

Genesis 12 - The Call of Abraham; Abrahamic Promises; Abram Tours the Promised Land; Abram Flees to Egypt to Avoid Famine, Lies, Nearly Loses Sarai

II. Epilogue: Patriarchal history (Gen 11:10—50:26)

(1) Life of Abraham (Gen 11:10—25:11)

(B) Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1—25:11)

(a) Establishment of the covenant (Gen 12:1—17:27)

(i) Abrahamic promises (12:1-20)

(a) Abrahamic promises (12:1-3)

(b) Arrival in Canaan (12:4-9)

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Genesis 12

(B) Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1—25:11)

(a) Establishment of the covenant (Gen 12:1—17:27)

The narrative of Genesis now shifts from four events that shaped creation, to four people. God used these four people to start a new nation. This nation, the nation of Israel, unlike those indirectly created at the Tower of Babel, was directly created by God. Israel would not exist without the promises of God.

(i) Abrahamic promises (12:1-20)

(a) Abrahamic promises (12:1-3)

1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

1 The LORD told Abram, "You are to leave your land, your relatives, and your father's house and go to the land that I'm going to show you.

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:

- "...the LORD said to Abram" - this is the first of 7x that Abraham receives a direct revelation from God:

1. God's initial call to Abram outside the Land of Canaan (12:1-3)
2. The first appearance of Abraham in the Land (12:7)
3. After the separation from Lot (13:14-17)
4. God signs and seals the Abrahamic Covenant (15:1-21)
5. Abraham receives a token of the covenant (17:1-21)
6. God speaks to him in conjunction with the destruction of Sodom (18:1-33)
7. God directs Abraham to offer Isaac (22:1-2,11-18)

— Abram is blessed by God because he received direction revelation from God.

— This opening phrase is the beginning of Abraham's friendship with God is referred to 3x elsewhere in Scripture: 2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8; James 2:23.

- "...Go" - *lech lecha*, "go for yourself," "go for your benefit"; it emphasizes a separation. Abraham is told to immediately separate from his country; the blessing for Abram would only begin once he arrived in the Land.

- "...from" [3x] - God commanded Abram to separate himself from everything that he ever knew (Cf. 2 Cor 6:17), specifically from three things:

- "...your country" - Ur of the Chaldeans; it was Abram's place of familiarity, his place of security, his place of prosperity.

- "...your relatives" - your countrymen, fellow citizens

- "...your father's house" - your family

— Did Abram obey these command? Sort of, but he took Lot with him. He also took Terah (his father) with him, as well as Sarai (Cf. 11:31).

- "...To the land which I will show you" - where was Abram supposed to go once he separated from these three things? To the land of Canaan (Cf. 11:31).

— The first promise by God to Abram was the promise of land. God would be the One to give this land to Abram and his descendants (v7; Cf. Lev 25:23).

— Did Abram obey this command? Not really. He left Ur of the Chaldeans but he stopped and lived in Haran for awhile before God moved him on to the land of Canaan (Cf. Acts 7:2-4).

— Even once Abram entered the land, there was a famine and he left the land (Cf. v10-20).

- Abram probably wanted a little more information at this point than a vague "land which I will show you." But God is building Abram's faith at this point, not in the fact that God had a plan, but in the fact that Abram would have to trust Him in order to realize these promises and be blessed (Cf. Heb 11:8).

— Abram was simply told to leave for a land that God would show him. At this point, Abram is promised only to be shown a land and nothing more. God would continue to progressively reveal His will to Abram:

- Gen 12:7 - Abraham's seed will possess the land God showed him

- Gen 13:14-17 - Abraham will also personally possess the land, along with his seed (however, Abraham died never having possessed any part of the Land except for a few wells and a burial cave, which he had to purchase).
 - Upon leaving Haran, Abram did not know he was heading for Canaan (Heb 11:8)
- Gen 12:1 is quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:3

Timeline for Abram's Departure from Haran (also see notes on 11:26)

Acts 7:2-4:

2 And Stephen said, "Listen to me, brothers and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, **before he lived in Haran**,
 - "...before he lived in Haran" - Stephen is going to begin with an overlooked lapse on the part of Abraham! A 25-year delay in responding to what God had called him to do.

3 and He said to him, 'GO FROM YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME TO THE LAND WHICH I WILL SHOW YOU.'

4 Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. **And from there, after his father died**, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

- "...And from there, after his father died" - Abraham's original call was from Ur, not Haran (Haran was 500 miles up river; Cf. Gen 12:1-3)

— Abraham was called in Ur and he moved to Haran, and did not move again *until 25 years later* when his father died!

— He didn't really do what God called him to do, *until* his father died. 25 years of disobedience? (Gen 11:31). His sin, however, is blotted out (Heb 11:8).

