

PART TWENTY-SIX

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

(Genesis, ch. 12; cf. Hebrews 11:8-19)

1. *The Biblical Account*

1 Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: 2 and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: 3 and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 5. So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. 6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. 8 And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. 9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was sore in the land. 11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12 and it will come to pass, when the Egyptians

shall see thee, that they will 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 that my soul may 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 And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 And he dealt well with Abram for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels. 17 And Jehovah 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 that I took her to be my wife? now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. 20 And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him: and they brought him on the way, and his wife, and all that he had.

2. *Ur of the Chaldees*

It should be noted that the earliest civilizations—those with which the actual *history* of man begins—flourished, as a rule, in relation geographically to the great river systems. This location was due to the fact that the various peoples learned to provide for a more abundant (temporal) life by the development of irrigation to enhance the fertility of the soil. Moreover, with the early invention of the sailboat water became the chief means of transportation. Most of the big cities of the ancient world were built on these waterways, e.g., the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates, the Indus, and (probably) the Hwang-Ho and Wei. Those which were established later on large bodies of water (gulfs and seas) were, according to Thucydides, the Greek historian, built some thirty to fifty miles inland

for protection against pirates. Each of these inland cities, therefore, had its harbor port, e.g., Rome and Ostia, Athens and the Piraeus, and Miletus, which served as a harbor port for several inland cities (cf. Acts 20:17).

Early in the history of the Near East the Tigris-Euphrates valley was made a very fertile area by irrigation. This area is commonly known in history by the name of Mesopotamia, a word meaning "between the rivers." In Egypt, of course, the annual inundations of the Nile provided the necessary ingredients for fertilization on both sides of the river.

When the curtain first goes up on the stage of human history we find wave after wave of nomadic peoples pouring into the Near East both from the western desert and from the northern area around the Caspian Sea. As far back as the fourth millenium before Christ the central area of Mesopotamia was known as Akkad or Accad (cf. Gen. 10:10, "the land of Shinar"; Isa. 11:11, Dan. 1:2), and the southern part, just above the Persian Gulf, as Sumer: hence the Accadians and Sumerians. From the first the peoples who occupied the territory now known generally as the Near East were of Semitic origin. Beyond the Mesopotamian area, that is, to the east of it, Indo-European (Aryan) peoples began to take over; among these were the Medes and the Elamites, some of whom evidently pushed into the Indus Valley; these were followed later by the Kassites. The earliest prevailing language among these peoples was the Sanskrit.

Inscriptions indicate that an early Semitic dynasty flourished, founded by Sargon, who built a new capital, Akade, the exact location of which is unknown today. Sargon established his hegemony over Akkad, Sumer, Elam, Syria and Anatolia (the early name for what is known today as Asia Minor). After an interval of some twenty-five years, Sargon's grandson, Naramsin, succeeded to the hegemony and proved himself to be another very strong

ruler. This Empire came to be known as the Akkadian Empire and survived for about two centuries (c. 2350-2150 B.C.). Later, when Babylon rose to pre-eminence in the area, the name Akkad came to be used to designate the whole of northern Babylonia. Prior to the Early Dynastic Period initiated by Sargon's conquests, Lower Mesopotamia had been only a cluster of city-states constantly at war among themselves—Ur, Eridu, Babylon (Babel), Larsa, Erech, Kish, Lagash, Nippur, etc. (cf. again Gen. 10:10).

Later, toward the end of the third millenium, the Amurr ("westerners")—the Biblical Amorites, Gen. 15:16, 48:22; Deut. 20:17, etc.—a new wave of Semites began pouring into Mesopotamia from the West. Included in this folk movement, apparently of several closely related ethnic groups, must have been the early Arameans. It seems evident that these western Semites also occupied Palestine about the beginning of the second millenium. Some of these peoples who occupied the Palestinian area took over northern Canaan (note archaeological discoveries at Ugarit) and Syria as far as its southern coast. These people entrenched themselves at Mari on the Euphrates in Upper Mesopotamia (see archaeological discoveries there also). The zenith of Amorite political power was reached in the First Dynasty of Babylon in the days of the great king and lawgiver, Hammurabi (c. 1728-1686 B.C.). (It is intriguing to note that various records at Mari and elsewhere in Mesopotamia, mention another troublesome group, the "Apiru" or "Habiru"—a name that is thought by many scholars to be equivalent to the name "Hebrews.")

Following the strong Semitic Dynasty of Agade (2350-2150 B.C.), the Second Dynasty Ur (of which little seems to be known), and a subsequent cultural eclipse under the Gutians (2150-2070), the Third Dynasty of Ur (2070-1960) was ushered in, in which a succession of strong rulers led in a Sumerian renaissance. The population of Ur is estimated to have been more than half a million souls

during this period. The mightiest building project of the time was the great ziggurat erected by Ur-Nammu and his son, Shulgi. This powerful Dynasty came to an end when the Amorites of Mari and the Elamites from the east took over southern Mesopotamia. The city was later brought under the control of Hammurabi and was destroyed by his son, when it rebelled against Amorite power. The whole area was further ravished by the barbarian Kassites, and the city of Ur went into total eclipse until the rebuilding of it was undertaken by the Chaldeans Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus. Further improvements were made later by the Persians under Cyrus.

Folk movements became more numerous in the early part of the second millenium before Christ. Other ethnic peoples came into the picture. Among these were the Hittites of Asia Minor, the partially Semitic Hyksos who had imposed their rule on Egypt from about 1700 to 1570 B.C., and the most puzzling of all, the Hurrians.

The Hurrians (Biblical Horites: cf. Gen. 14:6, 36:30; Deut. 2:12) poured into the Fertile Crescent in a steady stream: as Cornfeld puts it, "and into the political vacuum created by the downfall of the Sumerian (Third) Dynasty of Ur." They evidently originated from the Caucasian and Armenian mountains and infiltrated the whole Tigris-Euphrates area. They were not strictly a warlike people: hence they penetrated every section of Western Asia, including Syria and Palestine. They seem to have been under the leadership of an Aryan upper class. They gave much attention to horse-breeding, and in battle they used the horse and the chariot. They attained their greatest prominence in the kingdom of the Mitanni (1470-1350) which extended from east of the upper Tigris valley to the north Syrian coast. One of the best known Hurrian sites is Nuzi (or Nuzu), where thousands of documents were discovered by a Harvard University expedition from 1925 to 1931 under the direction of Edward Chiera. More than

20,000 cuneiform tablets from the second millenium, brought to light at Nuzi, constitute a primary source of information concerning life in northern Mesopotamia, the district (Haran) where the Biblical patriarchs lived for a time and to which they sent to find suitable wives for their sons.

By 2000 B.C. various groups of Indo-European origin had infiltrated Asia Minor. These were organized into a complex of city-states. The most influential of these groups became known as the Hittites. The capital of the ancient Hittite Empire was Hattusas (modern Boghazkoy), ninety miles east of modern Ankara, on the great bend of the Halys River. Excavations began at this site in 1906, and have brought to light the story of a once powerful empire, as evidenced by the fact that one of their kings, Mursilis, captured Aleppo in 1530, then thrust across Hurrian territories, raided northern Mesopotamia, and sacked Babylon. A peace treaty between the Hittite king, Hattusilis III (c. 1275-1250), and the Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses II is the oldest such treaty known to students of ancient history, and indicates that the Hittites were powerful enough to stop the Egyptian army in its tracks in a battle at Kadesh (c. 1296 B.C.) Beleaguered, however, by Hurrian aggressiveness and inner political conflicts, the Hittites finally withdrew into Asia Minor where their influences are felt even down to our own time. The Hittite kingdom came to an end when overrun by the so-called "Sea peoples" from the eastern Mediterranean, many of whom seem to have been of Cretan origin (e.g., the Philistines). The Hittites flourished at about the dawn of the Iron Age. (Iron was discovered about 1500 B.C. somewhere in the area around the Black Sea.) The Hittite monopoly on iron gave them formidable power for a time, but this power declined as other peoples began to make use of iron weapons. Outposts of Hittite culture survived in northern Syria: these Hittite principalities were those to

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which the Old Testament continued to refer for several centuries. (Cf. Gen. 15:20, Num. 13:29, Josh. 3:10, 1 Ki. 11:1, 2 Ki. 7:6, 2 Chron. 1:17).

The Hyksos have been described as a motley horde bent solely on conquest and looting. They invaded Egypt about 1800 (or 1700?) B.C. and kept control of the country until about 1570 B.C., when they were driven out and chased into Palestine by the Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty. Several of the Palestinian cities were destroyed during the sixteenth century, and the Hyksos type of fortifications which have been excavated at Megiddo, Shechem, and Lachish, furnish evidence of the savage intensity of these campaigns.

The last great empires of the Fertile Crescent were, of course, those which followed the migrations described in the foregoing paragraphs; hence, their history does not have too much relevance to that of the Patriarchal Age. These were, in the order named, the Assyrian, Chaldean (late Babylonian), Persian, and Macedonian (the short-lived empire of Alexander the Great). The Roman Empire was the last and most extensive and most powerful, having extended its rule over the entire Fertile Crescent, including North Africa, Egypt, and the whole of the Near East and Mesopotamia.

The departure of Abram from Ur is correlated in time with the Third Dynasty (the most powerful) of that city. The exact location of the original site has long been a matter of debate. The Moslems traditionally have identified it with Urfa, a city in Upper Mesopotamia near Haran (the Greeks called it Edessa). The location which commonly has been identified with Abram's Ur is in Southern Mesopotamia some 160 miles from the present head of the Persian Gulf. This identification originated in the late nineteenth century when so many references to Ur were found in the inscriptions which were numerous and widespread throughout the Mesopotamian area. The discoveries

made by the joint expedition of the British Museum and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, under Charles Leonard Woolley (1922-1934), set forth voluminously in official reports, seem to verify the Southern Mesopotamian identification. However, the debate has been revived in recent years by C. H. Gordon and other archaeologists who conclude that the original Ur was not Urffa, but Ura, another town near Haran, which was under the control of the Hittites. DBA, 602: "Gordon treats Abraham as a merchant-prince or *Tamkarum* from the realm of the Hittites. His three main arguments are: (1) There is strong tradition connecting Ur of the Chaldees with Northern Mesopotamia. (2) The picture of the patriarchs as city-merchants fits known facts. (3) The term 'Chaldees' can be adequately applied to Northern Mesopotamia." The consensus of archeological scholarship, however, still runs preponderantly in favor of the traditional Sumerian Ur as Abram's point of departure on his pilgrimage to the Land of Promise.

