

## What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM

“God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

### SESSION #1: Genesis 12:1-20

#### TEXT:

v. 1 The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.

v. 2 I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

v. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

v. 4 So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

v. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

v. 6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. The Canaanites were then in the land,

v. 7 but the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

v. 8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

v. 9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

v.10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

v.11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are.

v.12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live.

v.13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

v.14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman.

v.15 And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace.

v.16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.

v.17 But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai.

v.18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?"

v.19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!"

v.20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

**INTRODUCTION:**

(Still Lookin' by Joe Kreger) St. Louis, MO: Doane Agricultural Services Company. Copyright – Joe Kreger (poetry) and Doane Agricultural Services Company (book), 2000.

*Barn Cat*

Charlie is our barn cat,  
a down right friendly kitty.  
He lives out on the Bois D'Arc place,  
northwest of Ponca City.

We were gettin' the feed truck fixed  
at that shop of Charlie True's,  
when Alicia heard some noises,  
some pathetic little mews.

She looked behind a packin' box,  
and there that kitten was,  
a scrawny little skeleton  
all covered with gray fuzz.

Now Alicia couldn't leave him,  
For Her, that wouldn't do.  
She took him home and named him  
after Charlie True.

She already had so many cats,  
it was a near disgrace,  
so she installed him in the barn  
over at the Ponca place.

Ryan went to feedin' him,  
and he soon got sleek and fat.  
His coat got smooth and striped,  
a very handsome cat.

But, though his name was Charlie,  
and we referred to him as "he,"  
it soon became apparent  
that Charlie was a "she."

I've never been known for likin' cats.  
 Never cared much for their kind.  
 But Charlie is so friendly,  
 he's done changed my mind.

He meets me when I unlock the gate.  
 Acts so polite and nice.  
 He patrols the barn and feed room  
 And keeps them clear of mice.  
 He rubs right up agin' your legs  
 and he wiggles and he purrs.  
 He'll ride back on the pickup bed,  
 but it's the cab that he prefers.

He'll foller you a' horseback  
 or walkin', fixin' fence.  
 More like a dog than he is a cat,  
 the critters got good sense.

But, while I appreciate Ol' Charlie  
 An' the difference he has made,  
 one cat's enough for anyone.  
 We'd better get him spayed.  
 pp. 17-18

(New Cowboy Poetry: A Contemporary Gathering edited by Hal Cannon)  
Layton, Utah: Gibbs-Smith. Copyright - Hal Cannon, 1990. 165 pp.

## THE WHOLE LOAD WADDIE MITCHELL

In a western town in the days of old,  
‘Fore the mines closed down for the lack of gold,  
The folks there seized opportunity  
An’ built them a right smart community.  
They built ‘em a school where the R’s were taught,  
An’ they built them a church on a corner lot;  
They painted her white, with a steeple high  
To greet townfolk as they’s passin’ by.

They had ‘em a sheriff, a judge an’ a mayor,  
But they needed a preacher to make things square.  
So they sent back East, as was the general rule,  
An’ hired one fresh from divinity school.  
When Sunday come he was all decked out  
To preach his sermon, whisper an’ shout.  
But when he stepped out to the podium,  
It was all too obvious that no one come

‘Cept one old cowboy in a pew back there,  
In his Sunday shirt an’ his greased-down hair.  
He sat there quiet, just watched the floor,  
With a ‘ccasional glance towards the church’s door.  
Time stood still for the longest while,  
Till the preacher coughed an’ faked a smile:  
“Guess we could try it again next week.”  
But emotion reigned; he could hardly speak.

His demeanor was that of a scolded pup.  
He turned to leave when ol’ Jake spoke up:  
“Hold on there, Parson, it taint yer fault,  
An’ them thar doors ain’t like no vault,  
‘Cuz thar ain’t locks for to keep folks out;  
An’ if you don’t preach now, Satan’s won the bout.  
Now if I was t’ haul out a whole load o’ hay,  
An’ only one cow showed, she’d get fed that day.”

Well, this preachin' man, in the last few days,  
 Found it hard to cope with the western ways.  
 But he figured as how he'd found his call  
 From this profound man with his western drawl.  
 So he fixed his collar an' he stood up straight  
 And commenced to expound on the pearly gates;  
 And he shocked himself at his own recall  
 Of the book he waved, chapter, verse an' all.

It was God Almighty's omnipotent power  
 That he lectured on for near an hour,  
 Then the wages of sin an' the hell's brim fire;  
 An' he didn't weaken an' he didn't tire.  
 He was jumpin' an' screamin' an' poundin' the floor,  
 When he noticed ol' Jake weren't awake anymore.  
 Now, this made him mad, and he stomped to the pew;  
 He shook Jake's shoulder an' he said, "I'm not through."

"You're the one told me 'bout the cow gettin' fed,  
 An' here you're a-actin' like you're home in bed."  
 "You're right there, Preach, 'bout the things I told you;  
 If I'd a load of hay it would still stand true:  
 That cow would get fed, 'tis the cowboy's code—  
 But I wouldn't feed her the whole durn load."

pp. 55-56

### Actual Writings from Hospital Charts

Actual notes from hospital charts (probably written by some sleepy intern or frazzled nurse):

- The patient refused autopsy.
- Patient has left white blood cells at another hospital.
- Note: Patient recovering from forehead cut. Patient became very angry when given an enema by mistake.
- Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.
- On the second day, the knee was better, and on the third day it disappeared.
- The patient is tearful and crying constantly. She also appears to be depressed.
- The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 1993.
- She is numb from her toes down.
- While in ER, she was examined, x-rated, and sent home.
- The skin was moist and dry.
- Occasional, constant, infrequent headaches.
- Patient was alert and unresponsive.
- Rectal examination revealed a normal size thyroid.
- She stated that she had been constipated for most of her life, until she got a divorce.
- I saw your patient today, who is still under our car for physical therapy.
- The lab test indicated abnormal liver function.
- Skin: Somewhat pale but present.
- Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities.

*Submitted by Marshall Shelley, editor, Leadership Journal*

© 2007 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today International

**(PreachingToday.com)**

(Illustrations Unlimited by James S. Hewett, editor) Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright – James S. Hewett, 1988.

### APPLAUSE

The late Bishop Fulton J. Sheen was greeted by a burst of applause when he made his appearance as a speaker at a meeting in Minneapolis. He responded by saying: “Applause before a speaker begins in an act of faith. Applause during the speech is an act of hope. Applause after he has concluded is an act of charity.”

p. 295

### IRS POLICY

When you consider the taxes the average person has to pay, the IRS seems to have a policy of “handicap the hired.”

p. 369

### Sheryl Crow Embraces Multiple Religions

I believe in God. I believe in Jesus and Buddha and Mohammed and all those that were enlightened. I wouldn't say necessarily that I'm a strict Christian. I'm not sure I believe in heaven.

—Rock singer Sheryl Crow in an interview with the New York Post in September of 2005

*Mark A. Kellner, “Hollyview,” Today's Pentecostal Evangel (4-9-06), p. 19*

© 2007 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today International

(PreachingToday.com)

**(The Invisible War: What Every Believer Needs to Know About Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare by Chip Ingram) Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. Copyright – Chip Ingram, 2006.**

The real secret to happiness isn't anywhere in prime-time entertainment, of course. The key to a fulfilled life has nothing to do with fast cars, revolving partners, or this year's fashions. Those are just counterfeits with which the enemy and the flesh conspire to tempt us. And the remedy—the number one defense against this devious deception—is to clothe ourselves in truth.

p. 83

It is our pleasure in this series of studies to look together at the biographical material for **ONE OF THE GREATEST MEN IN THE SCRIPTURES.**

The life that we are going to be studying is the **LIFE OF ABRAHAM.**

Abraham is the only one who is called **THE FRIEND OF GOD.** This is recorded in:

**Isaiah 41:8,**

**2 Chronicles 20:7,** and

**James 2:23.**

His name is mentioned **74 TIMES in the NEW TESTAMENT** and is interwoven into much of New Testament teaching.

He is **PAUL'S VERY FAVORITE** illustration of how a man has made right with God by **THE SINGLE CONDITION OF FAITH** and faith alone.

Happened as **EXAMPLES** . . .

In Genesis 11 through Genesis 50 we have the **BIOGRAPHIES OF FOUR GREAT MEN:**

1. **ABRAHAM,**
2. **ISAAC,**
3. **JACOB,** and
4. **JOSEPH.**

Some have seen New Testament **PARALLEL TEACHING** of the great doctrines of the faith in each of these men's lives:

1. **ABRAHAM** would teach us of Divine **PREDESTINATION,**
2. **ISAAC** would teach us of Divine **CALLING,**
3. **JACOB** would teach us of Divine **JUSTIFICATION,** and
4. **JOSEPH** would teach us of Divine **GLORIFICATION.**

#### 1 Corinthians 10:6

Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved.

#### Romans 8:30

And whom He predestined these He also called, and whom called these He also justified, and whom He justified these He also glorified.

**GOD HAS NEVER LEFT:**

**UNDONE ANY WORK** and

**UNFULFILLED ANY PROMISE.**

A **TRANSITION** takes place in Genesis 11.

**GOD'S CHOICE AND CHANNEL NOW IS TO USE A MAN.**

**GOD'S CHOSEN INSTRUMENT** for the divine purposes of redemption is the man called **ABRAHAM**.

Joshua 24:2-3

And Joshua said unto all the people, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel Your Fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor and they served other gods and I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood and led him throughout all the land of Canaan and multiplied his seed and gave him Isaac.

**DeHaan points out:**

According to scripture, God called Abraham in sovereign grace. Man had utterly failed after the flood of Noah and God now abandons the nations and gives them up to themselves. He steps aside to choose one man in sovereign grace. Through him, His son Isaac, and His grandson Jacob He begins an entirely new work. Through Abraham and his seed, He is to give the revelation of His will in the Scriptures. Out of Abraham and his seed is to come the Saviour.

Here we are studying the life of a:

**ROUGH,**

**SIMPLE,**

**VENERABLE,**

**SHEEP MASTER.**

He uttered no prophecy. He wrote no book. Sang no song, gave no laws. He is just a man from Ur.

Why did God choose Abraham over everyone else? Only God knows the answer.

Abraham was just another man from an idolatrous family and was possibly an idolater himself.

God chooses this man and does not give the reasons why.

#### Psalm 75:6-7

For promotion comes neither from the east, nor from west, nor from the south, but God is the judge. He puts down one and sets up another.

He has made a choice and His choice is Abraham.

An obscure, solitary man, married but he had no family, and had no hope of a family because his wife was barren. He was probably living just like his neighbors—in an evil world in the midst of an evil age.

No credentials.

Nothing in Abraham.

Only God could see what he wanted to do!

### DeHaan points out:

Abraham is the great example of Divine sovereign election and predestination. He was not a Jew when God called him, he was not even Hebrew, He was a pagan. Abraham came from an idolatrous family. Passing by the whole nation of the Chaldeans God goes to one single family and in that one family He passes by all except one man, Abraham, and says to him, "I will make of thee a great nation." Such action on the part of God is nothing else but sovereign grace. There was certainly nothing in Abraham, God did not see a thing in him that made him worthy of being called rather than another, but in sovereign, absolute sovereign grace He chose Abraham according to His own purpose. Abraham then becomes the great example of divine predestination.

Chose just because of **LOVE IN THE HEART OF GOD**. Others were probably just as needy—perhaps morally better—but it was God's choice.

### Matthew 11:26

Even so Father for such was thy gracious will.

### Isaiah 51:2

Look to Abraham your father, and Sarah who gave birth to you in pain. When he was one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.

Abraham was the **YOUNGEST OF THREE BROTHERS**. They were all the sons of Terah. Abraham was born when Terah was 130 years old. Terah died at 205 when Abraham was 75.

Haran

Nahor

The religious worship of the family was probably primarily the worship of **THE MOON GOD**. The worship of the time was **POLYTHEISTIC**.

They worshipped:

**CELESTIAL BODIES,**

**THE STARS,**

**THE SUN,**

**THE MOON,** and

**THE PLANETS.**

Their worship was very **BASE** and **SENSUAL** in type. Haran had the location of a temple to the moon god which could have been a real attraction to them as a family.

Romans 1:21-25 serves as a divine commentary on the **RELIGIOUS CLIMATE** in the time of Abraham.

### Romans 1:21-25

For even though they knew God they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and of four footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchange the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever. Amen.

Abraham's life can easily be divided into **THREE DISTINCT PARTS**. There is:

1. **AWAKENING OF FAITH**—this phase of his life extended from his call in Ur of the Chaldees to his settlement in the land of Canaan. A period of about **six years**.
2. **DISCIPLING OF FAITH**—as part of Abraham's life. Extended from his settlement in Canaan to the birth of his son Isaac. This is a period of about **25 years**.
3. **PERFECTING OF HIS FAITH**—extended from birth of Isaac to Abraham's death. This covers a period of about **75 years**.

So we can say that his life progressed:

from **AWAKENING** of faith,  
to the **DISCIPLING** of faith,  
to the **PERFECTING** of faith.

