

“I am found of them who seek after me, I give unto all them that ask of me; I am not found of them that sought me not, or that inquireth not after me.” (Isaiah 65:1)

Abraham – Friend of God, Old Testament Study

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“Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day his salvation. Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvelous works among all nations. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols; but the Lord made the heavens. Glory and honor are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come before him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him, all the earth; the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth.” (1 Chronicles 16:23-31)

Lesson II: Abraham – Pilgrim, Altar Builder

“And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, leaving Beth-el on the west, and Hai was on the east. And there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.” (Genesis 12:6-7)

In lesson 1, the geographical area that Abraham came from – Sumer -- and some of the cultures -- Babylonian and Assyrian – were mentioned from his time. These countries were in existence at the time of Abram and certainly had a lasting effect on the country of Israel, as it became a nation centuries later. It is important to know where these countries were located (modern day Iraq), and perhaps a little bit about the heritage of their people, and certainly about their culture and their worship of many gods to help us understand Abram’s life better.

This lesson begins our look at the man Abram who was an altar builder and pilgrim. Lesson 2 will cover Abram’s life before he became Abraham through a specific covenant with God in Genesis 17. There were trials to overcome and covenants and promises being made all along Abram’s journey. We are going look at the life of the man who had such a close and enduring relationship with God. This man believed the promises of God so fully that he was willing to wander for one hundred years. He trusted that God would fulfill every covenant made to him through his children.

First, why study about someone who lived some 3800 years ago? Is his life and the accounts of his experiences with God of importance to us today? We find in Abram a most unusual man. The choice he made to follow God is influencing choices that are being made by many people even today. He was truly a man of God and good example of faith to us. Because of his life, there are many countries that exist today that would not have existed if he had never lived. We have political and social situations that exist today that would not if it had not been for Abram. We are dealing with many of the things in our world today (good and bad) that have their roots in this man who became Abraham, Pilgrim & Altar Builder, Man of Covenant, Father of Nations, and Blessing.

How is it that one man could make such a difference? It begs the question, what kind of a difference are we making? This one man was not perfect. As we read his history, we find some things

that he did that we will probably not agree with, especially those of us who are women. He was, however, a man who was willing to follow God wherever He led. He was willing to lay aside every preconceived idea, and all of the things that he had been taught to believe in so that he could worship the one and true and only God. He was willing to give up everything to know this God, and to serve Him. What a marvelous testimony. It should be our testimony as well. This study will look at the wonderful things God can do through one imperfect, but willing person.

This lesson will cover chapters 12, 13 and 14 and part of 11 in Genesis. In the next lesson, we are going to study about Abram becoming the covenant man – Abraham. Abram made many covenants with God; and God, to benefit us all, made a most marvelous and lasting covenant through which all Christians today are blessed. Abraham’s ancient relationship with God is affecting the Jews, the Muslims, and Christians of our day.

Doctrine & Covenants 22 gives a clear testimony that Moses knew what he was talking about when he wrote his account found in Genesis. Over the generations, many precious and simple things have been lost out of the Scriptures. But we have the Inspired Version of the Bible, which gives us extra insight back into that original testimony of Moses. Moses was not just recounting some oral history. Moses actually saw and heard God explain what happened. What better source can we have than an eyewitness?

Abram was a real man. Some Bible scholars (and I use that term as someone who has studied the Bible and not someone who necessarily understands it) believe that Abraham was a cultural myth. The Biblical account of creation and accounts of covenantal relationships are true. They actually happened. Not only do I believe this because of my own personal testimony, but also from a second witness, the Book of Mormon. The scriptures tell us of historical occurrences and actual people.

This study will work from Abraham as a real person and how he influenced his world and our world today. Many scholars, when you read their books, start from the opposite direction than the scriptures do. We believe that because of Abraham the nation of Israel arose. Many scholars believe that because there was a nation of Israel who had to explain their roots, there became an Abraham created as founder. It says in the last days that people will take good for bad, and bad for good, white for black and black for white, and you can see how scholarship sometimes will turn the truth around to fit their own theories and to discount the power and authority of God. We have to be sure that we understand, especially when we read other sources, that this is true. Don’t let that doubt come into your mind. The Genesis account is true.

Although I prepare my classes with prayer, my interpretation of the scriptures could be incorrect. The responsibility is on you to read your Scriptures. And not only to read them (because many people who believe many incorrect things read the scriptures), you must ask for the Holy Spirit to lead into understanding. Is that difficult? Not in the least because the Holy Spirit’s purpose is to talk about God, and His Son, and the light, and the truth, and He will give you truth if you ask Him. But we must be careful not to be like the waves of the ocean. They go and they come. Some days it is really important to us to have answers to our questions, and the next day we can’t even remember what we asked. We need to be asking for a purpose - to use the truth for God’s purposes and to His glory - and the Holy Spirit will gladly reveal the truth of all things to us (Moroni 10:5).

