



Abraham and the Covenant

THE BINDING OF ISAAC. THE ABRAHAMIC
COVENANT.

GENESIS 12, 15, 17, 21–22; ABRAHAM 1–2.

Abraham's departure by József Molnár

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (hymn no. 72)

1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of
creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and
salvation!

Join the great throng,
Psaltery, organ and song,
Sounding in glad adoration!

2. Praise to the Lord! Over all things he gloriously
reigneth.

Borne as on eagle wings, safely his Saints he
sustaineth.

Hast thou not seen
How all thou needest hath been
Granted in what he ordaineth?

3. Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy way and
defend thee.

Surely his goodness and mercy shall ever attend thee.

Ponder anew

What the Almighty can do,

Who with his love doth befriend thee.

4. Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore
him!

All that hath breath, *join with Abraham's seed to
adore him!*

Let the “amen”

Sum all our praises again,

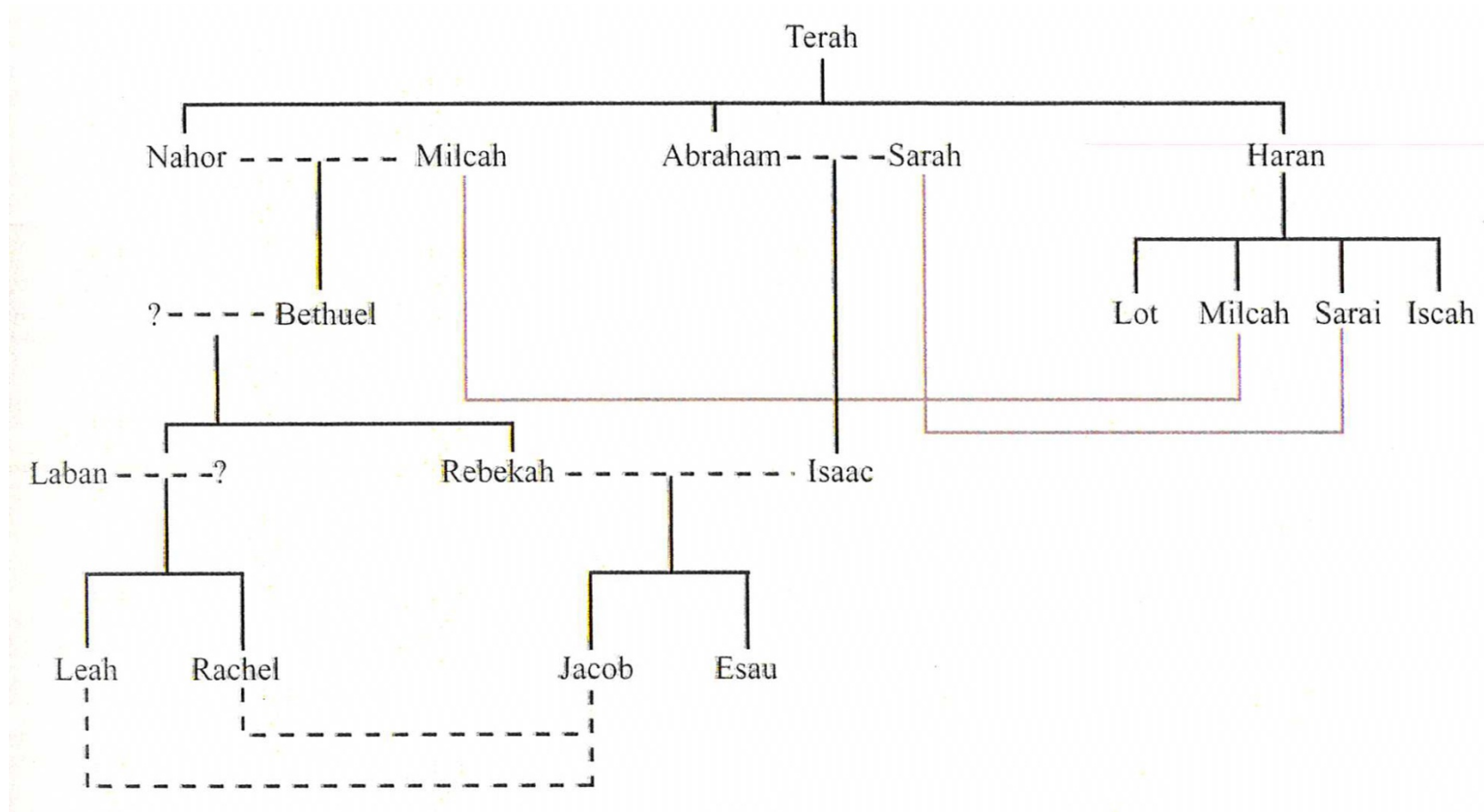
Now as we worship before him.