Excavations at Sumerian Ur indicate that a highly advanced culture flourished there at a very early age. It is the Ur of Abram's time, however, in which we are particularly interested here. Like all these cities of Mesopotamia, Ur had its sacred enclosure with its complex of temples and shrines. The ruins of the great temple-tower (ziggurat, which, we are told, once rose from the plain along the Euphrates to a height of seventy feet), built by Ur-Nammu, founder of the prosperous and powerful Third Dynasty, still dominate the site. Throughout the history of Babylonia down to the middle of the first millenium B.C., this sacred area with its ziggurat was the most important temple area in Mesopotamia: indeed, it was the place to which the devout made pilgrimages and which they sought for a place of burial. Openings in the outer city walls which were oval in shape allowed boats to enter the city itself. It could be said of the people of Ur, as

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said later by the Apostle on the Hill of Ares, of the Athenian people and their philosophers, that they were indeed "very religious" (or "superstitious," Acts 17:22). The ruling deity at Ur was Nanna (known among the Semites as "Sin"). The city abounded in many other temples and shrines dedicated to other gods. There were also many public chapels, wayside shrines, household chapels, and other evidences that idolatry flourished throughout the city, including terra cotta figurines indicative of the Cult of the Earth-Mother, which was often the most debased form of pagan "religious" ritual. The following note (HSB, 21) is important: "Abraham has often been conceived of as an ignorant nomad, an illiterate and uneducated ancient. This is not so. Archaeological discoveries have shown that Ur of the Chaldees was a center of advanced culture. There were libraries in the schools and temples. The people used grammars, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and reference works along with textbooks on mathematics, religion, and politics. What was true for Babylonia was also true for Egypt where more than a thousand years before Abraham's time, writing was well established. It is quite possible, therefore, that Abraham left written records which were incorporated in the Pentateuch." (For a study of the archeological discoveries relevant to the Patriarchal Age, at Ugarit, Hattusas, Mari, Nuzi, Larsa, Nippur, Lagash, Uruk (Erech), etc., *The Biblical World*, edited by Pfeiffer, published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, is highly recommended.)

3. *The Call of Abram (12:1-3)*

(CECG, 129) *in re* Gen. 12:1-5, as follows: "An attentive consideration will suffice to show, from the close resemblance of the phraseology in this passage and in Acts 7:2-3, that Moses refers to one and the same call with Stephen; and that he now only resumes, in his characteristic manner, the subject of Abram's departure from his native land, which had been briefly related in ch. 11:31, in order

to furnish some important details. In fact the narrative in the first five verses of this chapter is merely an expansion of the short notice in the preceding one; and therefore our translators have properly rendered the verb in the Pluperfect tense, 'had said.' This revelation is not to be accounted for by representing it, as one writer has recently done, to be only 'the newly increased light of his inner consciousness,' or by saying, with another, that the 'Lord' of Abram 'was as much a creature of human imagination as a Jupiter or an Apollo.' In whatever way it was made to him—whether in a dream, by a vision, or by a visible manifestation (the language of Stephen, Acts 7:2, implies that it was some glorious theophany, perhaps like the supernatural light and words that suddenly converted Paul—a miracle well adapted to the conceptions of a Zebian idolater)—Abram was thoroughly persuaded that it was a divine communication; and it was probably accompanied by such special instructions as to the being and character of 'the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth,' as carried conviction to his understanding and heart." (It is impossible for me to accept the view that Abram had drifted away from the knowledge of the true God so far as to share the idolatry of some of the members of his family: the Scripture story does not intimate such a notion, and *surely Abram's subsequent walk of faith invalidates it.* C.C.).

Whitelaw (PCG, 117) writes: "Designed to trace the outward development of God's kingdom on the earth, the narrative now concentrates its attention on one of the foregoing Terachites, whose remarkable career it sketches with considerable minuteness of detail, from the period of his emigration from Chaldea to his death at Hebron in the land of Canaan. Distinguished as a man of undoubted superiority both of character and mind, the head at least of two powerful and important races, and standing, as one might say, on the threshold of the historical era, it is yet

chiefly as his life and fortunes connect with the Divine purpose of salvation that they find a place in the inspired record. The progress of infidelity during the four centuries that had elapsed since the Flood, the almost universal corruption of even the Shemite portion of the human family, had conclusively demonstrated the necessity of a second Divine interposition, if the knowledge of salvation were not to be completely banished from the earth. Accordingly, the son of Terah was selected to be the founder of a new nation, in which the light of gospel truth might be deposited for preservation until the fulness of the times, and through which the promise of the Gospel might be conducted forward to its ultimate realization in the manifestation of the woman's seed. Partly to prepare him for the high destiny of being the progenitor of the chosen nation, and partly to illustrate the character of that gospel with which he was to be entrusted, he was summoned to renounce his native country and kinsmen in Chaldea, and venture forth upon an untried journey in obedience to the call of heaven, to a land which he should afterward receive for an inheritance. In a series of successive theophanies or Divine manifestations, around which the various incidents of his life are grouped—in Ur of the Chaldees (Acts 7:2), at Moreh in Canaan (Gen. 12:7), near Bethel (*ibid.* 13), at Mamre (*ibid.* 15, 17); and on Moriah (*ibid.* 22)—he is distinctly promised three things—a land, a seed, and a blessing—as the reward of his compliance with the heavenly invitation; and the confident persuasion both of the reality of these gracious promises and of the Divine ability and willingness to fulfill them forms the animating spirit and guiding principle of his being, in every situation of life, whether of trial or of difficulty, in which he is subsequently placed.”

Murphy (MG, 261) writes to the point, in these statements: “The narrative now takes leave of the rest of the Shemites, as well as the other branches of the human

family, and confines itself to Abram. It is no part of the design of Scripture to trace the development of worldiness. It marks its source, and indicates the law of its downward tendency; but then it turns away from the dark detail, to devote its attention to the way by which light from heaven may again pierce the gloom of the fallen heart. Here, then, we have the starting of a new spring of spiritual life in the human race."

Note the following also (SIBG, 230): "V. 1. While Abram was in Ur of the Chaldees, God appeared to him, probably in human shape, Acts 7:2, as He did at least eight times afterward (Gen. 12:6-7, 13:3-4, 15:1, 17:1, 18:1, 21:12, 22:1, 15), and called him to leave his country and his father's house, which, for some time past, had been infected with idolatry (Josh. 24:2, 2 Cor. 6:17, Rev. 18:4, Isa. 41:2, Neh. 9:7). He, readily surrendering all for the sake of Christ, (Psa. 45:10-11, Luke 14:26), in obedience to the divine command, and relying on His direction and protection, went forth, not knowing whither the Lord intended to lead him (Heb. 11:8). But as they had stopped too long in Haran, I suppose the call here mentioned was one which he received anew after the death of his father." (This last view, of course, has always been a matter of controversy.) Payne (OHH, 36): "Abraham grew up in Ur just before the rise of Dyn. III and the Sumerian renaissance. Here, in a center for the worship of the moon god Sin, God called Abraham to a life of pilgrimage to the celestial city (Heb. 11:13-16). Gen. 15:7 (cf. Neh. 9:7) notes that God was responsible for Abram's movement from Ur; but there is no information in the O.T. on the precise form of the call. Acts 7:2-4 reveals, however, that God appeared to him there and told him to move out. It was by faith (Heb. 11:8), the destination not yet given. (This verse must apply to the call in Ur, for by Haran he knew where he was going, Gen. 12:5); and Abram obeyed. He seems to have persuaded

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his father, for Terah led the party (Gen. 11:31), which included Terah, Abram, Sarai, and Lot; Nahor's family stayed but followed to Haran later (24:10, 27:43)."

Note the Call and the Fulfillment. V. 2—Abraham was made a *great nation*. His posterity by Ishmael, by the sons of Keturah, and by Esau, were exceedingly numerous (16:10, 17:20, 21:13, 25:1-18; ch. 36; Num., ch. 31; Judg., chs. 6, 7). His seed of promise, by Jacob, were as the stars of heaven and the dust of the earth in multitude (13:16, 15:5, 22:17, 28:3, 14; 32:12; Num., ch. 1, also 23:10; Heb. 11:12; 1 Chron., ch. 21; 1 Ki. 4:20; 2 Chron., ch. 17; Jer. 33:22). His spiritual seed, followers of his faith and obedience, are still more numerous, a multitude which no man can number (Psa. 2:8-9, 22:27-30; also Psalms 62, 88; Isa., chs. 52, 59, 60; Rev. 7:4-9, 11:15). All the spiritual children of Jesus, his *eminent seed*, are included herein (Isa. 53:10-12, Gal. 3:26-29). God *blessed* Abram (1) with the numerous seed mentioned, (2) with Canaan, as the future property of part of them, (3) with Christ, as his *eminent seed* (Gal. 3:16), with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Gal. 3:14, Eph. 1:3). Abram was a blessing (1) to his friends and servants, who were instructed by him (Gen. 14:14, 18:19), (2) to his posterity, who were blessed for his sake (Exo. 3:6-8, Lev. 26:42, Gen. 17:20), (3) to the world, as an eminent pattern of faith and holiness (Rom., ch. 4), and as the progenitor of Christ the Savior (Gal. 3:13, 16). God did and will remarkably befriend and prosper the friends of Abram and his natural seed, but especially of Jesus Christ and his spiritual seed; and did and will remarkably punish their enemies (Josh. 2:9, Gen. 15:13-14, Exo. 17:8-16; Matt. 10:42, 25:41-46). All the *families of the earth are blessed* in Abram. He was of great service to the Canaanites, in imparting revelation to some of them, or in setting before them all an engaging example of virtue. His seed of promise, and especially his spiritual seed, are useful on that account, and have been

and are still the means of the prosperity or protection of nations (Isa. 6:13, 10:24-25, Matt. 24:22). But it is properly in his seed (Christ) that men are blessed. Multitudes of nations receive much outward happiness, and the dispensation of gospel ordinances, in consequence of his undertaking for his people (Matt. 24:24, Isa., chs. 35, 49, 50, also 6:13). And believers, gathered out of all nations, are blessed in him with temporal, spiritual and eternal blessings (Gal. 3:16, Acts 3:25-26, Eph. 1:3, Psa. 72:17-19, Isa. 45:17-25). It is easy to see, that the subsequent promises and threatenings, nay, the doctrines and laws, mentioned in Scripture, are but an enlarged exposition of these two verses; and the whole fate of the Jewish and gospel church, nay, of the saints in heaven and the lost in hell, are but one continued fulfillment thereof. *Verse 3*—The command given to Abraham involved great personal sacrifices—country, kindred, and home; and also great faith—he knew not where he was going. But the blessing promised was most cheering and comprehensive. It embraced himself, all who favored and honored him, the whole nation that was to spring from him, and all the families of the earth. Abraham by faith saw in this last promise the most glorious and blessed of all truths—the atoning work of the Messiah (Acts 3:25, Gal. 3:8). (See SIBG, p. 230). Note that in calling the fleshly seed of Abram, God did not abandon the other “families of the earth,” but was in fact making provision for their future spiritual welfare also.

