

# Abraham – Friend of God, Old Testament Study

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## Lesson III: Abraham – Man of Covenant, the Friend of God

*“For thou art my lamp, O Lord; and the Lord will lighten my darkness.” (2 Samuel 22:29)*

### FRIEND OF GOD

What does it mean to be a friend of God? Who is an enemy to God? Throughout the scriptures we see people who recognize God as their Father and humbly seek Him. We also see those who in the pride of their hearts fight against Him and His children. What makes the difference? Our Father’s arms of mercy are extended all the day long (Mosiah 8:81-88). Why is it that so few claim that mercy and rest in His grace? A key to this question is found in the scripture that says,

*“For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 1:119-120).*

What God is looking for in a people is a willingness to see His hand in all things and give Him the praise, adoration, and willing, loving obedience that are due Him (D&C 59:5b). We recognize that this opportunity to be His children can only come to us because of the sacrifice of Jesus, God’s only begotten Son. God is offering to us, under the new covenant whose mediator is Christ (Galatians 3:19-20), an intimate relationship with Him that is beyond our understanding for He has prepared for us blessings that we have not even imaged (1 Corinthians 2:9). *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:33-34).*

Abraham was a friend to God because he trusted in Him and doubted not that God was able to fulfill all His words. He moved out in faith whenever God called. He was willing to give up every worldly treasure to seek *“...for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Hebrews 11:10). In faith and trust, he was even willing to give up his son, Isaac, without knowing how God was going to fulfill all His promises, which were to come only through this boy. How much are we willing to trust and obey God? This probationary time is our opportunity for our faith and trust to grow. We have had and will have experiences in our lives that will either draw us closer in a right relationship with God or (if we allow it) send us away from Him. We cannot let our circumstances determine our love and obedience toward God. Many times afflictions are just what we need to purify our lives of ungodliness. It is only through our trials that our faith is proved and even strengthened. No one wants affliction in their lives, but when it comes we can pray that the Lord will open our eyes to whatever truth He has for us that we may be *“...perfect and entire, wanting nothing”* (James 1:2-4).

**Genesis Chapter 15 -- Covenant**

The Lord came unto Abram in a vision

- “Fear not, I will be thy shield
- “I will be thy exceeding great reward
- “according to the blessing of my servant, I will give unto thee.” (vs. 2)

How could this be?

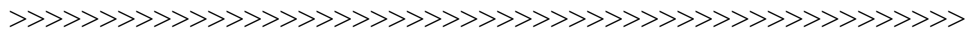
- “He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.” (vs. 6)
- as numerous as the stars in the heaven (vs. 7-8)

How can God give this land as an everlasting inheritance?

- God gave Abram a vision of the Son of Man, “...and his soul found rest, and he believed in the Lord; and the Lord counted it unto him for righteousness.” (vs. 11-12) Romans 4:1-3; Galatians 3:6-7; James 2:22
- God said he had brought Abram from Ur to give him this land (Canaan)

“...whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? Yet he believed God...” (vs. 14)

- Abram told to prepare an animal sacrifice – heifer, 3 yrs old; she goat, 3 yrs old; ram, 3 yrs old; turtle-dove, young pigeon
- Abram prepared by dividing (except the birds) and laying them in the ceremonial pattern
- Fowls came down (carrion fowls unclean, symbolic of Satan), Abram drove away
- At sun down “a deep sleep fell upon Abram” (vs. 16)
- “a great horror of darkness fell upon him”
  - *“And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.”* (Exodus 20:18-22)
- God speaks prophesy to Abram about his descendants
  - (a) “thy seed shall be a stranger in a land which shall not be theirs” (vs. 17)
  - (b) “[they] shall serve strangers;... shall be afflicted”
  - (c) After “four hundred years” God will judge this nation
  - (d) Hebrews will come out with “great substance”
  - (e) Abram will die before this happens at a “good old age” and in “peace” (vs.18)
  - (f) Hebrews will return to land when “the iniquity of the Amorites” is full (vs. 19)



**Amorites** (dwellers on the summits or mountaineers) lived in the hills west of the Dead Sea and east to Hebron.<sup>1</sup> They were to have been destroyed by the Israelites at the time of Joshua but apparently much of their culture survived. Pagan worship and intermarriage were two of the problems resulting

<sup>1</sup> Smith, William, L.L.D., Smith’s Bible Dictionary, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1986, pg. 37.



[God accepts Abram as His faithful servant.]” Genesis 15:2

Abram is being offered the very finest of gifts. There is nothing that we can give to the Lord that God will not repay bountifully in ways that we can't even imagine. We cannot even begin to taste of His goodness. God said to Abram, “I am your reward.” There is no richer gift.

Then Abram began to ask God some specifics on these promised blessings. Is it wrong to ask God questions? God expects us to ask questions. He created us with an inquisitive, intelligent mind. He is the fount of all knowledge. Who better to ask questions of? But there is a problem, sometimes, in the way that we ask. From Luke chapter 1, we have examples of how two people asked God questions. In verses 26-38, the angel Gabriel came to Mary and said, Oh rejoice. Good news! You are going to bear the Son of God. Mary asked, “...How can this be?” (vs.34). She was not saying that God could not do it. She was saying I don't understand. I am a virgin. I have never known a man so how can I bear a child. Can you explain it to me? And the angel said that it would happen “of the Holy Ghost, and the power of the Highest.” That was good enough for Mary because she trusted in God's ability to do what He said. She had asked her question because she was confused. She didn't know how it could work because in her mind; and the way things worked physically, it was impossible for her to have a child and so she brought her concern to the Lord. When she received an answer, her response was to praise God and accept His will. That is the kind of question and response God likes.