Development:

1. **DECLARATION** of faith,
2. **DISCIPLINE** of faith,
3. **DEMONSTRATION** of faith.

There are **SEVEN DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS WITH ABRAHAM**, each initiating a significant move forward. Every time God appeared to Abraham there was a giant forward step involved. Abraham responded with an obedient faith—He obeyed God.

We need to pick up our story in Genesis 11:26-32 to get the full impact of what is taking place in the study for today.

#### Genesis 11:26-32

And Terah lived 70 years and became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nabor and Haran and Haran became the father of Lot. And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth in Ur of Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. And Sarai was barren, she had no children. And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran his grandson and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife and they went out together from the Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan. They went as far as Haran and settled there. And the days of Terah were 205 years and Terah died in Haran.

**STEPHEN** says at the beginning of his sermon in:

Acts 7:2ff

And he said hear me brethren and fathers, the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he lived in Haran. And said to him depart from your country and your relatives and come into the land I will show you. Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran and from there after his father died, God removed him into this country in which you are now living.

Behind Terah's actions was the faith of his son, and so they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans and head toward Canaan. But they stopped in Haran.

We notice that their goal was Canaan, the promised land of victory, but they came to Haran instead, only about one-half of the distance to their destination. There they stopped and as far as we can determine, they spent about six years in this place of desolation. Haran means dry or parched and fruitless. Canaan stands for fruitfulness and victory. Here in Haran, Abram dwelt for six years. For the record, they were wholly wasted years.

They stopped, however, in Haran. This is the place for the moon god. It would be similar to the temple in Salt Lake City, Utah.

There is no record that Abram build any altars here or that he ever prayed. There is no record of any revelation or encouragement from God. Nor any appearances from the Lord. No victory, no progress, no growth. What a picture of many a Christian who starts out with enthusiasm only to come to a dead stand-still before he reaches the place of real victory. Instead of victory he comes to the place where God must deal with him in judgment as though he had never even known the Lord.

Start out like a house afire and slowly grind to a screeching halt!

Galatians 5:7

You were running well, who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth.

Many Christians today start off like Abram. They launch out with great enthusiasm to follow the Lord, perhaps as the result of a crises experience, but later grind to a standstill in their Christian walk. Has this happened to you? Remember the key issue for Abram was separation. It is the same for us. This age of materialism has gripped even the Christians. We can not expect God to lead us into fruitfulness unless we become separated from the things of the world. Each Christian must make the decision for himself. Once we break from the things of the world we will see the things of God far more than take the place of the things of this world.

2 Timothy 4:10

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18

Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Galatians 6:14

But may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

The half-way point for **NEHEMIAH** in rebuilding the walls was most difficult because the external opposition was mounting and the internal debris and the needs of those who were building made it difficult for the walls to continue to completion.

It was also the experience of **EZRA** and those who built the temple that they were side-tracked into building their own houses while they left just the foundation of the temple built. The words of the Lord come very clearly for them to consider their ways and to return of the task to bring it to completion.

### 2 Corinthians 8:10-11

And I give my opinion in this matter for this is to your advantage who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this but also to desire to do this. But now finish doing it also, that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

Haran is the half-way house—the order:

destination Canaan,

the execution a long stop in Haran.

Probably about **SIX YEARS IN THE DESERT.**

It is literally **CLUTTERED UP OBEDIENCE.**

There are a couple of things I would like to say before we begin our verse-by-verse exposition.

## The Plan

by David W. Breese

There is, in life, a bright design —  
 My soul declares it so.  
 There is a vision, still by me  
 Unseen, but yet I know.  
 Another mind, another heart  
 Has hoped on my behalf.  
 Another eye has seen in me  
 That which I know not half.

A surety within my breast,  
 More sure than can be shown,  
 Convinces me that I am here  
 For reasons yet unknown.  
 But daily on my heart there dawns  
 A fairer, fuller light,  
 A brighter morning, more aglow  
 With clarity and sight.

Til here upon my earthly way  
 At this mid-point I find  
 I can more clearly now compare  
 The road ahead, behind.  
 The poignant, striking contrast here  
 I can now mark with ease.  
 The path that seemed so liquid then  
 Was really charted seas.

How could I then have doubted that  
 One far more sure than I:  
 More wise, more true, more filled with love  
 Was watching from the sky,  
 And working with relentless power  
 To open there for me  
 The high road of His hope, His plan  
 That I could not foresee.

My Lord, my God, I know that I  
 Have not as yet attained,  
 But help me now more sure to walk  
 Amid the unexplained.

To show that God ordains on earth  
 The making of a man,  
 Which process is the prelude here  
 To His eternal plan.

And when that moment golden comes  
 When faith gives way to sight,  
 No hesitation shall there be,  
 No backward look, no fright,  
 No flicker of reluctance then,  
 For there I sure shall say,  
 “The mighty architect of time  
 Designed it all that way.”

[http://christiandestiny.org/publications/newsletter/2000-11/2000-11\\_newsletter.pdf](http://christiandestiny.org/publications/newsletter/2000-11/2000-11_newsletter.pdf)

Knowing that the land and the seed where involved in the Abrahamic covenant, I think it is important for us to realize that **ABRAHAM'S SEED IS HATED WORLD-WIDE.**

**(Epicenter: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future by Joel C. Rosenberg) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, Copyright – Joel C. Rosenberg, 2006.**

“Hitler hated Christianity with a passion which rivaled [Vladimir] Lenin’s,” Johnson once wrote. “Shortly after assuming power in 1933, he told Hermann Rauschning that he intended ‘to stamp out Christianity root and branch . . . One is either a Christian or a German—you cannot be both.’”<sup>1</sup>

This hatred of Christianity and the Bible upon which it is based led to an even more virulent hatred of the Jewish people who wrote the Bible and were the first true followers of God. Adolf Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*:

Wherever I went, I began to see Jews, and the more I saw, the more sharply they became distinguished in my eyes from the rest of humanity . . . Later I often grew sick to the stomach from the smell of these [Jews] . . . Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it? If you cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzled by the sudden light—a [Jewish person] . . . Gradually, I began to hate them . . . For me this was the time of the greatest spiritual upheaval I have ever had to go through. I had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and become an anti-Simite.<sup>2</sup>

Driven by this hatred of God and his chosen people, Hitler went on to murder 6 million Jews in a campaign known as The Final Solution that was designed to wipe out all Jews. Such a campaign might very well have succeeded if the U.S. and allied forces had not been able to destroy Hitler’s regime.

1 .Paul Johnson, “The Necessity of Christianity,” *Truth Journal*, Volume 1, 1985, see [www.leaderu.com/truth/1truth08.html](http://www.leaderu.com/truth/1truth08.html) (accessed May 24, 2006).

2. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, quoted in William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi German* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1959), 26. pp. 160-61

(Epicenter: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future by Joel C. Rosenberg) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, Copyright – Joel C. Rosenberg, 2006.

Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s, likewise hated all who looked to the Bible as a source of inspiration and authority, and he reserved particular cruelty for the Jewish people. He had a favorite saying by which he lived and by which multitudes of Jewish people died, notes Soviet expert Arnold Beichman: “*Est chelovek, est problema, net cheloveka—net problemy.*” It meant, “A person, a problem; no person—no problem.” As Beichman put it: “Millions of people in the Soviet Union became unpersons during [Stalin’s] quarter-century rule . . . and he had a particular hatred for Soviet Jews. Stalin’s own daughter, Svetlana, attested to that psychosis: ‘What was originally political hate gradually became a feeling of racial hatred against all Jews, without exception.’” During Stalin’s reign of terror, tens of millions of Russians died from purges, wars, and famines. Many of these were Jews, at least a million of whom were deported from Moscow in 1953 and sent to slave-labor camps in Siberia, never to be heard from again.<sup>3</sup>

Today the murderous anti-Semitic and anti-Christian spirit of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin is being carried on by Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. As we have seen, he has called for the complete destruction of the Jewish state, echoing the words of the Ayatollah Khomeini: “Israel must be wiped off the map.”<sup>4</sup>

3. Arnold Beichman, “How Stalin, the ‘Breaker of Nations,’ Hated, Murdered Jews.” *Washington Times*, August 16, 2003. Beichman was reviewing Arno Lustiger’s book, *Stalin and the Jews: The Red Book; The Tragedy of the Jews*, published by Enigma Books.
4. Aljazeera, “Ahmadinejad: Wipe Israel off map,” October 26, 2005.  
p. 161

(Facing Your Giants by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: W Publishing. Copyright  
– Max Lucado, 2006.

The most sacred symbol in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is a tree: a sprawling, shade-bearing, eighty-year-old American elm. Tourists drive from miles around to see her. People pose for pictures beneath her. Arborists carefully protect her. She adorns posters and letterhead. Other trees grow larger, fuller, even greener. But not one is equally cherished. The city treasures the tree, not for her appearance, but her endurance.

She endured the Oklahoma City bombing.

Timothy McVeigh parked his death-laden truck only yards from her. His malice killed 168 people, wounded 850, destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, and buried the tree in rubble. No one expected it to survive. No one, in fact, gave any thought to the dusty, branch-stripped tree.

But then she began to bud.

Sprouts pressed through damaged bark; green leaves pushed away gray soot. Life resurrected from an acre of death. People noticed. The tree modeled the resilience the victims desired. So they gave the elm a name: the Survivor Tree.<sup>1</sup>

Timothy McVeighs still rock our worlds. They still, inexcusably, inexplicably maim and scar us. We want to imitate the tree—survive the evil, rise above the ruin. But how?

1. <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/media>  
pp. 43-44

**FOR SIX YEARS ABRAM IS HUNG UP IN HARAN.**

**Anderson says:**

How many are the times we settle for something short of the Lord's perfect plan for our lives! The city of Haran should have been just a stopover on the journey to God's best, but Terah was happy to make it his permanent residence. The halfway point was good enough for him. Terah was content to live in Haran and, six years later at the age of 205, to die there.

p. 21

**Anderson says further:**

A key thought emerges from all of this. As we study Abram's life, we see that when we begin to follow God, to walk with God as he did, God starts separating us unto Himself. He ordered Abram to leave Ur and make tracks for Canaan. Just as we're often more interested in arranging compromises than in obeying commands, so Abram took all of his family and got only as far as Haran. He began to obey, to separate himself unto the Lord, but then he stopped and remained stopped for six long years.

Does that sound like something in your life? When you became a Christian, maybe you ignited like a straw house doused with gasoline and set aflame. You burned with excitement about your newfound faith and then all of a sudden Galatians 5:7 became true: "You were running well," but now you've kind of become dead in the water, fizzling like a wet firecracker on a drizzly Fourth of July. Many Christians are like that. Like Abram, they're hung up in Haran because they're unwilling to continue to take the steps of separation necessary to become men or women stripped down to do what God wants them to do.

p. 21

**Barnhouse says:**

The world has many a halfway house on the road to God's will. The order was: Destination Canaan. The execution was: long stop in Haran. Terah probably created a great emotional scene at the old home in Ur, when his son announced that God had called him to go to a far country which he had never seen. Finally, the old man said he would go too. Since he had the authority of the father, Abram deferred to his wishes and there was the long sojourn at Haran. Terah probably was very proud of his religious progress. Had he not given up Ur? Was he not well out into the desert? Could he not glory in his progress? But Terah died in Haran.

p. 73

**Baxter says:**

In ABRAHAM we see *the life of faith*. He stands out as the supreme exemplar of the faith-life. In him we see the man of faith going forth, trusting in the Divine guidance, believing the Divine promises, receiving Divine assurances, inheriting the Divine blessing, undergoing sharp testings, and—despite occasional failures—being “accounted righteous” through faith, and being called “the friend of God.”

p. 68

**Kidner says:**

The history of redemption, like that of creation, begins with God speaking: this, in a nutshell, differentiates Abram's story from his father's. The call to forsake all and follow finds its nearest parallels in the Gospels (which are in some ways nearer the patriarchal pattern than was the Law—*cf.* Gal. 3), and Abram's early history is partly that of his gradual disentanglement from *country, kindred* and *father's house*, a process not completed until the end of chapter 13.

p. 113

**MacArthur says:**

This passage contains the promise whose fulfillment extends all through Scripture (either in fact or in expectation) and ultimately to Revelation 20. The Abrahamic covenant proper is introduced in verses 1-3, actually made in 15:18-21, reaffirmed in 17:1-21, then renewed also with Isaac (26:2-5) and Jacob (28:10-17). It is an everlasting covenant.

p. 29

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

This section of the Bible begins with God's call of Abram and Sarai (later named Abraham and Sarah) to become the parents of a new people through whom God would reach all the families of the earth.

p. 26

**Stigers says:**

The salient features in the life of Abram relate to the promises of God and Abram's responses to them. Abram's life is a growth in faith developed under delayed fulfillment of divine promises. He is promised a seed, and when that seed is delayed, he must somehow see meaning in that delay and learn faith in God. When he is promised a land, and when that land is not given, he must look beyond the promise to its Maker so that he may understand. When he is commanded to sacrifice Isaac, he must obey with a willing heart of love, yet somehow see through to balance the command with the promise of the seed of a nation and leave the outcome to God and to find in God all sufficiency. Through all of his experiences he must come to see God as the origin of all that will endure. By the deferral of his hopes he must grow to see that not in the things promised, but in Yahweh-God alone is all reality.

p. 135

**Waltke says:**

First Abraham is not without flaws. As with each of the heroes of faith, his flaws will be as instructive as his virtues. The faithful patriarchs wander in and out of the Promised Land, the place of blessing and light, but with each step God's guiding hand will be evident, since even "if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).  
p. 193

**He says further:****Sovereign Grace**

This dark introduction profiles God's grace that will follow in the rest of Book 6. Terah is steeped in pagan idolatry. One of his sons dies, leaving two orphans; another is married to an infertile wife, and Terah himself will die, having settled for a land short of Abraham's heavenly vision. Against this hopelessness, God's sovereign call of Abraham offers bright hope. Indeed, Sarah's sterility (see 15:2-3; 17:17) emphasizes the fact that God's grace is beyond human imagination. She will bear children not by natural generation but by supernatural life that faith engenders. Through this childless couple, God will bring into being a new humanity that is born not of the will of a husband but by the will of God.  
p. 201

**Wiersbe says:**

"If the other planets are inhabited," quipped George Bernard Shaw, "then they must be using the earth for their insane asylum."

