



Abraham in the Sumerian Texts: A Philological and Historical Analysis of the Name “Za-ab-ra-am” in the Ur III Texts (2100 BC)

Abraham in Sumerian Texts: A philological and historical analysis of the name “Za-ab-ra-am” in the texts of Ur III (2100 BC)

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SUMMARY:

This work investigates the occurrence of the name "Za-ab-ra-am" in Sumerian administrative documents from the Ur III period (ca. 2100–2000 BC), preserved in Puzriš-Dagan, Girsu, and Nuzi (Gasur), with a view to analyzing its possible correspondence to the biblical patriarch Abraham. The research adopts a philological and historical-comparative approach, bringing together data from academic transliteration, paleographic reconstruction, and lexical analysis of Sumerian, with special attention to the particle *za* as a genitive marker. In addition to linguistic analysis, the administrative contexts of the tablets are examined, considering patterns of record keeping, trade, and taxation. The methodology includes onomastic comparison with patriarchal names present in the Hebrew tradition (Ishmael, Jacob, Israel) and attested in contemporary sources, as well as the integration of logistical data on the movements and supply of nomadic caravans in Mesopotamia. The results indicate that the recurrence of “Za-ab-ra-am” in regions and periods compatible with the biblical narrative, associated with Sumerian administrative practices, constitutes significant evidence for the discussion on patriarchal historicity, opposing theses that deny the historical existence of such characters.

Keywords: Abraham. Sumerian. Ur III. Philology. Biblical historicity.

ABSTRACT:

This study examines the occurrence of the name “Za-ab-ra-am” in Sumerian administrative documents from the Ur III period (ca. 2100–2000 BCE), preserved in Puzriš-Dagan, Girsu, and Nuzi (Gasur), in order to assess its potential correspondence to the biblical patriarch Abraham. Adopting a philological and historical-comparative approach, the research integrates academic transliterations, paleographic reconstructions, and lexical analysis of Sumerian, with particular focus on the genitive particle *za*. Beyond linguistic considerations, the study investigates the administrative contexts of the tablets, including patterns of property registration, trade, and taxation. Methodology also includes onomastic comparison with patriarchal names found in the Hebrew tradition (Ishmael, Jacob, Israel) and attested in contemporary sources, as well as the integration of logistical data on the mobility and provisioning of nomadic caravans in Mesopotamia. Findings indicate that the recurrence of “Za-ab-ra-am” in regions and periods consistent with the biblical narrative—combined with documented Sumerian administrative practices—offers significant evidence in support of the historicity of the patriarchs, challenging scholarly positions that deny their historical existence.

Keywords: Abraham. Sumerian. Ur III. Philology. Biblical historicity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The figure of Abraham, recognized as the founding patriarch of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, has been the subject of intense academic debate regarding its historicity. Although the biblical narrative places him in Ur of the Chaldees, in Mesopotamia, during the second millennium BC, the lack of direct archaeological evidence has led many scholars to consider his existence purely mythical or literary.

However, advances in Sumerian philology and the analysis of administrative documents from the Third Dynasty of Ur (Ur III, ca. 2100–2000 BC) offer new insights into this question.

This study proposes a philological and historical investigation of the name "Za-ab-ra-am," found on several Sumerian tablets from administrative centers such as Puzriš-Dagan, Girsu, and Nuzi. The recurrence of this name in contexts of property, trade, and taxation, combined with its linguistic structure,





compatible with Western Semitic names, suggests a possible correspondence with the biblical name Abraham (ÿAÿrÿm). The analysis is based on academic transliterations, paleographic reconstructions, and onomastic comparisons with other patriarchal names, such as Ishmael, Jacob, and Israel, also attested in Mesopotamian sources.