About six months earlier an angel had come to Zacharias, a priest serving in the Temple, and said, Good news, Zacharias! The child you and Elizabeth have been praying for all these years is going to be born. And “he shall be great in the sight of the Lord...” (vs. 15). Zacharias wanted to know how this could be. It seems on the surface to be the same question Mary asked. But Zacharias said – I am an old man, and my wife is old. What you are saying is not possible. It is past the time when we can have children, and how can this be? The difference between Mary saying, “How can this be?” and Zacharias saying, “How can this be?” is faith and trust. Zacharias said how can this be because I cannot understand it, and I don't believe it. How did the angel answer him? He said -You want a sign? I will give you a sign. You will be without speech until the baby is born. That is probably not the answer that Zacharias wanted or the way he wanted, but it was good for Zacharias. We learn by the things that we suffer, and he learned to more fully trust God from this experience.

Did God answer both questions? Asking questions of God is a good thing, but we need, just as our children need, to watch the tone in our voice and our intent and our attitude. When the Lord came to Abram, He said, “I am your reward, I am your shield.” Abram has just been in battle. Did God preserve him – was He Abram' shield? God had delivered Abram and his people from a powerful enemy. Then God told Abram, I am going to bless you abundantly. Abram said that was well and good, but God had not given him any children. If the blessing stopped with him or was given to the children of his steward, it would not be an inheritance. Abraham asked how was God going to reward him when he had no seed to pass this blessing and witness to. God reassured Abram. First of all He said that He was going to give him seed (children), and all God's promised blessing were going to be given through this seed - from the child of Abram's lineage - and these literal descendants were going to be as numerous as the stars in the heavens. What a promise!

Then Abram asked God his second question – “How was God going to give him this land in Canaan?” Abram was a nomad. He was a wanderer. He had no legal (worldly) claim on this land. How would God give him this land as an everlasting inheritance - because that is what God had promised him? Everlasting inheritance. How was this to be? Once again it's the attitude here. He wanted to know in what way this would be done. God gave Abram a vision, and what did He show Abram? He showed him the Son of Man. Rejoice that you have the Inspired Version of the Bible because it's not in the King James Bible. Other denominations have the understanding that Abram had faith, and that he believed God; but because of the Inspired Scriptures, we know what he believed in. He believed in the Son of Man. Every bit of the Bible, Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants points us to Jesus Christ.

There is no greater truth than Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven whereby man may be saved. Therefore, all things were created and bear record of God and Jesus Christ (Genesis 6:65-66). Everything. Every story in these scriptures has a deeper meaning which points us to Jesus Christ. What Abram believed and was counted unto him for righteousness was that he believed in the Son of Man. Who is the Son of Man<sup>2</sup>? Jesus Christ. So God said to him, let me explain to you something about eternal blessings. It's going to come in and through Jesus, My Son. And the Lord counted it for righteousness because Abram believed that the Son of God would come.

At this point I am going to ask, "What does to mean to believe?" In our day and time belief in something can mean some philosophical thought that you have running around in your mind. We say with our lips, "I believe it." I believe what you say is true. In the Hebrew way of looking at the word, believe is shown in the pattern of their life. When I say that I believe that electricity will be provided for my home, I prove that I believe this by my actions. With full confidence I walk up and turn on the switch – I act on my belief that the light will come on. I plan my day with the knowledge that it will be there when I need it. There is action to what I believe. We say that we believe that Jesus is the Son of the living God. Do our lives and our actions show that this is what we believe? Do we plan our day with the knowledge that He is always with us? There was no dichotomy–no separation for Abram. What he believed, he acted upon. The question is, "Is what we believe what we act upon?" Do our lives reflect what we say we believe? It is important to say it; but if our actions do not show it, then it is in question whether we truly believe it. It's certainly not counted to us for righteousness if our lives do not reflect what we say we believe.

God told Abram that He had brought Him out of Ur for this very purpose that this would be his land for an inheritance eternally. And the eternal inheritance would be in and through the Son of Man. Abram asked Him for a token. He needed something to hold on to while he waited for the fulfillment of the promise. Abram was a man. He was an imperfect man, just like we are imperfect people. Sometimes it is hard to understand eternal and spiritual things without having something temporal–something to hold on to–something to see. He said he wanted some token of the covenant. Is our God good? Does He understand what we need? God gave Himself to Abram in an oath that was and is indestructible. God swore an oath to Abram that can never be broken. Do we, humans, break our covenants? Yes, we do. God knows this so therefore He gave us the gift of repentance that we may come back into His presence. But God never breaks His covenants.

God instructed Abram to prepare a sacrifice. He was very specific. He listed out for him the animals to be offered. These are the animals that Moses was later told to sacrifice under special sin offerings, blessing and oblation offerings. These animal sacrifices are the same offerings that His people for centuries will give. God is consistent. Does He change? No. He gave Abram a pattern that Moses will be instructed to follow. It is not surprising that a sin offering was necessary. You cannot come to God without repentance–without an offering for sin. What is our offering for sin? - A broken heart (repentance) and a contrite spirit (submission). That is the only true and acceptable offering we can bring God.

