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Day 6 Abraham & Sarah: Genesis 12-19

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Patriarchal & Matriarchal Time Period Circa 2000-1500 BC (Corresponds to the Middle Bronze Age)



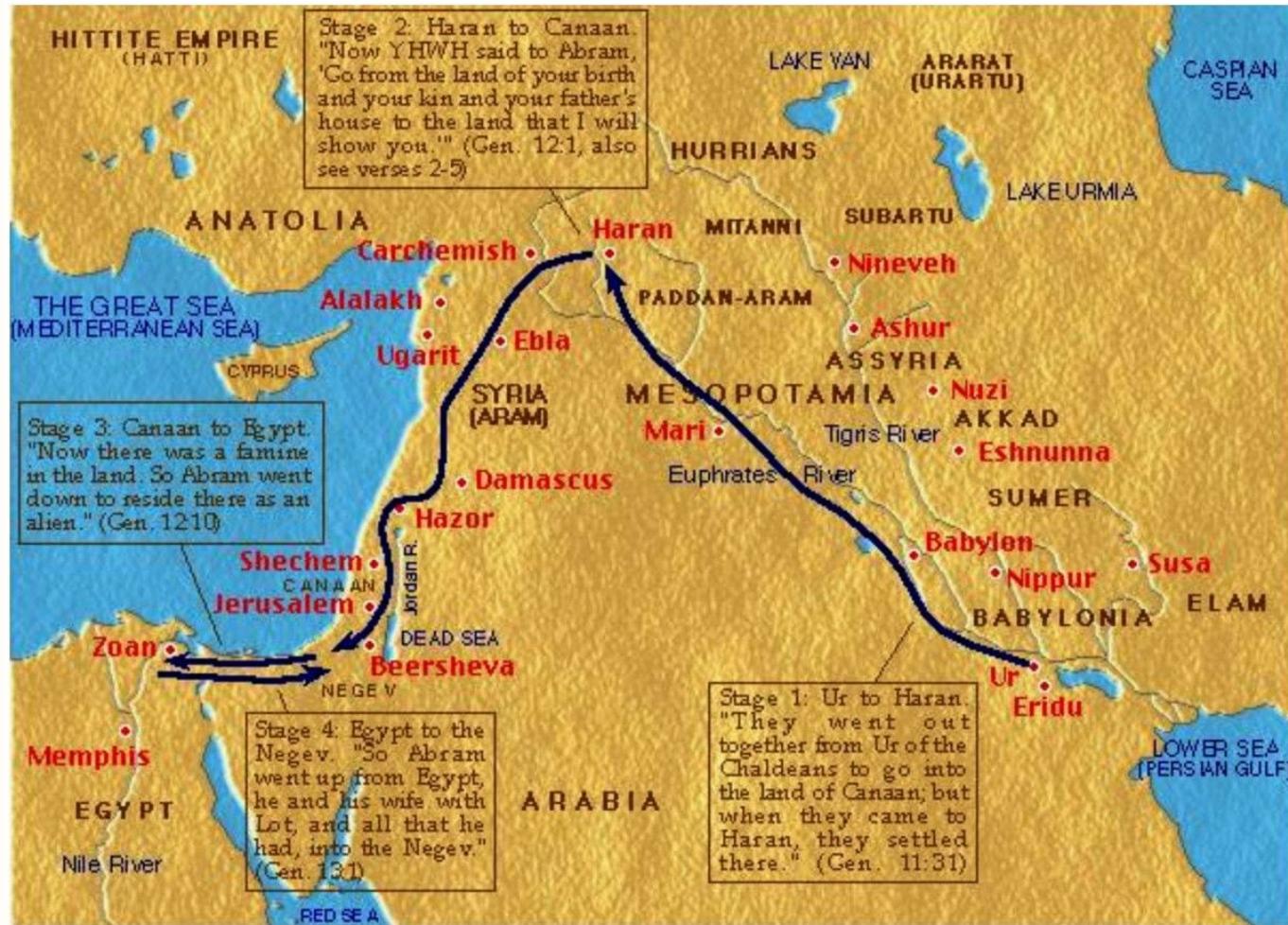
This time works best in terms of personal names, parallel customs, and lifestyle. It also makes it possible to correlate the Joseph story with the Hyksos period in Egypt (1675-1550 BC) and the Exodus as a result of the eventual expulsion of the Hyksos, which resulted in the rise of a pharaoh “who knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). Hyksos were West Asiatic Semites who invaded and controlled northern Egypt during the fifteenth and sixteenth Egyptian dynasties.

Picturing Abraham, Sarah, and their Household: Semi-nomads living in tents, wandering up and down Palestine and its borderlands in search of seasonal pasture for their flocks.

"Abraham and his household were resident aliens (*gerim*) in Canaan, and they generally moved along the north-south line of hill country from Shechem (in the north) to Bethel to Hebron to Beer-sheba (located at the norther edge of the Hegev), where he pastured his many flocks, built altars, and offered sacrifices (e.g. Gen 12:6-8; 13:18; 21:33), thus establishing the worship of Jehovah throughout Canaan. Possessing large herds of flocks necessitated movement to procure water and pasturage, which in turn required agreements (treaties or covenants; cf. Gen 21:25-31) with others to avoid contention. Seasonal agriculture would also have been part of the household's responsibility" (JWOT 53).



