

# Genesis 12 Commentary

Genesis 11

Genesis 13

CLICK VERSE  
To go directly to that verse

Genesis 12:1 Commentary  
Genesis 12:2 Commentary  
Genesis 12:3 Commentary  
Genesis 12:4 Commentary  
Genesis 12:5 Commentary  
Genesis 12:6 Commentary  
Genesis 12:7 Commentary  
Genesis 12:8 Commentary  
Genesis 12:9 Commentary  
Genesis 12:10 Commentary  
Genesis 12:11 Commentary  
Genesis 12:12 Commentary  
Genesis 12:13 Commentary  
Genesis 12:14 Commentary  
Genesis 12:15 Commentary  
Genesis 12:16 Commentary  
Genesis 12:17 Commentary  
Genesis 12:18 Commentary  
Genesis 12:19 Commentary  
Genesis 12:20 Commentary



**Abraham believed God** (Gal 3:6<sup>+</sup>, Ge 15:5,6<sup>+</sup>)

**John Phillips Outline** - [Borrow Exploring Genesis](#)

**The Progenitor: Abraham** Ge 12:1–25:18

1. The Path of Faith (Ge 12:1–20)
  1. Abram Believing (Ge 12:1–9)
    1. Finding the Path of Faith (Ge 12:1–4)
      1. A Statement of Faith (Ge 12:1–3)
      2. A Step of Faith (Ge 12:4)
    2. Following the Path of Faith (Ge 12:5–8)
      1. Abram Witnessing (Ge 12:5)
      2. Abram Walking (Ge 12:6a)
      3. Abram Waiting (Ge 12:6b–7)
      4. Abram Worshiping (Ge 12:8)
    3. Forsaking the Path of Faith (Ge 12:9)
  2. Abram Backsliding (Ge 12:10–20)
    1. Famine (Ge 12:10)

2. Foreboding (Ge 12:11–12)
3. Falsehood (Ge 12:13)
4. Frustration (Ge 12:14–15)
5. Flattery (Ge 12:16)
6. Failure (Ge 12:17–20)

**Genesis 12:1** Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

- had (KJV): Ge 11:31,32 15:7 Ne 9:7 Isa 41:9 51:2 Eze 33:24
- Get (KJV): Jos 24:2,3 Ps 45:10,11 Lu 14:26-33 Ac 7:2-6 2Co 6:17 Heb 11:8+ Rev 18:4
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#) - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross
- [Sermons on Genesis 12](#)
- [Genesis 12 - When Your Faith Fails](#) (scroll down to page 510 for first of 3 sermons on this topic) - Adrian Rogers ([mp3 only](#))

**Septuagint** - kai eipen kurios to Abram **exelthe** ([aorist imperative](#): go forth from) ek tes ges sou kai ek tes suggeneias (family) sou kai ek tou oikou tou patros sou eis ten gen he an soi deixo (deiknumi: 1SAAS: Heb 8:5, Rev 4:1)

## GOD'S CALLS ABRAM TO A LIFE OF SEPARATION

God' Plan in the Scripture could be summarized as "creation, fall, redemption, restoration." Genesis 1-11 deals with creation and the fall. Genesis 12-50 deals with redemption.

The word **watershed** is used to describe an event that causes an important change to take place. Genesis 12 is the watershed chapter of the entire Bible, a chapter that marks a crucial dividing line in how God deals with mankind. It marks the turning point in God's story of Redemption, for beginning in Genesis 12 we see God choose a man (Abram) and then a nation (Israel) from which will come the Redeemer of the world. It is a chapter which shouts "Grace" and eternal to mankind who desires eternal destruction. And so it behooves us to meditate deeply and gratefully on the truths in Genesis 12.

**Robert Morgan** writes "A professor in Bible college told us that the division between Genesis 11 and Genesis 12 was greater in importance than the division between the Old and New Testaments. The more I study the Bible, the more I'm convinced he was right. In the first eleven chapters of Genesis, God dealt with the whole earth en masse: The creation. The family of Adam. The flood of Noah. The tower of Babel. God repeatedly demonstrated that the earth as a whole was bent toward corruption and destruction. The word earth occurs ninety-two times in Genesis 1–11. Starting in Genesis 12, however, God launched a brilliant plan to provide redemption for all humanity. He chose one man—Abraham—and gave Him a set of seven remarkable promises. As we read through the Bible, these promises unfold like forest ferns until all the realities of God's redemption are revealed." (He Shall be Called)

This passage is best read in concert with the preceding passages Genesis 11:27-32 help get a proper context for the beginning of the patriarchal narratives.

The first "major" prediction about the coming of Christ is found in Genesis 3:15+. The second is found here in Genesis 12:1-3. As an aside the third major Messianic prophecy in Genesis is found in Genesis 49:10KJV+ - "until Shiloh Comes."

[The God of Abraham praise, Who reigns enthroned above;](#)

Ancient of everlasting days, and God of Love;

Jehovah, great I AM! by earth and Heav'n confessed;

I bow and bless the sacred Name forever blessed.

—THOMAS OLIVERS, C. 1765

[Beautiful piano version by Fernando Ortega](#)

**Allen Ross** - With this passage the focus of the book narrows from the wider history of the human race to that of one family. It records how God called Abram out of a pagan world and made amazing promises to him, promises that later became the Abrahamic covenant. The passage also extols the faith of Abram, teaching that faith obeys the word of the Lord. Here was a man who was middle-aged, settled, prosperous, aristocratic, and probably pagan (although it is possible that among the gods he revered there was

a remembrance of the ancestral God Yahweh). Then suddenly the word of the Lord came to him, although it is not known exactly how. He obeyed the word, turned his back on the old ways, and obediently left Ur to follow God's direction (see note on Ge 11:31; cf. Ge 15:7). That is why Abram is the epitome of faith in the Bible, and believers are referred to as "the seed of Abraham" (cf. Rom 4:1-3, 16-24; Gal 3:6-9; Heb 11:8-19; Jas 2:21-23). (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 1: Genesis and Exodus.

**Spurgeon** - It was God's intention to keep his truth and his pure worship alive in the world by committing it to the charge of one man, and the nation that should spring from him. In the infinite sovereignty of his grace, he chose Abraham,—passing by all the rest of mankind,—and elected him to be the depository of the heavenly light, that through him it might be preserved in the world until the days when it should be more widely scattered. It seemed essential to this end that Abraham should come right out from his fellow-countrymen, and be separate unto Jehovah, so the Lord said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."

Genesis 12 teaches us that God called Abram to a life of holiness (separation from the profane) and His call is the same to all those who are "Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29+) and so now "like the Holy One Who **called you, be** holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1 Peter 1:15-16+, Lev 11:44+)

- **Genesis 12:1-3 THE CALL**
- **Genesis 12:4-9 THE OBEDIENCE**

**Adrian Rogers outlines Genesis 12 as follows...** ([click here to listen to his sermon on this chapter](#))

#### **WHEN YOUR FAITH FAILS**

Introduction

I. The Root of His Faith

II. The Requirement of His Faith

III. The Reward of His Faith

IV. The Relapse of His Faith

V. The Restoration of His Faith

Conclusion

**Abraham's Chronology:** Keep Abraham's age in mind as you study the life of the patriarch in Genesis 11-22.

- Genesis 12:4 - Age 75 (Sarai = 65). God told him He would make Abe a father of many nations.
- Genesis 16:16 - Age 86 Abe went into Hagar producing Ishmael,
- Genesis 17:1, 17:17 Age 99 In Ge 12:3 God preached the gospel to Abraham (Gal 3:8), and not only would the Jews find salvation but so would the Gentiles. The seed that God promised was in fact Jesus Christ, [Gal 3:16]

**Steven Cole** introduces Genesis 12 explaining that Abram "was living as a pagan idolater (**Ed**: Josh 24:2) in a pagan city, Ur of the Chaldees (**Ed**: Ge 15:7, Neh 9:7 - Ur was devoted to [Nanna, the moon-god](#) also a chief idol at Haran. See [Ziggurat of Ur; Schematic plan of city of Ur](#)), when God called him and made a covenant with him. Abram left familiar surroundings, family, and friends and went out by faith to an unknown destination and future. Believing the promise of God, he became the father of all who follow God. He died in faith, not having received all that God had promised, but believing that it would be so. Abram's life, and especially God's calling him, teach us that ... God calls us to bless us and to make us a blessing to all the nations." ([Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#))

**Now the LORD said to Abram:** Where does this discourse take place? In the NT Stephen says that it was while Abram was in Mesopotamia (Ur of the Chaldeans in Ge 11:28).

- 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 \(location on map\)](#), and said to him, **LEAVE** YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.' "**Then** (Abram obeys immediately) he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.(Acts 7:2-4)

**Go forth from your country,**(Rev 18:4): In this command we see a basic Biblical concept of to those who would follow God and that is the idea of SEPARATION from that which is profane , unholy and common and unto that which is set apart, holy and divine. For example, Paul records a divine command to all NT believers which is similar to the command God issued to Abram...

Therefore, **COME OUT** ([aorist imperative](#) - Do this now!) FROM THEIR MIDST AND **BE SEPARATE** ([aorist](#)

[imperative](#) - Do not delay!),” says the Lord. “AND **DO NOT TOUCH** ([present imperative](#) = keep being separate, *only* possible as we depend on the Spirit’s enabling power!) WHAT IS UNCLEAN; (The reward when we trust and obey = ) 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 Cor 6:17-18, compare Ro 12:2<sup>±</sup>, Eph 5:11<sup>±</sup>, James 4:4<sup>±</sup>, 1 Jn 2:15-16<sup>±</sup>, Isa 52:11, Rev 18:4<sup>±</sup>)

**Spurgeon comments** - IF you desire to know the character of a child, you will probably learn much about it from observing the father. The young bird flies and sings as its father did before it. If we would know the life of the child of faith, we should study the history of the “father of the faithful.” Abraham, the man of faith, is a type of all believing men, and the narrative of his life, if rightly considered, is the mirror of the history of all the saints of God. The commencement of his career of faith, when he first became separated from his own country and went into the land of Canaan, is a most instructive representation of our effectual calling, when we are, by a work of omnipotent grace, separated from the world, and made to obey the great precept, “Come ye out from among them, be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” The life of the believer is as Abram’s was, a separated life, a life regulated by other affections than those which arise from the relationships of flesh and blood, a life of walking in the unseen, in which God’s command, presence, and approval are paramount considerations, and faith guides the soul, sitting like a pilot at the helm of the vessel. Abram denied the flesh, took up the cross, went without the camp, became sanctified unto the Lord, and lived and died the friend of God, and a stranger among men. The commencement of his separated life is a lively picture of the commencement of the same life in ourselves. The calling of Abram is a representation of our calling, and to that matter I shall ask your earnest attention this morning. ([EFFECTUAL CALLING—ILLUSTRATED BY THE CALL OF ABRAM](#))

**Spurgeon adds** - God had elected Abram, and therefore in due time he called him, and so separated him unto himself. All the chosen seed must in this be conformed to the father of the faithful. The **grace** which chose him made him obedient (**Ed**: God’s sovereignty - Read John 15:16), and he left all at the divine command (**Ed**: Abram’s responsibility). Only in the separated life could he inherit the blessing (**Ed**: **We need to fix this truth in our minds for we live in a modern world that would seek to ensnare us and in effect steal from us God’s blessing on our life!**), and therefore he cheerfully forsook all to follow his Lord. (The Interpreter: Spurgeon’s Devotional Bible)

**NET Note** on “**go forth**” - The initial command is the direct imperative (לך, lekh) from the verb הלך (halakh). It is followed by the lamed preposition with a pronominal suffix (לך, lékha) emphasizing the subject of the imperative: “**you leave.**”

**Steven Cole** points out that the verses Ge 12:1-3 “are symmetrical: There is a command from the Lord (“**Go forth**”) followed by three promises: “I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great.” Then there is a second command, rendered as a future tense in most versions: “**Be a blessing**” (NASB margin), followed by three more promises: “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Abram’s obedience to the first command would start a chain reaction in which God would bless him so that he could fulfill the second command to be a blessing, which would result in God’s further blessing.” ([Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#))

Let’s digress for a moment and analyze God’s initial command “**go forth**” a command Abram obeyed (Ge 12:4)...

In Genesis 15:7note we read that Jehovah said to Abram “I am the LORD Who **brought you out of** Ur of the Chaldeans (Joshua 24:3 says God “**took**” him from his country), to give you this land to possess it.” There the word “**brought out**” (Hebrew yatsa = to go or come out) is translated in the [Septuagint](#) with the Greek verb **exago** which literally means to lead out or to bring out from a place. The [active voice](#) (of exago) indicates that the subject (God) brought about this action. This same verb **exago** is used by Jesus in John 10:3 explaining that the shepherd “calls his own sheep by name and **leads** them **out**.”

Why is this significant? Because it clearly shows that the LORD Himself was actively involved in bringing Abram out of Ur. In Ge 12:1 God commanded Abram “**go forth**” (cp Acts 7:2 “**LEAVE** [exerchomai in [aorist imperative](#) = implies “Just do it!”, “Don’t delay!”] YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.”).

On the human side, Abram trusted and obeyed and went out of Ur (Ge 12:4, Hebrews 11:8<sup>±</sup>), but on the Divine side, God led (brought or “took” - Josh 24:3) him out. We see this juxtaposition of **Divine sovereignty** and **human responsibility** repeatedly in the Scripture. This is a vital truth to comprehend beloved and emphasizes that what God commands, He enables. God never asks us to do something with providing us with the “desire” and the “power” to obey and accomplish what He has asked. In Php 2:13NLT Paul teaches that “God is (continually) working in you (in the NT via His indwelling Spirit -- how this was effected in the OT is not

completely clear, but clearly the Spirit was involved in Abram's choice to leave Ur), giving (continually giving) you the desire (the "want to" to "overcome the anti-God inertia of our fallen flesh -- which does not want to obey God!) and the **power** to do what pleases Him. (Phi 2:13NLT+)

**From your country** - What country? For this answer we need to read in Genesis 11

Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of **Abram**, Nahor and Haran. 27 Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of **Abram**, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. 28 Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in [Ur of the Chaldeans](#). 29 **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. 30 **Sarai was barren; she had no child.** 31 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 Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as [Haran](#), and settled there. 32 The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in [Haran](#). (Ge 11:26-32+)

**Joshua** gives us an additional detail about God's call of Abram...

Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived [beyond the River](#) (refers to the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia, the river today running thru Iraq), namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and **they served** ([Lxx = latreuo](#)) **other** ([Lxx](#) = heteros = different) **gods**. 3 'Then I **took** (clearly it was God's sovereign pleasure, power and choice to take) your father Abraham from beyond the River, and **led** him through all the land of Canaan, and **multiplied** his descendants and **gave** him Isaac.(Joshua 24:2,3+)

**Comment:** Here we see Abraham (Abram) was an **idol worshiper** when God called him.

**Nehemiah** gives us another detail about the call of Abram....

"You are the LORD God, Who **chose** ([Lxx = eklego](#)) Abram And **brought him out** from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham. (Neh 9:7)

**Comment:** Notice that Abram did not choose God but God chose Abram. He chose Abram, not because of anything good in Abram, but because He was setting in motion His grand plan of redemption.

**Abram** (087)(**abram** from **ab** = father + **ram** from the verb **rum** = to be high, exalted as in Ps 138:6) means either "he is exalted with regard to the father," that is, he is of distinguished lineage or "exalted father." It emphasizes the eminence or loftiness of the person involved (Hicks). A remarkable feature of this name is that it was borne by no one else until the sixth century. Abram was changed to Abraham, "father of a multitude" in Ge 17:5, 9, 15, 17, 18.

**Abram** 60x in 50v - Gen. 11:26; Gen. 11:27; Gen. 11:29; Gen. 11:31; Gen. 12:1; Gen. 12:4; Gen. 12:5; Gen. 12:6; Gen. 12:7; Gen. 12:9; Gen. 12:10; Gen. 12:14; Gen. 12:16; Gen. 12:17; Gen. 12:18; Gen. 13:1; Gen. 13:2; Gen. 13:4; Gen. 13:5; Gen. 13:7; Gen. 13:8; Gen. 13:12; Gen. 13:14; Gen. 13:18; Gen. 14:12; Gen. 14:13; Gen. 14:14; Gen. 14:19; Gen. 14:21; Gen. 14:22; Gen. 14:23; Gen. 15:1; Gen. 15:2; Gen. 15:3; Gen. 15:11; Gen. 15:12; Gen. 15:13; Gen. 15:18; Gen. 16:1; Gen. 16:2; Gen. 16:3; Gen. 16:5; Gen. 16:6; Gen. 16:15; Gen. 16:16; Gen. 17:1; Gen. 17:3; Gen. 17:5; 1 Chr. 1:27; Neh. 9:7

**And from your relatives:** who were idolaters (Joshua 24:2). Having dealt in judgment (at Babel) God now deals in grace.

**And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you** note that it is not until (12:7) that God says specifically He will give Abram the land. The promises are confirmed and amplified in [Genesis 13:14-17; Ge 15:1-7; Ge 17:1-8, Ge 17:15-19; Ge 22:16-18; Ge 26:2-5,24; Ge 28:13-15; Ge 31:13; Ge 35:9-12].

The writer of Hebrews explains

**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." (Hebrews 11:8+)

**Wiersbe comments** - It was a call to separate himself from the corruption around him, and Abraham obeyed by faith (Heb. 11:8+). True faith is based on the Word of God and leads to obedience. God could not bless and use Abraham and Sarah unless they were in the place of His appointment (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). Lost sinners today are not likely to receive a special revelation of God's glory as did Abraham and Sarah. But they can see His glory in the lives of His people (Matt. 5:16) and hear His Word of faith when they share their witness. God spoke to Abraham directly, but today we hear the truth of salvation through the witness of

The call of Abram illustrates the leading of the LORD. The command in Acts 7:2 from God to Abram was to **leave**. The LORD's word is very specific about what Abram is to leave (the three prepositional phrases narrow to his father's household), but is not specific at all about where he is to go. God required faith, a point that Heb 11:8 notes.

**NET Note** - It would be hard to overestimate the value of this call and this divine plan for the theology of the Bible. Here begins God's plan to bring redemption to the world. The promises to Abram will be turned into a covenant in Gen 15 and 22 (here it is a call with conditional promises) and will then lead through the Bible to the work of the Messiah.

**Warren Wiersbe** - 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. (Be Obedient - see [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

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**Alexander Maclaren** - After all communion we dwell as upon islands, dotted over a great archipelago, each upon his little rock with the sea dashing between us; but the time comes when, if our hearts are set upon that great Lord whose presence makes us one, there shall be no more sea and all the isolated rocks shall be parts of a great continent.... If we cultivate that sense of detachment from the present and of having our true affinities in the unseen, if we dwell here as strangers because our citizenship is in heaven, then death will not drag us away from our associates nor hunt us into a lonely land, but will bring us where closer bonds shall knit the "sweet societies" together, and the sheep shall couch close by one another because all gathered round the one Shepherd. Then many a tie shall be re-woven, and the solitary wanderer meet again the dear ones whom he had "loved long since and lost awhile."

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### Marching Off The Map

Read: Genesis 12:1-4 | Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. — Genesis 12:1

Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans. Our lives are subject to detours and corrections that we never expected or imagined.

Abraham and Sarah could testify to that. They were planning for retirement when life "happened" to them. God adjusted their agenda. He told Abraham, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). So this old couple packed up the tent and headed out to only God knew where.

When Alexander the Great had completed his conquest of Persia, he headed east. Author Halford Luccock said the general "marched off his maps."

That happened to Sarah and Abraham. God gave them marching orders without a map. They needed only enough faith to begin the journey, and they headed out to unknown territories and unimagined adventures. God never told them He would turn them "every which way but loose" before fulfilling His promise of a son who would become a great nation.

Make your plans. But write them on paper, not in concrete. God and life have a way of intruding and leading you on a journey that you might not have anticipated in your wildest dreams. By Haddon Robinson (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Many things about tomorrow

I don't seem to understand;

But I know who holds tomorrow

And I know who holds my hand.

—Stanphill © 1950 Singspiration Music, Inc.

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. —Proverbs 16:9

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**ILLUSTRATION OF FAITH** - But I want you now to imagine two letters that are sent to the post office. One letter is typed beautifully by a word processor. It is typed on exquisite, expensive stationery. There is not a word misspelled. It is beautifully framed.



Everything is perfect, not a smudge, not a smear. It is perfectly addressed and it's placed in the mail. Another letter is written. This letter is written on common notepaper like a yellow legal pad. It's stuffed into an envelope. It is written by pencil. It is full of grammatical errors. It is smudged, dirty. It has erasures on it. But there's a difference in the two letters. The first letter, so beautifully written, has no stamp on it. The second letter, written in pencil, with smudges and smears, has a stamp on it. Question: Which letter will be delivered? Now, let me tell you something, folks. Faith is the stamp that gets your letter on through—faith. Some people may pray beautiful prayers; I mean they are eloquent, and they may be right, and the content may be good, but there is no stamp on the letter. ([Adrian Rogers](#))

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## Shenandoah

Read: Genesis 12:1-9 |

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go. —Hebrews 11:8

My grandfather grew up on the North American frontier and raised his family on a dairy farm. To pass the time, he often sang songs while he worked. "Shenandoah" was one of his favorites:

O Shenandoah, I long to hear you,  
Away, you rolling river,  
O Shenandoah, I long to hear you,  
Away, I'm bound away,  
'Cross the wide Missouri.

That song reflects the love the pioneer songwriter had for the Shenandoah River. Yet he felt compelled to leave its beauty and go west. His love for the familiar rooted him, but the pull of something better won his heart.

When Abraham was called out of Ur to follow God to the Promised Land, he had to leave everything that was familiar to him (Gen. 12:1). Despite the idolatry of that pagan city, Abraham had probably grown attached to the comfort of his home, the variety of the food, and the fellowship of his friends. But Abraham left the familiar to follow God's leading: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go" (Heb. 11:8).

When we experience God's call to another place, it may mean leaving behind the people and the things we love. But when we're obedient to God, He will provide something even more fulfilling at our new destination. By Dennis Fisher (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Fulfillment on life's journey comes  
When we in faith obey  
The leading of our loving God—  
He'll not lead us astray.  
—Sper

You don't need to see the way if you follow the One who is the Way.

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## The Leap

Read: Genesis 12:1-4 |

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out. —Hebrews 11:8

During a baseball game in the summer of 2006, Boston Red Sox centerfielder Coco Crisp made a spectacular play. David Wright of the New York Mets hit a ball toward left centerfield. The ball was moving away from Crisp as he raced after it. Just as it began to fall to the ground, Crisp dove headlong toward it. With his body flying through the air, he stretched his gloved hand as far as possible—and caught the ball. Some called it the best catch they had ever seen.

What were his thoughts as the ball sliced through the air? Crisp said, "I didn't think I could get there. I decided to go for it. I took a leap of faith."

In Hebrews 11, we read of what Abraham discovered "by faith." God called him to leave his country and family and go "to a land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). By faith, Abraham obeyed.

Is God calling you to do something difficult? Perhaps to take a missions trip to help people in need. Or to witness to someone throwing her life away with bad decisions. Or to show kindness and love in a relationship that needs encouragement. If you aren't

sure you can do it, ask God to help you. Then, trusting your loving heavenly Father, dive toward that goal. It could be the best play of your life. By Dave Branon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We who love Jesus are walking by faith,  
Not seeing one step that's ahead;  
Not doubting one moment what our lot may be,  
But looking to Jesus instead.  
—Fields

When God presents you with a challenge, take a leap of faith.

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## Mysterious Detours

Read: Genesis 12:1-10; 13:1 |

Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. —Psalm 22:4

Before my wife and I embarked on a 400-mile road trip, I set up the GPS with our daughter's home in Missouri as the destination. As we traveled through Illinois, the GPS instructed us to get off the Interstate, resulting in a detour through the city of Harvey. After the GPS directed us back to

I-80, I was baffled by this mysterious detour. Why were we directed off a perfectly good highway?

I'll never know the answer. We continued on our way, and we trusted the GPS to get us there and home again.

That got me to thinking about detours in life. We may seem to be traveling on a smooth pathway. Then for some reason, God redirects us into an unfamiliar area. Perhaps it is an illness, or a crisis at work or school, or an unexpected tragedy occurs. We don't understand what God is doing.

Abraham faced a mysterious detour when God told him, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house" (Gen. 12:1). Surely Abraham must have wondered why God was routing him to the Negev desert. But he trusted God and His good purposes.

A GPS may make mistakes, but we can trust our unfailing God (Ps. 22:4). He will guide us through all our mysterious detours and lead us where He wants us to go. By Dave Branon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We seek Your guidance, Lord, but we understand that our path won't always be without challenges. Help us to trust You through the detours—knowing

that You have our best interests and Your honor at heart.

We don't need to see the way when we stay close to the One who does.

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**Robert Morgan** - The transition between Genesis 11 and 12 is the **Continental Divide of Scripture**, even greater than the division between the Old and New Testaments. In the first eleven chapters of the Bible, God dealt with the world en masse; but in Genesis 12, He launched a far-reaching plan of redemption by choosing a man whose descendants would become a mighty nation. From that nation would come the Messiah from whom would come the church that, in turn, would take the gospel back to the whole world. This was outlined in advance in Genesis 12, given to Abraham and his "seed" or "offspring" (22:18). **There are seven promises in Genesis 12:1-3; and the seventh promise is repeated seven times in Scripture** (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14; Acts 3:25-26; Gal. 3:8, 16). The seventh occurrence cuts straight to Calvary and is actually called "**the gospel in advance**" (Gal. 3:8 NIV). The Scripture [the Old Testament] foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and foretold the good news to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed in you.... The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as though referring to many, but and to your seed, referring to one, who is Christ. (Gal. 3:8, 16) Whenever tempted to doubt the gospel, I just go back to the Old Testament and notice how the unfolding plan of God was revealed in advance—pre-planned, foreordained, and consistent from beginning to end. (My All in All Devotional)

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## The Father's Friend - Dr. Melvin Worthington

SCRIPTURE: James 2:21–23; Hebrews 11:8–19

INTRODUCTION: Abraham was chosen by God to become the father of the faithful. He stands out as one of the most prominent



characters in the Scriptures. In Genesis 12 Abraham received a distinct revelation from God regarding His **plan, purpose, people, and property**.

1. **Abraham's Faith.** Abraham's faith was **true** faith, **tested** faith, **tried** faith, **timid** faith, **tenacious** faith, and **triumphant** faith.
2. **Abraham's Faults.** Abraham's faults included **fear** of famine (Gen. 12:10–20), **fear** of danger (Gen. 20), and **fear** for family (Gen. 16:1–16; 17:1–27; 21:1–8).
3. **Abraham's Future.** Abraham's future includes the **covenant** (Genesis 12; 17; 22), the **conflicts** (Rom. 9 – past; Rom. 10 – present; Rom. 11 – prospect), and the **consummation** (Matt. 24; Acts 1).

