

Genesis 12:1-17:27 The **Era of the Torah Begins**

Introduction:

Abraham was born about 1948 years after the birth of Adam, 20 generations, and at the close of what many have called the Era of Desolation. In the first 2,000 years from creation Adam and Eve had fallen, Abel had been murdered, idolatry had been introduced, ten dismal generations had been destroyed by the Deluge, and generally the next ten generations had failed as well. Abram (Abraham) is born at the end of the second millennium, is close to 50 years old at the time of the Dispersion from Babel and is used by God to introduce the Era of Torah - God's instructions to man on how to live, how to relate to the living God and how to find redemption.

Abram originates in the Ur of the Chaldeas, somewhere along the Euphrates River in the land of Shiner. God calls Abram's father, Terah, along with his brother Nahor and all their family to leave the land of the Chaldeas and travel to Haran, located in the southern area of what is today Turkey. Terah died in Haran at the age of 205 years.

Chapter 12 "Go for yourself from your land"

Vs. 1-3 God calls Abram to leave his new land and relatives and travel to an unknown land that God promises to give to him. God states He will:

- Make of Abram a great nation
- He will bless Abram and make his name great
- He will make Abram a blessing to all the families of the earth
- God will bless those who bless Abram and curse those who curse Abram

Why did God choose Abram? Was it because Abram had been trained to know God and walk with Him. The non-canonized books such as "Jasher" and the histories of Josephus would certainly indicate this. Abram's father was a polytheist; he worshipped many gods, idols, and Abram is called to leave this familial influence. God makes promises that are fulfilled in many ways to Abram. Today, most of the world's population link Abram to their understanding of God; Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Vs. 4-6 At the age of 75 Abram obeys God and takes his whole family and journeys to this land he did not know. Abram and his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the servants and livestock he had amassed. Abram was the natural patriarch after his father's death, the sole survivor of his brothers, and therefore responsible for his nephew Lot.

Abram and his household traveled as far as Shechem, located between Mounts Ebal and Gerazim. The Canaanites lived in this land at that time. The Canaanites were the descendents of Ham through his son Canaan.

Vs. 7-9 “*Hashem appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’*”. Abram’s response was to build an altar and worship God through sacrifice. From here Abram traveled south and pitched his tent near the mountain and between Beth-el (House of God) and Ai. Abram built another altar to sacrifice and he called on or invoked Hashem by NAME. From here he continued south toward the Negev.

How did Abraham know the NAME?

Vs. 10-16 There was a great famine in the land so Abram and his people traveled to Egypt - Mitzraim. Here Abram has a fear that his beautiful wife, Sarai, is so beautiful the Pharaoh may see her and wish to take her as his own wife, having Abram killed. The beautiful Sarai is at least 85 years old at this time. Abram asks Sarai to pass herself off as his sister rather than his wife. (The historians of Judaism suggest that the reference to Iscah in 11:29 is actually Sarai who is the daughter of Abram’s brother Nahor. That technically makes Sarai Abram’s niece before she became his wife). Sure enough, Pharaoh’s men spot the very beautiful Sarai and (involuntarily) took her to Pharaoh’s house. Pharaoh treated Abram well for this soon-to-be trophy wife in Pharaoh’s harem, giving him much livestock and man and maid servants.

Vs. 17-20 But it did not go well with Pharaoh. He and his entire household suffered plagues (plural) because he had taken Sarai. It was very soon determined the problem was that Sarai was indeed Abram’s wife, not his sister, and Pharaoh had Abram, Sarai and all that was theirs escorted out of Egypt. Mitzraim expelled the righteous man.

Ramban, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (Nachmanides), 1198-1270, born in Spain and died in Israel, was one of the foremost sages in all of history. Ramban records that the deeds of the patriarchs often are portents of the lives of the offspring. That is, whatever happened to the patriarchs in their lives is a portent for the lives of the offspring. In Abram’s case, due to a famine he leaves Canaan and travels to Egypt. His grandson, Jacob, and all of Jacob’s family, too, flees Canaan due to a famine and finds safe harbor in Egypt. However, we can’t miss the fact that his even more significant offspring, Yeshua of Nazareth, as an infant, flees with his family to the safety of Egypt due to a famine of morals, values and righteousness in Canaan.

