

Come Follow Me: February 7-13

Abraham 1–2; Genesis 12–17

“To Be a Greater Follower of Righteousness”

As you read about Abram and Sarai (later called Abraham and Sarah) and their family, ponder how their examples inspire you. Record impressions about what you can do “to be a greater follower of righteousness” ([Abraham 1:2](#)).

Record Your Impressions

Because of the covenant God made with him, Abraham has been called “the father of the faithful” ([Doctrine and Covenants 138:41](#)) and “the Friend of God” ([James 2:23](#)). Millions today honor him as their direct ancestor, and others have been adopted into his family through conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet Abraham himself came from a troubled family—his father, who had abandoned the true worship of God, tried to have Abraham sacrificed to false gods. In spite of this, Abraham’s desire was “to be a greater follower of righteousness” ([Abraham 1:2](#)), and the account of his life shows that God honored his desire. Abraham’s life stands as a testimony that no matter what a person’s family history has been, the future can be filled with hope.

Abraham—Father of the Faithful

(5-1) Introduction

You are “the seed of Abraham” (D&C 84:34; see also D&C 132:30). What does that statement mean? You probably have a similar statement in your patriarchal blessing. What are the blessings of Abraham to which you are entitled, and what do blessings given so long ago have to do with you today? Are Abraham’s blessings essentially any different from the blessings given to Adam, Enoch, or Noah?

The focus of this chapter is on the covenant between Jehovah and Abraham. Emphasis will be given to the elements of the covenant and its blessings and responsibilities. As you study, look

for the application of this covenant to you. Because you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the covenant is a part of your life; you accepted it at baptism. Your eternal salvation depends on how you keep those promises. It would be very wise to understand this covenant.

The Covenant

Throughout the Old Testament, you will frequently read the word *covenant*. Today we usually think of covenants as sacred promises with God, but in the ancient world, covenants were also an important part of people's interactions with each other. For their safety and survival, people needed to be able to trust each other, and covenants were a way to secure that trust.

So when God spoke to Noah, Abraham, or Moses about covenants, He was inviting them to enter into a relationship of trust with Him. One of the best-known examples of a covenant in the Old Testament is the one God made with Abraham and Sarah—and then renewed with their descendants Isaac and Jacob (also called Israel). We often call this the Abrahamic covenant, although in the Old Testament it was known simply as “the covenant.” You will see that the Old Testament is fundamentally the story of people who saw themselves as the inheritors of this covenant—the covenant people.

The Abrahamic covenant continues to be important today, especially to Latter-day Saints. Why? Because we are also the covenant people, whether or not we are direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see [Galatians 3:27–29](#)). For this reason, it is important to understand what the Abrahamic covenant is and how it applies to us today.

What Is the Abrahamic Covenant?

Abraham wanted “to be a greater follower of righteousness” ([Abraham 1:2](#)), so God invited him into a covenant relationship. Abraham wasn't the first to have this desire, and he wasn't the first to receive a covenant. He sought for “the blessings of the fathers” ([Abraham 1:2](#))—blessings that were offered by covenant to Adam and Eve and thereafter to those who sought these blessings diligently.

God's covenant with Abraham promised wonderful blessings: an inheritance of land, a large posterity, access to priesthood ordinances, and a name that

would be honored for generations to come. But the focus of this covenant was not just on the blessings Abraham and his family would *receive* but also on the blessing they would *be* to the rest of God's children. "Thou shalt be a blessing," God declared, "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" ([Genesis 12:2–3](#)).

Did this covenant give Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants a privileged status among God's children? Only in the sense that it is a privilege to bless others. The family of Abraham were to "bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations," sharing "the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal" ([Abraham 2:9, 11](#)).

This covenant was the blessing Abraham was longing for. After receiving it, Abraham said in his heart, "Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee" ([Abraham 2:12](#)).

That was thousands of years ago, but this covenant has been restored in our day (see [1 Nephi 22:8–12](#)). And it is currently being fulfilled in the lives of God's people. In fact, the fulfillment of the covenant is building momentum in the latter days as God's work progresses, blessing families throughout the world. And anyone who, like Abraham, wants to be a greater follower of righteousness, anyone who seeks the Lord earnestly, can be a part of it.

What Does the Abrahamic Covenant Mean to Me?

You are a child of the covenant. You made a covenant with God when you were baptized. You renew that covenant every time you partake of the sacrament. And you make sacred covenants in the temple. Together, these covenants make you a participant in the Abrahamic covenant, the fulness of which is found in temple ordinances. As President Russell M. Nelson taught, "Ultimately, in the holy temple, we may become joint heirs to the blessings of an eternal family, as once promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity."¹

Through these covenants and ordinances, we become God's people (see [Exodus 6:7](#); [Deuteronomy 7:6](#); [26:18](#); [Ezekiel 11:20](#)). We become different

from the world around us. Our covenants make it possible for us to be true, committed disciples of Jesus Christ. “Our covenants,” President Nelson explained, “bind us to Him and give us godly power.”² And when God blesses His people with His power, it is with the invitation and expectation that they will bless others—that they will “be a blessing” to “all the families of the earth” ([Abraham 2:9, 11](#)).

This is the precious understanding granted to us because of the Restoration of the Abrahamic covenant through the Prophet Joseph Smith. So when you read about covenants in the Old Testament, don’t think just about God’s relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Think also about His relationship with you. When you read about the promise of numberless posterity (see [Genesis 28:14](#)), don’t think just about the millions who today call Abraham their father. Think also about God’s promise to you of eternal families and eternal increase (see [Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; 132:20–24](#)). When you read about the promise of a land of inheritance, don’t think just about the land promised to Abraham. Think also about the celestial destiny of the earth itself—an inheritance promised to the “meek” who “wait upon the Lord” ([Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:9, 11](#); see also [Doctrine and Covenants 88:17–20](#)). And when you read about the promise that God’s covenant people will bless “all the families of the earth” ([Abraham 2:11](#)), don’t think just about the ministry of Abraham or the prophets who descended from him. Think also about what you can do—as a covenant follower of Jesus Christ—to be a blessing to the families around you.

ABRAHAM CHAPTER 1

Abraham seeks the blessings of the patriarchal order—He is persecuted by false priests in Chaldea—Jehovah saves him—The origins and government of Egypt are reviewed.

1 In the land of the ^aChaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, ^bAbraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of ^cresidence;

Abraham 1:1. The Chaldeans and the Egyptians

Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, is generally identified with the modern town of Mugheir in present-day Iraq. It is about 150 miles (240 kilometers) from the Persian Gulf and 875 miles (1,400 kilometers) from Egypt. Although the peoples of Chaldea and Egypt were separated geographically, it appears that in the days of Abraham they shared religious beliefs and practices.

Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–1984) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that Abraham “mentions that the priest of Elkenah was also the priest of Pharaoh. The altar [see [facsimile 1, figure 4](#)] was obviously specially built for human sacrifice.

“How did this Egyptian infusion reach into Mesopotamia? What was the priest of Pharaoh doing in Ur?

“At this time Egyptian influence was felt throughout the Fertile Crescent [a geographic region that extends in a curve from Egypt north into Mesopotamia, then east and south again toward the Persian Gulf]. Much of the advanced learning of the people of the Nile was exported abroad, including some of their religious customs” (*Abraham, Friend of God* [1979], 42–43).

Abraham 1:1. Abraham’s Early Years

The biblical chronology indicates that the prophet Noah may have been alive during the early years of Abraham’s life. Therefore, Abraham may have known Noah personally. In [Abraham 1:19](#) the Lord mentioned His covenant relationship with Noah in order to teach Abraham about the covenant relationship the Lord would have with him.

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.

Abraham 1:2. Why Did Abraham Seek the Blessings of the Fathers?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “The true disciple has an inborn questioning to know, personally, all that God is willing to teach us. Nephi could have accepted gladly the vision of his father, Lehi. But Nephi ‘desired to know the things that [his] father had seen.’ (1 Nephi 11:1.) Abraham sought, even though he had a father who had turned from the faith, ‘for greater happiness and peace’ and ‘for mine appointment unto the Priesthood.’ ([Abraham 1:2, 4](#).) Abraham described himself as desiring ‘great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness’ ([Abraham 1:2](#)), questing for the word of Christ. Divine discontent in the form of promptings can move us to feast because we know that by feasting we can increase our knowledge, effectiveness, and joy” (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* [1977], 119).

Abraham 1:2. What Is “the Right Belonging to the Fathers”?

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught that Adam received the priesthood “in the Creation, before the world was formed,” and that he held the keys of the First Presidency (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], [104](#)).