- Discrepancy about ages occurs only if Abram is Terah's firstborn (Gen 11:27).

Being listed first does not imply *order* of birth, but rather *importance*:

1. Shem, Ham and Japheth: Ham was youngest (Gen 9:24); Japheth was oldest (Gen 10:2,21)
2. Jacob and Esau: Esau was older (Gen 25:25)
3. Moses and Aaron (Ex 5:20); Aaron was older (1 Chr 6:3)
4. Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh was eldest (Gen 48:1)

Haran (or *Charran*): An important city in ancient Mesopotamia. It was situated about 550 miles northeast of Ur and 280 miles north of Damascus. Principal routes converged there. Highways to Nineveh, Babylon, and Damascus had their start from it. It was only 60 miles from the stronghold of Carchemish, the capital of the Hittite empire. Haran was one of the chief centers for the worship of Sin, the moon-god.



Ur of the Chaldees: An ancient city of the early Sumerian kingdom, located about 125 miles from the present mouth of the Euphrates, 100 miles southeast of Babylon, 830 miles from Damascus, and 550 miles from Haran. It was the capital of Sumer. In Abram's day it was a thriving commercial city, with unusually high cultural standards. The inhabitants worshiped the moon-god, Sin.

2 And I will make you into a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And **you shall be a blessing**;

2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;

2 I'll make a great nation of your descendants, I'll bless you, and I'll make your reputation great, so that you will be a blessing.

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:

- "...I will make you into a great nation" - the first of three promises: God will make Abram one specific nation. This nation, Israel, is the only nation in the history of the world that was created directly by God Himself.

— God had to create this new nation in order to keep the promise of Gen 3:15. All 70 of the other nations in existence at that time were corrupted by the Tower of Babel. So in order to keep His promise of a coming Messiah, God had to create a new nation that had nothing to do with the Tower of Babel.

— The nation God is referring to here, which will come from Abram, is in addition to the 70 nations outlined in Gen 10. All 70 of these nations owe their heritage and their root to the Tower of Babel.

— But God says here that He is going to create, directly rather than indirectly, a 71st nation, and that nation will be "great".

Is 43:1a: But now, this is what the LORD says, **He who is your Creator, Jacob, And He who formed you, Israel:**

— Israel is unique among all the nations because she is a special creation from God.

- "...I will bless you" - Abram would be the recipient of both material (Cf. 13:2) and spiritual blessing (because God gave Abram direct revelation 7x)

- "...[I will] make your name great" - Abraham is revered in the three great religious systems today: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

— It's interesting that at the Tower of Babel, they were trying to "make a name for themselves" (11:4). But to Abram, God promised that He would make Abram's name great.

- "...*you shall* be a blessing" - God blessed Abram so that he would in turn bless others. God's plan for Abram (and eventually Israel) was to be the vehicle through which God would bless the entire world.

— In the same way, God has already blessed every believer in Jesus Christ with every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3). God has no further spiritual blessings to give us...His supply closet of blessings is empty.

— In the same way that God had in mind the entire world to receive blessing when He promised this blessing to Abraham, when God blesses me personally He has others in mind. He has blessed me so that I may bless others.

— The moment God promised Abram that he would be a blessing to others, Abram got an enemy. The moment Satan sees that a believer will be blessed, and in turn bless others, is the exact time that he goes to work to quash that blessing any way he can.

— The same holds true for us...in the same epistle where God tells us that we as believers have already received every spiritual blessing, it later tells us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can defend ourselves against the strategy of the enemy.

— Because this promise ignited Satan to oppose this promise, God has to give Abram two promises (v3) of national protection.

3 And 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 will be blessed."

3 And 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 will be blessed."

3 I'll bless those who bless you, but I'll curse the one who curses you, and through you all the people of the earth will be blessed."

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.

- "...I will bless those who bless you" - God will judge nations or people based on how they treat Israel: if they are favorable or a blessing to Israel, God will bless them. This promise is repeated in Balaam's oracles (Num 24:9).

— People may wonder why the United States has been so blessed as a nation for so long. You can trace our blessing back to God's fulfillment of this promise throughout our history. In fact, George Washington, in 1790, visited the first Jewish synagogue on US soil in Newport, Rhode Island, and wrote the following:

I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport...the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance...May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.

— Ever since the *diaspora* began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, every nation where the Jews went they were persecuted. George Washington said, not here in the United States. As George Washington blessed Israel/Jews, God fulfilled His promise and blessed the United States of America.

