

February 7-13, 2022

Genesis 12-17; Abraham 1-2

“TO BE A GREATER FOLLOWER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Summary: *Genesis 12. Abram will become a great nation—He and his seed will bless all the families of the earth—He travels from Haran to the land of Canaan—Because of famine, he goes down into Egypt—Abram and Sarai are tested in Pharaoh’s court.*

Genesis 13. Abram returns from Egypt—He and Lot part—The Lord will make Abram’s seed as the dust of the earth in number—Abram settles in Hebron.

Genesis 14. Lot is captured in the battles of the kings—He is rescued by Abram—Melchizedek administers bread and wine and blesses Abram—Abram pays tithes—He declines to accept the spoils of conquest.

Genesis 15. Abram desires offspring—The Lord promises him seed in number as the stars—Abram believes the promise—His seed will be strangers in Egypt—Then, after four generations, they will inherit Canaan.

Genesis 16. Sarai gives Hagar to Abram as his wife—Hagar flees from Sarai—An angel commands Hagar to return and submit herself to Sarai—Hagar bears Ishmael.

Genesis 17. Abram is commanded to be perfect—He will be a father of many nations—His name is changed to Abraham—The Lord covenants to be a God unto Abraham and his seed forever—Also, the Lord gives Abraham the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession—Circumcision becomes a token of the everlasting covenant between God and Abraham—Sarai’s name is changed to Sarah—She will bear Isaac, with whom the Lord will establish His covenant—Abraham and the men of his house are circumcised.

Abraham 1. Abraham seeks the blessings of the patriarchal order—He is persecuted by false priests in Chaldea—Jehovah saves him—The origins and government of Egypt are reviewed.

Abraham 2. Abraham leaves Ur to go to Canaan—Jehovah appears to him at Haran—All gospel blessings are promised to his seed and through his seed to all—He goes to Canaan and on to Egypt.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How did the “Abrahamic Covenant” get its name?

It can be considered that the “Abrahamic covenant” was in existence before Abraham’s time. The honor bestowed on this faithful dispensation leader was to have the covenant that eternally binds God and all His children named after him. A few others have been honored similarly, such

as in “The Law of Moses” and the “Sign of the Prophet Jonah.” A physical sign or ‘token’ of the Abrahamic covenant (it had hygienic as well as spiritual value) was when Abraham was commanded to circumcise himself and all male members of his family. “Abraham accepted this new commandment without faltering. Until the *mitzvah* (commandment and blessing) of circumcision, the patriarch had been known as Abram and his wife as Sarai. Another sign of the covenant was the inclusion in their names of the Hebrew

letter *heh* (H) which is one of the abbreviations for the name of God.”

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How important is a “new name” for the Children of Israel?

It is a common practice among religious Jews that a special Hebrew name is given to the newborn child. It is an additional name to the one the person is usually known by. A girl receives her name at birth and the boy at eight days of age, at the circumcision. Conversion to Judaism is always accompanied by giving a new name, for men it is usually Abraham or *Ben Avraham* (son of Abraham). When blessings are given for health, at marriages and at other festive occasions, often the ‘new’ or ‘special’ name is used.

What is a token of giving a blessing?

In some Jewish communities it is customary for the father to place his hands on their heads and bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue. “Hands are also significant in the symbolic act of bestowing a blessing. In rabbinic literature the priestly blessing is known as *nesi’at kappayim* (“raising of the hands”) and is pronounced with the hands uplifted, and the fingers spread in a special formation (two outer fingers together and a “v” split to the two inner fingers). In fact, this special formation of the hands is often engraved on the tombstones of *kohanim* (priests).” “In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In *Talmudic* times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as *semikhah*).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How do covenants testify of the Messiah?

A “chiasmus” can be noted in the positioning of the Savior in the center of the ancient covenant and the restored modern covenant.

1. ancient days	In ancient days in the Crossroads of the East (center of the ancient world) people had to come to the living prophets to receive the Word of God . In the Meridian of times, there was one called “ the Word .” (<i>John 1:1-2</i>) He made it possible for us to return to the Fathers’ presence, that is the covenant. The Word of God is sent to the people throughout the world by living prophets living in the Crossroads of the West (which is the center of the modern world) in the latter days .
2. Crossroads of the East	
3. come	
4. Word of God	
5. the Word	
4. Word of God	
3. sent	
2. Crossroads of the West	
1. latter days	

What may be the significance of a birth date?

Isaac was a miracle child, born of Sarah who was ninety-years old and barren. When she became pregnant, even in ancient parameters, one could ask, “what did the neighbors say?” That is where a reflection on language helps, because the name Isaac in Hebrew means laughter, humor, amusing or delightful. Abraham and Sarah were delighted. A supposed human impossibility turns out to be a God-given fulfillment. In the Lord’s own plan, he kept his promises (covenant)! “According to the *Aggadah* (Jewish legends and traditions), Isaac was born to Sarah on the first day of Passover,”

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) According to revelation, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, April 6, 1830, which in that year of the solar calendar, the Savior was born the same day. Using the biblical and Jewish lunar calendar, that day was the first day of Passover that year. That means that the firstborn Son of God was born to Mary on the first day of Passover. 18-centuries earlier, Abraham, who was saved from a pagan human sacrifice in the Ur of Chaldees was instructed by the Lord to sacrifice his firstborn son of Sarah. Later we see that Isaac was saved from human sacrifice as well. Those two men experienced a profound way of being taught about the planned atonement through the firstborn Son of God, who would, actually, be the one to be sacrificed.

