



The Abrahamic Covenant Genesis 11:27-13:18

Introduction and Review

1. Structure of Genesis

There are two main time periods covered in the book of Genesis: Primeval and Patriarchal. The Primeval period covers the earliest known ages or times from creation to Babel. The Patriarchal period includes the lifetimes of the main Hebrew leaders and their families from Abraham to Joseph.

2. Primeval Period

The first eleven chapters of Genesis cover the earliest known period of God's history. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the creation and order of the universe and mankind. Genesis 3 through 6 describes Adam and Eve's sin, their fall from grace, and the degeneration of the first human race. Chapters 7 and 8 explain the flood and destruction of all living things except Noah. Genesis 9 and 10 announce the new human race and its growth. Chapter 11 describes the decline and dispersion of the human race.

3. Significance of This Period

Chapters 1-11 establish the foundational framework on which God develops His divine plan of redemption for mankind. The Seed promise that began in Genesis 3:15, develops further in the Abrahamic Covenant which promises fulfillment of that divine Seed. The complete story extends through the Old and New Testaments to its perfect fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE of GENESIS 11:27-13:18

- I. Terah's Family in Ur - Genesis 11:27-32
- II. The Abrahamic Covenant - Genesis 12:1-3
- III. Onward to Canaan - Genesis 12:4-9
- IV. Sojourn to Egypt - Genesis 12:10-20
- V. Back to Canaan - Genesis 13:1-18

I. Terah's Family in Ur - Genesis 11:27-32

With this passage, we come to the end of the Primeval period in God's history and the beginning of the Patriarchal period. Terah lived with his family in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans. Terah had three sons, including Abram, and a grandson, Lot, the nephew of Abram. Abram was raised in Ur and married his half-sister, Sarai, in his earlier days. Family marriages were not prohibited by God at this early stage in history,

but later, this practice became a strict violation of God's Law (Leviticus 20:17; Deuteronomy 27:22). The city of Ur was the greatest commercial capital of the world. It was also the center of idolatry. Terah and his family served other gods in Ur (Joshua 24:2) until God told Abram to get out of the country (12:1). Following Abram's directions (see Acts 7:2-3), Terah moved the family to Haran in the land of Canaan.

II. The Abrahamic Covenant - Genesis 12:1-3

A. The Principle Elements

God originally called Abram when he was in Ur. He reiterated that call to him in Haran. It was a staggering call. Abram was commanded to abandon all that was important in his life – his land, his father's house, his relatives and his inheritance – and go to a new land. God's call was an historically and spiritually guaranteed covenant of promises and directions containing four principle elements:

- **Land.** *"I give to you and your descendants...all the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession"* (Genesis 15:18,17:8).
- **Nations.** *"You shall be a father of many nations"* (Genesis 17:4)
- **Seed.** *"To Abraham and his Seed were the promises made"* (Galatians 3:16).
- **Blessings.** *"I will bless you and make your name great ...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12:2-3).

B. Purpose of the Covenant

The cardinal word in this covenant is the word "*blessing*", which occurs no less than five times. It indicates prosperity, fertility and victory. Its application is at three levels: (1) personal to Abram (*"I will bless you"*); (2) national to Israel (*"I will make you a great nation"*); and (3) universal to all nations (*"all the families of the earth shall be blessed"*). Thus, the ultimate purpose of God's covenant was to bless all the peoples of the earth through Abraham and his seed. And God said, *"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you."*

C. Conditional or Unconditional

There are both conditional and unconditional aspects in the Abrahamic Covenant. It was conditional in the sense that the program would be instituted only if Abram acted obediently in leaving Ur and then Haran. Like

Noah, Abram did obey God and then God inaugurated an irrevocable, unconditional program of blessings which would be historically recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Dr. Constable ([Notes on Genesis](#)) describes it well: "Abram's example of obedience is a model of obedience for believers to forsake all else with the sole purpose of obtaining the promised blessings of God and serving Him by becoming a blessing to others".

Application

Like Abram, the fulfillment of God's blessings in our lives depends on our obedience to our Lord. What likeness do you see between the conditional aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant and Luke 9:23, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me*"? How are you fulfilling this call in your life?

III. Onward to Canaan - Genesis 12:4-9

After Terah died, Abram's deep, unwavering faith in God led him to leave Haran. He was seventy-five years old and he took Sarai, Lot, his servants, their families, and his flocks of livestock with him. This great retinue of possessions indicates that Abram was a very wealthy man. His immediate and definite objective was "*the land of Canaan*". At Shechem, the geographic center of Canaan, the Lord personally affirmed His promise to Abram, "*To your descendants I will give this land.*" Abram built an altar and worshipped the Lord – his characteristic response to God's grace. He then moved south to Bethel, built another altar and worshiped.

IV. Sojourn to Egypt - Genesis 12:10-20

A. The Brother-Sister Deception - Genesis 12:10-14

There was a severe drought and famine in Canaan at this time and Abram moved his people and possessions to Egypt. There is no indication that he consulted with God about this move. Approaching the Egyptian border, Abram knew how little the rights of foreigners were respected in those days, and how beautiful women were taken from their husbands, often by murder. So, he made a pact with Sarai to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister. This half-truth was for Abram's self-protection.

B. The Pharaoh and Sarai - Genesis 12:15-20

When Pharaoh heard that Sarai was very beautiful, he took her into his house and for her sake he treated Abram well. He apparently added Sarai to his harem and gave Abram additional servants, livestock, donkeys and camels. But the Lord intervened and sent great plagues on Pharaoh and his house because of Sarai. Pharaoh

soon realized that Abram had tried to pass Sarai off as his sister in order to save his own life. He commanded Abram to take Sarai and all of his possessions and get out of Egypt. Ironically, the "father of the faithful" was rebuked for sin by a pagan monarch.