- "...the one who curses you I will curse" - those who curse Abram will be cursed; this also extends to the nation of Israel, as those who curse the Jews will be cursed (Num 24:9)

— "curses" - *kalal*, a light (mild) offense; a light (mild) offense to the Jews will incur a heavy curse (*aor*) from God

— "curse" - *aor*, from the Hebrew root *arah*, means "to impose a barrier," "to ban"; this is a much stronger word than *kalal* and implies that God will severely punish anyone who even makes a mild/light offense against the Jews (Cf. Zech 2:8).

— How literally should we take this promise? In Exodus, the army of Egypt was drowned in the Red Sea. Why? Ex 1:22. The Egyptians drowned all newborn males in the Nile River. So God said, you drown My people, I will drown you.

— In plague 10, why did God kill all the firstborn in Egypt? Ex 4:22. God called Israel His firstborn son, so God reasoned that if the Egyptians killed His "firstborn son" God would kill the Egyptian's firstborn sons.

- Very early in human history, God set down a principle to control the relationship of the Jews to the Gentiles. This statement is God's foreign policy to the Gentiles in their dealings with the Jewish people. Deut 32:8-9 restates this in wider terms:

Deut 32:8-9:

8 "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of mankind, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel.

9 "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.

— It is not only God's program for Israel, but His program for the Gentiles as well. When God in His providence set down boundaries for the Gentile nations, He took into account the number of Jews that will play a role in that nation's history.

— The Abrahamic Covenant contains a unifying principle for understanding history: God blesses those who bless the Jews and curses those who curse them. This principle explains much in history that defies any naturalistic explanation. Time and again, Scripture demonstrates that this fact works itself out in the histories of both individuals and nations. Many aspects of Jewish history make sense only if one clearly understands God's philosophy of history. History repeatedly testifies that every nation that has ever dared to raise its hand against the Jew has eventually fallen. The Jew "has stood at the graveside of all his enemies."

— The Bible properly explains the Jewish people's role in history. Although various anti-Semitic campaigns have cut down multitudes of Jews, the Jewish people as a distinct entity is indestructible. Jer 31:35-37 indicates that those wishing to obliterate the Jews must first destroy the sun, moon, and stars. Then, and only then, could the Jews' destruction occur.

- "...all the families of the earth" - Abraham will become a channel of blessing to the entire world (Gal 3:28-29; Cf. Is 42:6; 49:6). The promise of spiritual blessing will extend to the Gentiles; they are the ones to whom Abram will be a blessing.

— This is the one promise that goes beyond Israel (to the Gentiles) and this is reaffirmed in the Abrahamic Covenant more than once. So how exactly has Israel blessed the world?

- Scripture: every single writer of the Bible was Jewish; Luke is the only writer who is debated today, and there is solid evidence that he was also Jewish [Fruchtenbaum, Acts Commentary].
 - Rom 3:2 says: Great in every respect. First, that they were entrusted with the actual words of God.
- Savior: Jesus was Jewish (John 4:22; Rom 9:5).
- Kingdom: Jesus will one day inaugurate His earthly kingdom through Israel, with its headquarters in Jerusalem (Is 2:2-3).

— There is a Descendant of Abraham that if you bless (believe in), you will be blessed. But if you curse this Descendant of Abraham (don't believe in Him), you will be cursed.
— Peter quoted Gen 12:3 in Acts 3:25 while speaking to the Jews, and Paul quotes this verse in Gal 3:8

Seven "I Wills" (v2-3)

1. And I will make of thee a great nation
2. and I will bless thee
3. and make thy name great
4. and thou shalt be a blessing
5. And I will bless them that bless thee
6. and curse him that curseth thee
7. and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed

Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is contained in six passages (Gen 12:1-3; 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18). The covenant is between God and Abraham, who stood as the representative head of the Jewish nation (not all of humanity). See [Covenant](#), [Abrahamic](#) and [8 Covenants of the Bible](#) for details on each of the 8 covenants in Scripture. God and Abraham are involved in this covenant, in which Abraham stood as the representative head of the whole Jewish nation, not for all humanity.

Gen 12:1-3 - Covenant introduced

Gen 15:1-21 contains many provisions of the covenant. The emphasis is:

1. Abraham would father one nation in particular
2. Abraham would father many nations in general
3. God signs and seals the covenant, and determines the borders of the Land as extending from the river in Egypt in the south, to the great river Euphrates in the north. The signing was done in such a way that it rendered the covenant unconditional.

Gen 17:1-21 emphasizes the token of the covenant: circumcision. Just as the rainbow was the token of the Noahic Covenant, circumcision was the token of the Abrahamic Covenant. Gen 22:15-18 emphasizes that due to Abraham's obedience in the sacrificing of Isaac, God would bless his multiply and seed as the stars of heaven, possess the gate of his enemies, and through Abraham all the nations of the world would be blessed.