Murphy (MG, 263): “In all God’s teachings the near and the sensible come before the far and the conceivable, the present and the earthly before the eternal and the heavenly. Thus Abram’s immediate acts of self-denial are his leaving his country, his birthplace, his home. The promise to him is to be made a great nation, be blessed, and have a great name in the new land which the Lord would show him. This is unspeakably enhanced by his

being made a blessing to all nations. God pursues this mode of teaching for several important reasons. *First*, the sensible and the present are intelligible to those who are taught. The Great Teacher begins with the known, and leads the mind forward to the unknown. If he had begun with things too high, too deep, or too far from the range of Abram's mental vision, he would not have come into relation with Abram's mind. It is superfluous to say that he might have enlarged Abram's view in proportion to the grandeur of the conceptions to be revealed. On the same principle he might have made Abram cognizant of all present and all developed truth. On the same principle he might have developed all things in an instant of time, and so have had done with creation and providence at once. *Secondly*, the present and the sensible are the types of the future and the conceivable; the land is the type of the better land; the nation of the spiritual nation; the temporal blessing of the eternal blessing; the earthly greatness of the name of the heavenly. And let us not suppose that we are arrived at the end of all knowledge. We pique ourselves on our advance in spiritual knowledge beyond the age of Abram. But even we may be in the very infancy of mental development. There may be a land, a nation, a blessing, a great name, of which our present realizations or conceptions are but the types. Any other supposition would be a large abatement from the sweetness of hope's overflowing cup. *Thirdly*, those things which God now promises are the immediate form of his bounty, the very gifts he begins at the moment to bestow. God has his gift to Abram ready in his hand in a tangible form. He points to it and says, This is what thou presently needest; this I give thee, with my blessing and favor. But, *fourthly*, these are the earnest and the germ of all temporal and eternal blessing. Man is a growing thing, whether as an individual or a race. God graduates his benefits according to the condition and capacity of the recipients. In the first

boon of his good-will is the earnest of what he will continue to bestow on those who continue to walk in his ways. And as the present is the womb of the future, so is the external the symbol of the internal, the material the shadow of the spiritual, in the order of the divine blessing. And as events unfold themselves in the history of man and conceptions in his soul within, so are doctrines gradually opened up in the Word of God, and progressively revealed to the soul by the Spirit of God." (Cf. Isa. 28:9-10, Mark 4:28, 1 Cor. 15:42-49, Heb. 10:1, Eph. 1:13-14, Col. 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:5-11, 3:18).

The Abrahamic Covenant, which is mentioned several times in Genesis (cf. 12:2, 3, 7; 13:14-17; chs. 15, 17; ch. 18; 21:12-13; 22:9-18) was essentially a *covenant of promise*; the only requirement was that Abram should respond in faith and trust to God's calling him away from his land and his family. And, although subsequent ramifications of the covenant occur in Genesis, the two basic features remain constant throughout. These are *the land* and *the descendants*. "The progeny of Abraham was to be a blessing to all and Abraham was guaranteed a son through whom his line would be perpetuated." This son, Isaac, therefore, came to be known as *the child of promise*, and the land to which Abram journeyed became designated *the land of promise*. (Exo. 12:25, Deut. 19:8-10, Josh. 23:5, Acts 7:4-5, Gal. 4:22-31; Gen. 17:15-19; Heb. 11:9-12, 17-19, etc.). Green (UBG, 163): "In the original promise and in the renewal of it upon two occasions of unusual solemnity, one when the Lord signified his approval of Abraham's unflinching faith by coming as his guest in human form, and again as a reward of his most signal act of obedience, the blessing is set before him in its most ample sweep. But during all the intervening period of long expectancy of his promised child the divine communications made to him from time to time were designed to keep alive his faith in that particular promise,

whose fulfillment was so long delayed; hence, mention is merely made of his numerous seed, and of the land which they were to occupy, alike in 13:14-17, 15:5-7, 18, which the critics assign to J, and in 17:4-8, which they give to P." There is no occasion here for the assumption of different sources.

Note, in this connection, JB (29): "As a result of God's call and promise of posterity Abraham cuts off all earthly ties and with his childless wife, 11:30, sets out for an unknown land. It is Abraham's first act of faith; it will be renewed when the promise is repeated, 15:5-6, and put to the test when God asks for the surrender of Isaac who was the fruit of that promise, ch. 22. To Abraham's unquestioning acts of faith the chosen people owes its existence and destiny, Heb. 11:8-19. Not only Abraham's physical descendants, but all who, in virtue of the same faith, become his sons, will have their share in that destiny, as the Apostle shows, Rom. 4, Gal. 3:7."

Although the emphasis in the Abrahamic promise is on the *land* and the *seed*, in its fullness the promise is a seven-fold one, as follows: (1) "I will make of thee a great nation." The phrase, "great nation," of course, implies infinitely more than great in number. "Since the greatness is of God's making, it involves true greatness in every sense. If ever there was a great nation, it was Israel." Israel achieved true greatness in her preservation of the knowledge of the living and true God, and Israel was great, inconceivably great, in her presentation to the world of the Messiah, the world's Redeemer. (2) "I will bless thee." This statement refers to Abram himself. "A man is blessed when due to the gracious working of God all goes well with him (cf. 39:5); the things that he undertakes thrives; and true success crowns all his endeavors." (3) "I will make thy name great." Note the various names given to him: "the father of a multitude" (17:5), a prince of God (23:6); the man in God's confidence

(18:17-19); a prophet (20:7); the servant of God (Psa. 105:6); and the friend of God (Jas. 2:23). (4) "And be thou a blessing." This expresses something that God does. "God is the one who in the last analysis makes Abram to be a true blessing unto others. But at the same time, a moral responsibility of Abram's is involved: He should do his part that he may become a blessing to others. Consequently the imperative, 'be thou a blessing.'" (5) "I will bless them that bless thee," "So intimately is God concerned in having men take the proper attitude toward this prophet and servant of His that whoever wishes Abram well, to him will God do good." (6) "And him that curseth thee will I curse." "The deeper reason behind all this is that Abram will be so closely identified with the good work of God, that to curse him comes to be almost the equivalent of cursing God." (7) "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "This word reaches back to the divided 'families' (10:5, 20, 31) of the earth, divided by their sins, as well as to the curse of 3:17 which is now to be replaced by a blessing. A blessing so great that its effect shall extend to 'all the families of the earth' can be thought of only in connection with the promised Savior. The word, therefore, is definitely Messianic and determines that the Messiah is to emerge from the line of Abram." Quotes from Leupold (EG, I, 411, 412). (Note the parallels of this sevenfold promise in Gen. 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14).

4. *The Promised Land*

V. 1—"unto the land that I will show thee." (Cf. 11:31, 12:5). Haley (ADB, 364): "At first the *name* of the country was not revealed to him. It is designated simply as a 'land that I will show thee' (12:1). Even if the name 'Canaan' had been mentioned to Abraham at the outset, it might still be true that he went forth 'not knowing whither he went.' For, in those days of slow transit, imperfect intercommunication, and meager geographical

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knowledge, the mere name of a country several hundred miles distant would convey almost *no* idea of the country itself. In our own time, even, of how many an emigrant on his way to America it might well be said, 'He knows not whither he is going.'" (Cf. Heb. 11:8). Again: "Gen. 11:31 merely shows that Abraham's destination was known to Moses writing at a later date." The same is true of 12:5.

McCleaer (COTH, 28:31): "This country, the future home of the great nation destined to spring from Abram's loins, was in many respects eminently adapted for its special mission in the history of the world. In extent, indeed, it was but a narrow strip of country, but a little larger than the six northern counties of England, being nearly 180 miles in length, and 75 miles in breadth, and having an area of about 13,600 English square miles. Bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the north by the mountains of Lebanon, on the east by the Syrian desert, on the south by the wilderness of Arabia, it was situated at the meeting-point of the two continents of Asia and Africa, 'on the very outpost, on the extremest western edge of the East.' It was a secluded land. A wilderness encompassed it on the east and south, mountains shut it in on the north, and the 'Great Sea' which washed its western shore was the terror rather than the thoroughfare of ancient nations. Unlike the coast of Europe, and especially of Greece, it had no indentations, no winding creeks, no deep havens, but one small port—that of Joppa—with which to tempt the mariner from the west. But while thus eminently adapted to be the 'silent and retired nursery of the Kingdom of God,' it was in the very centre of the activity of the ancient world, *in the midst of the nations, and the countries that were round about it* (Ezek. 5:5). On the south was the great empire of Egypt, on the northeast the rising kingdom of Assyria. Neither of these great nations could communicate with the other without passing through Palestine, and so learning some-

thing of its peculiar institutions and religion; and when the *fullness of time* was come no country was better suited, from its position at the extremest verge of the Eastern World, to be the starting-point whence the glad tidings of Redemption might be proclaimed to all nations. Moreover, narrow as were its limits, and secluded as was its position, it yet presented a greater variety of surface, scenery and temperature than is to be found in any other part of the world, and needed not to depend on other countries for anything that either the luxuries or actual wants of its inhabitants required. Four broadly marked longitudinal regions divided its surface. (1) First, there was the *low plain* of the western seacoast, broad toward the south, and gradually narrowing toward the north, famous for the Shephelah (*the low country*) with its waving grain-fields, and the vale of Sharon (*level country*), the garden of Palestine. From this was an ascent to (2) *a strip of table-land*, every part of which was more or less undulating, but increasing in elevation from north to south, and broken only by the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon. To this succeeded a rapid descent into (3) *a deep fissure or valley*, through which the Jordan (*the descender*), the only river of importance in the country, rushes from its source at the base of Hermon into the Dead Sea, the surface of which is no less than 1316 feet below that of the Mediterranean. Hence was a second ascent to (4) *a strip of table-land* on the east similar to that on the west, and seeming with its range of purple-tinted mountains to overhang Jerusalem itself. Crowned by the forests and upland pastures of Gilead and Bashan, this eastern table-land gradually melted into the desert which rolled between it and Mesopotamia. Thus within a very small space were crowded the most diverse features of natural scenery, and the most varied products. It was *a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, a land flowing with milk and honey*

(Exo. 3:8, 17; Exo. 13:5; Deut. 8:7-9, 11:8-12; Josh. 5:6, Jer. 11:5, Ezek. 20:6, 15; Num. 13:27). The low plains yielded luxuriant crops of wheat and barley, of rye and millet; on the table-lands with their equable and moderate climate grew the vine, the olive, the fig, the almond, the pomegranate; in the tropical neighborhood of Jericho flourished the palm-tree and the balsam; while the noble cedar waved on the mountains of Lebanon." *What a role this land has played in the history of the world! and what a role it is still playing in our day!*

5. *Abram's Response to God's Call* (12:1-6).