Chapter 11

- The Tower nigh unto heaven
- Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran
- Haran died, His children - Lot, Milcah, Iscah
- Abram married Sarai, (Abram’s half sister)
- Nahor married Milcah (Nahor’s niece)

- Their son - Bethuel
- Terah took Abram, Lot, Sarai from Ur to Haran
- Terah died (205 yrs old)



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In Genesis chapter 11, an account is given of the great tower or Tower of Babel. This was located in the plain of Shinar in Sumer (the land of the Chaldees). This was the same area where Ur, the city that Abram came from, was located. The Sumerians are also called Chaldeans. *People, Places, and Prophecies* by Verneil Simmons is a book well worth your time to read. She makes an interesting note about the Tower of Babel that applies to the Book of Mormon. We do not know a lot about the Tower of Babel. The account we have in Genesis does not give the location of the tower or the name of the people that built it. In Genesis 11:1-3, it is stated, “many journeyed from the east ... and dwelt there in the plain of Shinar.” Shinar was the tract of land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers just north of the Persian Gulf that was later known as Chaldaea or Babylon¹. It is believed that the tower was probably a ziggurat, which was briefly described in lesson 1. Although we don’t know the exact location of this tower, we do have the Jaredite account in the Book of Mormon that tells more about this experience in the book of Ether.

The point that Verneil makes in her book is that in the Book of Mormon it is called the great tower. It’s not called the Tower of Babel because that was a term that was only applied to it at such a later date. So we don’t really know what Jared and his people called the tower, but for our purposes it is called the Tower of Babel. It would have been a glaring error if it had been called the Tower of Babel in the Book of Mormon. This is another testimony of the accuracy of the Book of Mormon.

Abram descended from Shem, Noah’s second son. Genesis 10:4-7 states that Nimrod descended from Ham, Noah’s third son, and built Babel and other cities (vs. 6). From this people came Asshur who built Nineveh (one of the capitals of Assyria). Genesis 10:12-13 states that Asshur was the son of Shem. The Bible is not clear if this Asshur was the same man. At the time the great tower fell and the language was confounded, the people were scattered, very possibly the Babylonians and Assyrians came out of these people. At least they were highly influenced by them

Archeologists have some educated guesses about origins because they look at pottery, the types of artifacts that show how they lived and worshiped. They look at the remains of building structures to see what is similar and what’s dissimilar. But when you have such a magnificent society like the Sumerians, many cultures even though they were not related, pulled from them. The Sumerians were

¹Smith’s Bible Dictionary, William Smith, L.L.D., Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1986, pg. 622.

credited with inventing over 150 different inventions that had lasting effects upon many cultures such as the wheel and the arch and mathematics. They were very highly educated and they influenced and permeated other societies. If they were descended from Ham or Shem, we do not know for certain.

Some Bible scholars suggest that Japheth's, who was the oldest of Noah's sons, descendants settled in the north like in the area of Turkey and to the west into Europe. They think Ham's descendants were in Canaan and down into Egypt. And that Shem's descendants were originally (because they all moved) in the area of Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia means the land between two rivers—that is the Tigris and the Euphrates. That is where Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian cultures developed.

Read Galatians 3. What's the New Testament doing in an Old Testament study? All scripture is connected. The Old Testament is the beginning point for the Book of Mormon, and for the New Testament. The Book of Mormon came from the Old Testament culture—from the very pages of the Old Testament. The scriptures and cultural perspectives of the New Testament people came from the Old Testament prophets; the Old Testament accounts of history. They are all connected. So if you know something about the Old Testament -- about the way people thought and what they expected as fulfillment of prophesy and covenant -- you will know something about why they believed what they believed in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon.

There is an old saying, "In Old Testament, the New Testament is contained. In the New Testament, the Old Testament is explained." They are very much connected, and very important to each other. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that is received from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4, underline added). It is very important that we study all of the scriptures. So what is your homework assignment? If you have a Concordance, look up the scriptures about Melchizedek in the Old Testament. He will not get the attention he deserves in this study. Here is wonderful man who walks on the pages of the Old Testament and walks back out, as far as the world knows, and he is not heard of again in the King James Bible. Once again we see how very blessed we are to have the restored gospel. We need to be sure that we are taking advantage of this wonderful gift.

The father of Abram was Terah. What kind of a man was he? We know very little about him. According to Hebrew and Muslim tradition (Islam is the religion, and Muslim are the people), Abram's father was an idol worshiper, and his business was making idols. Can you imagine being raised in a home like that, and being a man like Abram? From Joshua 24:2, "...Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods." Abram came out of this family of idol worshipers. His brothers and his brothers' children worship idols – even years after Abram's experiences with God. They have idols in their home. Even Jacob – two generations away from Abram – still struggled with idols that were possessed by people of his household. Idol worship had a grip on these people that was very, very difficult to let go of. This problem continued centuries later in the country of Israel. Abram did not have a problem letting go of this sin and committing himself fully to the worship of God alone. He was a very unique and faithful individual.

During the time of Abram's journey to Canaan, the archeological evidence shows that there was a migration from Sumer, from the area of the Chaldees where Ur was located. There are many reasons why this might have been. The land of Sumer was a very highly industrial/commercial area. There was a limited amount of land between the two rivers. It was highly farmed. There could have been a westward migration just like we saw in our country. There was land and opportunity to the west – places for homes, pastures and trade. So not only Abram and his family, but also other people according to archeological records moved into Canaan from Sumer.