We may chuckle at that statement, but it reminds us of a sad fact: The world is in a mess, and it does not seem to be getting any better. What is wrong?

It all goes back to events recorded in the Book of Genesis.  
p. 67

**Candlish says:**

Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham.—NEHEMIAH ix. 7, 8.

THE stream of history now flows from a new fountainhead; as before from Adam, and then from Noah; so now from Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God.

p. 181

v. 1 The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 1:

GOD told Abram: “Leave your country, your family, and your father’s home for a land that I will show you.

The NET Bible translates verse 1:

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

Verses 1-3 record God’s call to **Abram**, and verses 4-9 record Abram’s obedience. The call had two imperatives, each with subsequent promises. The first imperative was to get out (**Leave your country . . . go to the land**, v. 1) . . .

Separation was a necessary condition for blessing in the life of Abram. We notice this as a keynote from the very first to the last in his life.

God is constantly separating him unto Himself.

### Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Lord is stripping him down. Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us.

The **FIRST COMMAND** is:

**“LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY.”**

There had been a failure to do this in chapter 11 and now the Lord makes it clear that He wants Abram to depart from his **“COUNTRY”** and then **“FROM HIS PEOPLE”**—that is his relatives who were proving to be a source of difficulty in his walk with the Lord. They, being idolaters, served as a deterrent to Abram’s walk with God.

**“AND FROM YOUR FATHER’S HOUSEHOLD.”**

He is to move into a **NEW SPHERE OF AUTHORITY:**

**FROM DEPENDENCE UPON HIS FATHER**

**TO DEPENDENCE UPON GOD HIMSELF.**

**“AND GO THE LAND I WILL SHOW YOU.”**

The Lord does not specify **GEOLOGY** or **GEOGRAPHY**—that makes no difference. It is the land he will show once Abram takes the step of faith to move in the direction of the Lord’s will.

Hebrews 11:14-16

For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own and indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out they would have had opportunity to return but as it is they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for He has prepared a city for them.

How do you suppose Nahor, his brother, would respond to the fact that Abram was going to be leaving?

What do you want more that you can not have here?

And Abram would respond:

“I want nothing but to do the will of God wherever it may lead me?”

Nahor would respond with:

“But look at the danger. You can not cross the desert or go into new country without arousing the jealousy of some and the anger of others. You would be no match for an army of free looters or troop of robbers.”

Abram would respond:

“But He who bids me go must take all the responsibility of that upon himself. He will care for us.”

And Nahor would say:

“Well tell me where are you going? And where are you planning on settling?”

Abram:

“That is a question I can not answer for indeed you know as much about it as I do myself, but I am sure if I take one day’s march at a time that will be made clear, and the next and the next until at last I am able to settle in the country God has selected for me somewhere.”

Abram was commanded in verse 1 to leave every source of security and just to trust God.

Abram, you are to **“LEAVE”** and you are to **“GO.”** You are to **“LEAVE”**  
**THREE THINGS:**

1. **“YOUR COUNTRY,”**
2. **“YOUR PEOPLE,”** and
3. **“YOUR FATHER’S HOUSEHOLD.”**

You are to **“GO TO THE LAND I WILL SHOW YOU.”**

In other words Abram:

**LET ME BE THE ONE WHO IS LEADING YOU.**

**Boice says:**

This means that although Abram believed God enough to start out on his journey after God had appeared to him in Ur, his faith was still weak and needed much cultivation. It is a way of saying that one does not need to be a spiritual giant to become a follower of God—after all, none of us is a spiritual giant. All one has to do is begin to follow him.

That is really what this study of Abram is about. The goal is that you might begin the life of Christian discipleship or, if you have already begun, that you might get on with the journey of faith to which God has called you.  
 p. 441

**Bush says:**

*Get thee out . . . go for thyself*; i.e. go for thine own advantage; go thou, even if no one will go with thee. yet it is evident from the context, that if he could persuade his family and friends to accompany him he was at liberty to do it, and not only so, but that he actually succeeded in inducing a large part of his father's house to be his companions. God is not wont to put restrictions upon the efforts of his chosen to prevail upon all in their power to cast in their lot with them in traveling to that better country to which he calls them; nor can the benevolent heart be content to leave any behind.

p. 195

**Hughes says:**

His agonizing decision was further compounded by the vagueness of God's order—"go . . . to the land that I will show you." Abram was not told that Canaan was the land God was talking about until he got there! Calvin observed that this uncertainty forced Abram to trust God's word even more. Calvin comments that God said in effect, "I command you to go forth with closed eyes, and forbid you to inquire where I am about to lead you, until, having renounced your country, you shall have given yourself wholly to me."<sup>3</sup> Abram was asked to believe and obey the bare word of God—the *verbum nudum* as Calvin has it—the naked word of the Lord.

p. 182

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

. . . Here are three levels of ever-increasing demands on the life of Abram and Sarai. The country was the region of his dwelling, the family was his clan, and his father's house was where he had responsibility and leadership. Upon the death of Terah, Abram would have become the leader of the family group. God's commands to Abram were intensely demanding because they caused him to leave his place, his clan, and his family in a world where such actions were simply not done.

p. 27

**Thomas says:**

The Lord said, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house.” These were very searching and pressing demands upon one who was the youngest one. Yet God’s call to separation was a necessary condition of blessing. Separation was the keynote of Abraham’s life from first to last, and in that separation to the will of God he found all his peace and blessing.

p. 115

**Waltke says:**

Abraham’s story begins with God’s call to venture from the “city of man” and family security to find the city of God. It is a call that every saint hears and that guides God’s people on their pilgrimage to the celestial city. Readers perceive themselves as recipients or addressees of these direct acts of commitment or of promise. They are members of this community.

p. 194

**He says further:**

The plot is driven by Abraham’s struggle to trust God in the face of a series of conflicts testing his faith. His faith develops as he trusts God in spite of a childless wife, famine in the Promised Land, exile in a hostile land, the kidnapping of his wife in pagan kings’ harems, an ungrateful nephew who seizes land for himself, war against mighty kings, family strife between rival wives and their children, his withering body, and death itself with the promise unfulfilled. In addition, Abraham’s God is mysterious, asking Abraham to sacrifice the child in whom his offspring will be reckoned.

p. 195

**Wiersbe says:**

***Why God called.*** There are at least three reasons why God called Abraham and Sarah. In His love, God was concerned about their salvation; so He revealed His glory and shared His gracious promises. But even beyond their personal salvation was God's purpose in blessing the whole world. This was accomplished when God sent His Son into the world through the Jewish nation. Christ died for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2; 4:14) and wants His church to tell the good news to the whole world (Mark 16:15).

But there is a third reason: The life of Abraham is an example for all Christians who want to walk by faith. Abraham was saved by faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-5; Gal. 3:6-14) and lived by faith (Heb. 11:8-19), and his obedience was the evidence of his faith (James 2:14-26). Abraham obeyed when he did not know *where* (Heb. 11:8-10), *how* (vv. 11-12), *when* (vv. 13-16), or *why* (vv. 17-19); and so should we.

Abraham and Sarah were not perfect, but their walk was generally characterized by faith and faithfulness. When they sinned, they suffered for it; and the Lord was always ready to forgive when they repented. "The victorious Christian life," said George Morrison, "is a series of new beginnings." As you study the life of Abraham and Sarah, you will learn what faith is and how to walk by faith. You will discover that, when you trust the Lord, no test is impossible and no failure is permanent.

p. 68

**McGee says:**

The first three verses give us the threefold promise of God to Abraham (Abram), and actually this is the hub of the Bible. The rest of Scripture is an unfolding of this threefold promise.

**Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:**

**And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:**

**And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed [Gen. 12:1-3].**

The first of the threefold promise is the *land*. God says, "I am going to show you a land, and I am going to give it to you." The second part of the promise is the *nation*—"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." He also promises him, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." The third part of the promise is that He would make him a *blessing*: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This is God's threefold promise.

p. 57

## OUR DWELLING PLACE

When Abraham was 75 years old, God called him to leave the land of his father. And so, advanced in years, he departed for the land of Canaan. He was rootless, homeless, “not knowing where he was going” (Heb. 11:8). That was the story of Abraham’s life.

Age brings change and uncertainty. It means transition from a familiar past to an uncertain future. It can mean movement from a family home to a smaller place, to a daughter’s home, to a retirement village, to a nursing home—the “final resort.” Like Abraham, some of us make our way from one location to another, always traveling and not knowing where we’re going.

Yet we can be at home in any dwelling, for our safekeeping lies not in the place where we live but in God Himself. We can dwell “in the secret place of the Most High” and “abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps. 91:1). There, in His presence, under His wings, we find refuge (v.4). The eternal God becomes our dwelling place (v.9).

Though our dwelling place here on earth may be uncertain, God will be our companion and friend until our traveling days are over and we reach our heart’s true home—heaven. Until that day, let’s shed the light of God’s lovingkindness on other travelers. —David H. Roper

*Someday my earthly house will fall—  
I cannot tell how soon ‘twill be;  
But this I know—my All in All  
Has now a place in heaven for me. —Crosby*

**For the Christian, heaven is spelled H-O-M-E.**

**(From *Our Daily Bread*, Thursday, January 4, 2007)**

v. 2 I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Peterson paraphrases verse 2:

I'll make you a great nation and bless you. I'll make you famous; you'll be a blessing.

The NET Bible translates verse 2:

Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing.

One translator takes the word “MAKE” from verse 2—“I WILL MAKE YOU”—and expands the translation to explain why Abram is to “leave” and to “go” from verse 1:

“so that I might make you into a great nation.”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

. . . and the second imperative was to be a blessing. (The second imperative, in v. 2, is imprecisely rendered in many versions, including the NIV, as a prediction, **you will be a blessing**. But lit., it is, “Be a blessing.”) His leaving started a chain of reactions. If Abram would get out of Ur, God would do three things for him, so that he could then be a blessing in the land (the second imperative); and he had to be that blessing so that God would do three more things for him. This symmetry should not be missed, for it strengthens the meaning. Abram’s calling had a purpose: his obedience would bring great blessing.

Three promises were based on God’s call for Abram to leave his land: (a) a **great nation**, (b) a blessing for Abram, and (c) a great **name** (v. 2). These promises would enable him to “be a blessing” . . .

Accompanying **GOD'S COMMAND** of verse 1 is the **PROMISE** of verses 2.

When God commands:

He does not give **REASONS**,  
but He does give **PROMISES**.

To give reasons would excite discussion, but to give a promise would show that the reason, though hidden, is all sufficient. We can understand the promise. The reason might baffle and confuse us.

The **QUESTION** that comes to us:

**ARE YOU WILLING TO TRUST GOD?**

When we know what God wants us to do can we step out in faith believing Him, claiming His promises, even though He has not given us a list of reasons and explanations.

These are unconditional promises, made by God. If they were conditional they would not be fulfilled because we have no power to keep any condition. Therefore these promises are in pure grace, without any conditions attached.

We note that the **FIRST PROMISE** the Lord makes to Abram is:

**"I WILL MAKE YOU A GREAT NATION."**

His **NATURAL SEED** will form the nation Israel.

And his **SPIRITUAL SEED** is **ALL OF US**, who through our lineage to Christ and our relationship to Him become Abrams offspring.

Galatians 3:29

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring heirs according to promise.

The **SECOND PROMISE** is seen in the next phrase:

**"AND I WILL BLESS YOU."**

Abram could have well asked "And how will it be?" And it will be in being faithful to fulfill the promises which He has given—Materially and Spiritually.

The **THIRD PROMISE** is:

**"I WILL . . . MAKE YOUR NAME GREAT."**

**THREE GREAT RELIGIONS CLAIM HIM AS FOUNDER:**

1. **JUDIASM,**
2. **MOHAMMEDISM,** and
3. **CHRISTIANITY.**

**Boice says:**

The striking feature of these opening words of God to Abram—the first recorded time God had spoken to anyone since Noah—is the sevenfold repetition of the words "I will." God says, "I will show you a land; I will make you a great nation; I will bless you; I will make your name great; I will bless those who bless you; I will curse those who curse you"; and finally, in verse 7, "To your offspring I will give this land."  
p. 444

**Boice continues:**

“But suppose I stop at Haran and wait there until my father Terah dies?”