V. 4—"So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him." This statement gives us the key to Abram's motivation throughout his entire life. When God spoke, Abram acted accordingly (cf. Paul, Acts 22:10, 26:19). This complete dedication to the will of God in all things, as manifested by Abraham throughout his life, surely negates the notion that he had become contaminated by the idolatrous tendencies of his kinsmen. It was this very commitment that caused his name to go down in the sacred records as the Friend of God and the Father of the Faithful (Isa. 41:8, 2 Chron. 20:7, Jas. 2:21-24, John 8:39-40; Rom. 4:4, 4:16-17; Gal. 3:5-9, Heb. 11:8-10, esp. John 15:14). This fact also tends to negate the view of some commentators that two divine calls were necessary to move Abram toward his ultimate destination. The record of Abram's life surely proves that it was not his custom to delay obedience when God called, any longer than circumstances might necessitate. The Scripture record clearly indicates that the place of his nativity was Ur, where he lived with his father Terah, his brothers Nahor and Haran, and where he married Sarai; that on the death of Haran, he migrated with his father, his wife, and his nephew Lot (son of Haran) to the geographical Haran in Upper Mesopotamia (11:26-32); and that on the death of his father he (Abram, now 75 years old) left Haran with

Sarai and Lot and moved by stages via Shechem and Bethel into the land of Canaan (12:1-9). We might compare the language of Stephen (Acts 7:2-4): here we read that the call from "the God of glory" came to Abraham "when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran"; that "he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran; and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell." This language would seem to indicate that he was under God's direction from the very first, and continued to be under this Divine direction throughout his entire pilgrimage. Murphy (MG, 264, 265): "*Abram took*. He is now the leader of the little colony, as Terah was, before his death. Sarai, as well as Lot, is now named. *The gaining they had gained* during the five years of residence in Haran. If Jacob became comparatively rich in six years (Gen. 30:43), so might Abram, with the divine blessing, in five. *The souls they had gotten*—the bondservants they had acquired. Where there is a large stock of cattle, there must be a corresponding number of servants to attend to them. Abram and Lot entered the land of promise as men of substance. They are in a position of independence. The Lord is realizing to Abram the blessing promised. They start for the land of Kanaan, and at length arrive there. This event is made as important as it ought to be in our minds by the mode in which it is stated."

However, it would be well, I think, for the student to be acquainted with A. Gosman's theory of the two divine calls (CDHCG, 392, n.) as follows: "There is no discrepancy between Moses and St. Stephen. Stephen's design was, when he pleaded before the Jewish Sanhedrin, to show that God's revelations were not limited to Jerusalem and Judea, but that He had first spoken to the father of Abram in an *idolatrous* land, Ur of the Chaldees. But Moses dwells specially on Abram's call from Haran, because Abram's obedience to *that* call was the proof of his faith (Words-

worth).’ There is no improbability in the supposition that the call was repeated. And this supposition would not only reconcile the words of Stephen and Moses, but may explain the fifth verse: ‘And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.’ Abram had left his home in obedience to the original call of God, but had not reached the land in which he was to dwell. Now, upon the second call, he not only sets forth, but continues in his migrations until he reaches Canaan, to which he was directed.”

The fact that stands out here, the one especially to be remembered, is that *Abram went first from Ur to Haran, and thence to Canaan*. Special mention is made of the fact that in both departures (first from Ur, and then from Haran) Abram was accompanied by his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. In mentioning Sarai the foundation is laid for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Promise (Covenant) in the progressive revelation of the Messianic genealogy and its ultimate consummation in Christ Jesus, Messiah Himself, and (2) for other subsequent events of secular history, as, for example, the never-ending conflict between the progeny of Isaac and that of Ishmael (Gen. 16:7-14), a conflict that still rages today. In mentioning Lot, the foundation is laid for the subsequent accounts of (1) the theophany vouchsafed Abraham in the vicinity of Hebron, (2) the subsequent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (chs. 18, 19), and (3) the incestuous origin of the Moabites and Ammonites (19:30-38).

We are told that men bound from Ur to Haran would set out before the coming of the nine dry months “which would strip every blade of grass from the land.” The distance was some 600 miles. Some writers think that Terah and his clan followed the west bank of the Euphrates. Hence when they passed through Central Mesopotamia, they would have seen the walls and towers of Babylon on the other side of the river, including the famous eight-

storied ziggurat (cf. Gen. 10:10, 11:1-9). Other writers think they followed the Tigris rather than the Euphrates. Thus Kraeling writes (BA, 57): "Terah is said to have started his renewed trek with a more distant objective in mind—to go to the land of Canaan. . . . But since he goes to Haran, we may imagine him as taking the familiar migration route back to the home area. Perhaps his herds had not crossed the Euphrates at all to the southern shore of which Ur lay, for the river was certainly a formidable obstacle. In returning he would have gone up the west side of the Tigris. We may imagine him as passing mighty Asshur, the capital of Assyria, and eighty miles beyond he would have seen Nineveh across the river, a city of yet lesser consequence, but destined to become the seat of an empire that was to trample his descendants under its feet. Leaving the Tigris, Terah would have taken the westward track to Nisibis, and crossing the headwaters of the Khabur River would soon have come to Haran on the upper *Balikh* River, another tributary of the Euphrates." Significant archeological discoveries were made at Haran in the nineteen-fifties under the direction of D. S. Rice. From these discoveries it seems evident that the moon-temple of Haran lay at the site occupied by the later great mosque. Kraeling (*ibid.*): "We here stand on the spot to which Joshua refers when he says to the assembled tribes that their fathers lived of old beyond the river and served other gods (Josh. 24:2). First among these gods was Sin of Haran. It was near here that the divine revelation calling Abraham to a land of promise was given. Truly at Haran one stands at the source of the River of Life."

Payne (OHH, 36, 37): "Haran, Gen. 11:31—12:4. Terah knew the destination was Canaan, 11:31; but he settled in Haran, which was likewise a center for the worship of Sin, and permeated with Hurrian customs, where he died. This was a tragedy: lost faith? Relapse into idolatry? God then called Abram again, this time to

leave the father's house' as well, 12:1. It was to 'the land I will show thee (in detail)'; he knew it was Canaan (v. 5). With this call came promises: (1) personal election, divine discrimination, for 'salvation is of the Jews,' John 4:22. God had previously associated Himself with groups, Noah, and Shem (9:26), but with antecedent ethical distinction; Abram's only plea was faith, Heb. 11:6. Election proves God's control of history and keeps the recipient in humility. He promised Abram posterity, blessing, and fame; and Abram's whole subsequent life demonstrated divine monergism; in his own power he had no seed, no land, no property, 14:23. (2) universality, 12:3, for all nations were to be blessed in him. He was an example of faith, Gal. 3:8; and the Gentiles are blessed with faithful Abraham, for Gen. 12:3 is not strictly as Messianic a prophecy as 22:18, where his 'seed' is specified, cf. Acts 3:25." (1) The student will again note the disagreement among eminent authorities as to whether Abram was the recipient of one or two divine calls. There seems to be no way of resolving this problem conclusively. Note however, our own conclusion, and the reasons for it, in preceding paragraphs. (2) The student must also keep in mind that the history of the cities of Asshur and Nineveh extends far back into that of Mesopotamia, as far back indeed as the fourth millenium B.C. (Gen. 10:10-12). This great antiquity is well confirmed by archaeology. These cities did not attain pre-eminence, however, until the rise of the Assyrian Empire. The First or Old Assyrian kingdom had its beginning about 1750 B.C., soon after the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur.)

Lange (CDHCG, 393): "The calling of Abram: 1. In its requisitions; 2. in its promises; 3. in its motives. (a) The grace of God. The election of Abram. The choice of God reflects itself in the dispositions of men, the gifts of believers. As every people has its peculiar disposition, so the race of Abram, and especially the

father of it, had the religious disposition in the highest measure. (b) The great necessity of the world. It appeared about to sink into heathenism; the faith must be saved in Abram. Faith should proceed from one believer to all, just as salvation should proceed from one Savior to all. The whole messianic prophecy was not embraced in Abram." A. Gosman (CDHCG, 396): "The promise receives its first fulfillment in Abram, then in the Jews, more perfectly when the Son of God became incarnate, *the seed of Abram*, then further in the church and the preaching of the gospel, but finally and fully when Christ shall complete his church, and come to take her unto himself." Again (*ibid.*): "The object of the writer is not Abram's glorification, but the glorification of Jehovah." Again (*ibid.*): "Abram is also an illustrious example to all who hear the call of God. His obedience is prompt and submissive. He neither delays nor questions, but went out not knowing whither he went, Heb. 11:8."

Speiser (ABG, 88: "Abraham's journey to the Promised Land was thus no routine expedition of several hundred miles. Instead, it was the start of an epic voyage in search of spiritual truths, a quest that was to constitute the central theme of all biblical history.")

6. *Through the Land of Promise (12:5-9).*

Leaving Mesopotamia, Abram and his retinue crossed the Great River, the Euphrates (Josh. 24:2). Smith-Fields (OTH, 68): "This separated him entirely from his old home, and possibly accounts for the title *Hebrew* which he came to wear (Gen. 14:13). While some think that the name Hebrew came from the patriarch Eber (Gen. 11:16), it may come from the Hebrew verb meaning to 'cross over.'" Evidently the caravan then made its way across the great Syrian desert. Although the route is not specifically indicated in the Biblical account, tradition has it that Abram tarried at Damascus. (Josephus, for example, informs us that the patriarch remained there for

some time, "being come with an army from the land of the Chaldeans (Antiq. I, 1). It should be noted, too, that Damascus was the native place of Eliezer, Abram's household steward, Gen. 15:2). No doubt the caravan then crossed the Jordan, where the first stopping-place was Shechem, in the valley of the same name, lying between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim.

