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The Faith of Abraham

11: 8-19

The faith of Abraham DIG: What makes Abraham a good model of the life of faith? Was Abraham raised in a godly environment? What does salvation demand? Define worldliness. How is faith demonstrated in the three examples from Abraham's life? What obstacles had to be overcome? What changed for him? What changed for his family? In what four ways did Abraham fail miserably in his life? Why don't we read about those failures here in the Hall of Faith? In what way was Abraham's patience seen in his life? What motivated Abraham to be patient in his faith?

REFLECT: If ADONAI has forgotten Abraham's sins as far as the east is from the west, what does that mean for you and your sins? Just as Abraham was a foreigner and a stranger in the Promised Land, so believers are strangers in this world. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and our earthly existence is only temporary. Do your priorities reflect that fact, or are you in danger of being so earthly minded that you're no heavenly good? Are your goals in life different from those of your worldly friends, or are you pursuing the same things they are? Meditate on Matthew 6:33 this week, and ask God if your priorities match up with His program: Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.³¹¹

The B'rit Chadashah makes it clear that **Abraham** was the first true man of **faith**. Since **his** time, everyone who **trusts God**, Jew or Gentile, is spiritually **a child of Abraham**. **Therefore, be sure that it is those of faith who are sons and daughters of Abraham (Galatians 3:7 and 29)**. Those who **trusted God** before the Flood - such as **Abel, Enoch and Noah** - were only partial examples of **faith**. **Abraham** was the first established man of **faith**, and **he** is the pattern, the prototype, of **faith** for people of all ages. **But those who are righteous will live their lives by faith (Hebrews 10:38 CJB quoting Habakkuk 2:4 CJB)**.³¹²

But **Abraham** failed miserably and demonstrated a lack of **faith** four times in **his**

life. First, **he** stayed in **Haran** when **he** should have gone to **the Promised Land** (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Dq - Terah Became the Father of Abram, Nahor and Haran**). Second, **Abram** left **the land of Canaan** and **went down to Egypt** (see the commentary on **Genesis Dv - Now There Was a Famine in the Land, and Abram Went Down to Egypt to Live**). Third, **he** listened to **his** wife instead of waiting on **the Lord**, which resulted in **the birth of Ishmael** and untold problems (see the commentary on **Genesis Ei - Sarai Took Hagar and Gave Her to Abram to be His Wife**). Fourth, **his** lapse of faith continued as **he** refused to trust **God** for **his** and **his** wife's safety when **he** lied to Abimelech for the second time (see the commentary on **Genesis Fd - Abraham Said of His Wife: She is My Sister**). So why am I talking about all **his** failures in **the Hall of Faith**? I am glad you asked.



When **Abram** looked up to **the heavens** and **believed** that **his descendants** would be **as numerous as the stars in the sky**, it was **credited to him as righteousness** (see the commentary on **Genesis Ef - Abram Believed the LORD and He Credited It to Him as Righteousness**). At that time **his** relationship to **YHVH** changed immediately. And when we accept **Yeshua Messiah** as our **Lord** and **Savior** our relationship also changes (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**).

Once saved, when **God** looks at us, **He** doesn't see or **sin**; **He** sees **His Son** who lives inside of us (**Ephesians 1:3, 7, 11-12**). **As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our sins from us (Psalm 103:12 GNT)**. How far is **the east from the west**? It can't be measured. Therefore, even though **Abraham** failed miserably at four critical times in **his** life, when we get to the Hall

of Faith, **the Holy Spirit** doesn't even mention them! The same is true for you and I. **Praise Adonai, for He is good, for His lovingkindness** (see the commentary on **Ruth Af - The Concept of Chesed**) **endures forever (Psalm 136:1-26 TLV)**. Thus, let's take a look at the **three reasons** why **Abraham** is listed among the **faithful**.

