

I Will Bless Those Who Bless You and Whoever Curses You I Will Curse

12: 1-3

DIG: To what extent had Abram been faithful? Disobedient? What needed to happen before he obeyed ADONAI? Does the New Covenant talk about his disobedience or his faithfulness? Why? Abram kept a light touch on this world. What was the only thing that he built? What is the difference between a top line blessing and a bottom line responsibility? Who would receive spiritual blessings through him?

REFLECT: Have you merely moved up the river a bit? Have you entered the land He has prepared for you? Are you stuck? Does there need to be a death of something in your life before you can move on to where the Lord wants you to go? Are you looking to build a city or an altar?

Parashah 3: Lekh L'kha (Get yourself out) 12:1-17:27

(see my commentary on Deuteronomy Af - Parashah)

After five years in Haran, ADONAI reminded Abram of what He originally had said to Abram back in the land of the Chaldeans: Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you (Genesis 12:1 and Acts 7:3). It is hard to leave one's country where one has all their associations. It is harder to leave one's people, and still more to leave one's father's household. But that is what the LORD asked of Abram. From these words we discover a two-fold failure on Abram's part. **Three things** were commanded him by God. **First**, he was to leave his country and the people living there. *Abram obeyed the first command, but failed to obey the last two.*

Sarai was sixty-five and Abram seventy-five when God first spoke to her husband. Whatever Abram thought about his call, it posed serious problems for her. The LORD had spoken to Abram about his calling and future, but He hadn't said a word to her. ADONAI's silence concerning Sarai must have chilled her to the bone. There was a nagging uncertainty that tugged at her heart all her life. Was there a place in God's plan for her, or did He only care about her husband? Was there a blessing for Sarai also?

In her book, *Lost Women of the Bible*, Carolyn James reasons that God's silence is one of the most discouraging experiences any believer can experience. She goes on to say, "We can persevere through just about anything as long as we sense the warmth of His presence and the reassuring comfort of His love. But courage melts and we are taken hostage by fear and

hopelessness when **the LORD** seems far away. Those long stretches of unanswered prayer, the problems that only seem to get worse, the sleepless nights and anxious days, the endless waiting for **God** to show up can drive us to despair." The psalmist lamented: **For if You are silent, I might as well give up and die (Psalm 28:1 NLT).**

Sarai suffered **ADONAI's** stony silence for twenty-four years when we first meet up with her here, and who knows how many years of waiting and monthly disappointments before that. Deafening silence to her tears and pleas for a child. Only silence in the beautiful promises that never seemed to include her. Silence that only strengthened Sarai's fears that **God** remembered **Abram**, but had forgotten her.

Secondly, he was to separate himself from his father and his father's household. But why would **the LORD** ask **Abram** to separate himself from his father and his father's household? It seems kind of mean-spirited. **Joshua** gives us the answer: **Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods (Joshua 24:3).** **Terah was an idolater** who worshiped the moon god *sin*. Both **Haran** and **Ur of the Chaldeans** were centers of moon worship. The names of the family actually show the influence of moon god worship. For example, the name Sari comes from the word *sharratu*, and means *queen*. This was the Akkadian manifestation of the Sumerian name of *ningal*, who was the wife of the moon god named *sin*. **Milcah** is from the Akkadian name *milkatu*, and means *princess*. In the mystery religions, *milkatu* had the title of *Ishtar*, who was the daughter of the moon god *sin*. **Laben** means *white* and it is also the poetic form for *the full moon*. So these various names like Sari, Milcah and Laben all show the influence of the worship of the moon god, reaffirming that **Terah was an idolater.**

And **thirdly**, he was to go to **Canaan (11:31)**. But there had to be a death before **Abram** moved on to where **ADONAI** wanted him to go. **So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. In this he was not obedient.** **Haran** had been **Terah's** original home and I am sure it was comforting to go back home. But there would be a time in the future when a follower of **Jesus** said to him: **I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family. Messiah** told him: **No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:61-62).** By going back to **Haran**, both **Terah** and **Abram** were looking back! **After the death of his father, God sent him to Canaan (Acts 7:4).** **The LORD** doesn't want anything to get between Him, His will for our lives, and us. Once when a follower of **Christ** said to Him: **Lord, first let me go and bury my father, Yeshua** told him: **Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead (Mt 8:21-22).** But instead of leaving his father and family, he brought **Terah** and his nephew **Lot** with him. *In this he was not obedient.* **Terah** means *delay*, and **Abram** was stuck in **Haran.**²²⁶

Even though **Abraham** is known as **the father** of the faithful, **he** was still a sinner. **He** had shortcomings, and when called by **ADONAI** to **go to Canaan**, all **he** did was move up the river a bit **and settled in Haran**. But before we get too critical of **Abram**, we need to realize that is exactly what you and I do! *We move up the river a bit. Maybe quite a bit. We are going to **the Promised Land**, but we still have one foot in the world.* **Abram** would not allow **God** to deal with **him** until there was a funeral in **his** life. When **his** father died (**11:32**), *then he* was obedient. *Is there a thing, an idea, a trapping, or an entanglement that needs to die before you can follow **God** completely? Do you need a funeral?*

The writer to the Hebrews tells us: **By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8a)**. It is beautiful to note that when we come to the New Covenant **Abram's** disobedience at **Haran** is not even mentioned. It is **his** entering into **the Promised Land** that is emphasized. That is what **Messiah** does for those who, like **Abraham**, believe in **Him** by **faith (John 5:24)**. He blots out their transgressions and remembers their sins no more (**Isaiah 43:25**).