Abraham's & Sarah's Long Journey: likely 2000 miles during his lifetime



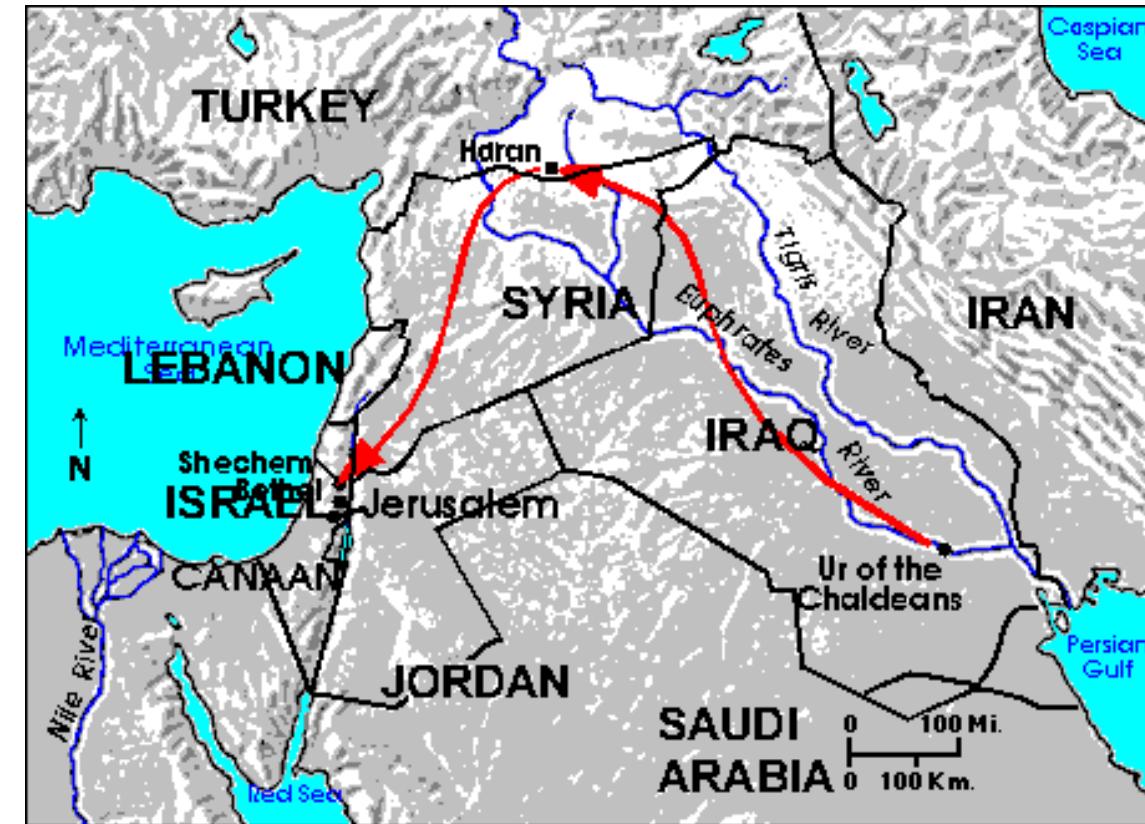
"The world of the patriarch and matriarchs spans the whole of the ancient Near East. For example, Abraham was born in Mesopotamia, moved to Canaan, and sojourned for a time in Egypt. Jacob was born in Canaan, moved to Mesopotamia, and spent the last years of his life in Egypt. Joseph was born in Mesopotamia and lived the first part of his life in Canaan and the rest of his life in Egypt. Sarah and Rebekah were from Mesopotamia while Asenath was from Egypt" (JWOT 50).

"The journey to Canaan was a long one. If Ur is located in southern Mesopotamia, Abram had already journeyed with his family nearly 600 miles to Haran. If Ur is located in the north then it was about 30 miles to Haran. From Haran it is almost 500 more miles to Shechem, where Abram built an altar and where Jehovah appeared to him" (JWOT 52).

Family History: Think of them as ancestral memories shared again & again

Genesis 12-50 composed of four major sections

1. Abraham & Sarah & Hagar 12-25
2. Rebekah & Isaac 26
3. Jacob & Rachel & Leah & Bilhah & Zilpah 26-36
4. Joseph 37-50



Major Themes of Genesis 12-50

The main theme of Genesis 12-50 is the covenant that Jehovah made with Abraham that will remain in place with the righteous followers of Abraham until the end of time. In this covenant, Jehovah promised Abraham land, posterity, and spiritual blessings. The stories in Genesis, as well as in the whole Pentateuch, serve to illustrate how these blessings were fulfilled.

Secondary Themes

1. Testing—in particular obstacles & threats to obtaining God's promises
2. Identification of the birthright son—departure from cultural norms of primogenitures
3. Jehovah appearing to each of the four patriarchs to establish the Abrahamic covenant with them, demonstrating to their descendants how to have a covenant relationship for themselves.

The emphasis should not be on the obstacles, but on the constantly renewed promise. This portion of the books serves as a note of encouragement—it might seem impossible for the promise to be fulfilled, yet the promises, the divine blessing, is right around the corner.

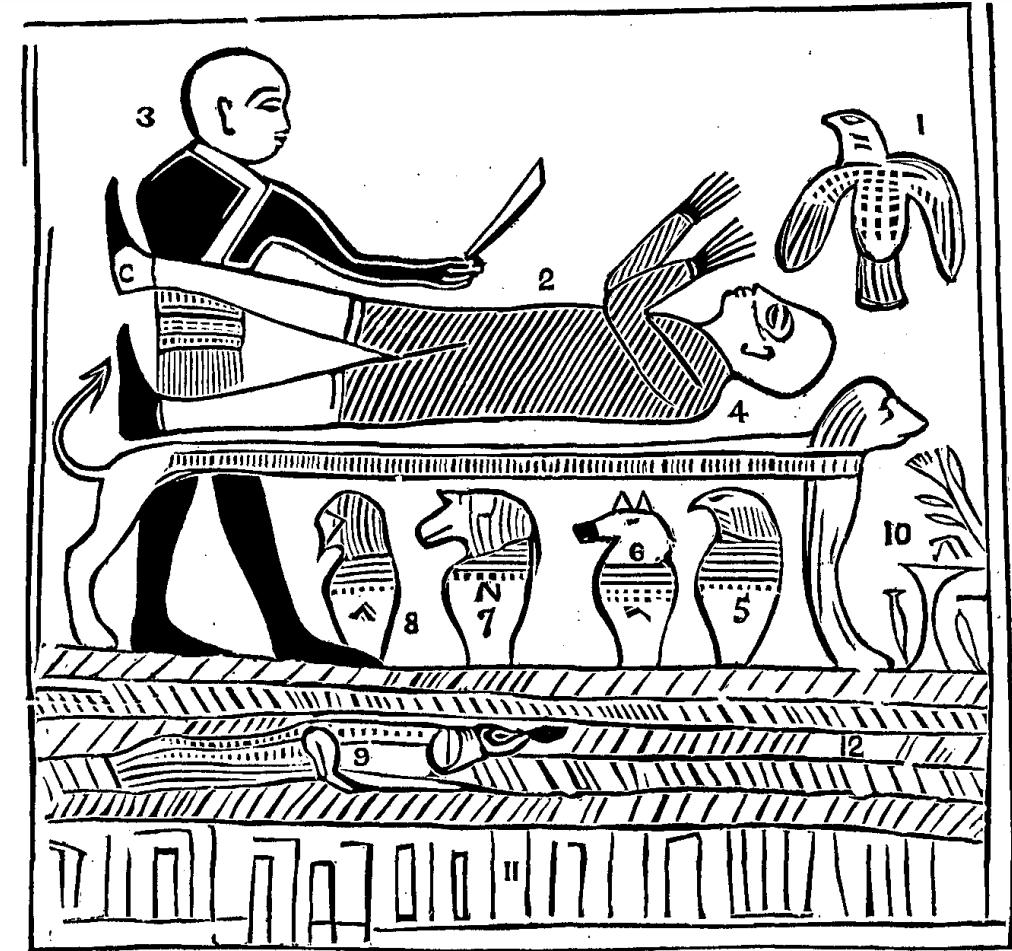
**The figure of Abraham appears at least 108 times beyond Genesis in the Old Testament and New Testament.*