CONCLUSION: Abraham serves as a powerful illustration of one who believed God. He believed the Word of God, he was beset by weaknesses, he was blessed with wealth and he was a beacon in witness. He was God's friend. (Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook - 2006)

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**Spurgeon gives us the background for Abram's call** - AFTER the flood, when men began to multiply and increase in the earth, it was not very long before they began to turn aside from the living and true God. At first the sons of Noah walked in the light of divine knowledge, though even among them was found an evil seed. When scattered over the earth after the confusion of tongues at Babel, the earth's hoar fathers carried with them a measure of the knowledge of God which they had received from their sires; but after a while, the light grew dim, men began to worship the sun and the moon, and they adored fire as the mystic symbol of the mysterious and spiritual Lord. They sought out many inventions; and having once begun to quit their allegiance to the one God, they very rapidly travelled along the down-grade till they worshipped strange gods. It was sad that although the earth produced its mighty hunters, and men built city after city, yet few among them sought after God, or builded altars to his name. Well might the Lord God cry out, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

A long period passed without a voice from God. Man seemed left to himself, and in danger of being given up to idols. The nations wandered each a different way, but all the downward road. Yet grace had not ended its reign; and therefore, before the lamp of God had wholly gone out, the Lord determined to reveal himself, and establish his worship in the world. He would select a family to be his peculiar servants; he would manifest himself to the father of that family, and would make with him a covenant. He would reveal to him the great things which he intended to do in the fulness of time, and he would bid him hand down the revelation to his children from generation to generation. This family should grow into a nation, and to that nation should be committed the oracles of God. Out of that nation should come prophets, and priests, and heroes, who should believe in God and maintain the true faith against all comers, even until the Son of God himself should come to manifest the glory of God in a pre-eminent degree. In the midst of that nation the Lord resolved to set up ordinances, and a settled organization, by which truth should be taught through type and symbol, and by the hallowed speech of godly men. This, in his wisdom, he judged to be best for the future of the race.

In the wise sovereignty of his choice, the Lord chose Abram and his house. He giveth no account of his matters, and we cannot, therefore, tell why he took out of Ur of the Chaldees those of whom Joshua says, "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." The Lord called Abram alone, and blessed him. He set apart the patriarch and his seed, and put them in trust with the priceless treasure of divine revelation: this they kept for themselves and for the rest of mankind.

It was needful that the elect family should be led apart and kept from the contamination of surrounding evil. Abram must come out from Ur of the Chaldees, and all its associations of idolatry, and he must even leave his kindred and his father's house, and walk before the Lord in separation unto prompt obedience and complete consecration. Thus in his separation unto God would be fulfilled the gracious purpose of the Most High. The Lord's end and aim was to keep his truth alive in the world by means of a people who should be set apart for that service; and it was therefore essential that the person chosen to be the head of that family, the founder of that nation, should come right away from all connection with the corrupt world, and walk apart with God. The chosen nation was to dwell alone, and not to be numbered among the peoples. Hence came that call which said to 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." (See full sermon [Abram's Call; or, Half-Way and All the Way](#) - Genesis 11:31, 12:5).

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#### **F B Meyer - Genesis 12:1 Get thee Out.**

Never did a corn of wheat more utterly fall into the ground to die. It seemed as though he were urgently needed in his country and among his kindred; but man's thoughts and ways are not God's. The blessing of Abraham's life could only come in the land of promise, and after he had died to the whole life of nature. To every one who is to be richly blessed and made a blessing there is the inevitable command, "Get thee out. Be willing to die."

**Get thee out of the land of idols.** — Beyond the flood of the Euphrates, Terah and the rest served other gods. Had Abram

remained there, he might have touched the unclean thing; hence God's desire to get him beyond the reach of infection, that he and his race might remain monotheistic. Hast thou had communion with darkness, with Belial, with idols? Get thee out and be separate; touch not the unclean thing. Be clean, thou who art to bear the vessels of the Lord. Reckon thyself to have died.

**Get thee out in loneliness.** — "I called him alone, and increased him." If thou art unwilling to abide alone, thou must fall alone into the ground and die. God must reduce us to a minimum before He can work through us to the maximum. But there is no loneliness to the soul who is one with God. Alone against the world, it is still in a majority.

**Get thee out in faith.** — "He went out, not knowing whither." It was what man calls a venture; but as he stepped out on what seemed a void, he found it rock beneath his feet. Day by day a track appeared across the desert, and all his needs were met till he reached the place of blessing. Death was the gate of life. Having died to Haran, he began to bring forth much fruit in every soil of the world.

**Genesis 12:2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be (qal imperative) a blessing;**

- Ge 13:16 15:5 17:5,6 18:18 22:17,18 24:35 26:4 27:29 28:3,14 Ge 35:11 46:3 Ex 1:7 32:10 Nu 14:12 24:9,10 De 26:5 2Sa 7:9 1Ki 3:8,9 Mic 7:20 Ro 4:11 Ga 3:7
- thou shalt (KJV): Ge 14:14-16 18:18 19:29 28:4 1Ki 1:47 Ga 3:14
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#) - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:2 Abraham's Double Blessing](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross

**NET** 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.

## **BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING**

While many writers refer to Genesis 12 as the "Abrahamic Covenant" it is probably more accurate to refer to it as God's promises to Abram. The Abrahamic Covenant was ratified in Genesis 15:18 when Jehovah cut a covenant with Abram. In either case, God is not a man that He should lie and when He gives Abram 6 promises they are certain to be fulfilled for as Joshua testified on in some of his last words *"Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed."* (Joshua 23:14).

**And I will make you a great nation:** Recall that at this time Abram is age 75 (Ge 12:4) and Sarai is 65 and barren and yet God promised He would make Abram a father of many nations. Unfortunately as we discover in later chapters, Abram "ran ahead" of this promise and chose to trust in the "arm of flesh" rather than the promise of God (we can all identify with this fleshly misstep can we not?) And so at about age 86 Abram went into Sarai's handmaiden Hagar who conceived a son, Ishmael, the product of the flesh not of the promise--and the flesh can never please God (cp Heb 11:6, Jn 15:5, Jn 6:63)! But praise God for His lovingkindness, for in Genesis 15 He appears to Abram and repeats the promise to Abram who believes the promise....

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." 4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:1-6+)

Obedience to the first command to **Go forth** is followed by three divine promises ("I will" statements). **'I will'...**

1. **Make you a great nation** - fulfilled in the nation of Israel which has endured even to our day! Included in this blessing was the land (Ge 12:7).

2. **Bless you** - Abram experienced temporal blessing (even when he did not deserve it - Ge 12:16) and spiritual well-being ("The friend of God" -Jas 2:23+).
3. **Make your name great** - Jews, Christians, and Moslems all look to Abraham as the father of their faith.

These three promises are followed by a purpose clause. The NAS reads "**and so**" which is more difficult to recognize as a purpose clause and for that reason the **ESV** (see also the **NET** version above) is preferable reading "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, **so that** you will be a blessing." "**SO THAT**" is a [terms of purpose or result](#). In other words, God promised to do the 3 things above for a purpose and the purpose was that Abram would be a blessing. The phrase "shall be a blessing" is difficult to recognize as a command but in fact it is a second command in this section. Abram is commanded to be a blessing. The verb "**be**" or "**become**" in Hebrew is qal imperative. This pattern of divine blessing followed by a command is similar to the first blessing issued to Adam and Eve before their fall into sin

God blessed them, saying, "**Be fruitful** and **multiply**, and **fill** the waters in the seas, and **let** birds **multiply** (effectively also a command) on the earth." (Genesis 1:22, 28, 5:2)

After the fall God did not bless again until the world had been purged by the flood and He had rescued Noah.

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "**Be fruitful** and **multiply**, and **fill** the earth. (Ge 9:1)

And now in Genesis 12:1-3 God once again bestows a blessing on the man Abram but this blessing would be associated with a different command, not to be fruitful, but to **be a blessing**. Abram and his line would be the vehicle through which God would bless the world with the Seed of the Messiah (cp Gal 3:16+) through Whom would come the ultimate blessing of salvation and eternal life for all who would believe in the Gospel (cp Gal 3:8+).

**Wiersbe** reminds us that "We are not saved by making promises to God; we are saved by believing God's promises to us. It was God who graciously gave His covenant to Abraham and he responded with faith and obedience (Heb. 11:8–10). How you respond to God's promises determines what God will do in your life....God did not give Abraham reasons or explanations; He simply gave him promises. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

This second command to **be a blessing** was followed by three more divine promises in Genesis 12:3, three more "I will" statements. "I will"...

1. **Bless those who bless you,**
2. **Curse those who curse you**
3. **Bless all of the families of the earth in you**

**As an aside contrast the I will's of Genesis 12 with what the people said in Genesis 11-** Compare Genesis 11:1-4 with Genesis 12:1-3. In Genesis 12, God says, "I will, I will, I will, I will." In Genesis 11, man says, "let us, let us, let us." Let us make us a name. God said, "Abraham, I will make your name great."

**Steven Cole** comments on the repeated divine "**I will's**" - The crucial thing with faith is not your faith, but the object of your faith. Note in our text, it was the Lord who called Abram. Note all the "I will's" that the Lord affirms to Abram: "**I will** show you the land; **I will** make you a great nation; **I will** bless you; **I will** bless those who bless you; **I will** curse those who curse you." This is the word of the eternal, living God, the Creator of heaven and earth! Can't you trust Him?...God's third promise ("**bless all the families of the earth in you**") connected with His second command is that in Abram, all the families of the earth will be blessed. This is a tremendous promise, fulfilled in the Savior, born of Abram's lineage, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the greatest promises in the Bible--God's promise of a Savior for all nations (or people groups). Apart from Abram and his Seed (Christ), we who are Gentiles would have no hope. The apostle Paul referred to this verse in Galatians 3:8: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you.'" And so here we have the good news, that Jesus Christ would be born to Abraham's descendants, and that He would save us from our sins through faith. ([Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#))

**Cole** adds this note on **curse those who curse you** - Anti-Semitism is dangerous business, because the person or nation which is against the Jews incurs God's judgment. While God does not approve of any form of racial prejudice, He is especially against those who are against His chosen people, and He is especially favorable to those who favor His people. Both biblical and post-biblical history bear abundant witness to this fact. ([Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#))

As you may know I am a physician and over 10 years ago a fellow physician actually took out space in the local newspaper to write a piece very critical of the Jews including Jewish physicians. The day that article was published a Jewish gastroenterologist with whom I had been sharing the Gospel (from an Old Testament perspective) came into my office at the hospital and was clearly distressed by the fellow physician's blatantly anti-Semitic article. I will never forget what happened next. I quoted Genesis 12:3 to him

in which God promised "I will curse those who curse you." I told Bob that this divine promise had never been revoked and that the doctor's anti-Semitic diatribe would not go unnoticed by God. About a week later, the Jewish gastroenterologist came flying into my office, his face ashen and clearly in distress. I asked him what was the problem and was shocked by his reply. He related how the doctor who had published the anti-Semitic piece had been flying his private plane the day before and something malfunctioned causing him to crash the plane and die! Needless, to say I was taken aback, but then Bob said "You told me that God would not let his anti-Semitic comments go unpunished." You might call this a coincidence but I am still convinced that this was the promise keeping God holding fast to the truth he had spoken 4000 years ago! Sadly Bob is still not a believer in Yeshua, so if you read this story and are inclined to do so, please pray for God to open his heart to come to know the Messiah. Thank you.

**NET Note** adds that "The blessing of creation is now carried forward to the patriarch. In the garden God blessed Adam and Eve; in that blessing he gave them (1) a fruitful place, (2) endowed them with fertility to multiply, and (3) made them rulers over creation. That was all ruined at the fall. Now God begins to build His covenant people; in Genesis 12–22 He promises to give Abram (1) a land flowing with milk and honey, (2) a great nation without number, and (3) kingship.

**Steven Cole** sums up this section - Ge 12:1-3 are symmetrical: There is a command from the Lord ("Go forth") followed by three promises: "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great." Then there is a second command, rendered as a future tense in most versions: "Be a blessing" (NASB margin), followed by three more promises: "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Abram's obedience to the first command would start a chain reaction in which God would bless him so that he could fulfill the second command to be a blessing, which would result in God's further blessing....Remember, while God gives us many blessings in this life, the main blessing is in eternity. Abram died without seeing most of these promises fulfilled. But he knew that God would make good on His Word. Abram was living for eternity, "looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:10). If you're living for this fleeting life alone, you should not become a Christian. As Paul put it, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). But if God is the eternal God, then the hardships we encounter in following Him cannot compare to the glory that will follow (2 Cor. 4:17). So that is our great privilege, that God calls us to salvation in order to bless us.

May the prayer of our heart be this old hymn

**Make me a blessing, make me a blessing,**

Out of my life may Jesus shine;  
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,  
Make me a blessing to someone today.

Out in the highways and byways of life,  
Many are weary and sad  
Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife,  
Making the sorrowing glad.

Tell the sweet story of Christ and His love;  
Tell of His pow'r to forgive.  
Others will trust Him if only you prove  
True ev'ry moment you live.

Give as 'twas given to you in your need;  
Love as the Master loved you;  
Be to the helpless a helper indeed;  
Unto your mission be true.

- Ira B. Wilson

**Bless** (01288)(**barak**) is a verb which literally can mean to kneel (to go to one's knees - Camel in Ge 24:11, Solomon in 2Chr 6:13) as contrasted with standing position or even a bowing at the waist). And so **barak** can refer to an act of adoration sometimes on bended knee. To give divine blessings (Ge 1:22, 9:1-7) To esteem greatly or adore God for His blessings (Ge 24:48, Ps 103:1) The Greek (**Septuagint**) translates **barak** with the verb **eulogeo** (from **eú** = good, well + **logos** = word. English = eulogize) which means to speak a good word of, to speak well or favorably of someone.

**And make your name great** - Which He did as Christians, Jews and Muslims all give respect to Abraham as the father of their faith.

**D L Moody** - THERE is no name in history so well known as the name of Abram. Even Christ is not more widely known, for the Mohammedans, the Persians, and the Egyptians make a great deal of Abram. His name has been for centuries and centuries favorably known in Damascus. God promised him that great men should spring from his loins. Was there ever a nation that has

turned out such men? Think of Moses, and Joseph, and Joshua, and Caleb, and Samuel, and David, and Solomon, and Elisha. Think of Elijah, and Daniel, and Isaiah, and all the other wonderful Bible characters that have sprung from this man! Then think of John the Baptist, of Peter, of James, and John, and Paul, a mighty army. No one can number the multitude of wonderful men that have sprung from this one man called out of the land of the Chaldeans, unknown and an idolater, probably, when God called him; and yet how literally God has fulfilled His promise that through him He would bless all the nations of the earth. All because he surrendered himself fully and wholly to let God bless him.

## **A MISSIONARY MANDATE**

**And so you shall be a blessing** (Ge 14:14-16 18:18 19:29 28:4 1Ki 1:47 Ga 3:14)

**Allen Ross** - Abram's **blessing** was a blessing that would extend to all the families of the earth; it included all the ways that the blessing was spread—through Israel, the Scriptures, the prophets, the covenants, and ultimately the Messiah, its greatest fulfillment (Gal 3:8, 16; cf. Ro 9:5). People who, by faith, revered the covenant that God was making with Abram and therefore blessed Abram would be blessed in return. If people treated Abram lightly, that is, saw no importance for him or his covenant, they would be rejecting God, his choice, and his plan. God would be bound to separate such people from the blessing—although these persons actually would have already removed themselves. The themes of blessing and cursing that are highlighted here run through the entire book of Genesis.

**This passage forms the central episode of the book; here God begins His program to restore the blessing that was there in the beginning. Everything before this chapter lays down the need for blessing, and everything following it traces its development in the faith and family of Abram.**

Because Abram responded by faith, these promises of God could be confirmed in a binding covenant (Ge 15:8-21). (Ibid)

**Spurgeon** on “**I will bless thee, ... and thou shalt be a blessing.**”- THIS was to be the double result of Abraham's coming out from his own country and his father's house. Those Orientals clung with great tenacity to their native homes. We in these latter ages are not so restful; we think nothing of crossing the Atlantic, and many think little of going to the other side of the globe; but those Easterns trembled even to cross the Euphrates or the Tigris. They spoke of the land beyond those rivers as “across the flood,” and a journey of two or three hundred miles seemed to them to be an event only second to death itself. Yet when the Lord said to Abraham, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:” he “departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him.” His obedience was an act of heroic faith. Now, brethren, in consequence of this obedience, Abraham obtained the double blessing of which our text speaks. But he is called the father of the faithful; that is, the father of all such as believe in God; so that, if we truly believe in God, we shall do what Abraham as a believer did. Children are like their father; believers are like the father of all believers, so that there will be a going out for them as there was for him. We may not be called actually to leave our homes and our native land; but we shall have a more troublesome task than that a great deal, for we are to be separated from the people among whom we dwell,—to dwell among them, yet not to be of them,—in the world, but not of the world. This is not an easy thing; it is far easier to become a monk, or a nun, and shut yourself up alone, than it is to live in the midst of ungodly people, and yet to be yourself godly,—to trade with the usual followers of commerce, and not to drop into their business customs,—to mix with the usual host of thinkers, yet not to think as they think, but to endeavour to think the thoughts of God, and to obey the will of the Most High. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the most perfect man among men; in no respect, in dress or in anything else, did he separate himself from the rest of mankind by anything merely external. He ate and drank just as they did, he sat at their tables, slept in their houses, and talked with them by the way, yet was he always “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” All believers are called thus to live in the world a separated life, in obedience to the Divine command, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” There is no necessity for us to wear either the broad-brimmed hat or the collarless coat, or anything whatever by which we shall be marked off from the rest of men; we are to be separated in reality rather than merely in appearance, to be separated by a higher tone of morals, to be separated by a truer life,—a life with God, a life in God,—to be separated by faith in the unseen, to be separated by an enthusiasm to which the rest of mankind will not pretend; which, indeed, they will even despise. This is the high, hard, holy, heavenly task to which believers in Christ are called. Oh, for grace to accomplish it! (Read the full sermon - [Genesis 12:2 Abraham's Double Blessing](#))

**Adrian Rogers** on **faith** - Now, the root of faith is a word from God. The requirement of faith is to be separated from sin. Get out, that I might bring you in. You see, faith brings us out that it might bring us in. So many people want to live in the land of faith and the land of idolatry at the same time. Listen to me, folks, you are not going to have faith until you're willing to be separated from sin. The most antithetical thing to faith is sin in the heart and in the life. And so many people are trying to live double lives and want to believe God, but the Bible says a, “A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord.” We are told to abhor that which is evil, we are told to cleave to that which is good. Do you want to have faith? Get your heart clean. Let me give you some scriptures. Hebrews 3:12. The Bible says, “Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of



unbelief." Now notice this, unbelief is not intellectual, it is moral. It doesn't come out of the head; it comes out of the heart. Beware, beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Nothing more debilitating, stultifying, to faith than sin in the life. Listen to Hebrews 12:1, 2, the great faith chapter. It says this, "Wherefore, seeing as we're compassed about by so great a crowd of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight," now listen to this, "let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." What's he saying? He's saying if you want faith, put your eyes on Jesus, but when you put your eyes on Jesus, lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. If you're having difficulty, please listen. If you're having difficulty with faith, try repentance. If you're having difficulty with faith, try repentance. There are certain things that always come in a particular order in the Bible. Grace and peace—never peace and grace—grace and peace, because you'll never know peace until you know grace. Believe and baptized. The Bible doesn't say, Be baptized and believe. Some of you need to get your baptism on the right side of your faith. And another order that God has given is repentance and faith, repentance and faith, repentance and faith. God says, Abram, get away from these pagans, get out of this pagan land of idolatry into a place that I will show you. You've got to be separated from sin. ([Sermon](#))

**NET Note** - What does it mean for Abram to "be a blessing"? Will he be a channel or source of blessing for others, or a prime example of divine blessing? A similar statement occurs in Zech 8:13, where God assures his people, "You will be a blessing," in contrast to the past when they "were a curse." Certainly "curse" here does not refer to Israel being a source of a curse, but rather to the fact that they became a curse-word or byword among the nations, who regarded them as the epitome of an accursed people (see 2 Kgs 22:19; Jer 42:18; 44:8, 12, 22). Therefore the statement "be a blessing" seems to refer to Israel being transformed into a prime example of a blessed people, whose name will be used in blessing formulae, rather than in curses. If the statement "be a blessing" is understood in the same way in Gen 12:2, then it means that God would so bless Abram that other nations would hear of his fame and hold him up as a paradigm of divine blessing in their blessing formulae.

**Spurgeon** - There, you see, was the missionary character of the seed of Abraham, if they had but recognized it. God did not bless them for themselves alone, but for all nations: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

**Steven Cole** - Since, by faith in Christ, we are Abraham's heirs, blessed with Abraham the believer (Gal. 3:7, 9), we are under obligation not to bottle up the promise, but to take it to every people group on this earth. This is our Lord's Great Commission, to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19 [see commentary](#)). If you have received the blessings of God's salvation, you are under the responsibility to do all you can to be the channel of that blessing to those who have not heard....God has called us to Himself and given us abundant blessings. But if we keep it to ourselves, we are not doing right. To bottle up God's blessings for ourselves is to fall into the rampant selfishness of our sinful culture. If your heart is not in evangelism and missions, if you're not burdened for the lost, if you're not investing the material blessings God has entrusted to you in the work of His kingdom, then you've gotten caught up with American selfishness. God calls us in salvation and blesses us so that we can be a blessing. We must set our focus on taking the good news of His salvation to all the nations. ([Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** reminds us that "God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others, and His great concern is that the whole world might be blessed. The missionary mandate of the church does not begin with John 3:16 or Matthew 28:18–20. It begins with God's covenant with Abraham. We are blessed that we might be a blessing." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

Can I give you a simple (but powerful) way you can carry the blessing of the Seed of Abraham to all the people groups of the earth? It will only take a few minutes of time each day, but it will yield a reward throughout eternity! Bookmark the following page on your computer and daily pray for the unreached people group that is highlighted in the [Joshua Project](#).

**Perspectives Course on World Missions** - If you have never taken this course, let me strongly encourage you to set aside some time to be edified, equipped and challenged by this course. I took it some 20 years ago and my mindset regarding missions was radically and permanently transformed. Currently this course is being used mightily by God's Spirit on the African continent among several people groups experiencing a revival of Christianity (Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya). I can promise that **Perspectives** will "revive" your Christian faith as you come to see and understand that our great God is above all a "Missionary God." Here is a summary of lesson 1

The summary of Lesson 1 is God says, "I will bless you so that you will be a blessing." The fulfillment of the promise was defined for Abraham in terms of land, descendants, and blessing. Stott's article showed that not only was God's promise fulfilled *immediately* in Abraham's time, it was fulfilled *intermediately* through the Gospel; the promised land was transformed into the whole world. The promise of physical descendants of Abraham was transformed into the spiritual children of the Father who are adopted by faith in Christ, and the blessing of salvation is given to all nations. Finally, the promise is fulfilled *ultimately* at the return of Christ when the land, the descendants, and the blessing are all fulfilled in a new eternal order; every tribe worshiping at the throne of God. We learn early on that God is a God of covenant; He makes and keeps His promises. The history of God's people, Abraham's descendants, is a gift so that they can be a blessing to all nations for His



eternal glory. ([Summary of Perspectives Classes 1-15](#) - go to bottom of page for links to all of the summaries.)

See also - [Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: Reader and Study Guide](#) - BORROW - [Take a moment to read some of the review comments](#).

World missions is not just an optional program in the church for some to be involved in. Missions is what God is doing! Not all are called to go, but every believer should be interested and concerned enough to educate himself or herself about the task. Out of that interest, we all can and should be praying for missions. We all should be giving to missions. If world missions is at the heart of God's purpose, then apathy about missions is inexcusable!

The question one might arise -

**"Is there any evidence that the divine mandate given to Abram/Abraham to be a blessing to the nations was realized even in the Old Testament?"**

1. Abraham himself bore witness to Canaanites, Philistines, Hittites and, rather negatively, to Egyptians.
2. Joseph was a son of Abraham who made up for his forefather's lack of a clear witness to the Egyptian nation! Joseph blessed Egyptians in truly amazing ways.
3. The spies who entered Jericho before it was destroyed became a blessing to Rahab, a Canaanite harlot, and her family.
4. Naomi, a daughter of Abraham, was a blessing to two Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah.
5. Moses became a blessing to Jethro, his Midianite father-in-law.
6. King David caused even his enemies, the Philistines, to acknowledge God's greatness.
7. The prophet Elijah was a blessing to a Sidonian widow in Zarephath.
8. The prophet Elisha, likewise, was a blessing to Naaman, a Syrian.
9. Jonah, however reluctantly, became a blessing to the Gentile population of Nineveh.
10. King Solomon was a blessing to the Sabaeen "Queen of the South."
11. Daniel and his three colleagues, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were a blessing to Babylonians. (Ed: I think Nebuchadnezzar became a believer in Yahweh! see Daniel 4:36-37+)
12. Esther and her uncle Mordecai were a blessing to the entire Persian Empire.
13. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah and other prophets declared the Word of the Lord to various Gentile nations.

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**G Campbell Morgan** - Genesis 12:2 - In this chapter we have the beginning of the history of the people through whom God has acted in human history, in order to the redemption of the race and the restoration of the Divine order. From this point the Biblical literature is concerned with that people, until of its stock the Deliverer appeared. Then it is concerned with Him and the elect race resulting from His work. While this is so, we must never imagine that the nations or the world are excluded from the Divine thought and purpose. The nation now to be called into being; the One Who, after the flesh, would be of that nation; and the new race created by His work—all, in the purpose of God, are called into co-operation with Him on behalf of the world and of all the nations. The recognition of this fact is fundamental to any correct interpretation of the Biblical Revelation. This is the vital matter in these words spoken to Abram. The last words, "Be thou a blessing," give the reason of the former, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." In calling Abram, God did not reject other men; in making his name great, He did not degrade other names; in blessing him, He did not hand others over to a curse. When at last this nation was for a season cast out from privilege and responsibility it was because it had become self-centred, and forgotten its high responsibility for the nations of the world. When that nation is restored to its true place, it will be to fulfil that office. The truth abides. The Church exists in order to be a blessing. For that, she is blessed of God. To forget this, is to fail utterly, and to be cast away.

**Genesis 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."**

- And I (KJV): Ge 27:29 Ex 23:22 Nu 24:9 Mt 25:40,45
- in thee (KJV): Ge 18:18 22:18 26:4 28:14 30:27,30 39:5 Ps 72:17 Ac 3:25,26 Ro 4:11 1Co 1:30 Ga 3:8,16,28 Eph 1:3 Col 3:11 Rev 7:9
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:1-3 Great Privilege, Great Responsibility](#) - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross

kai eulogeso tous eulogountas (1SFAI: Lu1:64) se kai tous kataromenous (PMPMPA: stating that a supernatural power will cause harm to someone = curse Lu6.28) se katarasomai (1SFMI) kai

eneulogethesontai (3PFPI) en soi pasai ai phulai (phule: tribes Mt24:30) tes ges

LXX: And I will bless those that bless thee, and curse those that curse thee, and in thee shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed.

