

Week #: 10 Text: Genesis 11:26 – 12:20 Title: God's Promises to Abram
Songs: Lord I Give You My Heart

Videos: Bible Project: Torah Series part 2
Bible Project: Genesis

God's Promises to Abram:

Peleg:

- The year is not given for Tower of Babel, but it is assumed it took place when Peleg was born. His name means "division" and is the only name in the Table of Nations that is given a definition for.
- The confusion of tongues at Babel (Peleg's Division) must have been near Peleg's birth because names are given at birth, not later in life.
- Peleg's ancestors (Noah, Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, and Eber) all outlived Peleg.
 - Note: If Peleg's birth indicates the Tower of Babel, then Noah was still alive when it took place.
- If Babel occurred later in Peleg's life, there's no reason to associate it with him more than with one of those other living ancestors or with one of his descendants Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abraham, since all their lifespans overlapped Peleg's lifespan.
- The first-century Jewish historian Josephus said of Peleg, "He was called Phaleg, because he was born at the dispersion of the nations to their several countries; for Phaleg among the Hebrews signifies division." (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* Book 1, Chapter 6, Section 4).
- Peleg was born 101 years after the Flood ended and 191 years before Abraham's birth (Genesis 11:10-26). Nimrod could easily have been 70 years old at this point and well-established as the world leader.
- Thus it is believed the scrambling of the tongues at Babel occurred about a century after Noah's flood.
- Some think Peleg's Division refers to the breaking up of a single land mass after the Flood into today's continents. Even if such a break-up did occur, it's more likely to have happened during the Flood, or possibly at the end of the Flood year when "*the mountains rose up and the valleys sank down*" for the Flood waters to drain off the earth (Psalm 104:6-9).
- Since Noah's Ark landed on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4-5) a century before Peleg, continents had apparently already collided to uplift the mountains ranges. The collision of the Arabian plate with the Eurasian plate had already pushed up Ararat.
- Given the Genesis 10 context of Peleg's Division, the most reasonable understanding is that it is the division of earth's population into languages, families, and nations which occurred at Babel. This occurred around 2400 BC, about a century after the Flood.

Abram:

- Abram was probably around during the tower of Babel.
 - In Genesis 10:25, we learn that Peleg means "division," because during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. In Genesis 11, the genealogy actually gives us some numbers to match that up with.
 - After doing the math we learn that Peleg was born 101 years after the flood and died 239 years later. That means the tower of Babel happened somewhere in the range of 101 years to 340 years after the flood.

- Abraham was born roughly 292 to 300 years after the flood (Genesis 11:26), well within the range of the tower of Babel.
- What’s even more interesting, Abraham was not only born at the same time as the tower of Babel, he was born in the same location. We know that because the Bible says Abraham was born in the Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:28). The tower of Babel was in Shinar, which was later known as Babylonia or CHALDEA .
- “One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram’s wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran’s child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans.” (Genesis 11:31 NLT)
- I suspect Terah moved Abraham away from Chaldea because they were part of the confusion of language and scattering of nations.
- Abraham’s story begins where Nimrod’s ends, which is very consistent with the Bible narrative of God opposing the proud, but giving grace to the humble (Proverbs 29:23, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).
- What was the motivation of the Nimrod and his followers at the tower of Babel?
 - Then they said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.” (Genesis 11:4 NLT)
 - They wanted to make themselves great by trusting in their own devices. That is the definition of pride. Thus they were opposed by God.
- Contrast that with what God told Abraham would happen if he left his native country and relatives.
 - “I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.” (Genesis 12:2 NLT)
 - Everything Nimrod and his people tried to get for themselves, was promised to Abraham – if he would trust God.
- So the tower of Babel and Abraham are not two different stories. They are a continuation of the same story and the major theme of the entire Bible.
 - Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord.
 - Cursed is the man who trusts in his own human strength.