V. 5. "And into the land of Canaan they came." (No doubt a prolepsis, as in 11:31). This was a distance of some 300 miles from Haran. Cf. v. 6—"And the Canaanite was then in the land." The territory originally occupied by the Canaanites as a separate ethnic group is clearly described in Gen. 10:19. A wider use of the term is also encountered in Scripture and in early external sources as including the inhabitants generally of the Syro-Palestinian area. In its wider use also the terms "Canaanite" and "Amorite" tend to overlap directly. Thus Abram was promised Canaan (12:5, 7) but this occupancy was delayed—in fact was never realized by Abraham personally—because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. Several inscriptions indicate clearly the contiguous use of "Amorites" and "Canaanites" in Moses' time; hence, "the use of these terms as the distinguishing marks of different literary hands is erroneous" (NBD, 184). It should be noted, too, that Shechem was a Canaanite principality under a Hivite ruler (Gen. 12:5, 6; 34:2, 30), but could be called "Amorite" (Gen. 48:22). It seems that at the time of the conquest of Abram's descendants, the mountainous land in the center, including the place of Shechem, was occupied by the Amorites and other tribes, while the coast of the Mediterranean and the west bank of the Jordan was held by the Canaanites proper (cf. Josh. 5:1, 11:3). The statement in v. 6 has been "fastened upon as a proof of the late composition of this history, as implying that though in Abram's time the Canaanite was in the land, he had ceased to have a place there in the writer's

days. The objection is not founded in historic truth; for it appears from Gen. 34:30, 1 Ki. 9:20-21, Ezek. 16:3, that the Canaanite continued to a certain extent in after ages to occupy the land" (CECG, 131). Murphy suggests three possible interpretations of this passage (MG, 265-266): "This simply implies that the land was not open for Abram to enter upon immediate possession of it without challenge: another was in possession; the sons of Kenaan had already arrived and preoccupied the country. It also intimates, or admits of, the supposition that there had been previous inhabitants who may have been subjugated by the invading Kenaanites. . . . It admits also of the supposition that the Kenaanites afterward ceased to be its inhabitants. Hence some have inferred that this could not have been penned by Moses, as they were expelled after his death. If this supposition were the necessary or the only one implied in the form of expression, we should acquiesce in the conclusion that this sentence came from one of the prophets to whom the conservation, revision, and continuation of the living oracles were committed. But we have seen that two other presuppositions may be made that satisfy the import of the passage. Moreover, the first of the three accounts for the fact that Abram does not instantly enter on possession, as there was an occupying tenant. And, finally, the third supposition may fairly be, not that the Kenaanites afterwards ceased, but that they should afterward cease to be in the land. This, then, as well as the others, admits of Moses being the writer of this interesting sentence." To the present writer the best explanation of this sentence is the simplest one: namely, that the writer intends us to know that the Canaanite was *already* in the land. Why try to give it some mysterious significance when the simplest interpretation makes the most sense? The implication could well be also that the Canaanite had driven out the earlier inhabitants.

The Place of Shechem, The Oak of Moreh

This was Abram's first stopping-place. The phrase is perhaps a prolepsis, for the place where the city Shechem, either built by or named after the Hivite prince (34:2) was afterward situated, between Ebal and Gerizim. This has been described as the only very beautiful spot in Central Palestine. *The oak of Moreh*: probably not the oak literally, but rather the terebinth or turpentine tree; however, the oak was a kind of generic name given to various kinds of trees. Cf. Deut. 11:30—in all likelihood, the oak-grove or terebinth-grove of Moreh. (Moreh, like Mamre, was probably the name of the owner: cf. Gen. 13:18, 14:13). It has been assumed by the critics that there was a sacred grove here where pagan rites had been practised, probably some aspect of the Cult of Fertility which prevailed generally among the inhabitants of the land. The phrase, "place of Shechem," is assumed to have been a "holy place." "Moreh" means literally "teacher" or "instructor": hence, it may be conceded that oaks of instruction were in the category of oaks of divination (Judg. 9:37). The notion that sacred trees and groves were inhabited by divinities and hence possessed oracular powers was widespread in the cults of ancient pagan peoples. To this day, we are told, the venerable cedars of Lebanon are tended by Maronite priests. From these facts it is further assumed by the critics that since this was the first place where Abram built an altar unto Jehovah (v. 7), he selected this particular "holy place" to worship his particular deity. This, of course, is conjecture. Lange (CDHCG, 391): "It is not probable that Abram would have fixed his abode precisely in a grove, which according to heathen notions had a sacred character as the residence of divining priests. The religious significance of the place may have arisen from the fact that Jacob buried the images brought with him in his family, under the oak of Shechem (35:4). The idols, indeed, must not be thrown into sacred but into

profane places (Isa. 2:20). But, perhaps, Jacob had regard to the feelings of his family, and prepared for the images, which, indeed, were not images belonging to any system of idolatry, an honorable burial. At the time of Joshua the place had a sacred character, and Joshua, therefore, erected here the monumental stone, commemorating the solemn renewal of the law (Josh., ch. 24). Thus they became the oaks of the pillar at which the Shechemites made Abimelech king (Judg. 19:6)." Leupold (EG, 419): "But all suppositions, such as that the words ought to be rendered 'oracle-terebinth,' or that we have here indications of an animistic religion on the part of the patriarchs, are guesses. It is just as possible that in days of old some worshiper of Yahweh had under this oak admonished and instructed the people." The sum and substance of the whole matter is clear, namely, that Abram encamped by an ancient landmark, and there received a second communication from God, and there built his first altar in the Land of Promise to the God who had called him to undertake this pilgrimage of faith.

The Theophany and the Altar, V. 7. The patriarch had left Ur of the Chaldees to set out on a trek, the destination of which God had not specified. The divine injunction was simply "unto the land that I will show thee" (12:1, cf. Heb. 11:8, "he went out, not knowing whither he went"). Now God appears to him and identifies this Land of Promise specifically: "unto thy seed will I give *this* land." Note that God did not declare He would give it to Abram himself: as a matter of fact, Abraham died without owning a foot of it, except the small spot he purchased for a burial-place (Gen. 23:17-20, 25:9-10, 49:28-33). Lange (CDHCG, 391, 392): "Abram's faith had developed itself thus far since he had entered Canaan, and now the promise is given to him of the land of Canaan, as the possession of the promised seed. . . . Abram's grateful acknowledgment: the erection of an altar, and

the founding of an outward service of Jehovah, which as to its first feature consisted in the calling upon his name (cultus), and as to its second in the profession and acknowledgement of his name. Thus also Jacob acted (33:20, Josh. 24:1, 26). Bethel, Jerusalem, Hebron, Beersheba are places of the same character (i.e., places which were consecrated by the patriarchs, and not as Knobel thinks, whose consecration took place in later times, and then was dated back to the period of the patriarchs). Abram's altars stood in the oaks of Moreh, and Mamre, in Bethel, and upon Moriah. Abram, and the patriarchs generally, served also the important purpose of preaching through their lives repentance to the Canaanites, as Noah was such a preacher for his time. For God leaves no race to perish unwarned. Sodom had even a constant warning in the life of Lot." *The divine deed to the Holy Land was here made over to the seed of Abraham.* "Abram himself was to possess only a burial ground. Faith had to accept 'things not seen.'"

Let us not forget that the three elements of Biblical religion are *the altar, the sacrifice, and the priesthood.* Hence Abram did here, precisely what Noah had done on coming out of the ark (Gen. 8:20), what undoubtedly the patriarchs of the Messianic Line had done from the time of Abel (Heb. 11:4; Gen. 4:1-5). Throughout the Patriarchal Dispensation, the patriarch himself fulfilled the three divine offices of prophet (revealer of the will of God to his household), priest (mediator between his household and God), and king (the one who had complete authority over his household). This threefold office was expressed in the titles, Messiah, Christos, Christ, meaning "The Anointed One." In Old Testament times those leaders inducted into these three ministries were formally set aside for their service by the ceremony of anointing (Judg. 9:8, 2 Sam. 2:4, 1 Ki. 1:34; Exo. 28:41; 1 Ki. 19:16). The holy anointing oil used in these ceremonies of induction

was typical of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16, 17; Acts 10:38, 4:26; Luke 4:18; Heb. 1:9; etc.). We see no reason for assuming that Abraham had not maintained this indispensable institution of sacrifice throughout his entire previous life; indispensable, that is, in the fact that from the beginning of revealed religion every lamb slain on the Patriarchal and Jewish altars was by divine ordination designed to point forward in type to the Lamb of God, our Passover, who would be offered up for the redemption of mankind (John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7, Isa. 53:7, Acts 8:32, 1 Pet. 1:19, Rev. 5:4-14).

Note the Abram *built his altar unto Yahweh (Jehovah) and called upon the name of Yahweh*, v. 7. Advocates of the *Documentary Theory* have built up a mass of conjecture based on the assumption of different sources or codes. The name Elohim, they contend, is characteristic of the Elohist Code (E) and the Priestly Code (P), whereas the name Jehovah characterizes the Jahvistic or Yahwistic Code (J). (This will be treated again *infra* in connection with Gen. 22:14 as related to Exo. 6:2). Suffices it here to quote from Green on this point (UBG, 167, 168): "It is said that J and P differ in their conception of God; J's representation is anthropomorphic, that of P is more exalted and spiritual. But the two aspects of God's being, his supreme exaltation and his gracious condescension, are not mutually exclusive or conflicting, but mutually supplementary. Both must be combined in any correct apprehension of his nature and his relation to man. These are not to be sundered, as though they were distinct conceptions of separate minds. *They are found together throughout the Bible.* Since Elohim is used of God as the creator and in his relation to the world at large, while Jehovah is the name by which he made himself known to his chosen people, his chief acts of condescending grace naturally appear in connection with the latter." Leupold (EG, 420): "A word from God requires a response on the part

of man. Abram felt impelled to give personal public testimony to God's mercy displayed in this appearance. So he built an altar. This statement is misconstrued by criticism in its attempt to find as many distinctions as possible between so-called sources. This passage, ascribed to J, is said to mean that J never records instances of actual sacrifices by the patriarchs. This is the argument from silence, and it is inconclusive because the word for altar is *mizbeach*, meaning 'a place for slaughter.' The manifest intention of the author must be that 'a place for slaughter' was made in order to slaughter a victim. *Altars became altars when the victim is slain.* A mere altar of stones would have been a formalistic gesture on Abram's part—a gesture like falling on one's knees to pray but omitting the prayer. *The soul of the patriarchal religion was sacrifice. The critics find matters, which no one before their time dreamed of.* The altar is said to be built 'unto Yahweh' to emphasize the undeserved mercy of His promise." (Italics ours—C. The fact seems to be that the critics are for the most part motivated by zeal to destroy the integrity of the Bible and so to destroy its influence on mankind.) (HSB, 22): "Abraham's altar at Shechem implies animal sacrifice which was common to all Semites."

