

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 11

This chapter gives an account of the inhabitants of the earth before the confusion of tongues at Babel, of their speech and language, which was one and the same, and of the place where they dwelt, (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:1,2) and of their design to build a city and tower, to make them a name and keep them together, which they put in execution, (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:3,4) of the notice the Lord took of this affair, and of the method he took to put a stop to their designs, by confounding their speech, and dispersing them abroad upon the face of the earth, (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:5-9) then follows a genealogy of Shem's posterity down to Abraham, (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:10-26) and a particular relation is given of Terah, the father of Abraham, and his family, and of his going forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, in order to go into the land of Canaan, and of his death at Haran by the way, (^{<0117>}Genesis 11:27-32).

Ver. 1. *And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech,* etc.] Or had been ^{f784}, before the flood, and from that time to this, and still was, until the confusion took place; the account of which, and the occasion of it, are given in this chapter: by the whole earth is meant the inhabitants of it, (see ^{<2378>}Isaiah 37:18 ^{<1104>}1 Kings 10:24) and so the Jerusalem Targum paraphrases the words,

“and all the generations of the earth were of one language, and of one speech, and of one counsel, for they spoke in the holy tongue in which the world was created at the beginning;”

and to the same purpose the Targum of Jonathan: all the posterity of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, used the same language, though it does not appear that they were all in one counsel or consultation, or of one mind about building a city or tower, which the Targum seems to suggest; for it is not likely that Shem and his sons were in it: nor by “one lip” and “the same words or things” ^{f785}, as these phrases may be rendered, are we to understand the same simplicity of speech and business, and likeness of manners; for it appears there was a difference with respect to these in the immediate sons

of Noah, and it may be supposed to be much more in their remote offspring; nor as if they were all of the same religion, embraced the same doctrines, and spoke the same things; for as idolatry and superstition obtained in the race of Cain before the flood, so Ham and his posterity soon fell into the same, or the like, afterwards: and it may be observed that the same distinction was made of the children of God, and of the children of men, before the confusion and dispersion, as was before the flood, (^{<OHIO>}Genesis 11:5) from whence it appears they were not in the same sentiments and practice of religion: but this is to be understood of one and the same language, without any diversity of dialects, or without any hard and strange words, not easily understood; and perhaps it was pronounced by the lip and other instruments of speech in the same way; so that there was no difficulty in understanding one another, men, women, and children, all the people in common, princes and peasants, wise and unwise, all spoke the same language and used the same words; and this the Targumists take to be the holy or Hebrew language; and so Jarchi and Aben Ezra, and the Jewish writers in general, and most Christians; though some make a question of it, whether it might not be rather the Syriac, or Chaldee, or Arabic; but there is no need of such a question, since these with the Hebrew are all one and the same language; and no doubt it was the eastern language, without giving it any other name, which now subsists in the above dialects, though not in anyone alone, which was first spoken; though more purely and without the difference of dialects it now consists of, or without the various different inflexions now made in it; for nothing is more reasonable to suppose, than that the language Adam spoke was used by Noah, since Adam lived within one hundred years and a little more of the birth of Noah; and it is not to be questioned but Noah's sons spoke the same language as he did, and their posterity now, which was but little more than one hundred years after the flood: there are various testimonies of Heathens confirming this truth, that originally men spoke but one language; thus Sibylla in Josephus ^{f786}, who says,

“when all men were **ομοφωνων**, of the same language, some began to build a most high tower, etc.”

so Abydenus ^{f787} an Heathen historian, speaking of the building of the tower of Babel, says,

“at that time men were **ομογλωσσους**, of the same tongue;”

in like manner Hyginus^{f788}, speaking of Phoroneus, the first of mortals, that reigned, says,

“many ages before, men lived without towns and laws, “una lingua loquentes”, speaking one language, under the empire of Jove.”

Ver. 2. *And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east*, etc.] That is, the inhabitants of the whole earth; not Ham and his posterity only, or Nimrod and his company; but as all the sons of Noah and his posterity for a while dwelt together, or at least very near each other, and finding the place where they were too scanty for them, as their several families increased, they set out in a body from the place where they were, to seek for a more convenient one: it seems a little difficult how to interpret this phrase, “from the east”, since if they came from Ararat in Armenia, where the ark rested, as that lay north of Shinar or Babylon, they might rather be said to come from the north than from the east, and rather came to it than from it: so some think the phrase should be rendered, “to the east”^{f789}, or eastward, as in (-(0131)-Genesis 13:11). Jarchi thinks this refers to (-(0100)-Genesis 10:30) “and their dwelling was”, etc. at “the mountain of the east”; from whence he supposes they journeyed, to find out a place that would hold them all, but could find none but Shinar; but then this restrains it to Joktan’s sons, and besides, their dwelling there was not until after the confusion and dispersion. But it is very probable the case was this, that when Noah and his sons came out of the ark, in a little time they betook themselves to their former habitation, from whence they had entered into the ark, namely, to the east of the garden of Eden, where was the appearance of the divine Presence, or Shechinah; and from hence it was that these now journeyed: and so it was as they were passing on,