“I will bless you.”

“Suppose I find myself in Egypt and am so afraid the Egyptians will kill me in order to take Sarai that I tell her to lie and say she is my sister, and suppose she is almost violated because of my cowardice?”

“I will bless you.”

“Suppose I am so distrustful of your promise to make me a nation that I take Sarai’s servant Hagar as a concubine to have children by her?”

“I will bless you.”

“But why, Lord? Why should you bless me?”

God answers that it is because he chooses to do so and for no other reason. This is grace.

p. 447

**Hartley says:**

Between these two sets of promises, Yahweh exhorted Abram to “become **a blessing**” (NIV renders the line “you will be a blessing”). That is, Abram was to let this blessing work in him and his family in order that he might become the agent through whom God might bless others.

p. 133

**Waltke says:**

God obligates himself to Abraham while assigning him a task. God’s commands are fulfilled in Abraham’s obedient faith . . .

p. 205

**Wenham says:**

God's blessing is manifested most obviously in human prosperity and well-being; long life, wealth, peace, good harvests, and children are the items that figure most frequently in lists of blessing such as 24:35-36; Lev 26:4-13; Deut 28:3-15. What modern secular man calls "luck" or "success" the OT calls "blessing," for it insists that God alone is the source of all good fortune. Indeed, the presence of God walking among his people is the highest of his blessings (Lev 26:11-12). Material blessings are in themselves tangible expressions of divine benevolence.

p. 275

**Wiersbe says:**

God did not give Abraham reasons or explanations; He simply gave him promises . . .

p. 69

**Spurgeon says:**

Now let us turn to the second part of the text, and consider THE SECOND BLESSING promised to Abraham: "Thou shalt be a blessing." When God has blessed any man, He makes that man to be a blessing to others. The Lord fills him that he may overflow with blessing for those around him. The Holy Spirit puts into the man the life of God that that life may flow out of him to others.

p. 64

**Spurgeon says further:**

“I will make thee a blessing.” When this promise came to Abraham, surely the very essence of it was that *Abraham was to be made a blessing to the world by virtue of his connection with Jesus Christ*. Our Lord was descended from Abraham: “He took not on him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” Our Saviour was a Jew, He took upon Himself the nature of that race, and therein Abraham became a blessing to the whole world; and now, spiritually, we who believe are the children of Abraham. We come not into the covenant as they do who are merely descended from Abraham after the flesh, but we come in with Isaac, the child of the promise, born, not after the flesh, but after the power of the Spirit; and so we become heirs of salvation by virtue of that faith which was in Abraham, and which dwells also in us by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

p. 65

v. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 3:

I'll bless those who bless you; those who curse you I'll curse. All the families of the Earth will be blessed through you.”

The NET Bible translates verse 3:

I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name.”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

Based on this obedience were God's three promises to: (a) **bless those who** blessed him, (b) **curse** anyone who would treat him lightly, and (c) bless the families of the **earth** through him (v. 3). To bless or curse Abram was to bless or curse Abram's God. Unfortunately God often had to use other nations to discipline His people because, far from being a blessing to the world, they were usually disobedient. The third promise takes on its greatest fulfillment in the fact that Jesus Christ became the means of blessing to the world . . .

The idea of faith is stressed in these passages. Abram was told to leave several things—his “country,” his **people**, and his **father's household** (Gen. 12:1). But he was told nothing about the land to which he must go. His departure required an unparalleled act of faith.

The themes of blessing and cursing are heightened here. In fact this is the central passage of the Book of Genesis. Here begins the program that was so desperately needed in chapters 1-11 (a purpose of which was to show that this blessing was needed). This was the call; Abram responded to it by faith. The ensuing promises were formulated later, under covenant conditions . . .

When the **GREEKS** overran Palestine and desecrated the temple. It was not long before their power was given to another.

When **ROME** persecuted Paul and destroyed Jerusalem it too fell.

We can see it in the history of:

**SPAIN,**

**POLAND,** and

**HITLER'S GERMANY.**

The attitude in which a nation has taken toward Abraham's seed, God either pronounced blessing or cursing, in faithfulness to the unconditional promise which He gave to Abraham in this case.

Can you see the impact of these promises which are made to Abraham? That he is going to be a great nation and his wife is barren. The Lord is going to bless him and he has no land. The Lord is going to make his name great and here he is a stranger in a strange land.

**Someone has described it:**

“They sought a land they knew not where, they sought a seed they knew not how, they sought a blessing they knew not what.”

Abraham is challenged with the trust in God alone and His reality and reputation, not in the things which are promised.

The **QUESTIONS** come:

Can God raise up seed from a barren woman?

Can He give land, when we are without real estate?

Can He put us in Who's Who when we are just a simple nobody, from Ur of the Chaldees, living in a strange land?

All His gifts are of grace. Salvation comes because God's promises are going to be fulfilled and not because a man or woman are humanly able to bear children. Trusting in the Word and on the God who spoke it is the call of the hour for Abram.

**Nehemiah 9:7-8**

“You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

Yes, we shout with joy and adoration:

**“O GOD! YOU KEPT YOUR PROMISE!”**

This is what Jesus meant when in John 8 He said:

Abraham saw my day and rejoiced with glad response.

Waltke says:

God's call contains seven (i.e., the symbolic number of completeness) elements: (1) "I will make you into a great nation"; (2) "I will bless you"; (3) "I will make your name great"; (4) "you will be a blessing"; (5) "I will bless those who bless you"; (6) "whoever curses you I will curse"; and (7) climactically, in the favored seventh position, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."  
p. 203

The last phrase in verse 3 is:

**"AND ALL PEOPLES ON EARTH WILL BE BLESSED THROUGH YOU."**

This is obviously a reference to a **MESSIANIC PROPHECY**.

v. 4 So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

Peterson paraphrases verse 4:

So Abram left just as GOD said, and Lot left with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

The NET Bible translates verse 4:

So Abram left, just as the Lord had told him to do, and Lot went with him. (Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.)

“SO ABRAM LEFT, AS THE LORD HAD TOLD HIM.”

What a great illustration of:

INSTANT OBEDIENCE to the Lord’s command.

Back in verse 1:

The Lord said “leave” and “go.”

Now in verse 4:

ABRAM LEFT—Lot went with him. In other words, he agrees on his own to join Abram on this journey.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

The narrative reports simply that **Abram** obeyed. His obedience is recounted in two ways, corresponding to the two imperatives in verse 2. He **left** (v. 4), and he was a blessing (vv. 5-9).

This verse opens with the blessed announcement of **OBEDIENCE** on the part of Abram.

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham when he was called obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he was going.

Oh! What a thrill in these **TWO WORDS**:

1. **“HE OBEYED”** or
2. **“ABRAHAM WENT FORTH.”**

There is a blessedness in heart and home and life fulfilled promises, mighty opportunities of good all these things lie along the narrow thorn set path of obedience to the word and the will of God. Abraham obeyed and in that act, laid the foundation stone of the noble structure of his life and character.

Ours is not to make reply,  
Ours not to reason why,  
Ours but to do and die.

**Bush says:**

No sooner did Abraham receive the divine command than he obeyed it. When acting in the ordinary affairs of life, and from mere worldly considerations, prudence may dictate delay, and the propriety of consulting friendly advice; but when the call is evidently from above, when the direction is clearly from God, to be dilatory is to be disobedient. Faith is prompt in compliance and makes haste to execute the will of our heavenly Master.  
p. 197

**Henry says:**

I. Abram's removal out of his country, out of Ur first and afterwards out of Haran, in compliance with the call of God. He *went out, not knowing whither he went* (Heb. xi. 8), but knowing whom he followed.  
p. 26

**Keil & Delitzsch says:**

Abram cheerfully followed the call of the Lord, and "departed as the Lord had spoken to him." He was then 75 years old. His age is given, because a new period in the history of mankind commenced with his exodus. After this brief notice there follows a more circumstantial account, in ver. 5, of the fact that he left Haran with his wife, with Lot, and with all that they possessed of servants and cattle, whereas Terah remained in Haran (cf. chap. xi. 31). . . . are not the souls which they have begotten, but the male and female slaves that Abram and Lot had acquired.  
p. 195

**Radmacher & Allen say:**

With the magnificent promise of the Lord as his sole motivation, **Abram departed**. He obeyed (Gen. 17:23; 22:3). In his obedience, Abram behaved as Noah had, demonstrating genuine righteousness (6:22; 7:5).  
p. 27

**Wiersbe says:**

First steps of faith are not always giant steps, which explains why Abraham did not fully obey God. Instead of leaving his family, as he was commanded, Abraham took his father and his nephew Lot with him when he left Ur; and then he stayed at Haran until his father died.

Whatever you bring with you from the old life into the new is likely to create problems. Terah, Abraham's father, kept Abraham from fully obeying the Lord; and Lot created serious problems for Abraham until they finally had to agree to part. Abraham and Sarah brought a sinful agreement with them from Ur (20:13), and it got them into trouble twice (12:10-20; 20:1-18).

The life of faith demands total separation *from* what is evil and total devotion *to* what is holy (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). As you study the life of Abraham, you will discover that he was often tempted to compromise; and occasionally he yielded. God tests us in order to build our faith and bring out the best in us, but the devil tempts us in order to destroy our faith and bring out the worst in us.

p. 69

**(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.**

George MacDonald once said, “You can begin at once to be a disciple of the Living One—by obeying Him in the first thing you can think of in which you are not obeying Him. We must learn to obey Him in everything, and so must begin somewhere. Let it be at once, and in the very next thing that lies at the door of our conscience.”

p. 7

(The Joy of My Heart by Anne Graham Lotz) Nashville, TN: J Countryman / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Anne Graham Lotz, 2004.

## THE CROSS OF OBEDIENCE

*“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*

MATTHEW 16:24, NIV

Are you repulsed by the thought of crucifixion? I am. But I also know that when I look into the eyes of Jesus, I see a cross! And He has said to me, “Anne, if you want to be My disciple, if you want to follow Me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me. Because if you want to save your life, you’re going to lose it in the end. If you choose to lose your life for Me, you will find it. For what good will it do you if you gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul?” (Matt. 16:24-26, paraphrased).

The cross that Jesus commands you and me to carry is the cross of submissive obedience to the will of God, even when His will includes suffering and hardship and things we don’t want to do. It is a willingness to totally, absolutely, irrevocably, and finally yield our lives to Him because we want what He wants more than what we want.

p. 128

(The Master’s Indwelling by Andrew Murray) Springdale, PA: Whitaker House. Copyright – Whitaker House, 1983.

When a man has given himself up to the real, living, acting, ruling power of God’s Spirit, he has discovered the right position in which he can grow.

p. 22

(Truth For Today: A Daily Touch of God’s Grace by John MacArthur) Nashville, TN: J. Countryman / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – John MacArthur, 2001.

The Lord uses only the disciplined mind to think clearly, understand His Word, and present its truth effectively to the world. Only the disciplined mind consistently discerns truth from error. And only the disciplined Christian is a good testimony, within the church and before the world.

Simply stated, self-discipline is obedience to God’s Word and willingness to submit everything in life to His will, for His ultimate glory.

p. 203

v. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

Peterson paraphrases verse 5:

Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot with him, along with all the possessions and people they had gotten in Haran, and set out for the land of Canaan and arrived safe and sound.

The NET Bible translates verse 5:

And Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they left for the land of Canaan. They entered the land of Canaan.

The **HOT WORDS** in these first five verses are seen with the **LORD'S COMMAND** in verse 1

1. "leave" and
2. "go."

And the words of **ABRAM'S RESPONSE** in verses 4 & 5:

3. "left,"
4. "SET OUT," and
5. "ARRIVED."

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary** says:

**In Haran** many **people** (lit., “souls”) were **acquired** by **Abram** and his family (v. 5). This “getting of souls” may refer to proselytizing, that is, to Abram’s influence on some Haranites to follow Yahweh.

In this verse we have the description of the **JOURNEY FROM HARAN** to the **LAND OF CANAAN**.

There is one thing still worthy of note, in that **LOT**, Abram’s nephew, goes with them and this is **DISOBEDIENCE TO THE COMMAND** and **“FROM YOUR RELATIVES”** in verse 1.

Evidently Lot had been impressed with his uncle’s faith and had a deep desire to go with him on this journey. We will note in our next study that God does not put His finger on this relationship and he makes the separation.

**Hughes** says:

Though the text does not give the details, the 800-mile route would have taken them near some of the great urban centers of the day. Abram likely traveled over to Carchemish and down to Aleppo and through Damascus to Canaan.<sup>10</sup>  
p. 185

You will notice in verse 5, Abram takes people and possessions on this trip. They are **FOUR** in number:

1. **“HIS WIFE SARAI,”**
2. **“HIS NEPHEW LOT,”**
3. **“ALL THE POSSESSIONS THEY HAD ACCUMULATED,”** and
4. **“THE PEOPLE THEY HAD ACQUIRED IN HARAN.”**

I think it is important for us to note that they did not go against their will.

v. 6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. The Canaanites were then in the land.

