

The Questor

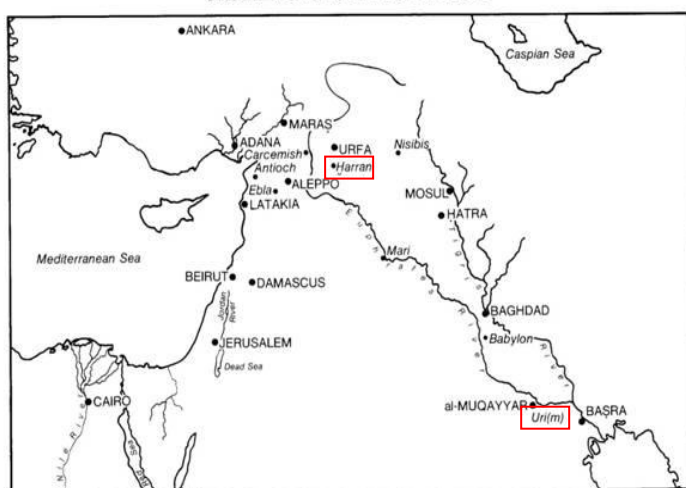
Bible history....

....In the beginning

Some people believe that the creation story in the Old Testament is literally true while others prefer to think in terms of theories such as the Big Bang and natural evolution. But for our purposes we don't need to get into that. We will start our journey in Genesis chapter 11. Until this point Genesis describes the history of humankind in general.

Our journey starts around 1950BC in the area which is now Southern Iraq, in a city called Ur which was close to the River Euphrates, about 200 miles south of modern day Baghdad. This was a very sophisticated and wealthy area which has been extensively excavated and was a centre of moon worship. At this time, Egypt was also a very sophisticated place which was in its second great age of culture.

THE NEAR EAST



Modern names of cities and sites are in capitals. Ancient names of cities are in italics.

Abraham grew up in Ur, the son of Terah who had two other sons, Haran and Nahor. Haran died while Terah was still alive, leaving a son called Lot. Whether it was because of Haran's death or because hostile forces were beginning to invade the south of the country we don't know. But Terah decided the whole family ought to move to Canaan, in modern day Israel.

Canaan was to the west of Ur, but there was the Arabian Desert between them. So the only option was to take the long route which meant following the Euphrates River north and then travelling west via modern day Syria and then south to Canaan. This area to the north was known as the Fertile Crescent because of the water available from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

It's not clear why Terah chose to go to Canaan. It may have been that merchants who travelled there regularly via the Fertile Crescent told him that it was a good place to live. In the event, they got as far north as Harran and they settled down there. Maybe it was just too much of an ordeal for Terah to go any further at his age; and he died in Harran.

This set the stage for God's big move. He'd created the human race with a view to having a deep and loving relationship with each person. But, until now, people were unaware of this and were doing their own thing. They were responding to their in built need for spiritual expression and satisfaction by worshipping idols – in Abraham's case it may have been the moon.

After the death of Terah, God spoke to Abraham in Harran. Exactly how that happened is not clear but the key point is that Abraham responded positively.

God told Abraham to complete the journey his father had started and, in return, he would make him into a great nation. So he set off, leaving the city life he was used to and became a nomad, living in tents. He took with him his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot and all his entourage. But his brother Nahor stayed behind.

This was the starting point for the Jewish race.