Abraham, the Friend of God



The Family of Abraham

(Genesis 11:27-32; cf. Abraham 1:5-7, 2:12)



Abraham's Call (Genesis 12:1–9; Abraham 2:1–12)

- The received biblical text simply relates that Abraham moved from Ur to Haran and then the Lord called him to leave Haran for a Promised Land (Genesis 11:31–12:1)
 - The Book of Abraham relates more details, including a famine that drove them from Ur and more details about Abraham's call
- Both accounts relates promises that the Lord made to Abraham as he accepted the call to move to the Promised Land (see slide 8 below)
- To this the Book of Abraham adds significant details:
 - The Lord **appeared** to Abraham and identified himself as **Jehovah** (Abraham 2:6–8)
 - “**Priesthood**” and “**the Gospel**” are specifically referenced (Abraham 2:9–11)
 - Abraham's response: “**Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee**” (Abraham 2:12; see Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23, “Abraham believed God . . . And he was called the Friend of God”)

History of Abraham (Genesis 11:27–25:11)

- Abram's Early Career (12:1–14:24)
 - **Call of Abram (12:1–9)**
 - Abram and Sarai in Egypt (12:10–20)
 - Separation of Abram and Lot, first Sodom reference (13:1–18,)
 - Lot's Captivity and Rescue by Abram (14:1–16)
 - Abram Blessed by Melchizedek (14:17–24)
- Abraham and the Covenant (15:1–20:18)
 - **Covenant with Abram (15:1–21)**
 - Birth of Ishmael (16:1–16)
 - **Sign of the Covenant/Circumcision of Abraham (17:1–27)**
 - A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah (18:1–15)
 - Judgment Pronounced on Sodom (18:16–33)
 - Depravity of Sodom (19:1–11)
 - Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (19:12–29)
 - Shameful Origin of Moab and Ammon (19:30–38)
 - Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech (20:1–18)

The Abrahamic Covenant



God's Promises to Abram

Precursors to Covenants (Genesis 12–17)

1. Abram shall be a great nation, go to Canaan, **in him shall all families of the Earth be blessed** (12:1–3, in Haran)
2. **The Promised Land of Canaan given to the seed of Abram**, Abram builds an altar (12:7, Shechem when first arriving in Canaan)
3. **The land again promised, Abram's seed as the dust of the earth** (13:15–16, Canaan after returning from Egypt)
4. **Abram's seed as the stars** (15:5, after rescue of Lot)
5. Abram's seed shall be held as stranger's in a land for many years, **the land between the Nile and Euphrates given to Abram** (15:9–18, when promise is made with a covenant)
6. A great nation and kings will arise from his generation (17:2–8, after Hagar bears Ishmael, promise again made with a covenant)
7. **A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah** (18:1–15)

Covenants

- **Solemn, binding, two-way agreements that bring us into a *relationship* with the other party**
 - Horizontal: Between equals, agreements between individuals (cf. Nephi and Zoram)
 - In antiquity included treaties and other formal agreements (e.g., between kings)
 - Vertical: Between a superior and an inferior
 - **Priesthood covenants**
 - God-initiated or established, made by means of proper authority
 - Often associated with ordinances that symbolize and/or “seal the deal” (cf. handshake or signing a contract)
 - “The gospel is so arranged that principles and ordinances are received by covenant placing the recipient under strong obligation and responsibility to honor the agreement”
- **Individual Covenants**
 - Baptismal, oath and covenant of the priesthood, temple endowment, temple sealings
- **Corporate or “group” covenants**
 - With Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Sinai/Deuteronomic (Moses and Joshua with Israel), David, Lehi