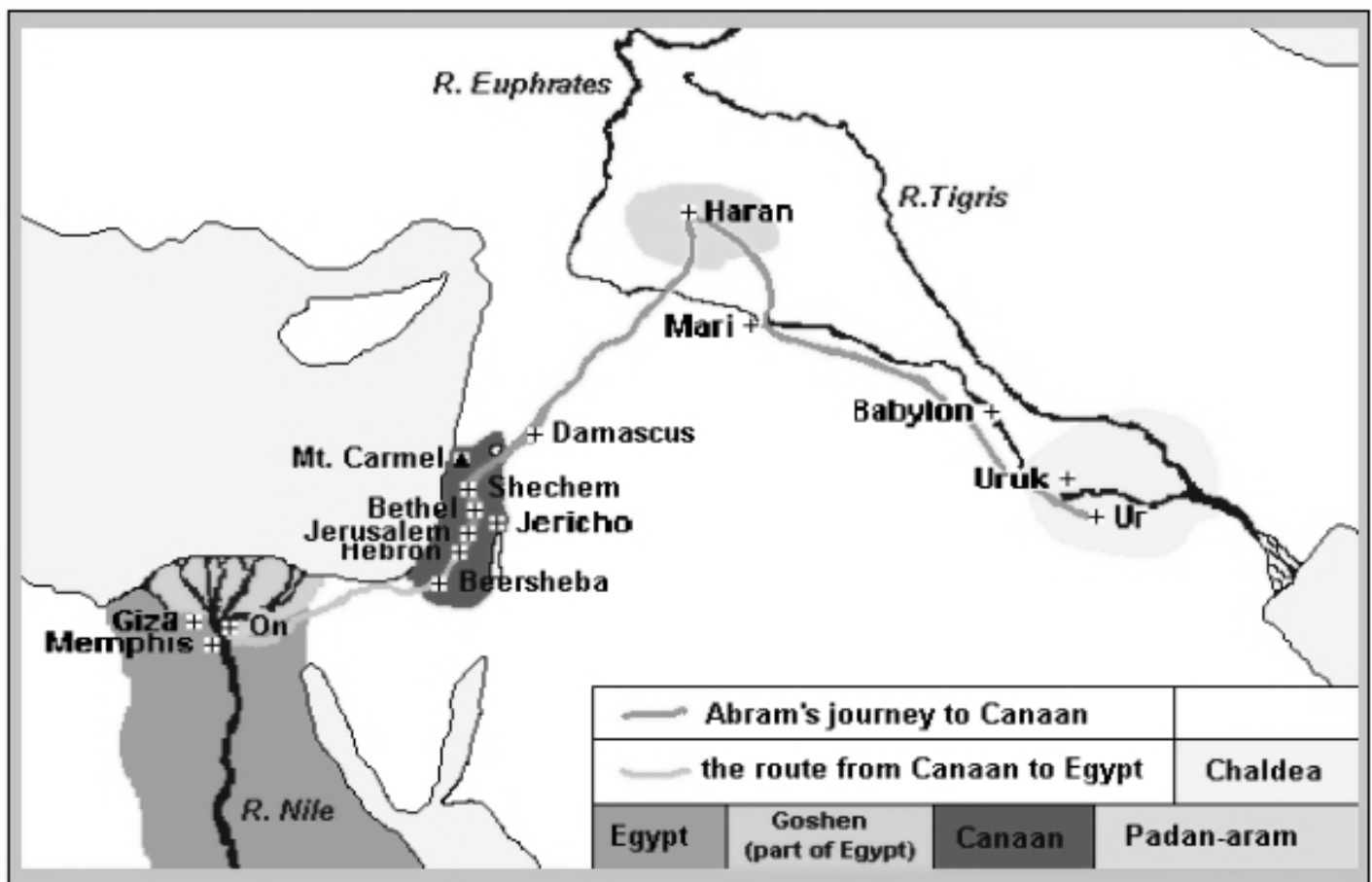
God’s Call for Abram:

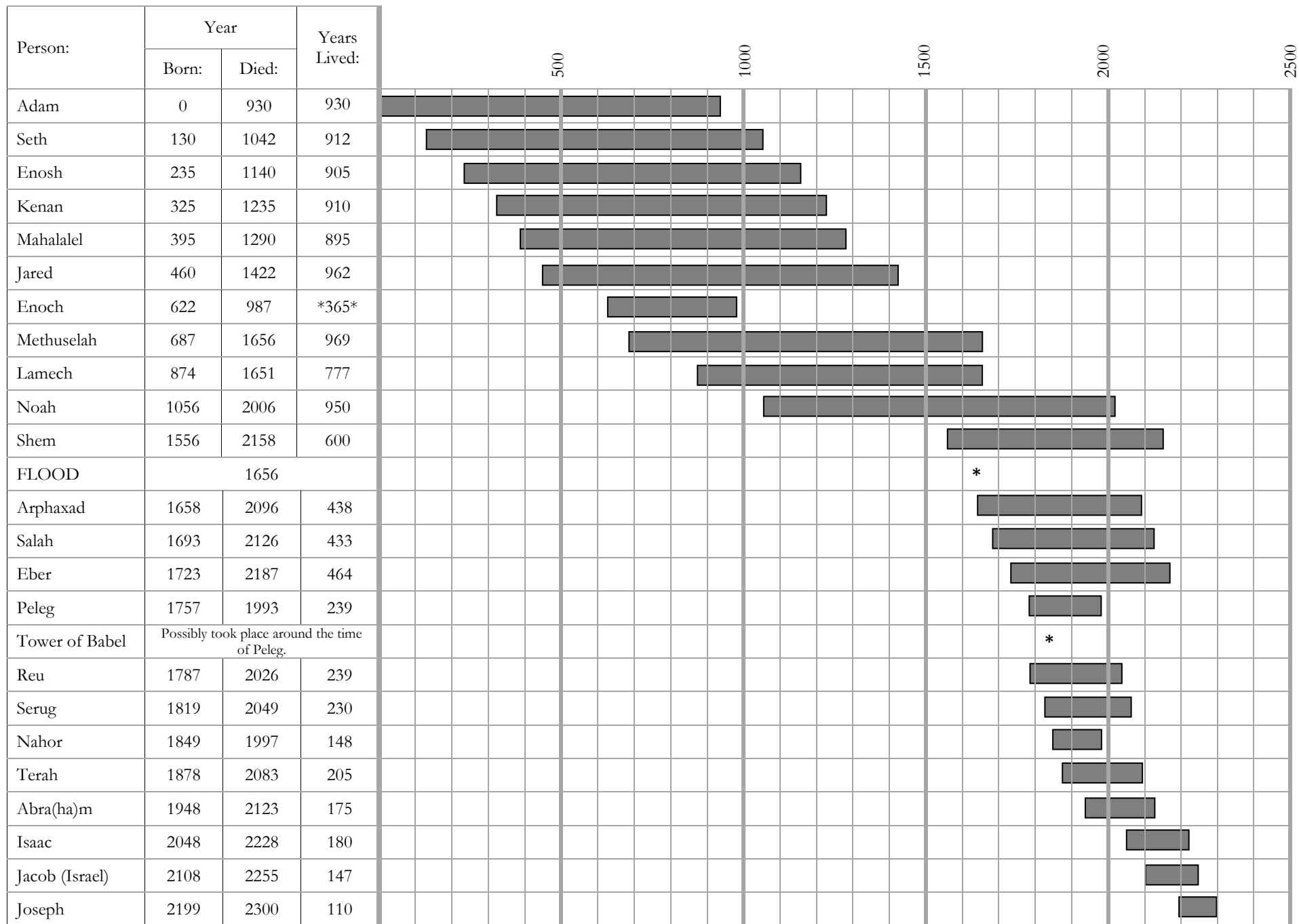
- God called him out of a rebellious world to be a conduit for salvation. He is a pivotal character in redemptive history. As we study him, we will learn a great deal about living a life of faith (cf. Heb 11:8–19). But, specifically in this passage, we learn about God’s call.
- God’s call: “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. (Genesis 12:1)
 - Why did God call Abraham? What made him special?
 - The next thing we can discern about God’s call is that it is a call of sovereign election.
 - Why did God call Abraham? Was he more holy than everybody else? Was he more faithful? No.
 - It seems that Abraham worshiped pagan gods just like everybody else. He was from the land of Ur, in Mesopotamia, that was known for worshiping Nanna, the moon god.
 - Joshua declared that Abraham’s family members were idolaters. Joshua 24:2–3 says,
 - Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond

the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac...”