Understanding of Abraham from Genesis vs Pearl of Great Price

From Genesis: “While genealogical continuity is established from Noah to Abraham, there is no attempt to establish a faith continuity. Abraham is not introduced as a righteous man, nor is he identified in any way as contrasting with the world around him. Other Scripture makes it clear that Abraham’s family did not worship Yahweh (cf. Joshua 24:2). So in a real sense, the Lord came to Abraham “out of the blue.” The first contact is described in 12:1-3, where Abraham was instructed to take drastic action to separate himself from his roots so that a new beginning could take place” (Hill & Walton 86)

From book of Abraham: “In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence; 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. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me. **I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.** My fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice; (Abraham 1:2 - 5)

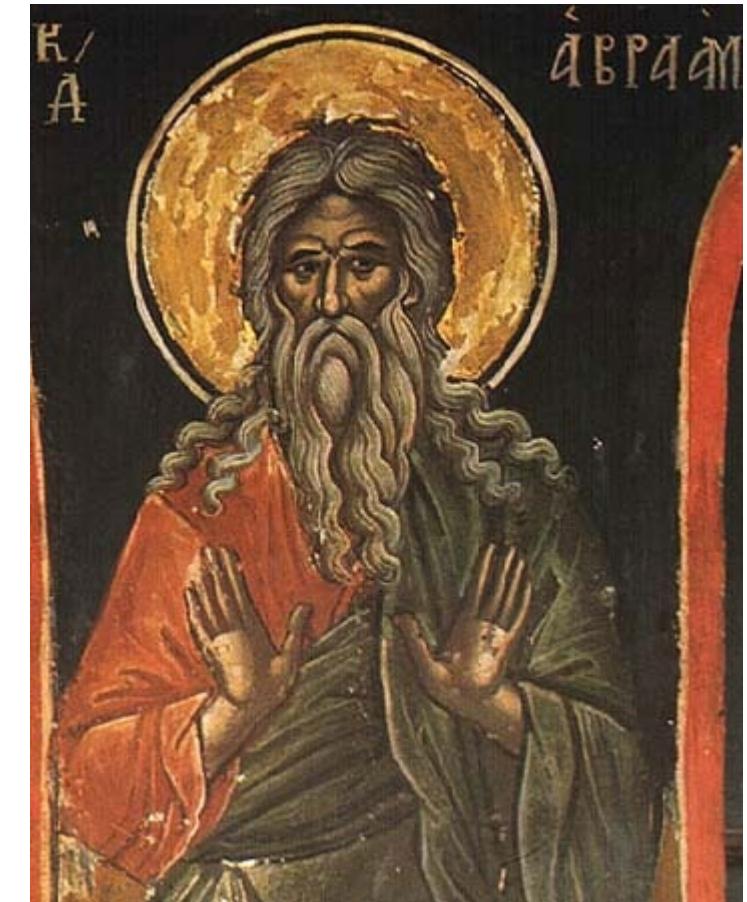
Abraham 1:12-30 **And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; . . . And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands; . . . 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 famine in the land. 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 life.**



*Why are these differences significant?
How do they alter our understanding
of Abraham moving forward?*

Why Did God Covenant with Abraham?

- He sought it
- Because he obeyed God's voice and commandments



Reminder that records are being kept

Abraham 1:31 But the records 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 planets, 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 record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.



