

BABEL AND UR OF THE CHALDEES - WHERE WERE THEY?

(From Ron Wyatt's Anchor Stones website)

The First Event Mentioned after the Flood - The Migration to the West and then, Building Babel

It's so exciting to study the archaeological discoveries of the last few hundred years and see how vividly they conform to the Biblical account. However, as we saw with the Ebla tablets, people come along with various "agendas" and motives, and try to twist or suppress these evidences. The Syrian government was extremely irate when they learned that the Ebla tablets brought to light evidences relating to the patriarchs, so they had the original translator removed from the project. It was then "arranged" for this translator to recant some of his original translations, stating that he had been in error. It is the same situation in Saudi Arabia with the real Mt. Sinai.

The Saudis KNOW that it is the true site, yet they do not want the world to know because of the connection with the Israelites. They even removed the column with the inscriptions on the Saudi shore because it was written in archaic Hebrew. Another example can be seen in Saqqara, Egypt. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ron was shown the tombs of 2 officials from the reign of Pharaoh Djoser, and the inscriptions of the officials both state that they "collected grain for a 7 year famine." But by the mid-1980's, both of these tombs were closed. The "good news" is that even though today's "leading men" and "experts" flood the media with their "interpretations" of the evidences in a manner which is completely contradictory to the Biblical account, the true evidence is still available. We will examine some of that evidence which relates to events soon after the flood.

Babel

The commonly accepted view today is that the tower of Babel was located near the much later city of Babylon, which is in southern Mesopotamia. Yet, the ancient remains there are from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, about 1,700 years AFTER the flood! The earliest remains they have found, date to the time of the Amorite period, whose most famous king was Hammurabi. Nothing earlier has been found. Of course, the "explanation" is that the "earlier remains" are now located under the water table and can't be excavated. But the Biblical account doesn't place Babel here. GEN 11:1. "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2. And it came to pass, as they journeyed FROM THE EAST, that they FOUND A PLAIN IN THE LAND OF SHINAR; and they dwelt there." Who is it that traveled to this plain, and where did they come from? The family of Noah. (Gen. 10:32) And they were coming from the region originally settled by Noah and his family after the flood, which was in the Ararat region.

If we use a little common sense, we can help our understanding of this first "exodus" from the area the ark settled in. The people leaving this region would have had flocks of animals as well as their families. To travel, they would have needed to follow a river in order to assure they would always have a sufficient water supply for both the people as well as the animals.

The Biblical account says they traveled "from the east" and since the Euphrates flows from east to west here, we can trace this river to see where it goes. (Note: The Euphrates has 2 sources, one near Erzurum, now called Karas, and the other near Ararat, now called Murat. We have traced their journey from the Ararat region, along the Murat.) We are told that they traveled until they "found a plain in the land of Shinar" and that they then "dwelt there." The region of Turkey that they traveled through is extremely mountainous until they reach the point where the Euphrates turns south near the present day Syrian border. And here, the mountains end and the region flattens out into a plain.

Could Babel have been located in this region? We just don't know since it hasn't been found. But for now, let's keep the possibility open and see what happens when we continue to study the Biblical account: GEN 11:9. "Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." We next learn that it was from Babel that the people dispersed.

But backing up bit, we learn that the leader in the building of the tower at Babel was a son of Cush's named Nimrod: GEN 10:9. "He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh,, in the land of Shinar." Nimrod established Babel, Accad and Calneh, NONE of which have ever been located. But the next verse may help: GEN 10:11. "Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh,, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, 12. And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city."

Nimrod began establishing cities, and from this region (land), Shem's son, Asshur went out and also established some cities. Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah and Resen. Now, 2 of these cities have been located. Nineveh and Calah. They can be seen on the map to be in northern Mesopotamia on the Tigris River. This agrees well with the statement that Asshur went out of the region of Nimrod's first established cities and built his cities. But for now, let's go on to the next event mentioned in the Bible—the "call of Abraham" out of his homeland to a land inhabited by the Canaanites—the land of "Canaan."

Ur of the Chaldees

GEN 12:1. " Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:" The verses relating to God's call to Abraham to leave his home and go into Canaan must be examined out of their order in the Bible to get the entire picture. He is called to leave his "country," his relatives (kindred) and his father's home. In other words, the place where his entire family had established their residence. This didn't imply one "house" but one area.

However, we learn that his father originally set out WITH Abraham to enter Canaan: GEN 11:31. " And TERAH TOOK ABRAM his son, and LOT the son of Haran his son's son and SARI, his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and THEY WENT forth with them FROM UR OF THE CHALDEES, TO GO INTO the land of CANAAN; and they came unto HARAN, AND DWELT THERE." Terah obviously believed he was supposed to accompany his son into this "promised land."