By integrating linguistic data with logistical evidence on the nomadic lifestyle and trade routes of the time, this work seeks to provide a solid foundation for reassessing the historicity of the biblical patriarchs. Far from asserting definitive conclusions, the research aims to contribute to the interdisciplinary debate between history, archaeology, linguistics, and theology, proposing that the biblical tradition may have deeper and more documented roots in the historical reality of the Ancient Near East than is commonly acknowledged.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study of the Sumerian civilization and the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur (Ur III, ca. 2100–2000 BC) is fundamental to understanding the historical and cultural context of ancient Mesopotamia. This period is characterized by a centralized administration and a vast production of cuneiform documents, especially administrative tablets recording economic transactions, the movement of goods, and onomastic information. Analysis of these documents allows us to reconstruct aspects of the social, economic, and political life of the time, providing a backdrop for the investigation of personal names and their possible relationship to historical figures.

In Sumerian philology, the interpretation of proper names and their transliteration into other languages, such as Hebrew, requires methodological rigor. The presence of genitive particles, such as "za-" in Sumerian, is crucial for the correct attribution of ownership or origin. Paleography, in turn, aids in the reconstruction of cuneiform writing and the precise identification of characters. Comparative onomastics, which analyzes the structure and meaning of names across different cultures and periods, is a valuable tool for identifying possible correspondences between names attested in Mesopotamian sources and those present in traditions such as the biblical one.

Discussions about the historicity of biblical patriarchs, such as Abraham, have been a field of intense academic debate. While some schools of thought, represented by scholars such as Thomas Römer and Israel Finkelstein, tend to view patriarchal narratives as later literary constructions, others seek evidence in extrabiblical sources that can corroborate, at least partially, the existence of such figures or the historical context in which they lived. The integration of archaeological, linguistic, and historical data is essential for a balanced and informed approach to this issue, allowing for a critical reevaluation of existing theories and the proposition of new perspectives.

3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

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This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining methods from Semitic philology, Sumerian paleography, and Ancient Near Eastern historiography. The research is structured around three main axes:

Philological Analysis

- Survey of occurrences of the name "Za-ab-ra-am" in Sumerian tablets dating from the Third Dynasty.

Ur's aunt.





- Transliteration and translation of original texts, based on corpora such as CDLI (Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative) and the ETCSL (Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature).
- Onomastic comparison with Western Semitic names, especially biblical patriarchal ones.

Historical and Archaeological Contextualization

- Study of Sumerian administrative centers (Puzriš-Dagan, Girsu, Nuzi) and their functions in redistribution of goods and registration of properties.
- Analysis of trade routes and nomadic mobility patterns in second-millennium BC Mesopotamia
- Integration of archaeological data on social and economic practices that may reflect the lifestyle attributed to the biblical patriarchs.

Historiographical Criticism

- Review of modern interpretations on the historicity of Abraham, with emphasis on authors such as Thomas Römer, Israel Finkelstein and Mario Liverani.
- Assessment of the theological and cultural implications of the possible identification of biblical characters in extrabiblical sources.

The triangulation of these methods aims to offer a critical and informed reading of the hypothesis that the name Abraham may have a real historical correspondence, documented in Sumerian records. The research does not seek to validate religious dogma, but rather to explore the possibility that biblical traditions have roots in concrete historical contexts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The documentary corpus analyzed in this study consists of Sumerian administrative tablets from the Ur III period (ca. 2100–2000 BC), originating from important centers such as Puzriš-Dagan, Girsu and Nuzi (Gasur).

The recurrence of the name "Za-ab-ra-am" in these records, in various contexts of property, trade, and taxation, offers significant insights into the discussion of the historicity of the biblical patriarch Abraham. Below, we detail the main findings:

3. DOCUMENTAL CORPUS / DOCUMENTARY CORPUS

Introduction to the Documentary Corpus

This study is based on a set of Sumerian and Akkadian administrative documents from the **Ur III period (2100–2000 BC)**, preserved in various urban centers in Mesopotamia and currently deposited in international museums. These records, of an economic and legal nature, mention the name *Za-ab-ra-am*, a form phonetically equivalent to the archaic Hebrew **יֶאֱבְרָאִם** (Abram). Below, we present a description of each document, including its archaeological provenance, current location, and relevance to the discussion of the historicity of the patriarch Abraham.