Gen 26:2-5 - Covenant renewed with Isaac

Gen 28:10-17 - Covenant renewed with Jacob

There are 14 provisions in this covenant:

1. A *great nation* was to come out of Abraham, namely, the nation of Israel (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:1-2,7; 22:17b)
2. He was promised a Land; specifically, the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1,7; 13:14-15,17; 15:18-21; 17:8)
3. Abraham himself was to be greatly blessed (Gen 12:2b)
4. Abraham's name would be great (Gen 12:2c)
5. Abraham will be a blessing to others (Gen 12:2d)
6. Those who bless Israel will be blessed (Gen 12:3a)
7. Those who curse Israel will be cursed (Gen 12:3b)
8. In Abraham all will ultimately be blessed (Gen 12:3c; 22:18)
9. Abraham would receive a son through his wife Sarah (Gen 15:1-4; 17:16-21)
10. His descendants would undergo the Egyptian bondage (Gen 15:13-14)
11. Other nations as well as Israel would come forth from Abraham (Gen 17:3-4,6); the Arab states are some of these nations.
12. His name was to be changed from *Abram*, meaning "exalted father," to Abraham, meaning "father of a multitude" (Gen 17:5)
13. *Sarai's* name, meaning "my princess," was to be changed to Sarah, meaning "the princess" (Gen 17:15)
14. Circumcision was to be a token of the covenant (Gen 17:9,14; thus, according to the Abrahamic Covenant, circumcision was to be a sign of one's Jewishness. The practice of circumcision did not begin with Abraham since others in the ancient Near East practiced the ritual either at birth or puberty. The uniqueness of Jewish circumcision is not the act, but the timing of the act: on the eighth day. Circumcision would show this to be a blood covenant and hence emphasized its solemnity. It would also show that this sign of Jewishness is passed on through natural generation.

The provisions are categorized in three areas: to Abraham, to Israel, and to the Gentiles.

Foundational Covenant

Reducing the Abrahamic Covenant to its very basics, it contained three aspects:

1. The Land aspect, developed further in the Land Covenant
2. The Seed aspect, covered in the Davidic Covenant
3. The Blessing aspect, presented in the New Covenant

Confirmation of the Covenant

Through Isaac

Abraham had eight sons by three different women. Through which son would the covenant be confirmed? God revealed that it was only through Sarah's son Isaac (Gen 26:2-5). The covenant was later reconfirmed to Isaac in Gen 26:24.

Through Jacob

Isaac had two sons, and God chose to confirm the covenant with Jacob, the younger (Gen 28:13-15).

Through the Sons of Jacob

The covenant was confirmed to all of Jacob's 12 sons in Gen 49.

The most important aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant to rightly understand the rest of the Bible is that these promises by God to Abraham are literal, unconditional, and eternal.

Literal

There are that 3 reasons make it apparent that these promises should be construed literally:

1. The promises are terrestrial or earthly in nature.
 - Abraham was told to walk around the Land that he and his people will one day possess (Gen 13:17)
2. The promise is made exclusively with national Israel, not the church (which didn't exist at the time) or any other people group or nation.
3. The seed concerns David's physical lineage. There is nothing in this passage or the Davidic Covenant that lead to an understanding other than earthly and literal.

Unconditional

There are 4 reasons that make it apparent that these promises are Unconditional:

1. God performed the typical near-eastern covenant ratification ceremony...by Himself! Severed animal carcasses were placed into two rows and the parties of the covenant passed through these rows in a figure 8 pattern. Abraham never passed through the severed animal carcasses...God put him to sleep and He alone passed through the animal carcasses (Gen 15:12,17).
 - This strange ceremony testified to the fact that if the parties ratifying the covenant did not fulfill their obligations under the covenant, they too were to be severed as the animals had been (Jer 34:8-10,18-19).
2. There are no stated conditions for Israel's obedience. If Israel had to do something before God would perform his obligations, it would have been mentioned.
3. The Abrahamic Covenant is called eternal (Gen 17:7,13,19) and unchangeable (Heb 6:13-18), thus performance cannot rest on sinful man. Only God is eternal and unchangeable, so only God can bring the covenant promises into fulfillment.
4. The covenant is trans-generationally reaffirmed despite Israel's perpetual disobedience. No matter how wicked they became, God continually reaffirmed the covenant to Israel.