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said:

“The order of priesthood spoken of in the scriptures is sometimes referred to as the patriarchal order because it came down from father to son. ...

“Abraham, a righteous servant of God, desiring as he said, ‘to be a greater follower of righteousness,’ sought for these same blessings. Speaking of the order of the priesthood, he said: ‘It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time ... even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, our first father, through the fathers unto me.’ (Abr. 1:2–3.)” (“What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 9).

Abraham explained that he had “the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood” (Abraham 1:31). These records confirmed Abraham’s right to the priesthood. This can be traced in Genesis 5 (from Adam to Shem; see also Moses 6:8–25; 8:1–13) and Genesis 11:10–26 (from Shem to Abram [Abraham]; see also D&C 84:14–16; 107:40–52).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), speaking of the patriarchal organization from Adam to Moses, wrote: “The order of this priesthood which was established in the beginning was patriarchal. The authority descended from father to son, and those who held it were high priests. This order of descent from Adam to Noah is given in the Doctrine and Covenants. Noah, who stands next to Adam in authority, brought this priesthood through the flood, and it continued from generation to generation. Abraham, the 10th from Noah, received special blessings from the Lord, and the priesthood continued through him and his seed with the promise that all who received the gospel should be counted as Abraham’s seed and partake of his blessings” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie [1956], 3:160–61).

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 ^bfirstborn, or the first man, who is ^cAdam, or first father, through the fathers unto me.

Abraham 1:3. Who Conferred the Priesthood upon Abraham?

Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–16 indicates that “Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah” and from Noah back to Enoch and eventually to Adam. Abraham’s record shows that his fathers had “turned from their righteousness” (Abraham 1:5) and therefore could not confer the holy priesthood upon Abraham. Yet Abraham became a “rightful heir” to the priesthood through his righteousness and “sought for the blessings of the fathers” who held the priesthood (Abraham 1:2). The **Prophet Joseph Smith** also referred to Abraham’s (Abram’s) relationship with the righteous patriarch Melchizedek when he wrote: “Abram says to Melchizedek, I believe all that [thou] hast taught me concerning the priesthood, and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abram and sent him away. Abram rejoiced saying, ‘Now I have a priesthood’” (Manuscript History of the Church, vol. E-1, p. 1708, josephsmithpapers.org; capitalization, punctuation, and spelling standardized).

4 I sought for mine “appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the ^bfathers concerning the seed.

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 ^bgods of the ^cheathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice;

6 For their ahearts were set to do bevil, and were wholly turned to the god of cElkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt;

Abraham 1:4–6. The Courage of Abraham

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) stated: “We all know something of the courage it takes for one to stand in opposition to united custom, and general belief. None of us likes to be ridiculed. Few are able to withstand popular opinion even when they know it is wrong, and it is difficult to comprehend the magnificent courage displayed by Abraham in his profound obedience to Jehovah, in the midst of his surroundings. His moral courage, his implicit faith in God, his boldness in raising his voice in opposition to the prevailing wickedness, is almost beyond comparison” (*The Way to Perfection* [1946], 86).

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

Abraham 1:6–7. Why Did the Fathers Seek to Sacrifice Abraham?

Abraham 1 reveals that Abraham’s father, Terah, had given himself to the worship of false gods and was willing to offer his own son as a sacrifice (see Abraham 1:5–6, 17; Joshua 24:2). **Elder John A. Widtsoe** (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: “The family of Abraham had turned from righteousness and had become idolators. Abraham therefore, himself a follower of God’s truth, preached righteousness to them but without avail. For his insistence upon the worship of the only true and Living God, he was persecuted and his life sought. So intense was the hatred of the idolators that it was only by the intervention of the Lord that he was saved from being offered up as a sacrifice to the idols of the people,” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham [1960], 398).

8 Now, at this time it was the custom of the priest of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to offer up upon the altar which was built in the land of Chaldea, for the offering unto these strange gods, men, women, and children.

9 And it came to pass that the priest made an offering unto the god of Pharaoh, and also unto the god of Shagreel, even after the manner of the Egyptians. Now the god of Shagreel was the sun.

10 Even the thank-offering of a child did the apriest of Pharaoh offer upon the altar which stood by the hill called Potiphar’s Hill, at the head of the plain of Olishem.

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 aHam. These virgins were offered up because of their virtue; they would not bbow 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.

Abraham 1:8–11. Egyptian Human Sacrifice

President Joseph Fielding Smith, commenting on the human sacrifices that took place during the time of Abraham, wrote: “Abraham was of the [tenth] generation from Noah. Several hundred years had passed since the flood, and people had multiplied and spread over the face of the earth. The civilizations of Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria and the petty nations of Canaan, had been

established. In the midst of this scattering the true worship of the Father was nearly lost. Sacrifice instituted in the days of Adam and continued in the practice and teaching of Noah, in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of Man, had become perverted. Instead of offering clean animals, such as the lamb and bullock, the apostate nations had dwindled in unbelief to the extent that human sacrifice was offered to their idol gods” (*The Way to Perfection*, 85).

Abraham 1:11. The Three Virgins

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed these three virtuous young women, along with three exceptionally faithful young men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (see Daniel 3:12–30)—as “marvelous models on enduring uncertainty and on trusting God”: “Matching those three young men are three young women whose names we do not have. They are mentioned in the book of Abraham, remarkable young women about whom I am anxious to know more. They were actually sacrificed upon the altar because ‘they would not bow down to worship [an idol] of wood or stone’ (Abraham 1:11). Some day the faithful will get to meet them” (“*Not My Will, But Thine*” [1988], 119–20).

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.

13 It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

14 That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics.

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 “bunloosed my bands;

16 And his voice was unto me: “Abraham, Abraham, behold, my “bname 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 “dland which thou knowest not of;

17 And this because they have turned their “hearts away from me, to worship 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; therefore I have come down to “bvisit them, and to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life.

18 Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee.

19 As it was with “Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my “bname shall be known in the earth “cforever, for I am thy God.

20 Behold, Potiphar’s Hill was in the land of “Ur, of Chaldea. And the Lord broke down the altar of Elkenah, and of the gods of the land, and utterly destroyed them, and smote the priest that he died; and there was great mourning in Chaldea, and also in the court of Pharaoh; which Pharaoh signifies king by royal blood.

Abraham 1:12–20. The Sacrifice of All Things If Necessary

Like the three virgins who laid down their lives rather than worship false gods, Abraham faced the ultimate sacrifice to remain true to his faith in God. While few of us face death because of our beliefs, we are each called upon to sacrifice all that God asks of us. *Lectures on Faith* states the following:

“For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor, and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also—counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God; but actual knowledge, realizing that, when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God. ...

“... A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth’s sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

“... It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him. ...

“... From the days of righteous Abel to the present time, the knowledge that men have that they are accepted in the sight of God is obtained by offering sacrifice. ...

“... Those, then, who make the sacrifice, will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God; and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith: therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do, and without this guarantee faith could not exist” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 68–70).

Abraham 1:20. There Was Mourning in the Court of Pharaoh



Chaldea was a great distance from Egypt, yet there was mourning in Egypt when the Lord broke down the altar and smote the priest. Regarding this event, **Elder Mark E. Petersen** (1900–1984) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote:

“When the scripture says that the Lord broke down the altars of the gods of the land [see Abraham 1:12, 20], it must have had broad repercussions because it brought great mourning in Chaldea ‘and also in the court of Pharaoh.’ Pharaoh and his court were in Egypt. Only a most unusual event could have caused such extensive and distant reactions.

“Abraham’s brief account obviously does not tell the whole story” (*Abraham, Friend of God* [1979], 48–49).

21 Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the “loins of ^bHam, and was a partaker of the blood of the “Canaanites by birth.

22 From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the “Canaanites was preserved in the land.

23 The land of “Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden;

24 When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

25 Now the first “government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

Abraham 1:25. “The First Government of Egypt ... Was after the Manner of the Government of Ham, Which Was Patriarchal”

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

“Egypt was not the only nation, in these early times, which attempted to imitate the patriarchal order of government. We have seen in Abraham’s record that this was the order of government in the reign of Adam, and down to the time of Noah.