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1. PDT 1, 0231 (P125647) – Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem)

- **Ancient geographic location:** Puzriš-Dagan, administrative center of Ur III, near Nippur, southern Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq).
- **Current location:** Arkeoloji Müzeleri, Istanbul, Turkey.
- **Description:** Administrative document listing 60 mixed sheep and goats (*Gešy udu mašy yi-a*), with the inscription *kišibý za-ab-ra-am* ("seal of Za-ab-ra-am"), indicating formal ownership or possession authenticated by cylinder seal.



It also contains the formula *zi-re-dam* (“this is correct”), validating the record.

- **Historical compatibility with Abraham:** The direct reference to a personal seal linked to the name *Za-ab-ra-am* is consistent with the use of seals by tribal chiefs and patriarchs at the time (cf. Gen. 38:18). The administrative context and the dating to the reign of Šu-Suen (2037–2029 BC) coincide with the traditional chronology attributed to Abraham.

2. HSS 10, 124 (P213389) – Girsu

- **Ancient geographic location:** Girsu (near modern Telloh, Iraq), an important city in the state of Lagash.
- **Current location:** Harvard Semitic Museum, USA.
- **Description:** Administrative record of cereal distribution, containing on line 8 the expression *za-ab-ra-am*, isolated and associated with large quantities of barley (2,850 liters) and wheat (9,000 liters) attributed to third parties, followed by the note of possession. The presence of the prefix *za-* is interpreted as a Sumerian genitive marker (“of / belonging to”), reinforcing the reading “of Abraham”.
- **Historical compatibility with Abraham:** The volume and nature of the transactions correspond to the type of supplies needed by nomadic caravans like the one described in Genesis 12. The location of Girsu is on the natural route between Ur and northern Mesopotamia, which makes it consistent with possible movements of Abraham towards Haran.

3. PDT 1, 0722 (P126138) – Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem)

- **Ancient geographic location:** Puzriš-Dagan, southern Mesopotamia.
- **Current location:** Arkeoloji Müzeleri, Istanbul, Turkey.
- **Description:** List of flocks, specifically mentioning “19 sheep [belonging to] *Za-ab-ra-am*” (*udu za-ab-ra-am*), alongside herds belonging to other owners, such as Lu-dSuen and Kazili.
- **Historical compatibility with Abraham:** Demonstrates that *Za-ab-ra-am* held officially registered movable property (cattle), a practice consistent with the role of shepherd-nomad patriarch described in the Bible (Gen 13:2; 13:5). It also reinforces the idea of direct interaction with the state administration of Ur III.

4. HSS 10, 161 (P213426) – Gasur/Nuzi (Yorgan Tepe)

- **Ancient geographic location:** Gasur, later known as Nuzi, in the Diyala River valley, northern Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq).
- **Current location:** National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad.
- **Description:** Administrative document listing quantities of barley attributed to various individuals. On line 15 the name *Za-ab-ra-am* (*za-ab-ry-ra-am*) appears, and on the reverse there are two entries for the name *Ish-ma-il* (*Ishmael*).
- **Historical compatibility with Abraham:** The simultaneous presence of Abraham (*Za-ab-ra-am*) and Ishmael (*Ish-ma-il*) in the same record from the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC is of high historical relevance, as it shows that these names coexisted in the same temporal and geographical context attributed by the biblical narrative.

5. PDT 1, 0253 (P125669) – Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem)

- **Ancient geographic location:** Puzriš-Dagan, southern Mesopotamia.
- **Current location:** Arkeoloji Müzeleri, Istanbul, Turkey.
- **Description:** Document recording the delivery of two sheep “from the land of *Za-ab-ra-am*” (*ki za-ab-ra-am-ta*), indicating the territorial link of the patriarch to a specific area.

