

God of Our Fathers: Genesis

Lesson 7: Abraham

Lesson Introduction

- What does the word *blessing* imply to you?
- What is involved in having a “covenant” relationship?
- What are the consequences for breaking a covenant?

Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Describe the calling of Abram
- Identify the major episodes in the life of Abraham
- Discuss the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Discuss the significance of the circumcision of Abraham
- Describe provisions of God’s covenant with Abraham
- Express understanding of who God is

Background for the Scripture

Genesis 12-50 tells stories about Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham, and his descendants as they move from Haran into the land of Canaan. These areas are part of what we know as Mesopotamia. It is believed these stories began as oral traditions passed down within the tribes long before they became part of the written record.

As we will see, God had promised Abram that he would become the father of a great nation. Only a few years later, however, God tested Abraham’s faith by telling Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham believed that Isaac was God’s choice to be the recipient of the covenant, and he was confused by God’s request. Trying to sort things out, Abraham drew all manner of conclusions. At first he thought that God would have to raise Isaac from the dead since he was the one and only covenant son. Abraham complied with God’s directive, and God honored Abraham for this act of faith. At the same time, God also provided the sacrifice on that occasion (Benware, 1993, p. 48).

These chapters include accounts of Abram’s journeys. According to one source:

The people are portrayed as very human with all their faults and strengths - they lie, deceive, steal, test God, they have courage, journey into the unknown, seek God, question God and are obedient. (Old Testament Lectionary, 2015)

The stories are rich with details about doubt and deception, war and tribulations and the beginnings of a great nation. Today, Abraham is a revered figure in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Genesis 12:1-20 (KJV)

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

² 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:

³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

⁴ 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.

⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

⁶ And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

⁷ 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.

⁸ And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

⁹ And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

¹⁰ And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

¹¹ And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

¹² Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

¹³ Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

¹⁴ And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

¹⁵ The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

¹⁶ And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

¹⁷ And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

¹⁸ And Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

¹⁹ Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

²⁰ And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

Examining the Scripture

1. How old was Abram when he departed from Haran?
2. What were the 3 major promises God made to Abram?
3. Why does Abraham introduce Sarai as his sister to everyone?

Applying the Scripture

1. What does God tell Abram to do? How easy is it to leave one's comfort zone?
2. Discuss Abram's faith as he sets out toward an unknown future.
3. Describe a situation in which you have stepped out on faith.

Quest to Know God Activity

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?