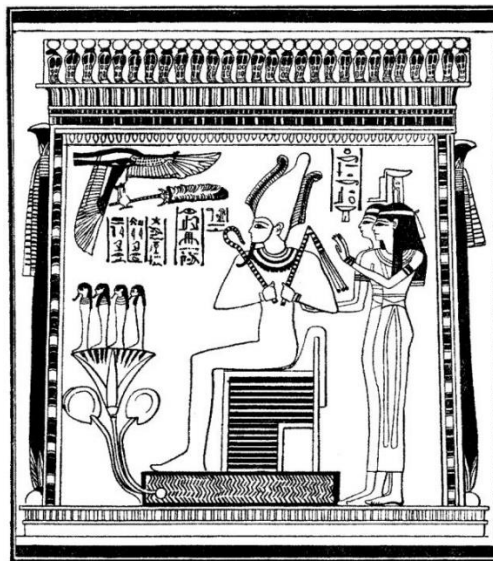
“Naturally that form of government would be perpetuated in large degree by all tribes as they began to spread over the face of the earth. As men multiplied they organized first in the family

group, then into tribes and eventually into nations. The greater powers would naturally occupy the most favored spots. Stronger tribes would overcome the weaker and force them to join the national government, or else they would be subdued and treated as slaves, or placed under tribute. As the patriarchal order was handed down from father to son so also would the political authority be perpetuated with the same claims to authority. We know that in ancient times in Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, Babylon, Persia, and among all the petty nations of the Mesopotamia and Palestine, the monarch was succeeded by his posterity in hereditary right” (*The Progress of Man* [1944], 100–101.)

26 Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that “order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the “blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

27 Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of “Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain “claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry;

Abraham 1:20–27. A Pharaoh in Egypt



Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: “After the immersion of the earth in the waters of Noah came a day of new beginning. As in Adam’s day, the faithful lived under a theocratic system, and as in the days before the flood, those who chose to live after the manner of the world set up their own governments and their own ways of worship. The seed of Shem, Ham, and Japheth began to populate the earth, and it so continued for more than four hundred years, when Abraham, who received theocratic power from Melchizedek, went down into Egypt. There he found a descendant of Ham, reigning as Pharaoh, whose government was patterned after the patriarchal governments of old, but which was devoid of priesthood and revelation, and hence, as far as worship is concerned—a worship prescribed,

mandated, and commanded by pharaoh—had turned to idolatry.’ (Abraham 1:20–27.)” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 660).

Abraham 1:24–27. The Pharaoh and the Priesthood

At times in the past, the power and authority to act in the name of the Lord was bestowed upon only a few worthy males and withheld from all others. In the days of Moses’s leadership of the children of Israel, for example, only the tribe of Levi had the privilege to hold the priesthood (see Numbers 8:5–26). Our day is the “long-promised day ... when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood.” On June 8, 1978, the **First Presidency** announced: “Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God’s eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

“He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

“We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of all his children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of his authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel” (Official Declaration 2).

Abraham 1:27. What Does It Mean to “Fain Claim” the Right of Priesthood?

Fain means “content or willing to accept an alternative when the more desirable thing cannot be attained” (*Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, 2nd ed. [1979], 657). “The Pharaohs would fain claim [the priesthood] from Noah, through Ham” (Abraham 1:27).

28 But I shall endeavor, hereafter, to delineate the chronology running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the ^arecords have come into my hands, which I hold unto this present time.

29 Now, after the priest of Elkenah was smitten that he died, there came a fulfilment of those things which were said unto me concerning the land of Chaldea, that there should be a ^afamine in the land.

30 Accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea, and my father was sorely tormented because of the famine, and he repented of the evil which he had determined against me, to take away my ^alife.

31 But the ^arecords of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the ^bplanets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this ^crecord, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.

ABRAHAM CHAPTER 2

Abraham leaves Ur to go to Canaan — Jehovah appears to him at Haran — All gospel blessings are promised to his seed and through his seed to all — He goes to Canaan and on to Egypt.

1 Now the Lord God caused the ^afamine to wax sore in the land of Ur, insomuch that ^bHaran, my brother, died; but ^cTerah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees.

Abraham 2:1. The Famine Waxed Sore in the Land

The famine in the land was most likely caused by drought, a prolonged period of dry weather during which crops wither and animals die from lack of feed. Note how the Lord used famine to influence Abraham and his family: a famine in Ur helped Terah, Abraham's father, turn from his idolatry and join his sons in the land of Haran (see [Abraham 1:30](#)); the famine in Ur also created an additional sense of urgency for Abraham to leave Ur (see [Abraham 2:1–2](#)); famine was a possible motivator for Abraham's departure from the land of Haran, and was a probable factor in the death of Terah (see [Abraham 2:17](#); see also [Genesis 11:32](#)); a famine persuaded Abraham and his family to leave the land of Canaan and continue their journey into Egypt (see [Abraham 2:21](#)). (See also [Helaman 11:3–20](#).)

2 And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took ^aSarai to wife, and ^bNahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who was the ^cdaughter of Haran.

3 Now the Lord had ^asaid 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 ^aUr, 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 ^bfather 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 ^aidolatry, therefore he continued in Haran.

6 But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord ^aappeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a ^bminister to bear my ^cname in a strange ^dland which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice.

Abraham 2:6. What Was the “Strange Land” Promised to Abraham?

The Bible and the book of Abraham both identify the strange land as the land of Canaan (see [Genesis 17:8](#); [Abraham 2:15](#)). It is not the same land possessed by the people of Canaan as recorded in [Moses 7:6–8](#). Abraham's Canaan was named for Canaan, the fourth son of Ham (see [Genesis 9:22](#); [10:6](#)). Canaan and his household originally inhabited the land located in the lowland toward the Mediterranean coast of Palestine. *Canaan* sometimes refers to all the country west of the Jordan River, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south. This is the same land that Joshua parceled out to the twelve tribes of Israel (see [Joshua 14–21](#)). To learn more about the land and people of Canaan, see [Genesis 15:18–21](#); [24:1–4](#); [28:1–2](#), [8–9](#); and [Joshua 24:11](#). Many of Abraham's descendants have dwelt in the land of Canaan, yet from time to time some of them were driven out of that promised land (see [Abraham 2:6](#)). **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) explained: “The descendants of Abraham, the tribes of Israel, became the

chosen people of the Lord according to the promise. The Lord honored them, nourished them, watched over them with a jealous care, until they became a great nation in the land the Lord had given to their fathers. Notwithstanding this tender care and the instructions and warnings this people received from time to time through their prophets, they failed to comprehend the goodness of the Lord and departed from him. Because of their rebellion they were driven out of their land and eventually were scattered among the nations” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie [1954], 1:164).

Abraham 2:6. An Everlasting Possession

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “Abraham’s inheritance in Canaan, for himself and his seed after him, was to be an eternal inheritance, one that would endure in time and in eternity. This promise is the hope of Israel, the hope that the meek shall inherit the earth, first during the millennial era and finally in that same immortal state when the earth becomes a celestial sphere” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [1971], 2:71).

7 For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in ^aheaven; the earth is my ^bfootstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my ^cchariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.

8 My ^aname is Jehovah, and I ^bknow the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9 And I will make of thee a great ^anation, and I will ^bbless 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 ^cPriesthood unto all nations;

10 And I will ^abless them through thy name; for as many as receive this ^bGospel shall be called after thy ^cname, and shall be accounted thy ^dseed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their ^efather;

Abraham 2:10. Abraham’s Seed

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “All who accept the gospel become by adoption members of the family of Abraham” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham [1960], 399). The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught: “As the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost” (“Discourse between circa 26 June and circa 2 July 1839, as Reported by Willard Richards,” 18–19, josephsmithpapers.org; capitalization, punctuation, and spelling standardized).

11 And I will ^abless them that bless thee, and ^bcurse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy ^cseed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this ^dright 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.

Abraham 2:6, 9–11. The Abrahamic Covenant

God's Promise	Scripture Reference
Land	Abraham 2:6
Posterity	Abraham 2:9
Priesthood	Abraham 1:18
Salvation and exaltation	Abraham 2:10

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

“Abraham stands in the same position as Noah for all who have lived since his day, as far as eternal blessings are concerned. Even those who are not his literal seed shall receive their eternal blessings through him and the covenant God made with him. The Lord made repeated promises to Abraham that he would become a great nation and also that in him should ‘all families of the earth be blessed.’ (Genesis 12:2–3.) He was promised the land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance for him and for his seed. ‘And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.’ (Genesis 13:16.) This has reference to eternal increase, for no man’s seed could exceed in number the dust particles of the earth. ‘Look now toward heaven,’ the Lord said, ‘and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.’ And Abraham ‘believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.’ (Genesis 15:5–6.) All these things are part of the Abrahamic covenant.