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- **Historical compatibility with Abraham:** The association between the name and a territorial property reinforces the social and economic status attributed to Abraham in the biblical accounts, suggesting that he not only owned flocks, but also lands recognized by the state bureaucracy.

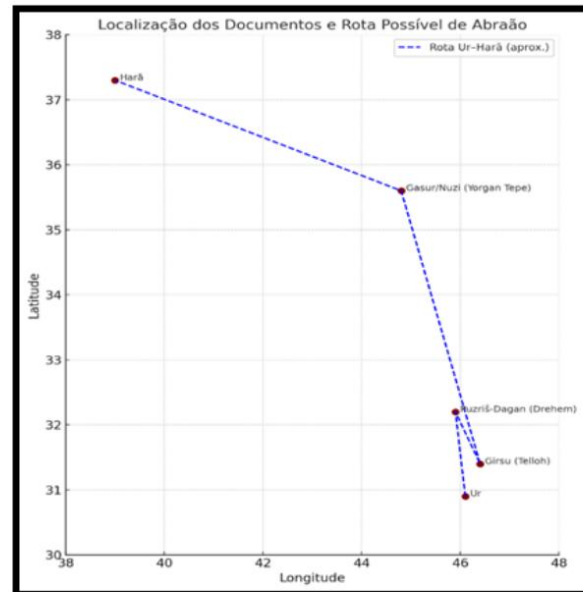
General compatibility considerations

The five documents come from central administrative centers in the Ur III redistributive system, located along strategic trade routes. Their dates and contexts are consistent with traditional chronology.



of Abraham, and the repetition of the name *Za-ab-ra-am* in different localities indicates not an isolated event, but a continuous and economically significant presence. The sum of onomastic, geographic, and logistical evidence suggests that these records may preserve mentions of a historical individual whose profile aligns with that of the biblical patriarch.

Figure 1: Abraham's possible route



1. PDT 1, 0231 (P125647) – Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem)

This administrative document, dated to the reign of Šu-Suen (2037–2029 BC), records 60 mixed sheep and goats with the inscription *kišibÿ za-ab-ra-am* (“seal of Za-ab-ra-am”). The presence of a personal seal indicates ownership or formal, authenticated possession, a practice consistent with the use of seals by tribal chiefs and patriarchs of the time (cf. Genesis 38:18). The formula *zi-re-dam* (“this is correct”) validates the record. The detailed transliteration and translation are:

Academic Transliteration:

Obverse (front): o 1. 1Gešÿ(u) udu mašÿ ÿi-a o 2. kišibÿ za-ab-ra-am o 3. [...] x-maÿ o 4. [ki in-ta]-eÿ-a-ta o 5. [...] x-NI

Reverse (verse): r 1. tukum-bi r 2. kišibÿ za-ab-ra-am 2(diš)-kam r 3. im-ma-deÿ r 4. zi-re-dam r 5. iti mašÿ-däÿ-guÿ r 6. mu dŠu-dSuen lugal

Line by Line Translation:

Front (o): 1. “60 assorted sheep and goats” 2. “Seal of Za-Ab-ra-am” 3. (Fragmented, illegible) 4. “land/place of In-ta-eÿ-a” 5. (Fragmented, perhaps place name or official)

Verse (r): 1. “Case” (common formula for validity or condition) 2. “Seal of ownership of a-Ab-ra-am, second time” 3. “was placed/presented” (im-ma-deÿ = physical placement of the seal/document) 4. “this is correct/is legitimate” (*zi-re-dam* = “is correct” “is confirmed”) 5. “Month Maš-daÿ-guÿ” (month of the Sumerian calendar, possibly the 11th month) 6. “Year in which Šu-Suen was king” (3rd Dynasty King of Ur, ca. 2037–2029 BCE)

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Seal impression: 1. “In-ta-eÿ-a” (name of scribe or witness) 2. “scribe” (dub-sar) 3. “son of Nas-saÿ-...” (incomplete)