On to Bethel. From the oak of Moreh Abram now moved to the hill east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east (localities that are still recognized—the former as Beiten, the latter as Teller-Rigmeh, the mount of the heap). Obviously Abram was still predominantly nomadic and apparently was still seeking better pasture land. It could well be also that the "Canaanites" did not view with too kindly eyes the appearance of this patriarch's tents and flocks and herds; that Abram had neither the power nor the inclination to resort, like Jacob, to "his sword and his bow" (Gen. 48:22, Smith-Fields, OTH, 99). Abram was now on the heights

which skirt the Jordan, on the northern border of what was later the kingdom of Judah, between Bethel and Ai. Bethel was a *place*, adjacent to which was the town called *Luz* at the first (Gen. 28:19). (Jacob gave this name to the place twice (Gen. 28:19, 35:15). Archaeology confirms the fact that the city was established early in the Bronze Age; hence we meet the name as existing as such in Abram's time. Bethel continued afterward to be a place hallowed by the presence of God, to which the people resorted for counsel in the war with Benjamin (Judg. 20:18, 26, 31; xxi. 2), and in which Jeroboam, 1 Ki. 12:29, set up one of the golden calves). "Ai" meant literally a "heap of stones" (cf. Josh., chs. 7, 8). Here Abram *pitched his tent*. This was his *second stopping-place* in the Promised Land. (*Tent: used for dwelling*, Gen. 4:20, 9:21, 12:8, 13:18, 18:1, 13:5; Exo. 18:7; Num. 24:5, 6; 2 Sam. 20:1; Isa. 13:20, 38:12; Jer. 6:3. Women had tents apart from men, Gen. 24:67, 31:33. *Used for cattle*, 2 Chron. 14:15. *Manufacture of*, Acts 18:3.) *Abram called upon the name of Yahweh*. Murphy (MG, 267): "On the hill east of this sacred ground [Bethel] Abram built another altar, and called upon the name of the Lord. Here we have the reappearance of an ancient custom, instituted in the family of Adam after the birth of Enok (Gen. 4:26). Abram addresses God by his proper name, Jehovah, with an audible voice, in his assembled household. This, then, was a continuation of the worship of Adam, with additional light according to the progressive development of the moral nature of man. But Abram has not yet any settled abode in the land. He is only surveying its several regions, and feeding his flocks as he finds an opening. Hence he continues his journey southward." Leupold on Gen. 4:26 (EG, 227): "The 'name' here, as usual, means the whole truth that God had revealed about Himself. Since the name 'Yahweh' is attached to 'name,' this means that from days of old God was known in the

capacity of *Yabweh*, or in the character of *Yabweh*, whether that word as such was known at this early date or not. The thing that the name stood for was known. Men do not first in the age of Abraham or Moses begin to comprehend God's faithfulness, unchangeableness, and mercy. Since this calling out by the use of the name definitely implies public worship, we have here the first record of *regular* public worship. Private worship is presupposed as preceding. The great importance of public worship, both as a matter of personal necessity as well as a matter of public confession, is beautifully set forth by this brief record. This act bears eloquent testimony to the courage of this group, who wanted to be known as such whose hope was placed only in Yahweh. It is not enough to say that 'Yahweh's religion began with Enosh.' It began with Adam and developed into regular public worship in three generations." The significance of the statement here, v. 8, is the fact of the use of the Name Yahweh in worship, that is, to call out by the use of the Name. (SIBG, 239): "*Abram called on God, i.e., worshiped him by prayer, by preaching to his family, and by offering sacrifices for himself and them, ch. 18:19, 21:13. . . . It is not uncommon for men to speak and act religiously in one company or place, where religion is prevalent, or, if it may be so called, fashionable, who yet totally lay it aside in another place or company, where religion is less regarded, or perhaps altogether despised. Abram testifies for God wherever he goes.*" Again: "That Abram, before this time, knew and worshiped God, there can be no doubt; but this [Shechem] is the first altar erected by him; that is, the first decided and public establishment of the worship of Jehovah in his family. It is well known, that young Christians, who worship God in private, often find considerable difficulty in commencing family worship. Let them remember Abram's faith, Abram's altar, and Abram's blessing, and take courage."

7. *The Round Trip to Egypt (12:10-20)*

Literally, Abraham *pulled up stakes* and kept on moving toward the south, that is *toward the Negeb*. Evidently the hill area adjacent to Bethel, though it may have protected him somewhat from the animosity of his neighbors (who surely did not look with too friendly an eye on this nomadic intruder) furnished scanty pasturage for his cattle. He therefore went on southward, that is, toward the Negeb ("dry land"). The Negeb is the Palestinian region which extends south from Hebron. It is a more or less arid region in parts of which isolated flocks may be tended, as far south at least as Beersheba. The terrain and character of the Negeb was such that Judea was almost never invaded from the South through this area. When Israel sought to enter the Promised Land the procession was repulsed by this formidable barrier and its inhabitants (Deut. 1:42-46). Of course it may have been less desiccated in the days of the patriarchs. Frequently in Scripture the word is used merely to indicate direction, south. (The reference to the Negeb here and elsewhere in Genesis takes on great significance since Dr. Nelson Glueck's archaeological discoveries which make it clear that the region was occupied from 2100-1800 B.C., the period of Abraham. Incidentally, it is now believed by some archaeologists that Abraham and the Babylonian king Hammurabi were relatively contemporary. See Glueck's fascinating book, *Rivers in the Desert*, RD in our Bibliographical Abbreviations.) The route taken from the Beersheba region was probably by "the way of Shur," an area in the northwest part of the isthmus of Sinai, south of the Mediterranean coastline and "the way of the land of the Philistines" (Gen. 16:7, 25:18; Exo. 13:17-18, 15:22; 1 Sam. 15:7, 27:8).

There arose a famine in the Land of Promise, so Abram pressed on to the south. The Land of Promise, we are told, is watered by rain periodically, but seasons of drought occur in which the growth of vegetation is arrested and

thus famine is brought on. Because the fertility of her soil was guaranteed by the annual inundation of the Nile, Egypt as a rule enjoyed protection from drought; hence it was customary for peoples of Syria and Palestine to seek refuge there in times of famine in their own lands, as did Jacob later. Thus it will be noted that insofar as the Promised Land is considered, it was literally true that Abram simply "passed through the land" (v. 6). The first journey was apparently one of exploration and it seems to have been rapidly consummated and then terminated in a brief sojourn in Egypt.

Abram in Egypt: The Problem of Sarai's Age

Abram's wife, Sarai, is now thrust forward into what was an unenviable situation, and surely not one of her own making. Abram testified to her attractiveness: "thou art a fair woman to look upon" (v. 11) and the princes of Pharaoh on seeing her beauty "praised her to Pharaoh" (vv. 14, 15). The statement Sarai was so fair as to attract the attention of Pharaoh, even to the peril of her husband's life (12:11, 15) is said by the critics to be incompatible with 12:4 (cf. 17:17), according to which she was at that time upward of sixty-five years old. It is said to be still more incongruous that she should have attracted Abimelech when she was more than ninety years old (20:2-7, 7:17). Green (UBG, 167): "The only point of any consequence in this discussion is not what modern critics may think of the probability or possibility of what is here narrated, but whether the sacred historian credited it. On the hypothesis of the critics R (redactor) believed it and recorded it. What possible ground can they have for assuming that J and E had less faith than R in what is here told of the marvelous beauty and attractiveness of the ancestress of the nation? If the entire narrative could be put together by R, and related by him with no suspicion of discord, the same thing could just as well have been done by one original writer. It may be added, if it will in any measure

relieve the minds of doubting critics, that Abimelech is not said to have been taken with Sarah's beauty. He may have thought an alliance with 'a mighty prince' like Abraham (23:6) desirable, even if Sarah's personal charms were not what they had once been. And when Abraham lived to an age of one hundred and seventy-five, who can say how well a lady of ninety may have borne her years?" It has been suggested that Sarai's complexion, coming from a mountainous country, was no doubt fresh and fair as compared with the faces of Egyptian women, which, as the monuments show, were dark-brown or copper-colored (CECG, 132). This suggestion surely has merit.

Abram in Egypt: His Attempted Deception (vv. 10-20).

Leupold (EG, 421, 422): "Now follows an episode that is less attractive. Abram does not appear to good advantage in it. With impartial truth Moses records what Abram did. If the account remains entirely objective without the addition of a subjective opinion or estimate of the ethical value of Abram's conduct, this can readily be seen to be offset by the fact that the narrative as such in its unvarnished truth so plainly sets forth the unworthy sentiments that animated the patriarch, that the sympathetic reader is almost made to blush for the thing done by the man of God. The charge of the critics is decidedly unfair when they say: 'There is no suggestion that either the untruthfulness or the selfish cowardice of the request [of Abram] was severely reprobated by the ethical code to which the narrative appealed.' Prochsch sees the situation more nearly as it actually is when he asserts: 'It is quite impossible here not to notice the narrator's sarcasm,' and adds that this step that Abram took 'is most sharply condemned' by the writer. Comparing chapters twenty and twenty-six, we find two situations that constitute a close parallel to the one under consideration. Strange as such recurrences may strike us, it should be remembered

that life often brings us into situations that are practically duplicates of what transpired at an earlier date; and he that marvels that a patriarch sinned a second time after a definite rebuke, let him remember how often he himself may repeat a sin for which a stern admonition had been addressed to him. To say this must have been 'a very popular story in ancient Israel' hardly does justice to the facts of the case. Why should Israel have deemed the failings of its patriarchs material for 'popular' stories? The recording of three such instances is explicable only on the score of the strict impartiality of the author." See the parallel stories of Abram and Abimelech (ch. 20) and of Isaac and Abimelech (ch. 26). It must be understood that *the Bible is a very realistic book: it pictures life just as men lived it; it does not turn away from the truth to cover up the weaknesses of the heroes of the faith. It deals with them realistically as it deals with all men realistically, in the fact that it finds them in sin (as they know they are if they will but be honest with themselves and with God), but at the same time offers the only possible remedy, the Atonement, God's Covering of Grace (John 1:29, 1 John 1:7-10, Rom. 3:24, Eph. 1:7, Heb. 9:12). Divine Justice required the Atonement, and Divine Love provided it (John 3:16). It should be noted that the severe reproof which God administered to those practising deception, on all these occasions, was administered through the instrumentality of those who had been made the victims of their deception. In each case, too, the reproof was accompanied with manifestations of great mercy and benevolence.*

According to a previous understanding with Sarai, Abram palmed her off on the king of Egypt as his sister. This, of course, was a half-truth and a half-lie (20:12), which makes the incident more interesting and more complex ethically. Some authors have tried to minimize the deception by appeals to customs. Speiser, for example,

would have us know that, according to the inscriptions, in the Hurrian culture of the time men were accustomed to confer special status on their wives by adopting them as sisters. This, we are told, would have made Sarai eligible for sistership status in Haran which was predominantly a Hurrian city; and because this relationship was for Sarai a matter of prestige, Abram would have stressed it in introducing her to Pharaoh (ABG, 91-94). This notion is surely "out of tune" completely with the Genesis account: it is completely contrary to the motive explicitly attributed to Abram and Sarai in that account. Speiser's attempted explanation of the motives involved in Abram's deception makes it to be no deception at all. He writes: "Why was tradition so interested in the matter, enough to dwell on it repeatedly. We know now that the wife-sister position was a mark of cherished social standing. This kind of background would be an implicit guarantee of the purity of the wife's descendants. The ultimate purpose of the biblical genealogies was to establish the superior strain of the line through which the biblical way of life was transmitted from generation to generation. In other words, the integrity of the mission was to be safeguarded in transmission, the purity of the content protected by the quality of the container. This is why the antecedents of the wife—the mother of the next generation—in the formative early stages were of particular significance. Hence, too, all such notices would be obligatory entries in the pertinent records" (*ibid.*, 94). In opposition to this view, we may ask two questions: (1) What evidence have we that this special sister-wife status over in Haran was recognized, or even known, down in Egypt? (2) If the Old Testament writers were seeking to protect the moral integrity of the mothers of each succeeding generation, why do they present the deception practised by Abram and Sarai as *a deception pure and simple, and as motivated by selfishness*. It strikes this writer that from the viewpoint taken

by Dr. Speiser, the Genesis accounts of these deceptions would have been omitted from the history.