“And yet again the Lord said to Abraham: ‘As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. ... And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.’ (Genesis 17:4–8.) Abraham thus covenants for himself and for his seed that he and they will serve the Lord Jehovah, who in turn promises them eternal increase. “In its purest and best form, as far as the ancient word is concerned, the Abrahamic covenant is thus set forth: [quotes Abraham 2:9–11.]

“What, then, is the Abrahamic covenant? It is that Abraham and his seed (including those adopted into his family) shall have all of the blessings of the gospel, of the priesthood, and of eternal life. The gate to eternal life is celestial marriage, which holy order of matrimony enables the family unit to continue in eternity, so that the participating parties may have posterity as numerous as the sands upon the seashore or the stars in heaven. The Abrahamic covenant enables men to create for themselves eternal family units that are patterned after the family of God our Heavenly Father. A lesser part of the covenant is that the seed of Abraham have the Millennial destiny of inheriting as an everlasting possession the very land of Canaan whereon the feet of the

righteous have trod in days gone by” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 503–5; see also [“The Abrahamic Covenant,”](#) at the end of this manual).

Abraham 2:11. “This Right Shall Continue in Thee, and in Thy Seed”

Abraham desired the blessings of the fathers—the right to administer in the Melchizedek Priesthood. He was a rightful heir, and because of his righteousness he became a high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood (see [Abraham 1:2](#)). The Lord promised him that his posterity would also be rightful heirs of the priesthood. “Being an heir to the Abrahamic covenant does not make one a ‘chosen person’ per se, but does signify that such are chosen to responsibly carry the gospel to all the peoples of the earth. Abraham’s seed have carried out the missionary activity in all the nations since Abraham’s day. ([Matt. 3:9](#); [Abr. 2:9–11](#))” (Bible Dictionary, [“Abraham, covenant of”](#)).

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said: “The responsibility of the seed of Abraham, which we are, is to be missionaries to ‘bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations’ ([Abraham 2:9](#))” ([“The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants,”](#) *Ensign*, May 1987, 85).

The same keys of the priesthood given to Abraham have been restored to the earth in the latter days. On April 3, 1836, a prophet named Elias appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the newly dedicated Kirtland Temple and committed to them “the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed” ([D&C 110:12](#)). With these keys of the priesthood on earth once again, a person can receive all of the blessings given to Abraham (see [D&C 132:29–33](#)).

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12 Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has *“sought* thee earnestly; now I have found thee;

13 Thou didst send thine angel to *“deliver* me from the gods of Elkenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.

14 So I, Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me; and I, Abraham, was *“sixty* and two years old when I departed out of Haran.

Abraham 2:14. A Chronology of the Later Years of Abraham’s Life

Age	Event
?	Abraham left Ur for the land of Haran (see Abraham 2:3–4).
62	Abraham and his family left the land of Haran for the land of Canaan (see Abraham 2:14 ; note that Genesis 12:4 says that he was 75 years old when they left Haran).
?	Abraham and his family lived in Egypt (see Genesis 12:11–20).
?	Abraham settled in Hebron (in the land of Canaan) and the Lord appeared to him again (see Genesis 13).

Age	Event
?	Abraham rescued Lot and met with Melchizedek (see Genesis 14).
86	Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar, was born (see Genesis 16:16).
99	The Lord again appeared to Abraham, confirming his covenant with him (see Genesis 17:1).
100	Isaac, Abraham's son by Sarah, was born (see Genesis 21:5).
?	Abraham obeyed the command to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord; the Abrahamic Covenant was reconfirmed (see Genesis 22).
137	Sarah, Abraham's wife, died (see Genesis 23).
175	Abraham died and was buried with Sarah in Hebron (see Genesis 25:7–10).

Abraham's call to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to the lands of Canaan and Egypt altered the course of his life, the lives of his descendants, and ultimately other nations and civilizations.

15 And I took Sarai, whom I took to wife when I was in Ur, in Chaldea, and Lot, my brother's son, and all our substance that we had gathered, and the souls that we had won in Haran, and came forth in the way to the land of Canaan, and dwelt in tents as we came on our way;

16 Therefore, eternity was our covering and our rock and our salvation, as we journeyed from Haran by the way of Jershon, to come to the land of Canaan.

17 Now I, Abraham, built an altar in the land of Jershon, and made an offering unto the Lord, and prayed that the famine might be turned away from my father's house, that they might not perish.

18 And then we passed from Jershon through the land unto the place of Sechem; it was situated in the plains of Moreh, and we had already come into the borders of the land of the Canaanites, and I offered sacrifice there in the plains of Moreh, and called on the Lord devoutly, because we had already come into the land of this idolatrous nation.

19 And the Lord appeared unto me in answer to my prayers, and said unto me: Unto thy seed will I give this land.

Abraham 2:19. The Lord Appeared to Abraham Again

The scriptures reveal numerous occasions when the Lord spoke or appeared to Abraham. Thus far the book of Abraham told about:

- A vision of God, an angel, and the voice of the Lord while Abraham lay on the altar (see [Abraham 1:15–19](#)).

- An appearance of the Lord while Abraham prayed in the land of Haran (see [Abraham 2:6–11](#)).
- Another appearance of the Lord in answer to Abraham’s prayer as he entered the land of Canaan (see [Abraham 2:19](#)).

Later, the Lord spoke or appeared to Abraham:

- Before Abraham went into Egypt (see [Abraham 2:22](#)).
- After he returned from Egypt and settled in the land of Canaan (see [Genesis 13:14–18](#)).
- When he prayed for offspring (see [Genesis 15](#)).
- When he was ninety-nine years old (see [Genesis 17](#)).
- When he pled for the residents of Sodom (see [Genesis 18:17–33](#)).
- Near the time Isaac was born (see [Genesis 21:12–14](#)).
- When he was commanded to offer Isaac as a burnt offering (see [Genesis 22:1–2](#)).
- At the offering of Isaac on the mount (see [Genesis 22:6–19](#)).

“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” ([D&C 132:29](#)).

20 And I, Abraham, arose from the place of the altar which I had built unto the Lord, and removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of ^aBethel, and pitched my tent there, Bethel on the west, and ^bHai on the east; and there I built another ^caltar unto the Lord, and ^dcalled again upon the name of the Lord.

21 And I, Abraham, journeyed, going on still towards the south; and there was a continuation of a famine in the land; and I, Abraham, concluded to go down into Egypt, to sojourn there, for the famine became very grievous.

22 And it came to pass when I was come near to enter into Egypt, the Lord ^asaid unto me: Behold, Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon;

23 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see her, they will say—She is his wife; and they will kill you, but they will save her alive; therefore see that ye do on this wise:

24 Let her say unto the Egyptians, she is thy sister, and thy soul shall live.

25 And it came to pass that I, Abraham, told Sarai, my wife, all that the Lord had said unto me—Therefore say unto them, I pray thee, thou art my ^asister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee.

Abraham 2:22–25. Abraham and Sarai in Egypt

[Facsimile 3](#) shows that Abraham not only survived his experience in Egypt, but that he was invited by Pharaoh to sit on the throne and teach principles of astronomy. The Lord blessed Abraham and Sarai spiritually, socially, and economically during their time in Egypt (see also [Genesis 12:16–20](#)).

Abraham 2:24–25. Sarai’s Obedience

Sarai was instructed to tell the Egyptians that she was Abraham’s sister. It was a test of her faith, just as it was undoubtedly a difficult experience for Abraham. Abraham and Sarai understood the principle of obedience and passed the divine test the Lord had put before them. **Elder Mark E. Petersen** (1900–1984) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: “To protect himself,

Abraham had told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister, which of course she was. Had he divulged that she was his wife, he might have been slain. But as his sister, Pharaoh was willing to buy her at a good price” (*Abraham, Friend of God* [1979], 69; see also [Genesis 20:12](#); for further discussion of this, see S. Kent Brown, “[Biblical Egypt: Land of Refuge, Land of Bondage](#),” *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, 45, 47).

Sarai comes from the root of a word meaning “princess” in Hebrew and “queen” in the Akkadian language. There is no doubt that Sarai was a woman of great spiritual stature. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “The Lord never sends apostles and prophets and righteous men to minister to his people without placing women of like spiritual stature at their sides. Adam stands as the great high priest, under Christ, to rule as a natural patriarch over all men of all ages, but he cannot rule alone; Eve, his wife, rules at his side, having like caliber and attainments to his own. Abraham is tested as few men have been when the Lord commands him to offer Isaac upon the altar ([Gen. 22:1–19](#)); and Sarah struggles with like problems when the Lord directs that she withhold from the Egyptians her status as Abraham’s wife. ... And so it goes, in all dispensations and at all times when there are holy men there are also holy women. Neither stands alone before the Lord. The exaltation of the one is dependent upon that of the other” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [1973], 3:302).