You cannot see a broken heart or a contrite spirit–but you can see a heifer. The animals that were brought represented what the rich could bring–the heifer, ram, goat–and also what the poor could bring–turtledove and pigeon–as an offering to God. In this offering we see the whole range of people–rich and poor–a covenant for all people. Abram understood covenant. He understood the covenant ritual. (See Covenant Handout)

Abram prepared the sacrifice. Physically in a man-to-man covenant two people prepare the sacrifice. The animals are cut in half, literally; and the birds remain whole. The two men walk through these divided pieces. They walk in a circle through the blood, and the blood gets on their shoes. It says two things to those who participate in the covenant agreement and to those who witness. it First, it is an

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<sup>2</sup> "Son of Man" is a covenant name. Jesus, the Son of God, exchanged names with us when we entered into covenant with Him. He became the Son of Man and we became the children of God or Christians.

affirmation that this covenant is a lifetime agreement. The penalty for breaking the covenant is death. In a blood covenant, it is understood that each covenant partner is saying, “let it be done to me as was done to these animals if I break my agreement.”

Secondly, there is death of the “old man.” Their lives will never be the same. A marriage is a good example of how covenant changes the life of two people into one united life. In covenant, you must give up your old life for a new life. When you enter into a covenant with God, you have to die to the old self and become a new creature. It is very important that the ancient covenant makers walked through these dead pieces because it reminded them of death and of sacrifice. We are reminded of the death and sacrifice of Jesus as we partake of the covenant meal - communion. The animals had to be sacrificed to complete the covenant. Jesus had to die in our place to bring us into a covenant relationship with God. There was no other way for us to be reconciled to God. And because of His sacrifice, old things are passed away and all things are become new.

Abram prepared the sacrifice. He was ready to walk through this covenant ritual. But we find out in verse 20 that Abram did not walk through this sacrifice. At no time did Abram walk through these pieces. Someone else took his place. Abram had done his part. He was obedient in the preparation of the animals. He faithfully waited on the Lord. He believed that God was going to do something. Can you imagine the anticipation, the wondering? How was this going to take place? As he was waiting, fowls came down to steal the sacrifice. Abram tried to chase them away. Who is it that comes and tries to destroy our covenant with God? Satan. These are not just ordinary birds; these are carrion fowls that were considered to be unclean. They are, many times, used symbolically for Satan. Satan would do anything to stop us from having a covenant relationship with God. Did it work? - Of course not. When Abram scared the birds away, he was trying his best to make this covenant work. But you know, this perfect covenant was not made with humans—that is to say, with sinful man. Instead, it was made by God and His Son Jesus on our behalf.

At sundown something happened. Please note that sundown is the beginning of the Hebrew day. We think of evening as the ending of our day. God sees it as the beginning. When God walked with Adam and Eve, He walked with them in the cool of the evening. The Hebrews believe that the day begins at sunset—at dusk. That is the beginning of a new day. Where did they get this understanding? - From Genesis. When God created the heavens and the earth, He said, “The evening and the morning was the first day.” He began the day in the evening. Isn’t that interesting. It is so different from what we think of in our western culture. Our day begins when the alarm clock goes off. But God’s day for us begins in the evening when we rest in Him and prepare our minds and hearts for what is to come. Are we are looking for an eternal rest, when we will rest in Him forever? Are we preparing our minds and our hearts to meet our God, and walk with Him in the cool of the day?

At sundown, a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And a great horror of darkness fell upon him. I have considered this, and there are at least two possible explanations for this. First of all, we know that Satan comes and tries to steal our experience with God. An example of this is Joseph’s experience in the grove. Before he saw his vision, there was a time of darkness and fear. There is a time right before God does something that Satan comes in and says, “Worship me.” He is always trying to distract us from God. This darkness may have been one of Satan’s ploys to pull Abram away from his spiritual experience. But when God’s Spirit came, Satan could not remain.

Another possible explanation for the darkness and fear Abram experienced is that he had entered into the presence of God. There is a fear that is a Godly fear. When Moses approached God, “The people stood afar off, and Moses drew near into the thick darkness where God was...” Exodus 20:21.

Just as Moses did, Abram came into the presence of God. Why darkness? Because the eyes of sinful man cannot behold a righteous, holy God without the covering of Jesus Christ—without the blood of Christ—without being transfigured. So there are at least two ways to look at this thick darkness, they may be both correct. But either way, what happened was done to help prepare Abram for his meeting with

God.

God spoke to Abram and told him some very specific things. Outlining the terms of the covenant is an important part of the ritual. Abram needed to know what this special covenant covered. God spoke to Abram about his descendants. Remember at this point Abram does not have any descendants. When God told him what would happen to his descendants, He was affirming, "It's a done deal. They are coming."

*"... thy seed shall be a stranger in a land which shall not be theirs, and shall serve strangers; and they shall be afflicted, and serve them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge; and afterwards shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt die, and go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Genesis 15:17-19*

God tells Abram that his seed will leave the land of promise and then explains why this must be. God was also concerned about the Amorites, and the Canaanites and all these other people who were in the land of Abram's inheritance. He sent His word through His angels, and through His prophets and through His Spirit to these people to call them into repentance but they would not. And when their iniquity was full, God brought His people into the land. Who does the land belong to? - To God. And He gives it to those who will love and obey Him. Who does this land called America belong to? He will give it to those who will love and obey Him. We have no promise of inheritance if we are not obedient to God.

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Abram and then he heard the voice of God. God and His Son made a covenant on Abram's behalf. This covenant is a perfect, eternal, everlasting covenant that cannot be broken. We, as human beings, break our covenants with men from time to time. Sometimes by our own sinful disobedience, and other times just out of ignorance; but we do break our covenants. God *never* breaks a covenant. The covenant that was made on behalf of Abram and his seed can never be broken. Abram can have peace. Do the Israelites always follow God? No. Do we always follow God? No. The covenant that they can have the land is not based upon the fact that they were always obedient to God. But the covenant is available to any of Abraham's seed who will be obedient to Him. He is holding it in trust for them. God is faithful; His covenants are sure.