that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; which the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases the land of Babylon; and Hestiaeus^{f790}, a Phoenician historian, calls it Sennaar of Babylon; there are plain traces of this name in the Singara of Ptolemy^{f791} and Pliny^{f792}, the Hebrew letter [being sometimes pronounced as “G”, as in Gaza and Gomorrah; the first of these place a city of this name in Mesopotamia, near the Tigris, and that of the other is reckoned a capital of the Rhetavi, a tribe of the Arabs, near Mesopotamia. This plain was very large, fruitful, and delightful, and therefore judged a fit place for a settlement, where they might have room enough, and which promised them a sufficient sustenance:

and they dwelt there; and provided for their continuance, quickly beginning to build a city and tower, afterwards called Babylon: and that Babylon was built in a large plain is not only here asserted, but is confirmed by Herodotus ^{f793}, who says of it, that it lay *εν πεδιω μεγαλω*, in a vast plain, and so Strabo ^{f794}, which was no other than the plain of Shinar.

Ver. 3. *And they said one to another, go to*, etc.] Advising, exhorting, stirring up, and encouraging one another to the work proposed, of building a city and tower for their habitation and protection; saying,

let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly; they knew the nature of bricks, and how to make them before: according to Sanchoniatho ^{f795}, the brothers of Vulcan, or Tubalcain, before the flood, were the first inventors of them; for he relates, that

“there are some that say that his brothers invented the way of making walls of bricks: he adds, that from the generation of Vulcan came two brothers, who invented the way of mixing straw or stubble with brick clay, and to dry them by the sun, and so found out tiling of houses.”

Now in the plain of Shinar, though it afforded no stones, yet they could dig clay enough to make bricks, and which they proposed to burn thoroughly, that they might be fit for their purpose. According to an eastern tradition ^{f796}, they were three years employed in making and burning those bricks, each of which was thirteen cubits long, ten broad, and five thick, and were forty years in building:

and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar: they could not get stone, which they would have chosen, as more durable; they got the best bricks they could make, and instead of mortar they used slime; or what the Septuagint version calls “asphaltos”, a bitumen, or kind of pitch, of which there was great plenty in that neighbourhood. Herodotus ^{f797} speaking of the building of Babylon, uses language very much like the Scripture;

“digging a foss or ditch (says he), the earth which was cast up they formed into bricks, and drawing large ones, they burnt them in furnaces, using for lime or mortar hot asphaltos or bitumen.”

And he observes, that

“Eight days journey from Babylon was another city, called Is, where was a small river of the same name, which ran into the river Euphrates, and with its water were carried many lumps of bitumen, and from hence it was conveyed to the walls of Babylon.”

This city is now called Ait, of which a traveller^{f798} of the last century gives the following account;

“from the ruins of old Babylon we came to a town called Ait, inhabited only with Arabians, but very ruinous; near unto which town is a valley of pitch, very marvellous to behold, and a thing almost incredible wherein are many springs throwing out abundantly a kind of black substance, like unto tar and pitch, which serveth all the countries thereabout to make staunch their barks and boats; everyone of which springs makes a noise like a smith’s forge, which never ceaseth night nor day, and the noise is heard a mile off, swallowing up all weighty things that come upon it; the Moors call it “the mouth of hell.””

Curtius relates^{f799}, that Alexander, in his march to Babylon, came to a city called Mennis, where was a cavern, from whence a fountain threw out a vast quantity of bitumen or pitch; so that, says he, it is plain, that the huge walls of Babylon were daubed with the bitumen of this fountain; and he afterwards speaks of the walls, towers, and houses, being built of brick, and cemented with it; and so Diodorus Siculus says^{f800} from Ctesias, that the walls of Babylon were built of bricks, cemented with bitumen; and not only these, but all Heathen authors that write of Babylon, confirm this; and not only historians, but poets, of which Bochart^{f801} has made a large collection; as well as Josephus^{f802} speaks of it, and this sort of pitch still remains. Rauwolff says^{f803} near the bridge over the Euphrates, where Babylon stood, are several heaps of Babylonian pitch, which is in some places grown so hard, that you may walk over it; but in others, that which hath been lately brought over thither is so soft, that you may see every step you make in it.

Ver. 4. *And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower,* etc.] Some Jewish writers^{f804} say, these are the words of Nimrod to his people; but it is a question whether he was now born, or if he was, must be too young to be at the head of such a body of people; but they are spoken to one another, or by the principal men among them to the common people, advising and encouraging to such an undertaking. It is generally thought

what led them to it was to secure them from another flood, they might be in fear of; but this seems not likely, since they had the covenant and oath of God, that the earth should never be destroyed by water any more; and besides, had this been the thing in view, they would not have chosen a plain to build on, a plain that lay between two of the greatest rivers, Tigris, and Euphrates, but rather one of the highest mountains and hills they could have found: nor could a building of brick be a sufficient defence against such a force of water, as the waters of the flood were; and besides, but few at most could be preserved at the top of the tower, to which, in such a case, they would have betook themselves. The reason of this building is given in a following clause, as will be observed. Some think by “a city and tower” is meant, by the figure “hendyadis”, one and the same thing, a city with towers; and, according to Ctesias^{f805}, there were two hundred and fifty towers in Babylon: but no doubt the city and tower were two distinct things; or there was one particular tower proposed to be built besides the city, though it might stand in it, or near it, as an acropolis or citadel to it; as it is not unusual in cities to have such, to betake unto in case of danger:

whose top [may reach] unto heaven: not that they imagined such a thing could be literally and strictly done, but that it should be raised exceeding high, like the cities in Canaan, said to be walled up to heaven, (^(~~4~~128)Deuteronomy 1:28 9:1) hyperbolically speaking; and such was the tower of Babel, by all accounts, even of Heathens: the Sibyl in Josephus^{f806} calls it a most high tower; and so Abydenus^{f807} reports;

“there are (says he) that say, that the first men that rose out of the earth, proud of their strength and largeness (of their bodies), and thinking themselves greater than the gods, erected a tower of a vast height, near to heaven, where Babylon now is.”

And the temple of Belus, which some take to be the same with this tower, at least was that perfected, and put to such an use, was, according to Ctesias^{f808}, of an immense height, where the Chaldeans made their observations of the stars: however, the tower that was in the middle of it, and which seems plainly to be the same with this, was exceeding high: the account Herodotus^{f809} gives of it is,

“in the midst of the temple a solid tower is built, of a furlong in length, and of as much in breadth; and upon this tower another tower is placed, and another upon that, and so on to eight towers.”

μηκος, the word used by Herodotus, translated “length”, signifies also “height”, and so it is taken here by some; and if so, it looks as if every tower was a furlong high, which makes the whole a mile, which is too extravagant to suppose, though it may denote the height of them all, a furlong, which makes it a very high building. This agrees with Strabo’s account of it, who calls it a pyramid, and says it was a furlong high ^{f810}: according to Rauwolff ^{f811}, the tower of Babel is still in being; this, says he, we saw still (in 1574), and it is half a league in diameter; but it is so mightily ruined, and low, and so full of vermin, that hath bored holes through it, that one may not come near it for half a mile, but only in two months in the winter, when they come not out of their holes. Another traveller ^{f812}, that was in those parts at the beginning of the last century, says,

“now at this day, that which remaineth is called the remnant of the tower of Babel; there standing as much as is a quarter of a mile in compass, and as high as the stone work of Paul’s steeple in London--the bricks are three quarters of a yard in length, and a quarter in thickness, and between every course of bricks there lieth a course of mats, made of canes and palm tree leaves, so fresh as if they had been laid within one year.”

Not to take notice of the extravagant account of the eastern writers, who say the tower was 5533 fathoms high ^{f813}; and others, beyond all belief, make it 10,000 fathoms, or twelve miles high ^{f814}; and they say the builders were forty years in building it: their design in it follows,

and let us make us a name; which some render “a sign” ^{f815}, and suppose it to be a signal set upon the top of the tower, which served as a beacon, by the sight of which they might be preserved from straying in the open plains with their flocks, or return again when they had strayed. Others take it to be an idol proposed to be set upon the top of the tower; and the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem intimate as if the tower was built for religious worship, paraphrasing the words,

“let us build in the midst of it a temple of worship on the top of it, and let us put a sword into his (the idol’s) hand.”

And it is the conjecture of Dr. Tennison, in his book of idolatry, that this tower was consecrated by the builders of it to the sun, as the cause of drying up the waters of the deluge: but the sense is, that they proposed by

erecting such an edifice to spread their fame, and perpetuate their name to the latest posterity, that hereby it might be known, that at such a time, and in such a place, were such a body of people, even all the inhabitants of the world; and all of them the sons of one man, as Ben Gersom observes; so that as long as this tower stood, they would be had in remembrance, it being called after their names; just as the Egyptian kings afterwards built their pyramids, perhaps for a like reason; and in which the end of neither have been answered, it not being known who were by name concerned therein, (see ^{f816}Psalm 49:11) though a late learned writer ^{f816} thinks, that by making a name is meant choosing a chief or captain, which was proposed by them; and that the person they pitched upon was Nimrod, in which sense the word he supposes is used, (^{f817}2 Samuel 23:17-19) but what has been observed at the beginning of this note may be objected to it; though Berosus ^{f817} says, that Nimrod came with his people into the plain of Sannaar, where he marked out a city, and founded the largest tower, in the year of deliverance from the waters of the flood one hundred and thirty one, and reigned fifty six years; and carried the tower to the height and size of mountains, “for a sign” and “monument”, that the people of Babylon were the first in the world, and ought to be called the kingdom of kingdoms; which last clause agrees with the sense given:

lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth: which they seemed to have some notion of, and feared would be their case, liking better to be together than to separate, and therefore were careful to avoid a dispersion; it being some way or other signified to them, that it was the will of God they should divide into colonies, and settle in different parts, that so the whole earth might be inhabited; or Noah, or some others, had proposed a division of the earth among them, each to take his part, which they did not care to hearken to; and therefore, to prevent such a separation, proposed the above scheme, and pursued it.