First, by faith Abraham, when was being 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 quoting Genesis 12:1). In other words, as soon as **he** understood what **God** was saying, **he** started packing. It was instant obedience. It may have taken several days or weeks to make final preparation for the trip, but in **his** mind **he** was already on the way. **He** separated **himself** from the worldliness of Ur, the wanting to do things that were sinful, wanting the praise of others, and desire to live like the rest of the world.

Abraham was a sinful heathen who grew up in an unbelieving and idolatrous society. We do not know exactly how or when **Ha'Shem** first made **Himself** known to **Abraham**, but **he** was raised in a home that **worshiped other gods (Joshua 24:2)**. His native city of Ur was in Chaldea, in the general region called Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. It was a fertile land and was culturally advanced. It was near where the garden of Eden was located (Genesis 2:14) and was some 140 miles from where Babylon would one day be built.³¹³ When **he** left Ur, and later Haran, **he** didn't know where **he** was going. **He** only knew that **God** was telling **him** to **go**. In the account in **Genesis 12:1-3, ADONAI** simply told **Abraham** to **go to a land** that **He** would **show him**. **Abraham** was to keep on walking until **YHVH** told **him** to stop. Therefore, **Abraham** shows the pilgrimage of **faith**.³¹⁴

By faith he 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. The three, **Abraham, Isaac** and **Jacob**, are mentioned because **they** cover the entire period of the sojourn in Canaan. The secret of **Abraham's** patience was **his** hope in the ultimate fulfillment of **God's promise**. For the rest of **his** life, from the time **he** entered **the Promised Land** until **he** died, **he lived in tents**. All of **his** life **Abraham** walked up and down **the Land** that **YHVH** had promised **him**, yet he never owned more than a small plot in which to bury **Sarah (Genesis 23:9-20)**. **The land** of Canaan was **promised**, but which was never given. **His** ultimate **Promised Land** was heaven, just as ours is. **He** was patient because **his** eyes were on **the City with foundations, whose**

architect and builder is God (11:9-10). As important as **the** earthly **land** was to **him** and to **God's promise**, **he** looked up toward **the** heavenly **land**, which **he** knew **he** would inherit without fail (see the commentary on **Revelation Fu - The New Jerusalem had a Great, High Wall with Twelve Gates**).³¹⁵

Second, by faith Abraham, in association with **Sarah, who was past childbearing age**, received power **to bare children** (Greek: *eis katabolen spermatos*, meaning literally *to lay down seed, the depositing of sperm*) **because she considered Him faithful who had made the promise (11:11)**. A woman, however, does not *lay down seed* that produce conception. This phrase, therefore, must refer to **Abraham**, making **him** the subject of the sentence. **The Ruach ELOHIM** is referring to **Abraham's faith**. It was **Abraham's faith** that gave **Sarah** the ability to conceive, and in that sense, **she** became one with **Abraham in faith**.

Then **verse 12** gives us the result. **Therefore, from this one man, Abraham, who was as good as dead**, meaning that **he** himself had become sterile, **came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore (Hebrews 11:12 quoting Genesis 15:5-6, 22:17, 32:12; Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 1:10 and 10:22)**. **Abraham** had become not only the father of the Jewish nation, but also all the Jewish and Gentile believers to ever be born. **His descendants** are truly **as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore**.³¹⁶

In **God's** eyes, the greatest heroes of **faith** are not those who achieve prosperity, success, and power in this life, but those who treat this life as a temporary assignment and serve faithfully, expecting their promised reward in eternity. **All these people (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth (Hebrews 11:13 quoting First Chronicles 29:15)**. Far from being a lament, however, this is a positive declaration that these **men** died in the assurance that **their promises** would be fulfilled. **They** did not see the fulfillment of these **promises** but **they** had the **faith** to greet **them from a distance**. **They** knew if **they** died and **the promises** were not fulfilled, **they** would be fulfilled in another lifetime. **The Patriarchs** were willing to live out **their** present lives as **strangers on the earth**, and as such, **they** were without the right of citizenship, and as **foreigners**, **they** had no possessions. Your time on earth is not the complete story of your life. You must wait until heaven for the rest of the

chapters. It takes **faith** to live **on earth** as **a foreigner**.