Abram saw a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp take his place in the covenant ritual and pass between the pieces of the sacrifice. The covenant partners are to walk around and through the sacrifice in a circular pattern that ends where it begins, because God is one eternal round. There are no loose ends to God's covenant. The infinity symbol is that pattern. Who was this "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp?"

*"And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Exodus 19:17-18*

Where God and Jesus are there is light.

*"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters." Revelations 1:13-15*

From Matthew 17:1

*“And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain, apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”*

This covenant that is immutable was made on our behalf by God and Jesus. What a comfort. You see, once a regular covenant is broken it is broken; and it can't be healed. It's gone. If our covenant with God relied upon our perfection to keep the covenant in every detail, it would not last a day. The covenant that God invites us into, as sons and daughters of His, is the covenant He made with Jesus, His Son. Can we leave this covenant? Yes. But there is no other name under heaven whereby man can be saved (II Nephi 11:39). If we reject this perfect covenant, there is no way back into the presence of God. Jesus is The Way (John 14:6). Do we need to daily move in loving obedience to God's commands (John 14:15,21)? Yes. Do we sin (I John 1:8-10)? Yes. But, because of the compassion and understanding of God, He has granted us the gift of repentance so that we can remain in this wonderful covenant although we ourselves are not perfect - yet (Matthew 5:50, Philippians 1:6).

Another really wonderful thing about covenant is that it extends to the participant's children. Look at the covenant made by David and Jonathan. When David had reached the point where he had secured himself as king after the death of Saul and Jonathan—he had put down rebellion, he had gotten the people to accept him as king, he had established Jerusalem as his capital and central place of worship—he asked a very interesting question. “And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?” (II Samuel 9:1)

David understood covenant extended to as many of the covenant partner's children who wanted to be under the covenant. He gave Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, the opportunity to come under the terms and conditions of the covenant he had made with his father. And so it is with us. All children are under the covenant made on our behalf by God and Jesus until the age when each can choose for himself if he wishes to be a part of the covenant. God does not compel us to come to Him. He offers eternal life as a gift but we must choose for ourselves.

*“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

Paul knew that the covenant that Abraham received through the grace of God dealt with the future coming of our Jesus Christ, because He entered into the veil into the Holy of Holies and made sacrifice of Himself for us; and therefore we can come into the presence of God. Paul knew that what God did with Abraham was part of his blessing through his seed to all generations and to all people. So how important was this covenant? It's important for all of his seed.

It is also important to understand that the covenant that we are invited into is perfect. It is immutable. God has offered His Son, Jesus Christ in this covenant sacrifice. And every soul shall stand at judgment day because of what God did through His Son on the cross. Every soul will go back to God

and have immortality. The question is, “Will we enter into the covenant? Will we choose eternal life which is different than immortality?” Immortality means that your soul is going to exist forever. Eternal life means that you will live in the presence of your God. The covenant is sure. You are going to have immortality. Do you want eternal life? You have to say, “Yes, I want that covenant, and I want to pass it on to my children.” Then you must abide under the condition of the covenant.

Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we are no longer going to cease to exist when we die. Through Adam sin entered into the world, and death entered into the world. All were under the penalty of death—the physical death and the spiritual death. Physical death we understand because our bodies go back to the dust of the earth. Spiritual death is when we are outside the presence of God. But there was no hope immortality or eternal life until Christ died upon the cross. If He had not come and died for us, we would have ceased to exist spiritually and physically at death. But because of the gift of Jesus Christ – because of His sacrifice, we are all going to come back into the presence of God. We will *all* go back to our God who created us. We will go back in state of bliss to paradise, or we go back in a state of remorse and pain to that hell which is a learning or holding place. Spiritually, we have a place to go. We will all go back to God. Because of the gift of the resurrection, we can have eternal life if we choose it. We must also have faith in the Son of Man – Jesus. This is the faith that will be counted unto us for righteousness.

### **Chapter 16 – Son of the Bondswomen -- Ishmael (Galatians 4:21-31)**

Sarai offered Abram her handmaiden, Hagar, would bear a child for her. (vs. 1-2)

After Hagar conceived, she “despised” Sarai (vs. 4)

Sarai blamed Abram (vs. 5)

Abram called Hagar “thy maid” and gave the problem back to Sarai (vs. 6)

Sarai punished Hagar and she fled (vs. 7)

God sent an angel to talk with Hagar (vs. 8-13)

- Where did you come from and where will you go?
- Return to Sarai and submit
- “The Lord will multiply thy seed exceedingly” so it cannot be numbered
- Announces the birth of a son

Called “Ishmael: because the Lord hath heard thy afflictions”

Will be a “wild man”, hand against every man; every man’s hand against him

Will dwell in the presence of all his brethren

Hagar spoke to the angel by name, Beer-la-hai-roi: a well of the living<sup>3</sup> (vs. 14-18)

Do you know that God sees you?

“I know that God seest me, for I have also here looked after him”

The nearby well named for the angel

Hagar bears Ishmael when Abram was 86 years old

**ISHMAEL** From the time of God’s promise of a son to Abram & Sarai until Isaac was born, twenty-five years passed. It was a long wait and Sarai became anxious. Sarai offered her handmaiden, Hagar, as a substitute wife to Abram. This was a common practice in the Middle East for generations. Hagar was to bear a child that Sarai would proclaim at birth hers. It did not work out as Sarai had thought and there has been sibling rivalry in the Middle East ever since. God’s kindness and provision was shown clearly once again as Hagar turned to God for His protection and blessing (Gen. 16:1-20, 21:7-19). Ishmael’s name means the Lord has heard or the Lord knows. God promised that twelve princes and a great nation would come from Ishmael’s lineage. The strife between the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac’s descendants would often bring about periods of repentance and reliance on God for

<sup>3</sup> Smith, William, L.L.D., Smith’s Bible Dictionary, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1986, pg. 80.

deliverance. Truly, God remembered Abraham's prayers on the behalf of Ishmael and his seed. God sees those who are looking for Him today just as He saw Hagar centuries ago when He sent His angel to comfort her.