Chapter 13 Abram and Lot part ways

Vs. 1-4 Abram and all his household and possessions go up from Egypt. Certainly, geographically Canaan is a higher elevation than Egypt and he is traveling north which would be proper to indicate “up from Egypt”. But there is a moral or spiritual statement made here as well. Abram is leaving the moral decay of Mitzraim, the world, to go the place God has prepared for him (aliyahs - returns to Israel - are always described as going up, too).

Scripture states Abram was very laden with livestock, silver and gold as he left Egypt and returned to Canaan. He made his way back to the area between Beth-el (house of God) and Ai and set his tents there. Again he sacrificed and invoked God by NAME.

Vs. 5-11 Lot, too, had many possessions of livestock and servants. There were far too many livestock between Abram’s and Lot’s for both to remain in one place. There was constant quarreling between the shepherds and herdsmen of Abram and Lot, and there were indigenous Canaanites and Perizzites as well who fussed over the land.

A division had to occur to achieve peace so Lot chose to take the land to the east and south, down in the Jordan River plains toward the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Vs. 12-13 Lot moved his tents into the city of Sodom which was described as a wicked place.

Vs. 14-18 Hashem was present with Abram and again promised him all the land he could see to the north, west, east and south. Not only did God promise to give it to Abram, He promised this land to Abram’s descendents as well - forever!

“I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring, too, can be counted. Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth! For to you I will give it”.

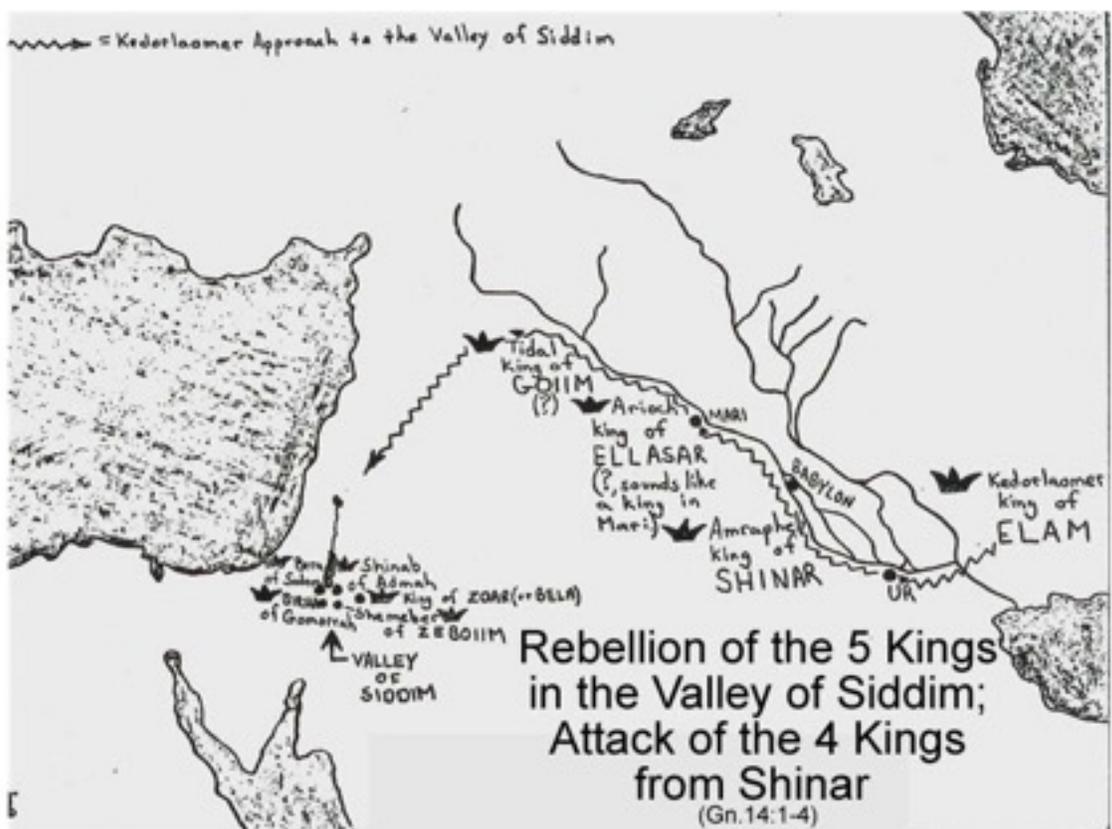
From here Abram moved south to Hebron, in the Plains of Mamre, where he built an altar to Hashem.

