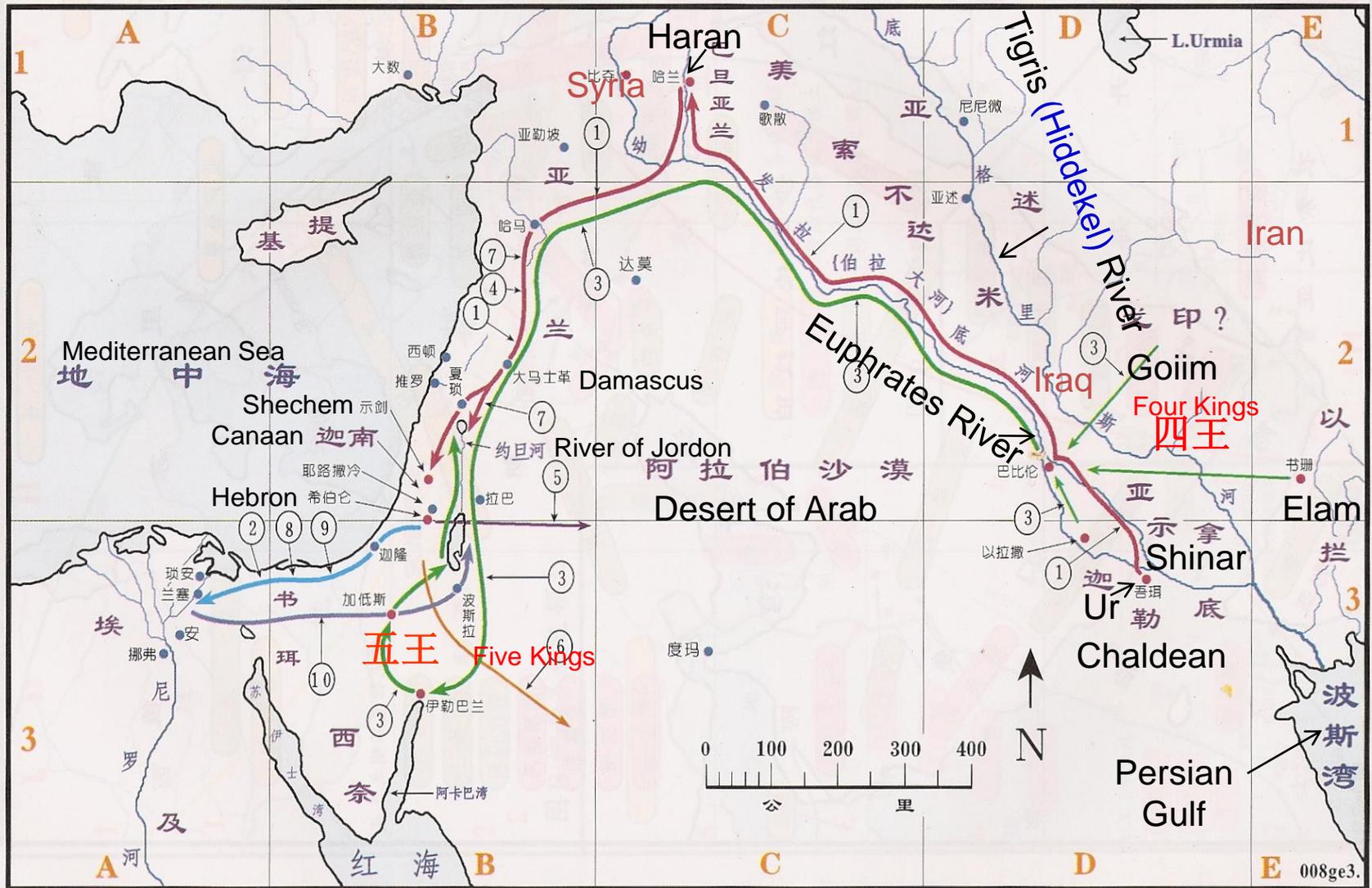


A summary of Genesis 12:1-9

- 1. Why did God especially call Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans? (Genesis 11:2,31;12:1).** “Ur” in Hebrew means “demons” or “robbers.” God called Abraham, and He also calls us, out of everything that robs us of knowing God, especially the manner of living that is detrimental to our physical and psychological lives. For example, if we are addicted to playing video games, our studies or our work will undoubtedly suffer, jeopardizing our chances of getting an adequate education and finding a good job. However, the land of the Chaldeans may signify more than something that robs our time or damages our humanity. In Genesis 11:2, the people of the earth journeyed and found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. Eventually, they built a city and a tower in order to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). As a result, God came in to scatter them and confound their language (v.8), causing the name of that place to be called “Babel,” which means “confusion” in Hebrew. Babel later became Babylon, the seat of the Babylonian empire. The city of Ur, where Abraham lived, was very close to Shinar. Therefore, Abraham lived in the midst of the Babylonian realm, and was subject to its influences. Ur, or Shinar, may signify power, opulence (riches) and control, much like Egypt at the time. The inhabitants of that land were already very powerful, but they had no vision of God. Thus, they could arrogantly build a city and a tower without any regard for God and His desire, and even justify themselves. They reveled in their power and abundance, but had no vision of God. They wanted to exalt their name, but not God’s name. This did not involve anything immoral or unrighteous towards any human being. What about us? For example, we may work day and night to get a promotion at our company, to move from an apartment to a house, then from a smaller house to a bigger house. There is nothing wrong with this. As we make more money or become more recognized, our name may become lifted up. God may become further and further from our thoughts and plans. We may even justify ourselves by giving our children’s education or providing for our parents as reasons, and they all may be legitimate. Yet God is not glorified. We trust in ourselves rather than in God. God wants to call us out of such a place, not just once, but again and again.