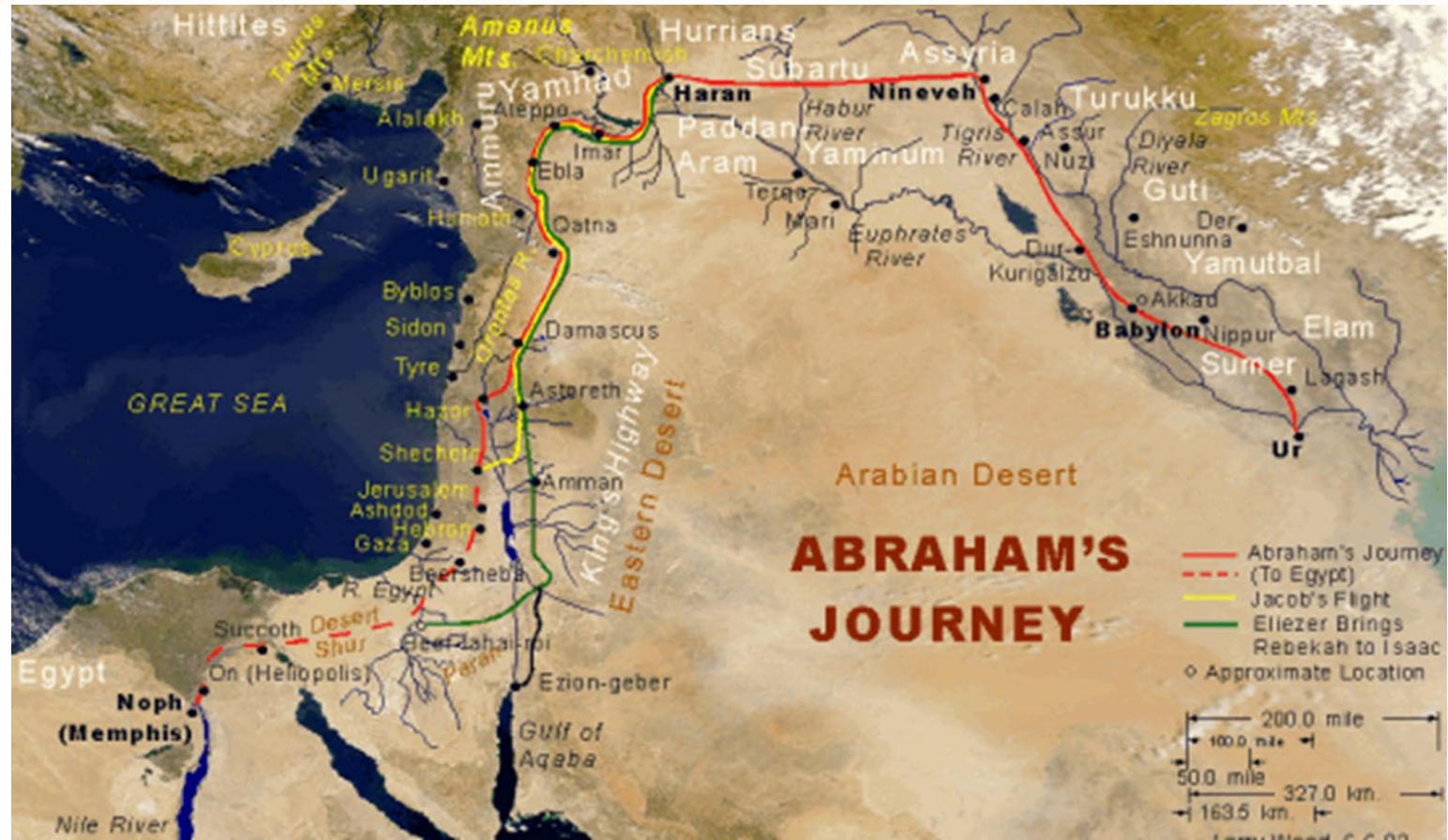
Abraham leaving—why are differences between accounts significant?

Genesis 11:31-12:5 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.
Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee . . . So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

Abraham 2:1-6 The Lord God caused the famine to wax sore in the land of Ur, insomuch that Haran, my brother, died; but Terah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees... Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. Therefore I left the land of Ur, of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and I took Lot, my brother's son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; and also my father followed after me, unto the land which we denominated Haran. And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; and my father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran. But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land

Abraham 2:12-13 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; 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.

Key Qualifications: Faith & Obedience



“Thus the first test of Abram was one of faith and obedience—the faith to trust the Lord’s covenantal promises and obedience in leaving behind all that was familiar to him. Abram’s life is enveloped by tests of obedience, beginning with the covenant to leave his country (Gen 12) and continuing with the test to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22)” (JWOT 52).

The main theme of Genesis 12-50 is the covenant that Jehovah made with Abraham that will remain in place with the righteous followers of Abraham until the end of time.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Interlude: sojourn in Egypt & separation from Lot

Genesis 13:14-16 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: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

What is this covenant & how is it presented differently at certain moments & why does this matter?

Posterity
Land
Blessing

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Interlude: Saved Lot & blessed by Melchizedek (10-20 years have passed)

15:1-5 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 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. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; . . .

Posterity
Land
Blessing

What additional information has been added
& why does this matter?

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith means trust—trust in God's will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable. We should not try to impose our timetable on His. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said: "The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best? The same is true with the second coming and with all those matters wherein our faith needs to include faith in the Lord's timing for us personally, not just in His overall plans and purposes." . . . Elder Maxwell [also] said: "Since faith in the timing of the Lord may be tried, let us learn to say not only, 'Thy will be done,' but patiently also, 'Thy timing be done'"

Indeed, we cannot have true faith in the Lord without also having complete trust in the Lord's will and in the Lord's timing. (Elder Oaks, Timing, BYU Devotional January 2002).



- Abram is 62 & Sarah is 52 (Abraham 2:14) or 75 & 65 (Genesis 12:4) when they depart out of Haran.
- Abram is 86 and Sarah is 76 when he & Hagar have Ishmael
- Abram is 99 and Sarah is 89 when God promises that Sarah will have a son through which the covenant will be passed.

The main theme of Genesis 12-50 is the covenant that Jehovah made with Abraham that will remain in place with the righteous followers of Abraham until the end of time.

Interlude Hagar and Abram have Ishmael (13+ more years have passed)

17:4-8 behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. 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.

**The nations & kings descended from Abraham include the dynasties of Israel, Ishmael, & Edom.*

17:15-21 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. . . . And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. . . . my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Posterity
Land
Blessing

What additional information has been added
& why does this matter?

Receiving Revelation Step-by-Step

Gospel light does not burst upon men in full noonday splendor, but ... it arises in their hearts gradually, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little [see D&C 50:24]. Eventually the faithful, having continued to grow in light and truth, shall have all things revealed to them and shall know all things. (D. & C. 76:5–10; 93:26–28; 101:32–34; 121:26–29.) (Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:291)

After each powerful impression was recorded, I pondered the feelings I had received to determine if I had accurately expressed them in writing. As a result, I made a few minor changes to what had been written. Then I studied their meaning and application in my own life. Subsequently I prayed, reviewing with the Lord what I thought I had been taught by the Spirit. When a feeling of peace came, I thanked Him for the guidance given. I was then impressed to ask, “**Was there yet more to be given?**” I received further impressions, and the process of writing down the impressions, pondering, and praying for confirmation was repeated. **Again I was prompted to ask, “Is there more I should know?”** And there was. When that last, most sacred experience was concluded, I had received some of the most precious, specific, personal direction one could hope to obtain in this life. Had I not responded to the first impressions and recorded them, I would not have received the last, most precious guidance. . . . I believe that you can leave the most precious, personal direction of the Spirit unheard because you do not respond to, record, and apply the first promptings that come to you. (Elder Richard G. Scott, October 2009)

The main theme of Genesis 12-50 is the covenant that Jehovah made with Abraham that will remain in place with the righteous followers of Abraham until the end of time.