An old story is often repeated of a retiring missionary coming home to America on the same boat as the president of the United States. Cheering crowds, a military band, a red carpet, banners, and the media welcomed the president home, but the missionary slipped off the ship unnoticed. Feeling self-pity and resentment, he began complaining to **God**. Then **the LORD** gently reminded him, “But my child, you’re not home yet.” You will not be in heaven two seconds before you cry out, ““Why did I place so much importance on things that were so temporary. What was I thinking? Why did I waste so much time, energy, and concern on what wasn’t going to last?”

When life gets tough, when you’re overwhelmed with doubt, or when you wonder if living for **Christ** is worth the effort, remember that you are not home yet. At death you won’t leave home . . . you’ll be going home.³¹⁷

People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a City for them (11:14-16). These **men of faith** did not know what to expect. **ADONAI** had given **them** no inside information, no word as to when or how **the promises** would be fulfilled. **He** only gave **them promises**, and that was enough. **They** had a sampling of **the Promised Land**. **They** walked on **it**, and pastured **their** flocks on **it**, and raised **their** children on **it**, but were not impatient to possess **it**. It was enough to possess **it from a distance**, because **their** primary concern was for **a better country - a heavenly one**.³¹⁸

Third, by faith Abraham, when God tested (Greek: *peirazo*) him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. The construction in the Greek makes it clear that while the testing of **Abraham** was still in progress, **he** had passed **the test** by the act of **his** obedient will through **faith** in **God**. The proof of **Abraham’s faith** was **his** willingness to give back to **God** everything **he** had, including **Isaac, the son of promise**, whom **he** had miraculously received as a direct result of **his faith**. **He** knew, therefore, that **Ha’Shem** would do whatever was necessary, including **raising Isaac** from **the dead**, to keep **His** Covenant. **He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son (11:17), even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be**

reckoned” (Hebrews 11:18 quoting Genesis 21:12). Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from the dead (11:19).

The story of the *Akedat-Yitzchak*, the “Binding of Isaac” (see the commentary on **Genesis FI - Abraham Tested**), is read in the synagogue as part of the liturgy for the second week of Rosh-Hashanah (some versions of the Siddur also include it in the first part of the daily morning prayers); and its *musaf* service contains this prayer.

“Remember unto us, **Adonai our God**, the covenant, the **lovingkindness** and the oath which You swore to **Avraham** our father on Mount Moriah. May the binding (*‘akedah*) with which **Avraham** our father bound **his son Yitzchak** on the altar appear before you, how **he** overcame **his** compassion in order to do **Your** will with a perfect heart.”

It is highly appropriate that the *‘akedah* should be remembered at this season, when Jewish people are concerned with sin and its punishment, death, as symbolized by sacrifices (see, for example, the *Un’tanneh Tokef* prayer). Indeed the great Rabbi Rashi comments on **Genesis 22:14** (“on this day”): **YHVH will see this ‘akedah to forgive Isra’el every year and rescue them from trouble; so that it will be said, “On this day,” in all coming generations, “on the mountain of ADONAI is seen” the ashes of Yitzchak heaped up and serving for atonement.**

Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from the dead (11:19). This verse explains that the events of the *‘akedah* prefigure the atoning death of **Yeshua Messiah**. The *‘akedah* is referred to again in the B’rit Chadashah: **The Jews then responded to Yeshua, “What sign can you show us to prove Your authority to do all this (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ IV - Jesus Entered the Temple Area and Drove Out All Who Were Buying and Selling**)? Jesus answered them: **Destroy this Temple, and I will rise it up again in three days.** They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and You are going to raise it in three days?” But the Temple He had spoken of was His body. After He was raised from the dead, His apostles recalled what He had said. Then they believed in the Scriptures and the words that Yeshua had spoken. Now while He was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and **believed** in**



His name (John 2:18-23).³¹⁸