See JB (p. 29, n.): Here we have another attempt to "explain away" Abram's defection, and this is equally without any positive evidence to support it. We read: "The purpose of this narrative (the same theme recurs in ch. 20 where Sarai figures again, and in 26:1-11, where the story is told of Rebekah) is to commemorate the beauty of the ancestress of the race, the astuteness of its patriarch, the protection that God afforded them. The story reflects a stage of moral development when a lie was still considered lawful under certain circumstances and when the husband's life meant more than his wife's honor. God was leading man to an appreciation of the moral law but this appreciation was gradual." It will be noted that this writer puts the emphasis on the importance of the father, whereas Speiser puts it on the moral integrity of the mother. These views are hardly reconcilable.

Why, then, do we not allow the Bible to say what it means and to mean what it says? Let us get away from the nit-picking propensities of the "intellectual" who frequently cannot see the forest for the trees. Let us take a look at the other side—the realistic side—of the problem. For example (HSB, 22, n.): "God's will, done God's way, never lacks for God's blessing. *Say you are my sister.* Here Abraham did not tell the truth. Selfishness overtook this man of faith. Fear for his own life made him forget what consequences his deceit would bring for Sarah and others. Although Abraham was a man of faith he was not a perfect man. This incident serves to illustrate the fact that the end does not justify the means. The means and the end must both be right." (SIB, 232): "Sarai was his *sister* in some sense . . . but it was not in that sense, but in the common acceptation of the words, *sister and brother*, they sinfully wished the Egyptians to understand them." Jamieson (CECG, 132): "On reaching the con-

finer of Egypt, which was the greatest primeval kingdom in the world, Abram began to feel uneasy. Increasing signs of civilization, grandeur, and power, met his eye on every side; and as the immigration of so numerous a tribe as his from the neighboring desert would certainly arrest public attention, the prospect of encountering the authorities of Egypt, so different from the simple nomads of Asia, to whom his experience had hitherto been limited, filled him with awe. But all other anxieties were forgotten and absorbed in one cause of alarm. . . . He entertained a bad opinion of the morals and manners of the country; and anticipating that Sarai, whose style of beauty was far superior to that of the Egyptian women, might captivate some proud noble, who would try by any means to obtain possession of her, Abram became apprehensive of his life. The idea so completely unnerved him that his fortitude and faith alike gave way; and he formed an artful plan, which, while it would retain his wife beside him, would, he hoped, by leading to betrothal and other negotiations connected with the dowry, put off the evil day. The counsel of Abram to Sarai was true in words: but it was a deception, intended to give an impression that she was no more than his sister. His conduct was culpable and inconsistent with his character as a servant of God; it showed a reliance on worldly policy more than a trust in the promise; and he not only sinned himself, but tempted Sarah to sin also." Leupold (EG, 424): "Abram knows how little the rights of foreigners were respected in olden times. He also knows how beautiful women would be sought out when they came to a foreign land. He also understands that marriage was respected sufficiently that men felt they must dispose of the husband before they could take his wife. Egyptian parallels prove that men had no hesitation about committing murder in order to secure their object. There was nothing beside the point in the estimate that he makes of the situation except the morals of the patriarch. Though

THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH 12:10-20

20:12 indicates that the literal truth was being told, there is yet the possibility of telling it with the intent to deceive; and so it becomes a lie. In addition, there is something cowardly and mean about expecting Sarai to encounter the hazards in order that Abram might avoid danger. The heroic is notably absent in this request." In reply to the question as to how Sarai could be deemed beautiful at the age of sixty-five, this author writes' (*ibid.*, 424): "It must be remembered that according to the limits of longevity of those times she was only middle-aged. Middle-aged women may have retained their beauty, especially if they have not borne many children. On Pharaoh's part the taking of a woman into his harem may be largely a political expedient to enhance his own influence." Lange (CDHCG, 392): "It must be observed that by the side of the Hamitic women in Egypt and Canaan, Semitic women, even when advanced in years, would be admired as beautiful. Abram desired that Sarah should say that she was his sister, lest he should be killed. If she was regarded as his wife, an Egyptian could only obtain her when he had murdered her husband and possessor; but if she was his sister, then there was a hope that she might be won from her brother by kindly means. The declaration was not false (20:12), but it was not the whole truth." Lange goes on to say, trying to justify what Abram did in this case, that the patriarch's policy to report that Sarai was his sister was determined at an early period in their migrations, but was first brought into use in his dealing with Pharaoh. (To the present writer, this seems to be an unjustified assumption and wholly contrary to the tenor of 12:11.) He continues as follows: "Abram's venture was not from laxity as to the sanctity of marriage, or as to his duty to protect his wife; it was from a presumptuous confidence in the wonderful assistance of God. It was excused through the great necessity of the time, his defenceless state among strangers, the customary lawlessness of those in power, and

as to the relations of the sexes. Therefore Jehovah preserved him from disgrace, although he did not spare him personal anxiety, and the moral rebuke from a heathen. It is only in Christ, that with the broad view of faith, the knowledge of its moral human measures and limitations is from the beginning perfect. In the yet imperfect, but growing faith, the word is true, 'The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' As a mere matter of prudence, Abram appeared to act prudently. He told no untruth, although he did not tell the whole truth. His word was, at all events, of doubtful import, and therefore, through his anxious forecast, was morally hazardous. But the necessity of the time, the difficulty of his position, and his confidence that God would make his relations clear at the proper time, serve to excuse it. It was intended to effect a final deception: his God would unloose the knot. In his faith Abram was a blameless type of believers, but not in his application of his faith to the moral problems of life. Still, even in this regard, he unfolds more and more his heroic greatness. We must distinguish clearly between a momentary, fanatical, exaggerated confidence in God, and the tempting of God with a selfish purpose." It strikes the present writer that there is much in the foregoing apologetic that is not in harmony with the Genesis account. Is it not the plain fact that Abram, in concealing the whole truth, did actually—by implication which cannot be ignored—tell an untruth? Oftentimes the most destructive lies are perpetrated by concealing that part of the truth which has the most bearing on the moral situation involved. We are reminded of the well-known couplet:

"A lie that is wholly a lie
Can be met and fought outright,
But a lie that is half a lie
Is a harder matter to fight."

There are situations in which a person can lie simply by keeping silent. Cf. Smith-Fields (OTH, 99): "It is enough here to observe that the mighty kingdom of the Pharaohs had already been long established in Lower Egypt. In this crisis the faith of Abram failed. To protect his wife from the license of a despot, he stooped to that mean form of deceit, which is true in word but false in fact. The trick defeated itself. Sarai, as an unmarried woman, was taken to the harem of the king, who heaped wealth and honors upon Abram." Whitelaw (PCG, 188) comments on Abram's introduction of Sarai to Pharaoh as his 'sister' as follows: "A half truth (20:12) but a whole falsehood. The usual apologies, that he did not fabricate but did 'cautiously conceal the truth,' that perhaps he was acting in obedience to a Divine impulse, that he dissembled in order to protect his wife's chastity, are not satisfactory. On the other hand, Abram must not be judged by the light of New Testament revelation. It is not necessary for a Christian in every situation of life to tell all the truth, especially when its part suppression involves no deception, and is indispensable for self-preservation; and Abram may have deemed it legitimate as a means of securing both his own life and Sarah's honor, though how he was to shield his wife in the peculiar circumstances it is difficult to see. Rosenmuller suggests that he knew the preliminary ceremonies to marriage required a considerable time, and counted upon being able to leave Egypt before any injury was done to Sarah. The only objection to this is that the historian represents him as being less solicitous about the preservation of his wife's chastity than about the conservation of his own life. . . . 'No defence can be offered for a man who, merely through dread of danger to himself, tells a lie, risks his wife's chastity, puts temptation in the way of his neighbors, and betrays the charge to which the Divine favor had summoned him' (Dykes)." The plain fact is that should anyone take Sarah into his harem on the

supposition that she was his siter, Abram as the honored brother would be given most respectful treatment. Hence, as Leupold puts it (EG, 425): "Fully aware of the fact that such a course may involve the sacrifice of Sarai's honor in order that he himself might fare well, he nevertheless asks Sarai to make the sacrifice. Abram never sank lower, as far as we know, than when he made this request. Sarai's acquiescence, however, seems to grow out of the idea that there actually is no other safe course to follow. She was as sadly deficient in faith as he himself on this occasion." We repeat:

The Bible is the most realistic book ever given to mankind. It never turns away from the truth to cover up the faults of the heroes of the faith. It deals with man as he is, and as he knows that he is, if he will but be honest with himself and with God. It finds him in sin, and proffers the only remedy for it.

As A. Gosman puts it (CDHCG, 394, n.): "We are not to be harsh or censorious in our judgments upon the acts of these eminent saints. But neither are we called upon to defend their acts. . . . it is well to bear in mind that the Scripture records these acts without expressing distinctly any moral judgment upon them. It impliedly condemns. The Scripture, however, contains the great principles of moral truth and duty, and then oftentimes leaves the reader to draw the inference as to the moral quality of the act which it records. And its faithfulness in not concealing what may be of questionable morality, in the lives of the greatest saints shows the honesty and accuracy of the historian.' Wordsworth says well: 'The weaknesses of the patriarchs strengthen our faith in the Pentateuch.'"

