit of an /l/ to it as well, an /l/ sound approximately merging with the /s/ sound, so that when this was transmitted into Greek, Latin, and the other European languages including English, we got the /l/ sound. So we say Chaldeans in English, but in Hebrew it's Kasdim. It would've been pronounced more like /kalsdim/.

The great Greek historian Xenophon, in his two works written in the fourth century BCE, mentions the Chaldeans as neighbors of the Armenians and the Carduchi, ancestors of the modern-day Kurds. My teacher Cyrus Gordon pointed this out in several publications during the 1950s. Therefore, you should find the Chaldeans, or Kasdim, not in the south of Mesopotamia but in the northern reaches of Mesopotamia where the Kurds and the Armenians live. That is exactly the area mentioned above along the Turkish-Syrian border north of Paddan Aran. That is the homeland of the Chaldeans (see Figure 11).



Map showing Armenia and Karduchi in the northern reaches of Mesopotamia

Figure 11. Map via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexander_den_stores_rike,_Nordisk_familjebok.jpg. Cropping, highlighting, and text box by Gary A. Rendsburg.

So how did it all go wrong? Henry Rawlinson was the great cuneiform specialist of the nineteenth century, a polymath, a man of many talents. He served in the British government and army in Iraq, Iran, India, and Afghanistan as a diplomat and a soldier, but he also was one of the first people able to read the first cuneiform tablets unearthed by Layard during his excavations at Nineveh. And Rawlinson then spent the rest of his life back in London at the British Museum publishing the tablets. His colleague John Taylor went off and excavated a site in the far southern part of Iraq, Tell Muqayyar, and that turned out to be the great city of Ur, which we saw on the original map and which is, indeed, a real place. Taylor did not express an opinion about any connection to Abraham, but in his wake, Rawlinson did.

Seven years after Taylor's excavations, Rawlinson published a famous article in the *Atheneum*, one of the great scholarly journals of a general nature in England, with the short title “Biblical Geography” (see Figure 12). In it he says that Tell Muqayyar is in fact the location of Ur of the Chaldees. Rawlinson accordingly is the one who set scholars on the wrong path, with no evidence whatsoever that this is Ur of the Chaldees—he simply made the proclamation, and his greatness as a scholar convinced the scholarly world. And so people started forgetting about the Urfa that George Bush and others had propounded.

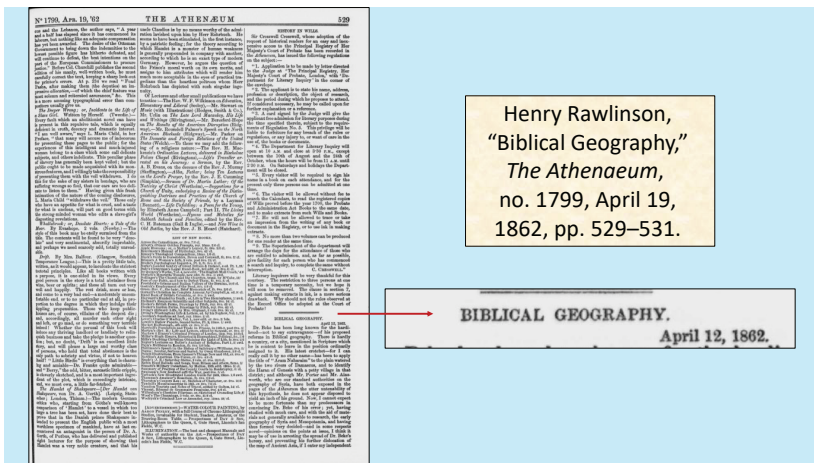


Figure 12. Henry Rawlinson, “Biblical Geography,” *The Athenaeum*, no. 1799, April 19, 1862, pp. 529–31, available via ProQuest.

A half-century later Sir Leonard Woolley excavated Ur for about twelve years during the 1920s and 1930s. Woolley published the results of his excavation in his book entitled *Ur of the Chaldees*, although there is not a shred of evidence that would connect this great site to Abraham of the Bible (see Figure 13). Two years prior he had written a different book, *Abraham: Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins*. What guided him to do that?

