



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

God's Leaders: Abraham

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Abraham was born in the tenth generation from Shem, son of Noah. Originally called Abram, his name means "exalted father". Yahwey (God) greatly "stretched" Abram, shaping him into the leader to carry God's blessing to all people of the earth.

INTRODUCTION

Genesis chapter twelve shifts from primeval history, the origins of the universe and early humans to a more specific focus. Here we are introduced to God's redemptive plan for the world. Our vertical relationship is restored through God's leader (Abraham and his seed/descendents), His nation (Israel), and His grace. You may notice similarities between Abram's challenges and your walk in life.

SET YOURSELF APART

Genesis 12:1-3 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Today, Ur is but a railroad stop near the Persian Gulf. In 2000 B.C. Ur was a populous, metropolitan city in the fertile valley at the mouth of the river Euphrates. Archaeologists report that it was the most magnificent city of the then known world. However, the people were steeped in idol worship and the surrounding kingdoms morally corrupt.² Do you see why God would call Abram out of that environment to begin shaping this future world leader? Is God calling you to separate from family, current friends, perhaps an area of residence? Abram certainly had difficulty seeing ahead ten years, even thousands of years into the future. Will you practice visualizing the impact that you can have on family, associates, and future generations?

FAILURE IN OBEDIENCE

Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife...(Genesis 11:31a).

Note the partial obedience. Abram left the country and the people, but was accompanied by his father and nephew. Father Terah served other gods, worshipping the sun and moon (Joshua 24:2-3, 14-15). Such influence is a threat to a leader's character and stability.

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD...(Genesis 12:7a).

God had directed Abram toward Canaan yet they "settled" in Haran, a trading town just past the half way mark. This was another city noted for idolatry. Terah, Abram's father died in Haran. God again told Abram to separate himself and travel to the land promised him. Abram set out with his wife Sarai, and his nephew. Lot was weak in character and influenced by the culture. He settled near the cities in the valley of the Jordan while Abram pitched his tents in the hill country. Soon, Abram had to assemble a militia to rescue Lot and his family from a conquering army (Genesis 14:1-16). Lot then moved into the city of Sodom where the men "were exceedingly wicked, sinners against the LORD." God judged Sodom, destroying the city while helping Lot and his two daughters escape with their lives. Lot's wife died when she hesitated to leave (Genesis 19:1-29). Bad company threatens the mission and your leadership.

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there...(Genesis 10a).

Despite God's promise of blessings and protection in the land, Abram walked his family and herds the 200+ miles to the Nile river valley. Because of Sarai's beauty, Abram feared he might be killed if the Pharaoh wanted her for his harem. Abram asked Sarai to say she was his sister (a half truth as she was his half sister). Pharaoh did take Sarai but the LORD afflicted his house with great plagues. Abram was evicted from Egypt in humiliation.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEADERSHIP STUDY WEDNESDAYS: 7 TO 7:50AM, CAPITOL ROOM 142 SOUTH

STAFF/GUESTS: WEDNESDAYS: 12:05 TO 12:55 PM, GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM – CAPITOL 264WEST

Kansas

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SUCCESS IN OBEDIENCE

*Genesis 14:18-20 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*³

Abram's militia had pursued and defeated the four kings and their marauding armies, taking back Lot and the other captives along with their property. A mysterious king-priest met Abram on the way back, offering refreshment and worship. Abram recognized his use of Hebrew term El Elyon (Sovereign Lord), accepted his blessing and presented the tithes as unto God. This spiritual and physical refreshment bolstered Abram, enabling him to refuse to accept the spoils of war when offered by the wicked king of Sodom. Leaders should take care to credit God for obvious blessings of talent and achievement rather than allow worldly actors to boast that they were responsible for your success.

CHALLENGES IN FAITH

*Genesis 17:3-5 Immediately, Abram bowed with his face touching the ground, and again God spoke to him, "My promise is still with you. You will become the father of many nations. So your name will no longer be Abram [Exalted Father], but Abraham [Father of Many] because I have made you a father of many nations."*⁴

Abraham was in his eighties when God reassured him of his destiny. More years passed and Sarai, his wife reasoned that she was barren and offered her maid as a surrogate to bear them a child. Hagar was a servant that they brought out of Egypt. Ishmael was born of Hagar but there was much strife in the household. Strife is a result of doing things our way rather in God's timing.

*God said to Abraham, "Don't call your wife by the name Sarai anymore. Instead, her name is Sarah [Princess]. I will bless her, and I will also give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will become a mother of nations, and kings will come from her" (Genesis 17:15-16).*⁵

Isaac was born to Sarah in her old age. Abraham made a great feast on the day that the child was weaned. However, Ishmael, the older half brother ridiculed Isaac. Sarah insisted that Hagar and Ishmael be sent out of the encampment. He was now seventeen, a customary time for a young man to strike out on his own. God spoke to Hagar in the desert, assuring her that Ishmael would be the father of a great nation. He and his Arabic descendants would exhibit a fiercely aggressive and independent nature (Genesis 16:12). The Jewish people are Isaac's descendants. This spiritual review should help us to understand the violence in the middle-east today.

CONCLUSION

A leader must see beyond the person or people that are in our focus at any time. There are spiritual, historical, and social factors that are in play. We must see beyond the behavior to gain understanding and be an effective leader. Abraham stumbled as he learned to walk with God. Yet he grew in faith and was allowed to see beyond his years and realize a destiny. Will you rise above your mortality and trust God to reveal the role you have in His eternal plan?

¹ The Holy Bible, New International Version. (International Bible Society). 1984.

² John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2006 p32.

³ The Holy Bible, New International Version. (International Bible Society). 1984.

⁴ The Holy Bible, God's Word Translation. (Baker Publishing Group). 1995.

⁵ Ibid