Ver. 5. *And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower,* etc.] Not locally or visibly, being immense, omnipresent, and invisible; nor in order to see and take notice of what he otherwise could not see from heaven, for he is omniscient; but this is spoken after the manner of men, and is to be understood of some effects and displays of his power, which were manifest, and showed him to be present: the Targum is,

“and the Lord was revealed to take vengeance on them on account of the business of the city and tower the children of men built.”

This shows the patience and longsuffering of God, that he did not immediately proceed against them, and his wisdom and justice in taking cognizance of the affair, and inquiring into it; examining the truth and reality of things before he passed judgment and took measures to hinder them in the execution of their design; all which must be understood agreeably to the divine Majesty, and as accommodated to the capacities of men, and as an instruction to them in judging matters they have a concern in:

which the children of men builded; or were building, for they had not finished their building, at least not the city, as appears from (⁰¹¹⁰⁸Genesis 11:8). These were either the whole body of the people, under the general appellation of “the children of men”: or else a part of them, distinguished by this character from the “sons of God”, who were truly religious; by which it seems that Noah, Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, and others, were not concerned in this affair, who though they might come with the rest unto Shinar, yet when they understood their design, refused to join with them in it; so that it was only the carnal and irreligious part of them, who very probably were by far the majority, and therefore there was no overruling their debates, and stopping them in their works, that were the builders; and these might be the posterity of Ham in general, with others of Shem and Japheth mixed with them. Josephus^{f818} makes Nimrod to be the head of them, which is not likely, as before observed.

Ver. 6. *And the Lord said*, etc.] Not to the angels, as Aben Ezra, but rather to the Son and Spirit, or within himself:

behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; which some think is spoken ironically; but I see no reason why it may not be understood seriously, that the people who were concerned in this building were unanimous, not only in their religious principles, such as they were, as Aben Ezra, but in their counsel, purpose, and design in building; they went on with great concord, harmony, and vigour, and being of one language, they understood one another, and so could carry on their work with the greater expedition:

and this they begin to do; to build the city and the tower, and had made considerable progress in it:

and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do; they had prepared bricks, and slime or bitumen, a sufficient quantity

for their use, or could easily come at more if they wanted; and they were not to be prevailed upon to desist from their work, by any advice that the sons of God could give them; they were obstinate and self-willed, and not to be argued with and persuaded to leave off; and there was no power on earth superior to them, to oblige them to it; they could only be restrained from their enterprise, and hindered from executing it, by divine power; and which was judged necessary to exert, as appears by what follows: and the words may be rendered, “shall they not be restrained? etc.” they shall.

Ver. 7. *Go to, let us go down, [and] there confound their language,* etc.] These words are not spoken to the angels, as the Targum and Aben Ezra; for, as Philo the Jew observes^{f819}, they are said to some as co-workers with God, which angels could not be in this work of confounding the language of men; it being above the power of creatures so to work upon the mind, and on the faculty of speech, as to make such an alteration as was at the confusion of tongues, when men were made to forget their former language, and had another put into their minds, and a faculty of speaking it given; or, however, the first language was so differently inflected and pronounced, that it seemed another, and various; all which could not be done but by him who is almighty, even that Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, said (^{Gen 11:8}Genesis 11:8) to confound man’s language; and the first of these speaks to the other two, with whom he consulted about doing it, and with whom he did it. Not that every man had a new and distinct language given him, for then there could have been no society and converse in the world, but one was given to each family; or rather to as many families as constituted a nation or colony, designed for the same place of habitation; how many there were, cannot be said with any certainty. Euphorus, and many other historians^{f820}, say they were seventy five, according to the number of Jacob’s posterity that went down into Egypt; others say seventy two: the Jewish writers generally agree with the Targum of Jonathan in making them seventy, according to the number of the posterity of Noah’s sons, recorded in the preceding chapter; but several of them spoke the same language, as Ashur, Arphaxad, and Aram, spoke the Chaldee or Syriac language; the sons of Canaan one and the same language; and the thirteen sons of Joktan the Arabic language; Javari and Elisha the Greek language; so that, as Bochart^{f821} observes, scarce thirty of the seventy will remain distinct: and it is an observation of Dr. Lightfoot^{f822} not to be despised, that

“the fifteen named in (^{f816}Acts 2:5-11) were enough to confound the work (at Babel), and they may very well be supposed to have been the whole number.”

The end to be answered it was,

that they may not understand one another's speech; or “hear”^{f823}, that is, so as to understand; the words were so changed, and so differently pronounced from what they had used to hear, that though they heard the sound, they could not tell the meaning of them: hence, as Jarchi observes, when one asked for a brick, another brought him clay or slime, on which he rose up against him, and dashed his brains out.