Part of this group was Terah and his family. Terah picked up his family and moved towards Canaan settling in Haran (Genesis 11:19). Haran is located right below modern day Turkey. The land there was very fertile. This land was at the top of the bow of the Fertile Crescent. This area, in the

shape of an arc or horseshoe, stretched from Sumer at the eastern end of the crescent, up to Haran (below Turkey), to the western end, which passed through Canaan into Egypt. On the right side were Sumer, Babylon and Assyria. The top was Haran. On the west side was Canaan (between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River and a little strip of land to the east of the river. Terah went from Ur of the Chaldees (for whatever reason) taking with him Abram and Abram's wife, his nephew Lot and whatever wealth they had, and moved into Haran. Haran is still an area today that is peopled. There is a city named Haran also. Although it may not be the exact same city, we find that the archeological evidence shows that many cultures built cities on top of older cities. The deeper you go, the older the city becomes. Many times cities were destroyed, and then rebuilt on the same location. Today's city called Haran has the most unusual beehive architecture. It is not found anywhere else; it is very unique to them, and it is very ancient. Many of the people there are still doing, in their every day life, things that would have been done at the time of Abram.

Terah was 205 when he died in Haran. We don't have much information about Terah—what he might have thought about Abram, what he might have thought about Abram's God, but we find that it after the death of Terah that God speaks to Abram. Why was it important that God waited until Terah died? Parents have a great deal of influence upon their children. God waited for Terah to die, which is a fact. What kind of influence are we on our children? Could we be keeping God back from blessing our children by holding onto incorrect traditions?

We have an opportunity to have an influence for good, or maybe not quite so good, on our children. Our children carry with them attitudes and ideas (even some things that we did not know we were teaching) that make them who they are. The commandments of God are true and sure, and one of the commandments from God is that you honor your father and your mother. By all indications Abram did honor his father. He still stayed within his family even though he was not an idol worshiper. But when God spoke to him, he was willing to give up all incorrect traditions and preconceived ideas to start anew.

One interesting note is that because of the long length of people's lives, Shem could have been alive during the time that Abram was born and was very young. Shem would have known the truth. Were there people who knew the gospel at the time Abram lived? Yes.

Chapter 12

- The Lord spoke to Abram 12:1-2:
 - “Get thee 1) out of thy country, 2) and from thy kindred, 3) and from thy father's house,
 - A) “unto a land that I will show thee;
 - B) “I will make of thee a great nation
 - C) “I will bless thee, and make thy name great”
 - “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee”
 - “in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed”
- Traveled to Sichem (Shechem), the plain of Moreh
- The Lord appeared to Abram 12:6
 - D) “Unto thy seed will I give this land...”
 - Built an altar** “unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.” (vs. 6)
- Traveled to Beth-el (the house of God)
 - Built an altar** “unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord” (vs.7)
- Traveled to Egypt because of famine
- Instructed Sarai to say she was his sister because he feared for his life
- Sarai taken into the Pharaoh's house
- Pharaoh gave Abram sheep, oxen, asses, menservants, maidservants, camels

- “ Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai” (vs.13)
- Pharaoh confronted Abram and sent him away with all his goods

A key to knowing who Abram was and why God moved through him, and not through most of people that were around him, is found in our beginning scripture Isaiah 65:1. Abram was seeking, and God answered. God reaches out to us and causes us to have the desire to seek. It begins with desire, and it is God who places that desire within us. We can do anything that we want with this desire – we can seek to fulfill it with carnal, temporal things or even reject it because it is too much trouble. If you are seeking God, you must expect change. You have to change; and boy, did Abram’s life change.

Abram went from a prosperous city in Ur into Haran where by all indication his brother’s, Nahor, family stayed. Later in Abraham’s life, when he seeks a wife for his son, he sends his servant back to this family – his kindred – in Haran to the city of Nahor (perhaps named after his brother Nahor or just a way to say the city that Nahor lived in).

It doesn’t mention in Genesis 11 that Terah took Nahor when he took his family to Haran. Perhaps Nahor went first and established a place and Terah came later. Terah could have gone to where Nahor already was established or Nahor could have come later. We know that the servant of Abraham, when he went for a wife for Isaac, came into the house of Bethel, which was Nahor’s son. Bethel’s son was named Laban who played an important role in the life of Jacob. The people that stayed in Haran remained idol worshipers. The scriptures state that they had household idols. People of that time believed that the gods of that land were specific to the land. Abram believed that there was only one God and that He was over all lands because they were His creation. This was revolutionary for most of the people of Abram’s day. Abram’s faith was in a God who would do all that He said. Abram’s faith was strong enough that God could not only speak to him but that He could also appear unto him (Genesis 12:6).

After the death of Abram’s father, God talks to him.

“Now, the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee; And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, and in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 12:1-2

What do you think of what God said to Abram? He will bless him, and not only will He bless him, but He will make him a blessing. He said to him, I will show you a land, and implied in this (and stated in other places) not only am I going to show you this land, but also I’m going to give it to your descendants. It was a sure inheritance but it would not be fulfilled for several generations.