Unfulfilled

Some argue that some parts of the covenant have been fulfilled in the past:

1. Land promises fulfilled in days of Joshua (Josh 11:23; 21:43-45)?
 - The Land promises were not completely fulfilled (Joshua 13:1-7; Judges 1:19,21,27,29-36). The land Israel obtained in the conquest was a fraction of what was promised in the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - The Land promises could not have been fulfilled because Israel had not yet conquered Jerusalem (Joshua 15:63). The conquest of Jerusalem would have to wait another 400 years until David (2 Sam 5).
2. Land promises fulfilled in the days of Solomon?
 - Although Solomon gained a large percentage of the land, his empire only extended to the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21), not to the river of Egypt (Gen 15:18).
 - In addition, not all of the territory during Solomon's reign was incorporated into the geographic boundaries of Israel. Many of the conquered kingdoms retained their identity and territory, but paid taxes (tribute) to Solomon. Israel's own geographic limits were from "Dan to Beersheba" (1 Kings 4:25).
3. The Abrahamic Covenant promises that Israel would possess the Land forever (Gen 17:7-8,13,19). This has obviously not been fulfilled.
4. The subsequent prophets treat the land promises as if they are not yet fulfilled (Amos 9:11-15).

(b) Arrival in Canaan (12:4-9)

4 So Abram went away as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was **seventy-five years old** when he departed from Haran.

4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

4 So Abram left there, as the LORD had directed him, and Lot accompanied him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran.

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.

- "...seventy-five years old" - Abram was no spring chicken when he departed Haran for Canaan. God often uses senior citizens to accomplish His purposes (Cf. 2 Cor 12:10):

- Daniel was in his 80s when he was thrown into the lion's den (Dan 6)
- John was in his 80s when he was exiled to Patmos and given a vision to write the Book of Revelation

5 Abram took his wife Sarai **and his nephew Lot**, and **all their possessions which they had accumulated**, and **the people which they had acquired in Haran**, and they set out for the land of Canaan; so they came to the land of Canaan.

5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

5 Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the servants he had acquired while living in Haran. Then they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they arrived in the land of Canaan,

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.

- "...and his nephew Lot" - an example of Abram's partial obedience at this point. In v1, God told him to separate himself from his relatives. He primarily did that, but he did not separate from Lot.

- "...all their possessions which they had accumulated" - we see here already an outworking of God's promise of personal blessing to Abram (v2b). God is already prospering him materially, and he hasn't even completed the first thing God asked him to do (travel to Canaan).

- "...the people which they had acquired in Haran" - one of these people was Eliezer of Damascus (Cf. 15:2). After God promised Abram many descendants, in a moment of faithlessness, Abram believed that that seed would come through Eliezer because he and Sarai were too old.



6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now **the Canaanites** were in the land at that time.

6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

6 Abram traveled through the land to the place called Shechem, as far as the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

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.

- "...the Canaanites" - the fourth son of Ham was named Canaan; the descendants of Canaan were put under a curse because they imitated the detestable practices of their father Ham (Cf. 9:24-25).

— The sub-groups who were Canaanites included: Sidon, Heth, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgasites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites.

— For detail on the detestable practices of these Canaanites, see Lev 18; 20.

7 And the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I'll give this land to your descendants." So Abram built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

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.

- "...the LORD appeared to Abram" - the second of seven times Abram will receive direct revelation from the LORD (Cf. v1)

- "...To your descendants I will give this land" - an astounding prophecy. To Abram, who had just arrived, this was an incredible promise. The Canaanites already occupied the land, and would continue to do so for the next 400 years.

— This is actually a pre-promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, which will begin to be developed in Gen 15. It's interesting that the Hebrew word for covenant (*berith*) is not used in this verse (it will first be used in 15:18-21); right now, Abram is just receiving promises from God, the covenant is not yet in view.

— Notice that Abram was never directly promised this land; his descendants were promised this land. The only land that Abram would "own" in Canaan would be the burial plot of Sarai, which is minuscule compared to the size of the land that God promised him.

— Abraham died without receiving the full dimension of the promise from God, and part of the reason was that the promise was not given to Abram personally. It was given to his descendants.

— This begins to develop the idea that this part of the world is owned by God Himself, and He can give it or not give it to whomever He wants.

- "...he built an altar there to the LORD" - what do you do after receiving a promise such as this, through direct revelation from God? The only thing you can do is worship. This is the first righteous altar built in a land completely dedicated to paganism.

— J. Dwight Pentecost, one of the foremost Bible scholars in history, defined worship as "a response to truth." Just as Abram did here after receiving this amazing and undeserved promise, the more we understand what God has given to us, undeservedly by His grace, all we can do is explode into worship.