**And I will bless those who bless you**, ("SEED" 22:17 22:18) (27:29 Ex23:22 Nu24:9 Mt25:40,45): Ryrie makes an interesting comment that is certainly compatible with the "oneness" found in a covenant relationship: "Abraham's relation to God was so close that to bless or curse him was, in effect, to bless or curse God. See examples in [20:2-18 21:22-34 23:1-20]."

The Hebrew reads "I am determined to bless all those who bless you."

**Missio Dei** is Latin for "the sending of God," and in that sense Abram is being sent of God, having been blessed to be a blessing to the nations. And if you are a believer, that is also your "mission" should you choose to accept it. What would happen if all genuine believers truly received a Spirit energized, Word centered, God glorifying vision of their privilege to be "on mission" with God anywhere and everywhere they were for the rest of their short time on earth?! May God be pleased to raise up many who like Isaiah will be willing to say "Here I am. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

**And the one who curses you I will curse** - ("But the one who treats you lightly I must curse")

**Curses** (07043)(qalal) means to be slight, swift, trifling. It means "to be small," "to be light," in weight or account. For example in Ge 16:5 we read that Hagar "was **despised** (qalal)" in Sarai's sight. The inhabitants of Nineveh were called **contemptible** by the prophet Nahum because of their idolatry (Nah. 1:14). After the flood God promised He would never again **curse** the ground Ge 8:21).

**NET Note** - Whoever treats Abram and the covenant with contempt as worthless God will banish from the blessing. It is important also to note that the verb is not a cohortative, but a simple imperfect. Since God is binding himself to Abram, this would then be an obligatory imperfect: "but the one who treats you with contempt I must curse."

**Scofield** notes that "This was a warning literally fulfilled in the history of Israel's persecutions. It has invariably fared ill with the people who have persecuted the Jew - well with those who have protected him. For a nation to commit the sin of anti-Semitism brings inevitable judgment. The future will still more remarkably prove this principle (Dt 30:7; Isa 14:1-2; Joel 3:1-8; Mic 5:7-9; Hag 2:22; Zec 14:1-3; Mt 25:40,45).

**John Weldon on the one who curses you I will curse** - Throughout history every government that has persecuted the Jews has, as far as can be determined, been judged by God: Assyria, Babylon and many other ancient nations that surrounded Israel, Rome, Nazi Germany, and the Arab nations in their recent multiple wars with Israel, have all suffered God's judgment because of their persecution or hatred of Israel.....as Lindsey points out the British Empire ruled the world for 300 years until it (in part) turned against the Jews, ceding land that was to be given to Israel to the Arab states instead. In addition, by restricting Jewish immigration to the holy land, Britain also helped permit the exposure to Hitler's brutalities in the Holocaust. By the time Israel declared her independence and statehood in 1948, the British Empire had basically ceased to exist. ([God's Heart for Israel](#)).

**And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed**: God reiterates that "in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Ge 18:18, cp GE 18:17) How could this prophecy be fulfilled? Paul answers writing...

Now the promises (Genesis 12:1-3) were spoken to Abraham and to his **seed** ("his descendant" = NET; "his offspring" = ESV; "seed" or Greek - sperma = a figurative extension of the meaning of sperma to refer to a descendant). He does not say, "And to seeds ("desendants" = NET)," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your **Seed**," (the Hebrew word OT text is singular - see Ge 12:7, 13:15, 17:7, 24:7) that is, **Christ**. (= Abraham received a prophetic promise of the Messiah) (Galatians 3:16+).

How would the families of the earth be blessed? Again Paul gives us the the answer writing...

Galatians 3:8-9 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify (declare righteous) the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel (Good News) beforehand to Abraham, saying, "**ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU** (quoting Ge 12:3, Ge 18:18). So then those who are of faith are **blessed** with Abraham, the believer. "

Romans 4:11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

So the blessing of Genesis 12 is obtained by faith, the same faith that resulted in the blessing of **Abraham, the believer**.

**Wiersbe** - Notice the contrast between Genesis 11:1-9 and Gen 12:1-3. At Babel, men said, "Let us!" but to Abraham, God said, "I will." At Babel, men wanted to make a name for themselves; but it was God who made Abraham's name great. At Babel, the

workers tried to unite men, only to divide them; but through Abraham, a whole world has been blessed, and all believers are united in Jesus Christ. Of course, Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47) is the “reversal” of Babel; but Pentecost could not have occurred apart from God’s covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:14+). It must have seemed incredible to Abraham and Sarah that God would bless the whole world through an elderly childless couple, but that is just what He did. From them came the nation of Israel, and from Israel came the Bible and the Savior. God reaffirmed this covenant with Isaac (Gen. 26:4) and Jacob (Ge 28:14) and fulfilled it in Christ (Acts 3:25–26). In later years, God amplified the various elements of this covenant; but He gave Abraham and Sarah sufficient truth for them to believe Him and set out by faith. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

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## Blessed To Bless

Read: Genesis 12:1-7

I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. —Genesis 12:2

While I was reading the 12th chapter of Genesis, the words of the second verse struck me with new meaning. Whenever I studied this particular passage of Scripture before, my mind was so occupied with the promises to Abraham and the nation of Israel that I overlooked a practical application for every Christian.

The Lord told Abraham: “I will bless you . . . and you shall be a blessing.” He was blessed to bless! What he received was not for his own selfish enjoyment, but for the welfare and betterment of others.

The same is true with believers today. The Lord has done a wonderful work of grace in our lives and wants us to share it with others. We who have trusted Jesus and have received the benefits of salvation have been saved to “save.” Although our relationship to Christ brings us personal satisfaction, He redeems us that we might go out and “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). Likewise, God comforts us in our distresses “that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:4).

You have been blessed to bless! Let the Lord do His work through you. By Richard DeHaan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Make me a channel of blessing today,  
Make me a channel of blessing, I pray;  
My life possessing, my service blessing,  
Make me a channel of blessing today. —Smyth

God gives freely to us so that we may give liberally to others.

**Genesis 12:4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.**

- and Lot (KJV): Ge 11:27
- departed out (KJV): Heb 11:8+
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:4-9](#) - Obedient Faith by Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross
- [Map of Migration of Abram from Ur to Haran to Canaan](#)
- [Map of Abram in Canaan and Migration to Egypt](#)

## Related Passages:

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.

## ABRAM'S IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE

**Spurgeon** - He had already attained a fine old age, but he had another century of life before him, which he could not then foresee, or expect. If, at his age, he had said, “Lord, I am too old to travel, too old to leave my country, and to begin to live a wandering life,”

we could not have wondered; but he did not talk in that fashion. He was commanded to go and we read, "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him."

**So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him** God spoke (Ge 12:1 "Now the LORD said to Abram") and "Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him." God commanded, SO Abram obeyed. O, to have such a heart that leads to continual obedience to the Lord! God grant it to us all in Jesus' Name. Amen

Note that all Abram could base his decision to leave his home was the promises of God (the Word of Truth) and yet he immediately obeyed and went forth just as Jehovah had commanded. God called and Abram obeyed in faith. Remember that God's commandments always come "pre-packaged" with His enablements! "When God calls us to Himself, He always supplies the grace we need to obey His call." (Cole) On one hand, we must still make a personal choice just as Abram did, but God's grace enables us to walk out in faith based on His Word of Truth and strengthened by His Spirit. How the Holy Spirit supernaturally worked in Abram's life is uncertain, but I have no doubt that the Spirit was active in giving Abram the desire and the power to obey God. "Abram believed what God said and acted on it. And, of course, God is always faithful to His Word of promise to those who believe and obey Him." (Cole)

**The only way you can follow God's call is by taking God at His Word.**

- Steven Cole

I might add a thought to Pastor Cole's good word above -- ultimately the only way to follow God's call is by relying wholly on His grace and the provision of His Spirit.

The writer of Hebrews has several passages that provide wonderful commentary on Genesis 12:4...

Now **faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it (faith) the men of old gained approval. (Hebrews 11:1-2)

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

**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. (Hebrews 11:8+)

**Steven Cole on he was called** - In the New Testament, the word "**call**" or "**calling**" is most often used of God's call to salvation. It is not a helpful hint for happier living. It is the authoritative command of God. When Jesus began to preach the gospel, Mark 1:15 sums up His message: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." It was the word of the King **calling** rebellious subjects to quit their rebellion and bow before His rightful sovereignty....While God may not ask you or me literally to leave our country or our families, He does call us to separate ourselves from all that would hinder our complete commitment to Him. The word "holy" comes from a word meaning to be separate or set apart. To be holy is to be separate from sin and set apart unto God. The core of holiness, or separation, is not outward, but inward. We must break from our culture's sinful ways of thinking. We must become 4 biblical thinkers who are able to evaluate our culture by the standard of God's Word. ([ref](#))

Abram trusted the promises of God and acted on them. He didn't look at his difficulties, but at the omnipotent King, "for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:10).

Faith is not believing in spite of evidence, that's superstition.

Faith is obeying God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences.

**Notice the vital association of faith and obedience.** Stated another way one could say that Abram demonstrated his faith by his obedience. Our soul is saved solely by faith, but faith that is genuine will obey. Wiersbe adds that ".This does not mean that sinners are saved by faith plus works, because Scripture declares that sinners are saved by faith alone (John 3:16–18; Eph. 2:8–9). Dr. H.A. Ironside, longtime pastor of Chicago's Moody Church, was told by a lady that she expected to get to heaven by faith plus her good works. "It's like rowing a boat," she explained. "It takes two oars to row a boat; otherwise you go around in a circle." Dr. Ironside replied, "That's a good illustration except for one thing: I'm not going to heaven in a rowboat!" The faith that saves is the faith that proves itself in good works (Eph. 2:8–10; Titus 2:14; 3:8, 14). Abraham was saved by faith (Heb. 11:8; Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1–5), but his faith was made evident by his obedience (James 2:21–24)." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

**Calvin** - "Faith alone saves, but faith that saves is not alone."

**Moody** - It is to him that worketh not, but believeth. We work because we are saved; we don't work to be saved. We work from the

cross but not towards it.

**Steven Cole** - One of the battles currently being waged in evangelical circles concerns the nature of saving faith. On the one hand are those who claim that if a person professes to believe in Christ as Savior, he is saved. There does not need to be any (or at least very little) confirming evidence in his life that his faith was genuine. According to this view, he could later become an atheist, but if he had previously professed faith in Christ, he is eternally saved. The other side argues that we are saved by faith alone, but that such faith, if it is genuine, inevitably produces a life of growth in godliness. If a person professes to believe, but there is scant evidence in his life, his faith is not genuine. True saving faith produces good works. I believe that this is the clear teaching of Scripture. The debate is not inconsequential, since it concerns the heart of the gospel message. When doubts and fears flooded into his mind and heart, as surely they must have on many occasions, Abraham could quietly meet them with the answer, God will do for me all that He has promised, and more. He isn't out to rob me or ruin me but His promise & His heart is to bless me (Ge 12:1-3). Do I really believe this truth about God even when I'm in the furnace of affliction & don't feel like He's looking or listening. Waiting is always one of the most difficult tests He puts His faithful ones through....Since eternity is riding on the matter, it's crucial to understand what true biblical faith is. I often shudder at Jesus' words, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" (Matt. 7:21-23.) How awful to hear those words! Here are people who not only claimed to be believers, they served the Lord. Even more, they performed works of power in His name. They thought they knew Him. But He didn't know them. To make sure we don't hear those words when we stand before the Lord, we must be clear on what the Bible teaches about saving faith, namely, that saving faith is obedient faith. ([Obedient Faith](#))

So we can say that a truly spiritual person pleases God by trusting Him (Heb 11:6), and that he loves God by obeying Him. We never can experience the delights of God's love until all on the altar we lay; for the favor He shows and the joy He bestows are for them who will trust and obey. There is no other way to be happy (blessed) in Jesus but to trust and obey. Abraham experienced this truth. His obedience to God was possible because of his faith in God. His was a life of learning to trust and obey. (Heb 11:8<sup>+</sup>)

**And Lot went with him** - This is almost like an addendum and it is intriguing because Abram was told to "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives" (Ge 12:1) and clearly Lot was his relative! Does this represent disobedience on Abram's part? Was his faith weak at this time? Possibly. We cannot state with certainty but we can say that it was not until Genesis 15:6 that he believed God and God accounted it to him as righteousness (salvation). In any event Abram clearly had faith in what Jehovah had spoken to him for Ge 12:4 says "Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him."

Although Lot subsequently took a "wrong turn" in Canaan, his story ended well because Peter gives the end result...

(God) condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; and if (or since = because He did rescue Him) He rescued righteous Lot (Ed: How did Lot become "righteous" by hearing and believing the Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham - Gal 3:8<sup>+</sup>), oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, (2 Peter 2:6-9<sup>+</sup>)

**Wiersbe** comments - 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.

**Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran** Age 75 (Sarai = 65). God told him He would make Abe a father of many nations. This text points out that age is not a barrier to the Gospel and that older individuals can receive and believe the Gospel that was preached to Abram (cf Gal 3:8<sup>+</sup>). One might question exactly when Abram was saved. Some might say it was in Genesis 12, but without question he was saved in Ge 15:6<sup>+</sup>. Whether in Genesis 12 or Genesis 15, those are simply measures in time, but God is outside of time and He chose Abram just as He chose you and I in Christ even "before the foundation of the world." (Eph 1:4<sup>+</sup>, cp Rev 13:8<sup>+</sup>). If Abram was in the range of age 75 when he became a believer in Messiah, then he subsequently walked with God for another 100 years (Ge 25:7)! What a life he must have experienced! And what a lesson his life of faith (both the ups and downs) has to teach us about how we too should walk by faith not by sight imitating the faith of Abram who was "looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Heb 11:10<sup>+</sup>) It is to be as true in our life as it was in the lives of patriarchs about which the writer of Hebrews declared

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. (Heb 11:16<sup>+</sup>)



**NET Note** - Terah was 70 years old when he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran (Gen 11:26). Terah was 205 when he died in Haran (Ge 11:32). Abram left Haran at the age of 75 after his father died. Abram was born when Terah was 130. Abram was not the firstborn—he is placed first in the list of three because of his importance. The same is true of the list in Gen 10:1 (Shem, Ham and Japheth). Ham was the youngest son (Ge 9:24). Japheth was the older brother of Shem (Ge 10:21), so the birth order of Noah's sons was Japheth, Shem, and Ham.

Notice that here we read **Abram...departed from Haran**, not that he departed from Ur of the Chaldeans. What is the implication of this observation? One might postulate that this is Abram's response not to the call to leave Ur of the Chaldeans, but that this represents a second call by God to go out. While that is a possibility, the evidence is not conclusive. There is another way to explain this passage. Note the NET translation below...

NET Genesis 12:4 So Abram left, just as the LORD had told him to do, and Lot went with him. (Now Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.) (Gen 12:4 NET)

The **NET Note** (somewhat technical) on the portion that is in parenthesis states "The disjunctive clause (note the pattern conjunction + subject + implied "to be" verb) is **parenthetical**, telling the age of Abram when he left Haran.)

If one accepts this interpretation, then one can still say that Abram went out from Ur of the Chaldeans, and was in Haran for undetermined length of time. On the other hand although Genesis 11:32 is separated from Genesis 12:1 by a chapter break, we know that those breaks are arbitrary. So reading the text without any chapter break (or bias that might create) we have "And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran. Now (When is "Now"? One could propose it was when his father died) the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country." This latter phrase "from your country" could support his place of origin as his original home in Ur and not Haran. On the other hand Ge 11:31 states that they "settled there" not that they "sojourned there." So it is possible Haran had become Abram's country ("your country" - Ge 12:1). Personally, I still favor that Abram had only one call to leave and that he obeyed that call, but there is certainly room for discussion. In either event the important truth is that God commanded and Abram obeyed! And as they say on the news "The rest is history!" or more accurately "The rest is His Story!," God's story of how He sovereignly chose Abram to be the father of all who would believe in the coming Messiah, the Redeemer of the world!

**Allen Ross** (with whom I tend to agree) writes that "The Bible is clear that the call of Abram occurred in Ur of the Chaldeans (Ge 15:7; Acts 7:3-4), but the sequence from Genesis 11 to 12 suggests that he received the call after the family moved to Haran. It does not help to attempt to locate a place named Ur near Haran, because the Bible clarifies that it was Ur of the Chaldeans, the great city of Ur near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. One would have to conclude that once again the style of the writer does not follow a strict chronological sequence. In fact, Genesis often will tidy up one part of the family before focusing on the chosen line. The chronological order should be understood with God's call coming to Abram in Ur before the family moved to Haran; the notes about the sons' marriages and the family's move would then be incidental to the overall emphasis on the call....With a call that promised an inheritance of land (Ge 12:1-3), the natural thought may have been to go to Haran. But in Haran, Terah died; and since no word of confirmation came to Abram (i.e., God had not yet shown him the place, Ge 12:1), he continued west looking for the Promised Land. Others, no doubt, were migrating westward, but Abram had a reason, a call. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 1: Genesis and Exodus)

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## Called From

Read: Genesis 12:1-9 | The Lord had said to Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you." —Genesis 12:1

One of the smartest people I know is a college friend who became a Christian while studying at a state university. He graduated with honors and went on to study at a respected seminary. He served a small church as pastor for several years and then accepted a call to another small church far from family and friends. After 12 years at that church, he sensed that the congregation needed new leadership, so he stepped down. He hadn't been offered a job at a bigger church or a teaching position at a college or seminary. In fact, he didn't even have another job. He just knew that God was leading him in a different direction, so he followed.

When we discussed it, my friend said, "A lot of people talk about being called to something, but I don't hear much about being called from something."

In many ways, my friend's obedience was like that of Israel's patriarch Abraham, who went out, not knowing where God was leading (Heb. 11:8-10). Difficulties like famine (Gen. 12:10), fear (vv.11-20), and family disputes (13:8) gave reason for doubt, but Abraham persevered and because of his faith God counted him as righteous (Gal. 3:6).

A life of obedience may not be easy, but it will be blessed (Luke 11:28). By Julie Ackerman Link [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC](#)



As Abraham went out,  
Not knowing where he was going;  
Now, Lord, keep me from doubt,  
To go the way You are showing.  
—Hess

**You don't need to know where you're going  
if you know God is leading.**

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**C H Spurgeon** - [The Obedience of Faith](#) - (As an aside - this is a great message if you are struggling with obedience to God).

Hebrews 11:8<sup>+</sup> 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.

THE part of the text to which I shall call your attention lies in these words, **"By faith...Abraham obeyed."** Obedience—what a blessing it would be if we were all trained to it by the Holy Spirit! How fully should we be restored if we were perfect in it! If all the world would obey the Lord, what a heaven on earth there would be! Perfect obedience to God would mean love among men, justice to all classes, and peace in every land. Our will brings envy, malice, war; but the Lord's will would bring us love, joy, rest, bliss. Obedience—let us pray for it for ourselves and others!

"Is there a heart that will not bend  
To thy divine control?  
Descend, O sovereign love, descend,  
And melt that stubborn soul! "

Surely, though we have had to mourn our disobedience with many tears and sighs, we now find joy in yielding ourselves as servants of the Lord: our deepest desire is to do the Lord's will in all things. Oh, for obedience!

It has been supposed by many ill-instructed people that the doctrine of justification by faith is opposed to the teaching of good works, or obedience. There is no truth in the supposition. We preach the obedience of faith. Faith is the fountain, the foundation, and the fosterer of obedience. Men obey not God till they believe him. We preach faith in order that men may be brought to obedience. To disbelieve is to disobey.

One of the first signs of practical obedience is found in the obedience of the mind, the understanding, and the heart; and this is expressed in believing the teaching of Christ, trusting to His work, and resting in His salvation. Faith is the morning star of obedience. If we would work the work of God, we must believe on Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent.

Brethren, we do not give a secondary place to obedience, as some suppose. We look upon the obedience of the heart to the will of God as salvation. The attainment of perfect obedience would mean perfect salvation. We regard sanctification, or obedience, as the great design for which the Saviour died (cp Heb 12:14<sup>+</sup>). He shed his blood that He might cleanse us from dead works, and purify unto Himself a people zealous for good works (Titus 2:14). It is for this that we were chosen: we are "elect unto holiness." (1 Peter 2:9<sup>+</sup>) We know nothing of election to continue in sin (Ed: cp "chosen....by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus." 1 Peter 1:1,2<sup>+</sup>). It is for this that we have been called: we are "called to be saints." (Romans 1:7KJV<sup>+</sup>, 1 Cor 1:2KJV<sup>+</sup>) Obedience is the grand object of the work of grace in the hearts of those who are chosen and called: they are to become obedient children, conformed to the image of the Elder Brother, with whom the Father is well pleased.

**The obedience that comes of faith is of a noble sort.** The obedience of a slave ranks very little higher than the obedience of a well-trained horse or dog, for it is tuned to the crack of the whip. Obedience which is not cheerfully rendered is not the **obedience of the heart**, and consequently is of little worth before God. If the man obeys because he has no opportunity of doing otherwise, and if, were he free, he would at once become a rebel—there is nothing in his obedience.

The obedience of faith springs from a principle within,  
and not from compulsion without.

It is sustained by the mind's soberest reasoning and the heart's warmest passion. The man reasons with himself that he ought to obey his Redeemer, his Father, his God; and, at the same time, the love of Christ constrains him so to do (2 Cor 5:14), and thus what argument suggests affection performs. A sense of great obligation, an apprehension of the fitness of obedience, and spiritual renewal of heart, work an obedience which becomes essential to the sanctified soul. Hence, it is not relaxed in the time of

temptation, nor destroyed in the hour of losses and sufferings. Life has no trial which can turn the gracious soul from its passion for obedience; and death itself doth but enable it to render an obedience which shall be as blissful as it will be complete. Yes, this is a chief ingredient of heaven—that we shall see the face of our Lord, and serve Him day and night in His temple. Meanwhile, the more fully we obey at this present, the nearer we shall be to His temple-gate. **May the Holy Spirit work in us, so that, by faith—like Abraham—we may obey!**

I preach to you, at this time, obedience—absolute obedience to the Lord God; but I preach the obedience of a child, not the obedience of a slave; the obedience of love, not of terror; the obedience of faith, not of dread. I shall urge you, as God shall help me, in order that you may come at this obedience, that you should seek after stronger faith—"For by faith Abraham obeyed."

**In every case where the father of the faithful obeyed, it was the result of his faith;  
and in every case in which you and I shall render true obedience, it will be the product of our faith.**

**Obedience, such as God can accept, never comes out of a heart which thinks God a liar; but is wrought in us by the Spirit of the Lord**, through our believing in the truth, and love, and grace of our God in Christ Jesus. If any of you are now disobedient, or have been so, the road to a better state of things is trust in God. You cannot hope to render obedience by the more forcing of conduct into a certain groove, or by a personal, unaided effort of the resolution. There is a free-grace road to obedience, and that is receiving, by faith, the Lord Jesus, who is the gift of God, and is made of God unto us sanctification. We accept the Lord Jesus by faith, and he teaches us obedience, and creates it in us. The more of faith in him you have, the more of obedience to him will you manifest. I was about to say that that obedience naturally flows out of faith, and I should not have spoken amiss, for as a man believeth so is he, and in proportion to the strength and purity of his faith in God, as he is revealed in Christ Jesus, will be the holy obedience of his life.

That our meditation may be profitable, we will first think a little of the kind of faith which produces obedience; and then, secondly, we will treat of the kind of obedience which faith produces; and then we will advance another step, and consider the kind of life which comes out of this faith and obedience. (**Read full sermon - [The Obedience of Faith](#)**)

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**Allen Ross in [The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - The Response of Faith: Those who truly believe forsake all else to become faithful worshipers** (Genesis 12:4-9).

Here, now, is the great demonstration of saving faith displayed. There are three main descriptions I should like to focus on for a few minutes.

**The true believer follows Him obediently.**

He got out. There was not wavering like Lot in Sodom; there was no trial period, no turning back, no retaining lands and positions in case it did not work out. Abram turned his back on idolatry and the pagan world and followed God's call to a totally new beginning. In fact, even in burial there was no going back, as the Semitic culture would believe that the dead would be gathered to their ancestors. Rather, when Abraham bought the Cave of Machpelah to bury Sarah, he was saying here is where they will be gathered.

A good way to measure commitment is to ask what it cost the person to follow the LORD. Or, to put it another way, if it all turned out to be false, what had Abram lost? Well, the answer is, everything. What about our commitments today? If it all turned out to be wrong, what have we invested, what have we lost to follow Christ? When I was in Russia, in the eastern countries, it was very convicting to find pockets of Christians--doctors, teachers, scientists--who had lost their posts because of commitment of Christ. Here was no easy-believism.

But Christians continue with this type of faith in their walk with the LORD. That is the way of true faith. A number of years ago there was a college student who wanted to go to Seminary. He applied, and was turned down flat for his grades. And they were terrible. I thought I had heard the end of the matter, but in August Brad called me up. I asked him what he was doing; he said, "I'm here." He was so absolutely convinced God called him to Seminary he sold out and moved. He said he would do what it took to get in, and would keep applying. Unknown to him, his father had written a letter on his behalf. His father was not a believer, but was the president of a major university on the west coast. He said he had so hindered Brad in his faith that he had been his worst nightmare for four years, and that was probably the reason for the grades. The seminary took another look. Brad was admitted, went on to graduate, and is out there serving the LORD. That is the kind of faith that God desires, faith that will take the risk, faith that follows obediently.

**There are two things about Abram's faith I would like you to see.**

1. **He made disciples in Haran.** The text says that he brought "the souls he made in Haran." The expression is very unusual. It cannot refer to slaves, and certainly not children--they didn't have any. The Jewish commentators all confirm that the expression refers to making disciples, proselytes. Apparently Abram had proclaimed his faith in Haran, had spoken of Yahweh, the one true God. And people came with him. Not only had he left; he was being a blessing.

2. **He was placed in the most needy location.** The text says he came down into the land as far as Shechem, to the "Oaks of Moreh." "Moreh" means "the teacher"; and we know that Canaanite shrines were usually in clumps of trees, places of fertility. This was a Canaanite shrine; may I suggest, a Canaanite seminary? The next line tells us, "Now the Canaanite was at that time dwelling in the land." So God calls Abram to be a blessing in the midst of the most wicked religious society on earth. It is a little like God's planting a Church in Corinth; the question then would be, Who will influence whom? Abram did better than the Corinthian believers.

So the first evidence of saving faith is that the believer follows God obediently. He may falter, doubt, wonder, even stray--but follow no other way. To whom can we go, for He has the words of eternal life. ([Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#))

**Genesis 12:5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan**

- the person: Ge 14:14,21 \*marg: Ge 46:5-26
- in : Ge 11:31
- and into: Ge 10:19 Ac 7:4 Heb 11:8,9
- Canaan: So called from Canaan the son of Ham, lies between the Mediterranean sea on the west, the wilderness of Paran, Idumea, and Egypt on the south, the mountains of Arabia on the east, and the mountains of Lebanon and Phoenicia on the north. Its length, from Dan to Beersheba, is about 200 miles, and its breadth, from the Mediterranean sea to its eastern borders, about 90.
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:4-9](#) - Obedient Faith by Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross
- [Map of Abram in Canaan and Migration to Egypt](#)

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**All their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran**(see map above) - Clearly God's good hand of blessing was upon Abram (see [The Hand of the Lord](#)) as indicated by these material possessions which included slaves.