Land was very important to these people. We don’t see it in quite the same way that they did then, but it was the real inheritance that you gave your children. It was a very necessary part of God provision for His people. He said I will make you a great nation. A great nation was to come out of one man. And we find that several nations came from him. The great nation that God is speaking of is the Israelite nation through whom He brought the Son of God. “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, and in thee shall the families of the earth (us!) be blessed.” Blessing, upon blessing, upon blessing. What is Abram’s response? Verse 3:

“So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran;”

Abram departed as the Lord had directed immediately. The Lord said, “I will do this for you,” and Abram said, “Yes, do this for me. I will be obedient.” He got up and he went. This was really important instruction that God gave him, and Abram followed it pretty well. In the places where he didn’t quite follow them, it ended up being a problem. Now is that a true concept? Does God ever make mistakes? No! He tells us what to do, but then sometimes we try to modify it. The more we modify God’s commands the more we are going to experience problems in our lives. Sometimes God tells us to do something in a certain way, and we think that maybe God does not really understand the situation, or maybe because of our culture we feel obligated in some way to do things in another way. God sees this and He can forgive us, if we repent, but we have to deal with consequences. There are consequences for our actions.

And there were consequences for Abram’s actions and most of them were wonderful, but there were certain areas where he deviated from what God said, and he had problems. And some of those problems we are dealing with today. God said in verse 1, get thee out of thy country. No problem. He went. He went not only from Ur, but he went from Haran where his family was. And not only from thy kindred, but from thy father’s house. Now father’s house meant (in this culture) the father, the married sons and their children. That is the father’s house—the descendants. Terah was the patriarch of the family and his sons and grandson were his descendants.

Abram left his father’s house, he left his brother, he left many people there, but he didn’t leave Lot. Who was Lot? His nephew. We learned about him in Chapter 11. He took Lot with him – part of his father’s house. Perhaps Abram felt responsible for him since his father, Haran, had died. Perhaps Lot wanted to go. We do not know how old Lot was at this time, but he was probably younger than Abram who was 75 when he left Haran (Sarai, his wife, was 65). Certain things happened because Lot went with them. Am I saying that Abram shouldn’t have taken Lot? Well I wasn’t there, and I didn’t hear the exact command of God. But God did say, leave thy kindred, and he took Lot.

Abram went into the land of Canaan (word means “lowland”). The land of Canaan was between the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee. The Dead Sea was on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the west. During the time of Abram it was very fertile. It is still fertile land. The main problem in this area is the limited amount of rainfall received each year. Only a slight deviation in the amount of rain would spell disaster for their crops and herds. The rain patterns have changed over the centuries, but at the time that Abram went, it was very lush, very green, and therefore very good pasture land. But there were years of drought as indicated in the scriptures.

The people living in this area were called collectively called Canaanites. They were a diverse group of people. There was a group of people there who were called Perizzites. Basically this name means people who lived in villages. They weren’t necessarily a nationality, but they lived in the area, they had some commonality, and they lived in villages so they were called Perizzites. Eventually over time, all the people who gathered in that area were considered Canaanites because they lived in the land of Canaan. They were not a unified body of people—they did not have a central government. They had city/states like Ur had which had a lot of autonomy, but they didn’t have the level of society that the Chaldeans, Babylonians, and Assyrians had. They were a loose group, and they were always struggling for power, and they did not have a strong nation.

There was a lot of traffic through the land had had good and bad results. The merchants brought in wonderful things for trade and potential wealth, but they also brought in a lot of diverse people, which caused problems. The reason that the people from Babylon and Assyria traveled through Canaan and did not just go straight west across to the coast was because the “in between” area was (and is) an extremely harsh desert. It would have been a lot less traveling but there is no water and the terrain was (and is) very rough. Trying to get across the desert with no water especially with herds and families or armies was just too difficult.

Abram was one of many people who came to Canaan. He brought with him his wife, Sarai, who was his half-sister (Sarai and Abram had the same father), Lot (and his family), servants, and his herds.

The Canaanites were not thrilled with the influx of new people -- especially herdsmen who were considered to be untrustworthy and thieves perhaps - because they could never stay in one place for long. When Abram first came, he was not a serious threat to anyone. He had many women with him, his servants, and his herds. He had to earn the respect and trust of the people around him. The first thing that he did when he came into the country was to set up his tent and build an altar. Everywhere that Abram went in Canaan, he built an altar. There is no record of Abram building altars in Egypt, but he was never called to go to Egypt. He was called to go to Canaan. Canaan was his land of promise and it was in Canaan that he built altars to worship God. It must have said to the people of this land – “this is where I am, and this is who I am. I am a worshiper of the true and living God.” When he left each site, he left that altar to mark his faith. These altars were the most permanent place that this wandering family had. They were a reminder to them that this would be their land (through their descendants) one day.

When Abram came back to an area, he would come back to the place of his altar. Everywhere that he went he left a testimony. If you were living in that time, and you came across an altar, you would have known that a man of faith had stopped there. What did this tell those people at that time about this man? Where was his priority? He loved his Lord.

- Land of Canaan

ABRAM'S JOURNEY TO CANAAN



[Genesis 11:31-12:9](#)

Abram, Sarai, and Lot traveled from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan by way of Haran. Though indirect, this route followed the rivers rather than attempting to cross the vast desert.