Ver. 8. *So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence, upon the face of all the earth*, etc.] Hence that which they feared came upon them, and what they were so careful to guard against befell them, occasioned by those measures they took to secure themselves from it; for not being able to understand one another, they left off their design, and as many as spoke the same language joined together, and so parted in bodies; some went one way, and some another, and settled in different places, until at length, by degrees, the whole world was peopled by them, which was the will of God should be done, and was brought about in this way. The Heathen writers themselves ascribe this dispersion to a divine Being, as well as speaking different tongues. Eupolemus^{f824} says, that first the city of Babylon was built by those that were saved from the flood, who were giants; and then they built tower, so much spoken of in history, which falling by the power of God, the giants were “scattered throughout the whole earth”. One would think this writer, by his language, must have read this account of Moses: some of them say the fall of the tower was by storms and tempests raised by the gods. So the Sybil in Josephus^{f825} says,

“the gods sending winds overthrew the tower, and gave to every one his own speech, and hence the city came to be called Babylon.”

Agreeably to which Abydenus^{f826}, an Assyrian writer, relates, that

“the winds being raised by the gods overthrew the mechanism (the tower) upon them (the builders of it), and out of the ruins of it was the city called Babylon, when those who were of the same language, from the gods spoke a different one, and of various sounds.”

And so Hestiaeus^{f827}, a Phoenician writer, speaking of those who came to Sennaar or Shinar of Babylon, says, from thence they were scattered; and, because of the diversity of language, formed colonies everywhere, and everyone seized on that land which offered to him. These writers indeed seem to be mistaken as to the destruction of the tower, and that by tempestuous winds; otherwise they agree with Moses in the confusion of languages, and scattering of the people at the tower of Babel: in what year this was done is not certain; it was in the days of Peleg, who was born in the year one hundred and one after the flood; and if it was at the time of his birth, as many are of opinion, both Jews^{f828} and Christians, it must be in the above year; but the phrase used does not determine that: the eastern writers^{f829} say, that it was in the fortieth year of the life of Peleg, and then it must be in the year after the flood one hundred and forty one; but others, and which is the common opinion of the Jewish chronologers^{f830}, say it was at the end of Peleg's days; and whereas he lived two hundred and thirty nine years, this must happen in the year three hundred and forty after the flood, and so it was ten years, as they observe, before the death of Noah, and when Abraham was forty eight years of age. But of this see more in Buxtorf's dissertation concerning the confusion of the Hebrew language. It follows here,

and they left off to build the city; it seems they had finished the tower, but not the city, and therefore are only said to leave off building that; though the Samaritan and Septuagint versions add, "and the tower"; for not understanding one another, they were not able to go on with their work, for when they asked for one thing, as before observed out of Jarchi, they had another brought them; which so enraged them, that the Targum of Jonathan says they killed one another; and, say some Jewish writers^{f831}, they fought one with another upon this occasion, until half the world fell by the sword.

Ver. 9. *Therefore is the name of it called Babel*, etc.] The name of the city mentioned, and the tower also, which signifies "confusion", as the Septuagint version renders it; and so Josephus^{f832} says the Hebrews call confusion "Babel": perhaps this name was given it by the sons of Eber, or it might be a common name preserved in all languages, as some are; and though the first builders desisted from going on with building it, yet it seems that afterwards Nimrod went on with it, and completed it, and made it the beginning of his kingdom, or his capital city; and perhaps he and his

family might continue after the confusion and dispersion somewhere near unto it, (see ⁻⁰¹⁰⁰Genesis 10:10). The reason of its name is given,

because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and therefore it is false what is said by some, that the above city had its name from Babylon, the son of Belus:

and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth; which is repeated for the confirmation of it, and that it might be taken notice of and observed as a very wonderful and important event. These Babel builders were an emblem of self-righteous persons, who, as those were, are the greater part of the world, and, under different forms of religion, are all upon the same foot of a covenant of works; they all speak the same language; and indeed all men naturally do, declaring and seeking for justification by their own works; and journey from the east, depart from Christ, one of whose names is the east, or rising sun; they turn their backs on him and his righteousness; build on a plain, not on a rock or mountain, but on the sandy bottom of their own works, in a land of Shinar, or shaking, on a tottering foundation; their view is to get themselves a name, to be seen of men, and be applauded for their work sake, and that they might reach heaven, and get to it this way; but the issue of all is confusion and scattering abroad; for upon the foot of their own righteousness they can never enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Ver. 10. *These are the generations of Shem,* etc.] Or a genealogy of the posterity of Shem; not of all of them, only of those of the line which led to Abraham, by which might appear the true line in which the Messiah from Adam through Abraham sprung:

Shem was one hundred years old, and begat Arphexad two years after the flood; by which it is pretty plain that he was younger than Japheth; (see Gill on "⁻⁰¹⁰¹Genesis 10:21") of Arphaxad his son, (see Gill on "⁻⁰¹⁰²Genesis 10:22").

Ver. 11. *And Shem lived, after he begat Arphaxad, five hundred years,* etc.] So that his whole age was six hundred years, and therefore must live to the times of Abraham, and even throughout the life of that patriarch, or near the end of it; and if he was the same with Melchizedek, as is the general opinion of the Jews, and is embraced by many Christians, they had an interview with each other:

and begat sons and daughters; of whom we have no account, because the Messiah did not spring from them; the design of this genealogy being to carry down his direct line from Shem to Abraham: it is to be observed, that in the account of the patriarchs, and their children after the flood, it is not added as before the flood, “and he died”, their lives being long, that remark is made; but the lives of these being shorter, and gradually decreasing, it is omitted. An Arabic writer ^{f833} says, that Shem died in the month Elul, on a Friday, at the close of the year of the world 2758. A Jewish writer ^{f834} says, he died in the fifteenth year of Jacob, and that he saw twelve generations; according to Bishop Usher, he died A. M. 2158.