Historical and Linguistic Comments: * **Za-ab-ra-am** (): Archaic form of the name Abram. * **kišibÿ**: Literally “seal”, indicating a document sealed and authenticated by a cylinder seal. * **im-ma-deÿ**:



“was placed” — refers to the deposit or formal acceptance of the object/document. * **zi-re-dam**: “this is correct” —
king of the 3rd Dynasty of Ur. formula that validates the content of the receipt. * **Šu** -dSuen,

2. HSS 10, 124 (P213389) – Girsu

This administrative record of grain distribution mentions *za-ab-ra-am* associated with large quantities of barley (2,850 liters) and wheat (9,000 liters). The presence of the prefix *za-* is interpreted as a Sumerian genitive marker (“of/belonging to”), reinforcing the reading “of Abraham.” The volume and nature of the transactions are consistent with the supply needed for nomadic caravans, such as that described in Genesis 11, 12. The location of Girsu, on the route between Ur and northern Mesopotamia, corroborates possible movements by Abraham.

Academic Transliteration:

start broken

1'. [...] i3 2'. [...] sze gur 3'. [...] 2(barig) 3(ban2) ziz2 gur 4'. a-ba-gi, 5'. 1(u) la2 3(barig) sze gur 6'. na-
-ha-ba 7'. 1(u) la2 1(asz) sze gur 8'. za-ab-ra-am

Reverse (verso) 1.5(u)2(barig) 3(ban2) sze [gur] 2. [...] 3(u) [n ziz2] gur# broken end

2. Summary translation into modern language:

- 150 liters of wheat (zizÿ type).
- Abagi, 2,850 liters of barley.

Nahaba received 2,700 liters of barley.

belonging to Abram.” (*Za-ab-ra-am*) is related to an entry (possibly received or delivered grain).

Totals on back of table:

- 1,650 liters of barley.
- 9,000 liters of wheat.

3. Historical interpretation

The occurrence of a name phonetically equivalent to “Abram” in Sumerian records prior to the Hebrew tradition, but contemporary to Abraham may reflect:

The existence of a real individual of that name in southern Mesopotamia.

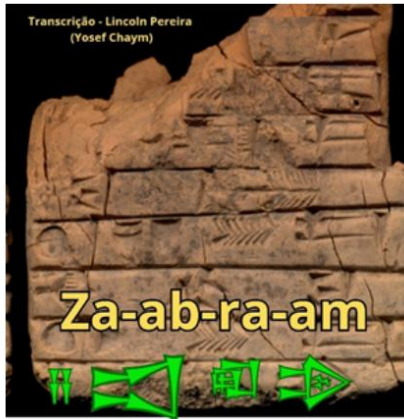
The transmission of West Semitic names in the administration of Ur and Girsu.

A possible historical origin for the name of the patriarch Abraham (*Avram*). The expression “*za-ab-ra-am*” must be understood as a standardized genitive construction of Sumerian administrative writing. Its occurrence in documents from Girsu offers a solid basis for discussions on the historicity and transmission of patriarchal names. The reading “of Abram” is not only grammatically plausible but also culturally significant, especially for comparative studies between the Mesopotamian and Hebrew traditions. Even though the name was literally *za-ab-ra-*
-am the connection with the name Abram is extremely relevant.

The Sumerian vocabulary of the tablet follows a pattern from the Ur III period (2100-2000 BC) different from what was proposed in the CDLI cataloguing, as being an Akkadian text and from the Old Akkadian period (2400-2200 BC).



Figure 2: Board. HSS 10, 124



3. PDT 1, 0722 (P126138) – Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem)

A list of flocks that specifically mentions “19 sheep [belonging to] Za-ab-ra-am” in the third line (*udu za-ab-ra-am*). This record demonstrates that Za-ab-ra-am owned officially registered movable property (livestock), a practice consistent with the role of a shepherd-nomadic patriarch described in the Bible (Genesis 13:2; 13:5). This reinforces the idea of direct interaction with the Ur III state administration.