**Spurgeon** - Fierce and powerful nations possessed the country; it did not seem a very likely place to be the heritage of a peace-loving man like Abraham. God does not always fulfill his promises to his people at once; else, where would be the room for faith? This life of ours is to be a life of faith, and it will be well rewarded in the end. Abraham had not a foot of land to call his own, except that cave of Machpelah which he bought of the sons of Heth for a burying-place for his beloved Sarah.

**Spurgeon on set out for the land of Canaan...came to the land of Canaan** - It is not enough to set out, we must persevere to the end. How many there are who set out to go to Canaan, but unto Canaan they come not! Some are stopped by the first depression of spirits that they meet with; like Pliable, they run home with the mud of Despond on their boots. Others turn aside to Self-righteousness. They follow the directions of Mr Worldly Wiseman and resort to Dr. Legality or Mr Civility, and Sinai falls upon them and crushes them. Some turn to the right hand with Hypocrisy, thinking that to pretend to be holy will be as good as being so. Others go on the left hand to Formality, imagining that sacraments and outward rites will be as effectual as inward purity and the work of the Spirit in their hearts. Many fall down the silver mine where Demas broke his neck. Hundreds get into Despair's castle and leave their bones there, because they will not trust Christ and so obtain eternal life. Some go far apparently, but, like Ignorance, they never go really and, when they come to the river, they perish at the very last. Some, like Turn-away, become apostates and are dragged away by the back door to hell, after all their professions. Some are frightened by the lions, others are tempted by By-path Meadow. Some would be saved, but must make a fortune. Many would be saved, but cannot bear to be laughed at. Some would trust Christ, but cannot endure his cross. Many would wear the crown, but cannot bear the labour by which they must attain to it. Ah, sons of men, you will turn aside to Madam Wanton and to Madam Bubble; you will be bewitched, but the beauties of the glorious Saviour, the lasting joys, the real happiness which he has to give, these are too high for you; they are above you and you reach not after them, or if you seek them for a while, 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire' (2

Peter 2:22+).’ ([Genesis 12:5 Effectual Calling-Illustrated by the Call of Abraham](#))

**Comment:** Abram's response recalls the doctrine of the [perseverance of the saints](#) as taught in the NT, e.g., in Hebrews 3:6+ and Hebrews 3:14+ (cp Matthew 24:13+).

**Daily Walk:** Joseph Chamberlain was a famous British statesman (1836–1914). In his younger years, he taught Sunday school in Birmingham. His favorite verse of Scripture was a sentence from [Ge 12:5]. It was a motto well-suited to a man of his determination and iron will. It also gave him a biblical basis for citing two qualifications for success in life. One is to have the right destination —“They went forth to go to the land of Canaan.” The second is to keep going after we have started—“into the land of Canaan they came.”

**Wiersbe** has a practical note on the significance of “Canaan” to us today - 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 (**ED: AND DAILY FIGHTING THE "CANAAINITES!"**). God has appointed a “Canaan” for each of His children (Eph. 2:10+), and it is obtained only by faith (**ED: AND THIS FAITH IS SHOWN EFFECTURAL BY ONE'S OBEDIENCE AND THUS EFFICACIOUS IN LAYING HOLD OF THE PROMISES. COROLLARY - DON'T EXPECT DIVINE BLESSINGS IF YOU ARE BEING DISOBEDIENT!**). Claiming your inheritance involves tests and temptations, challenges and battles, but God is able to see you through (Phil. 1:6+, **ED: Phil 2:13NLT+**). ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

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### Alan Carr - Abram's Obedience (Ge 12:4-5)

It took a while, but Abraham finally came to the place of total obedience to the Lord. That is the same place He wishes to bring each of His children this evening, ⇒ 1 Sa 15:22-23.

#### A. Abram's Obedience Involved His Separation

The call of God had been for Abraham to separate from his relatives, and to follow God by faith, Gen. 12:1. Abraham was called upon to separate himself from everything that would hinder the progress of the walk of faith! (Note: The Lord's call is the same for His children this evening! Anything that prevents us from progressing as He would desire is a weight that must go, Heb. 12:1-2. Most of the time, you will not be called upon to sever ties with your family as was Abraham. However, if you decide to walk by faith, there will be times when they will not be sympathetic to what the Lord is leading you to do in your life, especially if they are lost. In times like those, the will of the Lord must be given the priority! ⇒ The words of Jesus in this matter - Matt. 10:32-39.

#### B. Abram's Obedience Involved His Substance

Ge 12:5 tells us that when Abraham left to follow the Lord, he took “all his substance.” In other words, when the Lord got Abraham, the Lord got everything he had! Abraham didn't leave anything behind for the world to use, but he took it all and went after God. You can gauge the level of a person's commitment to the Lord by how much of that person's “stuff” has been dedicated to the Lord! We get hung up on the tithe. And, I believe that a person ought to tithe. But, what you do with the other 90% is just as important to the Lord as what you do with His 10%. You see, God doesn't just want His part, He wants your part too! He gives us what He does so that we might use it for His glory and for His kingdom's work. That's why some folks don't ever have anything! They peel off a dollar for the Lord and spent the rest of the ten on themselves and the things of the world, God won't bless that! When He has you and your checkbook, He can bless you in ways you have never imagined. By the way, the way to get is to give, Luke 6:38; Mal. 3:10+. That is not the motive for giving to the Lord and in His name, but it is a benefit! How much of your stuff does the Lord have? Or, do you have “your pile” and “God's pile”? If you do, I'll guarantee you that your pile is bigger! You had better be careful, He might blow on your pile. If He ever does, there won't be anything left, Hag. 1:5-11. By the way, if you have a problem with your tithes and offerings, you really don't have a problem with your tithes and offerings. You have a problem with your heart! Of course, this thing is bigger than just God wanting our money. He wants all of our stuff to be dedicated to Him. He might want to use your house or your car. He just wants you to surrender all to Him so He can do with it what He will!)

#### C. Abram's Obedience Involved His Surrender

The Bible tells us that Abraham did “as the Lord had spoken to him.” Abraham learned early on that the secret to pleasing God is simply doing what He says, to the letter! Even though the Lord's call upon his life would be difficult, it was the only course of action that made sense. You see, faith builds no barriers! It simply does what it is told and trusts God to take care of the rest! As we progress on our own pilgrimage, the sooner we learn that lesson the better! The only way to enjoy the Christian life to the full is to come to the place of total surrender, where your everything is on the altar, Ro 12:1-2. You might think, as you read the life of Abraham, that God wanted Abraham's stuff. Friend, God didn't need Abraham's stuff and He isn't interested in your stuff either! All God ever wanted from Abraham was Abraham! That's what it all was all about. Everything this man endured was about getting him on the altar. That's where the Lord wants us too! ([Abram's Commitment to a Life of Faith](#))

**Genesis 12:6** Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land

- passed (KJV): Heb 11:9
- [Shechem](#) (KJV): Ge 33:18 34:2 35:4 Jos 20:7 24:32 Jud 9:1 1Ki 12:1, Shechem, Joh 4:5, Sychar, Ac 7:16, Sychem
- plain (KJV): The word rendered "plain" should be rendered "oak," or according to Celsius, the "turpentine-tree."
- Moreh (KJV): De 11:30 Jud 7:1
- Canaanite (KJV): Ge 10:15,18,19 13:7 15:18-21
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:4-9](#) - Obedient Faith by Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross
- [Map of Migration of Abram from Ur to Haran to Canaan](#)
- [Map of Abram in Canaan and Migration to Egypt](#)

## A MAJOR OBSTACLE IN THE LIFE OF FAITH THE CANAANITES IN THE LAND

**Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh** (Lit., the tree of Moreh): Between [Mt Ebal](#) and [Mt Gerizim](#), near present-day [Nablus](#).

**Shechem** ([Wikipedia](#)) means "shoulder, back." 1. District and city in the hill country of Ephraim in north central Palestine. The first capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, the city was built mainly on the slope, or shoulder, of Mount Ebal. Situated where main highways and ancient trade routes converged, Shechem was an important city long before the Israelites occupied Canaan. The city makes its earliest appearance in biblical history in connection with Abram's arrival in the land (Genesis 12:6-7 ). When Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, he settled down at Shechem and purchased land from the sons of Hamor (Genesis 33:18-19 ). In Genesis 33-34 , Shechem was the name of the city and also of the prince of the city. While Jacob was at Shechem, the unfortunate incident of Dinah occurred. Simeon and Levi, her full brothers, destroyed the city (Genesis 34:1 ). Later, the brothers of Joseph were herding Jacob's flock at Shechem when Joseph was sent to check on their welfare. Joseph was buried in the plot of ground that his father Jacob had purchased here (Joshua 24:32 ). As the Israelites conquered Canaan, they turned unexpectedly to Shechem. Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal and led the people in its building, renewing their commitment to the law of Moses (Joshua 8:30-35 ; compare Deuteronomy 27:12-13 ). Shechem lay in the tribal territory of Ephraim near their border with Manasseh (Joshua 17:7 ). It was a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7 ) and a Levitical city (Joshua 21:21 ). See Joshua 24:1-17 ). Gideon's son Abimelech fought the leaders of Shechem (Judges 8:31-9:49 ). ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**NET Note** on oak of **Moreh** - The Hebrew word Moreh (מוֹרֶה, moreh) means "teacher." It may well be that the place of this great oak tree was a Canaanite shrine where instruction took place.

**Allen Ross** - The Canaanites had shrines in groves of oak trees, and Moreh may have been one of their cult centers. (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Moreh** - Place name meaning, "instruction" or "archers." 1. Place where several important events in the lives of the patriarchs and the nation Israel occurred. An oak tree at the site is mentioned several times as being the focal point. Abraham's first encampment in the land of Canaan was at Moreh. There he built an altar after God had appeared to him and entered into covenant (Genesis 12:6-7 ). Jacob buried there the foreign gods his family had brought from Haran (Genesis 35:4). At Moreh God pronounced the blessing and curse on Israel regarding their keeping the commandments (Deuteronomy 11:26-30 ). Joshua set up a memorial stone under the oak as a reminder of the covenant made between God and the people (Joshua 24:26 ). ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#)) ([Another resource](#))

**Now the Canaanite was then in the land:** Don't miss the important truth in this parenthetical note. In spite of the obstacle of the presence of the Canaanites, Abram believed God's promise and built an altar to worship and proclaim his God (Ge 12:8), as a true descendant of Seth (Ge 4:26) and Noah (Ge 8:20).

**ISBE on the Canaanite "culture" (if you could call it that!)** - The religious beliefs and deities of Babylonia were superimposed upon those of the primitive Canaanite. The local Baal or "lord" of the soil made way for the "lord of heaven," the Sun-god of the Babylonians. The "**high-place**" (see high places = [bamah](#)) gradually became a temple built after a Babylonian fashion. The sacred stone, once the supreme object of Canaanitish worship, was transformed into a **Beth-el** or shrine of an indwelling god. The gods and goddesses of Babylonia migrated to Canaan; places received their names from Nebo or Nin-ip; Hadad became Amurru "the Amorite god"; Ishtar passed into Ashtoreth, and Asirtu, the female counterpart of Asir, the national god of Assyria, became Asherah, while her sanctuary, which in Assyria was a temple, was identified in Canaan with the old fetish of an upright stone or log. But human sacrifice, and more especially the sacrifice of the firstborn son, of which we find few traces in Babylonia, continued to be practiced with undiminished frequency until, as we learn from the excavations, the Israelite conquest brought about its suppression. The



human victim is also absent from the later sacrificial tariffs of Carthage and Marseilles, its place being taken in them by the ram. According to these tariffs the sacrifices and offerings were of two kinds, the *zau'at* or sin offering and the *shelem* or thank-offering. The sin offering was given wholly to the god; part of the thank-offering would be taken by the offerer. Birds which were not allowed as a sin offering might constitute a thank-offering. Besides the sacrifices, there were also offerings of corn, wine, fruit and oil. ([ISBE](#))

**Alan Carr** reminds us that "The Canaanites were a godless people, trapped in a system of religion that involved the worship of many gods. They practiced human sacrifice, various fertility rites, and had no regard for morality and decency. Abram was headed into hostile territory, where no one would be sympathetic to his lifestyle or to his God. Yet, he was determined to follow God regardless of the opposition from darkness that he faced!" ([Abram's Commitment to a Life of Faith](#))

**THOUGHT - Dear separated, surrendered believer (does that describe you?).** If you live in the world, you, like Abram, are in a land inhabited by "**Canaanites**" who hate God and practice all manner of immoral behavior without fear of just retribution (cp Jesus' warnings Matt. 10:16-23+; John 15:20). "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Ti 3:12+) The problem is that their "*passing pleasures of sin*" (Heb 11:25+) can entice and lure even the most faithful believer into the deceitful trap of compromise and subsequent consequences (usually from the disciplining hand of the Lord in - Heb 12:5-11+). In fact believers have 3 "Canaanite" enemies - the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#)! This is why we must begin every day with dedication to the Lord (Ro 12:1-2+) manifest by confession, repentance, time in His Word (see [chart comparing filled with Word and Spirit](#)) and prayer. When we have eaten "the breakfast of champions" (so to speak), we can walk out into the "land of the Canaanites" and experience victory over the enemy because we are filled with (controlled by and empowered by) God's Spirit (Eph 5:18+, Gal 5:16+). The battle belongs to the Lord (2Chr 20:15+) and yet we still to fight (Note [paradoxical principle](#) of God's sovereignty/our responsibility), but not with natural power but supernatural power and then we can experience victory in Christ and His empowering Spirit. A life of total commitment demands that Spirit empowered believers stand faithfully in the face of all opposition (1 Cor. 15:58+; Eph. 6:10-18+ - **Stand!**)

#### Related Resources on Canaanites:

- Nave's Topical Bible - [Canaanites](#)
- American Tract Society [Canaanites](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Canaan; Canaanites](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Canaanites](#)
- Wikipedia [Ancient Canaanite Religion](#)
- [Ancient Map of Canaan](#)
- [Map of Migration of Abram from Ur to Haran to Canaan](#)
- [Map of Abram in Canaan and Migration to Egypt](#)

**Spurgeon** - Though the land was given to the patriarch by promise, yet he did not actually possess a single foot of it. Unbelief would have reckoned this to be a very shadowy inheritance; but faith is the substance of things hoped for (Heb 11:1+), and makes us content to wait (cp Heb 11:9, 10+). The Canaanite is still in the land, yet we rightly reckon that all things are ours (cp Ro 8:17, 18+).

**Genesis 12:7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him

- appeared (KJV): Ge 17:1 18:1 32:30
- To your: Ge 13:15 Ge 17:3,8 26:3 28:13 Ex 33:1 Nu 32:11 Dr 1:8 6:10 30:20 Ps 105:9-12 Ro 9:8 Ga 3:16 4:28
- builded (KJV): Ge 12:8 8:20 13:4,18 26:25 33:20 Heb 11:13
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:4-9](#) - Obedient Faith by Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross
- [Map of Migration of Abram from Ur to Haran to Canaan](#)
- [Map of Abram in Canaan and Migration to Egypt](#)

## THE LAND PROMISED TO ABRAM'S DESCENDANTS

**The LORD appeared to Abram:** This is the second "appearance" of God to Abram for as Stephen declared "The God of glory



appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, **before** he lived in Haran." (Acts 7:2). The term for this divine appearance is [theophany](#). The actual form of Jehovah's appearance is not stated. Other appearances of the LORD to Abram are described in Ge 17:1 (the form of the appearance is not clear) and Genesis 18:1-2 where the appearance was in the form of a man. While we cannot be dogmatic Genesis 18 was likely a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (see [Angel of the LORD](#)). Finally in Ge 22:11 we encounter an appearance of the [Angel of the LORD](#).

**Spurgeon** - Thus, you see, Abraham began his separated life with a blessing from the Lord his God. Further on in his history he received a still larger blessing when he returned from his victory over the kings.

**And said, "To your descendants I will give this land."** - In Genesis 12:1 the land was mentioned in the statement that Abram was to go "To the land which I will show you." As noted above, Abram himself did not take possession of the promised land.

**Give (nathan)** appears >1800 times in the Bible, with many of the uses related to God's giving the land of Palestine to Israel. Genesis 12:7 is the first passage describing the giving of the land to Abraham and his descendants. This truth is repeated in approximately 150 OT passages from the days of the patriarchs to the return from the exile (Neh 9:35,36 "the land which You gave to our fathers") and even incorporated in the Decalogue (Ex 20:12 = "days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you."). Note that God's promise to give Abram the land of Canaan was unconditional. Abram had already met the only condition by exercising faith, the genuineness of which was manifest by his obedience to depart from his homeland in Ur to go to Canaan just as God had commanded him. It is notable that when Abram died his only real estate was a cave he had bought for his family's burials (Ge 23:17-20).

God's Promise of the Land to Abraham and his descendants is repeated many times

Gen 13:15 for all **the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.**

Gen 17:8 "And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, **the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession;** and I will be their God."

Gen 26:3 (**To Isaac**) "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants **I will give all these lands,** and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.

Gen 28:13 (**To Jacob**) And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; **the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.**

Ex 33:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to **the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, To your descendants I will give it.**

Dt 1:8 See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess **the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.**

Dt 6:10 "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into **the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,** to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,

Dt 30:20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in **the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."**

Ezek 36:28+ "And **you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers** so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

**You** is Israel. The church is not in view in this context. God is serious about this promise and repeats it many times in Ezekiel's prophecy = Ezek 11:17, 28:25, 34:13, 36:10, 39:27.

**The land** - This phrase in the OT most often refers to the [Promised Land](#) of Canaan (but always examine the context), the land promised by [Jehovah](#) to Abraham in an unconditional, immutable, unbreakable covenant. Some today teach that God is "finished with Israel", but Ezekiel argues strongly against this viewpoint. The miraculous creation of the nation of Israel in May, 1948 after almost 2000 years of having no homeland should be strong evidence to every skeptic that **God is clearly not finished with Israel**

**Warren Wiersbe** observes that "God gave **the land of Israel** to the Jews as a part of the Abrahamic Covenant (Ge 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:7-21). That settled their **ownership** of the land, but their **possession** and enjoyment of the land depended on their **faith** and **obedience** (Lev. 26). The Christian life is similar. We **enter** God's family by trusting Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9), but we **enjoy** God's

family by believing His promises and **obeying** His will (2 Cor. 6:18-7:1). Disobedient children have to be chastened (Hebrews 12:5-11), and God often had to chasten the people of Israel because of their rebellion and disobedience (**Ed comment:** Not all of Israel in the OT were God's true children in the sense that He was their Father [cp Jn 1:11, 12, 13]. Only a [remnant](#) of all of Israel were genuine believers in the Messiah.) ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

Ezek 37:25+ "And **they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant** in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever.

**Comment:** God could not have been much clearer - How could this passage be interpreted as anything but literal? Israel will live on it. Period. God is not finished with the nation of Israel (cp May, 1948 when a nation is born after almost 2000 years absence!). Israel will receive the promise of the land. The promises given to "Jacob My servant" will not be given to the church. See discussion of the false teaching of [replacement theology](#).

Ezekiel 48:29 "This is **the land** which you shall divide by lot to the tribes of Israel for an **inheritance**, and these are their several portions," declares the Lord GOD.

**Comment:** Given the fact that Ezekiel 40-48 describes the time of the [Millennium](#) (if the Bible is read and interpreted literally), it is notable that THE LAND is not specified as being divided by lot to the CHURCH. The land promise here in Ge 12:7 are for national (redeemed [remnant](#)) Israel, not the Church.

**Descendants** (Seed, offspring)([02233](#))([zera](#)) is used in 204 verses in the OT and is translated seed for planting (48x) but most often is translated as descendants(105) or offspring (38), as in the present context.

**So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him:** what is Abe's heart response to a new revelation from God? He carries out an act of worship expressing his gratitude at such a gift. God doesn't force us to worship & true worship requires a genuinely grateful spirit.

**John Newton** - Abraham erected an altar. This shows:

- (i) **his faith**—in the great sacrifice, the virtue of which was set forth by all the sacrifices before under the law.
- (ii) **his gratitude.** When God had appeared to him and given him such promises, immediately he raises an altar. Who is there amongst you, upon whom the Lord has lately shone? Has he answered your prayers, prevented your fears, taken off your sackcloth and girded you with gladness? O say, the vows of God are upon me [Psalm 56:12]. O may your heart be as an altar upon which the sacrifice of praise is continually offered [Hebrews 13:15].
- (iii) **his profession.** He was among a people that knew not God, but he was not so affected by the custom of the country as to be ashamed or afraid to have it publicly known that he worshipped the Lord. Everything that looks like ostentation should be avoided, but if the Lord has called us out of darkness into light, we should not be unwilling to be marked and known by our neighbours and friends as those who have given themselves to him.

#### Cross References on altars in Genesis:

Gen 8:20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Gen 12:8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

Gen 13:4 to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Gen 13:18 Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Gen 26:25 So he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Gen 33:20 Then he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

Genesis 35:7 He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself

to him when he fled from his brother.

**John Newton** - God's promises still leave room for the exercise of faith. So Abraham found it. The land which he saw was for his seed, which was cause of rejoicing, but attended with two abatements.

(i) Though it was given to his seed, he himself had no possession, but was a sojourner in tents all his days. Yet he was not disappointed as to his own best interests; he was taught to consider this earthly inheritance as a type of a better [one], that is, an heavenly (Hebrews 11:10, 13–14). So the promises run to believers: all things are theirs; they shall inherit the earth. In the meanwhile many of them are destitute and in want of all things. Here sense is ready to complain, but faith takes up the best meaning. All things are mine so far as the Lord sees good, and I shall have his blessing with them, but my great inheritance is on high, therefore none of these things move me.

(ii) His chief [abatement] was that the promise was made to his seed, when as yet he had no child and little prospect of any, for his wife was barren and he himself advancing in years. This difficulty grew harder every day as he and his wife grew older, and though his faith surmounted it, yet it was not without conflicts, as we may gather from 15:2. In this instance the faith of Abraham is especially commended to our imitation (Romans 4:18–22). Great things believers expect in their walk with God: peace, joy, strength and sweet communion. Nor shall they be disappointed if they believe. But when they are acquainted with the evil of their own hearts and the temptations belonging to their warfare, they are in much the same situation as Abraham, who could never have had a comfortable hope of a child, if he had given way to the reasonings of flesh and blood. He waited twenty-five years and when at last it seemed impossible, then his desire was fulfilled.

Though the Lord was always with Abraham to protect and bless him, he manifested himself or appeared to him but now and then. Thus with respect to all necessary supplies of grace and strength, and a liberty to seek his direction and blessing, he is ever with his people—but there is a gracious presence, the light of his countenance, which they do not always enjoy. In this sense he visits them but does not abide, as the sun gives us every day for necessary uses, but does not always shine upon us. When it does, it casts an inimitable glory and gilds every object. Be thankful for the light and for eyes to behold it, but pray likewise for the breaking forth of the Sun of righteousness. If you have it, rejoice in it, yet expect a change. There are reasons both on the Lord's part and on ours why he does not always shine. But in yonder happy world we shall have unclouded skies.

**Genesis 12:8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD**

- **of Bethel:** Ge 28:19 35:3,15,16 Jos 8:17 18:22 Ne 11:31
- **Ai:** Jos 7:2 8:3, Ai, Ne 11:31, Aija, Isa 10:28, Aiath
- **called:** Ge 4:26 13:4 21:33 Ps 116:4 Joe 2:32 Ac 2:21 Ro 10:12-14 1Co 1:2
- **[Genesis 12 Resources](#)** - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- **[Genesis 12:4-9](#)** - Obedient Faith by Steven Cole
- **[Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#)** - Allen Ross
- **[Map of Migration of Abram from Ur to Haran to Canaan](#)**
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**Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel:**[\(See Map\)](#) Bethel [house of God] one of the sacred places of Canaan (Ge 28:1-22 35:7). It was at this place that Jeroboam chose to practice his [syncretistic](#)/idolatrous worship (1 Ki 12:28-13:6), whereupon God's judgment decreed the destruction of Bethel despite its sacred memories (1 Ki 13:1-5 2Ki 23:15-17 Amos 3:14,15). Although God must act ultimately in judgment against that which is contrary to His character, whatever its former associations, such action is accompanied by the sorrow of His divine compassion (Ex 34:6,7).

**Alan Carr** - Abram pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai. The word Bethel means "House of God." It was at Bethel that the patriarch Jacob would later meet God one lonely night, Gen. 28. The name Ai means "A Heap of Ruins". It was here that Israel would later learn a valuable lesson about faith, obedience and the destructive power of sin. I find it interesting that as Abraham journeyed, he seems to be moving away from "A Heap of Ruins" toward the "House of God". This symbolizes the fact that Abraham was moving away from what he used to be, toward that which God desired for him to be! That's what happens when a person sets out to walk with the Lord! When we determine that we will walk in the paths of the Lord, He will begin the process of transforming this "Heap of Ruins" that is our life before Him, and He will transform us into a "House of God" for His glory, 1 Cor. 6:19+. That's why He says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels", 2 Cor. 4:7+. He takes us like He finds us and He changes us into His image, 2 Cor. 5:17+; 1 Cor. 15:49+!