C. The Weakness of the Flesh

Overall, Abram and Sarai exhibited remarkable faith in their lifetimes. Both are described in Hebrews 11:8-19 as heroes of the faith. But they were also imperfect human beings, and on occasion, as this passage indicates, took things into their own hands. Their flesh, like ours, was self-centered and self-indulgent. They struggled for control in their own lives. Abram told a half-truth with the intent to deceive. Even though he and Sarai had agreed beforehand on this brother-sister scheme, there is something selfish and ungodly about Abram expecting Sarai to sacrifice her chastity and honor in order for him to avoid danger. In this instance, they both were sadly deficient in their faith.

D. Is It Ever Right to Lie?

1. God's Standard on Lying

Scripture never views lying in a favorable light (Proverbs 6:16, 17,19). From Genesis through Revelation, God makes it emphatically clear that intentional dishonesty is a violation of His absolute standard of holiness and purity. God's eternal condemnation of liars and the habitual sin of lying is unyielding and final: "*But the cowardly, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (Revelation 21:8).

2. The Worldly View

Lying has become commonplace in every segment of our society from homes to business to government. Some people hold to the view that the moral nature of a lie should be determined by the situation and not by an absolute standard. This view would justify the occasional lies by people in the Old Testament. In his book, [The Disciplines of a Godly Man](#), Pastor Kevin Hughes reports that a recent survey indicates that 91% of Americans lie regularly at home and at work. Pastor John MacArthur notes that, "One of the chief characteristics of our human lifestyle today is lying. We have an entire world system based on lying. Religious, economic and governmental – the whole system is of its father the devil and is based on lies."

Many people believe lying is acceptable if it benefits a given situation, favors distasteful circumstances, enhances relationships or protects someone from harm. Many more lie to enhance their ego and pride.

However, the above views or belief systems find no support in Scripture. Proverbs 6:16-19 states that two of the seven hateful abominations to the Lord are “a lying tongue” and a “false witness”. Practicing deceit and speaking falsehood are dealt with in many Scriptures, especially in the Psalms and Proverbs, and they are always contrary to the desires and injunctions of God.

3. The True Believer’s Response

In Genesis, God seems to allow Abram’s and Sarai’s deception to emphasize that: (1) He knows the defects in human flesh; (2) He has a loving, forgiving nature towards believers who are in the process of maturing; and (3) His plans and purposes for the future must be fulfilled, even with imperfect human beings. Whatever God’s reasons, we must acknowledge, respect and trust His sovereignty, unchangeable holiness, Holy Word and perfect moral standards when faced with the temptation to lie. If ever confronted with a life-or-death choice between two unavoidable sins such as murder or lying, we need to repent and mourn because of the weakness of our flesh to make such a decision. We must cry out to God for grace, courage, wisdom and direction. If we have a sincere heart attitude of trust and obedience, God has promised that He will direct our decisions and paths.

Application

Will you pray and ask God to make you evermore conscious of the weakness in your flesh? “*Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue*” (Psalm 120:2). Will you ask Him to give you discernment and power to uncover any lying that you may have excused or justified in your own mind? Will you commit your life to the control of the Holy Spirit? “*Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to each other so that you do not do the things that you wish*” (Galatians 5:16-17).

One of America’s Founding Fathers wrote:

“It is of great importance to set a resolution, not to be shaken, never to tell an untruth. There is no vice so mean, so pitiful, so contemptible; and he who permits himself to tell a lie once, finds it much easier to do it a second and a third time, till at length it becomes habitual; he tells lies without attending to it, and truths without the world’s believing him. This falsehood of the tongue leads to that of the heart, and in time depraves all its good disposition.” —Thomas Jefferson.

V. Back to Canaan - Genesis 13:1-18

A. The Altar at Bethel - Genesis 13:1-5

After being sent out of Egypt by Pharaoh, Abram led his people and possessions back to Bethel. He had previously built an altar and worshiped God there, and once again he “*called on the name of the Lord*”. It seems probable that he was reflecting and meditating on the near-disasterous situation in Egypt, and praising God for bringing him and Sarai through it safely.

B. Separation from Lot - Genesis 13:6-13

Abram was wealthy with livestock, gold and silver. Lot also had flocks, herds and tents. The crowded conditions and limited grazing soon became a problem between Abram’s and Lot’s herdsmen. Serious conflict was developing and Abram wanted to avoid strife with his nephew. Standing on the highest point in that part of Canaan, Abram unselfishly offered Lot the choice of land that spread before them in all directions. Lot chose the Jordan Valley which was irrigated and full of vegetation. What he did not know was that this area was characterized by immoral wickedness, especially the city of Sodom. Abram stayed in the land of Canaan.

C. God’s Promise Reaffirmed - Genesis 13:14-18

For the third time, God reiterated His covenant promise to Abram (Vs. 2, 7, 15). God’s words this time were even more specific concerning Abram’s descendants and the land. He emphasized that:

- All the land was his in every direction.
- His own offspring, would be his heir, not his nephew, Lot.
- The land was given to Abram and his descendants forever.
- His descendants would be countless like “*the dust of the earth*”. God directed Abram to claim the promise by walking through the land, from its length to its width. Victorious armies in those days often claimed the conquered land by marching through it.

Application

God’s word is filled with precious promises to His people, and God always keeps His promises. What promise have you found in this week’s Scripture reading that you may claim for your own? How will you act upon it?