What message did Biblical sacrifices teach?

“The Hebrew term for sacrifice, *korban*, is from a root meaning “to draw near,” and originally denoted that which was brought near, or offered, to God. It is also possible that the term signified “that which brings man near to God” and, indeed, a late *Aggadic* (Jewish legends and traditions) source interprets sacrifices in this sense.”

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The place where Abraham was commanded to bring Isaac to be sacrificed was Mount Moriah. In Hebrew, ‘*moreh*’ refers to teacher and ‘*Yah*’ is the shortened version of the sacred name of the Lord, Jehovah. The sacrifice of Isaac was an experience in being “taught of the Lord.” It was part of the profound teaching moment of the Lord; the firstborn son, the Lamb of God, who would be offered at the same mount. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (**John 1:29**) “And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea,

even the Son of the Eternal Father . . .”

(**1 Nephi 11:21**) In ancient times, sacrifices always happened at the north end of the altar. This is mentioned in the Bible. “And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar.”

(**Leviticus 1:11**) The place of crucifixion was at the north end of Mount Moriah, north of the altar. Additional symbolism can be found by comparing the rabbinic tradition that Isaac was in his early thirties when Abraham brought him to Mount Moriah. Jesus was sacrificed on the eve of his thirty-fourth birthday, (the first day of Passover that year).

How ancient is the “sacrament?”

Beginning at the times of the Children of Israel, and continued by the Jews to this time, during the Passover meal, the master of the house will pour and bless wine (it should be “new Wine”) three different times. He sips first, and then everyone else may sip. After each occurrence of wine there is a breaking and blessing of bread (unleavened) three different times. Again, each time the master blesses and eats a broken piece, then everyone else eats a piece. The remarkable exception is that at the beginning of the meal the middle of the three bread pieces is broken in two and a broken piece (largest of the two) is hidden for the children to find later in the Seder service. When that hidden piece is found, that part (fourth time bread is used) is blessed, broken, and the master eats the first part, then everyone follows his example. The fourth cup of wine is then poured full (more than the previous three “sips”) and the master instructs everyone to “drink all of it.” The present Jewish Passover feast is in fact an annual event to remember Israel’s deliverance. In a religious Jewish home,

a weekly reminder of the first Passover is done with a “*Kiddush*” (sip of wine, juice, or water) The master of the house always pours the wine with an appropriate blessing, sips first, followed by everyone else sipping the wine. He then breaks a piece of bread and after the appropriate blessing, eats the first piece with everyone following his example. The prayers said include an anticipation of an even greater deliverance, greater than the first Passover deliverance. Weekly, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints take a “sacrament” that consists of bread that is broken, blessed, the presiding Elder partakes first, then water (nowadays, water instead of wine) is blessed. Again, the presiding authority partakes first and then everyone follows. This is done in “remembrance” of the greater deliverance provided by the Savior’s atonement. It should be considered that symbolically, the Jews, descending from former-day Israelites take wine and bread in anticipation of a greater deliverance while Later-day Saints, latter-day Israelites, take bread and wine (water) in remembrance of that great deliverance. There, you have another chiasma – with the Savior’s atonement as the center point.

What sign or token of the covenant has been modified?

The ancient sign of being a part of the Children of Israel has been changed from male circumcision at eight-days of age (or Orthodox conversion), to the restoration sign of baptism by immersion, usually at eight years of age. Unaware of this change, the Jews continue this custom. “A special chair is set aside for Elijah at circumcisions, as he is called the protector of children, and the upholder of the covenant between God and Israel,

and Elijah is supposed to visit every Jewish home on Passover, so a special cup of wine (or juice) is set aside for him. And, says the *Midrash* (scripture commentary), when the time is right, it will be Elijah who will herald the coming of the Messiah.” “Jewish custom provides for great festivity and joy following the birth of a child. A boy is named when he is eight days old at his circumcision ceremony, an event of great religious importance and happy celebrating. A girl is named in the synagogue on the first day following her birth on which the *Torah* is read. The service, usually on the Sabbath, is likewise followed by a festive meal popularly known as a *Kiddush*.”

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) To Temple endowed members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the blessing and naming of newborn children renders them a child of the covenant. In New Testament times, the Jewish part of the church membership, especially in Jerusalem, appear to have been very hesitant to cease from the rituals and ceremony of the law of Moses (**Acts 21:17–25**). This is a clear difference among the Nephites, in which there seems to have been a cessation of the circumcision practice immediately upon their recognition of the death and resurrection of the Savior, Jesus Christ. (**3 Nephi. 15:1–4; Moroni 8:8**).

How am I a descendant or inheritor of Abraham and his covenants with God?

“As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.” (**Genesis 17:5**) The inclusion of “H,” the Hebrew letter *heh* (Abram to Abra-‘H’-am) is one of the abbreviations for the name of God. “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their

generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. **(Genesis 17:7)** The promise and prophecy of God to Abraham was that he would be the progenitor of great nations, that his descendants – literally “his seed” – would be numerous as “the stars in the heavens and as the sands on the seashore.” **(Genesis 22:17)**. The number of people in the world’s population today with the “Abrahamic Genetic Signature” is too large to precisely count. It is a reasonable estimate to be in at least a majority of people. The new covenant

includes the provision of being “adopted” into the House of Israel, as well as being adopted by the Son of God, so that we are the “Father’s.” That is how the term “Jesus is the father,” makes sense. “But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name.” **(Doctrine and Covenants 11:30)** “And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son.” **(Mosiah 15:2)**