Promises Formalized as Covenants

- Twice (the last two times God makes promises) God's promises to Abram are solemnized (i.e. they are presented as part of a covenant)
 - *Each time the covenant is ratified or effected by a ritual act (i.e., an ordinance)*
- **First Covenant (15:18–21) focuses on land**
 - Follows on Abraham's belief, which is counted for righteousness (15:6; see Romans 4:3)
 - Associated with **sacrifice** (an **ordinance**; 15:9–11, 17)
 - Preceded by "a deep sleep" (like Adam; see 2:21) and a prophecy of Israel's bondage and deliverance and Abraham's own "good death" (15:13–16)
- **Second Covenant (17:1–16, 21) focuses on posterity and land**
 - Accompanied by new names, indicating a new beginning or a new status
 - **Abram** (exalted father) > **Abraham** (father of a great number)
 - **Sarai** (my princess) > **Sarah** (princess)
 - Associated with **circumcision** (an **ordinance** and an outward sign of the inward covenant, 17:10–14)
 - *Like baptism today, the ordinance of circumcision was necessary to be part of the people of God (see 14:14)*

Abrahamic Covenant Synthesized (Genesis 15, 17)

- **God's Promises to Abraham**

- Land
- Posterity
- Blessings to the Nations
 - In LDS theology, priesthood blessings are included in this, carried from Noah to Abraham, but the only priesthood mentioned in the Old Testament (outside of the passing reference to Melchizedek himself) belongs to Aaron

- **Abraham's Promises to God**

- Accept Elohim/YHWH as his god
- Believe/Trust YHWH (15:6; cf. Romans 4:3)
- Walk with God - "be perfect" or follow God's commands (17:1)

- **Associated Ordinances (ritual acts)**

- Sacrifice – building an altar and sacrificing animals (15:9-10)
- Circumcision – A token of the covenant (17:10-11)

The Binding of Isaac



Sacrifice of Isaac, by Caravaggio

Command to Sacrifice Isaac

The *Aqedah* or “Binding” (Genesis 22:1–19)

- **The Command** (Genesis 22:1–2), references to Abraham’s “only son” whom he “loves”
 - “tempt” in 22:1 is better translated “test” or “prove”
 - Mount Moriah was later identified with the Temple Mount
- **The Attempted Sacrifice** (Genesis 22:3–10)
 - On KJV “lad” (22:5; also 22:12): Josephus said he was 25, the Talmud 37!
 - Did Abraham trust that God would raise Isaac from the dead if he went forward with the sacrifice?
- **The Intervention** (Genesis 22:11–14)
 - Not only does an angel stop Abraham, but a ram is miraculously provided
 - “the LORD shall be seen” in 22:14 is a wordplay that better means “YHWH will provide”
 - Jewish commentators struggled with the exegesis
 - Christians see it as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ (exposition) > since God’s only Son will die, Abraham’s does not need to!

The Binding of Isaac, exegesis and exposition

- **Simple exegesis**

- *A test of Abraham's faith, he is spared the sacrifice when he shows obedience*
- Problems include the issue of human sacrifice and why an all-knowing God would need to test his servant

- **Christian exposition**

- The almost-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham **symbolizes God's sending his Only Begotten and Beloved Son as a sacrifice for the world**
- Also represented by the ram that takes Isaac's place

The Covenant Renewed (Genesis 22:15–19)

- *A blessing for demonstrated obedience?*
- Note the evidence of **an oath**, “By myself I have sworn . . .” (22:16; cf. Gen 15:25–40 JST; Hebrews 6:13–17, 7:17–28; D&C 84:33–45 n.b. 39–40)