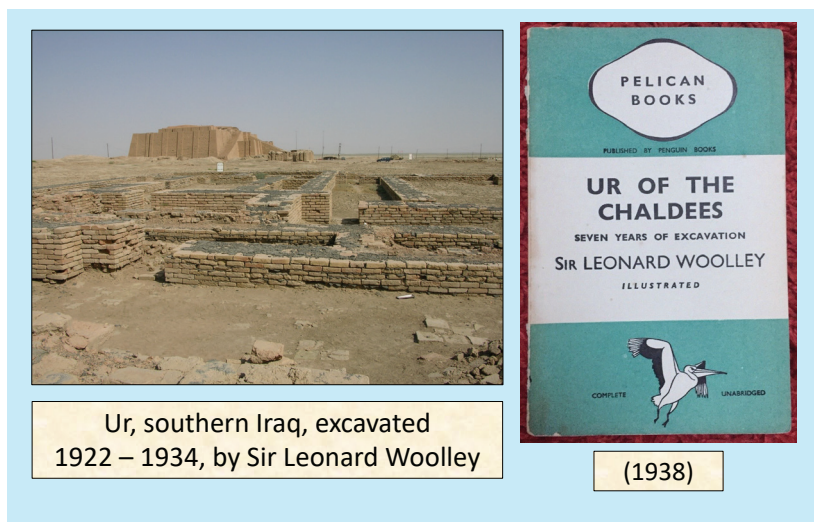


Figure 13. On the left: the great ziggurat and general excavations at Ur. Photo by M. Lubinski / CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/347/ruins-of-ur/>. On the right: book jacket of Leonard Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees* (1938), available at https://archive.org/details/uofchaldeesreco0000leon_f4k4/page/n7/mode/2up.

It is true that after a time the area of Babylonia in the south also came to be known as Chaldea. We see that in the Bible—in the books of Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc.—the Babylonians become known as the Chaldeans. However, they migrated there from the north only at a later stage, around the ninth or eighth centuries. At the earlier stage, the Chaldeans are in the north, so that Abraham lived prior to the migration of the Chaldeans from northern Mesopotamia to southern Mesopotamia. So I have no problem putting Chaldea on the map in the later biblical period and having a city there called Ur. But it is not the place where Abraham came from. It simply does not work.

Woolley's book was republished in 1982 by another British archeologist, Roger Moorey, who placed single quotation marks around 'of the Chaldees' in the title. In the preface, he says, very honestly, that despite Ur's fame as the birthplace of Abraham there is no evidence at all to place Abraham at this site. Abraham is not mentioned in any of the thousands of cuneiform texts found at the site, nor does any of the archaeological evidence inform the Abraham narrative.

Then in 2000, Pope John Paul stated, “If it be God’s will, I would like to go to Ur of the Chaldees, the present-day Tell el-Muqayyar in southern Iraq, the city where, according to the biblical account, Abraham heard the word of the Lord”—except it’s not according to the biblical account. And the late Herschel Shanks, founding editor and for forty years editor and publisher of *Biblical Archeology Review*, wrote an article in 2000 titled “Is the Pope Going to the Wrong Place?” Of course, Shanks quotes Cyrus Gordon and discusses the facts that I’m giving you now. There is nothing to associate Abraham with the city of Ur.

Finally, we have some new evidence: a new cylindrical inscription in cuneiform dated to approximately 1100 BCE, found recently and now in the private collection of David Sofer, a London collector. The cylinder is from Aššur-ketta-lēšir II, who calls himself the king of the land of Mari. It was published by Ron Zadok, an Israeli cuneiform specialist at Tel Aviv University. It was found to the east of Ḫarran and southeast of Şanlıurfa, Ur as we have mentioned before, but still in the general region of northern Mesopotamia. And this text refers to the acts of war by the Chaldeans and the Arameans. Remember, in Genesis 22 Aram and Chesed are referred to one right after another. This is the first cuneiform text ever found that associates Arameans and Chaldeans side by side, exactly as you see in the biblical text in Genesis 22.

As Ron Zadok observed, this text speaks clearly to the fact that the Chaldeans entered Babylonia at a later stage, after 1100 BCE, from the north, not from any other region. They were not native to the south. They are firmly to be located in northern Mesopotamia, exactly where Xenophon would have them in the fourth century, which is to say some of them moved south to Babylonia. But even in Xenophon’s day, the Chaldeans were still to be found in northern Mesopotamia alongside the Armenians.

Many biblical scholars will ask, what if the Torah was written at the time of the seventh or sixth century, when in fact the Chaldeans are to be found in Babylonia? And some scholars would date it even later to the sixth or fifth century.

I cannot go into all the details here except to say that this does not hold up when you bring the linguistic evidence into the picture. Hebrew terms including *hinne na’*, meaning “behold please,” and the

form *ṭerem* or *bə-ṭerem*, meaning “before,” occur only in earlier biblical writings, especially in Genesis—not in later biblical literature written at the time when indeed the Chaldeans are associated with the Babylonians.⁴ And this is also true of the style of the book of Genesis, including the Abraham narrative as discussed by my colleague Frank Polak, another Israeli scholar at Tel Aviv University.⁵

I hope I’ve convinced you that this map is wrong (again, see Figure 1). Ḥarran is to be found where it is presently, still today called Ḥarran, and Ur Kasdim or Ur of the Chaldees is to be found north of there in the city of Urfa. The geography makes sense: the Chaldeans are located in that region alongside the Arameans, it is beyond the river, and one would in fact stop at Ḥarran if one left Ur en route to the land of Canaan (see Figure 14).