Ideas for Personal Scripture Study

Abraham 1:1–19

God will bless me for my faith and righteous desires.

Like many of us, Abraham lived in a wicked environment, yet he desired to be righteous. President Dallin H. Oaks taught the importance of having righteous desires: “As important as it is to lose every desire for sin, eternal life requires more. To achieve our eternal destiny, we will desire and work for the qualities required to become an eternal being. ... If this seems too difficult—and surely it is not easy for any of us—then we should begin with a desire for such qualities and call upon our loving Heavenly Father for help with our feelings [see [Moroni 7:48](#)]” (“[Desire](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 44–45). As you read [Abraham 1:1–19](#), consider how these verses demonstrate what President Oaks taught. Questions like these might help:

- What did Abraham desire and seek after? What did he do to demonstrate his faith?
- What are your desires? Is there something you feel you should do to purify your desires?
- What challenges did Abraham face because of his righteous desires? How did God help him?
- What message do these verses have for those whose family members do not desire righteousness?

See also [Matthew 7:7](#); “Deliverance of Abraham” (video), ChurchofJesusChrist.org; “[Educate Your Desires, Elder Andersen Counsels](#)” (ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

The Abrahamic covenant blesses me and my family.

Because all members of the Church are included in the Abrahamic covenant, you might want to spend some time pondering why this covenant is meaningful in your life. Record your thoughts about the following questions:

How can the promises found in [Abraham 2:8–11](#) bless me and my family? (see also [Genesis 12:1–3](#); [13:15–16](#)).

Abraham 2:10–11

Who is included in the Abrahamic covenant?

When the Lord made His covenant with Abraham, He promised that this covenant would continue in Abraham’s posterity, or “seed,” and that “as many as receive this Gospel shall be ... accounted thy seed” ([Abraham 2:10–11](#)). This means that the promises of the Abrahamic covenant apply to members of the Church today, whether they are literal descendants of Abraham or adopted into his family through baptism and conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ (see [Galatians 3:26–29](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 132:30–32](#)). To be counted as Abraham’s seed, an individual must obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

What do I feel inspired to do to help fulfill the promise that “all the families of the earth shall be blessed”? ([Abraham 2:11](#)).

You might consider that some of the earthly blessings promised to Abraham and Sarah, such as inheriting a promised land and being parents of a great posterity, have eternal parallels. These include an inheritance in the celestial kingdom (see [Doctrine and Covenants 132:29](#)) and eternal marriage with eternal posterity (see [Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4](#); [132:20–24, 28–32](#)). It is

“in the temple,” President Russell M. Nelson taught, that “we receive our ultimate blessings, as the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (“[The Gathering of Scattered Israel](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 80).

See also [Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 15:9–12; 17:3–12](#) (in the Bible appendix); Bible Dictionary, “[Abraham, covenant of](#)”; “[Thoughts to Keep in Mind: The Covenant](#),” in this resource.

GENESIS CHAPTER 12

Abram will become a great nation — He and his seed will bless all the families of the earth — He travels from Haran to the land of Canaan — Because of famine, he goes down into Egypt — Abram and Sarai are tested in Pharaoh’s court.

1 Now the LORD had ^asaid unto ^bAbram, ^cGet thee out of thy ^dcountry, and from thy ^ekindred, and from thy ^ffather’s house, unto a ^gland that I will shew thee:

(5-2) Genesis 12:1

Doctrine and Covenants 84:14 teaches that Abraham received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Melchizedek. It is not certain when he received it: he may have received it while still in Ur (see Abraham 1:2, 3:1) or at some later date.

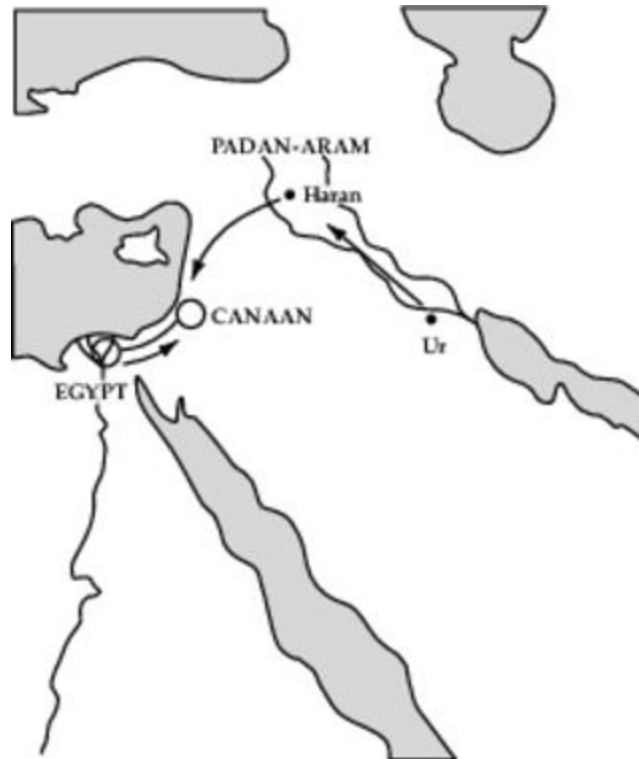
2 And I will make of thee a ^agreat ^bnation, and I will ^cbless thee, and make thy ^dname great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will ^abless them that bless thee, and ^bcurse him that ^ccurseth thee: and in thee shall all ^dfamilies of the earth be ^eblessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was ^aseventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

(5-3) Genesis 12:1–4

As recorded in Genesis 12:1, Abraham, while living in Haran, received a call to leave his country and family and go southwest to a new land. He then departed from Haran and went to Canaan. Earlier, as recorded in Abraham 1:15–16, the Lord had called Abraham from Ur, which is near the mouth of the Euphrates, and led him northwesterly to Haran. Thus, Abraham was directed by the Lord to move twice in these early years. The Lord continued to lead him from place to place.



The first intimations of the covenant to be renewed through Abraham are given in verses 2–3, 7. (See Points to Ponder in this chapter for a full discussion of this covenant.)

5 And Abram took ^aSarai his wife, and ^bLot his ^cbrother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had ^dgotten in ^eHaran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

(5-4) Genesis 12:5

Given here is evidence that Abraham was a preacher and a gatherer of souls (i.e., he did missionary work) wherever he went (see Abraham 2:15).

6 ¶ And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the ^aCanaanite *was* then in the land.

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, ^aUnto thy ^bseed will I give this ^cland: and there builded he an ^daltar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of ^aBeth-el, and pitched his tent, *having* ^bBeth-el on the west, and ^cHai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and ^dcalled upon the ^ename of the LORD.

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

10 ¶ And there was a ^afamine 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 ^asaid 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.

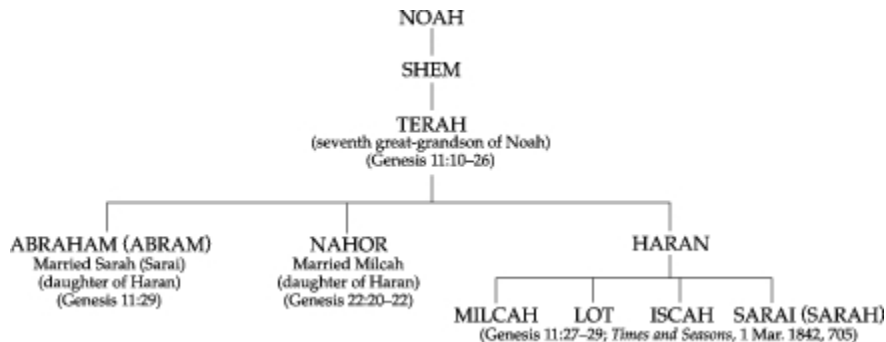
18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What *is* this *that* thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she *was* thy wife?

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.

(5-5) Genesis 12:10–20. Why Did Abraham Call Sarah His Sister?

The idea that Abraham, the great man of righteousness, deceived Pharaoh in order to protect his own life has troubled many students of the Old Testament. That his life was in danger because of Sarah's beauty seems quite clear. It seems peculiar, but whereas the Egyptian pharaohs had a strong aversion to committing adultery with another man's wife, they had no qualms about murdering the man to free his spouse for remarriage.



“To kill the husband in order to possess himself of his wife seems to have been a common royal custom in those days. A papyrus tells of a Pharaoh who, acting on the advice of one of his princes, sent armed men to fetch a beautiful woman and make away with her husband. Another Pharaoh is promised by his priest on his tombstone, that even after death he will kill Palestinian sheiks and include their wives in his harem.” (Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, 2:128.)

