

Abraham: The Man of Faith



SABBATH—APRIL 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 12:1–9; Genesis 12:10–20; Genesis 13:1–18; Genesis 14:1–17; Genesis 14:18–24.

MEMORY VERSE: “God called [commanded] Abraham to travel to another place that he promised to give him. Abraham did not know where that other place was. But he obeyed God and started traveling because he had faith” (Hebrews 11:8, ERV).



With no past and no future, Abraham always travels from place to place.

THE STORY ABOUT ABRAHAM is at the center of the book of Genesis. We read this story in chapters 12–25. These chapters show us the first time that God commands Abraham to go. In answer to this command, Abraham leaves his country (Genesis 12:1). Abraham also must leave his past life behind. Later, God commands Abraham to go again. This time, God commands Abraham to go up a mountain and give Him Isaac, his son, as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:2). Isaac is the future hope of Abraham. So, when God asks Abraham to go kill Isaac, this command shows us that God asks Abraham to let go of his future, too. With no past and no future, Abraham always travels from place to place. That is why Abraham also is named a “stranger” (Genesis 17:8, NLV).

Two times in his life, Abraham is asked to do something big: first at the beginning of his life and then near the end of his life. Abraham obeys God, who tells him: “ ‘Do not be afraid’ ” (Genesis 15:1, NKJV). That is why Old Testament writers remember Abraham as the man of faith (Nehemiah 9:7, 8). In the New Testament, many writers talk about Abraham, too. This week, we will start to see why.

ABRAM LEAVES (Genesis 12:1–9)

Read the story about Abram in Genesis 12:1–9. Why does God command Abram to leave his country and family? How does Abram answer the command?

The last time we read in the Bible about God talking to a human is when He talks to Noah. God tells Noah that He will make an agreement with every living thing on the earth (Genesis 9:15–17). God promises never to destroy the earth again with a worldwide flood. Now God makes a new promise to Abram: “I will use you to bless all the people on earth” (Genesis 12:3, ERV).

God starts to keep His promise when Abram leaves his past behind. Abram leaves everything he knows: his family, his country, and part of himself. First, Abram leaves Ur in Babylon, which is the country where he lived (Genesis 11:31; Isaiah 13:19). In other parts of the Bible we see that God asks His people to leave Babylon (Isaiah 48:20; Revelation 18:4).

So, Abram must leave his country. Second, Abram also must leave behind many of the ideas and education that he learned growing up.

At the same time, the command of God to Abram to leave includes much more. The Hebrew words for “go” are “**lekh lekha**.” These words really mean “go yourself” or “go for yourself.” So, these words show us that Abram must leave “for” himself. But he also must leave “himself.” What does that mean? It means that Abram must leave his past. He must get rid of the part of himself connected to Babylon.

God needs Abram to leave his past and his country so that God can show him a new land. This promise of a new land is more than a country on this earth. This promise is about the plan of God to save everyone on earth who will believe in Him: “I will build a great nation [people group] from you. I will bless you and make your name famous. People will use your name to bless other people. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you. I will use you to bless all the people on earth” (Genesis 12:2, 3, ERV). The Savior is the blessing that God will give to everyone on earth (Acts 3:25, 26). This blessing will come to us from the family line of Abraham. (Genesis 22:18; Genesis 26:4; Genesis 28:14).



Abram leaves everything he knows: his family, his country, and part of himself.

ABRAM IN EGYPT (Genesis 12:10–20)

Read the story about Abram in Genesis 12:10–20. Why does Abram leave the Promised Land to go to Egypt? Compare the behavior of Abram with the behavior of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. How does each man behave?



“Abraham does not tell Pharaoh that Sarah is his wife.”

Shortly after Abram arrives in the Promised Land, he decides to leave it. Then Abram goes to Egypt. The Bible tells us why. “During this time there was not enough food in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to live” (Genesis 12:10, ERV).

The Bible shows us that the Israelites often wanted to go to Egypt when their hearts were not right with God (Numbers 14:3). Then the Israelites got into trouble when they got there (Jeremiah 2:18). So, Egypt became a word picture for humans trusting in humans and not in God (2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 36:6, 9).

Compare the Abram who now leaves Canaan to go to Egypt with the Abram who left Ur. The Abram who left Ur was a man of faith. He left his country in answer to the command of God. Now, Abram leaves the Promised Land behind. The Abram who left Ur depended on God. Now Abram behaves the same as a king who thinks only about himself and does whatever he wants. “During his stay in Egypt, Abraham shows human weakness. He shows that his heart is not perfect with God. Abraham hides from Pharaoh important information about Sarah. Abraham does not tell Pharaoh that Sarah is his wife. This behavior shows that Abraham does not trust God to take care of him. This behavior is so different from his usual faith and courage that he showed in his life.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 130, adapted.

What we see here, then, is how a strong man of God can make a mistake. But does God turn away from him? Not at all. God shows Abram His mercy and loving-favor. Now we understand better what the New Testament means when it says that Abraham is an example of how we are saved. We are saved only by the mercy of God. If God did not save us by His mercy, then Abraham and all the rest of us have no hope of being saved at all.