1(u) 9(disz) udu za-ab-ra-am

4. HSS 10, 161 (P213426) – Gasur/Nuzi (Yorgan Tepe)

This document lists quantities of barley attributed to various individuals, including the name *Za-ab-ra-am* in line 15 of the text (*za-ab-ÿ-ra-am*). Of particular relevance is the appearance, on the reverse of the tablet, of two records of the name *Ish-ma-il* in lines 9 and 11 (Ishmael). The simultaneous presence of Abraham (Za-ab-ra-am) and Ishmael (Ish-ma-il) in the same record from the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC is of high historical significance, as it indicates that these names coexisted in the same temporal and geographic context attributed by the biblical narrative.

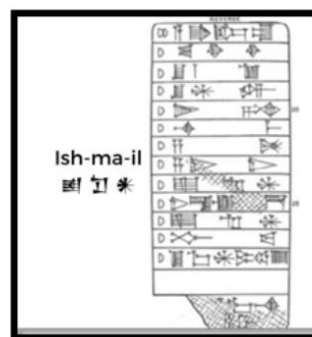
	15: 1(asz) za-ab2-ra-am
	9.15: 1(asz) isz-ma2-dingir (Ish-ma-il)

Sumerian/Akkadian administrative record listing quantities of barley (or other cereal) associated with the names of people, probably workers, merchants or heads of households, with numbers given in asz@c (a measure of volume, usually ÿ 300 liters).

Figure 3: Name Za-ab-ra-am on the obverse of the text



Figure 4: Name Ishmael on the reverse of the text





5. PDT 1, 0253 (P125669) – Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem)

This document records the delivery of two rams "from the land of Za-ab-ra-am" (*ki za-ab-ra-am-ta*), suggesting a territorial connection between the patriarch and a specific area. This association between the name and territorial property reinforces the social and economic status attributed to Abraham in the biblical accounts, indicating that he owned not only flocks but also lands recognized by the state bureaucracy.

The Logistical Realities of Abraham's Nomadic Way: An Analysis of Mobility and Supply

Studying the logistical conditions faced by nomadic caravans, such as that of the biblical figure Abraham, reveals significant complexities related to the movement, provisioning, and accommodation of a large group of family members, servants, and livestock. This text presents a detailed analysis of these dynamics, considering historical and archaeological evidence from the Fertile Crescent regions.

1. Displacement Dynamics

The caravan's movement was characterized by the slow pace inherent in transporting a large contingent, composed not only of extended family members but also of servants and a significant number of livestock—including sheep, goats, and possibly oxen and donkeys. The average daily walking speed was between 15 and 20 kilometers, a maximum compatible with the animals' endurance and need for rest.

This displacement required strategic stops, motivated by essential needs:

- **Pasture:** cattle needed rest periods for feeding, estimated at one to two days every three or four days of continuous march, in order to guarantee their health and ability to endure the journey.
- **Water supply:** water consumption depended on proximity to natural sources such as rivers, wells or artificial canals connected to ziggurats, typical Mesopotamian structures that facilitated access to water.
- **Human food supply:** food for the caravan members was acquired or exchanged in cities of economic and religious importance, such as Nipur, Larsa, Sippar, Gasur (present-day Nuzi) and Mari. These urban centers functioned as nodal points for trade and the exchange of goods.

2. Supply and Auxiliary Logistics Missions

In addition, smaller groups of servants carried out specific missions to gather and acquire provisions. These groups covered distances of 30 to 40 kilometers on round-trip journeys that could last two to five days, depending on the distance and terrain conditions.

During these periods, the main caravan remained in stable camps, allowing for resource conservation and rest. The aforementioned cities, such as Nippur and Nuzi, often housed temples and markets that facilitated trading and the acquisition of grains (wheat, barley), fruits (dates), and various utensils, essential for maintaining nomadic life.