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 6

The land of Canaan extended from Sidon to Gaza on the Mediterranean coast and to the Jordan River Valley. There were several city-states, which were often under Egyptian rule.² They were never united ethnically or politically enough to be considered a nation. Trade routes through their land provided many goods and many problems as nomadic tribes raided in the area. Approximately 1000 years before King David, there was a city called Canaan, which supported over 260,000 people and was known to have trading contacts all over the known world. It was destroyed around 1600 BC.³ As a whole, the Canaanite peoples were not regarded as politically strong or well educated. Egypt in its efforts to keep control of this important trade route, never allowed these people to gain complete independence. Therefore they never had a strong united army and could not defend themselves effectively when armies (such as the Hebrews) invaded. They were polytheistic, worshipping many gods of the earth such as those Jezebel brought into Israel when she married King Ahab (1 Kings 16:31-32).

² [Canaan-The Promised Land-Ancient Palestine](#), Crystalinks.com

³ [Canaan and Ancient Israel](#), The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology

- Land of Egypt

Abram traveled from place to place, caring for his herds and people, and leaving altars where he has been worshiping God. It is a fact of life that even when you are striving to serve God, times can get tough and trials come. A famine happened in the land. Perhaps the rains did not come at the right time. Abram decided to go to Egypt. Why? Because of the Nile. The Nile was (and is) very stable source of water. Before the Aswan Dam was built in the twentieth century, the Nile flooded at regular intervals. Because of this, the Egyptians had a much more dependable and structured system of agriculture. The people from neighboring cultures often turned to Egypt for help during times of famine and drought. The nation of Israel often turned to Egypt instead of God during times of trouble. When things got tough, people would go to Egypt. Did God send Abram to Egypt? There is not a lot in scriptures to answer that question. The answer in the fruit it bore.

“And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine became grievous in the land.” (Genesis 11:8)

ABRAM'S JOURNEY TO EGYPT



[Genesis 12:10](#)

A famine could cause the loss of a shepherd's wealth. So Abram traveled through the Negev to Egypt, where there was plenty of food and good land for his flocks.

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 7

Abram went to Egypt because of his herds, and because of his family, and because he had not learned to trust in God's provisions. At no time should any of God's people go to Egypt unless God sent them. Egypt is sort of synonymous with the world just as Babylon was. God chastised people for trusting in the chariot and horse (two things Egypt was famous for) instead of trusting in Him. The Hebrew people through the generations have had a lot of trouble with Egypt. They admired and feared these people. When they took their eyes off God and fled to Egypt (Jeremiah 42), they were trusting in the arm of flesh.

What was the problem with Abram going to Egypt? It was not the land God had promised to Abram. Was it tough in Canaan? Yes. It required a strong faith to trust that God was able to provide in this difficult situation. But things *really* get tough when you know what you are supposed to do, and you do not do it. Egypt was not a place that was conducive to the worship of the one and only true God. God uses all of His creation to bring about His work – “to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man.” (D&C 22:23b). When God chose, He sent His people to Egypt (Joseph and Jesus). But for the most part throughout the generations, it was not a place that God sent his people, and it was not an influence that God wanted on his people. God was to be Abram's deliverer, not Egypt.

Abram went to Egypt because of the famine. As he was going, he started compromising immediately and he did something that is hard to justify. He asked Sarai to say that she was his sister – which was half true. Apparently she was a very beautiful woman. It was a cultural thing for the people who were in power to seek out the most beautiful women for their rulers' harems. The book of Esther contains one account of this practice. Other historical records show that this was a common practice. Abram knew how things worked in the world. He handled the situation with a worldly answer. Was this pleasing to God? No. The covenant promises were going to come through the son Sarai would bear.

When those in authority saw Sarai, she was brought to the attention of Pharaoh. When she said she was Abram's sister, they brought her into Pharaoh's household. The Pharaoh gave Abram much wealth in exchange for his "sister." Then something very interesting happened. The Pharaohs had problems with God's people long before Moses! Because they had Sarai in the household, Pharaoh and his people were plagued. Even though Abram was not what we would consider a strong and faithful man in this situation, God still preserved him. When Pharaoh discovered Abram's deception, it could have been really bad for him for Pharaoh had the power of life and death. He could have had him killed instantly -- he was probably rather angry with him. But a man that God shelters in such a way that he would cause plagues on the Pharaoh's household, was someone to take notice of. So Pharaoh sent them away with all their accumulated wealth. Abram might have thought that that turned out really well. But the consequence of sin followed Abram. Not only did the wealth cause him difficulties, but also a certain Egyptian handmaiden that went with them caused problems that we are still experiencing today. Also, in Genesis 26:7, Abram's son Isaac committed this same sin which he probably learned from the history of his father.