By faith Abraham made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. Nahor built a city (24:10), but Abraham lived in tents. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:9b). He knew that this world is not his home, and he lived as an alien and a stranger in the world (First Peter 2:11). Even though he was wealthy, he kept a light touch on the things of this world. The only things Abraham built were altars (12:7-8, 13:18, 22:9). Are you looking to build a city or an altar?

So **ADONAI** had said to **Abram**, "**Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the Land I will show you**" (**12:1**). The Lord's commands are rarely accompanied with *reasons* but they are always accompanied with *promises*. And so it was in **Abram's** case.²²⁷

This is the first of seven times that **Abraham** receives direct revelation from **ADONAI** (here, **13:14-17, 15:1-21, 17:1-21, 18:1-33, 21:12-13** and **22:1-18**). These three verses are the beginning of **Abraham's** friendship with **God**. This is his unique title and **he** is referred to as the **friend of the LORD** three times in Scripture (**Second Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8** and **James 2:23**). **He** is the only one who has it and to this day the Arabs call **Abraham El Khalil, the friend of God**.

What we have next is the Great Commission. Most believers think Jesus gave the Great Commission first. Actually, He reviewed the Great Commission. The Great Commission is the story of the Bible. It starts in **Genesis**, runs through the TaNaKh and flows into the B'rit Chadashah. It's a cohesive theme, unifying all sixty-six books of the Bible to form one story: **The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob desires to see all the peoples of the earth reached through the message of redemption.**²²⁸

The LORD said: **I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you (12:2a)**. The nation of Isra'el would someday **bless all other nations**. ADONAI would **bless Abraham** both materially and spiritually. The implication here is that **Abram** would have a son. It was an unconditional promise. **He** said: **I will make your name great, and Abraham's name is great** to this day. Three of the world's great religions honor **him**: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. So what the builders of the Tower of Babel wanted for themselves, to **make a name for ourselves (11:4)**, The LORD now promised individually to **Abraham**. This is the first of five times that **God** confirms His covenant with **Abraham** (here, **13:14-17, 15:7-21, 17:1-8** and **22:15-18**).

But more importantly **Abram** must be more than a recipient; ADONAI said that **Abraham** would *be a blessing* (12:2b). **Therefore, with every top line blessing comes a bottom line responsibility**. As he was **blessed**, he would become a **blessing** to others. This promise has justifiably been regarded as one of the first promises of the coming Savior, who would bring salvation to **all nations**. The LORD had long ago made it clear that the Savior would be born into the human family as **the Seed of the woman (3:15)**, and now it became clear to **Abram** that this would be accomplished through **his own family**.²²⁹

God also promised protection, saying: **I will bless those who bless you (12:3)**. Those who **blessed Abraham** will be **blessed** and those who **blessed** the Jews will be **blessed** (**Numbers 24:9**). **And whoever curses you I will curse (12:3a)**. Those who **cursed Abraham** would be **cursed**, and later those who **cursed Israel** would be **cursed** (**Numbers 24:9**). The phrase **whoever curses you** is a Hebrew word *kalal* that means *to treat lightly, to hold in contempt, or to curse*. So one who **curses you** in this concept *holds you in contempt by treating you lightly*. And ADONAI says if people **curse you** like that, **I will curse** them. In English **curse** and **curse** mean the same thing. But in Hebrew they do not. When the LORD says **I will curse**, the word is *ao*, from the Hebrew *arah*, which means *to impose a barrier or to ban*. This is a much stronger word than **whoever curses you**. It literally means *the one who treats you lightly I must curse*. So even a slight **curse** against **Abraham** or the Jews will bring a strong **curse** from **God**. The Jewish nation has certainly been **blessed** and protected in a marvelous way through the centuries (see my commentary on the book of **Esther**).

The climax is this: **And all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you** (Genesis 12:3b and Acts 3:25). Abraham was to become a channel of blessing to the whole world. This will extend to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11-24). The Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (Galatians 3:8). They are the ones to whom Abraham will be a blessing. This is the one promise that goes beyond Isra'el. This will be reaffirmed to all the patriarchs, later it is reaffirmed to Abraham in 22:15 and 18, it is reaffirmed to Isaac in 26:3-4, and to Jacob in 28:14. This blessing would be accomplished through the seed of Abraham, the Messiah. As the prophets pointed out, it is through Him that the Gentiles will receive spiritual blessings (Isaiah 42:1, 6, 49:5-6 and Amos 9:11).

ADONAI would reach out to all the other nations of the earth by establishing a reputation for Himself through His chosen people, Isra'el. They would have special commandments to live by that would make them different from all the nations around them. They were supposed to be different, holy, set apart for the LORD, just like us, believers in the Messiah, are to live holy lives, set apart for Him. But like Isra'el, when we live like the rest of the world lives, we make others stumble and drag God's name through the mud. We have a bottom line responsibility to let others see Jesus Christ through our lives.