**Ai in [Holman Bible Dictionary](#)** - (ay' i) a city located two miles from Bethel, was the site where Abram built an altar, and Joshua and Achan suffered ruin. Ai is also spelled Aija, Aiath, and Hai. Ai means "ruin" (or possibly "heap") in the Hebrew language. The city

was almost the ruin of Joshua's leadership (Joshua 7:1-9 ); it was the ruin of Achan and his family (Joshua 7:16-26 ); and it suffered complete ruin (Joshua 8:1-29 ). Several hundred years before Joshua, Abram built an altar on a hill just west of Ai which was also near Bethel (Genesis 12:8 ). He then returned to the location after visiting Egypt (Genesis 13:3 ). The prophets later referred to Ai as a symbol of the power of God who provided victory for his obedient people. Isaiah noted the Assyrian army marching by Ai on his way to Jerusalem, but promised God would stop their progress (Isaiah 10:28 ). Jeremiah used the ruin of Ai as a warning to the Ammonites, who had occupied Israel's territory (Jeremiah 49:3 ). Residents of Bethel and Ai returned from Exile with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:28 ).(see also [Wikipedia](#))

**And pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east - Wiersbe** notes that "Wherever Abraham went in the land of Canaan, he was marked by his tent and his altar (Gen. 12:7–8; 13:3–4, 18). The tent marked him as a "stranger and pilgrim" who did not belong to this world (Heb. 11:9–16; 1 Peter 2:11), and the altar marked him as a citizen of heaven who worshiped the true and living God. He gave witness to all that he was separated from this world (the tent) and devoted to the Lord (the altar). Whenever Abraham abandoned his tent and his altar, he got into trouble." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

**Bethel** - (behth' uhl; house of God) **Bethel** was important in the Old Testament for both geographic and religious reasons. Because of its abundant springs, the area was fertile and attractive to settlements as early as 3200 B.C., and first supported a city around the time of Abraham. Today the village of Beitin rests on much of the ruins of Bethel. Located at the intersection of the main north-south road through the hill country and the main road from Jericho to the coastal plain, Bethel saw much domestic and international travel. Bethel became a prominent border town between tribes and the two kingdoms later. Religiously, Bethel served as a sanctuary during the times of the patriarchs, judges, and the divided kingdom, hence was second only to Jerusalem as a religious center. Entering Canaan, Abraham built an altar at Bethel, calling "upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 12:8 ), and returned here after his time in Egypt (Genesis 13:3 ). His grandson, Jacob, spent the night here on his way to Syria to find a wife. In a dream the Lord confirmed the Abrahamic covenant, and Jacob responded by renaming this locale which was previously called Luz, "Bethel" ("house of God"; Genesis 28:10-22 ). Probably the name "Bethel" is referred to but out of chronological sequence in the earlier Abraham passages. When he returned with his large family, Jacob came to Bethel again to hear the Lord's confirmation of the covenant and his name was changed to "Israel." Here again Jacob set up a stone monument (Genesis 35:1-16 ; Hosea 12:4-5 ). Extensive fortification of Bethel came after this patriarchal period. ([Click for complete entry on Bethel in Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**See also:**

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Bethel](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Bethel](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Bethel](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Bethel](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Bethel](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Bethel](#)

**And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD-** A second altar and prayer to God.

**Ross** - Luther translated this verb "preached"; he was not far off. God thus had a witness in the midst of the Canaanites, who were then in the land. In fact the mention of the great tree of Moreh (lit., "teacher") is significant in connection with this. The Canaanites had shrines in groves of oak trees, and Moreh may have been one of their cult centers." (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Alan Carr** applies this truth to believers - God's people should be known for their altars! Not just in church, but everywhere our path takes us. We should mark our days with prayer and with time spent in His presence. We must make worship a priority in our lives, John 4:23-24. When we build our altars and are not ashamed of the God we serve, it stands as a powerful witness to those around us! There is nothing wrong with telling people about the Lord, and we should all be vocal witnesses. But, when you get right down to it, if you have to tell someone that you are different, that you are a Christian, then something is wrong with the too! Our devotion to Him should make us stand out from the world around us! Notice that as he journeyed, Abraham and God enjoyed sweet communion and fellowship. God spoke to him and he worshiped the Lord. It seems that Abraham was determined to include God in his pilgrimage. Far too many people attempt to leave God out of their journey. That is a recipe for disaster! Whether you acknowledge Him or not, God is always there with you as you travel, Heb. 13:5. If you include Him in your life by listening to Him when He speaks and by worshiping Him as you travel, it makes the miles shorter and the trials easier to bear. ([Abram's Commitment](#))

**NET Note** on **called upon the name of the LORD** - The expression refers to worshiping the Lord through prayer and sacrifice

**Wenham** - To call on the name of the LORD" is used elsewhere in Genesis of the patriarchs Ge 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25, and it seems to be an umbrella phrase for worship, most obviously prayer and sacrifice. (Word Biblical Commentary)

This is the second use of the phrase **call upon the name of the LORD**.

Ge 4:26 And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began **to call upon the name of the LORD**.

Ge 13:3 And he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly; and there Abram **called on the name of the LORD**.

Ge 16:13 Then she (Hagar) **called the name of the LORD** who spoke to her, "Thou art a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"

Ge 21:33 And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he **called on the name of the LORD**, the Everlasting God. (See study of [El Olam: Everlasting God](#))

Genesis 26:25 So he (ISAAC) built an altar there and **called upon the name of the LORD**, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Exodus 34:5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him (**MOSES**) as he **called upon the name of the LORD**.

Psalms 116:4 Then I **called upon the name of the LORD**: "O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!"

Psalms 116:13 I shall lift up the cup of salvation And **call upon the name of the LORD**.

Psalms 116:17 To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And **call upon the name of the LORD**.

**Spurgeon** - The patriarch was careful to maintain the worship of God wherever he might be placed. Go where we may, let us not forget to render devotion and obedience to God.

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#### **Allen Ross - The true believer worships Him reverently.**

The second evidence of a living faith is true worship. Twice in this short passage we are told that Abram built an altar to the LORD. It need say no more. That tells us that he made a sacrifice to worship God. Everyone knew what altars and sacrifices meant; to make one to Yahweh set him apart.

There are three significant aspects to sacrificial worship that must not be missed:

1. **Surrender.** When the ancients brought the animal to the shrine, they were taught that this animal would represent them, would substitute for them, would atone for them. It was up to the worshiper, then, to kill the animal in the holy courtyard. He would identify with the animal by placing his hand on its head, and then slit the throat with the other. The animal would die "in his hand"--the priest catching the blood in a basin. The believing Israelite would know that that blood should have been his, that that carcass on the ground should have been his, for sinfulness brings the penalty of death. But God in His grace allowed a substitute, so that the true worshiper could walk away free. Thus it had always been. Adam and Eve never dreamed that God would deprive an animal of its life to clothe them; they snatched leaves from a tree, leaves that would grow back and not be missed. But God demanded life for life. So when a worshiper brought the sacrifice for atonement, it signified his complete surrender to God by faith; it being burnt on the altar signified God's complete acceptance of him by grace.

Fifty years later the Word of the LORD would come to Abraham again: Get you out of this land to a mountain which I will show you; and there offer to me your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac. My how he poured it on to display the cost of sacrifice. And Abram obeyed; he was willing to give back to God the dearest possession he had, what he considered the future, God's gift to him. But true worship is surrender, no holding back. And at times God will test us, to see if we truly are worshipers, willing to relinquish whatever He asks of us. Of course God did not take Isaac from him; he wanted to see if he would obey. Abram praised God there, saying the LORD will provide. And it is this idea that led Paul to expound on the theme of Genesis 22--If God the father did not spare his only Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all--how shall he not also give us all things?

Yes, when we come to worship we praise God that Jesus Christ gave his life a ransom for us. But we also come with the attitude of surrender, holding nothing back from God.

2. **Gratitude.** This praise is central to our sacrificial worship. Both testaments call for us to offer to God the sacrifice of praise. That is why we call it the Eucharist, the Great Thanksgiving. When Noah offered sacrifices after the Flood, he was expressing his profound gratitude that God spared him and his family from the judgment, and would begin a new program with him.

3. **Devotion.** Sacrificial offerings were gifts to God; and giving is the greatest evidence of gratitude. It cost Israel to worship, to bring the animals. But true faith did that, because it was devoted to serving the LORD who delivered from the bondage of the



world.

So true worship centered in the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ becomes the second evidence of saving faith. In John 4 Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman about true worship: ". . . they who worship will worship in spirit and in truth . . . the Father is seeking such to worship Him." This is why God is calling people. Today we are curious about meeting the greatest needs. What is God looking for? Great evangelists and missionaries? Some would agree to that. Great preachers and teachers? Probably. People who pray? Surely. But first and foremost, "The Father is seeking worshipers." If they are true worshipers, God will have them, and everything else. For they will have surrendered to Him, be filled with gratitude to Him, and devoted to Him.

So when we gather to worship in His name, we are reminded that it is sacrificial worship--it is centered around His sacrifice, but it calls for our sacrifice. And yet we walk away from the altar with greater confidence and brighter hope than ever before. Listen again to the words of Charles Wesley:

**Arise, my soul, arise, shake off thy guilty fears;**

The bleeding sacrifice, in my behalf appears;  
Before the throne my surety stands,  
My name is written on His hands.

Five bleeding wounds he bears, received on Calvary;  
They pour effectual prayers, they strongly plead for me:  
Forgive him, O, forgive, they cry,  
Nor let that ransomed sinner die.

My God is reconciled, His pardoning voice I hear;  
He owns me for His child, I can no longer fear;  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And Abba, Father, Abba, cry.

This is the confidence of saving faith, of the believer who has truly surrendered to God and come into his presence on the basis of the blood of the Lamb. Paul affirms, "He had made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5). That is appropriated by faith, and commemorated by the Eucharist. We worship at the altar; we go free.

**C. The true believer proclaims Him triumphantly.**

We are told that at the altar Abram "called upon the name of the LORD." I should like to rephrase this to catch what is actually going on: "And Abram made proclamation of Yahweh by name." The usage of the clause indicates that this is the meaning, especially the usage in Exodus 34:5ff., where the LORD is the subject, proclaiming "The name of the LORD": and what follows in His speech is a list of divine attributes--that is the "name" of the LORD.

Luther translated this line, "And Abram preached" in the name of the LORD. He is not too far off. When Abram made the sacrifice on the altar, he would stand there and proclaim who the LORD is and what He is like--that He is alive, He spoke, He calls people to follow Him, He is gracious and beneficent, offering blessing and fame, He is faithful to His own, but He will judge those who refuse the divine blessing. And of course this message would grow the longer Abram would walk with God.

Here was no simple talk, no message with weakened contents, no pagan musings. This was solid doctrinal discourse from divine revelation and personal experience. It would go with the sacrifice, so it spoke of commitment by faith. Thus, we have from the beginning the two parts of worship--the ministry of the sacrifice and the ministry of the Word. They belong together; the one explains the ritual, and the ritual gives life to the Word.

Did you note one amazing thing about Abram? God had promised to make his (Abram's) name great--but Abram proclaims the name of the LORD. It is in honoring God that fame comes, on earth and in heaven.

**Conclusion**

Here then is saving faith displayed: it follows God's word obediently, it worships Him reverently, and it proclaims His name triumphantly. Thus it is with us as well as with Abram.

The evidence of saving faith displayed here should bring us all great confidence in Christ: if during this lent your heart condemns you and you repent, that is evidence that you have the Spirit of God within, sealing you to redemption; If you desire to follow Him in righteousness, the Spirit is moving you and you are a child of God; if you can even call Him Father, you belong to Him; and if you worship Him sincerely, surrendering yourself to Him to His service in deep gratitude for what He has done, then you have evidence of saving faith, you have been born of God, and you are His, forever. But the reminder of what saving faith looks like should also inspire in us: greater obedience in following His Word, so that we like Abram can demonstrate our faith by our works; greater zeal in



proclaiming His name to a world that doesn't have a clue as to how to get to God; and greater adoration and devotion in worship, as we lose our pride, our self-sufficiency, our self-righteousness, at His altar. ([Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#))

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**Steven Cole** sums up Genesis 12:6-9 noting that "Two dominant themes emerge from verses 6-9, both of which illustrate the life of obedient faith. The first theme is **"Abram the pilgrim."** We see it in Ge 12:6, "Abram passed through the land." It is repeated in Ge 12:8, "he proceeded from there ... and pitched his tent." A tent is not a permanent dwelling. It is again seen in Ge 12:9, "Abram journeyed on ...." Here is a man on the move with no permanent roots, a man on a [pilgrimage](#). The second theme is **"Abram the worshiper and witness."** We see it in Ge 12:7, when he builds an altar to the Lord who had appeared unto him. In Ge 12:8 the impermanent "pitched his tent" is set against the more permanent, "built an altar." Abram the pilgrim, moving with his tent, didn't leave anything permanent for himself; but Abram the worshiper, after he had moved on, left behind altars unto the Lord, altars which bore witness to the pagan Canaanites in the land. Abram the worshiper bore witness to the strength behind his obedient faith by calling upon the name of the Lord (Ge 12:8) Let's apply these two themes:

#### **A. Obedient faith means living as pilgrims.**

A pilgrim is a person on a journey. He is not a settled resident. He's just passing through, on his way to a better place. God did not promise to give the land to Abram, but to his descendants. As John Calvin points out (Calvin's Commentaries [Baker], 1:353), this means that the land was not his ultimate aim, but rather, heaven. Abram was looking for that city whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). He had to trust that God would make good on His word even though Abram would not live to see it.

That's what we're called to as Christians. We're not of this world. We are not to love the things of this world. We're just passing through. Our destination is heaven. As Paul said, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). When we encounter any hardships, we have

to trust that God's promises about heaven are a sure thing. The pilgrim life means that we obey God whatever the hardships, knowing that our reward is in heaven. If we obey, like Abram, we'll have the Lord's presence and His promises of a glorious future, even if we never in our lifetime receive those promises.

The pilgrim life is often a difficult life, but obedient faith keeps on believing and obeying in spite of the hardships. Let me review some of the difficulties Abram faced in obeying God. He was 75 when he departed from Haran (12:4). While 75 in Abram's day was a lot younger than it is in our day, he wasn't a youth. He was married and had accumulated a number of possessions and servants (12:5). If moving with U-Haul is a hassle now, it was much harder then. It meant leaving a city and going across a desert to an uncertain location. There were bands of robbers and many other dangers along the way. He didn't know anything about Canaan before he set out. There wasn't an empty house waiting for them to move into.

No doubt Abram faced opposition from his family and friends. Knowing what we do of Sarah's personality, it's likely that she complained and even cried about the move. It's often hard on a wife to leave family and friends and to move to an unfamiliar place. Abram's older brother, Nahor, was living in Haran (Gen. 24:10; 27:43). I can hear him asking, "Now where is it you're going, Abram?" "I'm not sure. God told me to head for Canaan." "Canaan! Don't you know that there's nothing but desert between here and there? If you all don't die of thirst, the robbers will get you! Are you crazy?" "But God has told me to go, and I must obey Him. He will take care of us."

"But what more could you ask for than what you have here in Haran? You've got plenty of land, a nice house, servants, livestock, family, friends. What could you possibly gain by going to Canaan? And have you heard about the Canaanites? Those people sacrifice their children to their gods. They have sexual orgies at their temples. That's not a healthy environment to raise a family, Abram." But, in spite of all the hassles, the objections, the obstacles, and the risks, Abram obeyed God without excuses or protest. Obedient faith hears God's Word and acts on it.

So Abram obeyed God and lived happily ever after in a comfortable home in the land of Canaan. Is that what we read? No, we read that "the Canaanite was then in the land" (12:7). In verse 10 we read of something else in the land: a famine! What a welcome wagon: the Canaanites and a famine! Is that how God rewards those who hear His Word and act on it?

Yes, it often is. Moses obeyed God by going back to Egypt to lead His people out of captivity. What happened? Did Pharaoh say, "Have a good trip!"? Hardly. Did the Israelites say, "We'd love to follow you out into the wilderness, no matter how hard it is"? Not quite. Finally they left Egypt after God had inflicted the plagues on the Egyptians and parted the Red Sea and drowned Pharaoh's army. Did Israel then find a beautiful garden spot to camp? "They went three days in the wilderness and found no water" (Exod. 15:22). A slight problem for two million people in the Sinai peninsula!

Every time I've obeyed God by moving to a new situation, I've encountered trials. When Marla and I moved to Dallas so that I could finish seminary, we were caught in a blizzard in southern New Mexico on the way. We got there and couldn't find an apartment. We finally found one and were promptly mugged and I ended up with four stitches in my hand from the gun sight as it was ripped out of

my hand. Other moves haven't been that traumatic, but every time I've faced difficult trials in one form or another. Where did we ever get the idea that if we trust and obey God all our problems will evaporate? It's certainly not in the Bible. Quite often when we start obeying God we have troubles we never dreamed of having before.

From this time on, Abram lived as a nomad in a tent, not in a house. He never owned a single piece of Canaan, except for the burial plot he bought for his wife. The only thing of permanence he left behind were some altars. That points to our other theme:

### **B. Obedient faith means living as worshipers and witnesses.**

The tent shows him to be a pilgrim; the altar shows him to be a worshiper and a witness, claiming the land for God and His purposes. He built the first one at the oak of Moreh. It is possible that this was the spot of a heathen shrine. There Abram erected his altar

to the living God and bore witness to the godless Canaanites. When Abram "called on the name of the Lord" (12:8), it means that he openly acknowledged his trust in God as his strength and provider. He was raising the banner of the Lord's name in a pagan land, declaring Him to be the only true God.

No doubt the pagans would have watched Abram curiously and asked, "Where is the god you're sacrificing to? We don't see any statues or images." "No, my God is the living and true God, maker of heaven and earth. He cannot be represented by any manmade images." Perhaps Abram bore witness to them of how we cannot approach the holy God without the shedding of blood. Perhaps he told them of God's judgment during Noah's day and warned them of judgment if they did not turn to God.

As far as we know, the Canaanites for the most part, ignored Abram and continued in their wicked ways. In His great mercy, God spared those wicked people for 700 more years until Joshua's day. But Abram the worshiper had borne witness to them. God will use those who live as pilgrims and worshipers in the midst of a pagan land to bear witness for Him. Some will be saved; some will mock or ignore the message. But God will use the witness of His pilgrims at the day of judgment to vindicate His justice.

### **Conclusion**

A gray-haired old lady, long a member of her church, shook hands with the pastor after the Sunday morning service. "That was a wonderful sermon," she told him, "just wonderful. Everything you said applies to someone I know."

Obedient faith hears what God's Word is saying to me, and it responds with appropriate action. It begins with hearing the gospel, that salvation is not by my merit or good deeds, but rather that salvation is from the Lord. He has provided everything to reconcile sinners with Himself. Repenting of my pride and disobedience and abandoning all trust in myself, I cast myself completely upon Christ. Such saving faith results in a new life in which I obey God in response to His great love for me. Obedient faith goes on growing by searching God's Word and allowing it to search me. When God puts His finger on an area of sin, obedient faith responds, even if it is difficult or inconvenient. Obedient faith lets go of this evil world and begins a pilgrimage toward heaven. It worships God by calling upon Him and it bears witness of God to this pagan world. Wherever God is speaking to you, hear what He's saying and act on it. That's obedient faith. Without such faith, it is impossible to please the Lord. ([Genesis 12:4-9](#))

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### **Oswald Chambers - Worship Genesis 12:8.**

Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to Him as a love gift. Take time to meditate before God and offer the blessing back to Him in a deliberate act of worship. If you hoard a thing for yourself, it will turn into spiritual dry rot, as the manna did when it was hoarded. God will never let you hold a spiritual thing for yourself; it has to be given back to Him that He may make it a blessing to others. Bethel is the symbol of communion with God; Ai is the symbol of the world. Abraham pitched his tent between the two. The measure of the worth of our public activity for God is the private profound communion we have with Him. Rush is wrong every time; there is always plenty of time to worship God. Quiet days with God may be a snare. We have to pitch our tents where we shall always have quiet times with God, however noisy our times with the world may be. There are not three stages in spiritual life—worship, waiting and work. Some of us go in jumps like spiritual frogs, we jump from worship to waiting, and from waiting to work. God's idea is that the three should go together. They were always together in the life of Our Lord. He was unhasting and unresting. It is a discipline, we cannot get into it all at once.

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### **Time For A Change**

Read: Genesis 12:1-8 | There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. —Genesis 12:8

Many believers long to spend daily time with God, praying and reading His Word. Ironically, they are often distracted by a busy schedule. Frustrations mount as busyness seems to crowd out an opening in their schedule.

Oswald Chambers has wisely commented on the transforming power of even 5 minutes in the presence of the Lord. Indeed, even a short time spent in intercession and the Word still has great value: "It is not the thing on which we spend the most time that moulds us, but the thing that exerts the greatest power. Five minutes with God and His Word is worth more than all the rest of the day." Now, it may sound like Chambers has made an overstatement. Yet powerful results can come from even a short time of prayer, because God is powerful.

Sometimes our days are filled with busy demands that crowd out time spent in listening to and responding to God. But no matter where we are, any time taken to build our own spiritual "altar" to the Lord as Abram did (Gen. 12:8) opens the door to His transforming power. If you are having trouble establishing a time with God, you could start with just 5 minutes and see where it leads. Our God longs to meet with us and show His power in our lives. By Dennis Fisher (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, it's amazing to me that You, Almighty God, would want to spend time with me! Thank You. I stumble with my words at times but am in awe of You. Thank You that You want to hear from me.

Talk with God—He wants to hear your heart.

### Genesis 12:9 Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev

CSB Then Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev.

ESV And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

GWN Abram kept moving toward the Negev.

KJV And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

NET Abram continually journeyed by stages down to the Negev.

NAB Then Abram journeyed on by stages to the Negeb.

NIV Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

NJB Then Abram made his way stage by stage to the Negeb.

NLT Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

YLT And Abram journeyeth, going on and journeying towards the south.

- going on still (KJV): Heb. in going and journeying, Ge 13:3 24:62 Ps 105:13 Heb 11:13,14
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [See Map of Abram's Journey; More general map of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob](#)
- [Genesis 12:4-9](#) - Obedient Faith by Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:1-9 The Evidence of Saving Faith](#) - Allen Ross
- [Map of Migration of Abram from Ur to Haran to Canaan](#)
- [Map of Abram in Canaan and Migration to Egypt](#)

## ABRAM JOURNEYS SOUTH

**Ryrie** - Archaeological evidence of settlements in this area at this time supports the biblical record, which places the patriarch's residence there in the same period.

**Journeyed** (05265)(*nasa*) means to pull out or up, set out, to leave as on a journey. *Nasa* has the basic meaning of moving something out, pulling it out, taking it away; causing something to move out: Samson pulled out the gates (foundations included) and carried them away (Jdg. 16:3)

**NIDOTTE** says "Whether the original meaning of the verb is "to pull up tent pegs" or "to break up," the verb is most often used in contexts of setting out and traveling and then virtually always in *qal*."

**NET Note** adds that *nasa* "means "to journey"; more specifically it means to pull up the tent and move to another place. The construction here uses the preterite of this verb with its infinitive absolute to stress the activity of traveling. But it also adds the infinitive absolute of הָלַךְ (*halakh*) to stress that the traveling was continually going on. Thus "*Abram journeyed, going and*

*journeying*" becomes "*Abram continually journeyed by stages.*" Thus the NET Bible translates it "Abram continually journeyed by stages down to the Negev."

**Negev** (south) ([map](#)) (05045) is transliteration of the Hebrew word (negev) which means "south" which in turn is based on a word meaning "to be dry" a fitting name for this region ([region denoted in red](#); [see depiction of this arid region](#)). It is a geographical term which refers to a specific section of Palestine (Ge 13:1) located between Debir and the Arabian Desert. It is an arid region most of the year. Since this area was south of the larger part of Israel, the word also came to be used to denote that direction (cp. Ge 13:14 where "southward" = Negev -- also in Da 8:4,9; 11:5).

**Negev** - 95 verse all in the OT - I Gen. 12:9; 13:1,3,14; 20:1; 24:62; 28:14; Exod. 27:9; 36:23; 38:9; 40:24; Num. 13:17,22,29; 21:1; 33:40; 34:3f; 35:5; Deut. 1:7; 34:3; Jos. 10:40; 11:2,16; 12:8; 15:1ff,7f,19,21; 17:9f; 18:5,13ff,19; 19:34; Jdg. 1:9,15f; 21:19; 1 Sam. 14:5; 20:41; 27:10; 30:1,14; 2 Sam. 24:7; 1 Ki. 7:25,39; 1 Chr. 9:24; 26:15,17; 2 Chr. 4:4,10; 28:18; Ps. 126:4; Isa. 21:1; 30:6; Jer. 13:19; 17:26; 32:44; 33:13; Ezek. 20:46f; 21:4; 40:2; 46:9; 47:1,19; 48:10,16f,28,33; Dan. 8:4,9; 11:5f,9,11,14f,25,29,40; Obad. 1:19f; Zech. 7:7; 14:4,10

**Wiersbe** - The life of faith must never stand still; for if your feet are going, your faith is growing. Note the verbs used to describe Abraham's life: he departed (Ge 12:4), went forth (Ge 12:5), passed through (Ge 12:6), removed (Ge 12:8) and journeyed (Ge 12:9). God kept Abraham moving so that he would meet new challenges and be forced to trust God for new "grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Comfortable Christianity is opposite the life of faith, for "pilgrims and strangers" must face new circumstances if they are to gain new insights about themselves and their Lord. "Let us press on to maturity" is the challenge (Heb 6:1, NASB). How did Abraham know where to go and what to do? He "called upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 12:8). He prayed to the Lord, and the Lord helped him. Abraham's pagan neighbors saw that he had an altar but no idols. He had no "sacred places" but built his altar to God wherever he pitched his tent. You could trace Abraham's steps by the altars he left behind. He was not ashamed to worship God openly while his heathen neighbors watched him. In the pilgrim life, you must go "from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17) if you would go "from strength to strength" (Ps. 84:7). G.A. Studdert Kennedy said, "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; it is obeying in spite of consequence." "By faith Abraham ... obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). Faith without obedience is dead (James 2:14-26), and action without faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). God has wedded faith and obedience like the two sides of a coin; they go together. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Genesis 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land**

**Septuagint** - kai egeneto (3SAMI) limos epi tes ges kai katebe (3SAAI: basic mng. = step down; descend Mt27:40) Abram eis Aigupton paroikesai (AAN: paroikeo: living in a place without holding citizenship be an alien, live as a stranger, dwell temporarily Heb 11:9 Ru1:1) ekei (there, in that place) hoti enischusen (3SAAI: enischuo grew strong Ac9:19) ho limos (MSN noun: famine; , hunger: Mt24:7) epi tes ges

**Brenton's English of Septuagint** - And there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, because the famine prevailed in the land.

- was a: Ge 26:1 Ge 42:5 Ge 43:1 Ge 47:13 Ru 1:1 2Sa 21:1 1Ki 17:1-18:46 2Ki 4:38 2Ki 6:25 7:1-8:1 Ps 34:19 107:34 Jer 14:1 Joh 16:33 Ac 7:11 Ac 14:22
- went: Ge 26:2,3 43:1 46:3,4 2Ki 8:1,2 Ps 105:13
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [More general map of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob](#)
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 12:10-20 The Truth About The Path To Egypt](#) - Alan Carr
- [Map of Migration of Abram from Ur to Haran to Canaan](#)

#### Related Passages:

Ruth 1:1+ Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

## ABRAM'S LAPSE OF FAITH

**Adrian Rogers** referred to this section as "the relapse of his faith" - Now here's Abram, God put him, he was exactly, precisely where God wanted him to be. He's in the land of Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey, the land of promise, the land of plenty, and there's a famine in the land of plenty. There's a crisis in the land of promise. He doesn't know what to do. And now, rather than believing God and looking to God and trusting to God, he goes down to Egypt because down in Egypt there is plenty of food at this particular time. Ha ha, why was there famine in the land of plenty? It was a test. It was a test. Now, folks, the faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. Would you want to fly on an airplane that had not been tested? Would you want to drive in an automobile that had not been tested by the manufacturer? Do you know, the Bible says that faith is like gold? How do you know you don't have fool's gold, how do you know that you have real gold? Well, if a prospector takes his gold into the assayer's office and he does a chemical test and says, It's real gold. 1 Peter 1:7, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold, the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold," if you would try gold to find if it was pure gold, wouldn't you want to try your faith to find out if it is real faith? Now what should Abram have done here when there arose a famine? He should've prayed and gotten another word from God. Don't you think God knew where he was? Hadn't God led him there? Was he not obeying Almighty God when he got there? Yes! God fed Elijah with ravens. God fed the children of Israel with manna. And, friend, you believe God and don't you doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. Now why did he fail the test? Well you can see already the inkling of it if you go back to 12:1. God said in Ge 12:1, "Get out of thy country and from your kinfolds." But he didn't get out of his country, from his kinfold. He took his father with him, Terah. He took his nephew with him, Lot. God said, You leave those kinfolds. That's just a little compromise. He took, and God said, You go all the way to Canaan, but he stopped off halfway. Ge 12:4, 5, tell us that he got to Haran, and he stopped there for a while. He reminds me of a lot of folks here, members of my church, this church. They live in faith but they've got some kinfolds kind of hanging on. I'm not talking about physical kinfolds—I'm talking about spiritual kinfolds. Old habits, old ways, hangover sins, and you've not gone all the way, you've not gone out and out one hundred percent for God. You're just kind of at a halfway house. You say, Yeah, I really want to go to heaven, but I don't want to live like that radical Rogers is telling me to live. I mean, after all, I am saved. And so, his first step, listen, was a misguided compromise. ([Sermon](#))

**Now there was a famine in the land:** Who causes or allows famines? The sovereign (in control) God. He either sent it or allowed it, but however it happened, it resulted in a major spiritual test for the man of faith, Abram! As has been well said a faith that can't be tested, can't be trusted. That God allows trials to test our faith is a bedrock principle found in both the Old and New Testaments. Job was a blameless man in his day (Job 1:1) and yet God allowed him to be severely tested. And what did Job say? He affirmed that God "knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10+) How did Job know God would bring him forth as gold, because in the immediate context (Job 23:8,9) he said in four different ways that he could not even see God? The answer is found in Job 23:12 which I personally believe is the secret of how this blameless man could endure such incredible trials - "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured **the words of His mouth** more than my necessary food." ([see commentary](#)) Even though Job could not see God, He knew God's character from "the words of His mouth" and thus he knew that the tests were not sent to make him bitter but better! If you know God's Word, you will know that the trial He sends or allows is not to destroy you but to refine your faith. Our great Teacher writes many a bright lesson on the blackboard of affliction.