Peterson paraphrases verse 6:

Abram passed through the country as far as Shechem and the Oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites occupied the land.

The NET Bible translates verse 6:

Abram traveled through the land as far as the oak tree of Moreh at Shechem. (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.)

Here in verse 6 we continue to **TRAVEL WITH ABRAM:**

**“THROUGH THE LAND”** and

**“AS FAR AS THE SITE OF THE GREAT TREE OF MOREH** (which means “instruction”) **AT SHECHEM** (which means “strength”).”

Certainly now that Abram has arrived at his destination, both of these things are of **TOP PRIORITY.**

The last phrase **“THE CANAANITES WERE THEN IN THE LAND”** and I’m sure Abram is hearing the word **SURPRISE!**

The first location in the land where he stops is called **SHECHEM**, this means “shoulder” or “strength.”

Then he goes to the **OAK OF MOREH**, which has the meaning of “instruction.”

The **TWO THINGS** that Abram needs the most are:

1. **STRENGTH** and
2. **INSTRUCTION** or **GUIDANCE** from the hand of the Lord now that he has entered the land.

Back in Haran, God separated Abram from Terah, and now He brings him into the land and provides strength and instruction.

What is it in your life which hinders you and keeps you from the joy of the Christian life?

From what do you need to be separated? You know what it is?

Perhaps it is some secret sin, some habit, some desire, something your condoning, excusing in your life, some worldly practice, pride, dishonesty, gossip, or unforgiving spirit, bitterness, or a sharp tongue, or an uncontrolled temper, stubbornness, or hatred. Remember before you can go on, it must go. Terah the old man must be buried. Why not stop right now and confess this to the Lord Jesus and trust Him to give you the victory and then go on to the place of joy and fruit-bearing. To the place of strength and instruction in the land.

Now that Abram’s in the land, and because of his obedience, he will begin to know the reason why.

Obedience issues in greater knowledge.

John 7:17

If any man wills to do His will he shall know.

The verse goes on to say:

**“THE CANAANITES WERE THEN IN THE LAND.”**

I am sure Abram was concerned about these folks already being in the land the Lord had promised. And so as we come to verse 7 we find the Lord appearing unto Abram as a result of his obedience.

Obviously with **NO VACANCY SIGNS** all over the place, it is a surprise to Abram that this is the situation.

**The Daily Walk Bible says:**

*Understanding can wait; obedience can't.*  
p. 252

**Boice says:**

Are you a pilgrim for Christ? I am afraid that many Christians are more like Abram in Haran. You have been called by God. You have begun the Christian walk. But you have settled down in your Haran. You dress like the world. You talk like the world. You have the world's values. Tell me, those of you who live like this, how could anybody looking at you know you are a Christian?

F. B. Meyer has this challenge:

It is of the utmost importance that the children of God should live this detached life as a testimony to the world. How will people believe us, when we talk about our hope, if it does not wean us from excessive devotion to the things around us? If we are quite as eager, or careworn, quite as covetous or grasping, quite as dependent on the pleasures and fascinations of this passing world as themselves, may they not begin to question whether our profession be true, on the one hand, or whether after all there be a real city yonder, on the other.

We must not go on as we are. Professing Christians are too much taken up in business cares, in pleasure-seeking, in luxury, and self-indulgence. There is slight difference between the children of the kingdom and the children of this generation. The shrewdest observer could hardly detect any in their homes, in the education of their children, in their dress, or in their methods of doing business. They eat, they drink; they buy, they sell; they plant, they build; they marry, they give in marriage—though the flood is already breaking through the crumbling barriers to sweep them all away.<sup>2</sup>

p. 466

**Bush says:**

The import is not so much that of passing in a direct line from one point to another as of passing to and fro from place to place, or sojourning after the manner of the nomades till a district has been thoroughly traversed. It was thus that Abraham passed through the land of promise, surveying his destined inheritance in its length and breadth, till in the course of his wanderings he came to Sichem, where he probably made somewhat of a prolonged stay.

p. 199

**Henry says:**

I. How little comfort he had in the land he came to; for, 1. He had it not to himself: He found the country peopled and possessed by Canaanites, who were likely to be but bad neighbours and worse landlords.

p. 27

**Wiersbe says:**

God brings us out that He might bring us in (Deut. 6:23). We know nothing about their long journey from Haran to Canaan, because it was the destination that was important. Centuries later, God would give that land to Abraham's descendants; but when Abraham and Sarah arrived, they were "strangers and pilgrims" in the midst of a pagan society (Heb. 11:13).

In spite of what the folk songs say, entering Canaan is not a picture of dying and going to heaven. It is a picture of the believer claiming his or her inheritance by faith. God has appointed a "Canaan" for each of His children (Eph. 2:10), and it is obtained only by faith. Claiming your inheritance involves tests and temptations, challenges and battles, but God is able to see you through (Phil. 1:6).

p. 70

How easy it would have been for Abram to have said to the Lord at this particular juncture:

**"This is not what I expected!"**

The Lord would probably have used:

**Isaiah 55:8**

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

Yes, tests will come along our pilgrim journey—all the way home. And they are there to manifest the condition of our heart. Can we trust God in unexplainable circumstances?

v. 7 but the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 7:

God appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your children.” Abram built an altar at the place God had appeared to him.

The NET Bible translates verse 7:

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So Abram built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

At Shechem, Yahweh **appeared to Abram** to confirm His promise and to reward Abram’s faith: **To your offspring I will give this land** (12:7). Abram arrived in the land and God showed it to him. But it would be given to his descendants, not to him.

Verse 7 starts with the word **“BUT”** to form the **CONTRAST**:

**“The Canaanites were then in the land, BUT THE LORD APPEARED TO ABRAM AND SAID.”**

This helps us understand that the Lord really does know about our needs and our concerns. He knew that this would be a problem with Abram.

What a great and timely answer the Lord has:

**“TO YOUR OFFSPRING I WILL GIVE THIS LAND.”**

The **RESULT** of the Lord's message to Abram we find **ABRAM RESPONDING:**

**“SO HE BUILT AN ALTAR THERE TO THE LORD, WHO HAD APPEARED TO HIM.”**

Acts 27:23-25

“For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’ Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

The Lord comes with assurances of His promise about the land and Abram's response is an altar which declares his dependence upon the Lord.

**Barnhouse says:**

There were to be great trials, great struggles and great blessings. The Lord who called Abraham at the beginning now appears to him as he enters the land. It is always so. New supplies of grace will meet us at every point in the conflict.

A nation may put soldiers on the field of battle without sufficient ammunition and supplies; but with God there is always more than enough, and there is Himself.  
pp. 78-79

**Hartley says:**

After Abram had pitched his tent in Canaan, Yahweh **appeared to** him in recognition of his obedience in leaving Haran for Canaan. The initiative for this divine appearance rests solely with Yahweh; God did not appear because Abram was in the vicinity of a sacred tree.  
p. 134

**Hughes says:**

“Abram the pilgrim became Abram the builder” (Hamilton),<sup>14</sup> building neither a tower nor a city, but an altar. “So he built there an altar to the LORD.” And then, like Noah fresh from the ark, he offered sacrifice (cf. 8:20). We can presume that he offered consumed offerings like those of Noah, which symbolized the complete offering of his life to God. Abram would build altars in Bethel, Hebron, and Mount Moriah (cf. 12:8; 13:18; 22:9). How beautiful—the only architecture that remained from Abram’s life were altars.

p. 187

**Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:**

**7. Unto thy seed will I give this land**—God was dealing with Abram not in his private and personal capacity merely, but with a view to high and important interests in future ages. That land his posterity was for centuries to inhabit as a peculiar people; the seeds of divine knowledge were to be sown there for the benefit of all mankind; and considered in its geographical situation, it was chosen in divine wisdom as the fittest of all lands to serve as the cradle of a divine revelation designed for the whole world.

p. 25

**Keil & Delitzsch say:**

Here in Sichem Jehovah appeared to him, and assured him of the possession of the land of Canaan for his descendants. The assurance was made by means of an appearance of Jehovah, as a sign that this land was henceforth to be the scene of the manifestation of Jehovah. Abram understood this, “*and there builded he an altar to Jehovah, who appeared to him,*” to make the soil which was hallowed by the appearance of God a place for the worship of the God who appeared to him.

p. 196

**Thomas says:**

How beautifully God meets those who respond wholly to Him. They are assured of His presence (xii. 7), of His promises (xii. 2, 3), of His power, and of His peace. No life has ever had any demand made upon it without receiving the Divine cheer and encouragement which enables the soul to abide in the Lord and go forward with joy and courage.  
p. 117

**Waltke says:**

**appeared.** Again a key word is used at a crucial moment (see 12:1). God said that he would show Abraham the land, and now he appears, perhaps in a theophany, to confirm that he has arrived in the Promised Land.<sup>24</sup> God appears three times to Abraham (17:1; 18:1) . . .  
p. 208

**Wenham says:**

“The LORD appeared to Abram.” This is the first recorded appearance of the LORD to a patriarch . . .  
p. 279

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

O Lord, make me ready to receive the blessing which Thou art so willing to bestow.  
p. 275

v. 8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Peterson paraphrases verse 8:

He moved on from there to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent between Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. He built an altar there and prayed to God.

The NET Bible translates verse 8:

Then he moved from there to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and worshiped the Lord.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

After God confirmed His promise, **Abram** abode in the land, waiting for the promise. But the Canaanites had all the good, fertile land . . .

The **“TENT”** and the **“ALTAR”** are the **TWO CHARACTERISTICS** of the life of Abram, when he is walking in the will of God.

**BETHEL** means **HOUSE OF GOD.**

**AI** means **HEAP OF RUINS.**

He pitched his tent facing Bethel, “the house of God,” and behind him was Ai, “the heap of ruins.”

Back in verse 7 Abram:

“built an altar . . . to the Lord” because the Lord “had appeared to him.”

Now in verse 8 he:

“BUILT AN ALTAR TO THE LORD AND [THEN HE] CALLED ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.”

(God's Best Secrets: Daily Devotional Meditations by Andrew Murray) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – unknown, 1977.

I will learn the lesson, to *spend time each day*—without exception—in *fellowship with my Lord*.  
(January 1)

v. 9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Peterson paraphrases verse 9:

Abram kept moving, steadily making his way south, to the Negev.

The NET Bible translates verse 9:

Abram continually journeyed by stages down to the Negev.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

. . . **Abram** had to journey by stages **toward the** great and terrible **Negev**  
. . . a barren desert south of Canaan.

For Israel the call of their great patriarch demonstrated that their promises were from God, promises of a great nation, a land, divine blessing, and sovereign protection. Yahweh's appearance and confirmation (v. 7) proved that Canaan was their destiny. But God demanded a response by faith if this generation were to share in those promised blessings. Faith takes God at His word and obeys Him.

This scares us that Abram is moving around in the land, especially now moving away from the altar and the place of worship. I am sure a very high percentage of failures in the lives of individuals and families can be found in the simple cause that they neglected the word of God, and the time at the altar with the Lord. So Abram continues to journey and leave his altar.

Sometimes it is tough for God to get us going and then just as tough to get us to stop.

Abram is like a young Christian who is moving all over the place.

He needs to be still and know that God is God. He needs to be saying:

“Speak Lord for your servant is listening.”

Verse 9 begins with the word **“THEN.”** Just as soon as Abram has said his prayers he:

**“SET OUT AND CONTINUED TOWARD THE NEGEV.”**

When we are most eager to act, many times is when we will make the most pitiful mistakes.

v.10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

Peterson paraphrases verse 10:

Then a famine came to the land. Abram went down to Egypt to live; it was a hard famine.

The NET Bible translates verse 10:

There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay for a while because the famine was severe.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

This sojourn has much more to it than a simple lesson in honesty—though the story certainly warns against the folly of deceit. The claim that she is “my sister” occurs three times in the patriarchal narratives . . . Critics say these occasions refer to the same event. However, in the second instance Abram explained that this was their policy wherever they went . . . so it is not surprising that he repeated this lie.

One cannot miss the deliberate parallelism between this sojourn of Abram in Egypt and the later event in the life of the nation in bondage in Egypt. The motifs are remarkably similar: the famine in the land . . . the descent to Egypt to sojourn . . . the attempt to kill the males but save the females . . . the plagues on Egypt . . . the spoiling of Egypt . . . the deliverance . . . and the ascent to the Negev . . . The great deliverance out of bondage that Israel experienced was thus already accomplished in her ancestor, and probably was a source of comfort and encouragement to them. God was doing more than promise deliverance for the future nation; it was as if in anticipation He acted out their deliverance in Abram

In relation to the message of the book, Genesis 12:10-20 is significantly placed right after Abram’s call and obedience. In this story Abram was not walking by faith as he had been in the beginning, but God had made promises to him and would keep them. Abram was not the only patriarch who had to be rescued rather ingloriously from such difficulties.

