

Abram's Journey to Faith

Learning lessons from God through Abraham

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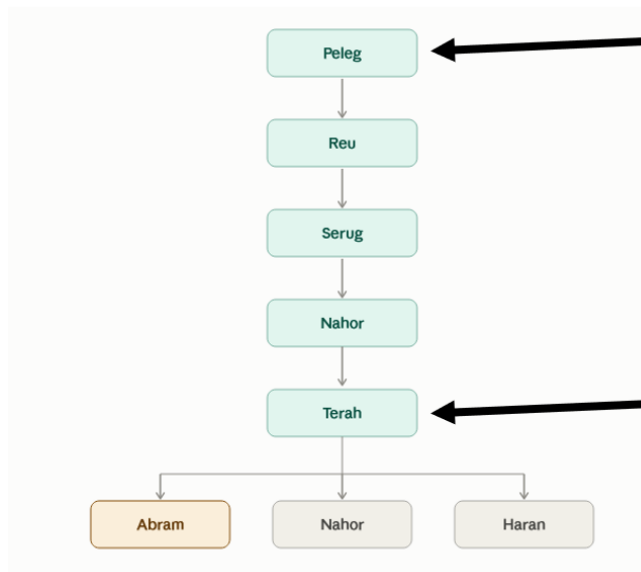
Genesis 10 -22,

KEY SCRIPTURES

Abram's Journey to Faith

There is no doubt that when we look at Scripture for giants of faith, Abram stands out. He is the figure who responds to God after a call to come out from Paganism in Ur.

So let us start with a bit of history. It was a dark day when the flood came and God brought Noah and his family through. The three sons would eventually go their own ways. The one we want to focus on, is Shem. It is through him, will come a line that will lead to the birth of a child – the promised Jewish Messiah. Here are the key people that are of interest in the account.



Gen 10:25 “And two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.”

This was the time the world was divided into nations

Joshua 24:2 “And Joshua said to all the people, So says YAHWEH the Elohim of Israel, Your fathers have in the past lived Beyond the River (Terah the father of Abraham and father of Nahor) and they served other gods.”

This points to the Pagan background of the family



The Ziggurat Built at Babylon, dedicated to Marduk. It was called, "Etemenanki
'House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth'"

The family had settled in Ur. Here we find that this area was a place of great idolatry. There was a man called Nimrod. He was called a mighty hunter and according to Jewish tradition

he opposed God. He founded the city of Babel (Babylon).

Genesis 10:10 “And the beginning of his [Nimrod] kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”

The Scriptures tell us of the event that brought God's displeasure.

Genesis 11:4 They said, “Come, let's build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, and let's make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole earth.”

Genesis 11:9 “Therefore its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of all the earth. From there, Yahweh scattered them abroad on the surface of all the earth.”

That which they feared came upon them (Job 3:25).

It was in that Pagan setting we find a man sensitive to the voice of God. He had travelled with his father Terah. Heading for the Promised Land, he stopped short and settled just before the Euphrates.

Genesis 12:1-3 “Now Yahweh said to Abram, “Leave your

country, and your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who treats you with contempt. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.””

When we look at the age of Abram at this point and the age of Terah, we note that Terah was still alive when Abram left. He would never see his father again. Stephen records this fact, by stating that Terah was dead, meaning that was so to Abram. (Acts 7:4) This is a lesson for believers. When we are called, we can be like Terah and remain dead, stopping short of God's best for us. It is important we do not let the natural human love of family come before following the call of the Lord (Luke 14:26). The text in Luke is about preference. Abram put God before his earthly father, and that is a difficult but necessary choice to be made. The choice that Abram made is rewarded. That first step of faith pleases God and Abraham moves forward.

There are other lessons Abram teaches us before he truly embraces faith in God. When famine comes he makes mistakes that lead to sin. He does not trust God to keep him safe, when famine comes. Unlike Isaac, who would later experience famine. But remains in the promised land (Genesis 26:1ff). In this lack of trust Abram goes to Egypt and there he becomes fearful for his life, because he thinks that he will die if the Pharaoh knows he is Sarai's husband. Again, he is not believing the Lord will keep him and fulfil the promises made to him. The fear leads him to lie. You see in

this how we too must be careful. Without faith we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6).