Think about this verse for a moment -- Why was Abram in this land? What was God's will? Clearly Abram was where he was supposed to be -- in the center of God's will. And yet what happens? A famine! The irony of it -- a famine in the land of plenty! A crisis in the land of promise! Test time Abram! This reminds me of Peter's admonition -

Beloved, **do not be surprised** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ (the test is not an obstacle but an opportunity and a privilege to imitate our Savior!), keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. (1 Peter 4:12-13+)

**Waltke on now there was a famine** - The rapidity of the narration between Abraham's journeying in Ge 12:9 and his leaving in Ge 12:10 gives the impression that he walked right through and out of the Promised Land.

**Pastor Ray Pritchard** reminds us that "Trouble often follows blessing in order that God may test our motives." ([Read full sermon](#))

Be aware that while God does not tempt us to sin, the devil can use tests of our faith to lure us to sin. As Wiersbe puts it "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." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

Below are some of the many NT passages that describe the value of testing in the believer's life.

James 1:2-4+ affirms the high and holy purpose of tests in our life...



Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the **testing of your faith** produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Comment: Later James adds an additional value to trials declaring "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12+)

In Romans 5:2-5+ adds that as believers

we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, **hope** ([elpis](#) = absolute assurance of future good - thus Biblical hope is closely linked with personal faith, our *assurance of things hoped for* Heb 11:1+); and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Peter speaking to a church undergoing persecution writes

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various ([poikilos](#)) trials ([peirasmos](#)), so that ([term of purpose](#)) the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (1 Peter 1:6-7+)

**Comment:** Fire is the test of gold, adversity of strong men.

Paul describes another future benefit of present trials

For momentary, light affliction is **producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison** while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:17-18+)

Recall that in context Abram had just obeyed God (Ge 12:4), had been protected by God during his journey to Canaan (Ge 12:6b), had a personal encounter with God (Ge 12:7), received an incredible promise from God (Ge 12:7), and built two altars and had a wonderful worship service (Ge 12:7b, 13). In a word, Abram had experienced a spiritual HIGH! He had been on the "mountain top" so to speak. Mountain top experiences are wonderful, but the direction off of most mountains is down. And so it is not uncommon to experience adversity after we have encountered the Lord in special ways.

**Keith Krell** - Abram was overwhelmed with the circumstances that God dealt him. Now he was not wrong for being concerned about the famine or feeding his family, but he was wrong for failing to trust God to provide for his needs (Isa 31:1). Abram acted prematurely. In alarm, he felt like he must do something and it seems he will have to go to Egypt where there is likely to be more food. Abram's going down 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. We are so much like Abram! Trials come and we automatically go into survival mode. We scheme, we prognosticate, we run through the "what ifs," we shore up our position, and we pile sandbags. And God? Oh yes...we ask Him to bless our ways.....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 (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?" (Jas 1:1-12). God is at work to build your faith and He 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."

As **Warren Wiersbe** says "Tests often follow triumphs. "I thought that getting saved was the end of all my troubles," a young believer said to me. "But now I know that faith in Christ has given me a whole new set of problems! But now there are two differences," he added with a smile. "I don't face them alone, because the Lord is with me; and I know He allows them for my good and His glory." One of the enemies of the life of faith is pride. When you win a victory, you may feel overconfident and start telling yourself that you can defeat any enemy at any time. You start depending on your past experience and your growing knowledge of the Word, instead of depending wholly on the Lord. This explains why the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is preceded by the warning of verse 12: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (NKJV). God did not want Abraham to become proud and self-confident, so He put him and his faith into the furnace of testing. After you have won a great victory of faith, expect the enemy to attack you or the Lord to test you, or both. This is the only way you can grow in your faith. God uses the tough circumstances of life to build the muscles of your faith and keep you from trusting something other than His Word. Don't try to run away from the problem. It won't work. 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 Nu 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. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

In the Old Testament God frequently used **famines** to “test” His people:

Genesis 26:1 (ISAAC) Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

Genesis 42:5 So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.

Genesis 43:1 Now the famine was severe in the land.

Genesis 47:13 Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine.

Ruth 1:1 [note](#) Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

**Warren Wiersbe** explains that “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. Like Abraham, as you progress in the “school of faith,” you will face three special tests: circumstances (Gen. 12:10), people (12:11–13:4), and things (13:5–18).” ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

As Spurgeon once said “The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction.”

Samuel Rutherford said “When I am in the cellar of affliction, I look for the Lord’s choicest wines.”

- See also [Afflictions-Suffering-Quotes](#), [Devotionals](#), [Illustrations](#)

**So - [term of conclusion](#)** - This is a sad conclusion of what was a “Y” in the road of Abram’s walk of faith. By that I mean that he was faced with a test (no food) and had essentially two choices - Trust God or Trust self. “**So**” he choose to trust his own ingenuity. How could he have trusted God? The obvious answer is he could have called on Him to provide for their needs. How often we imitate Abraham’s lack of faith in God. When the test comes in our life, we chose to trust our own ingenuity (including checking for answers on a “Google search,” asking our friends [not bad in itself, for they may point us to God], etc.)

- See [Map of Abram's migration to Egypt](#).

**Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there** (Webster’s = stay as a temporary resident [sojourned for a month at a resort]) First use of GUWR. Abram would not identify with the people of Egypt so as to take up permanent residence...he was just there for a short time. Gur = status of a resident alien that usually included protection under the laws of the host land. People migrated to other lands only in the direst circumstances for abandonment of one’s homeland meant severance from one’s family, clan, and deity. The root means to live among people who are not blood relatives; thus, rather than enjoying native civil rights, the ger was dependent on the hospitality that played an important role in the ancient near east.

**Adrian Rogers** - And then his second step was a misplaced confidence—a misplaced confidence. Now he goes down to Egypt and look if you will in verse 10. “Abram went down into Egypt.” Famine or no famine, he should not have gone down to Egypt. The Bible says in Isaiah 31:1, “Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help.” Egypt is a pagan place, was in that day, it represented sin and compromise. And rather than depending upon God now, he’s looking for worldly help. It’s an amazing thing. He trusted God to get him all the way from the Ur of the Chaldees to get him all the way to Canaan and then he couldn’t trust God to keep him once he got there. That’s like so many of us. We trust God to save us and then we can’t trust God to keep us. You know anybody like that? Lots of folks like that, we trust God for spiritual things—that’s what Abram did, and then we can’t trust him for material things when a famine comes along. We can trust God for all eternity and we can’t trust Him for tomorrow. Listen. Misguided compromise, misplaced confidence, and then inappropriate conduct. Now notice he’s beginning to go down, he’s getting away from God. Who is it, not so

loud, a lonely little sin slips through, I answered and soon all hell was in. ([Sermon](#))

**Steven Cole** - To survive, Abram journeyed down to Egypt. There was nothing wrong, per se, with going to Egypt. On at least two occasions God directed His people to Egypt for temporary protection (Gen. 46:3; Matt. 2:13). The text says that he went to "sojourn," not to settle, there. The problem was, there is no indication that Abram sought the Lord's guidance in this situation. It never seemed to occur to him that God was sovereign over the famine and that he needed to seek His direction.

**Constable** has this interesting quote on Egypt - "Throughout Gen. 12—50 Egypt is a symbol of safety and provision for the patriarchs and their families. If anything, Egypt is the oppressed in Genesis. Note that it is Sarai who 'dealt harshly' with her Egyptian maidservant, forcing her 'to flee' (Ge 16:6). Later she urges her husband to 'cast out' this Egyptian." (Hamilton, p. 386. See Peter D. Miscall, *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative*, pp. 42-45.) ([Ref](#))

**Bruce Waltke** writes that "Abraham's movement to Egypt is paralleled by his return in Ge 13:1. Since he receives no revelation to sojourn in Egypt (cf. Ge 12:1; Ge 26:2–6; Ge 46:2–3), he is stepping out of the stones in God's will to find bread." (Genesis: A Commentary)

**NET Note** on **Abram went down to Egypt**. The Abrahamic narrative foreshadows some of the events in the life of the nation of Israel. This sojourn in Egypt is typological of Israel's bondage there. In both stories there is a famine that forces the family to Egypt, death is a danger to the males while the females are preserved alive, great plagues bring about their departure, there is a summons to stand before Pharaoh, and there is a return to the land of Canaan with great wealth.

**NET Note** on **sojourn** - Hebrew verb *gur*, traditionally rendered "to sojourn," means "to stay for a while." The "stranger" (traditionally "sojourner") is one who is a temporary resident, a visitor, one who is passing through. Abram had no intention of settling down in Egypt or owning property. He was only there to wait out the famine.

**Sojourn** ([01481](#))(**gur**) means a temporary stay, to reside temporarily, to dwell as a foreigner; a short stay somewhere. In the reflexive sense, to seek hospitality with. The first use of *gur* is Ge 12:10 of the Abram (cp use with other patriarchs - Ge 20:1, 21:23, 34, 26:3, 32:4, 25:27, 47:4).

The term is commonly used of the patriarchs who sojourned in Canaan (Gen. 26:3; 35:27); places outside Canaan (Gen. 12:10; 20:1; 21:23; 32:4[5]; 47:4); Naomi and her family in Moab (Ruth 1:1); the exiles in Babylonia (Jer. 42:15).

Metaphorically, the term is used of one who worships in God's temple (Ps. 15:1; 61:4[5]). It is used reflexively with the meaning to seek hospitality with in 1 Kings 17:20.

**Gilbrant** - *Gûr* is used several different ways in the OT, and it means "to sojourn." A sojourner is one who dwells as a newcomer without original rights (Ge 19:9; Dt. 18:6). It is used of the patriarchs (Gen. 12:10; 20:1; 32:4; 47:4). It is also used of a woman who was a lodger or guest in another's house (Job 19:15) and of worshipers in Yahweh's house (Ps. 15:1). The term is used figuratively of evil in Ps. 5:4, which says, "Evil cannot dwell with you." It is used of others who sojourned throughout the OT (2 Chr. 15:9; Jer. 35:7; 42:15, 17, 22; Isa. 52:4). Isaiah 11:6 speaks of the wolf dwelling with the lamb. In the Hithpolel, it means "to seek hospitality with" (1 Ki. 17:20).

The word is used to mean "to stir up strife" (Isa. 54:15) and "to attack" (Ps. 56:6). It can also mean "to stand in awe" (Ps. 22:23; 33:8). Furthermore, it can mean "to dread" (Num. 22:3; 1 Sam. 18:15), or "to be afraid" (Nu. 22:3; Deut. 18:22).

A third nuance of the verb is "to attack." Resident-alien often became mercenaries. For example, the army of David was comprised of a number of ethnic groups, doubtless the most famous being Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 23:30ff). They were ideal soldiers, being free of clan ties (and subsequent legal demands). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**TWOT** - The root means to live among people who are not blood relatives; thus, rather than enjoying native civil rights, the *gēr* was dependent on the hospitality that played an important role in the ancient near east. When the people of Israel lived with their neighbors they were usually treated as protected citizens; foreigners in Israel were largely regarded as proselytes. **Often because of famine the people of Israel lived as protected citizens outside the promised land:** Abraham in Egypt (Gen 12:10); Israel in Egypt (Ge 47:4); Isaac with Abimelech of Gerar (Ge 26:3). In the case of the Patriarchs, however, they became "protected" citizens in the promised land through the call of God (Gen 17:8; 20:1; 23:4). Hebrews 11:9,13 describes them as pilgrims and strangers, evidence that they did not regard themselves as members of the sinful world. Many passages illustrate this meaning. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob only sojourned in Canaan (Ex 6:4), although Isaac and Jacob were born there. The land had not been given to them because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen 15:16). The Israelites are called sojourners (*gērīm*) in Egypt (Deut 10:17–19; Ex 22:20); being outsiders at the beginning and virtual slaves at the end of their stay. Jacob describes his stay with Laban as a sojourn, for he expected to return to Canaan. Lot dwelled in Sodom, but when he quarrelled with the men of Sodom he was scornfully called a sojourner, i.e. a foreigner, one without voice in community affairs (Gen 19:9). Israel in exile in Mesopotamia was

said to sojourn there (Ezr 1:4) because exiled from their covenant home. wthe Canaanites became gērîm after the conquest (Ex 20:10; 22:20; 23:9). because their sin had voided any privileges conferred upon them under the common grace of God. Even Israel is termed a sojourner in the sense that their tenure in the land was effective only as long as they honored the Covenant. In the age to come the wolf will be the protected citizen of the lamb (Isa 11:6). Evil never enjoys that status with God (Ps 5:4); but the Psalmist regards himself as such before the Lord (Ps 39:1–13; I Chr 29:15). Indeed, even after the Conquest Israel is still a sojourner in the land, for the land belongs to the Lord (Lev 25:23).

### **Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definition**

1) to sojourn, abide, dwell in, dwell with, remain, inhabit, be a stranger, be continuing, surely (NAS = 01471a)

1a) (*Qal*)

1a1) to sojourn, dwell for a time

1a2) to abide, stay, temporarily dwell

1b) (*Hithpolel*) (reflexive)

1b1) to seek hospitality with

1b2) to assemble oneself

2) to stir up trouble, strife, quarrel, gather together (NAS = 01471b)

2a) (*Qal*)

2a1) to stir up strife

2a2) to quarrel

2b) (*Hithpolel*) to excite oneself

3) to dread, fear, stand in awe, be afraid - Note the NAS lists this as a separate entry (NAS = 01471c) -

3a) (*Qal*)

3a1) to fear, be afraid

3a2) to be in awe, stand in awe

**Gur - 80 verses in NAS** - Usage: abide\*(1), alien(1), aliens(1), assemble(1), colonize(1), dwell(3), dwells(1), habitation(1), live(4), live as aliens(2), lives(1), reside(13), resided(1), resides(3), sojourn(11), sojourned(9), sojourning(1), sojourns(13), stay(6), staying(4), stays(1), strangers(3).

Gen. 12:10; 19:9; 20:1; 21:23,34; 26:3; 32:4; 35:27; 47:4; Exod. 3:22; 6:4; 12:48f; Lev. 16:29; 17:8,10,12f; 18:26; 19:33f; 20:2; 25:6,45; Num. 9:14; 15:14ff,26,29; 19:10; Deut. 18:6; 26:5; Jos. 20:9; Jdg. 5:17; 17:7ff; 19:1,16; Ruth 1:1; 2 Sam. 4:3; 1 Ki. 17:20; 2 Ki. 8:1f; 1 Chr. 16:19; 2 Chr. 15:9; Ezr. 1:4; Job 19:15; 28:4; Ps. 5:4; 15:1; 61:4; 105:12,23; 120:5; Isa. 5:17; 11:6; 16:4; 23:7; 33:14; 52:4; Jer. 35:7; 42:15,17,22; 43:2,5; 44:8,12,14,28; 49:18,33; 50:40; Lam. 4:15; Ezek. 14:7; 47:22f; Hos. 7:14

**10 verses in NAS (01481c) use Gur with the sense of dread** - Num. 22:3; Deut. 1:17; 18:22; 32:27; 1 Sam. 18:15; Job 19:29; 41:25; Ps. 22:23; 33:8; Hos. 10:5

**5 verses in NAS (01481b) use Gur to mean to stir up strife, quarrel** - Ps. 56:6; 59:3; 94:21; 140:2; Isa. 54:15

**Gur - 94 verses in the KJV** - Usage: AV - sojourn 58, dwell 12, afraid 6, stranger 6, gather together 4, fear 3, abide 2, assemble 1, stand in awe 1, gathered 1, inhabitant 1, remain 1, sojourners 1, surely 1; 98

Gen. 12:10; 19:9; 20:1; 21:23,34; 26:3; 32:4; 35:27; 47:4; Exod. 3:22; 6:4; 12:48f; Lev. 16:29; 17:8,10,12f; 18:26; 19:33f; 20:2; 25:6,45; Num. 9:14; 15:14ff,26,29; 19:10; 22:3; Deut. 1:17; 18:6,22; 26:5; 32:27; Jos. 20:9; Jdg. 5:17; 17:7ff; 19:1,16; Ruth 1:1; 1 Sam. 18:15; 2 Sam. 4:3; 1 Ki. 17:20; 2 Ki. 8:1f; 1 Chr. 16:19; 2 Chr. 15:9; Ezr. 1:4; Job 19:15,29; 28:4; 41:25; Ps. 5:4; 15:1; 22:23; 33:8; 56:6; 59:3; 61:4; 105:12,23; 120:5; 140:2; Isa. 5:17; 11:6; 16:4; 23:7; 33:14; 52:4; 54:15; Jer. 35:7; 42:15,17,22; 43:2,5; 44:8,12,14,28; 49:18,33; 50:40; Lam. 4:15; Ezek. 14:7; 47:22f; Hos. 7:14; 10:5

**Severe in the land** - More literally "heavy in the land." Severe famine is also seen in Ge 43:1, 47:13.

**Matthew Henry on the trial of Abram's faith...**

(1.) Strong faith is commonly exercised with divers temptations, that it may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, [1 Peter 1:6, 7](#).

(2.) It pleases God sometimes to try those with great afflictions who are but young beginners in religion.

(3.) 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.

**David Holwick** has an interesting analysis of some of the heroes of the Bible...

**The weakness of God's servants is most conspicuous where their strength lies.**

- Abraham, the most faithful of men, sinned by unfaithfulness.
- Moses, the meekest of men, by anger.
- Solomon, the wisest, by folly.
- Elijah, the most valiant, by fear.
- John, one of the gentlest, by vindictiveness.
- Peter, one of the boldest, by cowardice.

Humorist Sam Levenson once said: "You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself." (see 1 Cor 10:6, 11)

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**Tossing the Coin** - Donald Grey Barnhouse commented that just as every coin has a head and a tail, so every event in life either draws us to God or leads us away from him. If Abraham had stayed in Canaan during the famine, he would have learned to trust God in a brand-new way. If he hadn't lied to the Egyptians, he would have given God a chance to meet his needs without resorting to deception. But because he didn't do those things, that same famine led him away from God. How much better it would be if we would learn this lesson. Instead of complaining at every trial and saying "Why me?" we would be better off to say, "Lord, what are you trying to teach me through this?" Every difficult situation gives the opportunity to become a student of God's grace or a hapless victim of negative circumstances. When the famine comes, remember that God has not abandoned you. He sends the famines of life in order to see if you will trust him even in the most difficult moments. We should say, "Here is another opportunity for me to trust God. I wonder what wonderful things he is going to do for me this time." It's not easy to say that. Sometimes it takes more grace to stay in the Promised Land than it does to get there in the first place. But God never intended that that Christian life should be easy. If it were easy, none of us would ever grow spiritually. He arranges the steps of life so that as we climb higher, we also grow stronger. In the end we will discover heights of blessing that God reserves for those who just keep climbing. ([Ray Pritchard](#))

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**W H Griffith Thomas' Devotional Comments on Genesis 12:10-13:4 - [The Testing](#):**

The young believer's life is soon tested, especially after seasons of communion (see 2 Chr 32:1 and 2 Chr 31:20, 21, R.V.). It was so with the Apostle Peter (Mt 16:17-23), and even with our Lord (Luke 3:22, 4:1).

**We now see this great principle in the life of Abraham.**

**I. The Special Circumstances (Ge 12:10).—**

One of the frequent famines arose. As there was no artificial irrigation, Palestine necessarily depended on the annual rainfall and the heavy sea mist that came up from the Mediterranean at certain times of the year (the "dew" of the Old Testament). This was a very real test to Abraham. Notwithstanding the recent revelation of God with all its promises (Ge 12:7), there was actually a famine in the land of promise. Doubtless Abraham remembered the rich alluvial plains of Mesopotamia and Syria. Thus he was soon tested, and his faithfulness put to the proof. We are sometimes apt to identify the peace and calm of outward circumstances with the peace arising from a consciousness of the Divine presence. It was to make this distinction clear that Abraham was tested.

**II. The Long Journey (Ge 12:10).—**

This journey is the first point of contact between Israel as represented in Abraham and Egypt. We well know the baneful influence exercised in later ages. 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.

### III. The Proposal (Ge 12:11-13).—

Abraham suggested that Sarai should say that she was his sister instead of his wife. This was a 'half-truth' (cf. Ge 20:12). Verbally it was correct; but really it was a lie. 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!

### IV. The Result (Ge 12:14-16).—

What Abraham anticipated came to pass; Sarai was taken into the King's harem. Abraham's very precaution led to Pharaoh's action. The patriarch's life is thus saved, and gifts are showered upon him, doubtless as the recognised dowry on the marriage of his sister with Pharaoh. Yet what must have been his thoughts as he was alone in his tent! He had gained his end, but at a very great cost to Sarai and himself. Thus Abraham fell at the point where he was supposed to be strongest—his faith. So it was with Moses, the meek man (Num. 20:10).

### V. The Divine Displeasure (Ge 12:17).—

Serious illness came upon Pharaoh and his house, showing them clearly that some extraordinary meaning was in it. God could not allow His promises to Abraham to be frustrated or His will unfulfilled. It was therefore necessary to save Abraham from himself and rescue Sarai.

### VI. The Rebuke (Ge 12:18-20).—

We can picture Abraham's surprise at Pharaoh's expostulation. The Egyptians, with all their sins, seem to have laid great store by truth and abhorred all kinds of lying. The King thereupon ordered Abraham to take her and go out of the land, Pharaoh's servants being charged to see them both safely out of Egypt.

### VII. The Restoration (Ge 13:1-4).—

We can imagine Abraham's feelings as the caravan slowly wended its way out of Egypt, and as he came back to the land of Canaan. Note the phrase 'at the beginning' (Ge 13:3), and 'unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first' (Ge 13:4), and 'called on the name of the Lord' (Ge 13:4). We read of no such altar or prayer in Egypt. Abraham seems to have been out of communion there. Now, however, he does the only possible thing—he returns to where he had been at the commencement; he came back to the true surrender and simple worship of his earliest days in Canaan. Whenever we backslide there is nothing else to do but to come back by the old gateway of genuine repentance and simple faith (Ps. 23:3; 1 John 1:9).

**1. A Believer's false step.**—Abraham went aside out of the path of God's will; he was occupied with circumstances instead of with God. He only saw the famine, not the Divine faithfulness. 'He that trusts in his own heart is a fool' (Pr 28:26). 'A crust with God is better than a feast without Him.'

**2. A Believer's definite backsliding.**—The possibilities of a true child of God wandering into sin and unfaithfulness are very clear from Scripture. This is one of the saddest and most mysterious facts of spiritual experience. In Abraham's case it manifested itself first in fear due to forgetfulness of God, then in selfishness, and lastly in hypocrisy and deceit. There is nothing more solemn than the well-known fact that through sin a believer can be out of touch with God for a long time.

**3. A Believers sad experience.**—One part of this was the knowledge that his wrongdoing had brought ill effects on others. Both Sarai and Pharaoh's house suffered through Abraham's sin. Another element in his bitter cup was the plain rebuke from the heathen Pharaoh. We have truly touched the depths of spiritual unfaithfulness when a believer has to be openly rebuked by the ungodly.

**4. A Believer's only safeguard.**—This preservative is twofold—trust and truth every moment. Abraham was taught three lessons about God in relation to trust:

(1) That God was essential to his every step, and that nothing can be done apart from Him (John 15:5);

(2) that God was able—notwithstanding the famine God could have provided for Abraham;

(3) that God was faithful: He had not forgotten His promise to His servant (Ge 12:1-3). Thus Abraham came back with a deepened idea of God and a louder call for simple, absolute, continual trust.

He was also taught the lesson of truth. The child of God is to be straightforward in all his attitude, and to go straight forward in all his actions. The end does not justify the means, whatever men may say. Even though our objects may be perfectly right, our means to

attain those objects must be without blemish. This has special application to methods of Church work, ideas of social status, aspects of family life, and objects of personal ambition. Not only must the end we seek be true, the means we use must also be true.

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## Learning From Mistakes

Read: Genesis 12:10-20 | All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. —2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible is not a written record of perfect people (except for Jesus, of course). From beginning to end, God's Word points out in painful detail the mistakes made by its characters.

Adam and Eve failed to obey God's specific restrictions (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-7). Abram lied about his relationship to Sarai (Gen. 12:10-20). Moses grew angry and struck the rock in disobedience to God (Num. 20:7-12). David committed adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11-12). Solomon started out well but turned from God for a time (1 Ki. 3:5-9; 11:1-43). Peter denied knowing Jesus (Mt. 26:69-75).

The Bible's honest portrayal of the troubles that its characters brought upon themselves and others reminds me of what humorist Sam Levenson once said: "You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself."

It is for our instruction that the Bible records the sinful actions of many of its key figures. The old saying "Those who don't learn from history are bound to repeat it" is true here as well. As we see the errors made by biblical characters, we can ask the Lord to protect us from making similar mistakes. By Dave Branon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The Bible is filled with example and teaching  
On how to avoid all the pitfalls of sin;  
And if we will learn from its people and precepts,  
The struggles and battles of life we can win.  
—Hess

To the wise, the word is sufficient.

**Genesis 12:11** It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman

- a fair (KJV): Ge 12:14 26:7 29:17 39:6,7 2Sa 11:2 Pr 21:30 Song 1:14
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [See Map of Abram's Journey; More general map of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob](#)
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

KJV And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

## ABRAM FACES A SECOND TEST

Abram reasoned that in escaping the famine he would escape the test, only to discover that his failure to endure one test would be followed by another test! The moral of this story is to resist the temptation to run from whatever test God is allowing in your life or to attempt to resolve it with your own earthly (fleshly) wisdom. You may find the next test is even more enigmatic and trying!