Is it easy for Christians to turn from God and do the wrong thing? Explain. Why is our choice to disobey God never a good choice? What does the story about Abram in Egypt teach us about the answers to these questions?

ABRAM AND LOT (Genesis 13:1–18)

Read the story about Abram in Genesis 13:1–18. What does this story teach us about Abram? How does his behavior show us what is in his heart?

Abram goes back to Canaan. His first stop is Bethel (Genesis 13:3). Abram stopped in Bethel on his first trip to Canaan (Genesis 12:7, 8). So, this trip to Bethel shows us that Abram turns from his sin. Abram is now a man of faith, again.

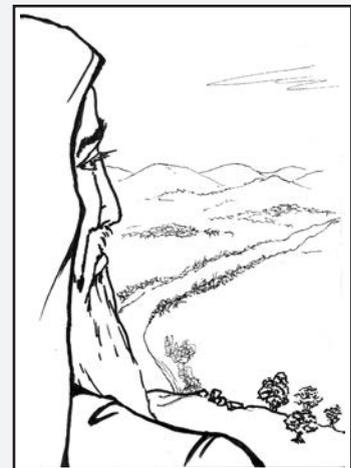
Abram grows close to God. Their close friendship shows in the way that Abram behaves and solves problems. Soon, there is a problem between Abram and Lot about the land. Abram solves the problem in a calm, loving way. He suggests a peaceful agreement to Lot. Abram allows Lot to choose first where he wants to live (Genesis 13:9–11). This kind offer shows us that the love of God lives in the heart of Abram.

Lot chooses the best part of the land “for himself” (Genesis 13:11, NIV; see also verse 10). Lot does not worry that this land is filled with evil men (Genesis 13:13). The choice of Lot shows us that he has a greedy heart. The words “for himself” (Genesis 13:11) help us remember the people who lived before the Flood. These people also chose all the wives that they wanted (read Genesis 6:2).

Abram does not choose the land he lives in. God gives him the land. Abram looks at this land only because God tells him to do so (Genesis 13:14). God talks to Abram again only after Abram separates from Lot (Genesis 13:14). As far as we know, God has not talked with Abram since he left Ur. Now God says to Abram, “Look around you. Look north, south, east, west. All this land that you see I will give to you and your people who live after you. This will be your land forever” (Genesis 13:14, 15, ERV). Then God invites Abram to walk on this land to show that he is the owner. “Go! Walk through the land. See how long and wide it is. I am giving it to you” (Genesis 13:17, NIV).

The Lord makes sure that Abram knows that the land is a gift from Him. This gift shows Abram the mercy and love of God. Abram must accept this mercy by faith. His faith in the mercy of God will lead him to obey God.

Think about kind Abram and greedy Lot. How can we learn to be kind and loving to other people who are not very kind and loving to us?



Abram does not choose the land he lives in. God gives him the land.

THE BABEL GROUP (Genesis 14:1–17)

Read about the war in Genesis 14:1–17. This war happens shortly after God gives Abram the Promised Land. What does this story teach us about Abram?

This is the first war that the Bible talks about (Genesis 14:2). The four armies from Mesopotamia and Persia fight against the five Canaanite armies. The Canaanites include the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 14:8). So, this fight was big (Genesis 14:9). Why are the two groups fighting? Because the Canaanites fought against the control of the kings of Mesopotamia and Persia (Genesis 14:4, 5). These kings came from Babylonia. This “worldwide” war happens just after God gives Abram Canaan as a gift. So, we see that this war is more than something that happened in human history. This war has a spiritual meaning, too.

As we said, many people groups from the land of Canaan fight in this war. The large number of people shows us that the war is about who owns and controls the land. The funny thing is that the people who fight for control of the land do not own the land. The real owner of the land is Abram.

At first, Abram does not join the fight. He wants to show that he did not get the Promised Land by fighting for it. Abram got the land as a gift from God. The only reason that Abram joins the fight is because his nephew is taken prisoner by the army from Babylonia (Genesis 14:12, 13).

“At the time of the war, Abram lives in the forest of oaks at Mamre. Abram learns about the war from someone who escaped the fighting. This person tells Abram about what happened to his nephew. Lot did not show Abram enough thanks in the past. But Abram does not hold any anger in his heart against Lot. The love of Abram for his nephew is strong. Abram decides to save his nephew. First, Abram asks God for help. Then Abram gets ready for war.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 135, adapted.

Abram does not fight the whole army. He attacks only the camp where Lot is a prisoner. Abram saves Lot. Abram shows courage and strength. For sure, the fame of Abram grows in the land. People hear the news about how Abram saves Lot. This story teaches them something more about the God that Abram serves.

What do our actions teach other people about the God that we serve?



Abram saves Lot.