Abram and Sarai both knew there was a blessing coming. They knew it was coming through Abram's seed, but God didn't specifically say that Sarai was going to bear this child, although it is implied. It was a common custom at that time, and for centuries after, that a man could take a concubine or take a second wife if his first wife was barren. This was not anything that God had ordained. But it was common in Abram's culture. There was a societal feeling that if you were barren, you were cursed of God. It was the leading cause for divorce. Children were your inheritance. They were the ones who would take care of you when you were old. Women were destitute when their husbands died if they did not have children. Unlike today when most people want everything now – instant gratification, Abram was willing to wait for God's blessing to come through and to his children. We do not understand that type of faith today. We want our blessing now. But Abram understood that his greatest blessing would be an inheritance to his children. He wanted to pass on his legacy of faith. We need to be passing on a legacy of faith, too.

Sarai wanted the blessing of God but she was unwilling to wait any longer to see the hand of God move (It has been 10 years since they had left Haran). She went to Abram and told him to take her servant, Hagar, to bear a child for them. Maybe God intended it to be this way – right? She had logically thought this thing out. So Abraham listened to his wife, and agreed to this plan. Do husbands and wives have great influence over their spouses? Is our influence helping to bring about the Kingdom?

And so Hagar was given to Abraham. Now where did Hagar come from? Egypt. Did God send Abram to Egypt? No. He came back with vast wealth that caused strife between Lot and himself, and a handmaiden named Hagar. All in all probability going to Egypt was not such a good idea, but we do a lot of things that are not good ideas. Hagar may have been well educated because the Egyptian culture stressed education at that time. The Arabs believe she was a princess or at least from the royal household. When she became pregnant, she despised Sarai. Although she was a handmaiden, she many have felt that God had honored her above Sarai. She probably did not do a lot of griping, but a look or attitude can speak volumes. Sarai was aware of the fact that now Hagar had lifted herself up in pride because obviously God has blessed her because she was having Abram's child. Probably Sarai was a little uncomfortable about what her position was at this point. Legally, she would not receive the full rights of a wife until she had given birth to her first child. She was not real happy about this situation. Whom does she blame? Abram. Doesn't that sound typical, ladies? She went to Abram and said that this uncomfortable situation was his fault. And here we get a glimpse into what Abram really thought about Hagar. Not much. He loved his wife, Sarai. Hagar was never going to take her place. He told Sarai that Hagar was her handmaiden; her problem – she would have to deal with it. He did not stand up for Hagar in this situation because Hagar did not have a place.

But God did not forget Hagar and He never forgets us either. Sarai punished Hagar. Hagar was not pleased and so she ran away. God sent an angel to her to talk with her. It is interesting that the angel came to her and asked her a question. (Ladies, you know we have to talk. We have to get it out. We have to get it off our chests and tell people something even when we know the answer; we still like to know someone is listening.) The angel opened up the discussion – Hagar, where did you come from, and where are you going? She laid it all out for him, and he told her that she needed to go back. He told her that she needed to submit. This happens to us sometimes. Sometimes in a bad situation God does not deliver us. He puts us back in that situation and tells us to submit so that we can learn to trust Him at all times and in all places. Remember in the Book of Mormon when Alma's people had to submit, He made their burden light so they could bear it.

God sent Hagar back, but He sent her back with a promise. He told her that He was going to multiply her seed. Now how important was that to her? - Very important. He said that He was going to

multiply her seed exceedingly in so much that they could be numbered. What a promise! He told her that she would have a son and to name that son, Ishmael. Ishmael means “God has heard.” Then he told her that her son was going to be a “wild man.” Apparently he was aggressive and strong. In Muslim tradition, he was a very hardy man, a good hunter, and a man’s man and a strong leader.

*“And he will be a wild man; and his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” Genesis 16:13*

He was not going to form alliances; he was going to be in charge. Hagar calls the angel by name. The angel’s name was Beer-la-hai-roi, which means “the well of the living.” Read about the woman at the well in John chapter 4 and see what Jesus said about Himself. Who is the living water?

Why did God send an angel to Hagar? She was not of Abram’s family line.

*“And he spake unto her, saying, Knowest thou that God seest thee? And she said, I know that God seest me, for I have also here looked after him.” Genesis 16:15,16*

Hagar was seeking God.

*“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*

The well where Hagar spoke with the angel was renamed Beer-la-hai-roi. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael when Abram was 86 years old. In the lesson, Father of Nations, more will be given about Ishmael. His story is very much like that of Laman and Lemuel.