Chapter 14 Redeeming Lot and tithing to Melchizedek

Vs. 1-12 Four kings from the east, the lands of Assyria and Babylon, go west and battle with several king states in southern Canaan. The eastern kings subdue the kings of southern Canaan and hold them as tax-paying subjects for 12 years; and in the 13th year, the kings of Canaan rebel against Chedorlaomer (Kedorlaomer) and his cronies. The kingdoms under siege in Canaan include Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and

Zoar - all cities around the Dead Sea. In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and his comrades expand their attacks against kings in Edom to the south of the Dead Sea, as well as cities to the east and to the west of Edom - as far west as the Plains of Paddan which is just north of the Wilderness Zin.

As the attacks are enlarged, the four kings from the cities around the Dead Sea went on the offensive and went to war with the kings of the east. While the battle grew, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and eventually were lost in the bitumen (tar) pits of Siddim. Chedorlaomer and his comrades raided Sodom and Gomorrah, captured all their wealth and food, and kidnapped Lot and his possessions and household, as he was residing in Sodom.



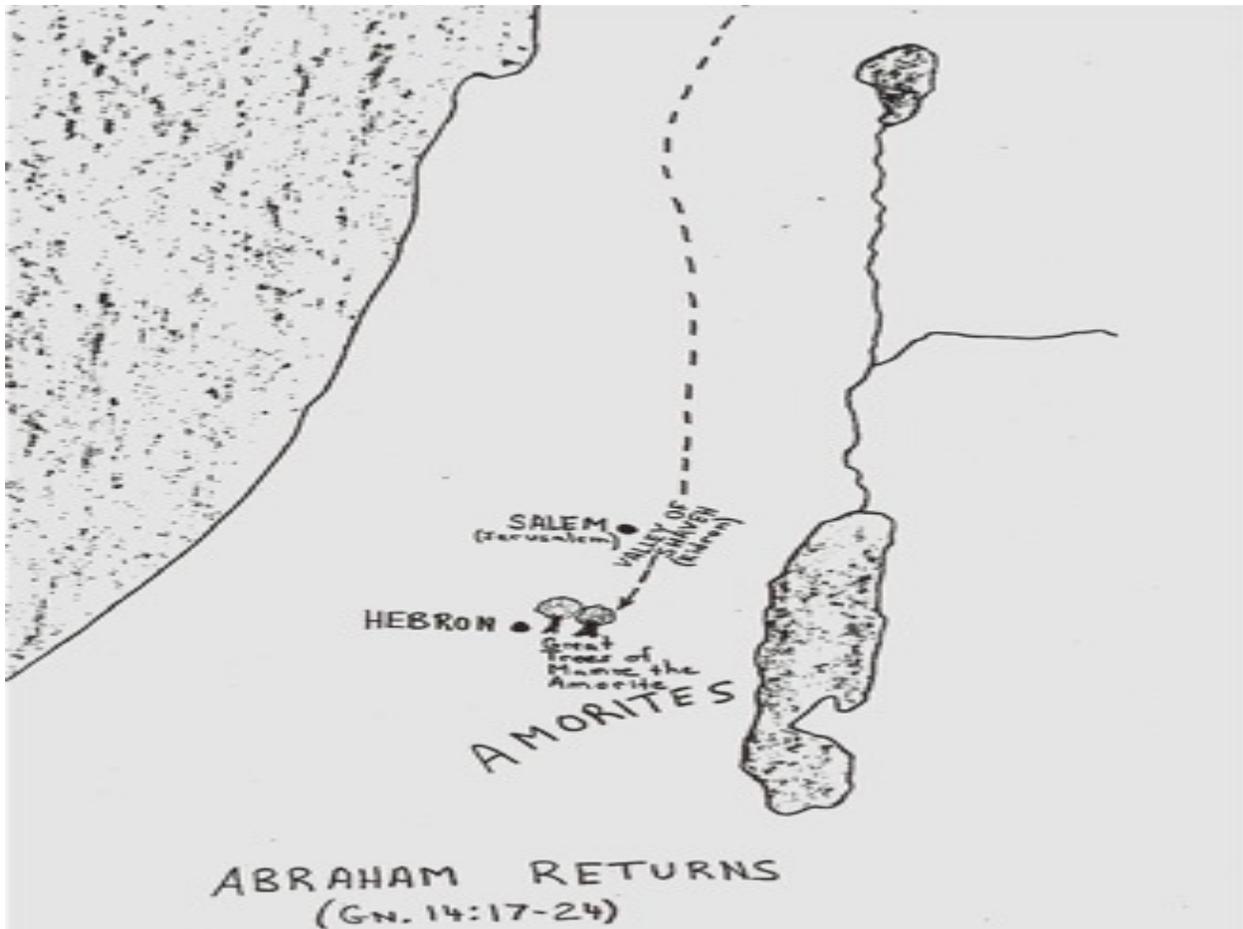
Vs. 13-16 One man escaped from Lot's household and made his way to the plains of Mamre to report to Lot's uncle Abram. Abram arms a small army of his servants, 318 in all, and goes after Chedorlaomer to retrieve (redeem) Lot and Lot's household. Abram and his small army travel to Dan, the far north end of Canaan where he caught up with the marauders and attacked them at night. Abram and his army pursued the fleeing Chedorlaomer north to Hobah, north of Damascus. Abram succeeds in defeating Chedorlaomer and his company and redeems not only Lot and Lot's