Abraham 2:9-11 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations; And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.

Posterity
Land
Blessing
Priesthood

What additional does the book of Abraham add to our understanding of the Covenant & why does this matter?

What are the blessings?

“And as I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph: In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed.” (D&C 124:58)

We of modern Israel are among the covenant people of the Lord. And, most remarkably, the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled only in these latter days. The Lord bestowed this Abrahamic covenant upon the Prophet Joseph for the blessing of him and posterity after him.

President Russell M. Nelson, Oct 2006



“Abraham received promises concerning his seed... This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham... Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham.” (D&C 132:30 - 32)

“You—my dear extraordinary youth—were sent to earth at this precise time, this most crucial time in the history of the earth, to help gather Israel,” the prophet said. **“There is nothing happening on this earth right now that is more important than that. There is nothing of greater consequence. Absolutely nothing. This gathering should mean everything to you. This is the mission for which you were sent to earth.”**

Sister Nelson spoke about understanding and fulfilling our individual roles in this great work and reminded us that we choose whether or not we fulfill our mortal missions.

“No one will make us,” she said. “We have our agency to choose how we spend our time and energy, our talents and resources. **In fact, what we choose to do is part of our testing. The choice is yours and mine. Will we choose to do whatever it takes to fulfill the wonderful missions for which we were sent to earth?**”

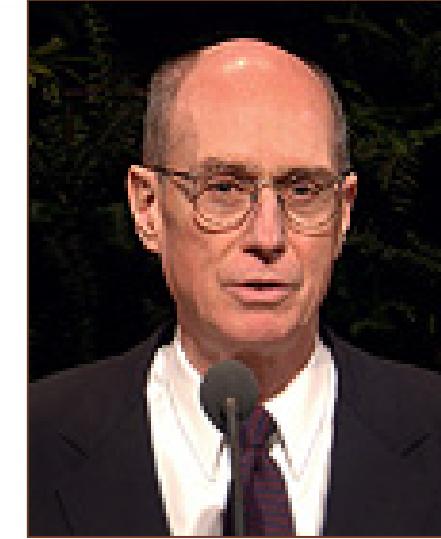
So, President Nelson asked, “Are you willing to enlist in the youth battalion of the Lord to help gather Israel?”



To be of the House of Israel is to assist in the Lord's work

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.
(Deuteronomy 14:2)

“The Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. From the day of baptism through the spiritual milestones of our lives, we make promises with God and He makes promises with us. He always keeps His promises offered through His authorized servants, but it is the crucial test of our lives to see if we will make and keep our covenants with Him.”



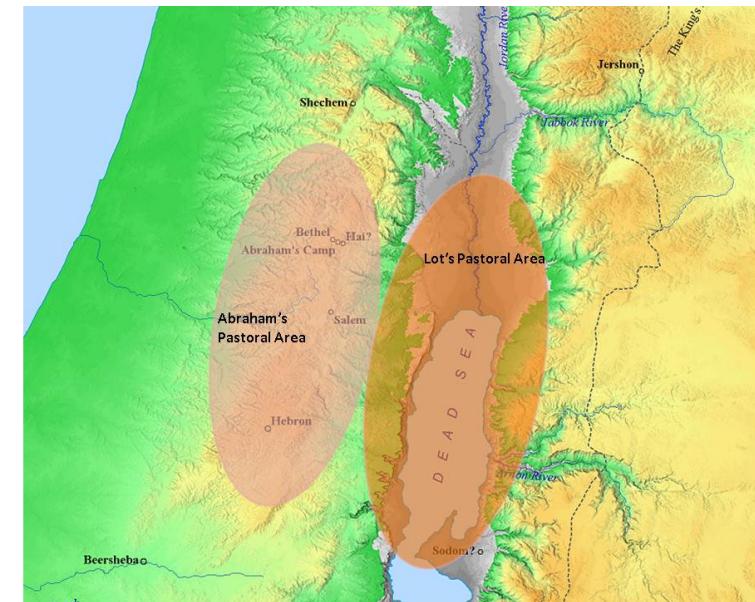
President Henry B.
Eyring

Henry B. Eyring, “Witnesses for God,”
Ensign (Nov. 1996), p. 30.

Chapters 12-22 present the checkered history of the establishment of the covenant between Abraham and the Lord. Once Abraham left his home behind, the next forty or fifty years provided continual suspense concerning how the promises of God would be fulfilled to Abraham. . . . The primary approach of the narrator is to introduce various obstacles that place the covenant promises in jeopardy. As each obstacle is surmounted, a successive step is introduced toward the fulfillment of the covenant promises. Obstacles variously take the form of alternate heirs or the form of threatening situations for the primary characters” (Hill & Walton 86).

The first threat came when Abraham and Sarah went down to Egypt to escape the famine. The danger was that the pharaoh might take Sarah into his harem or that a child born to Sarah may not be Abraham’s.

The first obstacle to overcome regarding an heir was the presence of Abraham’s nephew Lot. Since Abraham and Sarah had no children, Lot was the apparent heir.

