

## **Lesson 7: Genesis 12–17; Abraham 1–2, “To Be a Greater Follower of Righteousness”**

### Abraham's History

Abraham was a direct descendant of Noah thru Shem.

His father, Terah, fully participated in the wickedness in Ur, the land of the Chaldeans

Abr 1:5-7

5 My fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshipping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice;

6 For their hearts were set to do evil, and were wholly turned to the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt;

7 Therefore they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen in offering up their children unto these dumb idols, and hearkened not unto my voice, but endeavored to take away my life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah. The priest of Elkenah was also the priest of Pharaoh.

Not only were they caught up in worshipping false gods but they “[offered] up their children unto these dumb idols”

Abraham was one of those who they planed to sacrifice

Abr 1:11-12,15-16

11 Now, this priest had offered upon this altar three virgins at one time, who were the daughters of Onitah, one of the royal descent directly from the loins of Ham. These virgins were offered up because of their virtue; they would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone, therefore they were killed upon this altar, and it was done after the manner of the Egyptians.

12 And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.

15 And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands;

16 And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfolk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of;

Why did they single out the three virgins to be sacrificed?

(because of their virtue; they would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone)

Neal A. Maxwell

"The faithful will not be totally immune from the events on this planet.... Keeping the unfashionable but imperative first and seventh commandments can reflect the courage which three young women displayed anciently; they said no with their lives." (CR, Oct. 2002)

Maybe Abraham was also singled out to be sacrificed because, not only did he refuse to participate in their wickedness, but he preached against it.

Perhaps that is also why they sought to sacrifice Abraham as well

Note that Jehovah and an angel appeared to Abraham.

The angel loosened his bands and Jehovah delivered him a promise that he would be led to another land

Because of a famine, Abraham leaves Ur along with several family members

Abr 2:1-5

1 Now the Lord God caused the famine to wax sore in the land of Ur, insomuch that Haran, my brother, died; but Terah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees.

2 And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife, and Nahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who was the daughter of Haran.

3 Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.

4 Therefore I left the land of Ur, of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and I took Lot, my brother's son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; and also my father followed after me, unto the land which we denominated Haran.

5 And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; and my father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran.

Sarai, his wife, was also his half sister (daughter of Terah)

His brother, Nahor, was married to Milcah who was his brother Haran's daughter

Lot was Haran's son. His wife is not named and her ancestry is unknown

Verse 5 indicates that the famine stopped and they were again prosperous. My father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran

What did Terah, Abraham's father, choose to do?

(my father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran)  
He returned to his wicked ways with the return of prosperity

Abraham was commanded to leave Haran and go to Canaan.

Gen 12:1-6

1 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.

Who did Abraham take with him to Canaan?

(Lot - and the souls that they had gotten in Haran)

What blessings was Abraham promised?

(I will make of thee a great nation  
I will bless thee - thou shalt be a blessing - in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed)

In general:

His life will be blessed

He will be a blessing to others to those who know him

Because of him everyone will be blessed throughout history

Let's read other blessings that make up the Abrahamic Covenant

Abr 2:7-11

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 My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed

after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

10 And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

11 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.

What blessings were promised to Abraham and his seed?

(Unto thy seed will I give this land  
I will make of thee a great nation  
thy seed... in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood  
in thy seed... shall all the families of the earth be blessed)

Russell M. Nelson

"The covenant that the Lord first made to Abraham and reaffirmed to Isaac and Jacob is of transcendent significance. It contained several promises:

- Abraham's posterity would be numerous, entitled to eternal increase and to bear the priesthood;
- He would become a father of many nations;
- Christ and kings would come through Abraham's lineage;
- Certain lands would be inherited;
- All nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed;
- That covenant would be everlasting—even through 'a thousand generations'

"Some of these promises have been accomplished; others have yet to be. I quote from a prophecy given nearly 600 years B.C.: 'Our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham.'" (CR, April 1995)

### Blessing of Land Inheritance

Abraham is told when his seed will receive the land of their inheritance

Gen 15:13-18

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they

come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

When would Abraham's seed begin to receive the land of their inheritance?

(they shall afflict them four hundred years)

What is the reason for this timeframe?

John Taylor

"Abraham's day the Lord told that Patriarch that he should go to his fathers in peace, but in the fourth generation his posterity should come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full: by the days of Moses they appear to have filled the cup of their iniquity." (JD, 26:36)

Joseph Fielding Smith

"The Lord gave the promise to Abraham that he should have Palestine, or the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession. Yet, as Stephen said at the time of his martyrdom, Abraham never received as much as a foot of it as a possession while he lived.

"Then what did the Lord mean in making a promise to Abraham of that kind, giving him that portion of the earth as an everlasting possession for himself and his posterity, the righteous part of it, forever? Simply this, that the time would eventually come, after the resurrection from the dead, when Abraham and his children who have been faithful in the keeping of the commandments of the Lord, should possess that land, and they shall also spread forth as far as it is necessary for them to receive an inheritance." (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:88)

We know that Joseph will receive a promise of additional and specific land for his posterity

### Blessing of Numerous Posterity

The Lord emphasizes the promise of Abraham's numerous posterity

Gen 17:1-6

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram,

and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.  
2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.  
3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,  
4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.  
5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.  
6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Monte S. Nyman

"The vast population of the Arab, Moslem and Jewish world, which claim to be descendants of Abraham, number more than one hundred million. When one adds to that figure, the deceased ancestors, and the estimated future posterities of those groups, plus other descendants of Abraham such as the past, present and future members of the Nephite-Lamanite cultures, the lost ten tribes, and the Latter-day Saints, he sees what the Lord meant by the blessing of an innumerable and unmeasurable posterity." (Sidney B. Sperry Lecture Series, 1975, pg. 13)

How do you know that you are of the seed of Abraham?