Did Pharaoh enter into marital relations with Sarai? There is nothing in the records to indicate that he did; as a matter of fact, the customary prerequisites to any kind

of royal marriage in the ancient world involved considerable time. As Simpson writes (IBG, 581): "Had the author intended such a representation he would have stated the fact explicitly by saying, e.g., at the end of verse 15, that Pharaoh lay with her." We may surely conclude that precisely what happened in the case of Rebekah (26:8-11) happened in the similar instances in which Abram and Sarai were involved, namely, that the woman was divinely protected against physical coition. It is interesting to note, too, that in each case the royal victim of patriarchal duplicity protested in almost the same language, "What is this than thou hast done unto me?" (12:18, 20:9, 26:10). *In a word, the man of God was rebuked, and that rightly, by the man of the world.* Cf. Bowie (IBG, 581): "In this unvarnished story there are several points that are significant. Conspicuous—to begin with—is the fact that here, as elsewhere, the O.T. is written with an unhesitating realism. The faults even of its greatest figures are not disguised. What Abraham is described as having done when he went into Egypt would throw discredit on any man. Being afraid that the Egyptians would covet Sarah, and thinking that if they knew she was tied to him as her husband they would kill him to get possession of her, he persuaded Sarah to pose as his unmarried sister; and as such she was taken to the house of Pharaoh. In the climax of the story the Egyptian stands in a much better light than Abraham, the man of the covenant; for he denounced indignantly the lie that Abraham had told him, gave Sarah back to him, and let him go out of the country with the rich possessions which had been bestowed upon him when Sarah was taken."

"What is this that thou hast done unto me?" he demanded of Abram when he learned of the latter's deception. Thus, as F. W. Robertson has written (NG, 53): "The man of God was rebuked by the man of the world: a thing singularly humiliating. It is common to find men of the

world whose honor and integrity are a shame to every Christian; and common enough to find men of religious feeling and aspiration, of whom that same world is compelled to say that whenever they are tried in business there is always a something found wanting. . . . Morality is not religion; but unless religion is grafted on morality, religion is worth nothing."

"Be sure your sin will find you out" is the solemn warning of Scripture as voiced by Moses in the days of old. If it does not find you out here, it will surely do so in the Great Judgment (1 Tim. 5:24-25, Matt. 16:27, Acts 17:30-31, Rom. 2:4-6, Rev. 20:12). God saw to it that Abram's sin found him out, and that through the instrumentality of his victim (precisely as in the two other similar incidents). "And Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house." Murphy (MG, 271, 272): "The mode of divine interference is suited to have the desired effect on the parties concerned. As Pharaoh is punished, we conclude he was guilty in the eye of heaven in this matter. He committed a breach of hospitality by invading the private abode of the stranger. He further infringed the law of equity between man and man in the most tender point, by abstracting, if not with violence, at least with a show of arbitrary power which could not be resisted, a female, whether sister or wife, from the home of her natural guardian without the consent of either. A deed of ruthless self-will, also, is often rendered more heinous by a blamable inattention to the character or position of him who is wronged. So it was with Pharaoh. Abram was a man of blameless life and inoffensive manners. He was, moreover, the chosen and special servant of the Most High God. Pharaoh, however, does not condescend to inquire who the stranger is whom he is about to wrong; and is thus unwittingly involved in an aggravated crime. But the hand of the Almighty brings even tyrants to their

senses. . . . The princes of Pharaoh were accomplices in his crime (v. 15), and his domestics were concurring with him in carrying it into effect. But even apart from any positive consent or connivance in a particular act, men, otherwise culpable, are brought into trouble in this world by the faults of those with whom they are associated. *On account of Sarai*: Pharaoh was made aware of the cause of the plagues or strokes with which he was now visited."

Fully cognizant now of the fact that the "plagues" he and his household were suffering were *divine* visitations for a wrong he had committed, we can well suppose, I think, that this Egyptian king was motivated in large part by sheer superstitious fear of the gods or god whose will he had violated; hence, he was willing to do most anything he could to get this foreigner and his caravan out of Egypt posthaste, even providing him with an escort to see that he left the country unharmed. He actually sent Abram out with all the wealth the latter had acquired, some of it probably as the king's own purchase price for the projected admission of Sarai into his harem. (Bride purchase is a custom as old as the history of the race itself.) Pharaoh consoled himself with upbraiding Abram for the latter's deceit, and so permitted the incident to be terminated without any further unpleasantness. Abram, we are told, left Egypt, now "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (13:2). Traveling back through the south of Palestine (the Negeb) Abram finally reached his old camping-ground between Bethel and Ai, "unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first." "And there Abram called on the name of Jehovah," that is, re-established the worship of the living and true God. Murphy suggests that by this experience in Egypt, the patriarch, "thus reproved through the mouth of Pharaoh, will be less hasty in abandoning the land of promise, and betaking himself to carnal resources" (MG, 272).

Recapitulation: Leaving Haran, Abram journeyed through Shechem (12:6), Bethel (8), southward (9), Egypt (10), back to the Negeb (13:1), and to Bethel (13:3); but he seems not to have settled down until he reached Hebron (13:18). Here he remained (13:18, 14:13, 18:1), through the birth of Ishmael at 86 (16:16), and the conception of Isaac at 99 (17:1). The most significant event of this period, and indeed of his whole life, was the revelation of the Abrahamic covenant (ch. 15) and its confirmation (ch. 17), the means by which he and his fleshly seed were reconciled to God.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-SIX

1. Where were the earliest civilizations located and why?
2. What does the word "Mesopotamia" mean?
3. What especially enhanced the development of civilization in Mesopotamia?
4. Where did Semitic and Indo-European cultures flourish respectively?
5. Where did the Akkadians and Sumerians flourish geographically?
6. What was the Akkadian Empire and who established it?
7. Who were the Amorites? In what city especially have archaeologists discovered their cultural remains?
8. Who was their greatest king and in what city did he reign?
9. State the chief facts of the early history of Ur.
10. State the main facts of the later history of Ur.
11. Who were the Hurrians? What is the best known site of their cultural remains?
12. What was the kingdom of the Mitanni?
13. Who were the Hittites? Where did they establish themselves in the Near East? What was their chief city and where was it located?

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14. What economic development enhanced the power and prosperity of the Hittites?
15. Who were the Hyksos? When did they enter Palestine and why?
16. State the important facts about the Third Dynasty of Ur.
17. Name the centers of archaeological excavation the remains of which are relevant to the culture of the Patriarchal Age.
18. What light does Stephen's account in Acts 7:2-3 throw on the Call of Abram?
19. For what purpose in particular are the "generations of Terah" introduced in Genesis?
20. In what sense was the Call of Abram a turning-point in human history?
21. In what sense was it a turning-point in Messianic history?
22. Why do we take the view that Abram was not Terah's eldest son?
23. What two basic features of the Abrahamic Promise occur in all the statements of it in Genesis?
24. In what three ways was the Divine Promise *in re* Abram's seed fulfilled? Who was his *eminent* seed?
25. Summarize Murphy's eloquent treatment of the sequence of the earthly and the heavenly.
26. How was this sequence fulfilled in the life of Abraham?
27. Why do we say that the Abrahamic Covenant was the Covenant of Promise?
28. Who was the Child of Promise and why so called?
29. Why do many commentators assume that two divine calls were made to Abram?
30. Is it possible to harmonize Abram's many manifestations of faith in God with the notion that he had yielded to the religious apostasy which seems to have characterized his kinsmen?

31. What was the first lap of Abram's pilgrimage of faith?
32. How does Gosman reconcile the apparent discrepancy between Moses and Stephen concerning the Call of Abram?
33. Why are Sarai and Lot both mentioned in the accounts of Abram's departure from Ur and his departure from Haran?
34. What was the distance from Ur to Haran? How was Haran associated in Biblical history with Abram's various kinsmen? Where did Terah die?
35. State again the three fulfillments of the Abrahamic Promise concerning Abraham's seed.
36. Trace Abram's route from Haran to his first stopping-place at Shechem. What was the distance involved? How old was Abram when he left Haran?
37. How does the ancient city of Damascus figure in the story of the life of Abraham?
38. Explain the different uses of the word "Canaanite" in the Old Testament.
39. What suggested interpretations have we of the statement, "And the Canaanite was then in the land"?
40. What is the simplest explanation of this statement?
41. Why is it assumed that "the place of Shechem" is descriptive of a pagan "holy place"? Have we any reason for assuming that Abram himself participated in pagan rites?
42. Are we justified in assuming that we have in "the oak of Moreh" indications of primitive animism?
43. What is the significance of God's word to Abram in 12:7?
44. What was Abram's second stopping-place?
45. At what places were Abram's altars erected?
46. What are the three elements of Biblical religion?
47. Explain the statement that "altars become altars only when a victim is slain."

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48. What institution was the very "soul" of Patriarchal religion?
49. What typical meaning did sacrifice have under the Patriarchal and Jewish Dispensations?
50. Name in their proper sequence the three Dispensations of divine grace. What was the extent of each?
51. What specific changes determined the changes of Dispensations also?
52. In what other instances does Bethel figure in Old Testament history?
53. Explain the full meaning of the statement that Abram "called upon the name of Jehovah."
54. What was the Negeb? The Way of Shur?
55. What caused Abram to journey into Egypt?
56. What fact made Egypt a "breadbasket" in times of famine in Syria and Palestine?
57. In the light of Gen. 17:17 how old was Sarai when Abram entered Egypt?
58. How harmonize Sarah's age with her alleged attractiveness?
59. What deception did Abram perpetrate on Pharaoh?
60. What was the actual relationship of Sarai to Abram?
61. What according to the Genesis account motivated Abram's attempted deception in this case?
62. What explanation of Abram's deception is suggested by Speiser?
63. What explanation is suggested in the *Jerusalem Bible*?
64. How does Jamieson explain it?
65. What other cases of the same kind of deception are related in Genesis?
66. In what sense was Abram's introduction of Sarai to Pharaoh a half-truth but a whole lie at the same time?
67. In what sense is the Bible completely realistic? How is this illustrated by the report of Abram's behavior toward Pharaoh?

68. What evidence do we have that Pharaoh did not enter into marital relations with Sarai?
69. Discuss F. W. Robertson's statement that in this case the man of God was rebuked by the man of the world, and the parallels he draws from the incident.
70. Through whose instrumentality did God cause Abram's sin to "find him out"?
71. In what ways did God deal out justice to Pharaoh also?
72. How did Pharaoh deal with Abram?
73. To what place in Palestine did Abram return?
74. Give the "recap" of Abram's journey from Ur to Egypt and back into the Land of Promise.
75. What statement in the Abrahamic Promise shows that God did not abandon the "other families of the earth" when he called out Abram's seed, but was in fact making provision ultimately for their spiritual welfare also?