Abram did not ask the Lord about Egypt and had no instructions about going there. He could trust God for the eternal but not for the temporal. Could not the same God who called him keep him in the land, even as the children of Israel were provided for in their journey to the land? And as Elijah the prophet was cared for in the time of great famine, so the same God would have been faithful to provide for his servant Abram if he had been willing to stay at the place of the altar. He would trust God for direction, but not for daily bread.

Don't sit there, do something!

Don't you know that God helps those who help themselves.

You will note that **ABRAM IS TESTED** after his season of communion. The natural thing to do is to go to Egypt, but not the supernatural thing. The right way is not always the easiest, and the easiest is not always the right.

You will notice there is no altar in Egypt.

The word says "many are the afflictions of the righteous." Yes, Abram has faced some trials since he has gotten to the land. First, he meets the Canaanites, and now a famine. I am sure from a human point of view he could say, "God thanks a lot." Disappointed hope, ill requited faithfulness, and love, the loss of friends, the delay of promised good, uncongenial companionship. He is in a worldly wicked situation amid cold, contempt cruel hatred. It is not easy to express your faith and set up an altar. In the midst of this loneliness he also has a nature within, when need arises, that says, don't sit there, do something. God helps those who help themselves. So without any instruction from the Lord, he anticipates what he ought to do and makes the mistake of going into Egypt.

After all, all the signals in the land are there's:

No room,

No food,

No place to stay and nothing to eat.

A crust with God is better than a feast without Him.

Proverbs 28:26

He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

Faith is not a mushroom that grows overnight in damp soil, it is an oak tree that grows for thousands of years under storm, wind, and rain.

The daily blessings for Abram were conditioned upon his staying in the land.

I am sure the test of faith probably shocked Abram into asking the **QUESTIONS**:

Was he not where God wanted him?

Was he not in the place of fellowship?

Then why a famine in the land?

Because of this great test he failed. Instead of trust in God, he turned to the arm of the flesh he sought for his own solution. If he would have stayed in the land the Lord would have certainly provided for him, even as He took five loaves and a couple of fish and He fed the great multitude, surely He could take care of Abram also.

Luke 22:31-32

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Genesis 4:6-7

Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

1 Samuel 27:1

But David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”

Proverbs 3:5-7

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

In Abram’s trip south to Egypt there is no Lord and no altar. The only time that the Lord shows up is in discipline upon the house of Pharaoh to protect Sarah.

Abram’s **REASON FOR GOING SOUTH** was there was a famine:

**“BECAUSE THE FAMINE WAS SEVERE.”**

When we look only at circumstances instead of calling upon the Lord, we will render wrong verdicts time after time again.

**Anderson says:**

Just think—Abram left his home, friends, relatives, and then two apparently very negative things happened to him. One, he found someone else occupying the land God had promised to him. Two, he had nothing to eat. Basically, conditions were miserable, and he must have wondered what the reasons behind it all were. Maybe he felt confused, doubting himself, questioning his understanding of God’s command. Was his presence at Bethel really what the Lord wanted, or had there been a short-circuit on his end of the wire? It might have been that his anger burned against God as he realized that the so-called “promised land” offered no place to stay and nothing to eat. Or he could have felt sorry for himself, soaked in self-pity over the situation . . . poor Abram, you obey God and look where it gets you! These could all be reasons why Abram felt compelled to leave the place of his tent and altar.

But I think it’s more likely that Abram left for another reason. He was probably the kind of man who would have said, “Don’t just stand there—do something!” Seeing the adverse circumstances, he went right along with the philosophy that “God helps those who help themselves,” picked up his possessions, and rode his camel right out of the will of God.  
p. 35

**Boice says:**

For the most part, however, in biblical language *Egypt* stands for the world and wrong alliance with it; and, thus, God’s people are to stay away from it. Isaiah 31:1 reflects this viewpoint:

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help,  
who rely on horses,  
Who trust in the multitude of their chariots  
and in the great strength of their horsemen,  
But do not look to the Holy One of Israel,  
or seek help from the LORD.

To rely on Egypt means trusting human resources rather than God. It is something believers must avoid. If they find themselves in Egypt through lack of faith in God’s strength or promises, the only solution is to get out as quickly as possible—and not go back.

This is the lesson of the next segment of Abram’s life. Abram had heard the call of God and had responded in faith. He had left both Ur and Haran. He had arrived in Canaan. Now a test came. There was famine in Canaan, and Abram turned from following after God and went to Egypt.  
p. 472

**Henry says:**

A famine in the land of Caanan, *a grievous famine*, and a very sore trial it was; it tried what he would think. Nothing short of a strong faith could keep up good thoughts of God under such a providence. Now he was tried whether he could preserve an unshaken confidence that the God who brought him to Canaan would maintain him there, and whether he could rejoice in him as the God of his salvation when the fig-tree did not blossom, Hab. iii. 17, 18. It is possible for a man to be in the way of duty, and in the way to happiness, and yet meet with great troubles and disappointments.  
p. 27

**Hughes says:**

Abram did the natural thing, and herein the problem lies. There is no mention that he sought God's will in the matter. The famine had created the fear of starvation, and Abram then instinctively moved to allay his fear, without reference to God's will. Given what then befell him, it is apparent that if he had solicited God's will, the story would have been quite different. Abram's going to Egypt was not so much an intentional sin as it was a reflexive turn to his own devices. He did not deny God; he simply forgot him. He forgot how great God is.

How like Abram we are! Trials come, and we automatically go into survival mode. We scheme, we prognosticate, we run through the "what ifs," we shore up our position, we pile sandbags. And God? Oh yes. We ask him to bless our ways.  
pp. 190-91

**Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:**

**. . . and Abram went down into Egypt**—did not go back to the place of his nativity, as regretting his pilgrimage and despising the promised land (Heb. 11:15), but withdrew for a while into a neighboring country.  
p. 25

**Kidner says:**

In famine it might well seem a providence that Egypt was near by, watered by the flooding of the Nile.

Yet all the indications are that Abram did not stop to enquire, but went on his own initiative, taking everything into account but God. His craven and tortuous calculations are doubly revealing, both of the natural character of this spiritual giant (*cf.* Jas. 5:17a) and of the sudden transition that can be made from the plane of faith to that of fear.

p. 116

**Lange says:**

Famine in the land of promise is a severe test for Abram. For the land is promised to him as a good which should compensate all his self-denial.

p. 396

**MacArthur says:**

The severity and timing of this one forced Abram, soon after his arrival and travel in the Promised Land (vv. 5-9), to emigrate to Egypt, where food was usually in abundant supply. Still holding to God's promise, he did not return to Ur, though matters were extremely difficult (*cf.* Heb. 11:15).

p. 30

Phillips titles the remaining verses and then says:

#### ABRAM BACKSLIDING (12:10-20)

Forsaking the path of faith, for whatever reason, always brings its own complications. A whole series of events now followed in Abram's experience, each one of which stemmed from his lack of trust in God. First there was a *famine* (12:10). There were two things in Canaan that Abram surely did not expect to find there—the Canaanite and the famine. Both were there to test him. The famine took hold of the land or, at least, came home to Abram personally after his abandonment of Bethel. Moving away from God's house will always produce a famine in the soul's experience.

Next came *foreboding* (12:10-12). Aware of the famine and out of touch with God since leaving Bethel, Abram decided upon an expedient. Egypt looked like a good solution to his problems.<sup>2</sup>  
p. 117

Stigers says:

The first session in training in faith takes place almost as soon as Abram has arrived in the land. He has first to learn that what appears to be aggressive, uncontrollable nature is indeed regulated by God. He then must learn not to be precipitated in action, but to look to Yahweh for His control of all events and peoples. One must realize that when one forgets that food and clothing come from God, when one resorts to craft and deceit to assure and secure one's needs, earthly powers have a way of exposing that craft and deceit to the perpetrator's embarrassment.  
p. 141

**Stigers says again:**

Something should also be said about Abram's plight had he remained where the famine was hard on the land. To some it is useless to speak of waiting for the Lord to supply the need. Yet one must recall such events as the famine in the days of Elijah and the Syro-Phoenician woman to remember that God does indeed control nature and beings; so that as the ravens were sent to feed Elijah, so God can by wonderful ways provide for His own. The things provided might have been scant, but Abram would have been preserved and not have come to shame among strangers. He had so soon forgotten the promise that he should bear seed—his thought had not crystallized on the implications of the promise that required his preservation in the land.

p. 141

**Thomas says:**

The famine was, of course, the sole cause of Abraham's journey, and in itself the most obvious and natural thing for him to do.

It was the "natural" thing for him to do; but then Abraham's position was not merely natural, for he had supernatural relationships. The right way is not always the easiest, and the easiest is not always the right way. Difficulties do not necessarily indicate that we are out of the pathway of God's will. It would certainly seem that Abraham was now thinking solely of the land and its famine, and forgetting God and His promises.

p. 119

**Wiersbe says:**

"Life can be difficult," wrote Amy Carmichael, missionary to India. "Sometimes the enemy comes in like a flood. But then is the time to prove our faith and live our songs" (*Candles in the Dark*, p. 51).

A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. Peter compared the Christian's trials to the testing of gold in the furnace (1 Peter 1:7), and the patriarch Job used the same image: "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10, NKJV). God's purpose in allowing trials is not only to verify our faith, but also to purify it and remove the dross. God knows what kind of faith we have, but *we* don't know; and the only way to advance in the "school of faith" is to take examinations.

p. 71

**Wiersbe says further:**

Instead of remaining in the land and trusting the Lord to help him, Abraham went “down into Egypt” (Gen. 12:10). In the Bible, Egypt is a symbol of the world system and its bondage, while the land of Israel is a picture of the inheritance of blessing God has for you (Deut. 11:10-12). When people went to Jerusalem, they went *up*; but when they went to Egypt, they went *down*. Spiritually speaking, “going down to Egypt” means doubting God’s promises and running to the world for help. (See Num. 11; 14; Isa. 30:1-2; 31:1; and Jer. 42:13ff.)

When circumstances become difficult and you are in the furnace of testing, *remain where God has put you until He tells you to move*. Faith moves in the direction of peace and hope, but unbelief moves in the direction of restlessness and fear. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa. 28:16). In times of testing, the important question is not, “*How* can I get out of this?” but, “*What* can I get out of this?” (See James 1:1-12). God is at work to build your faith.

God alone is in control of circumstances. You are safer in a famine *in His will* than in a palace *out of His will*. It has well been said, “The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.” Abraham failed the test of circumstances and turned from the will of God.

p. 72

**McGee says:**

As you probably know, over along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, ancient scrolls were found in the caves there, and they are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. At first the unbelieving scholars thought that they had found something that would disprove the Bible. But have you noticed how silent the higher critics have become? They just don’t seem to have found anything that contradicts the Bible.

Among the scrolls was a set which couldn’t be unrolled because they were so fragile—they had been wrapped so long that they would just shatter and come to pieces. One name could be seen, the name Lamech, so they were called part of the book of Lamech and said to be one of the apocryphal books of the Bible. Boy, how incorrect that is! The nation Israel bought them, and in the museum the experts began to moisten and soften them until they were unrolled. The scholars found that they contained Genesis 12, 13, 14, and 15, not in the Bible text but rather an interpretation of it. In the part that deals with chapter 12, it tells about the beauty of Sarai, actually describing her features and telling how beautiful she was. It confirms what we read of her in the Word of God.

p. 59

**Parker says:**

And yet there is another lesson here which we need quite as much: the lesson of Divine forbearance with human infirmity. God did not cast off Abram, or send him back to Ur of the Chaldees—a man disgraced and condemned. God forbid that I should make any excuse for sin; yet there are sins that come out of weakness rather than out of love of sin for its own sake. Abram’s sin arose rather from weakness than depravity. A great fear seized him. A sudden squall from the hills struck his little boat sharply, and for the time being he foolishly took his affairs into his own hands. “Let him that is without sin cast the first stone” at Abram!

p. 191

**Parker says further:**

Showing what the best of men are when they betake themselves to their own devices. As the minister of God, Abram is great and noble; as the “architect of his own fortune,” he is cowardly, selfish, and false. I seek for no palliation of such conduct: it invites and deserves malediction and vengeance. In our own life we know what it is to have great faith and great unbelief. Abram went out at God’s bidding, cheerfully encountering all the trials of pilgrimage in unknown places, yet he cannot trust God to take care of his wife. How little are the greatest men! If we are never stronger than our weakest point, we should take heed, lest in our proud sufficiency the dart strike us in the vulnerable spot. It is a bad thing to rack our brains for excuses on behalf of the Bible worthies when they fall; if God did not excuse them, we need not stretch our charity into a covering for their sins. A lie was twice a lie in the mouth of a man like Abram. Where there was great grace there should have been great courage. We are not to qualify the disgrace by talking about spots on the sun; we are to call poison “poison,” and to learn by the failures of other men that our own life will be called to trials which will need higher strength than merely human power.

p. 197

(Leading with a Limp by Dan B. Allender) Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press. Copyright – Dr. Dan B. Allender, 2006.

