

Series: God & Abraham #1125

**Title: Genesis 11.26, 32; 12.4; Acts 7.4
Do the Math (Part 4)**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world.

And as we read the Scriptures we sometimes come upon something that, at first, appears as a bit of a mystery. And since Tuesday you and I have been working to solve one such mystery that emerges from three verses in Genesis and one verse in the Book of the Acts. Without taking time to read those texts again (I think you know them by now), I will summarize the mystery as this:

Terah, the father of Abram, was either 70 years old or 130 years old when Abram was born. Which is it? Both cannot be true at the same time. We have considered four options in answering this, and I have proposed to you that solution number four is the best. Following this we have seen that, indeed, Terah was 70 when one of his sons was born, but Terah was not 70 when Abram was born. By the time Abram comes along, Terah is older than 70. Why do I say this? Here is why.

Genesis chapter 11 and verse 26 says, **“²⁶ Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.”** The assumption in reading that is when Terah was seventy, Abram was born. That would make Nahor and Haran younger brothers of Abram.

But I believe it is the other way around. Abram is the youngest son, not the oldest son. If that is true then this solves the mystery. Well, that’s easy to say, but can I prove that Abram was not the oldest son? I need some evidence, and I do have it, coming to you in two parts.

My first evidence is that Abram’s name is listed first among these three sons because Abram is the most important. He is the most prominent of the three boys, given what God does in his life. These three names (Abram, Nahor, and Haran) are listed by Moses in the order of importance, *not* in the birth order. After all, this same thing happens with Noah’s three sons. We looked at that last time, and I have chosen not to repeat what was said because it involves reading in other chapters of Genesis and in 1 Chronicles. So, if you were not here yesterday, you can either take my word for it or go listen to the God Is Podcast and hear what was said. And you can get the podcast at godisministry.org.

With the time we now have remaining let me share my second piece of evidence supporting my solution to the mystery being that because Abram is not the oldest but the youngest of these three sons, Terah did indeed die in Haran at 205 and Abram left Haran soon thereafter at the age of 75. My second piece of evidence, for Abram as youngest not oldest, is that God Himself has a practice of choosing the youngest sons. God Himself has the practice of choosing for Himself and His purposes the youngest, not the oldest of a man’s sons.

And let me give you four names: Abel, Jacob, Ephraim, and David. (Abel, Jacob, Ephraim, and David.)

Let’s find, in the Bible, how God chose each of these youngest sons to fulfil the Lord’s plans and purposes. And we do not have to spend long on the first one, Abel, because not too long ago we invested a serious amount of time and attention to Genesis chapter 4 and the relationship between God and Cain, which revealed how God rejected Cain and accepted Abel.

I hope you remember that in Genesis 4 Eve gives birth to Cain first, then Abel. Cain is the older son. Abel is the younger son of Adam and Eve. I will read Genesis chapter 4, part of verses 2-5. **“² [Eve] gave birth to [Cain’s] brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering [the Lord] had no regard.”**

As Genesis 4:2-5 clearly demonstrates God chose Abel, the younger brother, over Cain the older brother.

We come to the second name on our list: Jacob. Now this is a long story, but Isaac and his wife Rebekah had two sons. The name of the older was Esau and the name of the younger was Jacob. God did not choose Esau, but Jacob and that sovereign choice was reflected in the events of their lives as brothers in relation to getting the blessing from their father Isaac. To be succinct, let me share with you one verse, a statement God makes to Rebekah when she was carrying Esau and Jacob in her womb. This is Genesis chapter 25 and verse 23.

“²³ The Lord said to [Rebekah], ‘Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.’” There it is, “the older shall serve the younger.” As Genesis 25, verse 23 clearly demonstrates God chose Jacob, the younger brother, over Esau the older brother.

And the third name on our list is Ephraim. Joseph, who was the son of Jacob, Joseph himself had two sons. The name of the older son was Manasseh and the name of the younger Ephraim. As Jacob is dying, Joseph brings in his two boys to receive a blessing from Jacob (by then known as Israel) and here is what happens. I am over in Genesis chapter 48 now, reading select verses. I'll start at verse 8. (Genesis 48:8.)

“⁸ When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he said, ‘Who are these?’ ⁹ Joseph said to his father, ‘They are my sons, whom God has given me here.’ So [Israel] said, ‘Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.’ ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were *so dim from age that he could not see*. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. (Skipping down to verse 13) ¹³ Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right, and brought them close to him. ¹⁴ But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

(I will continue the reading now at verse 17, Genesis 48:17)

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim’s head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, ‘Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.’ ¹⁹ But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.’” As Genesis chapter 48 clearly demonstrates God chose Ephraim, the younger brother, over Manasseh the older brother.

Do you see the pattern? OK, good. I have one more: David. This *awesome* story is found in 1 Samuel chapter 16. Read it in full this weekend. (1 Samuel 16.) I just have time to read this much. The Lord sent Samuel to Jesse and God said, “ ‘I have selected a king for Myself among his sons...you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you.’ ⁴ So Samuel did what the Lord said, and came to Bethlehem.

¹⁰ Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, ‘The Lord has not chosen these.’ ¹¹ And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Are these all the children?’ And he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep.’ Then Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.’

¹² So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the Lord said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this is he.’ ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.”

As 1 Samuel 16 clearly demonstrates God chose David, the younger brother, over Jesse's older sons.

My evidence is strong, wouldn't you agree? As God chose these younger sons over their older brothers, likewise Abram was the younger brother whom God also chose. In Genesis 11, verse 26 Abram is listed first not because he was the oldest, but because he was the most prominent. And God chose the younger over the older. Our mystery is solved!

At least, I think so. But on Monday, there is one thing that even I have to admit does not quite fit my solution. So, I hope you will join me next week to find out what that is. And then we are going to move onto the second mystery as we enter Genesis chapter 12. That one requires less time to solve.

Mysteries. God works in mysterious ways. Regarding the mystery we are looking at today, the famous Reformation theologian Martin Luther once said that he would be exceedingly grateful if a man was sufficiently clever to off the solution. Well, I am *not* that man! Luther would not necessarily like my solution either. That being said, I am going with what seems most likely. What about you? What do you think? Take the weekend to think about it. I'll speak to you again, Lord willing, on Monday's God Is.

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