household, but all the wealth and persons taken from Sodom and Gomorrah by Chederlaomer and his armies.



Vs. 17- 20 Abram returns to the Valley of Shaveh which runs just east of Salem (Jerusalem).

Here he is intercepted by the King of Sodom who wishes to honor Abram.



Also, Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest to the God, the Most High appears on the scene and brought out bread and wine. Melchizedek blessed Abram saying, *“Blessed is Abram of God, the Most High, Maker of Heaven and earth; and blessed be God, the Most High, Who has delivered your foes into your hand”*. Abram gave one-tenth of everything to Melchizedek.

In an attempt to be gracious to Abram, the king of Sodom offered Abram to take all the wealth but just return his people to him. Abram’s response is powerful! *“I lift up my hand to Hashem, God, the Most High, Maker of heaven and earth. If so much as a thread to a sandal strap; or if I shall take from anything of yours, so you shall not say, ‘It is I who made Abram rich’. Far from me! Only what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who accompanied me, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre - they shall take their portion”*.

Abram recognized full well that all he had was a gift from God, the Most High.

Melchizedek - So here, the question of Melchizedek must be considered. Who is this man?

- He is identified as the King of Salem (peace). Salem is identified with Jerusalem.
- He is identified as a Priest of God, the Most High, Maker of Heaven and earth.
- His name means “King of Righteousness”
- He is a High Priest as Abram tithes one-tenth of all the spoils to God through him

Psalms 110:4 connects the Messiah with Melchizedek citing Yeshua (Jesus) as a “*Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*”.

