

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Genesis Lesson 12 (13:1-18; 14:8-24): Some Summary Thoughts:

The primary principles permeating the book of Genesis through the story of Abram and his descendants are that God’s “*promised land*” will be given to the “*promised seed*,” who will become a *great nation* and thus a *blessing to the nations* – even though the “Canaanites” (social designation meaning “commercial traders”) now possess the land (12:6; 13:7) and Sarai is barren (11:30)! Abram begins his journey well as he *trusts* and *worships* the God who is the Promise maker (particularly in the promised land).

In his brief sojourn to Egypt (12:10-20), however, he seems unsure of God’s protective power, choosing to lie to Pharaoh about his wife, Sarai. This ultimately results in *affliction* to Pharaoh and Egypt rather than being *blessings* as God intended. Despite the fact that Abram still needs to learn more about how he will be a blessing, God still moves forward as He blesses Abram through Pharaoh tremendously (12:16; 13:1-2).

In Chapter 13, Abram, his nephew Lot, and their entourages return to the promised land and we see that Abram is growing some in his understanding about who God is and how he needs to behave in “*trust/faith*” in his life journey. Perhaps having learned some valuable lessons in Egypt, Abram now seems more prepared to trust his future and fortunes to God’s care. He continues to emulate past behavior as he “*calls upon the name of the LORD*” (13:4) in worship and dedication of the land back to God. Scripture offers no hint that Lot has a similar mindset.

Within this attitude of *trust* and *worship*, Abram offers Lot first choice in determining where to settle. Implied in this action could be that Abram has now learned by experience in Egypt of God’s powerful will to bless and protect him and make him a blessing to others. He now appears to intuitively “know” that he can let Lot take whatever land he desires, for God’s ability to bless is not limited to or by location! God will reward Abram’s “trust.”

- Scripture says that Lot “*lifted up his eyes*” (13:10) and “saw” what he thought would be the best choice for his future. He picks the area of Sodom and “*travels east*” (13:11) – a phrase used previously (3:24; 4:16; 11:1-2) that seems to indicate moving further away from God. The contrast to Abram is fascinating. Where Lot “*lifts up his eyes*” and chooses based on his own interests and “knowledge,” Abram waits for God to “*lift his eyes*” (13:14) and for God to *reveal* His choice to him. The results are clear: Lot’s choice will soon suffer destruction; Abram’s will last “forever” (13:15).
- In contrast to Lot, Abram first waits for Lot to choose, then waits for God to reveal His choice for Abram. In 13:14-15, we learn that after Lot separates from Abram, God has Abram “*lift up your eyes*” and God *reveals* a forever future everywhere Abram can choose to look. This is the essence of “faith” as described in Heb 11:1: developing the ability to see the unseen, i.e., allowing God’s revelation to become your reality. Lot “saw” what he thought was reality. His vision was short-term and in the end it was also destructive. Abram “saw” what God revealed and acted upon that revelation. As Paul Harvey would say, and now we know the rest of the story.

In chapter 14, we learn that a coalition of eastern kings raids the area where Lot has settled, capturing Lot and seizing booty in the process. Abram leads 318 men from his house (clearly he is blessed by God!) to re-capture Lot and his entourage (14:14-16). As he returns, he encounters the surviving king of Sodom and the king of Salem. King Melchizedek of Salem (=same as Jerusalem? [see Psalm 76:2]), who is also a priest of *El Elyon* (God Most High; Possessor/ Maker of heaven and earth), blesses Abram and offers blessings to *El Elyon* (14:18-20). In return, Abram gives Melchizedek a tithe (1/10) of everything he has seized from the marauding kings who raided Sodom (14:20).

- At that point, the king of Sodom offers Abram the material goods as a “reward,” asking only that Abram return to him the persons that were captured. Abram refuses the offer showing that he has learned the lessons of Egypt well. His riches come from the LORD, not any earthly king!!!! In striking contrast to the scene in Egypt where Abram left indebted to Pharaoh, the kings of Canaan now find themselves indebted to Abram, and Abram remains indebted to God.
- Abram also makes sure that everyone present understands the correct “name” or identification of the God Most High (*El Elyon*). This creator/possessor of the universe is also the God of his Promise and call. He is *Yahweh* (LORD) – the personal name for God in the Old Testament – the God who will more fully reveal Himself by more aspect to that name to Moses in Ex 6:2-7 when He prepares His people for delivery/ redemption from their slavery in Egypt.

Now Abram probably feels that the land portion of his promise is secure. He has defended it with God’s help and has dedicated it to *Yahweh, El Elyon* by strategic placement of altars throughout. Next: Descendants.