Abraham could validly state that Sarah was his sister. In the Bible the Hebrew words *brother* and *sister* are often used for other blood relatives. (See Genesis 14:14, in which Lot, Abraham's nephew, is called “his brother.”) Because Abraham and Haran, Sarah's father, were brothers, Sarah was Abraham's niece and thus could be called *sister*. The accompanying pedigree chart shows this relationship.

Another ancient custom that might shed light on the relationship permitted a woman to be adopted as a man's sister upon their marriage to give her greater legal and social status (see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Sarah," 14:866).

Even though Abraham was correct in calling her his sister, he did deceive the Egyptians. How can this action be justified? The answer is very simple. His action was justified because God told him to do it (see Abraham 2:22–25). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the following:

"That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.

"God said, 'Thou shalt not kill;' at another time He said, 'Thou shalt utterly destroy.' This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire." (*Teachings*, p. 256.)

Since God is perfect and does not do anything that is not right (see Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Samuel 15:29; Alma 7:20; D&C 3:2), Abraham's act was not wrong.

GENESIS CHAPTER 13

Abram returns from Egypt — He and Lot part — The Lord will make Abram's seed as the dust of the earth in number — Abram settles in Hebron.

1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

2 And Abram *was* very ^arich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to ^aBeth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and ^bHai;

4 Unto the place of the ^aaltar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram ^bcalled on the name of the LORD.

5 ¶ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the ^aCanaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no ^astrife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* ^bbrethren.

9 *Is* not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if *thou depart* to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed ^aSodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto ^bZoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and ^aLot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched *his* tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of ^aSodom *were* ^bwicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

(5-6) Genesis 13:1–13. Abraham Was Very Rich

The scriptures warn of the dangers of wealth so often that occasionally some people assume that wealth in and of itself is evil and that all wealthy people are automatically wicked. Without question, the temptation to set one's heart upon the things of the world is one to which many people succumb. But Paul taught that the "love of money is the root of all evil," not the money itself (1 Timothy 6:10; emphasis added).

Abraham provides an example of one who had great wealth (see Genesis 13:2) and yet was a man of great faith and righteousness. The incident between him and Lot provides an excellent insight into Abraham's Christlike nature. By all rights Lot should have insisted that Abraham choose first. Lot had been nurtured and protected by Abraham, and Abraham was the patriarch of the clan. Abraham could have taken his rights and given Lot what was left. Instead, his concern was only that "there be no strife" between them, so he gave Lot first choice (v. 8; see also vv. 9–10). Lot seems to have chosen the best land—the well-watered plains of Jordan—and yet there is not a trace of resentment in Abraham. In fact, in the next few chapters is recorded Abraham's intervention to save Lot's life. Here was a man for whom principles came first and material things second. It is not surprising that the Lord should renew the ancient covenant with him and make him father of the faithful.

14 ¶ And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

(5-7) Genesis 13:14–17. How Can Abraham's Seed Have the Land "Forever"?

All those who "receive this Gospel shall be called after thy [Abraham's] name, and shall be accounted thy seed" (Abraham 2:10). Also, "the meek ... shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5) when the earth achieves its "sanctified and immortal state" (D&C 130:9) as the celestial kingdom. Thus, Abraham's seed (the faithful) will have the earth throughout all eternity as well as during mortality.

18 Then Abram removed *his* tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which *is* in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Genesis 13:5–12.

What did Abraham do to create peace in his family? Perhaps your family members could practice being a peacemaker like Abraham by role-playing how to resolve conflicts that are likely to arise in your family.

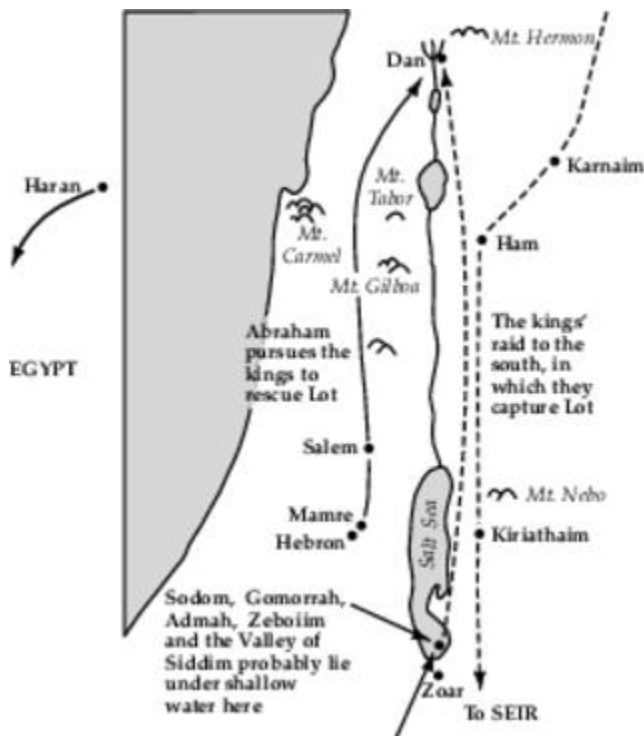
GENESIS CHAPTER 14

Lot is captured in the battles of the kings — He is rescued by Abram — Melchizedek administers bread and wine and blesses Abram — Abram pays tithes — He declines to accept the spoils of conquest.

- 1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;
- 2 *That these* made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.
- 3 All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.
- 4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.
- 5 And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that *were* with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim,
- 6 And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-paran, which *is* by the wilderness.
- 7 And they returned, and came to En-mishpat, which *is* Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezon-tamar.

(5-8) Genesis 14:1-7

In this listing of conquests by the alliance of five kings, it must be remembered that anciently the most typical political entity was a small city-state wherein the king presided over one major city and the surrounding area. This territory was sometimes expanded, but kings in those days did not rule over large countries or kingdoms. Sodom had a king, Gomorrah a king, and so on.



8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same *is* Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;

9 With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.

10 And the vale of Siddim *was full of*^aslimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

12 And they took ^aLot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 ¶ And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the ^aHebrew; for he dwelt ^bin the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these *were* confederate with Abram.

14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, ^ahe armed his trained *servants*, ^bborn in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued *them* unto Dan.

15 And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which *is* on the ^aleft hand of Damascus.

16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his ^abrother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

17 ¶ And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that *were* with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which *is* the ^aking's dale.

18 And ^aMelchizedek king of ^bSalem brought forth ^cbread and wine: ^dand he *was* the ^epriest of the most high God.

(5-9) Genesis 14:18. Who Was Melchizedek?

“To the man *Melchizedek* goes the honor of having his name used to identify the *Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God*, thus enabling men ‘to avoid the too frequent repetition’ of the name of Deity. (D. & C. 107:2–4.) Of all God’s ancient high priests ‘none were greater.’ (Alma 13:19.) His position in the priestly hierarchy of God’s earthly kingdom was like unto that of Abraham (Heb. 7:4–10), his contemporary whom he blessed (Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:1; [JST], Gen. 14:17–40 [click here and here for JST text]), and upon whom he conferred the priesthood. (D. & C. 84:14.)

“Indeed, so exalted and high was the position of Melchizedek in the eyes of the Lord and of his people that he stood as a prototype of the Son of God himself. ...

“Alma tells us that ‘Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness; But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.’ (Alma 13:17–18.)

“Paul, very obviously knowing much more about Melchizedek than he happened to record in his epistles, gave as an illustration of great faith some unnamed person who ‘wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire.’ (Heb. 11:33–34.) From the Prophet’s inspired additions to the Old Testament we learn that Paul’s reference was to Melchizedek. ‘Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire’ [JST, Genesis 14:26].” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 474–75.)

In ancient Jewish traditions Melchizedek is often thought to be Shem, the son of Noah. *Melchizedek* is a title meaning “king of righteousness,” even though it is also used as a proper name. A modern writer examined the question of whether Shem and Melchizedek could be the same person and concluded that, while we cannot say for sure, the possibility is clearly there. He said:

“Let us examine first what we know about Shem. Although the Bible names Shem as the eldest son of Noah (Gen. 5:32), modern-day revelation places Japheth as the eldest (Moses 8:12). Both reports, however, are harmonious in naming Shem as the progenitor of Israel and in the fact that the priesthood descended through Shem to all the great patriarchs after Noah. (1 Chron. 1:24–27.) In this patriarchal order of priesthood, Shem stands next to Noah. He held the keys to the priesthood and was the great high priest of his day.