Joseph Fielding Smith

"Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the house of Israel. In other words, they become members of the chosen lineage, or Abraham's children through Isaac and Jacob unto whom the promises were made. The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs." (Doctrines of Salvation, 3:246)

so all righteous that are baptized are his seed.

How has, and how will, Abraham's posterity bless the families of the earth?

Joseph Fielding Smith,

"When the Lord called Abraham out of Ur, the land of his fathers, he made certain covenants with him because of his faithfulness. One promise was that through him and his seed after him all nations of the earth should be blessed. This blessing is accomplished in several ways.

"1. Through Jesus Christ who came through the lineage of Abraham;

"2. Through the priesthood which was conferred upon Abraham and his

descendants;

“3. Through the scattering of Israel among all nations by which the blood of Israel was sprinkled among the nations, and thus the nations partake of the leaven of righteousness, on condition of their repentance, and are entitled to the promises made to the children of Abraham; and

“4. In the fact that the Lord covenanted with Abraham that after his time all who embraced the gospel should be called by his name, or, should be numbered among his seed, and should receive the Holy Ghost.” (Doctrines of Salvation, 3:246)

Ezra Taft Benson

"The responsibility of the seed of Abraham, which we are, is to be missionaries to bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations" (CR, Oct. 1923)

### Blessing of the Priesthood

Abr 1:1-3

1 In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence;

2 And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.

3 It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me.

Why did Abraham want to receive the priesthood?

(desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God)

Delbert L. Stapley

"I remember that the progenitor of the great Israelite family was not satisfied with the conditions found in his homeland, and said to secure happiness and peace it was necessary for him to seek for the blessings of the fathers, and the right to administer the same. He had been a follower of

righteousness, desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God, and sought the great blessings of the priesthood, and to be a father of many nations.

"And as descendants of this great leader, we, too, should be followers after righteousness, and should seek to know the mind and will of God in order that our lives might conform thereto." (CR, Oct. 2002)

From whom did Abraham receive the priesthood?

Not sure when  
(conferred upon me from the fathers)  
D&C 84:14 Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah

Who was Melchizedek that Abraham should receive the priesthood from him?

It's a mystery but Jewish tradition states that he was Shem, the oldest son of Noah. We know that the priesthood came from Noah thru Shem's line. We know that Shem was alive during the time of Abraham (Shem lived 600 years - Gen 11:10-11)

D&C 138:38,41  
38 Among the great and mighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were Father Adam, the Ancient of Days and father of all,

41 Noah, who gave warning of the flood; Shem, the great high priest; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, the great law-giver of Israel;

"Shem, the great high priest", but no mention of Melchizedek

We learn more about Melchizedek in the Book of Mormon, D&C, and JST

As we read earlier, all who would receive the priesthood would be descendants of Abraham.

Descendants of Abraham

These are great blessing promised to the descendants of Abraham, of whom we all are. Lets read how these blessing should and should not be implemented into our lives.



Here are some examples of the attitudes that we shouldn't take as descendants of Abraham

John 8:32-39

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

What did these people think they were guaranteed because of Abraham?

(the truth shall make you free

We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man

Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin)

If they were truly the children of Abraham that what would they do?

(If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham)

This is restated in Section 132

D&C 132:29-32

29 Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne.

30 Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph—which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.

31 This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself.

32 Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.

What must we do to make the blessing of Abraham a part of our lives?

(do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law)

Franklin D. Richards

"Let us humble ourselves before the Lord, let us keep His commandments and teach our children so to do. Let us teach them the principles of purity and righteousness, so that they may go to the house of the Lord pure as they were born, free from sin, and while there to enter into covenants with God.... For the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, have come down upon us. And they that are the children of Abraham will do the works of Abraham. Let us not forget it; that they that would inherit the blessings of Abraham, must do the works of Abraham, to entitle them to these blessings." (JD, 24:331)

### Hagar and Ishmael

Sarai cannot have children so she give her servant, Hagar, to Abraham to be his wife. Hagar gets pregnant, which apparently makes her too uppity for Sarai's liking

Gen 16:6-12

6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

9 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

10 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

11 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

12 And he will be a wild man; 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.

What did the angel command Hagar to do?

(Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands)

What did the angel tell Hagar about Ishmael and her posterity?

(I will multiply thy seed exceedingly  
he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him)

## Abraham and Isaac

Gen 17:15-19

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

First, how does the JST clarify verses 17-18?

JST Gen 17:23-24

23 Then Abraham fell on his face and rejoiced, and said in his heart, There shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old, and Sarah that is ninety years old shall bear.

24 And Abraham said unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live uprightly before thee!

Note in verse 18 how Abraham desires Ishmael to live uprightly before God. But Ishmael chose not to.

What promise was made about Isaac and his seed?

(I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him)

Bruce R. McConkie

“Why Isaac? Because he kept the commandments and did everything he was counseled to do by his father. And so, in due course the Lord came also to Isaac and renewed upon his head all the promises given to Abraham. 'I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven,' was the divine word to Abraham's son, 'and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' (Gen 26:4.)" (A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, pg. 37)