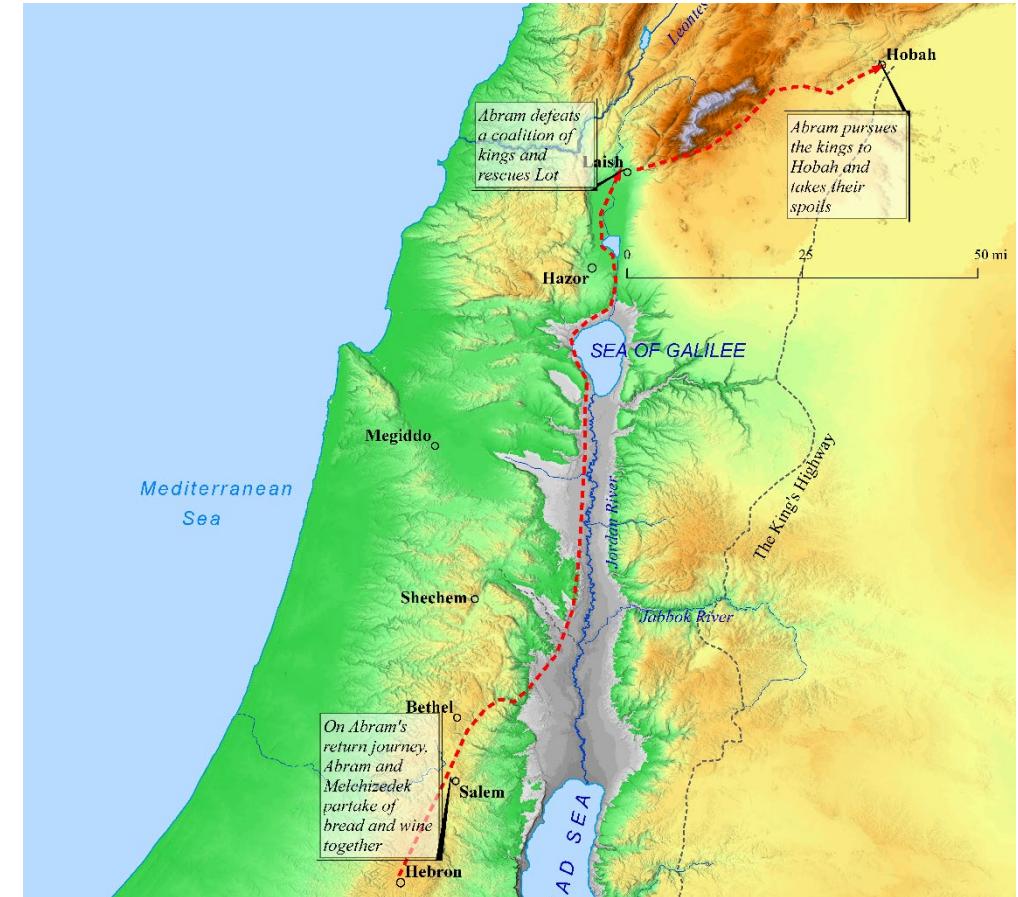


Genesis 13:2-12 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. . . . 5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. . . . 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 . . . 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 Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

Strange interjection about Abraham rescuing Lot and many others from an invading army. How does this alter our understanding of Abraham?

14:14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

“Further research has revealed connections with Genesis that had not previously been developed. For example, it has long been noted that Genesis 14 is unique in the accounts of Abram in that he is involved in fighting an international coalition of kings. Ancient Near Eastern scholars have stated that only in the Middle Bronze Age, and at no later time, could such a coalition have come together and crossed the Fertile Crescent from as far east as Elam into the West Semitic world. Now the Mari texts attest to just such incursions by Elam into Mari territory and possibly beyond” (Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament*, 46-47).



Melchizedek in Genesis (14:17-20)

- Afterwards, Abram met with the enigmatic high priest Melchizedek, to whom he paid his tithe, with whom he shared a meal of bread and wine, and from whom he received a blessing (Genesis 14:17-20).
- **Melchizedek is a name-title meaning “righteous king” or “king of righteousness”**
 - This Melchizedek is the king of Salem and the priest of the “most high God”
 - Salem is related to *Shalom*, meaning “peace,” and is the later site of Jerusalem
 - The priest-kings in this time seem to be similar to the time of kings Mosiah or Benjamin in the Book of Mormon – the kings presided over the land and priesthood
- Abraham recognizes Melchizedek as a Patriarchal superior and pays tithes to him
 - In Jewish Tradition Melchizedek has been identified with both Shem and even Noah
 - <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1973/11/i-have-a-question/is-it-possible-that-shem-and-melchizedek-are-the-same-person?lang=eng>
 - Remember these men had antediluvian life-spans. They may very well have still been around in the time of Abraham
 - In the Book of Abraham, he receives the priesthood from the fathers, perhaps even these fathers?
- Melchizedek presides over a feast and blesses Abram, “the possessor of heaven and earth”
 - *The blessing on Abram creates a patriarchal link with Jerusalem and its cult (including the payment of a tithe to its priests), which are in some sense legitimized by this association*
 - See Psalm 110:4, suggests that Melchizedek played a symbolic role in Israel’s royal ideology



Melchizedek in Restoration Scripture

JST Genesis 14:26-37 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. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, . . . 30 For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; . . . 32 **And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven.** 33 And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace. 34 **And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven,** and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, . . . 37 And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor.

“There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic... Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest. Before his day it was called *the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood.” (D&C 107:1-4)



What does Melchizedek's existence help us to understand about God's interactions with humanity at this time?

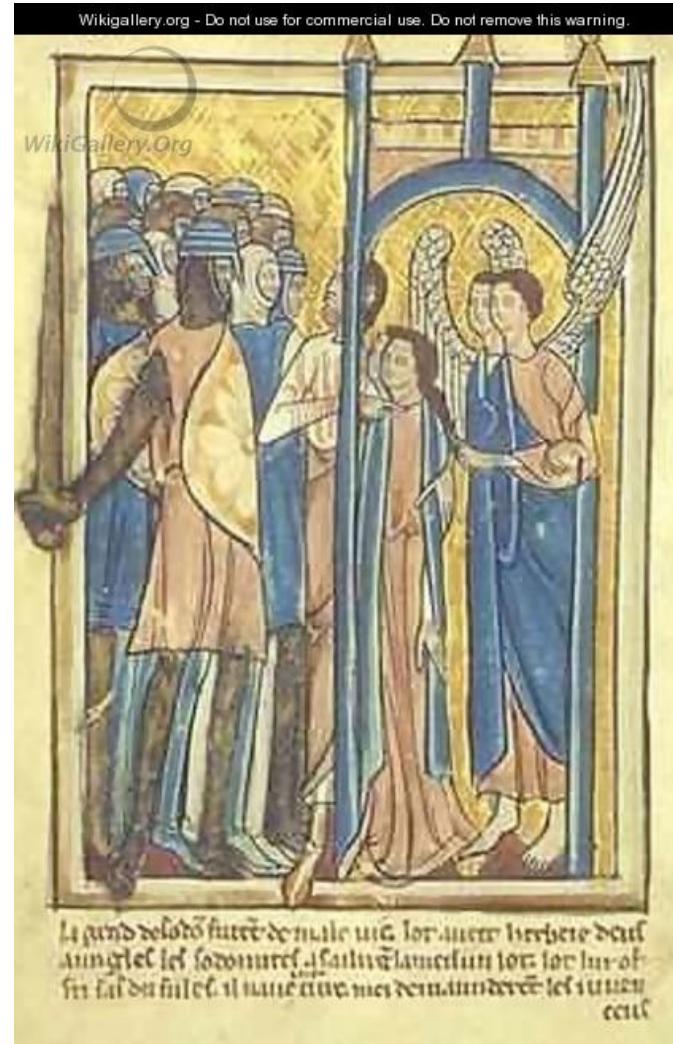
Hospitality of Lot (19:1-3) vs Abraham (18:1-8)

