

Text: Genesis 11:27-32

Genesis 11:27-32 (NKJV) ²⁷ ¶ This *is* the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. ²⁸ And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ²⁹ Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife *was* Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. ³⁰ But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

³¹ ¶ And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. ³² So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

Exegetical Idea:

The genealogy and death of Abraham's father, Terah is given along with an account of Abraham's brother's death, their journey to Haran from Ur of the Chaldeans, and Sarai's barrenness.

Structure:

11:27a	Preface
11:27b-30	Terah's genealogy
11:31	Terah's migration and relocation to Haran
11:32	Terah's death

Concentric Pattern:¹

- A Introduction: Terah and his offspring (11:27)
- B The family lives in *Ur of the Chaldeans*; Haran dies (11:28)
- C Abraham *takes (laqah) Sarai* as his wife; Nahor marries Milcah, *whose father is Haran* (11:29)
- X Sarai is barren; she has no children (11:30)
- C' Terah *takes (laqah) Abraham*, along with Abraham's wife *Sarai* and Lot, *whose father is Haran* (11:31a)
- B' The family leaves *Ur of the Chaldeans* and settles in Haran (11:31b)
- A' Conclusion: summary of Terah's life; his death (11:32)

Commentary:

This genealogy not only connects the coming narrative to the preceding chapters (note the similarity of 11:26 and 11:27a) but also provides the necessary background to the beginning of the Abraham narrative. Sailhamer points out (in EBC) that most genealogies up to this point

¹ Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 54

have had ten names, since this genealogy has only eight names, the reader is left to discover who the ninth and tenth names are and their significance (they are Ishmael and Isaac, respectively).

[11:27a] Terah's name may be derived from the word meaning "moon." Sarai's and Milcah's names, "princess" and "queen," (in v. 29) refer to the daughter and wife, respectively, of the moon god. These facts coupled with their residence in Ur and later resettlement to Haran, both centers of the moon-god cult, imply that they were worshippers of the moon-god, Sin (Cf. Josh. 24:2).

[11:27b-30] Nahor marries his deceased brother's wife, Milcah, who bears him eight sons, one of whom is Bethuel, the father of Laban and Rebekah. Sarai was actually Abram's half-sister (they had the same father, Terah, but different mothers); there was no law or taboo against this in patriarchal times.

That Sarai was "barren" is to signify the hopelessness of their future (childlessness had practical ramifications that would impact a person's future survival). This also is what tests their faith and drives the narrative. This theme of God's purpose overcoming barrenness is a prominent recurring theme (cf. Isa. 54:1) in the OT, played out in the lives of Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah, and foreshadows the virgin birth (Lk. 1:26-38). Each of these women must actively commit themselves to God's purpose of grace.

[11:31] Since the word translated "country" in 12:1 is the same word translated "native land" or "land of his nativity" in 11:28, the call apparently came to Abram while still in Ur (cf. 15:7; Neh.9:7; Acts 7:2-4) but when Abram leaves Ur, it is the result of a family decision rather than a direct response to God's call. This foreshadows the departure of God's people in Israel's history who longed to travel to the Promised Land from the land of the Chaldeans.

Abram also does not leave for Canaan until after his father's death. Haran is 550 NW of Ur, close to the modern border of Syria and Turkey. It, too, was an important center of moon worship.

[11:32] The original text probably read 145 years as opposed to 205. This is attested to by the Samaritan Pentateuch which tradition supports Stephen's speech in Acts 7:2-4.

Theological Reflections:

Theological Theme: God's sovereign grace and purpose

NT connections: Acts 7:2-5; Hebrews 11:8

- Terah's family was steeped in pagan idolatry
- *Hopelessness* is evident in several aspect of this story: the orphans (11:29), the barrenness of Sarai; Terah dies in a strange land, neither his birth-land nor the land of Abram's promise.
- God's call gives hope. Sarai's infertility emphasizes the fact of God's sovereignty and grace as beyond human imagination and conception. Sarah will bear children by supernatural means through faith.
- Out of this hopelessness, God will bring new life that is not of the will of man but of the will of God (cf. John 1:13).