Hebrews 6:20 tells us that Jesus has entered within the veil, into the Most Holy Place, as a forerunner for us. He has become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:1-22 reiterates the qualifications of Melchizedek as recorded in the Genesis 14 account and goes on to expand on this by saying the order of Melchizedek is an order of priests not of the Levitical priesthood. Yeshua is of the tribe of Judah, not Levi. Melchizedek has no recorded mother or father, no genealogy, and no recorded beginning of days or ending of life - he remains a priest perpetually, as does Yeshua. This means that Yeshua will serve as a High Priest for all time and beyond time. His is a perfect priesthood that never ends. This priesthood is far greater than the Levitical priesthood which was required to pay tithes and make sin sacrifices for themselves as well as the people.

It is interesting to note that the rabbinic sages tend to agree that Melchizedek was none other than Shem, son of Noah. Shem did outlive Abraham by about 35 years.

Chapter 15 The Covenant with God, sealed by the Blood Covenant

Vs. 1-6 God visited Abram in a vision saying, “*Fear not, Abram, I am a shield for you; your reward is very great*”.

Abram responds out of great concern for he is an older man and no child has been born to him. As far as Abram can tell, his servant Eliezer the Damascene will inherit all his wealth.

The scripture records that God responded “**Suddenly**”. Eliezer **will not** be your heir! Only a child who shall come forth from within Abram will inherit. God has Abram look up into the night sky and tells him there is a day coming when his offspring will be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Vs. 7-8 God speaks again, *“I am Hashem Who bought you out of Ur of the Chaldeas to give you this land to inherit it”*.

Abram responds, *“My LORD, Hashem, Elohim: whereby shall I know that I am to inherit it?”*

Vs. 9-10 God instructed Abram to take three heifers, three goats, three rams, a turtle dove and a young dove. Abram was to cut the heifers, goats and rams in half from nose to tail and lay them out, side opposite side. The birds were not to be cut. This is so the blood of the cut animals would drain into a pool between the halves for each party to walk through. This is a traditional blood covenant that says if either party fails to keep the covenant the other party may do to him as was done to these animals.

In thinking about the significance of numbers, God commands Abram to take 11 animals for this blood covenant. Eleven is the number of mankind, human failure, and this covenant is dependent on man who fails to keep covenants, keeping the covenant in this situation. We see pretty easily where this is destined to be headed.

Vs. 11 Birds of prey came down to eat the animal carcasses and Abram drove them away. These birds of prey represent the world, or possibly satanic attacks to keep this covenant from taking place.

Vs. 12 As the sun was setting and darkness was coming, Abram fell asleep into a deep, dreadful darkness which completely enveloped him. Perhaps he literally passed out due to the fear of making this covenant as he was not just making this covenant for himself with God, he was making the covenant for all the myriad of offspring God had promised would come through him. How does one make such a covenant for those who have not even been born yet? Failure on the part of the offspring meant that God was free to destroy them just as these animals had been destroyed. Was this to be a curse on his offspring or a blessing?

Vs. 13-16 God continues to speak to Abram and tells him his offspring will be taken into captivity and will be oppressed in an alien land for four hundred years. God will judge the oppressing nation and Abram’s children will be redeemed and will leave the land with great wealth. Abram himself will live to be a ripe old age and will die in peace, but the fourth generation will return to this land and obtain it from the Amorites at that time.

The Children of Israel do not spend 400 years in exile in Egypt but 210 years in Egypt. However, the 180 years preceding Egyptian exile will be spent as aliens in Canaan, but

when they return to Canaan, they will become possessors of the land. Of the 210 years of Egyptian exile, only the last 86 years were under slavery and bondage before God lead them in the great exodus.