### **Chapter 17 – A New Name, Sign of the Covenant -Circumcision**

God appeared to Abram when he was 99 years old

Commanded Abram to “walk uprightly before me, and be perfect”

New Covenant – New Name “...that thy children may be known among all nations” (vs. 9)

- His people have gone astray from His precepts and not kept His ordinances (vs. 4)
- Not observed God’s anointing or baptism  
Instead: Washing of children, sprinkling of blood  
Claimed Abel’s blood atoned for sin
- “...thy name shall be called Abraham; for, a father of many nations have I made thee.” (vs. 9)  
“...I will make thee exceedingly fruitful”  
“...I will make nations of thee”  
“...kings shall come of thee, and of thy seed”

Covenant of Circumcision

- For Abraham and all his seed
- “...that thou mayest know forever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old.” (vs. 11)
- Keep all the commandments given to “thy fathers” and all the commandment given to Abraham (vs. 12)
- “And I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee.”
- Every male to be circumcised, born into house or bought with money
- Every child to be circumcised when 8 days old
- Anyone not willing to be circumcised, is to be cut off – “...he hath broken my covenant” (vs. 20)

Sarai's name changed to Sarah

- She will bear the child of promise, she will be "...the mother of nations; kings, and people" (vs. 22)
- Abraham rejoiced that he and Sarah would have child when he was one hundred and Sarah was ninety

Abraham asked for a blessing for Ishmael

- The covenant to be established with Isaac, son of Sarah, an everlasting covenant
- God has blessings for Ishmael  
"Will multiply him exceedingly"  
He will beget twelve princes  
Make him a great nation
- But the covenant will be established with Isaac who Sarah will bear the following year

Abraham took all the males in his household 8 days and older and circumcised them all on the same day God spoke to him. Abraham was 99; Ishmael was 13.

In Chapter 17, the sign of the covenant – circumcision - and a new name – Abraham are given. How old was Abram when Ishmael was born? - 86. God appeared again to Abram when he was 99. God did not constantly appear to Abram and talk with him. Abram did not have this constant influx of the Holy Spirit. He had to wander around a lot without these spiritual experiences. He had to live every day with the belief and faith that God would not forget him or the promises He had given. Some days, although we hope he was a very prayerful man, it might have seem to him that God was far away, but he did not falter in his faith. When Abram was 99 years of age, God spoke to him again and commanded him to walk upright before Him and be perfect. You think Abram might have stumbled along the way a little bit? Possibly. Not so much that he denied the covenant, but in his daily living he probably had things that he needed to repent of as do we.

Again we should be grateful for the added insight given in Inspired Version. It is in the Inspired Version that we are told the full reason God instituted circumcision. The nations had forgotten God and His precepts. Although they were all descendants of Noah (after the flood) and they had had the truth taught to them at one time, they had all slipped away into different pagan beliefs. God did not want His covenant people to forget His word and fall into grievous sin. What was the grievous sin? They were not keeping His ordinances. They are washing children and using the sprinkling of blood. They had corrupted baptism. They were also claiming that it was Abel's blood that atoned for sin instead of the Son of God who would come in the meridian of time.

God was very specific about the reasons and purpose for circumcision. He told Abram that it was to be a memorial for all generations, for everyone in his household from eight days and older—every male—must be circumcised in order to be under this covenant. Here again you have a choice. Do you want to be in covenant, or do you not want to be in covenant. In all fairness eight-day old children do not have a choice. But their fathers are saying until my children are old enough to choose for themselves, they are covered under the original covenant. Now who covers the children who are not baptized? Christ. But, the time must come for each person to accept or reject this covenant – to choose for himself.

Now thy name shall be called Abraham. God took an H from His name and added it to Abram's name making Abraham, which means "father of many nations." The name Abram means father—Abraham means father of a multitude. Note that God's name also changed. He became the God of Abraham.

*"And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come of thee, and of thy seed." Genesis 17:10*

God was reminding Abraham what He was going to do for him. This covenant of circumcision was to also remind him and all his descendants forever that children are not accountable before God until they are eight years old. All those under this covenant are to keep all the commandments given to by their fathers (the patriarch and prophets) and all the commandments given to Abraham. And God said that if Abraham was faithful, “. . . I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee.” Genesis 17:12.

What a promise! Every male was to be circumcised who was born into the household or bought with money. Anyone who is not willing to participate in this covenant through circumcision was to be cut off from God’s presence. Read Matthew 22:1-14 and Isaiah 61:10 about our covenant covering.

God also changed Sarai’s name to Sarah by giving her an H from His name. Sarai means princess with a little “p” as in a term of endearment “my little princess.” Sarah means Princess with a big “P” as in royalty. She will bear the child of promise. She will be the mother of nations. Kings and rulers will come through her child. Abraham rejoiced. Abraham said I am 99 years old, and Sarah is 89 years old, and we are going to have a child! He was ecstatic. Then in the midst of his joy he remembered Ishmael. He said, “O bless Ishmael – he’s my son, too.” God told him in His first statement and His last that the covenant would be established with the child born of Sarah. God was very clear. The covenant will be established with Isaac. But in between these two very firm and immutable statements of Isaac’s birthright God gave a blessing to Ishmael. God did not forget Ishmael. He was going to multiply him exceedingly. He would beget twelve princes. He would make him a great nation. The Arabs claim Abraham and Ishmael as their forefathers.

Abraham took Ishmael (who was 13) and all the males of his household and circumcised them that very day.

### **Chapter 18 – “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”**

“The Lord appeared unto Abraham” (vs. 1); three men: “angels which were holy men...after the order of God” (vs. 2, 23)

Hospitality of Abraham

They ask about Sarah

“Sarah thy wife shall have a son” (vs. 9)

Sarah laughs (vs. 10-12) - “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (vs. 13)

“Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which the Lord will do for him” (vs. 17-18)

The Mission (vs. 19-23)

Abraham’s intercession

- “Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (vs.25)
- “for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (vs. 28)
- “And the Lord said...If thou findest...fifty righteous...I will spare all...for their sakes.” (vs.29) - for the sake of 45, 40, 30, 20, or 10? (vs. 29-39)
- “I will not destroy them for ten’s sake.” (vs. 40)

Abraham returned to his tent comforted

The Lord was going to do something about sinful Sodom and Gomorrah, but God never does anything that He does not tell His people through His prophets first. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, until he revealeth the secret unto his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7). “And the Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre.” (Genesis 18:1). God sent three holy men, who are called angels, to Abraham.