“Lot’s hospitality to the strangers, although genuine, is not as gracious as Abraham’s in the previous chapter. Whereas Abraham ran . . . to meet them, Lot rose to meet them. Whereas Abraham served cakes of choice flour, Lot served unleavened bread. Whereas Abraham stood by them . . . while they ate, at Lot’s feast they ate together: and they ate. These are subtle denigrations of Lot by comparison with Abraham” (19:1-3).



Lot & His Daughters

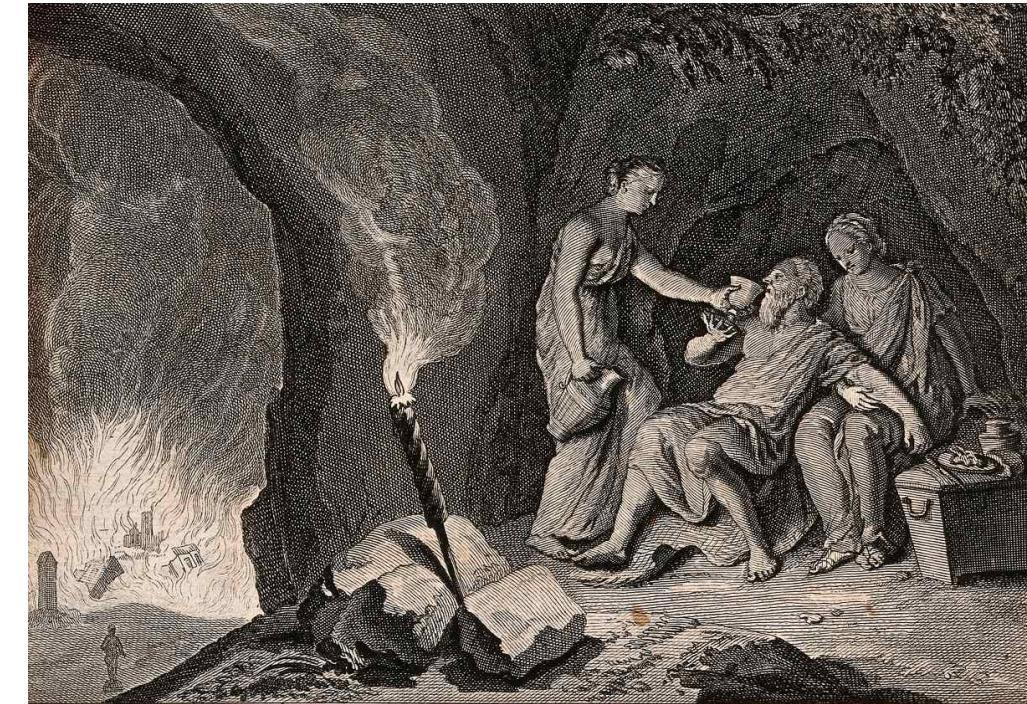
19:5-8 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. **Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing;** for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.



JST 19:11-15 Wherefore they said unto the man, We will have the men, and thy daughters also; and we will do with them as seemeth us good. Now this was after the wickedness of Sodom. And Lot said, Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, plead with my brethren that I may not bring them out unto you; and ye shall not do unto them as seemeth good in your eyes; For God will not justify his servant in this thing; wherefore, let me plead with my brethren, this once only, that unto these men ye do nothing, that they may have peace in my house; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. And they were angry with Lot and came near to break the door, but the angels of God, which were holy men, put forth their hand and pulled Lot into the house unto them, and shut the door.

Shameful Origins of Moab & Ammon

19:30-38 “The aftermath of the great destruction, with the story of Lot and his two daughters, thematically echoes the aftermath of the flood, with the story of Noah and his three sons (Gen 9:18-27). In both the father becomes drunk and is the object of (sexual?) transgression by his offspring, resulting in a shameful ancestry for Israel’s neighbors (Canaan, Moab, and Ammon). These are ethnographic stories that cast aspersions on Israel’s culture rivals while acknowledging a kinship between them. Lot’s daughters are well-intentioned, aiming to engender offspring through their father, since they think there are no men left to impregnate them (v. 32). Their justification for engaging in sex with their father happens to be wrong, since only the cities of the plain were destroyed, but they do not know this. Lot is also relatively innocent, since he is drunk and unconscious during the sexual act (v. 35). . . . The offspring of Lot and his daughters have names that betray their shameful origins: *Moab* is a play on *me’ab*, “from the father,” and *Ben-ammi* means “son of my kinsman” (vv. 37-38)” (footnote NSRV Harper Collins Study Bible).



The Story of Sodom: What do we learn? How is justice & mercy shown?

We read in modern revelation, “All kingdoms have a law given” (D&C 88:36). For example: “He who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory” (D&C 88:22–24). In other words, the kingdom of glory to which the Final Judgment assigns us is not determined by love but by the law that God has invoked in His plan to qualify us for eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).



The Story of Sodom: Why is Sodom Destroyed?

Ambiguity exists, but from the scripture the best guess would seem to be radical inhospitality: gang rape, mob violence, turning their backs on strangers and the needy in their midst. Gang rape as the inverse of hospitality and protection.

Ezekiel 16:48-50 As I live, saith the Lord God . . . Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.



“At the final day the Savior will not ask about the nature of our callings. He will not inquire about our material possessions or fame. He will ask if we ministered to the sick, gave food and drink to the hungry, visited those in prison, or gave succor to the weak [see Matthew 25:31–40]. When we reach out to assist the least of Heavenly Father’s children, we do it unto Him [see Matthew 24:40]. That is the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Great Commandment,” October 2007).