**It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife**- Earlier we read that Abram came to Shechem and he built an altar (Ge 12:6-7). And again and journeying he pitched his tent east of Bethel, and built another altar. Now we have another journey and another destination (Egypt), but this time Abram does not build an altar. To the contrary he shifts from trusting God to (in effect) testing God by scheming. Webster defines **scheme** as a method devised for making or doing something or achieving an end. Scheme describes consideration of a possible end of a series of events and the devising of a plan motivated by craftiness and self-interest, this plan calculated to alter the end result. So in Ge 12:11-13 we see Abram devise a secret, crafty plan calculated (at least as he reasoned in his flesh) to protect his own life!

**Warren Wiersbe** comments that "'Faith is living without scheming." When you stop trusting God's Word, you start leaning on man's wisdom; and this leads to trouble (Pr 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 3:18-20). Abraham and Sarah brought this "half-truth" with them from Ur (Ge. 20:13), used it in Egypt and Gerar (Gen. 20:1-18), and then their son Isaac adopted it (Ge 26:1-35). When you find yourself scheming in order to escape problems with people, beware; worse trouble is coming!" ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

**See now** - **See** is more often translated **Behold** (02009) ([hinneh](#)) and is an interjection meaning look and is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, etc. **Spurgeon** adds that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation."

**I know that you are a beautiful woman** - This is always a good word of affirmation for a husband to speak to his wife!

**Steven Cole** - In Ge 12:10-16 we see Abram's faithlessness; in Ge 12:17-20, God's faithfulness in delivering Abram and Sarai; and, in Ge 13:1-4, Abram's restoration to faith in line with God's purpose. There are some obvious parallels between this incident in Abram's life and the nation Israel to whom Moses was writing. Both Abram and the nation Israel went down to Egypt because of a famine in the land (Ge 12:10; 47:13, 27). Abram feared that he, a man, would be killed and Sarai, a woman, would be spared (Ge 12:12); in Moses' day, Pharaoh ordered the male babies killed and the females spared (Exod. 1:22). God sent plagues on Pharaoh to deliver both Abram and Israel (12:17; Exod. 7:14-11:10). Abram received many possessions from the Egyptians (Ge 12:16); Israel took great spoil before the Exodus (Exod. 12:35-36). God delivered both Abram and the nation Israel, and they journeyed north toward the Negev (12:19, 13:1; Exod. 15, Num. 13:17, 22). (Alan Ross, borrow - [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#) [Victor Books, 1985] 2:49)...It is significant that Abram's deception concerning his wife started with a trial, the famine in the land. Whenever we face trials, we need to be on guard because the situation can either to draw us closer to the Lord or turn us away. The words, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8), are written to suffering Christians (1 Pet. 5:9, 10). When trials hit, the devil moves in to take advantage of the situation by trying to get us to turn from the Lord to our own schemes. That was Abram's problem in this situation: He was relying on his own scheming, but he had not sought the Lord (see Isa. 31:1). If Abram had asked, the God who would later rain manna from heaven and bring water from a rock could have supplied his needs in the land during this famine. But he didn't bother to ask. When you turn from the Lord to your own schemes of deliverance, you get yourself in deeper trouble, and you have to figure out even more schemes. Like turning on a road that angles off from the main road, the farther you go down the path of self-reliance, the farther you get from the Lord. As Abram got closer to Egypt, he realized that he could be in great danger because of Sarai. So he concocted a plan to pawn her off as his sister, not his wife (Ge 12:11-12).

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**Walter Kaiser addresses the issue of Abram's ruse in Genesis 12:11-13** - This incident is puzzling not only because of the subterfuge involved but also because the same kind of episode occurs three times (here and in Gen 20:1-3; 26:7-11). In all three episodes the plot is essentially the same. A patriarch visits a foreign land, accompanied by his wife. Fearing that his wife's beauty will become a source of danger to himself, he resorts to the subterfuge of pretending that his wife is his sister. The recurrent wife-sister theme in Genesis has provoked an unusual number of comments and speculative solutions. Interpreters have been puzzled about why father and son should have fallen back on this ploy so frequently....The two protagonists of these stories, **Abram**—or as he was later renamed, Abraham—and **Isaac**, were at the center of the promise-plan by which God was going to bless the very nations they were coming in contact with. Moreover, the means by which God was going to bless these Gentile nations was to be carried in the womb of the very woman to whom these potentates were being attracted. Each of these stories, then, sets up a moment of real suspense for divine providence and for the patriarchs, who, in spite of all their blundering, lying and mismanagement, were still the means through whom God was going to bless the world.

**It must be stated clearly that Abraham and Isaac both practiced deception.** The Bible merely reports that they did so, without approving of it. God preserved the purity of Sarai and Rebekah in spite of all the maneuverings of their husbands. No one can make a case for lying based on these passages. It will always be wrong to lie, since God is truth.

**What about half lies?** Wasn't it true that Sarai was Abraham's half sister? Was it not also true that the Hurrian society, in such centers as Haran, where Abraham had stayed on his way to Canaan, had a special legal fiction in which the bonds of marriage were strengthened when the groom adopted his wife as his "sister" in a legal document parallel to the marriage contract? Yes, both are true. Sarai was Abraham's half sister (Gen 11:29). And there was the Hurrian legal form of sister-marriage. However, most scholars have now concluded that there is very little basis for assuming that Abraham had such a document in mind, since the details of patriarchal and Hurrian marriage documents are quite different.

What, then, was Abraham's motivation? Was he willing to sacrifice his wife's honor and allow her to marry any suitor in order to save

his own skin and possibly get some financial gain? Though Genesis 12:13 might appear to support such an interpretation, subsequent events (Gen 12:15–16) provide a basis for questioning its correctness. Oriental attitudes toward adultery were much more sensitive than ours (Gen 20:2–9). It is doubtful that Abraham would have allowed his wife to bear that sin on her conscience, much less allow himself to be an accomplice in it.

The medieval commentators suggested that what Abraham hoped to get out of his “brother” status was the right to receive and deny all suitors’ requests to be Sarai’s husband. This suggestion works in those stories where brothers attempt to delay their sister’s marriage (Laban and Rebekah in Gen 24:55, and Dinah and her brothers in Gen 34:13–17).

**Abraham and Isaac are to be condemned for their complicity in lying, no matter how noble a motive they may have had, or how much truth the lie contained. Still, God was not to be deterred in his plan to bring life and blessing to the nations through the offspring of Sarai and Rebekah.** (See [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#))

**Genesis 12:12** and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live

- will kill (KJV): Ge 20:11 26:7 1Sa 27:1 Pr 29:25 Mt 10:28 1Jn 1:8-10
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [See Map of Abram's Journey; More general map of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob](#)
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

### ABRAM MOVES FROM CONFIDENCE TO FEAR

**Warren Wiersbe** observes that "When you are in the place of God's choosing, you don't ever need to be afraid; for faith and fear cannot dwell in the same heart (Isa. 12:2; Mk 4:40). The fear of God is the fear that conquers every fear (Ps. 112:1-10; Isa. 8:13); but "the fear of man brings a snare" (Pr. 29:25). God had repeatedly said "**I will**" to Abraham, but now Abraham was saying "**They will**" (Ge 12:12). He took his eyes off the Lord and started looking at people." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

Fear of man reflects lack of faith in God's promises. In a word, Abram seems to have forgotten the promises God had made which if considered logically would have taught him that he could not be killed (because he did not yet have an heir).

**Pastor Ray Pritchard** reminds us that "God's people often respond to danger with clever deception" ([Read full sermon](#))

To say it another way, Abram changed his line of sight, from **Vertical Vision** to **Horizontal Vision**! He took his eyes off of God and begin to look at men. Isn't this a "spiritual detour" we all frequently take? That's why Paul wrote what he wrote in 1 Cor 10:6, 11 and Romans 15:4+.

Related Resource:

- Vertical Vision empowers horizontal living

**When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me** - The fallen flesh reasons this way. It sees a potential problem and turns inward rather than Godward. What had Abram forgotten? How could he possibly attain to the promises of Jehovah in Genesis 12:1-3 if he were killed? Obviously he couldn't, but he took his eyes off of the trustworthy promises of Jehovah and fixed them on the theoretical problem (which may or may not have come to pass). He had what I like to refer to as a bad case of "horizontal vision," fixing his eyes on the temporal circumstances and taking them off the eternal promises (which I call "vertical vision"). We can't be too hard on Abram because all of us have fallen into this fleshly pattern when confronted with a trial, affliction or obstacle. Abram's primary problem was a failure to trust in the promises of the Promise Keeping God Who cannot lie!

We need to remember as **Davis** says that "The integrity and honesty of a child of God are among his most potent weapons in spreading the gospel."

You can mark it down that you cannot fear (reverentially) God and fear man. Fear of man is incompatible with faith in God.

**Genesis 12:13** "Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.

- Say (KJV): Joh 8:44 Ro 3:6-8 6:23 Col 3:6
- thou (KJV): Ge 11:29 20:2,5,12,13 26:7 Isa 57:11 Mt 26:69-75 Ga 2:12,13
- and (KJV): Ps 146:3-5 Jer 17:5-8 Eze 18:4
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

## ABRAM'S HALF TRUTH STILL A FULL LIE!

**Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me-** Having shifted his vision from God to others (the fear of Pharaoh in Ge 12:12), Abram now shifts his focus to self ("with me"). Instead of focusing on protection of his wife (as husbands are commanded - Eph 5:25, 28), he instead focused on himself. It never crossed his mind (or at least it is not stated) that his ruse might bring ruin to Sarai who was to be the mother of the line that blessed the entire earth! It is as if Abram had developed "spiritual amnesia" regarding the incredible promises of God in Ge 12:1-3 and Ge 12:7. We don't know how long it had been since he had heard God's promises or since God had appeared to him but his memory of those significant events clearly takes a "back seat" to self interest, specifically self preservation. But aren't we all like Abram. We get up in the morning and have a great quiet time and hear a wonderful word from the Lord through His Word. And then we go into our day and some trial or test comes on us suddenly. And our reaction is all too often just like Abram -- we seek to save self rather than recall God's word to us earlier that morning. And so we begin to scheme and possibly even offer a "little white lie" like Abram. O, how we need Thee Lord...

### I need Thee every hour

Most gracious Lord  
No tender voice like Thine  
Can peace afford

I need Thee every hour  
Stay Thou near by  
Temptations loose their power  
When Thou art nigh

I need Thee oh I need Thee  
Every hour I need Thee  
Oh bless me now my Savior  
I come to Thee

**NET Note** on **Tell them you are my sister** - Abram's motives may not be as selfish as they appear. He is aware of the danger to the family. His method of dealing with it is deception with a half truth, for Sarai really was his sister—but the Egyptians would not know that. Abram presumably thought that there would be negotiations for a marriage by anyone interested (as Laban does later for his sister Rebekah), giving him time to react. But the plan backfires because Pharaoh does not take the time to negotiate.

**Allen Ross** - The claim that "she is my sister" occurs three times in the patriarchal narratives, twice by Abraham and once by Isaac (Ge 12:13; 20:2; 26:7). The first occurrence (ch 12) is outside the land, and the second (ch 20) occurs inside the land, showing that God protects his promise in both regions despite the way Abram endangers it. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary)

**Waltke** writes "Sarah pragmatically consents. Their philosophy is "Better defiled than dead." This is not a philosophy that establishes God's kingdom in a pagan world!" (Ibid)

**Henry Morris** on [my sister](#) - Sarai was Abram's half-sister (Ge 20:12), so this a "half truth"! but a half truth is a lie! Abram's faith was still weak. He should have stayed in Canaan in spite of the famine. Having gone into Egypt, he should have been open and consistent in his testimony but he compromised, following human reason instead of God's Word. God protected Sarai in spite of it, but they lost their testimony with the Egyptians. (Defender's Study Bible Notes)

**Reformation Study Note** on **Sarai** - She was the daughter of Terah by a different mother than Abraham's (Ge 20:2). The prohibition against such a marriage was unknown in patriarchal times (cf. Lev. 18:9; 20:17; Deut. 27:22).

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**Norman Geisler** - **PROBLEM:** We are told in the Bible not to lie (Ex. 20:16), but, when Abraham lied about Sarah, his wealth was increased.

**SOLUTION:** First, Abraham's increase in wealth should not be viewed as a divine reward for his lie. Pharaoh's gifts to him were understandable. Pharaoh may have felt obligated to pay amends for the wicked constraint that his corrupt society put on strangers



who visited his land. Furthermore, Pharaoh may have felt he had to make amends to Abraham for unwittingly taking his wife into his palace. Adultery was strictly forbidden by the Egyptian religion. What is more, Abraham paid for his sin. The years of trouble that followed may have been a direct result of his lack of faith in God's protecting power. Finally, although some people are portrayed as men of God, they are still fallible and responsible for their own sin (e.g., David and Bathsheba, 2 Sam. 12). God blessed them in spite of, not because of, their sins. (When Critics Ask)

- See [Is it Ever Right to Lie?](#)

#### Genesis 12:14 It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful

- **Saw:** Ge 3:6 6:2 39:7 Mt 5:28
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

**It came about when Abram came into Egypt** - "That he built an altar." Oh, that the verse had said that! It seems God and His promises are far from Abram's mind and so building an altar was not his priority.

**The Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful** - Abram must have thought "See that is exactly what I predicted would happen! Now our lie will keep them from taking my life!" Have you ever lied and over time began to actually believe your lie was true? The writer of Hebrews describes one of the great, grave dangers of sin is that we might "be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb 3:13-[see discussion of deceitfulness of sin](#)).

**Walkte on woman** - This impersonal identification signifies Sarah's treatment as an object.

You may ask how could she be beautiful at age 65? (Ge 12:4) Keep in mind the patriarchs lived well past 100 (she lived to be about 127) so she would in effect be "in her mid 30's!"

**Krell** - There are additional problems with Abram's lying, and lessons we can learn:

1. After lying once it becomes easier to do the next time. Abram later tried to pull the same stunt with Abimelech in 20:12.
2. Lying influences others around us. In 26:7, we discover Abraham's son, Isaac, pulling this exact same stunt with his wife Rebekah and Abimelech.
3. Lying brings a reproach to the name of God. Sadly, a pagan king must rebuke Abram for his deception and lack of faith in God (12:18-19).

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. We laugh at this but we all can acknowledge the truth that seems to be resident in this remark. Yet, God says lying is not an appropriate response for the believer. Are you careful to tell the truth to the best of your ability? ([From Faith to Fear](#))

#### Genesis 12:15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house

- princes (KJV): Es 2:2-16 Pr 29:12 Ho 7:4,5 Pharaoh was a common name of the Egyptian kings, and signified a "ruler," or "king," or "father of his country." Ge 40:2 41:1 Ex 2:5,15 1Ki 3:1 2Ki 18:21 Jer 25:19 46:17 Eze 32:2
- taken (KJV): Ge 20:2 Es 2:9 Ps 105:4 Pr 6:29 Heb 13:4
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

### ABRAM'S WIFE TAKEN FOR PHARAOH

**NET Note** on **Pharaoh's house** - The Hebrew text simply has "house of Pharaoh." The word "house" refers to the household in general, more specifically to the royal harem.

**Pharaoh** was not a proper name but a title, such as king, emperor, president, etc.

**Pharaoh** - is not a personal name; it is a metonymy, like "Crown" for the British monarch.

"A title meaning, "great house" for the ancient kings of Egypt. Every ancient pharaoh had five "great names" which he assumed on the day of his accession. Since it was not deemed proper to use such powerful names in direct fashion, a polite circumlocution developed; he came to be called Pharaoh. Egyptians applied "pharaoh" to the royal palace and grounds in the fourth dynasty (about 2500 B.C.). The title *Pharaoh* came to be applied to the king from about 1500 B.C. until the Persian domination, about 550 B.C. An ancient pharaoh was an absolute monarch, supreme commander of the armies, chief justice of the royal court, and high priest of all religion. His absolute power may be seen in that justice was defined as "what Pharaoh loves"; wrongdoing as "what Pharaoh hates." An example of his divine power was that he daily conducted "the Rite of the House of the Morning," an early morning ritual in which he broke the seal to the statue of the sun god, waking him up with a prayer. This act brought the sun up and started every day for the people. References to ten pharaohs can be clearly distinguished in the Old Testament: the Pharaoh of Abraham, Genesis 12:10-20 ; of Joseph, Genesis 39-50 ; of the Oppression, Exodus 1:1 ; of the Exodus, Exodus 2:23-15:19 ; of 1 Chronicles 4:18 ; of Solomon, 1 Kings 3-11 ; of Rehoboam, called Shishak, king of Egypt, 1 Kings 14:25 ; of Hezekiah and Isaiah, 2 Kings 18:21 ; Isaiah 36:1 ; of Josiah, 2 Kings 23:29 ; of Jeremiah 44:30 and Ezekiel 29:1-16 . ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**The woman was taken into Pharaoh's house** - She was taken but not violated. "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." (Jamieson)

**Genesis 12:16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.**

- And he (KJV): Ge 13:2 20:14
- he had (KJV): Ge 24:35 26:14 32:5,13-15 Job 1:3 42:12 Ps 144:13,14
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

### PHARAOH LAVISH PRICE FOR HIS "BRIDE"

**Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake**- ("He treated Abram well because of her" = CSB; "Everything went well for Abram because of her" = GWN) The words Abram had spoken in Ge 12:13 "that it may go well with me" now became true, for he became wealthy because of his wife Sarai (and at her expense!). It is notable that later in Genesis we see the Egyptian pharaoh bestow good on Abraham's great-grandson Joseph (Ge 41:41-43) and of Abraham's grandson Jacob (Ge 45:16-20).

**Pastor Ray Pritchard** notes that "God sometimes allows our deception to gain us a temporary advantage.". ([Read full sermon](#))

**Ryrie** - camels were domesticated during this era, though not commonly used in caravans until much later.

**NET Note on treated Abram well** - The construction of the parenthetical disjunctive clause, beginning with the conjunction on the prepositional phrase, draws attention to the irony of the story. Abram wanted Sarai to lie "so that it would go well" with him. Though he lost Sarai to Pharaoh, it did go well for him—he received a lavish bride price.

**Genesis 12:17 But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.**

- Ge 20:18 1Ch 16:21 21:22 Job 34:19 Ps 105:14,15 Heb 13:4
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

### ABRAM BRINGS A CURSE RATHER THAN A BLESSING

**But** - Whenever you see a **BUT** pause and ponder this [term of contrast](#) seeking to prayerfully [interrogate it with the 5W/H questions](#). Recall that God had given Abram a promise "I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Ge 12:2-3) Even though Pharaoh "blessed" Abram, God "cursed" him! Abram was to have been a walking proclamation of the good news of his coming Descendant (the Messiah cf Gal 3:8, 16), becoming in essence a light to the nations (Isa 42:6, Lk 2:32) So instead of bringing blessing to the Gentiles in Egypt, because of his sin, Abram brought judgment on Pharaoh and his household!

**The LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai** - This is a manifestation of Jehovah's grace and His gracious protection, which foreshadows His declaration to Abram in Genesis 15:1+ "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you."

**The LORD struck Pharaoh** - Notice this is the first appearance of God in this famine sojourn story.

**Matthew Henry** - The deliverance of Sarai from this danger. For if God did not deliver us, many a time, by prerogative, out of those straits and distresses which we bring ourselves into by our own sin and folly, and which therefore we could not expect any deliverance from by promise, we should soon be ruined, nay, we should have been ruined long before this. He deals not with us according to our deserts....Observe, Not Pharaoh only, but **his house**, was plagued, probably those princes especially that had commended Sarai to Pharaoh. Note, Partners in sin are justly made partners in the punishment. Those that serve others' lusts must expect to share in their plagues. We are not told particularly what these plagues were; but doubtless there was something in the plagues themselves, or some explication added to them, sufficient to convince them that it was for Sarai's sake that they were thus plagued.

**Allen Ross** rightly observes that "Divine intervention alone could deliver Sarai from Pharaoh's harem unharmed....In spite of the trouble Abram caused for himself, God was faithful to His word and did not let the foolishness of this man throw His plan into jeopardy. Abram probably felt that the easiest way out of danger was to manipulate deceptively. But such scheming put him in danger and jeopardized the promise. God's servants should trust Him completely and not resort to self-directed schemes." (Ibid)

Sadly it seems that either Abram did not learn his lesson or simply forgot (we never do that do we beloved!), because **years later** in Genesis 20 (probably more than 20 years later = he was 75 in Ge 12:4 and 99 in Ge 17:1, 17) he repeated his lie before Abimelech...

Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. 2 **Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.** (Ge 20:1-2)

Fortunately in this second episode, God intervened in a dream and prevented Abimelech from sinning against Him. (Ge 20:3-7).

**Wiersbe** gives us all a general principle - **"If you want to be a blessing to others, then stay in the will of God.** Jonah ran from God's will and caused a storm that almost sank the ship (Jonah 1:2-15). Like Jonah, Abraham lost his testimony before unbelievers and had to face embarrassment and rebuke....The seventeenth-century English preacher [Jeremy Taylor](#) said, "God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy." He was referring, of course, to being happy with God's will for our lives." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

In his comments on the book of Jonah, Warren Wiersbe reminds us that "God called the Jews to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3), but whenever the Jews were out of the will of God, they brought trouble instead of blessing. Twice Abraham brought trouble to people because he lied (Ge 12:10-20; 20:1-18); Achan brought trouble to Israel's army because he robbed God (Josh. 7); and Jonah brought trouble to a boatload of pagan sailors because he fled. Consider all that Jonah lost because he wasn't a blessing to others." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

**NET Note**- The cognate accusative adds emphasis to the verbal sentence: "he plagued with great plagues," meaning the LORD inflicted numerous plagues, probably diseases (see Ex 15:26). The adjective "great" emphasizes that the plagues were severe and overwhelming.

**Steven Cole** - In spite of our failures, God is always faithful (Ge 12:17-20). In the face of Abram's faithlessness, we see God's faithfulness. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Even though Abram's eyes were off the Lord, the Lord's eyes were never off Abram. God intervened by striking Pharaoh and his household with some sort of unspecified plagues. But somehow the Egyptians figured out that things started going badly from the moment Sarai took up residence in the harem. And somehow Pharaoh found out that Sarai was Abram's wife. Pharaoh's command to Abram to take his wife and go (Ge 12:19) echoes God's call to Abram to go forth from his country (Ge 12:1). God uses a pagan king's rebuke to get Abram back to the promised land to uphold His divine call. The incident shows God's faithfulness in spite of Abram's faithlessness. It's always embarrassing for a believer to be rightly corrected by an unbeliever. It's tough to bear witness in those situations!

Remember Jonah, fleeing from the Lord on the ship headed for Tarshish? When the storm arose, they cast lots to figure out whose fault it was. The lot fell on Jonah. They ask him about himself and he has to tell them that he's a Hebrew, who fears the Lord God who made the heaven and the sea and the dry land. And he tells them that he is fleeing from the presence of the Lord. Even though they're pagans, they answer, "How could you do this?" (Jonah 1:8-10). They could see Jonah's inconsistency. So here Pharaoh calls Abram to account and Abram doesn't say a word in reply. He just goes off with his tail between his legs, duly chastened. If you as a Christian ever get rightly rebuked for your sin by an unbeliever, just confess your sin and seek the person's forgiveness and pray that God will give you or someone else an opportunity at another time for witness. But don't try to minimize or rationalize your sin and then proceed to witness for Christ. That's the worst thing you could do! Verse 20 shows God's abundant grace in spite of our sin. Pharaoh commanded his men, and they escorted Abram, his wife, and all his belongings out of the country. That's grace: undeserved favor. If Abram had got what he deserved, Pharaoh would have killed him and kept Sarai and all his possessions. Or at least he would have kept his possessions and kicked Abram and Sarai out of the country with just the shirts on their backs. But God graciously blessed Abram through Pharaoh. Don't ever mistake God's grace as a license to sin. God's grace ought to bind us in deeper devotion to our forgiving Father:

O to grace, how great a debtor,  
daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
bind my wandering heart to Thee!  
Robert Robinson, "Come, Thou Fount"

God's grace never ought to be a reason for us to think, "I got off easy the last time, so I can do it again." If we do that, we are courting God's severe discipline (Gal. 6:7).

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**[Gotquestions.org](http://Gotquestions.org) asks - "Why did God punish Pharaoh for Abram's lie (Genesis 12:17)?"**

**Answer:** In Genesis 12, Abram and his wife Sarai (their names were later changed to Abraham and Sarah) traveled to Egypt due to a famine in Canaan. Abram instructed his wife to tell people in Egypt that she was his sister instead of his wife. His reason was to protect himself. Because Sarai was so beautiful, Abram feared someone would kill him and take Sarai as his wife. The plan to pass her off as his sister would ensure that Abram would be well received by those he met. In Egypt, Sarai's beauty attracted the attention of Pharaoh, the ruler of that country. Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's house, and many gifts were given to Abram (Genesis 12:16). Genesis 12:17 says, "But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife." This seems puzzling. After all, the king was the victim of Abram and Sarai's deceit. The result of this punishment reveals the reason for it. When Pharaoh realized Sarai was Abram's wife, he summoned Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go" (Genesis 12:18-19).

**If God had not caused the plagues to come upon Pharaoh and his household, he may not have known anything was wrong. The affliction led to the discovery that Sarai was Abram's wife. If Pharaoh had kept Sarai, Abram would not have had a son by Sarai in fulfillment of God's promise to him (Genesis 12:2; 17:19).**

Abram was wrong to lie, but God graciously intervened in order to keep His covenant with Abram. In the end, Pharaoh returned Abram's wife and provided protection for him: "Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had" (Genesis 12:20). Despite Abram's wrongdoing, God worked to fulfill His promise (**Ed**: Notice that this is an example of amazing grace, God not giving him what his sin deserved [MERCY], but giving him what he did not deserve [GRACE], because He would remain faithful to keep His promises to Abram. Amazing grace indeed!). Abram left Egypt with his wife Sarai, the protection of the king, and added prosperity.

This incident is a good example of how God sometimes allows bad things to take place in someone's life as part of a larger situation. God used the affliction of Pharaoh's household to bring about good for Abram. We may not always know why bad things happen, but that does not mean they are without purpose. God has a larger purpose behind everything that takes place in life (Jeremiah 29:11). As Paul taught in Romans 8:28, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Abram unwisely trusted in his own cunning to preserve his life, and he was caught in a lie. God proved His strength is perfect and that He is the only One with the power to save. Further, we see God has a greater purpose in all things, including suffering. His will is sovereign, and His Name will be glorified.

**(Editorial Addendum:** Unfortunately sin has consequences and Abram's sojourn into Egypt resulted in acquiring Hagar who later bore Ishmael the father of the Arabs who have been the avowed enemy of Israel ever since!)