Ver. 12. *And Arphaxad lived thirty five years, and begat Salah.*]

Arphaxad is the first on record that had a son born to him so early; of Salah, (see Gill on “⁰¹⁰²⁴Genesis 10:24”).

Ver. 13. *And Arphaxad lived, after he begat Salah, four hundred and three years,* etc.] In all four hundred and thirty eight; the Vulgate Latin wrongly reads, three hundred and three:

and begat sons and daughters; not mentioned by name: he died, as the above Arabic writer ^{f835} says, in the month Nisan, A. M. 2696; and a Jewish writer ^{f836} says he died in the forty eighth year of Isaac, and who also says ^{f837}, that in his days they began to build the city of Babel.

Ver. 14. *And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber.*] He had a son born to him five years sooner than his father had; of Eber, (see Gill on “⁰¹⁰²⁵Genesis 10:25”).

Ver. 15. *And Salah lived, after he begat Eber, four hundred and three years,* etc.] In all four hundred and thirty three:

and begat sons and daughters; of whom also there is no other account: the same Arabic writer ^{f838} says, he died in the month, Adar, which is called Barhamath, at the close of A. M. 2950; and the Jewish chronologer ^{f839} says, he died in the fourteenth year of Jacob.

Ver. 16. *And Eber lived thirty four years, and begat Peleg.*] Of Peleg, (see Gill on “⁰¹⁰²⁵Genesis 10:25”).

Ver. 17. *And Eber lived, after he begat Peleg, four hundred and thirty years,* etc.] All the years of his life were four hundred and sixty four:

and he begat sons and daughters; one of which is elsewhere mentioned, whose name is Joktan, (^{<HEB>}Genesis 10:25) according to the above Jewish writer ^{f840}, he died in the seventy ninth year of Jacob.

Ver. 18. *And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu.*] Or Ragau, as he is called in the Septuagint version, the letter [being pronounced as a “G”, as in Gaza and Gomorrah: he is supposed to give name to a large plain called Ragau, near Assyria, about Tigris and Euphrates,

“Even in those days king Nabuchodonosor made war with king Arphaxad in the great plain, which is the plain in the borders of Ragau.” (Judith 1:5)

and to Ragis in Media,

“In that day Tobit remembered the money which he had committed to Gabael in Rages of Media,” (Tobit 4:1)

where Strabo ^{f841} makes mention of a city of the same name.

Ver. 19. *And Peleg lived, after he begat Reu, two hundred and nine years,* etc.] In all two hundred and thirty nine, little more than half the age of his father:

and begat sons and daughters; but not named the Arabic writers ^{f842} say he begat Melchizedek the priest, and that he died in the month Elul, A. M. 3126; and a Jewish writer ^{f843} says he died in the forty eighth year of Abraham.

Ver. 20. *And Reu lived thirty two years, and begat Serug.*] He is thought to give name to a city called Sarug, which, according to the Arabic geographer ^{f844}, was near Charrae, or Haran, in Chaldea; and another Arabic writer ^{f845} speaks of a city called to this day <Arabic> “Sarug”, which he places in Mesopotamia.

Ver. 21. *And Reu lived, after he begat Sarug, two hundred and seven years,* etc.] So that the whole of his life was two hundred and thirty nine years, the exact age of his father: in his days various kingdoms arose; according to the Arabic writer ^{f846}, in the one hundred and thirtieth year of his life began Nimrod to reign at Babylon, the first king that reigned on earth: and according to the Jewish writers ^{f847}, in his days began the kingdom of Egypt, which continued to the times of Octavian; and the kingdom of the Bohemians, the metropolis of which was Prague, and the

kingdom of the Amazons, which continued to the times of Alexander: in his time also, the Arabic writers ^{f848} say, idolatry prevailed, the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, and other things; and images of men and women were made by the Babylonians and Egyptians, and worshipped by them:

and he begat sons and daughters of whom no account is given; according to a Jewish writer ^{f849}, he died in the seventy fifth year of Abraham.

Ver. 22. *And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor.*] The grandfather of Abraham, one of the same name was Abraham's brother, (^{<01126>}Genesis 11:26).

Ver. 23. *And Serug lived, after he begat Nahor, two hundred years,* etc.]. The years of his life were two hundred and thirty:

and he begat sons and daughters; nowhere else mentioned: he died, according to the above Jewish writer ^{f850}, in the one hundredth year of Abraham, and in his days, according to the eastern writers ^{f851}, idolatry began, and the kingdom of Damascus was set up ^{f852}; and Samirus, king of the Chaldeans, invented weights and measures, weaving silk, and the art of dying ^{f853}.

Ver. 24. *And Nahor lived twenty nine years, and begat Terah.*] The father of Abraham, and the first of the patriarchs of this line of Shem that fell off from the true religion to idolatry.

