

## The first time the Torah mentions Abraham:

Genesis 11:26-12:4

כז וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת תְּרַח הַתְּרַח הוֹלִיד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נְחוֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן וְהָרָן הוֹלִיד אֶת־לוֹט :  
כח וַיָּמָת הָרָן עַל־פְּנֵי תְּרַח אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹלְדֹתוֹ בְּאוּר כְּשָׂדִים :  
כט וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם וְנְחוֹר לָהֶם נָשִׁים שֵׁם אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם שָׂרִי וְשֵׁם אִשְׁת־נְחוֹר מִלְכָּה בַת־הָרָן אֲבִי־מִלְכָּה וְאֲבִי יִסְכָּה :  
ל וַתְּהִי שָׂרִי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ וָלֵד :  
לא וַיִּקַּח תְּרַח אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּרֵהָרָן בְּרֵבְנֵוֹ וְאֵת שָׂרִי כַלְתּוֹ אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וַיֵּצְאוּ אֹתָם מְאוּר כְּשָׂדִים  
לָלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־חָרָן וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם :  
לב וַיְהִי יְמֵי־תְּרַח חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים וּמְאַתָּים שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת תְּרַח בְּחָרָן : (ס)

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ־לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן וּמִמּוֹלְדֹתֶיךָ וּמִבְּיַת אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ :  
ב וְאַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ גְּדוֹל וְאַבְרָכְךָ וְאַגְדֹּלְהָ שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְּרָכָה :  
ג וְאַבְרָכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אֶאְרָר וְנִבְרָכוּ בְּךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפְּחֵת הָאָדָמָה :  
ד וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בְּרַחֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן :  
ה וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּרֵאֲחִיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ  
לָלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן :

Now this is the line of Terach: Terach begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran;  
and Haran begot Lot.

Haran died before his father Terach, in his native land, Ur of the Chaldeans.

And Avram and Nachor took wives there:

The name of the wife of Avram was Sarai and the name of the wife of Nachor was Milkah,  
Daughter of Haran, father of Milkah and father of Iscah.

And Sarai was infertile; she had no child.

Terach took his son Abram,

his grandson Lot the son of Haran,  
and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram,  
and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan;  
but when they had come as far as Charan, they settled there.

The days of Terach came to 205 years; and Terach died in Charan.

The LORD said to Abram,

“Go forth [*lech l'cha*] from your land, from your birthplace, from your father's house  
to the land that I will show you.

I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great,  
And you shall be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and curse him that curses you;

And all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.”

Abram went forth as the LORD had commanded him, and Lot went with him.

Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Charan.

Avram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot, and all of the possessions that they had acquired,

And all of the souls which they had made in Charan

And they headed out toward the Land of Canaan,

And they came to the Land of Canaan.