ABRAM GIVES MELCHIZEDEK ONE-TENTH (Genesis 14:18–24)

Read the story about Abram and Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18–24. Who is Melchizedek? Why does Abram give Melchizedek tithe? Tithe is one-tenth of the money we get.

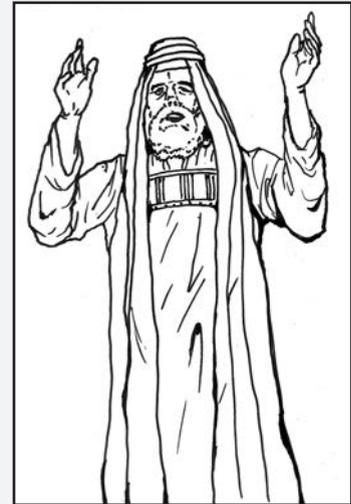
The sudden coming of Melchizedek is not strange at all. After the Canaanite kings thank Abram, Abram now thanks Melchizedek. Melchizedek is a priest, or religious leader. Abram shows Melchizedek his thanks by paying tithe.

Melchizedek comes from the city of Salem. Salem means “peace.” This name is an important message after the war. The other part of the name of Melchizedek is from the Hebrew word “**tsedek**.” “**Tsedek**” means “what is fair or right.” Compare the name of Melchizedek with the names of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. The king of Sodom is named King Bera. Bera means “in evil” in the Hebrew language. The king of Gomorrah is named King Birsha. Birsha means “in sin” in the Hebrew language. For sure, these names show us much about these men. Their names are word pictures for the evil and sin in their cities (Genesis 14:2).

Melchizedek shows up after Abram beats the kings of Babylonia and reverses the evil things they do. Genesis 14:18–24 also shows us the first time the Bible uses the word “priest” (Genesis 14:18). Melchizedek is connected with “God Most High” (Genesis 14:18, ERV). Abram announces that this God is his God, too (Genesis 14:22). So, Abram accepts Melchizedek as a priest of God. Melchizedek is not Jesus. Melchizedek is a servant of God among the people at that time (read Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 1, pages 1092, 1093).

As a priest, Melchizedek serves bread and wine. The wine is fresh grape juice (Deuteronomy 7:13; 2 Chronicles 31:5). Later, the Bible connects the juice with the tithe again (Deuteronomy 14:23). In the Genesis story, Melchizedek also blesses Abram (Genesis 14:19).

“Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything” (Genesis 14:20, NIV). Abram gives this tithe to Melchizedek to show his thanks to God, “‘who made heaven and earth’ ” (Genesis 14:22, ERV). So, Abram shows that we give tithe to God because God owns everything (Hebrews 7:1–6; compare with Genesis 28:22). Tithe is not a gift to God. Tithe is a gift from God. Everything we own comes from Him.



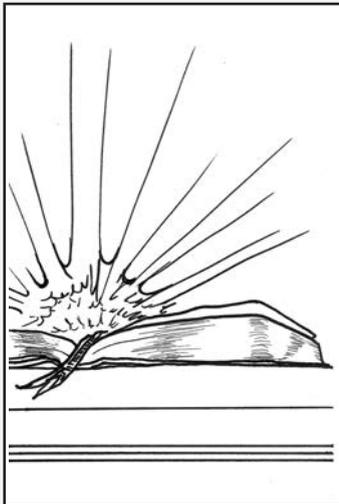
Melchizedek is a servant of God among the people at that time.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Abraham in Canaan,” pages 134–136, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Jesus wants His church to be a blessing. Jesus will bless church members as they bless other people. God chose a special people as His own. He adopted them as His sons and daughters. God wished to bless the people on the earth with the blessings that He gave to His people. The Lord chose Abraham to be His special friend. God also chose to give many blessings to Abraham. God wanted Abraham to share these blessings with the people around him. Abraham was the same as a bright light in the dark.

“God blesses His children with light and Bible truth. God wants them to share this light with the people around them. . . . Jesus says to His followers, ‘ “You are the salt of the earth” ’ [Matthew 5:13, ERV]. God makes His children the same as salt so that He may save them. But not only them. God also makes them the same as salt so that they may help Him save other people, too. . . .

“Do you shine as living stones in the building of God? . . . Our religion is not real unless it controls every part of our lives. We should bring our religion into everything we do. We must allow the mercy of Jesus to change our hearts. We need much less of self, and more of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, page 205, adapted.



“God blesses His children with light and Bible truth.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Look at the blessing that God gives to Abraham: “ ‘I will bless you. . . . You will be a blessing to others [peoples]’ ” (Genesis 12:2, ICB). What does it mean to be blessed? How can we be a blessing to other people?
- ② Abram lied to the king of Egypt about Sarah. Part of his lie had some truth in it. What is worse: lying, or saying some truth and mixing it with a lie? Explain.
- ③ Read again the answer of Abram to the king of Sodom (Genesis 14:21–23). Why does Abram answer the king the way he does? What important lesson does this story teach us? Do you think Abram should take what the king offers him? Why, or why not?