Perplexing Moment with Noah and Ham

Genesis 9: 22-25 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

Sexual relations? Priesthood garment?



Consequences: Used to explain why Shem and Japheth's posterity should have rulership over Canaan's posterity. & "[Ham's descendant Pharaoh sought] to imitate that order...of Noah, his father, who... cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. 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." (Abraham 1:26-27)

The Curse of Ham (Genesis 9:20-27)

Beware of twisting Scripture to justify your sinful desires. False teachings are attractive because some love what they promise. The curse of Ham is a form of the prosperity gospel that provides theological justification for pride, greed, racism, and partiality. Loving their sin, its proponents raised the volume on their Genesis 9:20–27 interpretation while muting texts condemning man-stealing (Ex. 21:16; 1 Tim. 1:10)

False teaching always comes at another's expense. The “curse of Ham” not only fueled the slave trade and the church’s blood-handed involvement—it has also poisoned generations with racist thinking.

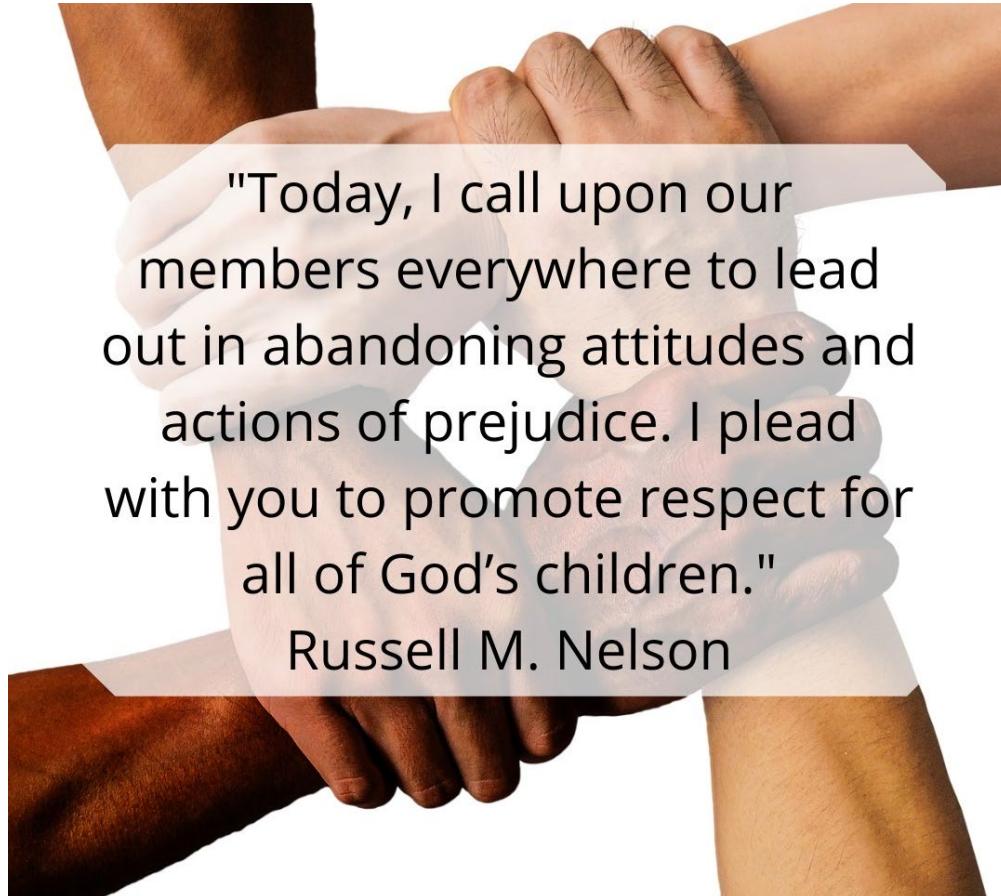
Why does this misinterpretation continue to be dangerous?

First, bad biblical interpretation hurts people. Bad interpretations justify unjust institutions, perversely motivate immoral behaviors, and encourage harmful attitudes. Misogyny, child abuse, warmongering, and greed join racism as evils that bad interpretations of scripture have undergirded. In this case, misinterpretations perpetuate the abhorrent notion that God endorses the systematic oppression and subjugation of any given group of people.

Second, the proslavery interpretation of Gen 9 exhibits the major characteristics of flawed hermeneutics. It does not take the text seriously; it engages in logical trickery and a kind of reorientation by substitution (Ham for Canaan, then all black persons for Ham); it does not consider the broader context of scripture (Gen 10, for example); and it overlooks the fact that Noah pronounced the curse, God did not. This observation is particularly telling. Gen 9 does not grant divine authority to Israel’s oppression of the Canaanites—or of anyone else.

Third, it fails to acknowledge the situation-bound character of much of the Bible. In this case, there are no Canaanites left in the world to whom this curse could possibly apply. The Canaanites disappeared as a distinct people long ago.

The Prophet's Call to Root Out Racism



"Today, I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice. I plead with you to promote respect for all of God's children."

Russell M. Nelson

"The church calls on all people to abandon attitudes and actions of prejudice toward any group or individual. Members of the church should lead out in promoting respect for all of God's children. Members follow the Savior's commandment to love others (see Matthew 22:35–39). They strive to be persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting prejudice of any kind. This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation."
General Handbook, 38.6.14, "Prejudice"

Tower of Babel

“The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech ...And they said, ‘...Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name’ ...And the LORD said, ‘...This they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth...Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth.” (Gen. 11:1,4,6-9)

Why was God so angry with them?





“Nimrod built the tower of Babel...in an attempt to contact heaven... The impetus in building this temple was to make themselves a name. In other words, Nimrod was proposing that they build a temple to receive the name of God without making eternal covenants ... In Babylonian or Akkadian, the meaning [of the word ‘Babel’] was ‘gate of God.’ Nimrod and his people were building their own temple, their gate to heaven, without divine approval or priesthood keys.”

Dr. David R. Seely, BYU, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign* (Feb. 1994), p. 60.