Ver. 25. *And Nahor lived, after he begat Terah, one hundred and nineteen years,* etc.] In all one hundred and forty eight years; so sensibly did the lives of the patriarchs decrease: in the days of Nahor, the Arabic writers ^{f854} say, was a great earthquake, which had never been observed before; idolaters increasing and offering their children to demons, God raised a tempest like a deluge, which broke their images and destroyed their temples in Arabia, and covered them in heaps of sand, which remained to the days of those writers, as they affirm: in his days it is also said Spain, Portugal, and Arragon were founded ^{f855}:

and begat sons and daughters; of whom no other account is given: he died, as a Jewish chronologer says ^{f856}, in the one hundred and tenth year of Abraham.

Ver. 26. *And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.*] Abram, though named first, does not appear to be the eldest, but

rather Haran; nay, it seems pretty plain that Abram was not born until the one hundred and thirtieth year of his father's life, for Terah was two hundred and five years old when he died, (^{<0113>}Genesis 11:32) and Abram was but seventy five years of age when he went out of Haran to Canaan, (^{<0113>}Genesis 12:4) and that was as soon as his father died there; and so that if seventy five are taken out two hundred and five, there will remain one hundred and thirty, in which year and not before Abram must be born: the wife of Terah, of whom Abram was born, according to the Jewish writers ^{f857}, her name was Chamtelaah, the daughter of Carnebo, or as others ^{f858} call her, Amthalai; but by the Arabic writers ^{f859} she is called Juna: the Jews say ^{f860} Terah was the first that found out the way of coining money, and that in his days men began to worship images, and that he was the chief of their priests, but afterwards repented; and that he was an idolater appears from (^{<0242>}Joshua 24:2).

Ver. 27. *Now these are the generations of Terah*, etc.] Or the genealogy of his posterity, which is a very short one; for it only gives an account of his three sons as before,

Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran: and of three grand children, Lot, Milcah, and Iscah, the children of Haran; and chiefly for the sake of Abram it is given, and indeed the above genealogy of Shem, which ends with him; and of whom and whose posterity the remaining part of this book of Genesis treats:

and Haran begat Lot: of whom we have some further account in (^{<0113>}Genesis 13:1-14:24 19:1-38).

Ver. 28. *And Haran died before his father Terah*, etc.] In his father's presence, before his face, in his life time, as Jarchi; he seeing him, as Aben Ezra: it does not so much respect the time of his death, that it was before his father, though that is true, as the place where he died, his father being present there at the time this was;

in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees; Ur, which Ben Melech renders a valley, was the place of his birth, as it was of Abram's; it was in Mesopotamia, that part of it next to Assyria being called the land of the Chaldeans; hence these are spoken of as the same by Stephen, (^{<4113>}Acts 7:2,4) mention is made by Pliny ^{f861}, of a place in those parts called Ura, which seems to be the same with this: Eupolemus ^{f862} says,

“that Abram was born at Camarine, a city of Babylon, some call Urie, and is interpreted a city of the Chaldeans;”

now Camarine is from **rmk**, “Camar”, to heat or burn, and Ur signifies fire, so that both words are of the same signification: Josephus ^{f863} says, that Haran died among the Chaldeans, in a city called Ur of the Chaldees, where, he adds, his grave is shown to this day: the Jews ^{f864} have a fable concerning the death of Haran; they say that Terah was not only an idolater, but a maker and seller of images; and that one day going abroad, he left his son Abraham in the shop to sell them, who, during his father’s absence, broke them all to pieces, except one; upon which, when Terah returned and found what was done, he had him before Nimrod, who ordered him to be cast into a burning furnace, and he should see whether the God he worshipped would come and save him; and while he was in it, they asked his brother Haran in whom he believed? he answered, if Abraham overcomes, he would believe in his God, but if not, in Nimrod; wherefore they cast him into the furnace, and he was burnt; and with respect to this it is said, “and Haran died before the face of Terah his father”; but Abraham came out safe before the eyes of them all.

Ver. 29. *And Abram and Nahor took them wives*, etc.] Very probably after the death of their elder brother Haran, whose daughters they married, at least one of them did, and some think both;

the name of Abraham’s wife was Sarai: it is not said whose daughter she was, unless she is the same with Ischah, the daughter of Haran, and so had two names, Ischah her name before marriage, Sarai after it, Abram calling her “my mistress”, as “Sarai” signifies, as she called him my lord: so the Targum of Jonathan, Ischah, this is Sarai; in like manner Jarchi, Baal Hatturim, and other Jewish writers ^{f865}, take them to be the same; but according to (⁻⁰²⁰²Genesis 20:12) Sarai should be the daughter of Terah, the father of Abraham, by another woman; and so the Arabic writers ^{f866} say,

“the mother of Abraham died, whose name was Juna; and Terah married another wife, whose name was Lahazib; she bore him Sarah, whom Abraham afterwards married:”

[and] the name of Nahor’s wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Ischah: so that Nahor married his brother’s daughter, which sort of marriage was then allowed of, as formerly that of own brothers and sisters, but afterwards was strictly forbidden in the

Levitical law: this account is given of Nahor's wife, as Aben Ezra observes, to show the pedigree of Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah: some think, as before observed, that Abram married the other daughter of his brother Haran, Iscah, and that she is the same with Sarai; and indeed, without supposing that, it is difficult to conceive for what reason this should be observed, that Haran, the father of Milcah, was also the father of Iscah; and if Sarai is not Iscah, no account is given by Moses of her descent, which may seem strange; and it can hardly be thought he would omit it, when it must be so agreeable to his people to know from whom they descended, both by the father's and mother's side.