As a side note, this passage of scripture identifies Abraham as a man of hospitality. Lot also has this gift. The people who call themselves Christians should have it too. We should be a people of hospitality. The people in the cultures that valued hospitality would sit at the door of their tent or home and watch for possible guests. When they saw one coming down the road, they did not just call out,

“Come on in.” They ran out, and got them, and gathered them up, and brought them in. “Stay, do not go on. Stay a little longer. Here, have the best food; have the best bed. What can I do for you?”

Today, if you walked down the street and someone sitting on the front porch of their house ran out and said, “Please come in and eat of my supper.” What would you think? There is a little cultural problem here. The Bedouins still act in this manner. If a Bedouin person were to come to our country, he would think we were terrible hosts. We value privacy. In their homes, they would never leave a guest alone because that would be the ultimate insult. A guest was to be treated as a special and valued part of the family.

When Abraham saw the three men sent from God, he rushed out and brought them to his tent. He had the fatted calf killed. He provided water for their feet. He had Sarah bake fine meal into bread. He did everything he could to make these strangers welcome. These were holy men called after the order of the Son of God (Hebrews 13:2). Even today they speak over in the Middle East of the hospitality of Abraham, and they emulate his hospitality the best they can.

When they had finished their meal, they did a very interesting thing. They asked about Sarah. “Where is Sarah?” This was not something that the common man would do - to ask about another man’s wife. She was in another part of the tent separated from the men. Abraham told them that she was at the tent door. Perhaps she was there ready to be of service. Probably she was curious about their guests. We would have been at the tent door listening, too. She must have heard her name. The angel said, “Your wife is going to have a son.” How did Sarah respond? She laughed. She was 89 years old. She may have laughed partly out of doubt or perhaps the thought of having a child at her age was difficult to picture. But “...is anything too hard for the Lord?” Sarah denied her laughter out of fear. But they were not fooled. Sarah did laugh, but God forgave her doubt and blessed her with a child to love because the Lord is faithful who promised.

As the angels began their journey, Abraham went with them a good way down the road. This was another sign of hospitality. When it was time for a guest to leave, the host would say please do not go, but eventually the guest would say that he really must leave. Then the host would walk with the guest until finally he was convinced that they really did have to leave, and only then did the host go back to his home. The host did this to show to his guest how valuable their company was to him.

*“And the angel of the Lord, said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which the Lord will do for him; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” Genesis 18:17*

Remember God reveals to His people what He is going to do before He does it. The angel explained to Abraham that they were on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah to bring judgment. This was because of all their sin. The major sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was homosexuality, but it wasn’t their only sin.

*“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished...” II Peter 2:6-9*

In a later time Ezekiel likened Samaria to Sodom and Gomorrah. The reasons Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed and why the people Samaria were carried away into captivity were the same.

*“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom [Samaria, the Northern Kingdom],*

*pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away, as I saw good.” Ezekiel 16:49-50*

Now what does that tell us about our culture? Their sin was pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness. Their people did not strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy. They were haughty, and committed abomination before God, therefore He took them away. Does God change? No. Do any of these things apply to our country today? Are we in danger of being taken away? Yes, but God has promised to save the righteous. I look at righteousness as a right relationship with God, and that comes through repentance and humility before Him. God sent His angels to walk the streets of Sodom and Gomorrah as a testimony against them that what they did was wrong. Are His angels walking the streets of America?

What sad news for Abraham. Who was in Sodom? - His beloved nephew, Lot. Abraham had followed these men out a great way, and when it was finally time to go back he stood looking out over the plains. He began to pray and ask God for His mercy. Abraham stands as an intercessor. “...*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” James 5:16. He began to talk with God. He said some things that might cause us to think, “Gosh, I would never say that to God!” But God knows the intent of our hearts. If we have thought it, we might just as well say it. Abraham asks God, “Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?” Genesis 18:25 “O God, may that be far from thee, for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Genesis 18:28

Now remember the intent and the attitude of our questions matter. Abraham was not proud and boastful saying - you had better do right (as if Abraham understood what was “right”). He was moved with compassion and was pleading for the life of his nephew and his family. Will the Judge of all the earth do right? Yes, He will and He does. The Lord said if you find fifty righteous, I will spare all for their sakes. Do the righteous in a city protect the wicked in a sense from the judgment of God? For a period of time, but eventually God says that He will draw the righteous out or the wicked will cast them out, and then judgment will come. Abraham was not sure there were fifty in the city and so he bargained for less, just per chance there is only forty-five, how about that? How about thirty? Twenty? And for the last time - how about ten? God said for the sake of ten He would spare the whole city. Was the whole city spared? No. Did Lot have ten people in his family? Yes, he did. Lot’s family consisted of himself, his wife, his sons-in-law (plural), his married daughters (plural), his son’s sons (plural), and his two unmarried daughter living at home (19:18). Lot had at least ten people in his family. Can you remain in sinful Babylon and not have consequences on your children?

