

Abraham

My name is Abraham – “father of many,” formerly Abram – “exalted father.” Let me tell you the whole story, a story that centers on the LORD, blessed be his name. In Haran he spoke the most amazing message to me, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

In my life I learned many things about the LORD. He is a God of mercy. He chose me and promised me a land and an incredible future. All this even though I am a coward and a liar. When I feared that the Pharaoh would kill me for my beautiful wife, Sarai and I conspired to mislead him by calling her my sister – true but not the whole truth. She was a half-sister, but we were indeed married. That ruse was discovered when the LORD sent diseases on Pharaoh’s household! I guess I then went on my better behavior and gave my nephew Lot first choice of pastures. He chose the well-watered plain by Sodom leaving me with the apparently inferior land. Yet this was God’s provision, for Sodom was ultimately destined for destruction and Lot’s family was seriously affected by having lived there, even though his life was preserved.

The LORD is also a God of miracles. Going back a few years before Sodom’s destruction, when Lot was taken captive in a regional war, I impulsively gathered 318 of my men and set out to rescue him. Even though we were not soldiers and were up against several battle-hardened armies, we regained the captives and the loot. That was the work of God, not me. And this was confirmed by the King of Salem, Melchizedek, who said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand."

I was also visited by Shem, son of Noah who handed me the records from our first fathers, Adam, Seth, Enoch and Noah. You may ask me if meeting Melchizedek and Shem were the same meeting? You may ask but I will not tell you. If I did, I would have to kill you. (I am told that is humorous.) I gave a tithe to Melchizedek and refused to take any payment from the king of Sodom.

I had heard from the LORD several times, once when he told me to leave the land of my ancestors. Then, after the battle, he spoke again. "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." Did I tell you that I am also a haggler? I was starting to get a bit concerned about how I was going to be the father of a great nation. I said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" The LORD gave me a sign but still no child.

Sarai and I hatched another plan, just in case the LORD had missed our predicament, and I fathered a son by Hagar, Sarai’s maid. That led to some serious conflict within the family. But the LORD blessed that son, Ishmael, because of his blessing of me, even though it led to many problems later. This is something else I found out about the LORD. His promises are sure, regardless of our choices.

The covenant of circumcision was instituted, and my name was changed. Sarai’s name was changed to Sarah. When a son was promised, I still had trouble believing it – after all, we were certified senior citizens and Sarah was sterile!

Three visitors appeared and predicted that in a year we would be holding a baby. Sarah laughed, and that became his name, Isaac – “Laughter”. At that point the visitors shared with us the plan to destroy Sodom. Now Lot had moved into the city and I had another of my haggling episodes. I asked if 50 righteous were found in the city could it be spared? I winnowed it down to 10 and got the

assurance, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." I didn't want to go any lower for I feared finding out that Lot was not counted among the righteous. Well, the city was destroyed, and Lot's wife died because she disobeyed – I think she longed for the benefits of the city and was insensitive to the sin. Horrible sins were later committed by Lot and his daughters.

The big challenge came when the LORD had to test whether I really trusted him. I knew the voice of God and could not mistake it. But the command seemed all wrong. "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." That is what the pagan gods required but how could the LORD who miraculously gave me the son, through whom a great nation would arise, call for his death? I didn't sleep that night and said nothing to Sarah or Isaac. I would not have been able to fight them off. Isaac trusted me. I was prepared to be killed by my frail but fierce wife when I returned home. I spent the journey trying to figure out how the LORD would solve this problem. Was it to have another child at 113 and 103? Was it raising Isaac from the dead?

Perhaps you know the happy ending. After tying Isaac and laying him on the alter, I raised the knife, prepared to obey the order and the LORD called out to me from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," I quickly replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Can God be trusted? Of course! Do we always know what he is up to? Not really. The third thing I learned about God is that he is really in charge and his plans will ultimately be fulfilled. Should we wait for God's plan to be carried out? Certainly! If we mess up will he still have his way? Absolutely!

I did live to see Isaac married to Rebekah, granddaughter of my brother and met their twins, Jacob and Esau.

By the way, after Sarah died, I was lonely, and I remarried. Keturah and I had six children. Was this the will of the LORD? Even if not, the plan of the LORD is being carried out to bless all the nations of the earth through Isaac.

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