Vs.17-21 So, as the sun set, Abram has fallen asleep (passed out), and a smoking furnace and a flaming torch passed between the pieces of animal carcasses. Since Abram could not walk through the bloody pools himself, God and Yeshua in the form of the smoking furnace and flaming torch passed through it. Yeshua, the Flaming Torch, passed through this for mankind and when the descendents of Abram failed to keep the covenant, Yeshua Himself took man's place by being beaten and pierced, dying on the cross, taking the consequences destined for mankind.

On that day Hashem made a covenant with Abram, saying, ***“To your descendents have I given this land, from the River of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River: the Kennites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Raphaim; The Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites”***.

Chapter 16 Ishmael is conceived

Vs.1-5 Ten years have passed and no son is born to Sarai by her husband Abram. She is now 75 years of age and Abram is 85 years of age. Sarai decides the way to get things going is for Abram to have a child with her maid servant, Hagar the Egyptian. Abram agreed and in a short time Hagar conceived. With the conception, conflict soon erupted. Hagar felt elevated as the mother of her master's baby and Sarai was lowered in esteem as she had yet to conceive. Sarai was angry and blamed this outrage on her husband Abram.

Vs. 6 Abram told Sarai she could do with Hagar as she chose and Sarai chose to send her packing. Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar and Hagar fled - she ran away in her state of pregnancy.

Vs. 7-14 So Hagar takes off toward the land of Shur, Abram's homeland, and an angel finds her near a spring on the road and asks her what she is doing and where is she going. The angel instructs her to return to her home with Abram and Sarai and place herself in submission to Sarai, her mistress. The angel promises that she shall have many children and they too will be blessed. The baby within her is a son and she is to name him Ishmael for Hashem had heard her prayer. Ishmael will become a “wild ass” of a man, his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand will be against him, yet he will be a leader over all his brothers.

Hagar called the name of the LORD who spoke to her for she was surprised she remained alive after seeing this angel from God. She called the well, “The well of the Living One who Appeared to Me”.

Vs. 15-16 Hagar returned to serve Sarai and she gave birth to a son and called his name Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born.

Note: Tradition tells us that Hagar the Egyptian was in fact a daughter of the Pharaoh and was given to Abram and Sarai when they departed Egypt. Perhaps this was a gesture of kindness by the Pharaoh and perhaps it was a gesture of affiliation, placing the daughter of the king into the household of another great king/leader for the purpose of forming political alliance.

Chapter 17 The sign of the covenant - circumcision; changes Abram’s name to Abraham

Vs. 1-8 God re-confirms the covenant He has made with Abram who is now 99 years old.

“I am God Almighty; Walk before me; and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly”.

Abram fell on his face as God continued to speak,

“As for ME, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendents after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendents after you. I will give to you and to your descendents after you, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”.

Vs. 9-14 Further, God not only changes Abram’s name to Abraham, but He institutes a sign of the covenant - circumcision for every male. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant between Abraham and his descendents forever. Every son, every servant born in a descendant’s household or purchased with money will be circumcised. It is an everlasting covenant. The one who is not circumcised is to be cut off from the people.

Vs. 15-16 Sarai (mockery), too, is to be blessed with a new name - Sarah (princess) - for she is to be a mother not only a promised son, but the mother of nations, kings of peoples will come from her.

Vs. 17-22 Abraham falls down and laughs -his 90 year old wife is going to have a baby - how can that be? Abraham considers the physical impossibility of Sarah conceiving, much less carrying a baby 9 months than going through the pains of delivery, and he asks God to allow Ishmael to be his primary son of promise. No, that is not to be. Isaac will be the son of promise, the one who the covenantal promises will be carried through.

Ishmael will be blessed in his own accord, but is not the son of promise and covenant. He will become the father of twelve princes and God will make of Ishmael a great nation.

From here, God ascended away from Abraham.

Vs. 23-27 Abraham obeyed God and at the age of 99 he circumcised himself, 13 year old Ishmael, and all the servants in his household. All the men of his household were circumcised on that day whether they were born into his household or purchased with money from a foreigner; they were all circumcised with Abraham.