- 2. Abraham heard and listened to God’s calling. Do we hear the Lord’s speaking? (Hebrews 11:8).** God calls us, just as He called Abraham. Do we hear His speaking to us? Hebrews 11:8 says that “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” Abraham heard God’s calling and he responded by following God’s call. His response was his obedience. If we do not hear, how can we follow? Abraham followed God, but not 100%, as we will see as we consider his life. Yet he followed according to his capacity and “level of life.” If we follow, we will not follow 100%. But if we do not hear the Lord speak, we will not follow at all. How good it is to hear the Lord speak and follow only 20%! We should never underestimate the “little” steps that we take when we hear and respond to the Lord’s speaking. Did the Lord speak to us last year, last month, last week, yesterday, or this morning? Whenever He spoke to us, did we hear? If we heard, how did we respond? If we responded, how did the Lord bless (respond or answer) our response? And what is our next step? We all should aspire to have little testimonies of the Lord’s speaking in our lives. Better yet, we can exercise to write down such testimonies, not for the purpose of others reading them (though that may be quite beneficial), but rather first towards God, and then for ourselves. In other words, if we write down our testimony, we are writing firstly “to God” and second to “ourselves.” A testimony or an experience or even a repentance, when written, may carry more weight and can function as a reminder later in our lives, when we may, for example, be going through a period of doubt or weakness, of our response to the Lord and of His faithfulness and trustworthiness. Whether we write our testimony and keep it entirely private, or whether we publish it on the church website, is up to each one of us, but in so doing, we may solidify the Lord’s speaking in our lives and thereby even “set our mind on our spirit” (Romans 8:6).