**Midrash Genesis Rabbah 38:19**

וְנָמַת הָרֶן עַל פְּנֵי תֵרַח אָבִיו (בראשית יא, כח), רַבִּי חִזְקִיָּה בֶר בְּרִיָּה דָרַב אֲדָא דִּיפּוֹ,  
תֵרַח עוֹבֵד צִלְמִים הָיָה, חַד זְמַן נָפִיק לְאַתֵּר, הוֹשִׁיב לְאַבְרָהָם מוֹכֵר תַּחְתָּיו.  
הָיָה אָתִי בֵר אֵינֶשׁ בְּעֵי דִיזְבוּ, וְהָיָה אָמַר לֵה בֵר כַּמָּה שְׁנֵי אֶתְּ, וְהָיָה אָמַר לֵיה בֵר חֲמִשִּׁין אוֹ שְׁתֵּין,  
וְהָיָה אָמַר לֵיה וִי לֵיה לְהָוֵא גְבָרָא דְהָוֵה בֵר שְׁתֵּין וּבְעֵי לְמַסְגֵּד לְבֵר יוֹמִי, וְהָיָה מִתְבַּיֵּשׁ וְהוֹלֵךְ לוֹ.  
חַד זְמַן אָתְּא חַד אֲתְּתָא טְעִינָא בִידָה חָדָא פִּינָךְ דְסֻלַּת, אָמַרְהָ לֵיה הָא לָךְ קָרַב קְדָמִיהוֹן,  
קָם נָסִיב בּוֹקְלָסָא בִידָה, וְתַבְרִינוֹן לְכַלְהוֹן פְּסִילָא, וְיֵהֵב בּוֹקְלָסָא בִידָא דְרַבָּה דְהָוֵה בִּינִיהוֹן.  
פִּינוֹן דְאַתְּתָא אָבִיָּה אָמַר לֵיה מֵאֵן עָבִיד לְהוֹן כְּדִין, אָמַר לֵיה מַה נְכַפּוֹר מִינָךְ  
אֲתַת חָדָא אֲתְּתָא טְעִינָא לֵה חָדָא פִּינָךְ דְסֻלַּת, וְאַמְרַת לִי הָא לָךְ קָרִיב קְדָמִיהוֹן, קָרִיבָתְּ לְקְדָמִיהוֹן הָוֵה דִּין  
אָמַר אָנָּא אֵיכּוֹל קְדָמָי, וְדִין אָמַר אָנָּא אֵיכּוֹל קְדָמָי, קָם הָדִין רַבָּה דְהָוֵה בִּינִיהוֹן נָסִיב בּוֹקְלָסָא וְתַבְרִינוֹן.  
אָמַר לֵיה מַה אֲתָה מַפְלָה בִי, וְיַדְעִין אֵינּוֹן. אָמַר לֵיה וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אֲזַנְיָךְ מַה שְּׁפִיף אֹמֵר.

*“And Haran died before his father Terach.” (Genesis 11:28)*

Rabbi Hiyya the son of Rav Adda of Yaffo said,

Terach worshipped idols and sold them.

From time to time he would go out and leave Avraham to sell in his place.

A person would come in wanting to buy.

Avraham would say: “How old are you?” They would say: “Fifty or sixty.”

He would say: “Woe to one who is sixty years old and intends to worship something one day old.”

They would depart embarrassed.

One day a woman came in with a bowl of flour. She said: “Take this and offer it to them.”

He took a stick and smashed all of them, and placed the stick in the hand of the largest one.

When his father returned, he said: “Who did this to them?”

He replied: “I cannot tell a lie. A woman came in with a bowl of flour and asked me to offer it to them.

I did so, and one said, “I will eat first.” And another said, “I will eat first.”

Then this largest one took this stick and smashed all of the others.”

His father replied: “Are you joking? They know nothing!”

Avraham replied: “Do your ears not hear what your mouth is saying?”

נְסִיבִיה וּמְסָרִיָּה לְנִמְרוֹד. אָמַר לֵיה נְסִגּוֹד לְנוֹרָא, אָמַר לֵיה אֲבָרְהָם וְנִסְגּוֹד לְמִיָּא דְמִטְפִין נוֹרָא.

אָמַר לֵיה נְמִרוֹד נְסִגּוֹד לְמִיָּא, אָמַר לֵיה אִם כֵּן נְסִגּוֹד לְעִנְנָא דְטָעִין מִיָּא.

אָמַר לֵיה נְסִגּוֹד לְעִנְנָא. אָמַר לֵיה אִם כֵּן נְסִגּוֹד לְרוּחָא דְמַבְדֵּר עִנְנָא.

אָמַר לֵיה נְסִגּוֹד לְרוּחָא. אָמַר לֵיה וְנִסְגּוֹד לְבֵר אֵינֶשׁא דְסָבִיל רוּחָא.

אָמַר לֵיה מִלִּין אֶתְּ מִשְׁתַּעִי, אָנִי אֵינִי מִשְׁתַּחֲוֵה אֶלָּא לְאוּר, הָרִי אָנִי מִשְׁלִיכְךָ בְּתוֹכוֹ,

וְנִבּוּא אֱלוֹהִי שְׁאַתְּהָ מִשְׁתַּחֲוֵה לוֹ וְיִצְלַךְ הִימְנוּ.

הָוֵה תַמֵּן הָרֶן קָאִים פְּלוּג, אָמַר מַה נִפְשָׁךְ

אִם נִצַח אֲבָרְהָם אָנָּא אָמַר מֵן דְאַבְרָהָם אָנָּא וְאִם נִצַח נְמִרוֹד אָנָּא אָמַר דְנִמְרוֹד אָנָּא.