Chapter 13

- Left Egypt "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (1)
- Traveled to Beth-el
- **At the altar**, called on the name of the Lord" (2)
- Strife between Lot and Abram's herdsmen (3-5)
- Abram gave Lot first choice of the grazing land (7)
- Lot chose the plain of Jordan, "like as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt" (8)
- God spoke to Abram after he separated from Lot:
 - A) "look ...northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward (12)
 - B) "remember the covenant which I make with thee, for it shall be an everlasting covenant (13)
 - C) "remember the days of Enoch thy father;
 - D) "all the land which thou seest, will I give thee and to thy seed forever (14)
 - E) "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth
 - F) "Arise, walk through the land...for I will give it unto thee." (15)
- Traveled to Hebron, plain of Mamre
- **Built an altar** "unto the Lord" (15)

After leaving Egypt, Abram went back to Bethel and again worshiped there at the altar that he had built. Immediately there were problems with the abundant wealth he had brought back from Egypt. Remember Lot, Abram's kindred that went with him from Haran? The herdsmen of Lot and Abram began fighting because there was not enough pasture and water to meet the needs of all the animals. In verse 5, there is something really interesting mentioned briefly. It says in the midst of this strife, that the Canaanite and the Perrizzite dwelled in the land. It doesn't say what they were doing.

But they were probably watching. Here is Abram who has come into their land. He seems to be a really righteous and good man. He says he worships the one and only true God. He builds altars as a sign of his devotion. But when he returns to the land from Egypt with all this wealth there is strife and bickering. Now Abram and Lot are not bickering, but their herdsmen are bickering. What kind of a testimony is that? We all have to be really careful about our testimonies. We can build wonderful altars, but if we are bickering one with another, what is that testifying?

Abram did not want this strife to continue between them. Since the land there was not big enough for the two of them, Abram gave Lot first choice of the available pastureland. Abram was the patriarch. As Lot's uncle, he was the one providing shelter and protection for Lot and his family. Abram was the one who was receiving the word of the Lord. He could have told Lot what to do and where to do. But he did not do this. It is indicative of his character. He said to Lot (who he must have loved greatly), "Lot, we can not live together. We are going to have to separate, and I am going to give you first choice. You look over the land. If you want to go to the west, I will go to the east. If you want to go to the east, then I will go to the west."

The people around Hebron today celebrate the fact that Abram was a very generous man. Part of their culture, part of their understanding of Abram is that here was a man that turned no one away who came to him for help. Here was a man who openly gave of everything that he had. He was a very unique person. Today in Hebron they serve the soup of Abraham. A group of Muslims there make soup every day and give it to anyone who comes. Does the heritage of Abraham influence people today? It certainly does.

What did Lot do? Did Lot say, "Oh no, you have been so good to me—all these blessings have come to me because of your God." Is that what he said? No. He looked over to the plains of Jordan and thought, "Wow, just like the Garden of God was supposed to have been. I want that. There is lots of water there. I will prosper. Give me that." Abram did not argue with him. There was no debate. He did not chasten him. Lot, in his own wisdom, took his family and servants and went to the very best place that he thought he could go.

"Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom becoming sinners, and exceedingly wicked before the Lord, the Lord was angry with them."

As it turned out, Lot went to the very worst place he could have chosen. Sometimes we think that God is blessing us and that He loves us because of all the good things we have. We see those things good because they are some of the physical desires that we have. But God's greatest blessing is when we are where He wants us to be. And that place may not look like a garden, but if it is the place that He has planned for us, we can rest safely in His hands. How much better to be safely in His hands in an unpleasant place, than to be out of His will in the most beautiful place in the world. Lot had to learn this hard lesson.

Abram remained in Canaan. Immediately after his separation from the rest of his kindred – his father's household - God spoke to him again and gave him wonderful promises (see A-F previous page). Remember Abram's generosity? God is far more generous than we could ever imagine.

"...For all the land which thou seest, will I give thee, and to thy seed for ever; and I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, thy seed shall also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and

dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which was in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.” (Genesis 13:12-15)

Who does the land belong to? God. Who does He give it to? Abram. Why does He give it to him? Because Abram has chosen to be God’s servant. When I was a child and I thought as a child, I had many of these stories read to me. And some of these stories bothered me because I didn’t understand. And some scriptures still bother me today because I do not understand but this does not make them untrue. One particular scripture caused me distress, and that was the story of Joshua and the Israelites going into the land of promise – the land of Canaan. I realized that there were people already living there and God told them to go in and destroy all of those people and leave none of them alive. God told them that the land was theirs now. They claimed their inheritance not by some miraculous one-time disaster, but they went in by warfare and took those cities and killed those people. That was very hard for me at the time. I was going through some difficult times of my own emotionally in my family. In my household, you didn’t ask questions. Children were seen and not heard. It was difficult to talk with my parents. So I didn’t have anyone to ask, and we weren’t really active in church although my parents taught me to love the Bible. Since I did not have anyone to ask, I thought that I would ask God, and I did. I told Him my concern. I was not a Hebrew, one of God special people. If you wanted my house, would you send your people in to kill me? There wasn’t an audible voice, there wasn’t a quick understanding, but God surrounded me in His love and in His comfort, and gave me peace. He also helped me to lay this question aside for a while and it did not trouble me any more. But you know, He didn’t forget that I asked that question. Some 12 to 15 years later I was introduced to the church and introduced to the Inspired Version and the Book of Mormon. I began to read and I began to learn, and you know what God did for me? He brought me to the answer and then reminded me of how I had asked Him years earlier. It came back to me just as clearly as when I first asked it. In I Nephi 5:118-132, He gave the answer about these people who lived Canaan at the time of Joshua. All the scriptures work together. They work hand in hand. If you have a question, you can ask God to help you study the scriptures for the answer.