But we see that the mustard seed of faith that was still in Abram, brings God's grace into force. God does not abandon Abram because of this sin. God remains faithful even when we don't (2 Timothy 2:13). We see this grace when Abram is shown his future.



Genesis 17:5-6 "Your name will no more be called Abram, ???????? but your name will be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of

you. Kings will come out of you.”

The name change is significant in two ways. Firstly, he is told he will not only be a human father, but he will be the father of many nations. The insertion of the ‘h’ – hey in Hebrew has a twofold meaning. It is a breath and not pronounced. It is also the fifth letter, that signifies grace. Thus, the Lord ‘breathes’ grace into Abraham’s life. The promise is restated.

Abraham will still make mistakes, but now he moves forward. He would lie in another situation once more but an even greater error is in the matter of the promise of a son from Sarai’s womb (Genesis 15:4). (Note to the breath of grace upon Sarai when she becomes Sarah (Genesis 17:15)) In this he and Sarai are old. The birth would be a miracle through the grace of God. Another lesson to learn. is waiting on the Lord and His timing (Genesis 18:10 & 14). Sarah is impatient. She has not become pregnant. She will intervene before God’s time. In chapter 15 of Genesis we see this tendency of impatience and interfering in God’s work. God tells Abraham he will cut a covenant with him. He brings the animals for the sacrifice (v10). The animals are prepared for the sacrificial covenant that God is going to make. Abraham sees birds of prey coming to take the cut animals and starts trying to chase them. He doesn’t understand God does not need him to interfere. God is capable of dealing with creatures of any kind that try to destroy His work. Abraham is put to sleep out of the way. This was God’s own covenant that He was taking responsibility for – Abraham has no effort of his own in it.

So it was with the promised child. Sarah was too old; she was infertile. The promised child would be the work of God. However, Sarah intervenes and gives her slave Hagar to Abraham. Hagar becomes pregnant and when she begins to show that she with child, Sarah is jealous and angry, charging Hagar with despising her. Is this not a lesson for us? We foul up and then blame others or God for the mess we created! The result of Sarah's interfering and Abraham's being complicit, was Ishmael. This would have grave implications for the world, as from him came those who would be enemies of Israel. These enemies to this day have plagued Israel.

As is usual with our great God, His grace flows and He blesses Ishmael and restores Hagar to Abraham's home. Furthermore, God also keeps His promise and Sarah does bear the promised child, Isaac (Genesis 21:3). Abraham would have further testing involving the promised child. God would ask Abraham to sacrifice the promised child – the child through whom God would work out His promises to Abraham (Genesis 22:2). This great man of faith has learned many lessons and he obeys God. He believed God could raise the dead (Genesis 22:5). Here the Theophany of the Lord intervenes and prevents the death of Isaac and a ram would be provided by God, as Abraham had said (Genesis 22:7-8). It is here Abraham and the Theophany (the pre-existent Messiah) meet. Jesus would speak of this day.



John 8:56 “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad.” Jesus also confirms that He was that Theophany.

John 8:58 “Jesus said to them, “Most certainly, I tell you, before Abraham came into existence, I AM.”

Jesus also makes the great statement that God is the God of

the living (Matthew 22:32) and that this man of faith will live eternally, as will all those of the same faith as Abraham.

Matthew 8:11 “I tell you that many will come from the east and the west [Jews and Gentiles], and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven..”

The son of Abraham, his only true son of Abraham and Sarah, as the Scripture states (Genesis 22:2), is a type of Jesus, the true Son of God, born of the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew writer confirms,

Hebrews 11:16-17 “By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out to the place which he was to receive for an inheritance. He went out, not knowing where he went. By faith, Abraham, being tested, offered up Isaac. Yes, he who had gladly received the promises was offering up his one and only son..”



Galatians 3:13-14 “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Abraham has much to teach us about what we should not do and what we should do. There is much more about the life of Abraham and of his son Isaac we can explore and learn from. For now, let us rejoice in this truth:

Galatians 3:6-9 “Even as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” Know therefore that those who are of faith, the same are children of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Good News beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you all the nations will be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.”