- Abraham was from a family of idolaters. There was no special reason for God to call him. In fact, as we follow his story, we will watch him fail God many times.
 - He lies about his wife twice and
 - He marries another woman.
 - He allows his wife, Sarah, to abuse his new, pregnant wife.
 - He fails God in many ways.
 - What makes him special is God’s election. God chose him from among all the pagans to bestow special grace on him, and this grace was not just to bless Abraham but to bless the entire world through him. The messiah, Jesus Christ, eventually came through his lineage (Matt 1:1–2).
 - Why did God choose Israel to be his nation of priests to the world? Was it because they were more obedient, more spiritual, or more faithful? Absolutely not. Deuteronomy 7:7–8 says,
 - “The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”
 - God chose them based on his sovereign right as King. They were chosen because of election.
 - Paul taught that the very faith that we demonstrate in our salvation is only a result of grace. We believed in Christ as our Lord and Savior because of grace, and we received this grace because of God’s election. This is a difficult doctrine, but unless we accept it, we will find ourselves confused at much of Scriptures’ teachings.
 - How can God show up and save a murderer like Paul and call him to be an apostle? It isn’t fair. Wouldn’t everybody become a Christian if Christ actually appeared to them and blinded them to prove it? This may be true, but this is proof of the doctrine we are considering. Paul was saved and called to be an apostle by election. He was elect. And it’s the same with Abraham. God showed up and called an idolater, a liar, and a future polygamist to be the father of those who believe because of election. This is also true for every Christian. Though God may not appear to us in a shining light or a burning bush, our salvation is no less magnificent. It is a work of amazing grace. It is a work of election. Salvation could not happen any other way.
- **Why did God punish Pharaoh for Abram’s lie (Genesis 12:17)?**
 - It seems puzzling. After all, the king was the victim of Abram and Sarai’s deceit. The result of this punishment reveals the reason for it. When Pharaoh realized Sarai was Abram’s wife, he summoned Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go.”
 - If God had not caused the plagues to come upon Pharaoh and his household, he may not have known anything was wrong. The affliction led to the discovery that Sarai was Abram’s wife. If Pharaoh had kept Sarai, Abram would not have had a son by Sarai in fulfillment of God’s promise to him (Genesis 12:2; 17:19). Abram was wrong to lie, but God graciously intervened in order to keep His covenant with Abram.

- In the end, Pharaoh returned Abram's wife and provided protection for him. Despite Abram's wrongdoing, God worked to fulfill His promise. Abram left Egypt with his wife Sarai, the protection of the king, and added prosperity.
- This incident is a good example of how God sometimes allows bad things to take place in someone's life as part of a larger situation. God used the affliction of Pharaoh's household to bring about good for Abram. We may not always know why bad things happen, but that does not mean they are without purpose. God has a larger purpose behind everything that takes place in life (Jeremiah 29:11). As Paul taught in Romans 8:28, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."
- Abram unwisely trusted in his own cunning to preserve his life, and he was caught in a lie. God proved His strength is perfect and that He is the only One with the power to save. Further, we see God has a greater purpose in all things, including suffering. His will is sovereign, and His Name will be glorified.





Genesis 11 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

²⁶ Terah lived seventy years and fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran. ²⁷ Here is the genealogy of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. ²⁸ Haran died before his father Terah in the land where he was born, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

²⁹ Then Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah the daughter of Haran. He was the father of Milkah and of Yiskah. ³⁰ Sarai was barren — she had no child. ³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his son Haran's son Lot, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they stayed there. ³² Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

Genesis 12 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

12 Now *ADONAI* said to Abram, "Get yourself out of your country, away from your kinsmen and away from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

⁴ So Abram went, as *ADONAI* had said to him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai, his brother's son Lot, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, as well as the people they had acquired in Haran; then they set out for the land of Kena'an and entered the land of Kena'an.

⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place called Sh'khem, to the oak of Moreh. The Kena'ani were then in the land. ⁷ *ADONAI* appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to *ADONAI*, who had appeared to him.

⁸ He left that place, went to the hill east of Beit-El and pitched his tent. With Beit-El to the west and 'Ai to the east, he built an altar there and called on the name of *ADONAI*. ⁹ Then Abram traveled on, continuing toward the Negev. ¹⁰ But there was a famine in the land, so Abram went down into Egypt to stay there, because the famine in the land was severe.

¹¹ When he came close to Egypt and was about to enter, he said to Sarai his wife, "Here now, I know that you are a good-looking woman; ¹² so that when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife,' and kill me but keep you alive. ¹³ Please say that you are my sister, so that it will go well with me for your sake, and so that I will stay alive because of you."

¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians did notice that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ Pharaoh's princes saw her and commended her to Pharaoh, so the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well for her sake, giving him sheep, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female slaves, and camels.

¹⁷ But *ADONAI* inflicted great plagues on Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai Abram's wife. ¹⁸ Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this that you have done to me? Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my own wife? Now therefore, here is your wife! Take her, and go away!" ²⁰ So Pharaoh gave orders concerning him to his men, and they sent him on his way with his wife and everything he had.