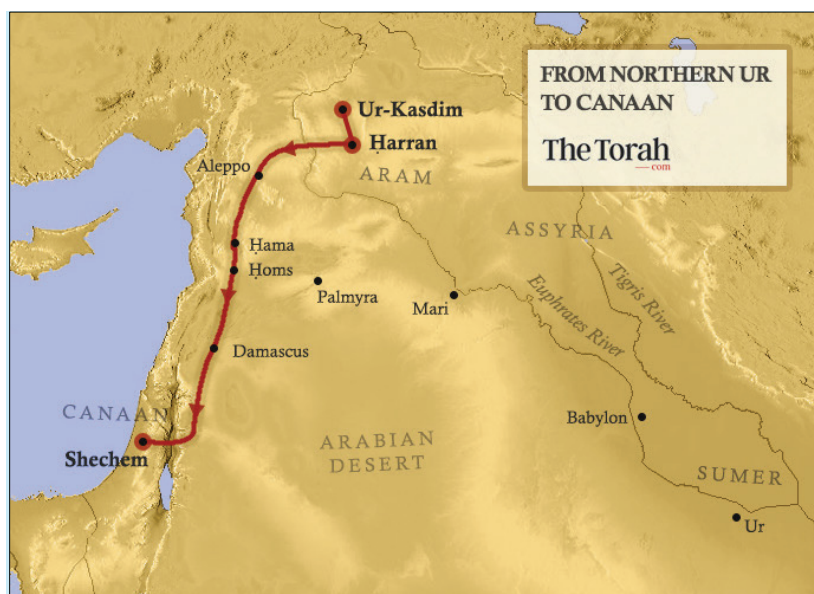


Figure 14. Map of Abraham’s journey, according to the book of Genesis, from Urfa to Ḥarran and thence to Canaan. Available at <https://www.thetorah.com/article/ur-kasdim-where-is-abrahams-birthplace>, used with kind permission of TheTorah.com.



Q&A

JOHN S. THOMPSON. That was amazing. Thank you very much. I have a couple of questions and comments. One of them is about Micah 5:6, which mentions the land of Nimrod, and of course there are a lot of Abraham–Nimrod traditions. The land of Nimrod is in Assyria—does that have any bearing on this at all?

GARY A. RENDSBURG. I don't think so. I'll have to go back and look at Micah 5:6. Thanks for reminding me of that. Nimrod, of course, is already mentioned back in Genesis 10, and yes, later Jewish tradition in fact has a number of legends, midrashim, and so on, connecting Abraham to Nimrod. But let's put it this way: there is no biblical text that connects Abraham to Nimrod, right? It's only later Jewish traditions, so I would say that they were created at a certain point but that the biblical text, when we investigate Genesis as I have done, firmly places Abraham in northern Mesopotamia.

JOHN S. THOMPSON. Yeah. Assyria seems to have more of a central location in northern Mesopotamia, so the thought was there might be a connection there. The Amenhotep III claim to have plundered Shinar, which is also traditionally Nimrod's land, would again suggest northern Mesopotamia because we don't have a tradition of Egypt plundering in southern Mesopotamia. But some biblical scholars try to get around that by making it sound like he is exaggerating. Do you have any thought on that? Are you aware of that particular text from Egypt?

GARY A. RENDSBURG. This is new to me. I'm not aware of this text, but I will certainly look at it. Shinar in Genesis is usually assumed to be the Hebrew way of saying Sumer, the phonological issues notwithstanding. And that, of course, would only be in the south of Mesopotamia, so I'll have to look at this inscription. So thanks for sending me along that line.

I also want to say the following, which I did not state in my talk: the phrase *Ur of the Chaldees* is required because if you just said *Ur* in the ancient near Eastern world, everybody would think of Ur, the great Ur excavated by Woolley in southern Iraq.

So the fact that you have to say Ur of the Chaldees suggests that it's not the big Ur but some other lesser-known Ur that requires that kind of additional epithet. The analogy I use is that if I'm going to London, I just say I'm going to London. If I'm going to London, Ontario, I then say I'm going to London, Ontario, to make it clear where I'm going. So Ur would just be London, and Ur of the Chaldees would be like London, Ontario, if that helps. So I wanted to add that here as well, and it's also very possible this somehow ties into some of the questions.