Ver. 30. *But Sarai was barren; she had no child.*] Aben Ezra observes, there are some that say that Abraham was impotent, and not Sarai barren; the very reverse of the Scriptures; but as he rightly adds, his son Ishmael and his sons by Keturah show the contrary, (see ^{<0152>}Genesis 15:2 16:1).

Ver. 31. *And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife,* etc.] Many words are made use of in describing Lot and Sarai, and yet still we are left pretty much in the dark who Sarai was; for, as Aben Ezra observes, if she was the sister of Abram and daughter of Terah, the Scripture would have said, Terah took Abram his son and Sarai his daughter, and wife of Abram; and if she was the sister of Lot, it would have said, and Sarai the daughter of his son, as it does of Lot:

and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; that is, as Jarchi interprets it, Terah and Abram went forth with Lot and Sarai, or "with them" may mean with Nahor and Milcah: for Josephus ^{f867} says, that all went into Charan of Mesopotamia, the whole family of Terah; and the Arabic historian ^{f868} is express for it,

"Terah went out from Chorasán, and with him Abram, Nahor, Lot, his children, and their wives, and he went to Charan, where he dwelt:"

and it is certain, if Nahor and his wife did not set out with them, they followed them afterwards, for Haran was the city of Nahor, where his family in later times dwelt, (see ^{<0140>}Genesis 14:10,15 27:43 29:4,5) what moved Terah to depart from Ur of the Chaldees seems to be the call of God to Abram, which, though after related, was previous to this; and he acquainting his father Terah with it, he listened to it, being now convinced

of his idolatry and converted from it, and readily obeyed the divine will; and being the father of Abram, is represented as the head of the family, as he was, and their leader in this transaction; who encouraged their departure from the idolatrous country in which they were, and set out with them to seek another, where they might more freely and safely worship the true God. Though Josephus^{f869} represents it in this light, that Terah hating the country of Chaldea, because of the mourning of Haran, he and all his went out from thence:

and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there; which Josephus^{f870} calls Charan of Mesopotamia, and yet Stephen speaks of Abraham being in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Charan; but then Mesopotamia is to be taken both in a more general and a more limited sense; in general, it took in Mesopotamia and Chaldea, and in the eastern part of it was Ur of the Chaldees, and when Abram came from thence to Haran, he came into Mesopotamia, strictly so called. Stephen calls it Charran it is by Herodian^{f871} called *καρραι*, by Ptolemy^{f872} Carrae, by Pliny^{f873} Carra, a city famous in Lucan^{f874} for the slaughter of Crassus, by whom it is called an Assyrian city. Benjamin of Tudela^{f875} speaks of it as in being in his time, and as two days journey from the entrance into the land of Shinar or Mesopotamia; and says, that in that place where was the house of Abraham, there is no building on it, but the Ishmaelites (the Mahometans) honour the place, and come thither to pray. Rauwolff, who was in this town A. D. 1575, calls it Orpha; his account of it is this^{f876}, that it is a costly city, with a castle situated on the hill very pleasantly; that the town is very pleasant, pretty big, with fortifications well provided; and that some say it was anciently called Haran and Charras: a later traveller^{f877} says, who also calls it Orpha,

“the air of this city is very healthful, and the country fruitful; that it is built four square, the west part standing on the side of a rocky mountain, and the east part tendeth into a spacious valley, replenished with vineyards, orchards, and gardens: the walls are very strong, furnished with great store of artillery, and contain in circuit three English miles, and, for the gallantness of its sight, it was once reckoned the metropolitical seat of Mesopotamia.”

What detained Terah and his family here, when they intended to go further, is not said. Aben Ezra suggests, that the agreeableness of the place to Terah caused him to continue there; but it is very probable he was seized with a disease which obliged them to stay here, and of which he died.

Ver. 32. *And the days of Terah were two hundred years,* etc.] His days are summed up as none of the rest are in this genealogy, that it might be observed; his death being the time of Abram's leaving Chaldea and coming into the land of Canaan, given to him and his seed for an inheritance; (see ~~400~~ Acts 7:4,5)

and Terah died in Haran: the Arabic historian ^{f878} says, he died in Haran in the month Elul, in the year of his age two hundred and sixty five; but he gives him sixty years too many: a Jewish chronologer ^{f879} says he died in the thirty fifth year of Isaac. Perhaps he gave the name to this place, where he dwelt a while, in memory of his son Haran, which before might be called by another name, Padanaram, as it seems to be called even after this; (see ~~1210~~ Genesis 24:10 25:20 28:2,5,10 29:4,5).