## **Chapter 19 – Judgment and Mercy and Consequences**

Three angels to Sodom

Lot’s hospitality

The sin of the people of Sodom

Lot’s integrity

Blindness and Anger

Brought out all who will listen

- at least 10 people in Lot’s family (vs. 18)
- “But he seemed as one that mocked, unto his sons-in-law” (vs. 22)
- only Lot, his wife, and two daughters leave Sodom (vs. 24)

Lot is forced to leave

Lot asked not to go to the mountains – a small, close city instead – Zoar

Lot’s wife turned back

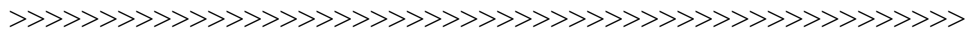
As Lot entered Zoar, God rained brimstone and fire out from heaven upon all the cities of the plain,

their inhabitants, and upon what grew there (vs. 31-32)  
Abraham saw smoke as from a furnace



*Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps, pg. 7*

God comforted Abraham about Lot's safety  
Lot's left Zoar out of fear  
Lot's daughter dealt wickedly with their father  
The older had a child Moab (of his father) – father of the Moabites (Ruth)  
The younger had a child, Ben-ammi (son of my people) – father of the Ammonites



**Moabites** (of his father) The Moabites lived east of the Dead Sea in rich, hilly pastureland as far north as the Mt. Gilead. They were sometimes friend and often foe to Israel. Their god was a fire god called Chemosh and human sacrifice was common.<sup>4</sup> Naomi and her family moved to Moab during the time of the Judges when there was a famine in Israel. They found a home there and her sons took Moabite women (Ruth and Orpah) as wives. Ruth was King David great grandmother and therefore he and Jesus have an ancestor from Moab. Moab was completely destroyed as a nation in 200 AD.<sup>5</sup>

**Ammonites** (sons of renown, mountaineers) The Ammonites were closely associated with the Moabites. The location of their land was not specifically noted in the scriptures. They were particularly despised by the Israelites because they did not assist them when they returned to the Promised Land from Egypt. They were idol worshipers whose god was called Molech. This god was also a fire god that required human sacrifice.<sup>6</sup>

When the angels arrived in Sodom, Lot was waiting at the door of his home looking for possible guests. Lot had been raised to know the truth – to live a righteous life; but somehow that did not get

<sup>4</sup> Smith, William, L.L.D., *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1986, pg. 413-414.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, William, L.L.D., *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1986, pg. 411-412.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, William, L.L.D., *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1986, pg. 36-37.

passed to his children. Think of how difficult it would have been to raise righteous children in the city of Sodom. You cannot remain in Sodom or Babylon and expect your children to fare very well.

Lot urged the angels to stay in his home with his family. He gave them water to wash their feet and he prepared a feast. He was a man of hospitality. But it was not a restful evening. Before they could retire for the night, the men of Sodom came and demanded that Lot turn over his visitors to them that "...we may know them." (vs.7) "To know" in the Biblical sense of the word, meant to be intimate. Lot pleaded for the life of these three men but to no avail. He put his life and his family in danger to protect his guests. The angels delivered Lot and blinded those evil people at Lot's door. But note, instead of fear and repentance, the people were filled with anger. This was a testimony of the hardness of their hearts and the correctness of God's judgment.

The angels allowed Lot to go to his married daughter's families and plead with them to leave Sodom. "But he seemed as one that mocked..." (Genesis 19-21-22) At the very last the angels finally had to take Lot by the hand and move him out of the city because he was lingering there. You can imagine, although it doesn't say so, he was lingering for the love of his children. He is leaving his married daughters, their husbands, and perhaps his grandchildren. He finally left with his wife and his two unmarried daughters. The angels wanted him to go to the mountains, but he did not want to go to the mountains; he wanted to go to another city. Remember he was a city dweller. He had come out of the big city of Ur. When he had a choice of where to live, he chose to live in the city of Sodom. The angels allowed him to go to Zoar, a small city on the plain. Once he entered into that city, Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities in the plain went up in smoke and ashes. But shortly before Lot walked into Zoar, his wife, probably grieving for her children, and her grandchildren, her home, and her lifestyle and everything that she valued, turned and looked back. It is a hard thing to understand and accept. But God knows we cannot serve Him and look back with regret to our old sinful life.

Lot did not stay in the city for very long after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. He was fearful here. The people of the city probably knew that Lot had something to do with catastrophe and so he left. Where did he go? - Up into the mountains to live in a cave. It must have been a miserable place for him. His two daughters asked themselves, "Who is going to marry us?" Remember, there is nothing worse than being childless in their culture. They apparently had no testimony of God and therefore did not trust Him to provide for them. And so they reason this out logically. They used the excuse that their father was not going to have any seed or inheritance. So they did something unspeakably bad. Both of these daughters conspired to get their father drunk and both became pregnant with his sons. The first daughter's son became the father of the Moabites. The second daughter's son became the father of the Ammonites. These two nations caused the Israelites many problems. But God is mindful and merciful to all people. God chose Ruth, a Moabite, to be the great grandmother of David and in the lineage of His Son, Jesus.

Visit web site [www.christiananswers.net](http://www.christiananswers.net) and type in Sodom and choose "Evidence of Sodom and Gomorrah" for an interesting look at the possible remains of these cities.

## Covenant Steps<sup>7</sup>

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Exchanging Coat or Robe   | All of Myself   |
| 2. Exchanging Belt           | Weapons, Protection   |
| 3. Cut the Covenant          | Symbolic of Death to Old Life and also<br>Penalty for Breaking the Covenant |
| 4. Raise Right Arm Mix Blood | Swear Allegiance/Two Lives Become One                                       |
| 5. Exchange Names            | Same Heritage/Future  |
| 6. Make a Scar               | Permanent Testimony – Reminder  |
| 7. Give Covenant Terms       | Spoken Witness  |
| 8. Eat Memorial Meal         | Symbolic of Oneness   |
| 9. Plant A Memorial          | Reminder for All Ages to All People   |

*“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 6:13-20)*

*Psalm 105*

*Psalm 106*

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<sup>7</sup> The Miracle of the Scarlet Thread. Booker, Richard. Sounds of the Trumpet. Houston.