3. Nomadic Camping Model

The camping strategy called for a continuous march of three to five days followed by a prolonged stop of five to ten days. These stops were strategic in nature and were preferably carried out in



regions that offered natural resources and logistical advantages, such as:

- Proximity to irrigation channels, ensuring access to water and pasture.
- Locations located on ancient trade routes, facilitating contact with urban centers for supplies.
- Fertile areas and plains suitable for grazing.

Emblematic locations of the period and the region, such as the surroundings of Kish, Eshnunna and Gasur (Nuzi), would have been ideal points for the temporary establishment of these stops.

4. Time Estimate of the Journey

Based on the approximate distance of 960 kilometers and the average speed of 18 kilometers per day, rivers — an intermediate value considering the presence of cattle — the direct march would take about 53 days.

However, for a realistic assessment, several additional temporal factors must be added:

Factor	Estimated Extra Days
Long stops (7 to 9 stops of approximately 7 days each) 49 to 63	
Supply missions (4 trips of 5 days each)	20
Unforeseen weather events, diseases and natural obstacles	10 to 15

Thus, the total estimated travel time is approximately 140 days, or between 4.5 and 5 months. This estimate excludes additional, smaller stops that occurred during the gathering of food for the overnight stay, highlighting the complexity and logistical rigor involved in a nomadic journey of this magnitude.

The text of HSS 10, 124 (P213389) makes the quantity of grain purchased consistent with the route taken by Abraham from Ur to Haram. Nippur was an important trading center for travelers, which corroborates the possibility that Abraham sent his servants under his seal to acquire food and provisions for the journey.

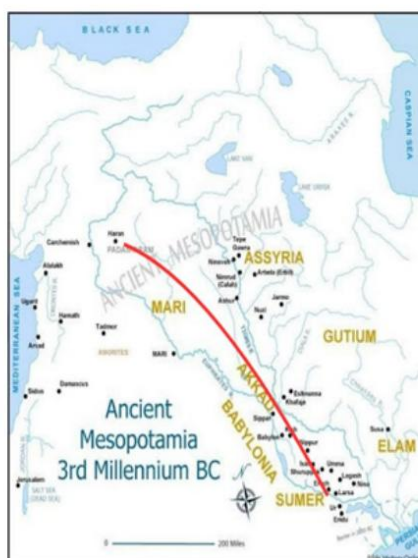


Figure 6: Abram's journey from Ur to Haram, passing through Nippur, the place where the tablets were found

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According to scholars, the Semitic names on the tablets are of Amorite origin, from the Amartu (Amorites).


They point out that "Amorites" may not have originally referred to a specific ethnic group, but to any nomadic people who threatened the stability of established communities. Even if this is the case, at some point, "Amorites" came to designate a certain tribe of people with a specific culture based on a nomadic lifestyle, who lived off the land and extracted what they needed from the communities they encountered. It did not refer to a people by descent, but to any nomadic group or



semi-nomadic people who come from the territories of southern Canaan.

Etymology and meaning:

Amurru (in Akkadian) originally refers to the lands west of Mesopotamia, that is, the region inhabited by the Amorites (Amurrû), who came from Syria, the upper Euphrates, and the semiarid regions of the west. Evidence of this is the fact that the Kassites followed the Hittites in taking Babylon and renaming it, and the Hittites, in turn, were succeeded by the Assyrians. The Amorite Period in Mesopotamia ended around 1600 BC, although it is evident from the characteristic Semitic names of recorded individuals that Amorites continued to live in the region as part of the general population. The Amorites continued to pose problems for the Neo-Assyrian Empire until c. 900–800 BC. It is unclear who these “Amorites” were and whether they were culturally Amorite. Over time, the cultural Amorites came to be called “Aramaeans” and the land from which they came as “Aramaic.”¹

In addition to Abram, there are also legal texts with the name of *Yaqub-Ilum*.  Jacob, in administrative texts such as the (P365188) Legal Tablet excavated at Sippar-Yahrurum (modern Tell Abu Habbah), dated to the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1900-1600 BC) we also find the personal name *Isra il* (Is-rael) in texts such as (P240860).