Few decisions are simple. In fact, simple decisions are better called choices. Do I want to eat now or wait for my wife to get home? Do we cancel classes when there is a foot of snow in Seattle? We make choices every day that require little thought, have few consequences, and are completed without much need for reflection or counsel. Leaders choose daily, but the real weight on their shoulders lies in the need to *decide*.

And there are no easy decisions. To decide requires a death, a dying to a thousand options, the putting aside of a legion of possibilities in order to choose just one. *De-cide*. *Homo-cide*. *Sui-cide*. *Patri-cide*. The root word *decidere* means “to cut off.” All decisions cut us off, separate us from nearly infinite options as we select just one single path. And every decision we make earns us the favor of some and the disfavor of others.

p. 14

(Facing Your Giants by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: W Publishing. Copyright – Max Lucado, 2006.

The God who guided David guides you. You simply need to consult your Maker. I wish I'd sought counsel before I made a recent decision. I awoke early one morning for a meeting. When searching for some breakfast, I spotted a plastic bag of cookies in the kitchen. Denalyn and our daughter Sara had just attended a school bake sale, so I thought. *What great luck! Breakfast cookies. Denalyn must have set them out for me.*

I ate one and found it very chewy, almost gummy. *Interesting texture*, I thought. *Reminds me of pita bread*. I ate a second. The taste was a bit subtle for my preference, but when mixed with coffee, it made for an interesting option. I grabbed a third for the road. I would have grabbed the fourth, but only one remained, so I left it for Denalyn.

Later in the day she phoned. “Looks like someone has been in the bag.”

“It was me,” I admitted. “I’ve had better breakfast cookies, but those weren’t bad.”

“Those weren’t breakfast cookies, Max.”

“They weren’t?”

“No.”

“What were they?”

“Homemade dog biscuits.”

“Oh . . .” That explained a lot. That explained the gummy texture and the tasteless taste. That also explained why all day each time I scratched my belly, my leg kicked. (Not to mention my sudden interest in fire hydrants.)

pp. 94-95

v.11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 11:

As he drew near to Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarai, “Look. We both know that you’re a beautiful woman.”

The NET Bible translates verse 11:

As he approached Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “Look, I know that you are a beautiful woman.”

If Abram had just stopped with what he has to say here in verse 11 it would have been a great marriage encouragement and energizer.

“I KNOW WHAT A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN YOU ARE.”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

Abram’s scheme, born out of fear, turned against him, and God’s promise to him was thrown into jeopardy. Only God could rescue **his wife** so that the promise to Abram might be fulfilled. **Abram**, faced with a **famine**, decided to go to **Egypt** to sojourn (a temporary stay—to live there for a while—without plans to settle). Other famines in Palestine are mentioned in 26:1 and 41:56. One cannot fault him for this, except that there is no indication Abram was operating in faith. The bedouin scheme he concocted was to speak a half truth about his sister-wife. This was a subtle way to salve his own conscience. She was indeed his **sister** (actually a half-sister . . . so he conveyed to the Egyptians only what he wanted them to know. His motive was undoubtedly based on patriarchical society laws . . . In enemy territory a husband could be killed for **his wife**. But if Abram were known as her brother, someone wanting her would have to make marriage arrangements with him, which would possibly give him time to react in his own interest.

Waltke says:

**11. he said.** Abraham speaks out of fear of humans, which is incompatible with faith in God.  
p. 213

**(The Last Jihad by Joel C. Rosenberg) New York, NY: Tom Doherty Associates LLC. Copyright – Joel C. Rosenberg, 2003.**

“He said, and I quote: ‘The problem with you Americans is that you don’t believe in evil.’”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“That’s what I said. So he went on to explain that in his opinion, the CIA and FBI and definitely the guys at State don’t properly anticipate horrible, catastrophic events because we don’t really believe in the presence of evil, the presence of a dark and wicked and nefarious spiritual dimension that drives some men to do the unthinkable.

p. 262

**(Fénelon: Selected Writings – The Classics of Western Spirituality Edited and translated by Chad Helms) Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. Copyright – Chad Helms, 2006.**

But we must allow that real goodness of heart consists in faithfulness to God and in pure love. All generosity, all natural tenderness is only a more seductive, more refined, more flattering, more pleasant, and, consequently, more diabolical form of self-love.

p. 173

v.12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live.

Peterson paraphrases verse 12:

When the Egyptians see you they’re going to say, ‘Aha! That’s his wife!’ and kill me. But they’ll let you live.

The NET Bible translates verse 12:

When the Egyptians see you they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will keep you alive.

Thomas says:

It is to be observed, too, that the proposal was clearly actuated by selfishness; there was no regard for Sarai, but only for his own safety. How strange this is! He had journeyed all the way from Ur of the Chaldees, and yet could not trust God with his wife or with his own life. How small great people can be! How weak strong men can be! How bad good people can be!  
p. 119

Waltke says:

However, Abraham’s fear demonstrates a lack of trust in God’s recent promises. Although God has promised to make Abraham’s seed abundant (a promise still to be fulfilled) and to curse those who curse Abraham, Abraham fears for his life.  
p. 213

**v.13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”**

**Peterson paraphrases verse 13:**

Do me a favor: tell them you're my sister. Because of you, they'll welcome me and let me live.”

**The NET Bible translates verse 13:**

So tell them you are my sister so that it may go well for me because of you and my life will be spared on account of you.”

Out of the will of God—Anticipating the worst is where Abram is in these verses.

When we are calling the shots then we get into the act.

Yet so it happens when we lose our faith and are filled with panic for ourselves. We become, regardless of all and every tie, and prepare to sacrifice our nearest and dearest if only we can escape. The world may entreat us well, but that will be a poor compensation for our losses.

There is no altar in Egypt, no fellowship with God, no new promise, but a desolated home and wretched sense of wrong. Not only did Abram's lack of faith lead to fear and insecurity but it also led to selfishness. He was more concerned about his safety than he was about the honor and chastity of his wife.

It is true that in Abram's day a wife was not respected as highly as she should have been, but a believing man like Abram should have looked upon his wife as more than just property. Temporarily Abram turned away from God and began to center everything on himself. Abram's lack of faith also led to hypocrisy. He pretended to be what he was not. He pretended to be Sarai's brother when in actuality he was her husband. It is true that Sarai was his half sister and some might argue on this basis, that Abram was only telling a half lie.

**Hughes says:**

Abram could ease his conscience in saying "truthfully" that she was his sister, while also knowing how the Egyptians would take it. Pretty smart! Abram probably congratulated himself for being so wise and forward-looking. He was a responsible man. And he was helping God. After all, if something happened to him, God's promise would be undone. Clever man, Abram.

There were only a few little problems. This trickery was not an act of faith. Abram was living as if the God who had spoken to him in Ur, who had promised those incredible personal and global blessings, who had led him to and through Canaan and promised it to his descendants, did not exist. God was not in the driver's seat—Abram was. And more, he was using a lie to promote God's work. George Burns was joking when he said that the key to his success was first learning honesty; once he could fake that, he could achieve anything.<sup>7</sup> Abram had mastered the art of fake honesty in Ur, and it was no joke.

How the great man had stumbled. And he did not even suspect it—yet.  
p. 192

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

O for grace to cast away all hypocrisy, and to be found of Him sincere and without rebuke in the day of His appearing.  
p. 578

(Seeking Him by Nancy Leigh DeMoss & Tim Grissom with Life Action Ministries) Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers. Copyright – Life Action Ministries, 2004.

“Nothing can enter heaven which is not real; nothing erroneous, mistaken, conceited, hollow, professional, pretentious, insubstantial, can be smuggled through the gates. Only truth can dwell with the God of truth.”

—C.H. Spurgeon

p. 55

Abram’s request in verse 13 could be translated:

“Please say you’re my sister.”

The **REASON** I’m making this request is so that:

1. **“I WILL BE TREATED WELL FOR YOUR SAKE”** and
2. **“MY LIFE WILL BE SPARED BECAUSE OF YOU.”**

v.14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman.

Peterson paraphrases verse 14:

When Abram arrived in Egypt, the Egyptians took one look and saw that his wife was stunningly beautiful.

The NET Bible translates verse 14:

When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

The ironic twist to the story came when someone wanted Sarai, someone who need not bargain for her, namely, **Pharaoh**. The very words of **Abram** (“so that I will be treated well,” v. 13) came back on him for Pharaoh **treated Abram well** because of **beautiful** Sarai, and **Abram** got very wealthy.

2 Samuel 11:2

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

**v.15 And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace.**

**Peterson paraphrases verse 15:**

Pharaoh's princes raved over her to Pharaoh. She was taken to live with Pharaoh.

**The NET Bible translates verse 15:**

When Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. So Abram's wife was taken into the household of Pharaoh,

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

The promise looks as if it will fail. In the face of such a threat, however, God remains faithful to his word and safeguards the promise. God can bring about his promise, despite human failures.  
p. 22

**Hughes says:**

Great! Sarai became a part of Pharaoh's harem. What was going on in those chambers? Was she now in Pharaoh's arms? "Oh, Pharaoh, Pharaoh . . . let my Sarai go!" Sarai, so beautiful, would surely become one of Pharaoh's favorite entertainments. And from then on, life would have taken its natural course. She well could have lived and died in Egypt, had her place in the royal tomb—and her excavated mummy would be grinning up at us in the British Museum. Good job, Abram.  
pp. 192-93

**Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:**

**15. the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house**—Eastern kings have for ages claimed the privilege of taking to their harem an unmarried woman whom they like. The father or brother may deplore the removal as a calamity, but the royal right is never resisted nor questioned.

p. 25

**Keil & Delitzsch say:**

But the very thing he feared and hoped to avoid actually occurred.—Vers. 15 sqq. The princes of Pharaoh finding her very beautiful, extolled her beauty to the king, and she was taken to Pharaoh's house. As Sarah was then 65 years old (cf. chap. xvii. 17 and xii. 4), her beauty at such an age has been made a difficulty by some. But as she lived to the age of 127 (chap. xxiii. 1), she was then middle-aged; and as her vigour and bloom had not been tried by bearing children, she might easily appear very beautiful in the eyes of the Egyptians, whose wives, according to both ancient and modern testimony, were generally ugly, and faded early.

p. 197

v.16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.

Peterson paraphrases verse 16:

Because of her, Abram got along very well: he accumulated sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, men and women servants, and camels.

The NET Bible translates verse 16:

and he did treat Abram well on account of her. Abram received sheep and cattle, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

There are **SIX THINGS** that are on the inventory list here of Abram's possessions as a result of the lie which he has told:

1. **"SHEEP,"**
2. **"CATTLE,"**
3. **"MALE AND FEMALE DONKEYS,"**
4. **"MENSERVANTS,"**
5. **"MAIDSERVANTS,"** and
6. **"CAMELS."**

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary** says:

But this bound **Abram** to an obligation from which he was not able to deliver himself. His scheme nearly lost him his wife, and without Sarai his promised blessing would be doomed.

**Hughes** says:

*Abram prospers.* And then there was an excruciating moral twist. Pharaoh was so pleased with obtaining Sarai that he made Abram a very rich man. Two of the gifts tell all—the female donkeys and the camels. Female donkeys were far more controllable and dependable for riding and therefore the ride of choice of the rich (the Lexuses and BMWs of the Nile.)<sup>8</sup> The camels (not the plural) had just been introduced as domesticated animals and were a rarity. They were prestige symbols, for show by the very rich, not for utility (the equivalent in my mind of a Ferrari Testarosa).<sup>9</sup> And Abram now had several in his stable. So faithless, deceitful Abram was inundated with luxurious things, while his beloved spent frantic days and sleepless nights in Pharaoh's harem.

p. 193

## Carnival Ride Mirrors the Effects of Sin

Some years ago, while our family was vacationing in northern Minnesota, we decided to visit a small county fair near the town of Babbitt. There weren't many people there that morning. In fact, we were about the only ones visiting the carnival rides. So when I climbed into the Tilt-O-Wheel with my three kids, we hoped the operator would give us a decent ride—even though we were the only ones on it.

Little did we know what we were getting involved in. The first few minutes were rather fun. We laughed and enjoyed the funny feeling inside our stomachs. But after a while, it got to be not so much fun. And after some more time—way past the length of an ordinary ride—I began to feel queasy.

I wanted to get out, but I couldn't. First, we were going to fast to escape. Second, the centrifugal force had me pressed firmly against the back of the car. I was immobilized. Every time we spun past the operator, I looked pleadingly at him. "Please! Read my eyes! I need to get off!" But the operator kept the ride going. I guess he thought he'd let it run until more customers showed up.

After another few minutes, the ride became miserable. The funny feeling inside my stomach had turned into a churning concoction that had a faint resemblance of my morning's breakfast. I had no control over my life. I was caught, going around in circles, held down by a merciless carnival ride operator.

Only after what seemed like three or four hours did he finally relent and stop the ride. I'm sure I looked completely green by this time. I staggered off the platform and made it about 20 feet, where I bent over and lost my breakfast. Of course, my kids gathered around, cheering me on. They thought this was the best part of the ride.

If you're caught in the grip of a diabolical ride that started out fun but has turned into an addiction—if you're going around in circles, powerless to get off—you know the helpless feeling of losing control of your life. You know what it means to need God's supernatural help to stop the ride so you can escape.