“And now do ye suppose that the children of this land, who were in the land of promise, who were driven out by our fathers, do ye suppose that they were righteous? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they, if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay; Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one. He that is righteous, is favored of God. But behold, this people had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity; and the fullness of the wrath of God was upon them; And the Lord did curse the land against them, and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction; And he did bless it unto our fathers, unto their obtaining power over it. Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; And he hath created his children, that they should possess it. And he raiseth up a righteous nation; and destroyeth the nations of the wicked. And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands, and the wicked he destroyeth, and curseth the land unto them for their sakes. He ruleth high in the heavens, for it is his throne, and this earth is his footstool. And he loveth those who will have him to be their God. Behold, he loved our fathers; and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: and he remembered the covenants which he had made;” (underlining added, 1 N 5:118-132)

Nephi was talking to his brothers, and he was chastising them. He was talking to them about what God was doing with them, and in the midst of his talking to them, he answered my question. Not only did God answer my question, but also He said, “See where you found it?” He put it in the Book

of Mormon. It was a testimony to me that God was working in and through the Book of Mormon. The land belongs to God. He gives it to those who will serve Him and love Him. What does that tell us about our land? Do we have certain things that we are told about this land? God is not a changeable God. He does not turn to the right or to the left. He doesn't have plan A or plan B. He has certain principles that He has set forth, and we will serve Him or we will be swept off. He gives the land to those who will serve Him. Such a man was Abram.

Lot moved his family and his herds over into the plains of Jordan. The plains of Jordan could be a lot of places. The Jordan River runs between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Archeological evidence gives the indication that possibly the plains that he lived in were south of the Dead Sea. There is evidence that at one time it was a very fruitful, well-watered area. There is also evidence of five cities there, four of which seem to have been destroyed under a sudden, cataclysmic occurrence. It was a place with a great deal of commerce before its destruction. There were plenty of places for herds and flocks. Lot moved his family into the city of Sodom. Remember that Lot had been a city dweller. He came from Ur. He was probably born and raised in Ur, which was a large, sophisticated, cultural city. Maybe he didn't like wandering around in camps and caring for herds. It certainly would have been a drastic life style change. But more changes are to follow for Lot. His choices had a lasting effect on his descendants.

Chapter 14

LOT'S RESCUE



[Genesis 14:14-16](#)

After conquering Sodom, Kedorlaomer left for his home country, taking many captives with him. Abram learned what had happened and chased Kedorlaomer past Dan and beyond Damascus. There he defeated the king and rescued the captives, among them Lot.

Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 7

- Kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeeboiim, and Bela revolted against the king of Shinar and were defeated
- Lot and his family were taken captive with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Abram called “Abram the Hebrew, the man of God” (vs. 12)
- Abram gathered his “trained men, and they which were born in his own house (318)” and Mamre the Amorite, and his brothers Eschol and Aner. (12-13)
- Abram recaptured the prisoners and their goods
- Melchizedek, king of Salem, “brought forth bread and wine; and he blest the wine, he being the priest of the most high God,” (17)
 “and he blest him, and said, ‘Blessed Abram, thou art a man of the most high God,

possessor of heaven and of earth; (18)

And he blessed the name of the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hands.” (19)

- Abram gave Melchizedek tithes of all he had taken (20)
- King of Sodom offered all the goods to Abram and asked for the persons back only
- Abram had sworn that he would not take anything “least thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich” (23)
- Melchizedek (high priest, keeper of the storehouse of God, appointed to receive tithes for the poor) blessed Abram (37-38)
- Abram paid “tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need.” (39)
- “God blessed Abram” (40)

For many centuries, scholars questioned whether the events in chapter 14 of Genesis really happened because they couldn't find the names of these kings anywhere in history. The Genesis account states that there were five kings going to battle against four kings. The ruler of a large city was sometimes called a king if he had a lot of influence over the surrounding country. There were five cities on the plain and each one could have had a ruler called king. These kings had been paying tribute to a more powerful king, Amraphel king of Shinar, who lived far away. They decided after 13 years that they didn't want to pay tribute any more. Apparently, several city/states or nations rebelled. King Chedorlaomer was sent with some of his allies to wage war and stop the rebellion. During this war, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were taken.

Often Archeologists look at the scriptures and say because they have not found any record or evidence of an event that it did not happen. We do not have a record of a lot of things that have happened. We do not have a record of a lot of things that happened last year much less thousands of years ago. And just because they cannot go to some particular site and find something that says, “Lot lived here” does not mean that he did not live. There was a historical document found just recently that ties history to this scripture. On this document was found the name of King Amraphel.

For centuries scholars were saying there was no such person. They have since found out that another name for Amraphel was Hammarabi who was a very famous king of Sumer. Was he a real man? He sure was. Was he a powerful king? He sure was. Did he have authority over many city/states in his country and over many other people? He sure did. He sent his army and his confederates, to teach Sodom and Gomorrah a lesson. His army gathered up the people as booty and took off with them. Someone escaped and went to Abram because they knew of him and must have thought he could help. This says a lot about what people thought of Abram.

