

Abraham - Part Three

by Charles E. Wigg

Partial obedience:

When they reached the place called Haran, Abraham probably named (it in memory of his brother), and it seems possible that the old father had experienced enough of the life of a pilgrim. I believe it was Terah, (though we are not told), who probably complained to Abraham that they had gone far enough. The undulating country where they had come was abundant in grass, and perhaps using his age as an excuse, Terah persuaded Abraham that they had gone far enough. After all they had left Ur, that was a great sacrifice for him. I deduce this, because it was not until Terah died that Abraham recalled what God had said to him when they left Ur.

They may have remained in Haran for up to 40 years, and during those years God had never spoken to Abraham. Because we read in Gen. 12 verse 1, that the Lord **had said** to Abraham. That means that from the time that they left Ur, all the time that they had settled in Haran, God never spoke to Abraham.

The Silent Years:

These 30+ years were the silent years, years during which God never spoke to Abraham. They stand as a warning to us, to warn us against settling down short of God's purpose for us.

If Satan cannot prevent us from answering the call of God, then his next trick is to remind us of the break that we have made, to give us an exaggerated idea of the price that we have already paid. He may quietly whisper; "You have done enough, you have gone far enough, don't be fanatical, don't be extreme." He will even use those who are near and dear to us, as in this case, Abraham's father.

When the Lord called me to leave my land and to travel abroad, to India, my father, (a dear and godly old man), was very upset. In his mind it was OK for others to go. He admired some of those who did, and supported them in prayer and financially, but he thought that it was too much for me to go.

During those years, Abraham became involved in agriculture, in business again, and he prospered. It was true that he had no house now, (he never had a house again after he left Ur). However he did amass wealth, even in parts of Africa today, the number of cattle that he owns measures a man's wealth. Sometimes material prosperity is taken as a token of God's blessing and approval of a believer and his activities. We have noted the words of the Lord Jesus earlier; "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses". Riches can be a snare; they can rob us of our dependence upon God. Solomon was taught to pray, "Give me neither poverty or riches", Prov. 30; 7 to 9.

When Terah died, Abraham learned again the lesson that God taught him at the time of Haran's death. What was the real value of all those material things? His father had died, and he had taken nothing with him. It was then that he recalled what God had said to him, when they left Ur. It was then that he saw the great mistake of those wasted, silent years. He remembered the promises of God, not only that God would bless him, but also bless others, (even you and I), through him. That blessing would spread out to all the families of the earth. So he returned to the path of total obedience again, he departed from Haran.

Hindrances:

Abraham gathered all his goods, his animals, and his people together, but it was not so easy for him to travel now. More than half of his life had gone; he was now seventy-five years old. What a warning this is

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to us, let us see that we do not waste our lives or our time, doing our own will, and missing out on God's will.

It was not so easy to travel also because of all his possessions. Possessions and property are a hindrance to a pilgrim. We are commanded to "Lay aside every **weight and the sin** that so easily besets us. It is not only sin that hinders, (it surely does), but weights also. These can be things that are quite legitimate in their place, but if they hinder our fully answering the call of God, then we need to lay them aside.

Canaan at last:

Verse 5, of Gen. 12, is lovely, "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; **and into the land of Canaan they came**". Abraham had learned his lesson, and learned it well. He would allow no difficulty to hinder him now. God had shown him where to go, and though it was a long journey, possibly 700 to 800 Kilometres, he did not stop until he reached Shechem, and there he pitched his tent beneath the oak of Moreh.

The name Moreh means "Teacher", and the word "Oak", is in some Bibles rendered "Plain", however it is more correctly rendered "Oak". The oak in the Old Testament, (O.T.), represents in some cases, the "cross of Christ", in others the "faithfulness of God". In this case it represents the faithfulness of God. To arrive at this meaning we need to remember that oak trees grow to a very large size, and they live for thousands of years. They also never move from their place: if they could see, they could witness the passing of many generations; they could see many battles fought and won, or lost. They could see kingdoms rise and fall, Empires come and go, yet they never change, never move. Thus we may rightly claim that they represent the unchanging faithfulness of God. I like to link this with Psalm 91; 1 & 2, as well as the whole psalm, and Psalm 90; 1 & 2. "Under the shadow of the Almighty", is a wonderful place to pitch your tent. "The secret place of the Most High", is a wonderful place to raise your children. To live each day in the realization of God's unchanging faithfulness is so wonderful. The one from whom every good and perfect gift comes, the One in whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. This brings stability to the soul, in a changing and a decaying world.

But this oak is called Moreh, "Teacher". Showing us that the One who is unchanging in His faithfulness, is also our teacher, and He teaches us lessons throughout all of life's experiences. How many lessons Abraham had learned up until this time. How many more he was to learn, before his pilgrimage ended. Elihu exclaimed, "Who teacheth like Him", Job 36; 22. Isaiah shows us how patiently He teaches, because we are so slow to learn. He teaches by example, as well as by precept. He teaches us by the word, but He also teaches through our failures.

Communion restored:

Once Abraham obeyed, then God spoke to him again; we learn from this, that if He gives us light, and we do not obey, then He will give no more until we do obey. In verse 7 we read that God appeared to Abraham, and that He spoke to him, but we also read that Abraham built an altar to Jehovah who appeared to him.

This is the first altar that Abraham built, showing us that he had grown in his knowledge of God, and that he now has a desire to approach to God, and to offer thanks and praise, to serve Him.

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Abraham reaches new heights:

From Shechem Abraham moved on into the very centre of the promised inheritance, he comes to a mountain top experience, having Hai on the east, and Beth-el on the west.

Hai means "ruins"; so as the sun rose each morning, Abraham was reminded of the ruins of all that man may strive and labor to build up. Beth-el, means the "House of God", so that as the sun set in the West, he was reminded of the permanence of what God builds, the Lord Jesus said that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Matt. 16; 18.