It's very possible that northern Ur was a trading colony or an outpost of southern Ur, and hence it got its name. We tend to put new in front of names like this, but you don't have to. New York has something to do with old York in England, although there's simply York, Pennsylvania, as well, so that city names sometimes get transplanted, including London, from the homeland. This tells us that three thousand years from now, people are going to realize that London, Ontario, was settled by some English folk who had some connection to London. And that would be accurate because we know of the English settlement in Canada. So New York, et cetera, and in the US Boston—there's a city of Boston in England. So these suggest to us that, in fact, these are connected. Except we don't have enough information to know to what extent northern Ur would have been an outpost in some fashion of the great Ur in the south.

JOHN S. THOMPSON. Thank you. One other source that you might be interested in if you haven't already seen it—and this one was brought up by John Gee to us several months ago—Parpola's translation in the SAA 10 volume of some Neo-Assyrian letters that were written to King Esarhaddon. One of his servants informs the king that "west land means the Hittite country and the nomad land, or according to another tradition, Chaldea." So we have another source that the Chaldean people are in Hittite territory rather than southern Mesopotamia. So that's another one that's a newer source that supports your thesis.

GARY A. RENDSBURG. Okay, this is a new one for me, and I'll thank John Gee and track that one down too. Thank you.

JOHN S. THOMPSON. So, just a question: for Latter-day Saints there is some thought about the religious practice of the area. I'm not sure if that's something that you've looked at quite a bit, but do you have any thoughts on human sacrifice in Ur of the Chaldees?

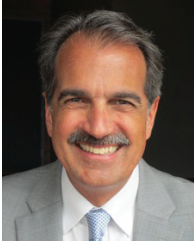
GARY A. RENDSBURG. I don't think we have enough information. I am not a student of ritual texts. Animal sacrifice would have been much more common than human sacrifice. So no, I have no information about that at all. I can say of course, and I had some email exchange with Paul Hoskisson about this, that in Joseph Smith's day as a contemporary of George Bush, the idea that Abraham came from northern Mesopotamia would have just been standard teaching. I mean, everybody would have believed that until Rawlinson took everybody away. So I guess we should connect the 1830s and 1840s to everything that's being discussed in the conference.

JOHN S. THOMPSON. One last one: This is unrelated to the topic tonight, but a question someone asks is that you gave a presentation two years ago on Hebrew and Egyptian. Are you aware of any Hebrew texts circa 600 BCE written in Hebrew using hieratic or demotic Egyptian script? Is it true that the primary use of hieratic with Hebrew texts on ostraca in the Palestine area are numbers for accounting or government purposes. Are you aware of that corpus of materials—Palestinian hieratic?

GARY A. RENDSBURG. Yes, I am. And in fact, all hieratic material is used only for bookkeeping, especially to abbreviate numerals, measurements, commodities, and so on. So, it is widely used by Hebrew scribes. We would not know that from the Bible. Every single time there's a number mentioned in the Bible, it is written out phonetically. If you wanted to say "three," you have to write it out *šaloš*, and so on and so forth.

But we now know through archeology, from a variety of sites in Israel, that the scribes were well trained in Egyptian hieratic. And in fact, the standard text that I use when I teach this material is by David Calabro.

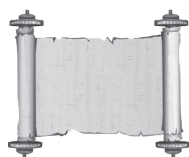
JOHN S. THOMPSON. Great. Well, the last comment is something I think we all would echo, and that is simply this: the person says, "I have no real questions, but I just wanted to say I really appreciate your passion for this topic." So thank you for the way you've delivered your thoughts tonight. There were quite a few chuckles in the audience. We did love your passion and how you brought forth those ideas. So thank you.



Gary A. Rendsburg serves as the Blanche and Irving Laurie Chair in Jewish History and holds the rank of Distinguished Professor at Rutgers University. His wide-ranging scholarship covers the history, literature, and archaeology of ancient Israel, though he also has developed a second expertise in the medieval Hebrew manuscript tradition. Professor Rendsburg has visited all the major archaeological sites in Israel, Egypt, and Jordan and has worked in the world's leading libraries, including the Vatican Library, the British Library, the Bodleian Library (Oxford), the Cambridge University Library, the National Library of Israel, and the Library of Congress. He has held visiting positions at the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome), and the Getty Villa (Los Angeles).

ABRAHAM AND HIS FAMILY

IN SCRIPTURE, HISTORY, AND TRADITION



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE HELD MAY 3 & 10, 2025
AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY**

EDITORS

**Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John S. Thompson,
Matthew L. Bowen, and David R. Seely**



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