

## ENGAGING GOSPEL DOCTRINE

### Lesson 7: Abrahamic Covenant; The Abrahamic Covenant

**Class Member Reading:** [Abraham 1:1–4](#); [2:1–11](#); [Genesis 12:1–8](#); [17:1–9](#); [18:19](#)

#### [Abraham 1:1–4](#)

1 In the land of the Chaldeans (Chaldeans were a group dominant in Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and never mentioned at all before the 9<sup>th</sup> century, so this is a pretty big anachronism), at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence;

2 And, finding there was **greater happiness and peace and rest** for me, **I sought for the blessings of the fathers**, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who **possessed great knowledge**, and to be a **greater follower of righteousness**, and to **possess a greater knowledge**, and to be a **father of many nations**, a **prince of peace**, and desiring **to receive instructions**, and to **keep the commandments of God**, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. Exemplary motivations. How do we seek greater knowledge and righteousness in our own lives? I also like the cycle Abraham describes here, that when we live seeking the divine life (knowledge and living well), we seek greater happiness.

3 It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me. (Is there a parallel process for women? One that hasn't been fully revealed? I refuse to believe in a system that simply neglects half of humanity. What do women do who seek greater happiness and peace and rest and seek blessings of the mothers?)

4 I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.

#### [2:1–11](#)

1 Now the Lord God caused the famine to wax sore (Not in the Biblical parallel. Problematic theologically?) in the land of Ur (Babylonia, modern Iraq), insomuch that Haran, my brother, died; but Terah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees.

2 And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife, and Nahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who was the daughter of Haran.

3 Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.

4 Therefore I left the land of Ur, of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and I took Lot, my brother's son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; and also my father followed after me, unto the land which we denominated Haran.

5 And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; and my father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran.

6 But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, **prayed unto the Lord**, and the **Lord appeared unto me**, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice.

7 For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly. (Elijah language; see 2 Kings 2)

8 My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore **my hand shall be over thee**. (Jehovah is a Latin-based mispronunciation of Yahweh)

9 And I will **make of thee a great nation**, and I will **bless thee above measure**, and **make thy name great among all nations**, and **thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee**, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

10 And **I will bless them through thy name**; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

11 And **I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee**; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed

of the body) **shall all the families of the earth be blessed**, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. Note how the general idea of Abrahamic covenant becomes specific to LDS ideas by the addition of the priesthood.

### Genesis 12:1–8

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and **in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed**. This is the main take away from this lesson. How can we use our gifts and privileges such that others are blessed? How can God bless as many as possible through us? Noble goal, that. The Jewish Study Bible notes that this blessing functions as a reversal/correction of the curses of the fall (exile, pain in childbirth, uncooperative soil). Another interesting theme is God moving from a universal approach (humankind before the flood) to a particular approach (working first and foremost with the Abrahamic family). The covenant becomes increasingly specific until it focuses on Israelite priests.

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord 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. This does seem to refer to those he converted among others.

6 ¶And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

## 17:1-9

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God (**El Shaddai, which could have originally referred to a different God**); walk before me, and **be thou perfect**. This is the “blameless” perfect word rather than the “finished/mature” word Jesus uses.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, **my covenant is with thee**, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. I love how personal this passage is, illustrating the powerful idea that God works with us individually, one on one.

5 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.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 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. **What interesting wording. This is the core of the idea of the Abrahamic covenant, that God established a covenant with Abraham and then renewed it through his posterity.**

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

9 ¶And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

## 18:19

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. **Other translations impact the meaning of this passage: No, for I have chosen<sup>[e]</sup> him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (NRSV; the JPS has similar wording)**

**Additional Reading:** [Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–24, 29–32](#); [Genesis 15](#); [“Abraham, Covenant of,” Bible Dictionary](#)

[Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–24, 29–32](#)

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. *“Ye” is the plural of “you”. I like how these promises are applied equally to both the man and wife.*

20 **Then shall they be gods**, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

22 For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

23 But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

24 This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law.

30 Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph—which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.

31 This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth

himself.

32 Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.

There are both interesting and troubling points regarding Abraham in D&C 132. Theologically it is interesting that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are \*already\* gods (verse 37). Disturbingly and problematically, verses 34-37 attribute Abraham taking wives and concubines and being willing to kill his own child directly to God.