“Living contemporary with Shem was a man known as Melchizedek, who was also known as the great high priest. The scriptures give us the details of Shem’s birth and ancestry but are silent as to his ministry and later life. Of Melchizedek, however, the opposite is true. Nothing is recorded about his birth or ancestry, even though the Book of Mormon states that he did have a father. (Al. 13:17–18.) Concerning his ministry and life we have several interesting and important facts. (Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:1–4; Al. 13:17–18.)

“All of this provokes some questions and calls for answers. Were there two high priests presiding at the same time? Why is the record silent concerning Shem’s ministry? Why is nothing known concerning Melchizedek’s ancestry?

“Because of this state of knowledge on our part, many Saints and gospel scholars have wondered if these men were the same person. The truth is, we do not know the answer. But an examination of the scriptures is fascinating, because it seems to indicate that these men may have been one and the same. For example, here is the case for their oneness:

1. The inheritance given to Shem included the land of Salem. Melchizedek appears in scripture as the king of Salem, who reigns over this area.
2. Shem, according to later revelation, reigned in righteousness and the priesthood came through him. Melchizedek appears on the scene with a title that means ‘king of righteousness.’
3. Shem was the great high priest of his day. Abraham honored the high priest Melchizedek by seeking a blessing at his hands and paying him tithes.

4. Abraham stands next to Shem in the patriarchal order of the priesthood and would surely have received the priesthood from Shem; but D&C 84:5–17 says Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek.
5. Jewish tradition identifies Shem as Melchizedek.
6. President Joseph F. Smith’s remarkable vision names Shem among the great patriarchs, but no mention is made of Melchizedek.

7. *Times and Seasons* [15 Dec. 1844, p. 746] speaks of ‘Shem, who was Melchizedek. ...’ “On the other hand, there is a case for their being two distinct personalities. Many persons believe D&C 84:14 is proof that there are perhaps several generations between Melchizedek and Noah. The scripture says, ‘Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah.’ ‘If it does turn out that Shem and Melchizedek are the same person, this scripture should prove no stumbling block, because it could be interpreted to mean that priesthood authority commenced with Adam and came through the fathers, even till Noah, and then to Shem.’” (Alma E. Gygi, “Is It Possible That Shem and Melchizedek Are the Same Person?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1973, pp. 15–16.)

In the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 14, several verses are added about Melchizedek that greatly increase the available knowledge of this great high priest (see JST, Genesis 14:25–40).

- 19** And he blessed him, and said, *a*Blessed *be* Abram of the most high *b*God, *c*possessor of heaven and earth:
- 20** And *a*blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him *b*tithes of all.
- 21** And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the *a*goods to thyself.
- 22** And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,
- 23** That I will not *take* from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that *is* thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram *a*rich:
- 24** Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their *a*portion.

Genesis 14:18–20.

What do we learn about Melchizedek from [Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:25–40](#)? (in the Bible appendix; see also [Alma 13:13–19](#)). How can we “[establish] righteousness” as Melchizedek did? ([verse 36](#)). What else about Melchizedek’s ministry inspires us?

Abram desires offspring—The Lord promises him seed in number as the stars—Abram believes the promise—His seed will be strangers in Egypt—Then, after four generations, they will inherit Canaan.

1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a *a*vision, saying, *b*Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy *c*shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the *a*steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, *a*one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and *a*tell the *b*stars, if thou be able to *c*number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy *d*seed be.

6 *a*And he *b*believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for *c*righteousness.

(5-10) Genesis 15:5–6. Abraham Saw Jesus Christ

In the Joseph Smith Translation, four significant verses are added between verses 5 and 6 of the Genesis account:

“And Abram said, Lord God, how wilt thou give me this land for an everlasting inheritance?”

“And the Lord said, Though thou wast dead, yet am I not able to give it thee?”

“And if thou shalt die, yet thou shalt possess it, for the day cometh, that the Son of Man shall live; but how can he live if he be not dead? he must first be quickened.

“And it came to pass, that Abram looked forth and saw the days of the Son of Man, and was glad, and his soul found rest, and he believed in the Lord; and the Lord counted it unto him for righteousness.” (JST, Genesis 15:9–12.)

Once again it is clear that the early patriarchs knew far more about Christ and His mission than the present Old Testament record indicates (see Mosiah 13:33).

7 And he said unto him, I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to *a*inherit it.

8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I *a*know that I shall inherit it?

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

10 And he took unto him all these, and *a*divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great *a*darkness fell upon him.

(5-11) Genesis 15:12. A Horror of Great Darkness Fell upon Him

For an interesting parallel to the experience Abraham had at the beginning of his vision, read Joseph Smith—History 1:14–16.

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

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they ^acome out with great ^bsubstance.

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

16 But in the ^afourth generation they shall come ^bhither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is not yet* ^cfull.

(5-12) Genesis 15:13–16. For the Iniquity of the Amorites Is Not Yet Full

In this prophecy about the future captivity of Israel, the Lord gives an important clue to why He later would command the Israelites to utterly destroy any Canaanites living in the land of promise (see Deuteronomy 7:1–2; 20:16–18). Evidently by that time their iniquity had become full and they were therefore ripe for destruction.

For a full discussion of the destruction of the Canaanites, see Reading 19-15.

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 ^apassed between those pieces.

18 In the same day the LORD made a ^acovenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this ^bland, from ^cthe river of Egypt unto the great river, the river ^dEuphrates:

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

GENESIS CHAPTER 16

Sarai gives Hagar to Abram as his wife—Hagar flees from Sarai—An angel commands Hagar to return and submit herself to Sarai—Hagar bears Ishmael.

1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an ^aEgyptian, whose name was ^bHagar.

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my ^amaid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

(5-13) Genesis 16:1–3

According to the custom of the time, Sarah's giving her handmaid, Hagar, to be a wife to Abraham was an expected and logical act (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:109–11; D&C 132:1–2, 29–30, 34–35).

4 ¶ And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was *a*despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid *is* in thy hand; do to her *a*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 *a*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 *a*angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and *b*submit thyself under her hands.

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

(5-14) Genesis 16:10

The angelic message to Hagar shows that the promises to Abraham go even beyond those which have come through Isaac.

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 *a*Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

12 And he will be a *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.

13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

14 Wherefore the *a*well was called *b*Beer-lahai-roi; behold, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

15 ¶ And Hagar *a*bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, *b*Ishmael.

16 And Abram *was* fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

(5-15) Genesis 16:11–12

The Hebrew word *Ishmael* literally means, “God hears” (v. 11a). In verse 12 he is called a “wild man,” or in Hebrew, a “wild ass,” which metaphor implies one who loves freedom. This metaphor could be a prophetic description of the nomadic life of the descendants of Ishmael (see v. 12a).

Genesis 16.

Reading about Hagar could be an opportunity to discuss how the Lord helps us when we feel wronged. You might point out that “Ishmael” means “God hears.” When have we felt that the Lord heard and helped us when we felt wronged? (see [Genesis 16:11](#)).

GENESIS CHAPTER 17

Abram is commanded to be perfect — He will be a father of many nations — His name is changed to Abraham — The Lord covenants to be a God unto Abraham and his seed forever — Also, the Lord gives Abraham the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession — Circumcision becomes a token of the everlasting covenant between God and Abraham — Sarai's name is changed to Sarah — She will bear Isaac, with whom the Lord will establish His covenant — Abraham and the men of his house are circumcised.

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD ^aappeared to ^bAbram, and said unto him, I am the ^cAlmighty God; ^dwalk before me, and be thou ^eperfect.

(5-16) Genesis 17:1. Walk Uprightly and Be Perfect

The commandment to Abraham was “thou shalt walk uprightly before me, and be perfect” (JST, Genesis 17:1a). This commandment has been given to the Saints in all ages (see Deuteronomy 18:13; Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; D&C 67:13).

“Salvation does not come all at once; we are commanded to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. It will take us ages to accomplish this end, for there will be greater progress beyond the grave, and it will be there that the faithful will overcome all things, and receive all things, even the fulness of the Father’s glory.

“I believe the Lord meant just what he said: that we should be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. That will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then not as long as we live in this mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and shall be like God.

“But here we lay the foundation. Here is where we are taught these simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in this probationary state, to prepare us for that perfection. It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. Why? Because we are on that road, if we are keeping the commandments of the Lord, we are on that road to perfection, and that can only come through obedience and the desire in our hearts to overcome the world.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:18–19.)

2 And I will make my ^acovenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 ^aAnd Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my ^acovenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a ^bfather of many ^cnations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be ^aAbraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding ^afruitful, and I will make ^bnations of thee, and ^ckings shall come out of thee.