*Rich Doeblner, Cloquet, Minnesota*

© 2007 PreachingToday.com & Christianity Today International

**(PreachingToday.com)**

**v.17 But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai.**

**Peterson paraphrases verse 17:**

But God hit Pharaoh hard because of Abram's wife Sarai; everybody in the palace got seriously sick.

**The NET Bible translates verse 17:**

But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his household with severe diseases because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:***

**But the LORD** plagued residents of the Egyptian palace with **serious diseases**. Divine intervention alone could deliver **Sarai** from Pharaoh's harem unharmed. With that deliverance came a royal rebuke . . .

Well we haven't seen anything of the Lord since back up in verse 8 when:

**"he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord."**

Now here the **LORD INTERVENES** in this crisis.

The word **"BUT"** forms the **CONTRAST**:

**"BUT THE LORD INFLICTED SERIOUS DISEASES ON PHARAOH."**

The Lord starts to work and His purpose is **HE PROTECTS HIS OWN.**

**Gangel & Bramer say:**

Abram's sin brought God's judgment on Pharaoh's house. But in a true demonstration of biblical grace, God overcame Abram's sin, forgave his lie, and sent him back to the land. Egyptian ethics insisted on absolute truthfulness, so Abram's behavior offended his hosts. Abram probably learned two important spiritual lessons from this side trip to Egypt—*truth* and *trust*. The lesson of trust he exemplified throughout the rest of his life. The issue of truth, unfortunately, gave him difficulty on at least one other occasion.

p. 122

**MacArthur says:**

The separation of Abram and Sarai was critical enough to evoke the Lord's personal and dramatic intervention. Abram engineered the ruse to protect himself (v. 13, "that I may live"), apparently without too much thought being given to Sarai; but God's reaction focused on the protection of Sarai . . .

p. 31

**(Sanctuary: Finding Moments of Refuge in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2002.**

Problems have a way of becoming pulpits in the overruling providence of God.

p. 349

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

Dwell much with Him, and it is impossible for you to be at peace with sin.

“Order my footsteps by Thy Word,  
And make my heart sincere;  
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,  
But keep my conscience clear.”

p. 318

**(God Is Closer Than You Think by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI:  
Zondervan. Copyright – John Ortberg, 2005.**

He speaks (in the words of Garrison Keillor) in “ordinary things like cooking and small talk, through storytelling, making love, fishing, tending animals and sweet corn and flowers, through sports, music, and books, raising kids—all the places where the gravy soaks in and grace shines through.”  
p. 14

The **KEY WORDS** in verse 17 are:

1. **“INFLICTED”** and
2. **“BECAUSE.”**

The Lord **TOOK ACTION** and:

**“INFLICTED SERIOUS DISEASES.”**

The **REASON**:

**“BECAUSE OF ABRAM’S WIFE SARAI.”**

v.18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said.  
 “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?”

Peterson paraphrases verse 18:

Pharaoh called for Abram, “What’s this that you’ve done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she’s your wife?”

The NET Bible translates verse 18:

So Pharaoh summoned Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she was your wife?”

Pharaoh is angry here in verse 18 and he has **TWO VERY POINTED QUESTIONS** for Abram:

1. **“WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?”** and
2. **“WHY DIDN’T YOU TELL ME SHE WAS YOUR WIFE?”**

The only way that Pharaoh could have found this out was by the fact that Sarai was being approached by Pharaoh and so she tells him the truth that she is the wife of Abram.

(Season of Life by Jeffrey Marx) New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. Copyright  
– Jeffrey Marx, 2003.

*That Guy in the Glass*

*When you get what you want in your struggle for self  
and the world makes you king for a day,  
then go to the mirror and look at yourself  
and see what that guy has to say.*

*For it isn't your mother, brother or friends  
whose judgment you must pass.  
the person whose verdict counts most in your life  
is the one staring back in the glass.*

*You can go down the pathway of years  
receiving pats on the back as you pass.  
but your final reward will be heartaches and tears  
if you cheated that guy in the glass.*

p. 9

v.19 Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife?  
Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!”

Peterson paraphrases verse 19:

Why did you say, ‘She’s my sister’ so that I’d take her as my wife?  
Here’s your wife back—take her and get out!”

The NET Bible translates verse 19:

Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife?  
Here is your wife! Take her and go!”

What an embarrassing and humiliating situation. **THREE QUESTIONS**  
from Pharaoh:

1. “What have you done to me?”
2. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?” and now
3. “WHY DID YOU SAY, ‘SHE IS MY SISTER’?”

This volley of three questions is followed up with **TWO COMMANDS:**

1. “HERE IS YOUR WIFE” and
2. “TAKE HER AND GO!”

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

The Egyptians were a superstitious people, and any such plague would be ominous to them. Pharaoh’s **orders** for **Abram** to leave (**Take her and go!**) parallel the words of God’s call to Abram (“Leave your country . . . and go” . . . but Pharaoh’s words were said in dishonor.

**v.20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.**

**Peterson paraphrases verse 20:**

Pharaoh ordered his men to get Abram out of the country. They sent him and his wife and everything he owned on their way.

**The NET Bible translates verse 20:**

Pharaoh gave his men orders about Abram, and so they expelled him, along with his wife and all his possessions.

Pharaoh gives order for **THREE THINGS** here:

1. **“THEY SENT HIM ON HIS WAY,”**
2. **“WITH HIS WIFE,”** and
3. **“EVERYTHING HE HAD.”**

**MacArthur says:**

Abram’s lie brought him and his extended family to an ignominious exit from Egypt—one which the servants must have talked about among themselves, with some loss to Abram’s integrity and reputation in their eyes.

p. 31

**Stigers says:**

When Pharaoh gave orders to his men concerning Abram, he was setting a police guard over him so as to eject a troublesome character from his realm. Abram had become *persona non grata*! Abram was obliged to endure shame because he forgot that God ruled in all affairs of men of whatever time or place. If God could give the land, God could give all things necessary to support life therein, even the good regard of strangers.  
p. 144

In this we can see:

**HOW SMALL GREAT PEOPLE CAN BE,**

**HOW WEAK STRONG PEOPLE CAN BE,** and

**HOW BAD GOOD PEOPLE CAN BE.**

Abram, in his selfishness:

went down to Egypt **WITHOUT GOD,** and  
came back **WITHOUT HONOR.**

When a person is out of the will of God, he looks on circumstances instead of God, he looks on the famine instead of God's faithfulness. First there is fear as he thinks of himself. Then he forgets God and stoops to hypocrisy and deceit and his wrong doing affects others, namely Sarai and Pharaoh's house. Finally he ends up in the very disrespectful position of being rebuked by the ungodly.

We learn that God does not accept anything that is only half truth.

Half truth is untruth or a lie, as far as God is concerned.

There are **TWO THINGS** that Abram obtained in his time in Egypt and both of them proved to be great hindrances to him:

1. Sarai's maid **HAGAR** which will figure into the story a little later.
2. **MUCH EARTHLY WEALTH**—this too became a great hindrance.

Both he and Lot obtained riches in the land of Egypt.

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

HUMILIATION of soul always *brings a positive blessing with it*. If we empty our hearts of self God will fill them with His love.  
p. 193

(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.

GUESS WHO MOVED?

*For the perverse person is an abomination to the LORD, but His secret counsel is with the upright.*

PROVERBS 3:32

A couple was driving home from their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary dinner, she in the passenger seat and he behind the wheel. Dreamily, the wife said, “Honey, remember when we used to sit right next to each other in the car?” The husband answered, “Well, sweetheart, I haven’t moved. I’ve been right here all the time.”

Sometimes Christians remember the early days of their walk with God. They have memories of a more intimate relationship with God. Over time, that relationship became formal and distant. But God never wanted it that way; He desires intimate relationships with all His children.

Abraham, the friend of God, found out just how close God wants to be. Before destroying Sodom, God said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?” (Genesis 18:17). God shared His plans with His friend and gave Abraham the chance to respond—which he did! Christianity is a relationship, not a religion; and relationships demand time together if they are to grow. If God wanted to tell you a secret, would you be available?

If God doesn’t seem as close as He used to, guess who moved?

p. 14

**CONCLUSION:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: You can trust the God who promises to perform.

LESSON #2: God is ever calling us to a greater and greater separation unto Himself (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

LESSON #3: Our resistance to the separation is hindering God's blessing.

LESSON #4: Keep our eyes on the Lord and not on our circumstances.

LESSON #5: God will supply all our needs when we are in the center of His will.

LESSON #6: We are going to be tested in the pursuit of His will, even as Abram experienced through the Canaanites in the land and also the famine.

LESSON #7: Listen for instructions!

LESSON #8: The altar and tent ought to characterize our lives.

LESSON #9: God, in love, has chosen us.

LESSON #10: God also knows how to discipline and chasten His erring children.

**Candlish says:**

But though thus weak when he followed his own wisdom, how strong is Abram in the Lord! In Egypt his eye was not single; he became double-minded, and dealt in guile; and, consequently, he was unstable in his ways (James i. 8). But in his going out from Ur, and in his sojourn in Canaan, how full of light is his whole body,—how steadfast is his loyalty to God,—what trials does he endure,—what temptations does he resist! Surely his faith did work by love; it made him walk at liberty, when he had respect to all God's commandments.

p. 193

**(Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom by Nancy Leigh DeMoss)  
Chicago, Il: Moody Publishers. Copyright – Nancy Leigh DeMoss,  
2006.**

IF YOU'RE A CHILD OF GOD,  
THE ORDEAL YOU'RE  
UNDERGOING WILL BE USED  
TO TAKE YOU DEEPER  
INTO HIS HEART.

p. 106

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

Stumbling-blocks of sin must be removed, and thorns and briars of rebellion must be uprooted. So great a visitor must not find miry ways and stony places when He comes to honour His favoured ones with His company. Oh that this evening the Lord may find it in my heart a highway made ready by His grace, that He may make a triumphal progress through the utmost bounds of my soul, from the beginning of this year even to the end of it.

p. 7

Lord, accept me; I here present myself, praying to live only in Thee and to Thee. Let me be as the bullock which stands between the plough and the altar, to work or to be sacrificed; and let my motto be, "Ready for either."

p. 14

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 2007.

### *The Real Me*

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

—Hebrews 12:15

The other week during a long flight home, I could not get comfortable in the airline seat. My corset was digging into me and no matter what Ken did, my blood pressure continued to spike and my forehead kept sweating (signs that I am in pain). Normally, it would have been enough to drive me to pray. But not this time. I was fed up with my disability (a nice way of saying I was fed up with God’s control of the situation). My thoughts were sour, and I was not about to pull my Bible out of my backpack. Instead, I tried to get my mind off my pain by watching the in-flight movie. Halfway through, I thought, *This is the stupidest film. Why am I watching it?!*

That night after the pain subsided, my first thought was, *That wasn’t like me. I’m normally not like that.* But the whisper of the Holy Spirit replied, “That *is* you. You *are* like that.” Suffering always tests us, examining and sifting us and asking, “Who *are* you really?” Normally, we are not faced all the time with how self-focused we are, or how sour or peevish our attitude can be. We think we’re doing pretty well. But suffering strips off that veneer and shows us our true colors.

Affliction does not teach you about yourself from a textbook; it teaches you from experience. It will always show you what you love—either the God of all comfort or the comfort that can become your god. Think back on the last time you got “fed up” with your circumstances. What did this reveal about yourself? Talk to God about that today.

*Lord Jesus, I may not like affliction in my life, but I am keenly aware that it constantly shows me who I really am. Thank you for covering every sin with your precious blood!*

(April 20)

*Father, I wait on you. I desire to learn your song so that even in the darkest night, I might declare your praises for all to hear.*

(February 22)

**(The Pursuit of God by A. W. Tozer) Camp Hill, Pa: Christian Publications, Inc. Copyright – Christian Publications, Inc., 1982.**

*Lord, I would trust Thee completely; I would be altogether Thine; I would exalt Thee above all. I desire that I may feel no sense of possessing anything outside of Thee. I want constantly to be aware of Thy overshadowing presence and to hear Thy speaking voice. I long to live in restful sincerity of heart. I want to live so fully in the Spirit that all my thoughts may be a sweet incense ascending to Thee and every act of my life may be an act of worship. Therefore*

*I pray in the words of Thy great servant of old, "I beseech Thee so for to cleanse the intent of mine heart with the unspeakable gift of Thy grace, that I may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee." And all this I confidently believe Thou wilt grant me through the merits of Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.* pp. 127–28

**Alexander Maclaren says**

The pilgrims who had but one single aim, 'to go to the land of Canaan,' were delivered from the miseries of conflicting desires, and with simplicity of aim came concentration of force and calm of spirit.

p. 80

Alexander Maclaren says:

1. *God's bit-by-bit leading of us.*

How slowly the divine purpose was revealed—the trial before the promise—did not know where, nor that Canaan was land, but only told enough for his first march.

So with us—our ignorance of future is meant to have the effect of keeping us near God and training us to live a day at a time.

God's finger on the page points to a word at the time. Each day's route is given morning by morning in the order for the day.

p. 83