But, something happened before they got there which caused them to make a temporary stop at Haran. And GEN 11:32. "...Terah died in Haran." For some reason, Terah wasn't meant to go to Canaan. The reason may be found in another verse in Joshua: JOSH 24:2. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, YOUR FATHERS DWELT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FLOOD IN OLD TIME, even TERAH, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and THEY SERVED OTHER GODS." Even the father of Abraham had been affected by the idolatry all around him, and mingled the worship of the true God with the worship of pagan gods. Perhaps the Lord knew his influence would hinder the purpose He had ordained through Abraham.

"The Other Side of the Flood"

Another point to mention here is the phrase, "the other side of the flood," when talking about the Israelites' "fathers," or ancestors. This doesn't refer to Noah's flood—it means "the river" Euphrates, as can be seen from the next verse: JOSH 24:3. "And I took your father ABRAHAM FROM THE

OTHER SIDE OF THE FLOOD, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

The point we are studying here, though, is "where was UR" that Abraham and Terah dwelt in before they went to Haran? Ever since Woolley's discovery of the ancient city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia, the general consensus among the "learned men and scholars" has been that THIS was Abraham's Ur." But again, this doesn't agree with the Biblical account. It indicates that Abraham make a 600 or so mile detour to the north—yet, Canaan was directly WEST of this "UR." Remember, Gen.11:31, tells us distinctly that when Abraham, Terah and Lot left Ur, they were going to CANAAN.

Haran

Well, the site of Haran is known. And amazingly, it is located in that very plain that we located earlier when we followed the Euphrates from the Ararat region; the first plain encountered when the Euphrates leaves the mountainous region. It is also located on the Balikh River—the Euphrates, flowing south, turns west, then south and then east, around this plain area. The Balikh River branches off the western curve of the Euphrates and flows directly south and meets up with the eastern curve.

OK, are we to believe Abraham left southern Mesopotamia for Canaan, detouring to Haran which was about 600 miles north, and then another 400 miles south to Canaan? Or should we look for Ur in the region of Haran? Remember, we earlier discussed the need for traveling along rivers? Well, if we follow the Balikh River north, we see that about 20 miles north and a few miles west, is a city called today, "Urfa." Could this be "Ur of the Chaldees?" The following is quoted from the Britannica, 1985 edition, under the subject, "Urfa:" "The Town lies in the fertile plain of Haran, ringed by limestone hills on three sides... Traditions of its earliest foundation associate the site with the legendary king Nimrod, and Muslim legend associates the place with Abraham; a cave beneath Urfa's citadel is said to be Abraham's birthplace. The town's modern name is derived from its early Aramaic name, Urhai...".

In addition to this, since we are told that Abraham was to leave his country and obviously the place of his, as well as his father's, birth, we cannot be surprised to learn that there are towns bearing the names of Serug (Abraham's great-grandfather), Nahor (his grandfather) and Terah (his father) all in the area: "It would seem to have been a Hurrian custom to call a place by what was originally the name of a person, such as Nahor, Serug and Terah. What is remarkable is that all these geographical names are found in the district of Haran—according to the Biblical traditions it is precisely in this region that Abraham's family stayed. " From "The Early History of Israel" by Roland DeVaux, 1971.

The cuneiform tablets of Ebla mention a city designated "Ur in the territory of Haran." (See BAR June 1977). The evidence shows local tradition and place names—but where was "the Chaldees?" Ur is referred to as "Ur of the Chalices," yet the only mention of Chaldea after this, in the Bible, is referring to the Chaldean dynasty of Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's time, which was almost 1,700 years later! I believe the answer can be found in the religion of the people who continued to live in the region of eastern and central Turkey.

The first inhabitants of this region were called "Hurrians," and later "Urartuans," from which the name "Ararat" comes. Inscriptions show that the Urartuans had at least 79 different gods—and this conglomeration of gods were called "Khaldis" (Chaldees). In the inscription of Argistis near Van, it states: "This is the spoil of the cities which I obtained for the people of the Khaldis its one year... To Khaldis, the giver, to the Khaldises. the supreme givers, she children of Khaldis the mighty....."

Interestingly, these were the people who years later still lived in the region near and around where the ark came to rest. And one thing noted later about the Chaldeans was their great knowledge. There is a great deal of logic in assuming that the people who remained closest to Noah and his immediate family would have had access to the greatest amount of knowledge. With this information, we can now confidently place Abraham as living in Urfa on the Balikh River. Then, when called to leave this "Ur" for Canaan, he and his family members gathered their flocks and belongings and followed the Balikh south, in the direction of Canaan. But, for some reason, about 20 miles down the road, they temporarily stop in Haran, where Terah dies.

The evidence archaeology has revealed completely validates the Biblical account. Sir Charles Marston wrote in "New Bible Evidence" (1934) p. 21, "...Bible commentators as a rule display little respect for the Old Testament when it stands in the way of their conjectures." Was there really a time when all people spoke one language? The ancient Sumerians believed this to be true, as is recorded in an ancient text entitled, "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta:" "Once upon a time,..... the whole universe, the people in unison, to Enlil IN ONE TONGUE gave praise."