**Genesis 12:18** Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife

- Ge 3:13 4:10 20:9,10 26:9-11 31:26 44:15 Ex 32:21 Jos 7:19 1Sa 14:43 Pr 21:1
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

## ABRAM REBUKED BY A PAGAN

**What is this you have done to me?** - The rotten seed Abram had sowed deserved a righteous rebuke from this pagan king! God brought Abram's deception to the light. As Moses wrote several centuries later "be sure your sin will find you out." (Nu 32:23b+). Similarly, the apostle Paul warned believers

**Do not be deceived** (command to stop this!), God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal 6:7-8<sup>+</sup>)

**Matthew Henry** - If those that profess religion do that which is unfair and disingenuous, especially if they say that which borders upon a lie, they must expect to hear of it, and have reason to thank those that will tell them of it.

**Pastor Ray Pritchard** writes that "God disciplines his disobedient children by humiliating them in front of unbelievers." ([Read full sermon](#))

**NET Note** - The demonstrative pronoun translated "this" adds emphasis: "What in the world have you done to me?"

**William MacDonald** - God did not forsake Abram, but He did allow the sin to work itself out. Abram was publicly humbled by the Pharaoh and deported in disgrace. This incident reminds us that we should not wage a spiritual warfare with carnal weapons (2 Cor 10:3,4<sup>+</sup>), that the end does not justify the means, and that we can't sin and get away with it (Ps 32:3<sup>+</sup>, 4, Pr 28:13<sup>+</sup>)

**Adrian Rogers** - First of all, compromise, then the wrong confidence, and now this unspeakable conduct of this man. I'm saying that Abram had a blowout on the road to heaven. Now what happened to him? That was the cause of it. What was the cost of it? Well number one, folks, he wasted an awful lot of time. All the time that he was down in Egypt was wasted time when he was down in Egypt because, you see, the Bible says that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." At the judgment seat Abram gets no reward for the time. But not only was it wasted time, a weakened testimony. Can you imagine the testimony. When that Egyptian king found out what Abram had done, he scolded Abraham for his duplicity. Can you imagine a pagan scolding a man of God? Saying, Hey, why did you deceive me like that? What kind of testimony did Abram have to the king of Egypt? And he took with him Lot down to Egypt. What kind of testimony did he have to his nephew Lot? I'll tell you his nephew Lot got down in Egypt, his nephew Lot had a taste of Egypt and you know what happened to his nephew Lot? He never forgot it, brother. As a matter of fact, when Lot was given a choice as to which was he could go after there was a conflict between, his herdsmen and Abram's herdsmen, the Bible says Lot lifted up his eyes and looked to the well-watered plains, watered plains, the grass was lush. Why, he said, the Bible tells us, he said, That's just like Egypt. That's just like Egypt. And Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. You know where it began? With Uncle Abraham. I mean the man of faith. Now I want, I want every parent in this building, you listen to me, and those of you on television, you listen to me. You may be saved and you may be going to heaven, but you listen to me. You camp out in Egypt and your kids are gonna get in all kinds of trouble. I mean, the testimony that you have, the junk that you watch on television. The places that you go. You are going down to Egypt. You're living like an Egyptian and God may get you out of Egypt and God got Lot out of Egypt, but he never got the Egypt out of Lot. Wasted time, wasted testimony when he's down in there. But not only in the error of time, and testimony, but trouble. Do you know what he got down, when he was down there in Egypt? He got two things, folks. Number one, he got wealth, and number two, he got a woman. The wealth he got, he picked up cattle, and later on there came a range war. Before this he was not a herdsman, he was a shepherd. He had sheep—he didn't have any cattle. The cattle came from Egypt. What's the difference between sheep and cattle? Sheep browse. Cattle graze. Sheep can eat the things that cows can't eat. Sheep just clip the grass. They've got two sets of teeth—cows just have one. Did you know that? I read this, I'm not a farm boy. I just read this. You watch a cow. Cow will take long grass, put his tongue around it and lift up his head and with one set of teeth he'll break off that grass. You watch a cow. I've watched cows after this do this. They take that grass and they break it off. A sheep doesn't do that. A sheep just goes along just like your barber shears, just clipping that grass. Now it takes a whole lot more for cattle than it takes for sheep and so Abram comes out and the Bible says he's got all these cows. Now he's a rancher, not a shepherd. And what he thought was



going to be such a blessing to him became a curse to him. And he got a woman down there. What was her name? Hagar, an Egyptian maid. She was an Egyptian. He later slept with her, produced a son Ishmael, who is giving to the sons of Abraham trouble to this very day and the trouble spot in the world is the Middle East because a man went down to Egypt and would not believe God and would not trust God. He had a blowout, a lapse of faith. ([Sermon](#))

**Genesis 12:19** "Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go.

- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

**Why did you say, 'She is my sister** - Why did you lie to me? The man who was blessed to be a blessing lied to this pagan Gentile.

**Matthew Henry** - Pharaoh "sent him away in peace, and was so far from any design to kill him, as he apprehended, that he took particular care of him. Note, We often perplex and ensnare ourselves with fears which soon appear to have been altogether groundless. We often fear where no fear is. We fear the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy, when really there is no danger, Isa. 51:13. It would have been more for Abram's credit and comfort to have told the truth at first; for, after all, honesty is the best policy."

**Pastor Ray Pritchard** notes that "Though it may seem painful at the time, chastening is meant to save us from our own stupidity and bring us to the place where our trust will be in God alone."

I don't imagine that Abraham often told the story of his days in Egypt. Most of us have a way of forgetting our painful failures and emphasizing our victories. But we always learn far more from defeat than we do from victory. That, I think, explains why this story is in the Bible. It teaches us important lessons about the spiritual life.

We always learn far more from defeat than we do from victory.

First, we see the danger of compromise. What seemed so innocent almost cost Abraham everything. Compromise generally starts with a small step in the wrong direction, followed by another and another. Pretty soon we're so far off the trail that it's easier to just continue in the same direction. If you don't want to end up in the Valley of Destruction, don't take that first step down Compromise Alley. Second, we see the deceitfulness of sin. No one ever "gets away" with sin. Though the wheels of God's justice grind slowly, they grind with perfect precision. Nothing is missed. All Satan's apples have worms. Every sin seems fun or reasonable or justified in the beginning. But in the end, we are the ones who pay the price. Third, we see what Oswald Chambers called the Dance of Circumstance. Who sent the famine? God did. Who sent the plague to Pharaoh? God did. Who stepped in to protect Sarah's purity at just the right moment? Who caused Abraham to be humiliated so that he would return to the Promised Land? God did. Think about that. As far as we know, God never speaks directly to Abraham, yet he is the Unseen Hand moving behind the events. Whatever else you can say about your life, don't ever forget that God is in charge of even the tiniest details. Nothing escapes his notice and even the most unlikely events are part of his plan for you.

Don't ever forget that God is in charge of even the tiniest details.

**Finally**, this passage teaches us something about the grace of God. That may seem strange because this story ends with Abraham's humiliation. But where does that humiliation lead? Back to the Promised Land where he should have been all along. The Psalmist cried out, "It was good that I was afflicted, that I might learn your decrees" (Psalm 119:71). How many of God's saints can testify that through God's judgment on sin they learned how great is his grace in forgiveness and restoration. This week I ate lunch with a man who shared how he came to Christ just a few years ago. He said that after his conversion, someone asked him to explain what it really means to be a Christian. What difference does Jesus make once he becomes both Lord and Savior? His answer was profound: "I've learned that I can sin but I can't enjoy it like I used to." You can still sin, and you can enjoy it for awhile, but not forever. God will not let his children enjoy the pleasures of sin indefinitely. Sooner or later, he steps in and brings his wandering sons and daughters back home to him.

([Read full sermon](#))

**Genesis 12:20** Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

- Ex 18:27 1Sa 29:6-11 Ps 105:14,15 Pr 21:1
- [Genesis 12 Resources](#) - Multiple commentaries, sermons, devotionals
- [Genesis 12:10-13:4 Faithless Man, Faithful God](#) - Steven Cole

**Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away** - Pharaoh could have easily inflicted harm on Abram for bringing judgment on him and his house. But he did not do so. Why? The text does not state why not but other texts teach us that God protects His promises (which in this case must be fulfilled in Abram and Sarai).

**Solomon** wrote

"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes." (Pr 21:1)

The **psalmist** wrote

"He (God) permitted no man to oppress them, And He reproved kings for their sakes: "Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm." (Ps 105:14-15)

As **Matthew Henry** reminds us "God's care of his people is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

[Adrian Rogers](#) - Did you know that the only place you can read about Abraham's failure is in the Old Testament. You can't read about it in the New Testament. Did you know that? In the New Testament, when God speaks of Abram, God does not remember his failures, God remembers his faith, isn't that wonderful? Is that not wonderful? And friend, I tell you, if you have failed God today, you can put that failure in the grave of God's forgetfulness and the God that gave Abram a new start and changed his name to Abraham is the God who'll give you a new start. God will give you a new name, a name written down in glory, if you'll trust Jesus. Where should you put your faith today? You put your faith where God has put your sins, on Jesus. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31) Father, I pray that many today will pray and say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart and forgive my sin and save me."

After his dangerous and humiliating side trip to Egypt out of which God rescued him, Abram would have surely agreed with the third stanza of John Newton's Amazing Grace...

[Through many dangers, toils and snares](#)

I have already come'

Tis Grace hath brought we safe thus far

And grace will lead me home.

**The 4,000-Year Connection**  
**Don Richardson**  
[Eternity in their Hearts](#)  
**(Borrow Book - Recommended reading)**

Dr. Ralph Winter, director of the United States Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, sometimes likes to startle audiences by saying things they think can't possibly be true—but are! For example: "Most Christians think," Dr. Winter once exclaimed, "that the Bible doesn't really emphasize missions. They see it as a sort of afterthought Christ had at the very end of His ministry—as if He snapped His fingers at the last minute before His ascension into heaven and said, 'Oh, by the way, men, there's just one more thing ...'

"And then, cold turkey, He rocked them back on their heels with this unprecedented, virtually unforeshadowed command about taking the gospel out into all the world.

"But as a matter of fact," Dr. Winter continued, "the Bible actually begins with missions, maintains missions as its central theme throughout, and then climaxes in the Apocalypse with spontaneous outbursts of joy because the missionary mandate has been fulfilled!"

Dr. Winter paused to rearrange his notes, while in the audience before him one eyebrow after another furrowed with a question.

Then someone raised a hand and voiced the question which was on everyone's mind: "Dr. Winter, the Bible begins with a statement that God created the heavens and the earth. How can you find missions in that?"

Just what the scholarly doctor was waiting for!

"The main theme of the Bible," he responded, his eyes twinkling over the rims of his glasses, "is God blessing all peoples on Earth with a blessing first given to Abraham. And where does God promise to bless all peoples on Earth through Abraham?"

"In Genesis chapter 12," someone replied.

"Genesis chapter 12, then, is the real beginning of the Bible," Dr. Winter continued. "Everything prior to Genesis 12 is the introduction. Equally inspired, yes! But the introduction nonetheless. The main theme doesn't get underway until Genesis 12. Let's look at it."

Curiously, I leafed through Genesis to the twelfth chapter and read the first three verses. I had read them many times before. Now I realized that I had underestimated their significance. Those three verses contain Yahweh's initial articulation of something Jews and Christians together call the Abrahamic Covenant. Authors of other parts of the Bible sometimes call that covenant "the promises" because several such are included in it. Other times they call it "the promise," in the singular, because the various promises included in the covenant together constitute one coherent purpose of God.

I saw that the various promises contained in the covenant can be arranged under two main headings. I call them the top line and the bottom line. Let's look at the top line first: "I will make you into a great nation," Yahweh began, "and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse!"

So-called higher critics have snidely suggested that the Abrahamic Covenant was really just another example of a petty tribal god whetting the selfishness of an exclusive little clique of followers with promises of exclusive blessing. That is because they are so high above the text in their intellectual pride that they cannot see what it is really saying. Note that in the very midst of this flurry of promises regarding the political, personal and social enrichment of Abraham, a qualifying phrase occurs: "... and you will be a blessing."

And that phrase presages the bottom line: "... AND ALL PEOPLES ON EARTH WILL BE BLESSED THROUGH YOU."

These words bring a hush upon thoughtful readers. We sense immediately that the God who would speak such words is no petty tribal god. He is a God whose plans are both benign and universal, spanning all ages and cultures. If He retaliates against enemies of Abraham, it is not just to protect Abraham, but also to keep the enemies from extinguishing a fire kindled to warm the whole world!

Clearly the Abrahamic Covenant did not mark the first time God revealed Himself to men. Adam, Cain, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Job and no doubt many others right on through to Abraham's contemporary, Melchizedek, had received direct communication from God. God even revealed Himself through a dream to Abimelech, a Philistine king (see Gen. 20:6). All of these prior revelations center around (1) the fact of God's existence; (2) creation; (3) the rebellion and fall of man; (4) the need for a sacrifice to appease God and the crafty attempts of devils to make men sacrifice to them; (5) the great Flood; (6) the sudden appearance of many languages and the resulting dispersion of mankind into many peoples; and finally (7) an acknowledgment of man's need of some further revelation that will seal man back into a blessed relationship with God.

These seven major facts which were known before Abraham's time are still included—in a declining order of statistical occurrence—among the main components of folk religions worldwide. The degree to which any folk religion has maintained its hold on truth can be measured by how many of these seven components it still retains and with what clarity. On this basis, the Karen folk religion discovered by Boardman, Wade, Mason and others in Burma was perhaps the "purest" folk religion left on Earth in modern times.

These surviving elements found throughout the world comprise what is sometimes called general revelation. Since Melchizedek was the main representative of that kind of revelation in Abraham's day, I have identified that kind of revelation as the Melchizedek Factor in history.

The Abrahamic Covenant, however, rises like an island in the midst of the sea of general revelation. That island is called special revelation. It is the Abraham Factor in history. We have already learned something about the Melchizedek factor in earlier chapters. Now we must study the Abraham factor.

How does the Abraham factor of special revelation differ from the preceding general revelation? First, special revelation is always associated with an inspired canonical record. Moses apparently compiled earlier records to write Genesis—the beginning of that canon. Then he added Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Apart from special revelation's unique emphasis upon preserving a written record, mankind would have been left without any authoritative account of the wellspring from which general revelation later spread across the earth.

The writer of the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews calls specific attention to the fact that general revelation, by Melchizedek's time, was already detached from a traceable historical tie-in with special revelation. He points out the unusual fact that Moses, although carefully recording the lineage of every other major person in the patriarchal age, does not record the names of Melchizedek's parents, nor the historical context of his birth, nor his age at death (see Heb. 7:3). He does not say, "Melchizedek, son of ... ." He emphasizes also that Melchizedek's priesthood—unlike the later Levitical priesthood which came through Abraham—was not based upon physical membership in a priestly lineage. A priest of this Melchizedekian type was always "just there," so to speak. You could never predict where you might find (or not find) one of them!

This has always been a characteristic of general revelation—it's just there-ness! The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes also that the Messiah who came among men in fulfillment of every spiritual reality foreshadowed by the Levitical priestly system was also at the same time "a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4; see also Heb. 5:4-10; 6:20; 7:15-22). Christ, in other words, is Lord of both general and special revelation.

The unity of both general and special revelation under Christ is indicated also by the apostle John, who wrote: "The true light [Christ] that gives light to every man [through general revelation]" was coming into the world (i.e., to shine upon men in a new and special way. John states also: "The light shines in the darkness [the Sodom factor], but the darkness has not overpowered it" (John 1:5, alternate rendering; see footnote in NIV).

Scientists have discovered recently that even physical light occurs in two forms—ambient and coherent. Ambient light, such as daylight, lamplight, firelight and so on, occurs naturally whenever certain factors prevail. Coherent light, however, occurs only in a laser, and therefore requires special, deliberate preparation and design. In ambient light, individual photons are scattered indiscriminately, like strollers meandering through a park. In coherent light, individual photons are organized into a "solid" beam, as if the "strollers" suddenly become organized and march lockstep through the park like an army! And coherent light can accomplish wonders beyond the scope of ambient light. It can, for example, eat through metal, or even excise cataracts from the eyes of the blind!

Thus general revelation could perhaps be called ambient revelation, and special revelation, in this parallelism, becomes coherent revelation, for it is systematized to bring, not merely illumination, but "blessing"!

Tracing the emergence of special revelation through the Abrahamic Covenant, the promised "blessing" turns out to be redemption through the Messiah. And the target of that blessing is "all peoples on earth." Not every person on Earth—otherwise the Abrahamic Covenant would be a basis for a doctrine of universal salvation!

The phrase "all peoples" constitutes a divine recognition of ethnic distinctions within our race. The same God who caused the proliferation of human cultures by His sovereign intervention at Babel now targets His special blessing through Abraham toward every "people" thus formed. In fact, Moses mentions 36 pagan peoples by name in the course of describing Yahweh's dealings with Abraham.

Furthermore, God is so determined to fulfill His promise to bless Abraham and make him a blessing to all peoples that He actually binds Himself by an oath to emphasize His determination (see Gen. 22:15-18). And the oath covers both the top and bottom lines of the covenant (see specifically Gen. 22:18).

This oath taking—a very serious matter from the viewpoint of Semitic peoples—triggers extensive commentary again from the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He states that God thus staked His infinite reputation upon the fulfillment of the covenant so that all may know that it represents "the unchanging nature of his purpose" (Heb. 6:17, emphasis added).

What, then, is that purpose? To guarantee that both the top and bottom lines of the Abrahamic Covenant come true! To bless Abraham and his seed (which, as we shall soon see, includes more than just the Jewish race), and then to make Abraham's seed a blessing to all peoples.

Now—let's ask the inevitable question: Do the Scriptures from Genesis 12 onward show Yahweh pursuing the fulfillment of His oathbound promises to Abraham—including the bottom line? Or does Scripture indicate that Yahweh, having bound Himself by that solemn oath, sort of drifted off course and got sidetracked into pursuing other goals? First of all—have you ever noticed that so much of the Old Testament is dedicated to narratives of various sons and daughters of Abraham being a blessing to non-Jewish peoples?

Just in case you haven't noticed this special significance of your favorite Old Testament dramas, let me point out that, for example:

1. Abraham himself bore witness to Canaanites, Philistines, Hittites and, rather negatively, to Egyptians.
2. Joseph was a son of Abraham who made up for his forefather's lack of a clear witness to the Egyptian nation! Joseph blessed Egyptians in truly amazing ways.
3. The spies who entered Jericho before it was destroyed became a blessing to Rahab, a Canaanite harlot, and her family.

4. Naomi, a daughter of Abraham, was a blessing to two Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah.
5. Moses became a blessing to Jethro, his Midianite father-in-law.
6. King David caused even his enemies, the Philistines, to acknowledge God's greatness.
7. The prophet Elijah was a blessing to a Sidonian widow in Zarephath.
8. The prophet Elisha, likewise, was a blessing to Naaman, a Syrian.
9. Jonah, however reluctantly, became a blessing to the Gentile population of Nineveh.
10. King Solomon was a blessing to the Sabaean "Queen of the South."
11. Daniel and his three colleagues, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were a blessing to Babylonians.
12. Esther and her uncle Mordecai were a blessing to the entire Persian Empire.
13. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah and other prophets declared the Word of the Lord to various Gentile nations.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit has employed a principle of selectivity in deciding which biographical narratives should or should not find inclusion in the Old Testament canon. Out of tens of thousands of other worthy narratives that doubtless could have been included, He has favored narratives which illustrate both the top and bottom lines of the Abrahamic Covenant at work in the lives of sons and daughters of Abraham.

Not only so, but there are also more than 300 declarative passages in the Old Testament which amplify God's oath-sealed promise to bless all nations on Earth (see, for example, Ps. 67:1-7 and Isa. 49:6).

Moving forward now to the New Testament, do we find God still adhering to His ancient commitment to both the top and bottom lines, or drifting from it?

The apostle Paul, for one, leaves us in no doubt whatever that the New Testament is really a continuation of God's original purpose revealed in the Abrahamic Covenant. For example, five times in just one chapter of one Epistle—Galatians—Paul emphasizes the unbreakable connection between the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Testament gospel:

1. "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you' "(Gal.3:8). Paul saw the New Testament gospel as already having a 2,000-year connection with the Abrahamic Covenant. But there is more.
2. "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham [i.e. the "top line" blessing] might come to the Gentiles [fulfilling the "bottom line" promise] through Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:14). Paul continued:
3. "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). In a special singular sense, then, Jesus Christ was the seed of Abraham, Paul states this specific identification of Christ as the Seed of Abraham again.
4. Gal 3:19: "[The law] was added ... until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."
5. But there is a more general sense in which all who stand identified with Jesus Christ by their faith in Him are also the "seed" of Abraham: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

We Christians have generally failed to appreciate the fact that Paul and the other apostles saw the Abrahamic Covenant as basic to everything Christ came to accomplish. That covenant was therefore basic to their own labors and to their writings as well. By means of the Abrahamic Covenant (and especially its "bottom line"), they saw their own lives fitting into God's long-term historical perspective. And they used the bottom line as their main means of explaining to their fellow Jews why it was necessary for them to reach out to Gentile peoples!

Notice, for example, Peter's clear reference to the "bottom line" in Acts 3:25, spoken in the aftermath of Christ's clear command to the apostles to "be witnesses unto him" from Jerusalem to the "ends of the earth." "And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'"

Peter then explained the point of the "bottom line" by saying: "When God raised up his servant [i.e., when He called Jesus to His ministry as Messiah, as in Acts 3:22], he sent him first to you to bless you [i.e., in fulfillment of 'the top line']" (Acts 3:26). Peter has simply referred to the top and bottom lines in reverse order. Peter's words, "first to you to bless you" imply that God had also a contiguous second purpose to bless Gentiles according to the promise just quoted.

Paul's perception that the "bottom line" foreshadowed the New Testament gospel's "breakout" into the Gentile world was not merely a casual insight. Paul actually calls it a "mystery made known to me by revelation" (Eph. 3:3). He also calls it an "insight ... not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets" (Eph. 3:4-5).

He then defines his profound insight: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles [i.e., the 'all peoples' of the bottom line] are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise [the Abrahamic Covenant] in

Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:6, emphasis added). Paul says essentially the same thing again in Romans 16:25-26 and in Colossians 1:25-27. Also, in Romans 15:8-9 he writes: “For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs, so that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy” (emphasis added).

Paul then expresses his desire to “make plain to everyone [his] administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God” (Eph. 3:9). This mystery—and Paul’s administration of it—is in accord with “[God’s] eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11; see also Rom. 15; 16:25-26).

Paul’s words remind us of the statement in the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning “the unchanging nature of his purpose,” as indicated by the oath God took over the Abrahamic Covenant.

Why, then, have tens of thousands of Bible teachers and Bible commentators throughout Christendom failed to reflect the centrality of the Abrahamic Covenant with its top and bottom lines in their teaching and lecturing? Followers of Christ around the world and down through the centuries could have had 100 times more missionary vigor if seminary professors, pastors and church school teachers had understood and communicated this central theme as the Bible communicates it.

The Abrahamic Covenant, in all the manifold out-workings of both its top and its bottom lines, is the very backbone of the Bible—the spinal column of special revelation! Teaching which does not acknowledge that spinal column will inevitably have a certain spinelessness about it. It will—quite literally—lack backbone! And it will tend to leave Christians less motivated than they would otherwise be to pass on the blessings they have received, not merely to their own kind of people, but to all peoples on Earth.

We can hardly expect the Church to manifest a Pauline zeal for all remaining unblessed peoples if we ourselves have failed to infuse the Church with the very historical perspectives which accelerated Paul himself to that high level of zeal. To use a parallel, physicists concerned with high energy physics tell us that no atomic particle can be accelerated to high energies unless: (1) it is a charged particle to begin with; (2) it is caught in the grip of a powerful magnetic field; and (3) that particle is moved by the magnetic field in relation to a very long tunnel, the “accelerator.”

By analogy, we first have to become “charged particles” through our individual conversion to Jesus Christ. Then we must be caught in the grip of a surrounding magnetic field—the Holy Spirit’s power permeating the Body of Christ. That magnetic field must then move us in alignment with a very long tunnel—God’s 4,000-year-old purpose in history—a purpose defined by just one thing: the Abrahamic Covenant. That covenant’s importance, therefore, cannot be overstated. To perceive oneself in relation to that 4,000-year-old purpose of God is to become a profoundly “charged” person. It is impossible to imagine a stronger stimulation to high motivation in seeking the fulfillment of God’s plan for the world.

To imply that God is no longer concerned about fulfilling His two ancient promises to Abraham would be to imply that God’s mind has wandered—that it has somehow slipped His mind that He bound Himself by an oath to fulfill those two ancient promises.

Remember the response of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “It is impossible for God to lie [or forget]” (Heb 6:18).

This, then, is what I mean by “the 4,000-year connection.” To see oneself as an instrument in God’s now 4,000-year-old purpose to impart blessing to all peoples is to jettison at once all feelings of insignificance, indecision and purposelessness. That very long historical perspective, by the spiritual magnetic field which permeates it, begins at once to accelerate us toward the greatest destiny any finite being can possibly find.

Just be sure you are a charged particle to begin with—a genuine believer in Jesus Christ. Otherwise that magnetic field and the accelerator will have no effect upon you whatever. They will simply leave you standing where you are.

Hundreds of millions of Christians have listened to hundreds of thousands of preachers deliver hundreds of thousands of sermons based on the great anthems of the Apocalypse, anthems sung by heavenly beings to celebrate the great gathering of the redeemed in heaven. You will find these recorded in the apostle John’s Revelation, the final book of the Bible. But precious few of those preachers or their listeners seem to have understood what John was really telling us when he quoted the 24 elders, for example, singing in one of those anthems: “You [Lamb of God] are worthy ... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on earth” (Rev. 5:9-10, emphasis added).

And when John described his own breathtaking vision of “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9), what was he really communicating to us?

Likewise, when he was told by an angel that he “must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings” (Rev. 10:11), what significance do you discern?

And what comes to mind when he in Revelation 11:9 states that “men from every people, tribe, language and nation” will behold the



miracle of the two witnesses? And when he states that the beast (Antichrist) will for a season exercise authority over every tribe, people, language and nation (see Rev. 13:7)?

What comes through in his description of another angel who proclaims **‘the eternal gospel ... to every nation, tribe, language and people’** (Rev. 14:6)?

Surely John is describing not just the consummation of history, but the consummation of God's special purpose in history to bless all peoples on Earth through Abraham's Seed—Jesus Christ! John could as easily have described the scenes mentioned with a single Greek noun for the word “mankind.” Instead he explores the entire vocabulary of the Greek language, mustering every noun available to denote the kind of ethnic subdivisions of mankind which were the original God-ordained targets of the Abrahamic “blessing.”

In other words, John is telling us through such prophecies that God will pursue His ancient purpose to the very end—when He will be free from the obligation He took upon Himself by that ancient oath. For it is the “unchanging nature of His purpose”!

Now for a very suspenseful question. The apostles reveal full awareness of the centrality of the Abrahamic Covenant in their writings—but what about Jesus Christ Himself? Do the four Gospels reveal that He manifested awareness of the covenant as foundational to His ministry? If, after all I have said on this subject, it turns out that our Lord Himself seemed blissfully unaware of any obligation relating to “the bottom line,” and therefore did not manifest an all-peoples perspective, the entire point of this book would be undermined. (Borrow this fascinating book [Eternity in Their Hearts](#))