פִּינוֹן שְׁיָרַד אֲבָרְהָם לְכַבְשָׁן הָאֵשׁ וְנִצַל, אָמַרְוּ לֵיה דְמֵאֵן אֲתָה, אָמַר לְהוֹן מֵן אֲבָרְהָם אָנָּא,

נְטִלוּהוּ וְהִשְׁלִיכוּהוּ לְאוּר וְנִחְמְרוּ בְּנֵי מַעִין, וְיִצָּא וּמַת עַל פְּנֵי תֵרַח אָבִיו,

הָדָא הוּא דְכַתִּיב: וְנָמַת הָרֶן עַל פְּנֵי תֵרַח וּגו'.

His father took Avraham and brought him before Nimrod.

Nimrod said: “Let us worship fire.” Avraham replied: “Let us worship water which extinguishes fire.”

Nimrod said: “Let us worship water.” Avraham said: “Let us worship clouds which contain water.”

Nimrod said: “Let us worship clouds.” Avraham said: “Let us worship the wind, which disperses the clouds.”

Nimrod said: “Let us worship the wind.” Avraham said: “Let us worship human beings, who contain the wind.”

Nimrod said: “You are playing with words. I worship only the fire. Behold, I cast you into it.

Let the God that you worship come and save you from it.”

Haran was there and he was undecided.

Nimrod asked him: “Whose side are you on?”

He replied: “If Avraham triumphs, I am with Avraham. If Nimrod triumphs, I am with Nimrod.”

When Avraham went down into the furnace, he was saved. They said to Haran: “Whose side are you on?”

He replied: “I am with Avraham.”

They took him and threw him into the fire, and his insides withered.

He came out *“and Haran died before his father.”*

כִּי־וַיִּנְגַּמַּל אֵיתָן זֶה הַתַּחֲחִיל לְשׁוֹטֵט בְּדַעְתּוֹ וְהוּא קָטָן וְהַתַּחֲחִיל לַחֲשֹׁב בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וְהָיָה תַמְמָה הַיָּאֵד אֶפְשָׁר שְׂיִהְיֶה הַגִּלְגָּל הַזֶּה נוֹהֵג תָּמִיד וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לוֹ מְנַהֵג וּמִי יִסְבֵּב אוֹתוֹ. כִּי אֵי אֶפְשָׁר שְׂיִסְבֵּב אֶת עֲצָמוֹ. וְלֹא הָיָה לוֹ מְלַמֵּד וְלֹא מוֹדִיעַ דָּבָר אֶלָּא מִשְׁקַע בְּאוֹר כְּשֵׂדִים בֵּין עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים הַטּוֹפְשִׁים וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ וְכָל הָעָם עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים וְהוּא עוֹבֵד עִמָּהֶם וְלִבּוֹ מְשׁוֹטֵט וּמִבֵּין עַד שֶׁהִשִּׁיג דָּרָךְ הָאֱמֶת וְהִבִּין קוֹ הַצִּדִּק מִתְבוּנָתוֹ הַנְּכוֹנָה. וַיֵּדַע שְׂיִשׁ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי אֶחָד וְהוּא מְנַהֵג הַגִּלְגָּל וְהוּא בָּרָא הַכָּל וְאֵין בְּכָל הַנִּמְצָא אֱלֹהֵי חוּץ מִמֶּנּוּ.

After this mighty man was weaned, he began to explore and think.

Though he was a child, he began to think by day and by night, and to wonder:

“How is it possible for the sphere to revolve, but without anyone causing it to revolve?

Who is causing it to revolve? It cannot be revolving by itself?

He had no teacher, nor anyone to inform him.

Rather, he was mired in Ur of the Chaldeans, among the foolish worshippers of the stars,

And his father and his mother and all of the people were worshippers of stars,

And he would worship with them.

But his heart was exploring, and gaining understanding, until he achieved the way of truth,

And understood the path of righteousness, through his accurate comprehension.

And he realized that there is one God who controls the sphere,

And Who created everything, and there is not in all of reality any other divinity, other than Him.