- 3. What is the difference between God's calling of Abraham and Sarah and His calling of Noah and his family? (Genesis 6-12).** God called Noah to save him and his family. God also told him to be fruitful and multiply the earth (Genesis 8:17;9:1). The earth is also the land, but in a general sense. However, when God called Abraham, His calling was higher and more specific. For example, He told Abraham that He would bring him from his country, his kindred (relatives) and his father's house to a land that He would show him (Genesis 12:1). The land that God promised Abraham was more specific and concrete. Later, God would tell Abraham to lift up his eyes and walk in the land, and wherever his feet trod, He (God) would give it to him (Genesis 13:14,17). God's speaking to Abraham was high, higher than His speaking to Noah. That does not mean that Abraham understood everything God told him, and his responses and actions reflect his lack of understanding. Yet his lack of understanding did not deter God from fulfilling His higher purpose with Abraham. Noah built an altar and offered burnt offerings (Genesis 8:20) and God responded to Noah by making a covenant with him (8:21-22;9:9-17), consisting of His promise never to destroy the earth again with a flood. Abraham also built an altar and offered burnt offerings to God, but went a step further and called upon the name of the Lord (12:8). God also made a covenant with him, but this covenant was to give him the land and an offspring (13:14-14;15:7), a higher purpose than merely refraining from destroying all flesh with a flood. Are we willing to know God in such a way, not merely to be saved from our sins and receive eternal life, but also to grow and to know Christ (the seed or offspring) and His purpose (Christ as the seed in the saints) which is the church and the church life, and to walk in the "land," that is to have a field or an operation in the church life in order to raise up brothers and sisters to love the Lord, by accompanying them and preaching the gospel. Like Abraham, we may not understand, yet three months later, or three years later, we might understand. God is the One who not only speaks to us in such a high way, but also the One who will fulfill what He speaks.
- 4. God is the One who calls us and also brings us out. He is in control (Genesis 15:7).** Genesis 15:7 clearly states that it was God who brought Abraham out from Ur of the Chaldeans. It was not Terah his father or any human agent, but God who arranged his environment in such a positive way. If we look closely at the map, we will see that there were two rivers in the land of Chaldea that are not mentioned in Genesis 12 or later in the life of Abraham, yet are mentioned early in the Bible in Genesis 2:14. These are the Euphrates and the Hiddekel or Tigris. "Hiddekel" means "powerful." "Euphrates" means "fruitful, sweet." These two rivers flow through the land of Chaldea, but are used by God in a positive way to call Abraham out of such an environment. God uses many reasons in our environment to bring us out. For example, we may be well off, with a house and a good job. But these are not our purpose in life. We may have a good position, but we may not trust in it. Christ is still the center. The danger is that we may be trapped by Shinar (see point 1). However, if Christ is the center, and the church (the brothers and sisters) are our living, then the things in our environment (for example, what we possess) may become sweet and fruitful and even powerful for God to use to call us out to serve Him in a fruitful and powerful way. For example, God may use a person's diligence and creativity to serve the church, yet He will call such a person out of trusting in his diligence and creativity. This is different from "Shinar" which traps and enslaves us to trust in ourselves.
- 5. We need to raise up pillars by preaching the gospel to new people (Genesis 12:1).** Abraham loved Lot and probably raised him up as his son. God told him to leave his relatives, but he took Lot with him. We may love a brother or sister and care for them. Yet the Lord may tell us to "leave" him or her and raise up pillars (an Isaac). In other words, it is easy to be "kidnapped" by those who may not be interested in the Lord. Should we love them? Absolutely. Should we pray for them? Certainly? Should we visit them? By all means. But we must raise up those who can become vessels in the Lord's hands. Therefore, we need to preach the gospel. We must love those who only come once a year to the church gatherings. At the same time, we must not forget to preach the gospel to new people, in order that "Isaacs" (spiritual children) can be raised up. We may care for someone year after year (and we should), in the hopes that he or she will love the Lord (and maybe they will). However, can we also "leave" them in order to explore the land that God has given to us in order to produce spiritual children (pillars) who can raise up churches elsewhere and be a blessing wherever they go?



- ① 亚伯拉罕从迦勒底的吾珥到哈兰 (~1000 km), 然后到了迦南地 (~800 km).
 Abraham moved from Ur of Chaldean to Haran (~1000 km), then to Canaan (~800 km).