## Genesis 15

1 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And **he believed in the Lord**; and he counted it to him for righteousness. **Both important themes and personal application here. One of the main purposes of the story of Abraham is to show that human and natural limitations will not prevent God from keeping his covenants and fulfilling his promises.**

7 And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

8 And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. **This should feel very foreign to us. In Hebrew you don't make a covenant, you "cut" a covenant. As Kugel cleverly points out, this was the ancient**

equivalent of Abraham asking “Lord, can I have that promise in writing?”

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. *I have never thought of the parallel with Joseph’s first vision.*

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. *Referring to the Egyptian enslavement and Exodus.*

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. *Symbolizing the presence of God, but note the everyday (but not human) imagery used to describe God.*

18 In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

[“Abraham, Covenant of,” Bible Dictionary](#)

Abraham first **received the gospel by baptism** (*This isn’t recorded anywhere that I know of*)(which is the **covenant of salvation**). Then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood (*recorded in Abraham 1*), and he entered into celestial marriage (*based on D&C 132*) (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase. Finally he received a promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity (*D&C 132:29–50; Abr. 2:6–11*). Included in the divine promises to Abraham were the assurances that (1) Christ would come through his lineage, and that (2) Abraham’s posterity would receive certain lands as an eternal inheritance (*Gen. 17; 22:15–*

18; Gal. 3; Abr. 2). These promises taken together are called the “Abrahamic covenant.” It was renewed with Isaac (Gen. 26:1–4, 24) and again with Jacob (Gen. 28; 35:9–13; 48:3–4).

The portions of the covenant that pertain to personal salvation and eternal increase are **renewed with each individual** who receives the ordinance of celestial marriage (see D&C 132:29–33). Those of non-Israelite lineage, commonly known as Gentiles, are **adopted into the house of Israel and become heirs of the covenant and the seed of Abraham through the ordinances of the gospel** (Gal. 3:26–29).

**Being an heir to the Abrahamic covenant does not make one a “chosen person” per se but does signify that such are chosen to responsibly carry the gospel to all the peoples of the earth.** Abraham’s seed have carried out the missionary activity in all the nations since Abraham’s day. (Matt. 3:9; Abr. 2:9–11.) Important point to remember. We can also critique this rhetoric however since it is used about the priesthood and by extension leadership in the Church. Yes, leadership demands responsibility, but it also grants status, voice, and other privileges. It also understandably encourages an attitude of superiority, even if we officially discourage it.

To fulfill the covenant God made with Abraham—having particular reference to the fact that the literal seed of his body would be entitled to all of the blessings of the gospel (Abr. 2:10–11)—a number of specific and particular things must take place in the last days. The gospel must be restored, the priesthood must be conferred again upon man, the keys of the sealing power must be given again to mortals, Israel must be gathered, and the Holy Ghost must be poured out upon the Gentiles. All this has already taken place or is in process of fulfillment. See also *Adoption; Gentile*.

**Other Passages:** Genesis 12; 17 (We need more chapters to cover the whole arc of the covenant at risk and its eventual fulfillment) (Two main stories here: Abraham and the fulfilling of the covenant, and Abraham and his righteous? Living; Pertinent portions of Genesis 12-25).

## Gen 12

Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’

<sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup> Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that

time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup>Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup>From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. <sup>9</sup>And Abram journeyed on by stages towards the Negeb.

10 Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land. <sup>11</sup>When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; <sup>12</sup>and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife"; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. <sup>13</sup>Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.' <sup>14</sup>When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. <sup>15</sup>When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. <sup>16</sup>And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels.

17 But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. <sup>18</sup>So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? <sup>19</sup>Why did you say, "She is my sister", so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and be gone.' <sup>20</sup>And Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had.

## **Gen 17**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup>And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.'

9 God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup>This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup>You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup>Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. <sup>13</sup>Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup>Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be

cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.'

15 God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup>I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.' <sup>17</sup>Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, 'Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' <sup>18</sup>And Abraham said to God, 'O that Ishmael might live in your sight!' <sup>19</sup>God said, 'No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. <sup>20</sup>As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. <sup>21</sup>But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.' <sup>22</sup>And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

23 Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. <sup>24</sup>Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. <sup>25</sup>And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. <sup>26</sup>That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised; <sup>27</sup>and all the men of his house, slaves born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.