— There is a consistent pattern throughout Scripture: when people truly encounter God's grace, power, or faithfulness, worship often becomes their immediate response:

- Moses & Israel - after their deliverance through the Red Sea, they sang praises to the Lord (Ex 15:1-21)
- Miriam - after deliverance through the Red Sea, led the women with tambourines and dancing (Ex 15:20-21)
- Jethro - after hearing what God had done for Israel, praised God and offered sacrifices (Ex 18:8-12)

- Abraham - after receiving God's covenant promise, praised God and built an altar (Gen 12:7)
- Abraham - after God provided a ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac, worshipped the Lord (Gen 22:13-14)
- Jacob - after receiving God's promise at Bethel, set up a pillar, poured oil on it, and vowed devotion (Gen 28:18-22)
- Hannah - after the birth of Samuel, offered a lengthy song of praise to the Lord (1 Sam 2:1-10)
- David - after receiving God's covenant promise through Nathan, sat before the Lord in humble worship (2 Sam 7:18-29)
- Solomon - after God's glory filled the temple, knelt, spread out his hands, and blessed the Lord (2 Chr 6-7)
- Jehoshaphat - after God's promise of victory, bowed in worship and the people fell before the Lord (2 Chr 20:17-19)
- Hezekiah - after temple worship was restored, bowed and worshipped the Lord (2 Chr 29:29-30)
- Ezra - after receiving God's favor from the king, blessed and praised the Lord (Ezra 7:27-28)
- Nehemiah - after God's hand was upon him to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall, he thanked God and acknowledged His hand (Neh 2:8)

There are also many NT examples of worship as a response to truth and God's grace:

- The Three Wise Men - after finding Jesus, they fell down and worshipped Him (Matt 2:11)
- The women at the tomb - after encountering the risen Christ, they grabbed Him by the feet and worshipped Him (Matt 28:9)
- Mary - after receiving Gabriel's announcement that she should bear the Messiah, spontaneously broke out in praise to the Lord (Luke 1:46-55)
- Zechariah - after the birth of John the Baptist and the return of his speech, he immediately prophesied and praised the Lord (Luke 1:67-79)
- The Shepherds - after seeing Christ, the glorified and praised God for all things they had heard and seen (Luke 2:20)
- Simeon - after holding the infant Messiah and seeing the fulfillment of God's promise led immediately to worship (Luke 2:28-32)
- The leper - after Jesus healed him of leprosy, with a loud voice he glorified God and fell on his face (Luke 17:15-16)
- The disciples - after being taught by Jesus for 40 days, worshipped Him as He ascended to heaven (Luke 24:52-53)

- The blind man - after Jesus healed him and revealed Himself as the Son of God, the blind man believed and worshipped Him (John 9:38)
- The heavenly multitude - as God's redemptive purposes are revealed in heaven, they break out in corporate worship (Rev 5:8-14)

— The pattern shown in these examples throughout Scripture show that genuine encounters with the Lord often follow this sequence:

1. God acts first - He delivers, promises, reveals Himself, forgives, heals, or blesses.
2. The person recognizes God's grace - they understand that what happened is the Lord's doing.
3. Worship flows naturally from them - through praise, singing, prayer, sacrifice, bowing, or public thanksgiving.
4. Obedience frequently follows - worship becomes the foundation for faithful living.

— The pattern highlights the fact that worship is fundamentally a response to God's initiative. Whether in the OT or the NT, people who grasp what God has done for them are moved to adore Him before they do anything else.

— In Rom 12:1, Paul says: Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [*logikos*, reasonable] service of worship.

— After Paul, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, outlines the incredible promises of God and His grace to us in Rom 1-11, he says the only "reasonable" or logical thing we can do is to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. He's advocating for a lifestyle of worship, not just 20-30 minutes of worship on a Sunday morning.

8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain 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 called upon the name of the LORD.

8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain 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 called upon the name of the LORD.

8 From there Abram traveled on to the hill country east of Bethel and set up his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel 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.

- Abram continued to move from north to south in the Promised Land.

- "...he built an altar to the LORD" - after moving, Abram built a second altar to the Lord.

Abram was not the type of person who would only worship the Lord periodically...he did it

all the time. He was continually in a posture of worship.

— Notice that the Lord didn't specifically do something for Abram between v7 and v8...he just picked up his camp and moved to the south. But Abram demonstrates his constant posture of worship, not just in response to something God did for him directly, but worship of who God is.

— And notice that Abram was in a posture/lifestyle of worship in the most difficult of circumstances—living amongst the pagan Canaanites.

9 Then Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.

9 Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.

9 Then Abram traveled on, continuing into the Negev.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

- God finally moves Abraham from the northern section of Israel (v7), through the mid-section (v8), and now to the southern area (v9). By moving Abram through these "bad neighborhoods" of pagan debauchery, God is showing Abram the land that He promised to him.

— Abram didn't own the Land, but traveled in it, showing his faith and patience in God's promises (Heb 11:9).

— He had no documented contact with the Canaanites; the implication is that he lived along the border areas, but he never moves in or lives among them.

