

Abram Left Haran, He Took His Wife Sari and His Nephew Lot

12: 4-9

DIG: Why did Lot go with him? Why didn't ADONAI speak to Abram in Haran, but spoke to him in the Promised Land? What were the Canaanites like? Who was supposed to influence whom? What did he do once he got there? What was the purpose?

REFLECT: Have you ever been disobedient to God and felt that He was silent in your life? Who moved away from whom? Have you left your Ur of the Chaldeans? Have you left your place of unbelief? What is your testimony to the Lord?

In this section, **God** speaks and **Moses**, the narrator, speaks, but **Abram** is silent.

So Abram left Haran, as ADONAI had told him (12:4a). The LORD called and Abram responded. Though he could see nothing that would encourage him to obey, he trusted God and stepped out in faith. 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 11:8; Acts 7:3). The word know here, from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the TaNaKh, is *epistamai* and means to fix one's attention on, or to put one's thoughts on. But it wasn't that he did not know where he was going because ADONAI had already called him to go to Canaan and the next verse tells us that is exactly where he was going. The point here is that he did not put his thoughts on where he was going, but willing to live once he got there. He was totally surrendered to the will of God. And we can see the wisdom of that approach later in the next chapter when the LORD would say to him, "Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you" (13:17).

The life of faith begins with the willingness to leave one's Ur, one's own place of sin and unbelief - to leave the system of the world. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:2; Second Corinthians 6:14; Galatians 1:4). Giving up the old life is one of the greatest obstacles to coming to Messiah, and is also one of the greatest obstacles to faith once we become a believer.²³⁰ We must leave that old life as Abram did.

And Lot, Abram's nephew, went with him because his own father, Haran, had died. When his father died, Lot came under the authority of his uncle. Therefore, Lot became very attached to his uncle Abram, and Abram became his guardian. So Lot went with him.

Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran (12:4b). Abram was the youngest son of his father Terah, born sixty years after Haran, the eldest. But he is placed first in this list because of his importance (11:26). Thus, Terah was 70 years old when he started having children and 130 years old when Abram was born.²³¹ As proceed in this study, Abraham's age is always given at the turning points of his life.

He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran. The rabbis that Abram influenced some of the people of Haran to believe in ADONAI, so that they are regarded as though he had acquired them for Him. And they set out for the four hundred mile trip to the land of Canaan, and they arrived there (12:5). Leaving Ur of the Chaldeans was a sacrifice for Abram and Sarai; it was a great and prosperous city. But Abram left all that and came to the land of Canaan. The Canaanites were not civilized; they were barbarians and heathens, if there ever was any. Abram's purpose in coming to Canaan was certainly not to better his lot in life. He came in obedience to the LORD's command.²³²

Abram traveled through the Land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at the pagan city of Shechem, which was the center of Canaanite idolatry and occult practices. The Canaanites had shrines in groves of oak trees, and Moreh may have been one of their cult centers.²³³ Palestine had been promised to Abram, but at the time the Canaanites were in the Land (12:6). Abram had not come to be influenced by the Canaanites, nor did he come to worship their gods. It is only as we separate ourselves from the world and walk in obedience to Christ that we can enter into fellowship with Him.

The entire narrative of the patriarchs is an anticipation of what happened to their descendants. This emphasizes the incidents in their lives, such as the digging of wells and their various journeys, which are otherwise unimportant. Thus, Abram's first stop was at Shechem, an indication that this would be the first place to be taken by his descendants, even before the time came for them to conquer the Land. Therefore, the narrative states at the time the Canaanites were in the Land, which means that the time had not yet come for them to be ousted. And in fact, it was Jacob's sons who conquered Shechem (34:27).

Living in disobedience to **God's** Word hurts our relationship with **Him**. **He** does not separate **Himself** from us, but our sin separates us from **Him**! We are not living up to the light that **He** has already given to us. If we would obey **Him**, then more blessing would come. Our fellowship would be restored. We see in **Abram's** experience that **ADONAI** did not appear again to **him** until after **he** had moved out of **Haran** and had begun to obey **the LORD** at the revelation that **he** had been given.

Now **ADONAI** appeared to **Abram** again and said: **To your offspring I will give this land (12:7a)**. **Abram** went to the Promised Land and **the LORD** showed it to **him**, but it would be given to **his offspring**, not to **him**. **God** gave **him** no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But **God** promised **him** that **he** would possess **the Land**, even though at the time **Abraham** had no children (**Acts 7:5**). When **he** died the only plot of land **he** owned was **Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre (23:17-20)**. After **the LORD** confirmed **His** promise, then **Abram** lived in **the Land**. **God** appeared to **Abraham** six other times in **Genesis (13:14-17, 15:1-21, 17:1-21, 18:1-33 and 22:1-2, 11-18)**.

In gratitude for God's promise of children and the possession of the Land, he built an altar at Shechem to the LORD who had appeared to him (12:7b). So in contrast to pagan worship, **Abram** built an altar to **ADONAI**. The reason **he** built it there was because that was the place **God** appeared to **him**. After this, the building of altars became a habit of the patriarchs (**12:8, 13:18, 22:9, 26:25, 33:20, 35:7**). That was **his** witness to **the LORD**, and everywhere **Abram** went **he** left a witness to **ADONAI**. It is fascinating that **Genesis** devotes two chapters to the creation, and one to the Fall, but over thirteen chapters to the account of **Abraham**. It seems that **the Ruach HaKodesh** was much more interested in how we relate to **God** than to how the world was created.²³⁴

From **Shechem** **he** went on toward the hills east of **Bethel** and pitched his tent, with **Bethel**, which means *the house of God*, on the west and **Ai**, which means *a heap of ruin*, on the east. In this life we all pitch our tent between *the house of God* and *a heap of ruin*. What we do with it is our choice. In **Abram's** case, **he** built an altar to **the LORD** as an act of worship, to sacrifice burnt offerings on, and **he** called on **ADONAI (12:8)**. To call upon **the LORD** means that *he participated in public worship*. **Abram** didn't pass out any tracts to **the Canaanites**, or have a "Jesus Saves" sticker on his camel. But the way **he** lived his life soon convinced **the Canaanites** that **he** was a man who worshiped **God** and lived by faith.

Living by faith is not unique to **Abram**; it is common to all who live in obedience to **Christ**. The promise often seems long and delayed, and the believer must simply continue following day-by-day, trusting **God** and knowing that **His** timing is always right. In the meantime, until the opening of the larger door and the accomplishment of **His** specific and ultimate will in our lives, there are daily opportunities for service and witness wherever we are, and whatever we are doing. There is still a time of testing, when **Yeshua** must teach us patience and submission; and such training is often long and slow. **Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much (Luke 16:10).**²³⁵

After the **LORD** confirmed **His** promise, **Abram** lived in the **Land**. But the **Canaanites** had all the good, fertile **land**. So **he** had to travel south toward **Egypt**. Then **Abram** set out and continued toward the **Negev desert** in the southern part of the **Promised Land** where his faith would be greatly tested (12:9). **The rabbis teach that he journeyed southward and did not turn eastward or westward so as to remain on the direct road between Bethel and Ai, because its inhabitants had already shown some tendency to follow ADONAI in His call to true worship.**