There is also mention of the name Isaac, which I could not find to analyze and do a textual investigation, but I will leave it the mention referred to in the Tyndale House archive, Cambridge 'Patriarchal Names in context' (Allan Millard, p.161).

Discussion and Implications for Patriarchal Historicity

The five documents analyzed come from crucial administrative centers in the Ur III redistributive system, located along strategic trade routes. Their dates and contexts are consistent with the traditional chronology of Abraham, and the repetition of the name *Za-ab-ra-am* in different locations indicates not an isolated event, but a continuous and economically significant presence. The sum of onomastic, geographic, and logistical evidence suggests that these records may preserve mentions of a historical individual whose profile aligns with that of the biblical patriarch.

The philological analysis of the name *Za-ab-ra-am* and its correspondence with the Hebrew *ÿAÿrÿm* (Abram) is a central point. The linguistic structure and its presence in administrative contexts reflecting large-scale economic and social activities (such as the registration of livestock and grain) lend weight to the hypothesis that it is the name of a royal and influential person. The mention of *Ish-ma-il* in the same document as *Za-ab-ra-am* in Nuzi is particularly intriguing because it aligns directly with the biblical narrative of the relationship between Abraham and Ishmael.

The logistical realities of Abraham's nomadic lifestyle, as described in the Bible, are echoed in Sumerian records. The need for caravan supplies and the movement of herds were intrinsic aspects of the economy of the time. The Ur III bureaucracy, with its detailed record-keeping system, would have documented such activities, making the appearance of names associated with these practices plausible. *Za-ab-ra-am*'s ability to own property and have his "land" recognized by the state administration suggests a

¹ Bertman, S. *Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

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status that transcends that of a simple individual, bringing him closer to the figure of a tribal leader or patriarch.

It is important to emphasize that this study does not seek to prove the exact identity of *Za-ab-ra-am* with the biblical Abraham, but rather to demonstrate the plausibility of his historical existence within the Mesopotamian context of the time. Philological, archaeological, and historical evidence converge to challenge the purely mythical view of the patriarchs, suggesting that biblical traditions may have a more concrete historical basis than previously assumed. The research contributes to interdisciplinary dialogue, encouraging a reevaluation of sources and a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between narrative and history in the Ancient Near East.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study explored the occurrence of the name "Za-ab-ra-am" in Sumerian administrative documents from the Ur III period, analyzing its possible correspondence with the biblical patriarch Abraham. Through a philological and historical-comparative approach, which included the analysis of academic transliterations, paleographic reconstructions, and historical contextualization, it was possible to demonstrate that the presence of this name in records of property, trade, and taxation, in regions and periods compatible with the biblical narrative, offers significant evidence for the discussion of patriarchal historicity.

The recurrence of "Za-ab-ra-am" in different localities (Puzriš-Dagan, Girsu, Nuzi) and its association with large-scale economic activities (herds, grain, land) suggest that he was an individual of social and economic importance. The discovery of the name "Ish-ma-il" on the same tablet as "Za-ab-ra-am" in Nuzi is particularly notable, as it establishes a direct connection to the biblical narrative and reinforces the plausibility that these names represent real historical figures.

Although this work does not definitively identify "Za-ab-ra-am" with the biblical Abraham, it contributes to the academic debate by presenting a body of evidence that challenges the purely mythical view of the patriarchs. Sumerian administrative practices of detailed record-keeping of assets and transactions provide a concrete backdrop for the existence of individuals with Abraham's profile, suggesting that biblical traditions may have deeper roots in the historical reality of the Ancient Near East than is commonly acknowledged.

Future research could deepen the analysis of other West Semitic names in Mesopotamian documents, as well as explore the interconnection between trade networks and migration routes in the region. The continued integration of archaeological, philological, and historical data is essential for a more complete understanding of the complex relationship between ancient narratives and the historical context in which they were formed.

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