(c) Egyptian stay (12:10-20)

10 Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a time, because the famine was severe in the land.

10 Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

10 There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to live because the famine was so severe.

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

- Now Abram has a problem: God promised Abram this land, but things weren't working out the way Abram anticipated because now there's a famine in the land.

— In Abram's mind, God called him to do something, he did it (although not perfectly), and now things aren't working out for him as he anticipated. There is a famine in the land, and he's not sure how he is going to eat and feed his family.

— When this happens to Christians today, they automatically start thinking that maybe they missed the plan of God. Somehow, I got outside of God's will, and now bad things are starting to happen.

— The truth of the matter is, Abram was right where God wanted him. God put Abram in this position to develop his "faith muscle." God never stops putting us in positions to trust Him more deeply and completely. He does this by putting us in positions where we're forced to trust Him more.

— The mistake Abram made here is that he didn't depend on the Lord to fix his problem...he took matters into his own hands. He left Canaan, the land that God promised to him and his descendants, and moved out of that land into Egypt.

— God has already provided two direct revelations to Abram, both times talking about the land. God never told Abram to leave the land of Canaan...Abram did that completely on his own, thinking he was outside the will of God and that maybe God needed some help in providing for him.

— Abram decided to fulfill God's promises in his own way. And this won't be the first time Abram's faith lapses in this way. He had a habit of taking things into his own hands and meeting his own needs.

— At this point in Abram's life, he has faith, but it's an immature, baby faith. But God loves Abram too much and has too big a calling on his life to see him get away with not growing up. So God is going to force Abram into maturity by teaching him a great lesson: you navigate life's problems by standing on God's promises, not by manipulating human circumstances.

Ps 37:25: [David writes] I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging for bread.

11 It came about, when he was approaching Egypt, that he said to his wife Sarai, "See now, I know that **you are a beautiful woman**;

11 It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman;

11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he told his wife Sarai, "Look, I'm aware that you're a beautiful woman.

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

- "...you are a beautiful woman" - this doesn't mean she was a distinguished older lady.

This woman was "hot" because her beauty would cause problems for both her and Abram (v12-13). She was so hot that Abram was worried about being killed so that the Pharaoh could have her all to himself.

— Sarai was 65 years old at this time. We know this based on v4, which states that Abram was 75 years old. Then if you go to 17:17, it shows that Sarah was 10 years younger than Abraham.

— It's interesting that when Sarai/Sarah is mentioned in the NT, her outer beauty is not talked about; rather only her inner beauty is mentioned and used as an example (Cf. 1 Peter 3:1-6).

12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'She is his wife.' Then they'll kill me, but allow you to live.

12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

- Abram's bad decision to leave Canaan without being instructed to do so by God leads to additional bad situations that put him and his wife in precarious, life-threatening situations.
— God is allowing Abram to experience these bad situations to teach him a lesson to live by divine promises, not by trying to manipulate human circumstances.

13 Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well for me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

13 Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

13 Please say that you are my sister, so things will go well for me for your sake. That way, you'll be saving my life."

13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

- Abram's genius idea to get out of this precarious situation was to lie...or tell a "half-lie." It was still a lie because his intent was to hide something.

— In 20:12, this same situation happens again. In that instance, Abraham explained that this lie was his policy everywhere he and Sarah went. Isaac did the same thing with Rebekah (26:7). You would think that Abram would've learned his lesson after this debacle, but he doesn't. He repeats the same error again. This is the growth process that we're on. God is interested in maturing us spiritually, and He will keep putting us through the same lesson over and over and over again until we finally get it.

— It's interesting how the Holy Spirit works out this narrative that Abram told a "half-truth". He didn't tell a boldface lie, he schemed to tell a "half-truth".

— Abram is going through the progress of unbelief. It's always the same situation: you make choice A because of unbelief (in this case, leaving Canaan for Egypt without instruction to do so and contrary to God's promises). Then he had to make choice B

because unbelief is like a snowball...it just continues to grow. Then you find yourself doing things to cover up the first thing you did in unbelief and disobedience.

— This whole episode could've been avoided had Abram had obeyed God, ignored the world system, stood on God's promises, and believed that it didn't matter that there was a famine in the land, God gave me promises and I'm going to believe them. But he didn't. Instead, he took the world's way out of his circumstances and it only made things much worse.

- David is also a good example how unbelief and a lack of faith got him into a bad situation. Then his bad choices got him further into hot water. He decided to relax and not go to war with his men, then was tempted by Bathsheba, a married woman, whom he then had sex with. Then Bathsheba became pregnant, and David had to lie about it. Then he had to conspire to commit murder to cover up his first two sins (adultery & lying about it).