7 ^aAnd I will establish my ^bcovenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an ^ceverlasting covenant, to be a ^dGod unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 And I will ^agive unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the ^bland wherein thou art a ^cstranger, all the ^dland of ^eCanaan, for an everlasting ^fpossession; and I will be their ^gGod.

9 ¶ And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10 This *is* my ^acovenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be ^bcircumcised.

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a ^btoken of the covenant betwixt me and you.

12 And he that is ^aeight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or ^bbought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an ^aeverlasting covenant.

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be ^acut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

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

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

17 ^aThen Abraham fell upon his face, and ^blaughed, and said in his heart, Shall *a child* be born unto him that is an ^chundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

(5-18) Genesis 17:17

Joseph Smith corrected this verse to say that Abraham rejoiced (see JST, Genesis 17:23a). This change is also substantiated by the Hebrew text.

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

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

20 And as for ^aIshmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; ^btwelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

21 But my ^acovenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set ^btime in the next year.

(5-19) Genesis 17:18–21

The birthright was given to Isaac, the first son of the first wife, rather than to Ishmael, who was the first son of Abraham and Hagar and was about fourteen years older than Isaac. The Lord made it clear that in accordance with the original promise Abraham's son by Sarah would bear the covenant responsibility. Yet, Ishmael, through his twelve sons, was also to be the father of a great nation.

22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

23 ¶ And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

24 And Abraham *was* ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

25 And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

What do I learn about the Abrahamic covenant from [Genesis 15:1–6](#); [17:1–8](#), [15–22](#)?

[Genesis 13:16](#); [15:2–6](#); [17:15–19](#).

How can you help your family understand the Lord’s promise in these verses—that even though Abraham and Sarah did not yet have children, their posterity would be as numerous as the dust of the earth, stars in the sky, or sand on the seashore? (see also [Genesis 22:17](#)). Perhaps you could show family members a container of sand, look at the stars, or use the picture that accompanies this outline. How can we trust God’s promises even when they seem impossible?

Points to Ponder

(5-20) Though we know from modern scripture that the covenant-making process began with Adam and the other patriarchs (see Moses 6:65–68; 7:51; 8:2), it is from the Abrahamic covenant that we get a fuller idea of what is involved in covenant making. Since righteous members of the Church become the seed of Abraham and thus part of the covenant people (see D&C 84:34), we should understand what is involved in the covenant made with Abraham. Abraham’s part of the covenant, which is the same as for us, is that he “walk uprightly before me, and be perfect” (JST, Genesis 17:1). If he would do so, then the Lord’s part of the covenant, or His promises to Abraham, constitute what is known as the Abrahamic covenant. Elder McConkie explained Abraham’s covenant and its relationship to us:

“Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation); then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase; finally he received a promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity. (Abra. 2:6–11; D. & C. 132:29–50.) Included in the divine promises to Abraham was the assurance that Christ would come through his lineage, and the assurance that Abraham’s posterity would receive certain choice, promised lands as an eternal inheritance. (Abra. 2; Gen. 17; 22:15–18; Gal. 3.)

“All of these promises lumped together are called the *Abrahamic covenant*. This covenant was renewed with Isaac (Gen. 24:60; 26:1–4, 24) and again with Jacob. (Gen. 28; 35:9–13; 48:3–4.) *Those portions of it which pertain to personal exaltation and eternal increase are renewed with each member of the House of Israel who enters the order of celestial marriage; through that order the participating parties become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (D. & C. 132; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 3; 4.)*” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 13.)

A close analysis of the promises shows both their temporal and eternal significance.

The Land Promise. Read Genesis 15:18; 17:8; Abraham 2:6.

Temporal Significance

The land of Canaan was promised to Abraham and his descendants, even though he never personally possessed it (see Genesis 17:7; 13:15; 17:8).

“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.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:88.)

Eternal Significance

Abraham’s righteous descendants will inherit the earth.

“Following the millennium plus ‘a little season’ (D. & C. 29:22–25), the earth will die, be resurrected, and becoming like a ‘sea of glass’ (D. & C. 130:7), attain unto ‘its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.’ (D. & C. 77:1–2.) Then the poor and the meek—that is, the godfearing and the righteous—shall inherit the earth; it will become an abiding place for the Father and the Son, and celestial beings will possess it forever and ever. (D. & C. 88:14–26, 111.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 211.)

The Posterity Promise. Read Abraham 2:9; Genesis 17:4–6; 16; Abraham 3:14.

Temporal Significance

Abraham was one hundred years old before his covenant son, Isaac, was born. Abraham had eight sons in all; however, from Isaac the covenant people developed; through Ishmael came many of the Arab nations (see D&C 132:34). Through Keturah’s sons came the Midianites and others.

“The vast population of the Arab, Moslem, and Israeli world which claim to be descendants of Abraham numbers approximately one hundred million. When one adds to that figure the deceased ancestors, and the estimates of 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 concerning

the innumerable and unmeasurable blessing of posterity.” (Nyman, in *Sperry Lecture Series*, 1975, p. 13.)

Eternal Significance

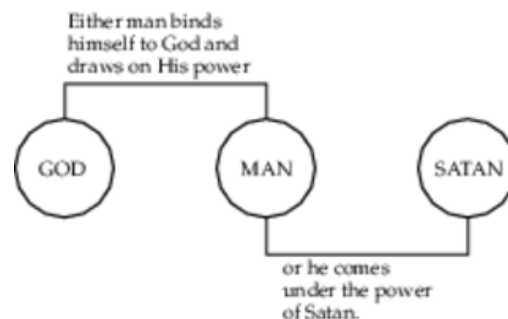
In a literal sense Abraham’s posterity will have no end because his righteous descendants will go on through eternity bringing forth posterity (see D&C 132:30).

(5-21) As a second matter for you to consider, note that there are three great intelligent powers in the universe: God, man, and Satan. There is no question about which of those powers is the greatest. God has all power and therefore no one has greater power than He. But of these, who has greater power—man or Satan? Before answering, read the following scriptures, thinking in terms of power.

Man’s Power. Read D&C 10:5; Ephesians 6:10–13; Romans 8:35–39.

Satan’s Power. Read Moses 4:4; 2 Nephi 2:29; 28:22–23; Alma 34:35.

Whether man’s power is greater than Satan’s depends on man’s willingness to bind himself to God and draw on His power. If he does not, then he comes increasingly under Satan’s power and dominion. Man’s choice could be diagramed in this way.



Joseph Smith stated this truth in these words: “The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power.”

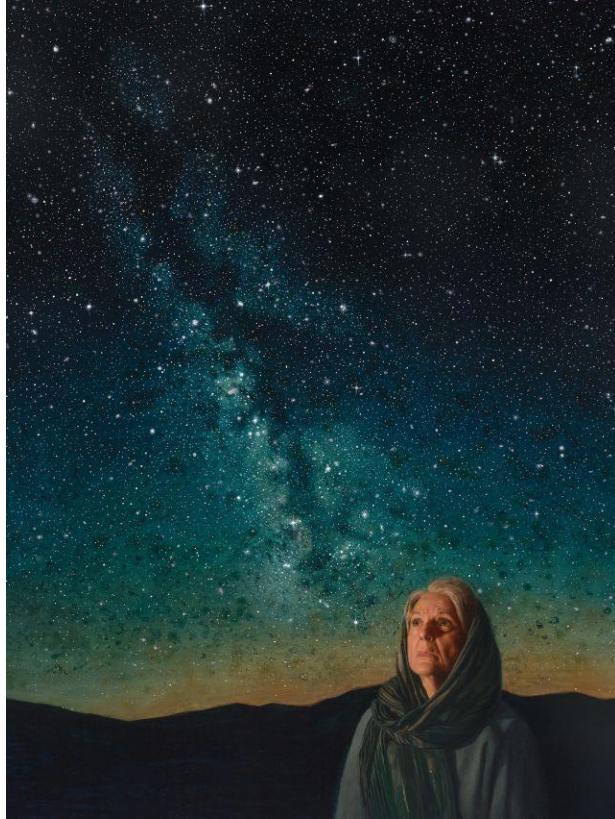
(*Teachings*, p. 181.)

What is the means of binding oneself to God?

Read D&C 130:20–21; 82:4–10; 54:3–6.

For more ideas for teaching children, see [this week’s outline](#) in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

Suggested song: “[I Want to Live the Gospel](#),” *Children’s Songbook*, 148.



God promised that Abraham's and Sarah's posterity would number "as the stars of the heaven" ([Genesis 22:17](#)). Pondering God's Promise, by Courtney Matz.