וַיֵּדַע שֶׁכָּל הָעוֹלָם טוֹעִים וְדָבָר שְׂגוֹרָם לָהֶם לְטַעוֹת זֶה שְׁעוֹבְדִים אֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים וְאֶת הַצּוּרוֹת עַד שֶׁאֲבָד הָאֱמֶת מִדַּעְתָּם. וַיִּבֶן אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה הַכִּיר אֲבָרְהָם אֶת בּוֹרְאוֹ.

כִּי־וַיִּנְכִּיר וַיֵּדַע הַתַּחֲחִיל לְהִשִּׁיב תְּשׁוּבוֹת עַל בְּנֵי אוֹר כְּשֵׂדִים וְלַעֲרֹךְ דִּין עִמָּהֶם וְלֹמַר שְׂאִין זוֹ דָּרָךְ הָאֱמֶת שְׂאֵתֶם הוֹלְכִים בָּהּ וְשִׁבַּר הַצִּלְמִים וְהַתַּחֲחִיל לְהוֹדִיעַ לָעָם שְׂאִין רְאוּי לַעֲבֹד אֶלָּא לְאֱלֹהֵי הָעוֹלָם וְלֹא רְאוּי לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת וּלְהִקְרִיב וּלְנַסֵּךְ כְּדֵי שְׂיִכִּירוּהוּ כָּל הַבְּרוּאִים הַבָּאִים.

וְרְאוּי לַאֲבֹד וּלְשַׁבֵּר כָּל הַצּוּרוֹת כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא יִטְעוּ בָּהֶן כָּל הָעָם כְּמוֹ אֵלוֹ שֶׁהֵם מְדַמִּים שְׂאִין שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי אֶלָּא אֵלֹהֵי...

He knew that the whole world was in error,

and that the thing which caused them to err was their worshipping the stars and the images, until the truth was lost from their consciousness.

And, when Abraham was forty years old he recognized his Creator.

After he recognized and knew, he started to make replies to the sons of Ur of the Chaldeans, and to organize disputations with them, saying:

"This is not the true path that you are following", and he destroyed the images,

and began warning the people that it is not right to worship any save the God of the universe,

and unto Him alone it is right to bow down, to offer sacrifices, and compound offerings,

so that the creatures of the future shall recognize Him.

Moreover, it is right to destroy and break in pieces all of the images,

so that all the people be not led to an error like these

who imagine that there is no God save these images.

כִּינּוֹן שְׁגִבֵר עֲלֵיהֶם בְּרֵאיוֹתָיו בְּקֶשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַרְגוֹ וְנִעְשָׂה לוֹ נֶס וַיִּצָא לְחָרָן.  
וְהִתְחִיל לְעַמֵּד וְלִקְרֹא בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל לְכָל הָעוֹלָם וּלְהוֹדִיעַם שֶׁיֵּשׁ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי אֶחָד לְכָל הָעוֹלָם וְלוֹ רְאוּי לְעַבְד.  
וְהָיָה מִהֵלָךְ וְקוֹרֵא וּמְקַבֵּץ הָעַם מֵעִיר לְעִיר וּמִמַּמְלָכָה לְמַמְלָכָה עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לְאַרְץ כְּנָעַן  
וְהוּא קוֹרֵא שְׁנַאֲמַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית כ"א ל"ג) "וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם בְּשֵׁם ה' אֵל עוֹלָם".  
וְכִינּוֹן שֶׁהָיוּ הָעַם מִתְקַבְּצִין אֵלָיו וְשׂוֹאֲלִין לוֹ עַל דְּבָרָיו  
הָיָה מוֹדִיעַ לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד כְּפִי דַעְתּוֹ עַד שֶׁיַּחְזִירָהוּ לְדֶרֶךְ הָאֱמֶת  
עַד שֶׁנִּתְקַבְּצוּ אֵלָיו אֲלָפִים וּרְבָבוֹת

וְהֵם אֲנָשֵׁי בַיִת אַבְרָהָם וְשִׁתַּל בְּלִבָּם הָעֵקֶר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה וְחִבְּרָ בּוֹ סִפְרִים וְהוֹדִיעוּ לְיִצְחָק בְּנֵו

When he overcame them by the strength of his arguments, the king tried to put him to death,  
but he was saved by a miracle, and went hence to Haran.