“And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew, the man of God, for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eschol, and brother of Aner; and these were confederate with Abram.” Genesis 15:12

This is the first time the word “Hebrew” is written in the scriptures. It means “from the other side.” He was not from Canaan; he was from the other side of the desert. He was from Ur. The name Hebrew was given to Abram not by Abram, not by God, but by the Canaanites. They labeled him as the man “from the other side.” It is interesting to note that Christians were first called by that name by unbelievers. Abram was different kind of person. He was not only from a different place; he believed there was only one God and that he was in covenant relationship with Him. The people also called him, the man of God, which was a far most important title. Abram was now “the Hebrew” from which all the “Hebrews” come from, but more importantly, he was known by all as the man of God.

Abram was living in the plain of Mamre. At that period of time when someone went into a new land, it was important to form bonds with other groups of people for protection. Abram had a large group of people with him by this time, but there were always enemies with greater numbers. It was important to form relationships with those around in a community for mutual support. Even though Abram was still a wandering herdsman, he had earned the respect and friendship of Mamre the Amorite and his brothers Eschol and Aner. So close was their bond, that they joined Abram in challenging an army that had just conquered five kings. It a testimony of Abram's faith and also shows the trust Abram's confederates had in him.

We ought to be a people who are forming close bonds with people of like faith so that we will come to each other's aid. As we form close relationships of trust, we can strengthen each other. Abram formed a bond with these men. When they were told that Lot, Abram's kin, was taken, they took up arms and fought along side of Abram. Because of God's blessings, Abram was able to take a large group of men from his own people. Some of these men probably came from the menservants from Egypt who may have been trained in battle. The "trained" men and also the men who were born of his own house totaled 318. We do not know how many women, children, and older men he left behind. He would have also left some servants to protect the family and the herds. Abram was responsible for the welfare of a large group of people and several large herds of animals by this time.

Abram and his men traveled almost to Damascus, which was close to three-quarters of the way to Horan. Through strategy they divided their forces and struck the army from several sides. With God's help, they were able to scatter the invaders and defeat them. They rescued the captured people and brought them back. It was only by the hand of God that this victory could be possible. In the Book of Mormon when men of God led the people, they were able to defeat huge armies. But when they relied on their own strength, much smaller armies defeated them. That is a principle that we would do well to remember.

As they returned, Abram was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, "priest of the most high God" (Genesis 14:17) and the king of Sodom. Most Bibles scholars believe that Salem became Jerusalem. The word Salem means peace. Jerusalem means the habitation of peace. There have been people in every society and every age who have sought God and found Him. Abram was the one God chose to begin a nation that He would bring His Son through. There have many others who have sought out God with all their hearts and have found Him. He is found by those who seek Him.

God works with people who would have Him to be their God, and He worked with Melchizedek and the people of his city in Abram's day. We know that Melchizedek was a high priest of God – not by lineage – not father to son, but without father and son, without days from eternity to eternity. He was after the order of the Son of God. Melchizedek brought wine and bread and blessed it and gave it to Abram (communion!). He blessed Abram (priesthood!). And Abram paid his tithes to Melchizedek for the poor (stewardship!). Here we have elements of the gospel preached from the beginning.

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; For this Melchizedek was ordained a priest after the order of the Son of God, which order was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. And all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham; But he whose descent is

not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” (Hebrews 7:1-7)

It was very common in those days to make slaves out of conquered people. They were considered to be valuable property by ungodly men. The king of Sodom knew that Abram and his army had earned the “right” to keep these people as slaves. The king offered all the goods that had been retrieved during the battles in exchange for the people. Here we have another insight into the heart of Abram for he will not take anything from these people he rescued. When the king of Sodom said that he could have all of the goods, he was offering Abram great wealth. Abram said no because he had made a covenant. He had lifted his hand to God. We do that in court. We lift our hand and swear an oath to speak only the truth. Abram was not going to take anything from these people. Why? Because if he did, one day they would say that they had made Abram rich. No one was going to receive the praise for Abram’s blessings except God. All of the blessings that he had received were from God. No one was going to question his testimony when people looked at his wealth. They would not be able to say that the king of Sodom or any man had made him rich. There was not going to be that conflict. Abram said that God did it all, and He deserved all the glory. Abram did not need a man to make him rich. This was another insight into who Abram was and why God chose him.

Abram was also good to the men who came with him, those men who joined him in battle that were not of his household. He took care of his associates. He said that they could take what they wanted. Abram only took the food that his men had eaten. All the other goods and persons were returned to the king of Sodom. Abram did not need them. He had God as his provider. His covenant partner would supply all his needs. He also had received ministry from Melchizedek, which had strengthened and reassured him of God blessing. God gave to Abram “riches, and honor, and lands for an everlasting possession” (vs.40) because he put his trust in God and not in man. Once more we see the generosity of our God.

Abram was an altar builder. But his worship of God did not stop there. He moved out in faith and trust. He became a pilgrim in a land of promise who looked to God for all his blessings.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Hebrews 11:8-10