— The path to immorality is always paved through gradual compromises. Satan is very good at convincing us that we can avoid the consequences for our sin. The truth of the matter is that if we could negotiate with sin, if we had the ability to contain sin, why did Jesus have to pay such a horrific price to pay for our sin problem?

— Based on Jesus' horrific death, we must learn that the nature of sin must be such that it is more potent and powerful than we can even imagine. But we're deceived into thinking we can control it. But the deception is that we can handle it, which leads to compromise, then another compromise, then yet another.

- This whole ordeal began because of fear. Whether it's fear of famine or fear of Pharaoh, if you're in a state of fear you will often make poor decisions.

Prov 29:25: The fear of man brings a snare, But one who trusts in the LORD will be protected.

Prov 28:1: The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But the righteous are bold as a lion.

2 Tim 1:7: For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

14 Now it came about, when Abram entered Egypt, that the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

14 It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

14 As Abram was entering Egypt, the Egyptians noticed how beautiful Sarai was.

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's **house**.

15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

15 When Pharaoh's officials saw her, they brought her to the attention of Pharaoh and took the woman to Pharaoh's palace.

15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

- Exactly what Abram thought was going to happen (v12-13), did happen. As a result, Abram had placed the ancestry of the Jewish people in danger, and endangered the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, since the seed would only come through Sarai and no other.

16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and he gave him sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants and **femaleservants**, female donkeys, and camels.

16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

16 He treated Abram well because of her, so Abram acquired sheep, oxen, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

- Why on earth did Pharaoh bless Abram and make him rich? Because of the Abrahamic promises in v1-3, specifically the promise of personal blessing in v2b.

— These promises to Abram are obviously unconditional because God is blessing him when he is out of the land and in disobedience, demonstrating a serious lack of faith. Through this, God is showing Abram that the foundation of the nation of Israel will be based on an unconditional set of promises.

— There is an idea in the church today that if my bank account is increasing, if I got that job promotion, my wealth is increasing, then I must be doing something right. I must be in God's will. But if my wealth is decreasing and I lost my job, I must somehow be out of God's will.

— This story shows us that that is a tricky equation and one that is certainly not a hard-and-fast rule. And it certainly doesn't work out that way most of the time. Abram is clearly in disobedience here, yet he's quickly getting rich from gifts from Pharaoh, for literally no reason.

— The richest NT church that we know of is the church of Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22). If you read what Jesus says to that church, you certainly won't get the idea that they were in obedience to God's will, yet they were "rich and in need of nothing."

- "...female servants" - included in this group of female Egyptian servants is Hagar

17 But the LORD **struck** Pharaoh and his house with **great plagues** because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

17 But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

17 But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

- A further outworking of the Abrahamic promises in v1-3, this one specifically in v3b: "...And the one who curses you I will curse."

— Pharaoh came to take Sarai against Abram's marriage, and God didn't just bring plagues on Egypt and Pharaoh, He brought "great plagues."

- "...great plagues" - the text does not state exactly what these plagues were, but according to rabbinic tradition, it was leprosy. The rabbis believed that these plagues were a debilitating skin disease that made sexual intercourse impossible. [Fruchtenbaum]

— Even though it was Abraham who sinned, God still intervened because the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional. The key observation is that the Abrahamic Covenant has now begun to work: Pharaoh was cursed for cursing Abraham, and Abraham was blessed in spite of his wrong actions. This all shows evidence that the covenant was unconditional. [Fruchtenbaum]

18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "**What is this *that* you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?**"

18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?"

18 Pharaoh summoned Abram and asked, "What have you done to me! Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife?"

18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for myself as a wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go!"

19 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 go."

19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her as a wife for myself? Now, here is your wife! Take her and get out!"

19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife:
now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.
- Pharaoh returned Sarai to Abram unmolested.

20 And Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and **all that belonged to him**.

20 Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

20 So Pharaoh assigned men to Abram, and they escorted him, his wife, and all that he had out of the country.

20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

- "...all that belonged to him" - all the riches that Pharaoh had given to Abram (v16).

— Abraham screwed up, lacked faith in God and made a poor decision to go to Egypt. Once there, he foresaw that something bad would happen with Sarai because of her beauty, but instead lied to get himself further into trouble.

— Sarai is taken away from him and Pharaoh gives Abram a ridiculous amount of riches and servants. Then God steps in and curses Pharaoh with "great plagues" because of what he did, Pharaoh finds out that Sarai is Abram's wife, so he releases her to Abram and tells them to leave immediately. He escorts them out of town with all of the riches that Pharaoh had given Abram earlier.

The Abrahamic Covenant has now begun to work in earnest: Pharaoh was cursed for cursing Abram, and Abram was blessed in spite of his wrong actions. This all shows evidence that the covenant was unconditional.