There he began to stand up and to call out in a great voice to the whole world,  
to let them know that there is One God for the whole universe,  
and unto Him it is proper to render service.

And thus he went onward with his proclamations from city to city,  
and from government to government, until he reached the land of Canaan,  
and he called out, as it is said:

*"And called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God" (Gen. 21.33).*

When the people gathered about him and asked him concerning his words,  
he answered each and every one according to his mentality,  
until he was able to turn him to the path of truth,  
until there gathered around him thousands, and tens of thousands,  
and they became the people of Abraham's household,  
and he implanted in their hearts this great principle,  
and he compiled books about it, and he taught it to his son Isaac.

## Haamek Davar (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin of Volozhin, 1817-1893)

ונשרפה לשרפה וגו' כל המקרא אין בו ענין שראוי להודיע לענין הספור ומה לי אם היו להם אבנים לבנין או בנו בעץ או עשו שריפת לבנים וכבר לפני המבול כתיב ויהי בנה עירץ ונראה בכאן מרומז קבלת חז"ל דהפילו לא"א לכבשן האשין ומגוף המקרא אשר הוצאתיך מאור כשדים אין הכרחץ דלפי הפשט הוא מקום נקרא הכי וכמו דכתיב בארץ מולדתו באור כשדים ויצאו אתם מאור כשדים וגו', אלא כאן מרומז הענין דהא ודאי דלפי הקבלה שהפילו את א"א לכבשן האשין לא עשו כבשן האש בשביל זה אלא היה אתון נורא יקידתא לצורך הבריותץ והודיע זה הכתוב שהיה כבשן לצורך העיר והמגדלץ ומזה נבין כמה גדול ועמוק היה הכבשן ומזה הכבשן ניצול א"אץ והא שלא פירש המקרא זה הנס באר היטב יבואר להלן

### v. 3 *let us burn them*

Nothing in this verse seems necessary to be told in this story.

Why do I care if they had stones for building, or if they built with wood,  
or if they made a fire for bricks?

And was it not already written before the flood “and he built a city”

and there the text says nothing about from what and how it was built.

So we must try to understand why the text details their words.

And it appears that here there is a hint of the tradition of our sages

that Nimrod cast Abraham our father into the fiery furnace.

Nowhere else in the Torah is that tradition even hinted at...

only that God brought Abraham out from Ur Casdim.

But here, there is a hint of it.

For in all of the tradition about casting Abraham into the furnace,

the furnace was not built for that purpose,

but was a fiery kiln which had been built for other human purpose.

And this text informs us that the furnace had been built for the purpose

of the tower and the city.

And from this we may understand how large and deep that furnace was.

And from that furnace, our father Avraham was rescued.

פן נפוץ על פני כל הארץץ אמנם יש להבין מה חששו אם יצאו כמה לארץ אחרת ומובן שזה היה שייך לדברים אחדים שהיה ביניהם ובאשר אין דעות ב"א שוים חששו שלא יצאו ב"א מדעה זו ויהיו במחשבה אחרת ע"כ היו משגיחים שלא יצא איש מישוב שלהםץ ומי שסר מדברים אחדים שביניהם היה משפטו לשריפה כאשר עשו לא"אץ נמצא היו דברים אחדים שביניהם לרועץ שהחליטו להרוג את מי שלא יחשוב כדעתםץ ויבואר עוד להלן ו.;

### v. 4 *lest we be scattered across the face of the earth*

but we have to understand why they were concerned

about some of their number departing to a different land.

Clearly, it is related to the “one words” which existed among them.

Because the opinions of people differ,

they were worried lest some of their people depart from this single opinion,  
and begin to think different thoughts.

This was why they kept a look out to make sure that no one went forth from their settlement.

And anyone among them who departed from their “one words”

would be condemned to be burned in the fire,

as they did to Abraham our father.

And so we find that the “one words” that existed among them

resulted in a fracturing,

because they decided to kill anyone who did not think according to their opinion.