

**CHAPTER VII**  
**The Call of Abraham**  
Gen. 12-21; Gal. 4

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Hints to Bible Study  
The Colorado College of Divine Science  
Denver, 1920.

The history of the Hebrew family begins with Abraham. It is true that some of the higher critics begin actual history with Moses and reduce the Patriarchal period to "shadows in the mist." That the nation and religious organization begin with Moses cannot be gainsaid; but before there can be a nation and a church, there must be a family and a religion. Undoubtedly the allegories and stories of the book of Genesis are much later than Exodus, but they were written from popular oral tradition or pre-existing books now lost. A nation like that of the Hebrews would keep its traditions distinct and true.

Abraham is one of the greatest figures in the religious history of the human race. Three great religions trace their origin to him. The Hebrew religion, its child, the Christian religion, and Mohammedanism. The world owes to him its first clear knowledge of the true God and the manner of service that will be acceptable to him. Hebrew history requires the starting point which the Patriarchal period gives it. It was no new and unknown God in whose name Moses spoke to his brethren in Egypt. He had a basis to work from in the God of their Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

The simple yet stately figures would be alike a loss to the historian, the literateur, the religionist and the artist. Their dignity, magnanimity and graciousness are examples for all ages. Simple spiritual guidance is much needed in our complex civilization. The visits of Jehovah and His angels are reminders that God and His angels do visit the children of men.

The country lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates, Mesopotamia (between two rivers), was one of the oldest civilizations on earth. There were three nations in this country, in the north Assyrian, in the center Babylonian, and in the south Chaldean. Abraham came out from "Ur of the Chaldees." This was a great civilization, advanced in astronomy, science and arts. Every time that we look at our clocks, or wrist watches, we go back to the period of Chaldean history before Abraham was born. They had divided time into the year, month, week and days approximating the division used by us at the present time. The day was composed of twenty-four hours, and the hour sixty minutes, the minute sixty seconds. We owe to this great race also our one sacred day in seven, called by them the "Day of the Heart."

With this heritage back of him Abram was called of God. One of the greatest features of this great Book is the "calls" of leaders and prophets. Now the Lord said unto Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy Father's house, into a land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse and in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." God speaks to us through the "still small voice" in our own souls. He spake unto Abram as he speaks to you and me. "There is a guidance for each of us and by lowly listening we hear the right word."

Abram is the type of character that hears; large, magnanimous, rich consciousness, of deep peace, poise and power. There are men who think in terms of self, others in villages, yet others in empires, but Abram held in his consciousness the whole human race. His ideal was "in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And this insight was true, the human family is indebted to him. This new race, started in the consciousness of Abram, has given us religion, and without this human progress would have been impossible. This race has given us a knowledge of God and man's relation to God. The relationship of man to God is dependency, but a relationship of this kind involves a mutual obligation. God is responsible for man, and is bound to work with and for man until he is free.

Abram emigrated from Chaldea to Canaan (low region), a distance of about three hundred miles. With him was Sarai his wife, Lot his nephew, and a large retinue of slaves. The end of any life, enterprise or race is held fast in its beginning. We find certain characteristics of Abram in the Jewish character today: The rich consciousness, "and Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold"; his love for his wife and his deference to her judgment; his love of peace and the conciliatory method in which he settles the affair with his nephew, are all still strong characteristics in the Jewish race at the present time.

Abram had no heir, but he was assured of the Lord that he should have one; "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it unto him for righteousness." According to the custom of the day, Sarai, who was childless, gave her maid Hagar to her husband for a secondary wife. Hagar despised her mistress when she knew that she herself should be mother of the heir, and Abraham sent her away at Sarai's demand. In the issue here we see the prenatal influence on the child. Hagar's ingratitude and rebellion against her mistress to whom she owed her position marks the child. The Angel said to her: "Behold thou art with child, and shalt have a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael (God hears) because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he shall be a wild-ass among men, his hand shall be against every man's and every man's hand against him." Here again the end in the beginning. The Arabs, Ishmael's descendants, are of an untamable nature, always roving. Hagar could flee from the sight of her mistress but not from the sight of God, nor from the consequences of her rebellion.

Paul calls this an allegory. It is the first of the positive lessons of the two brothers. There is the son of the bond woman and Isaac, the son of the free woman. When Abram was ninety-and-nine years old--remember the Hebrew wrote in numerical symbolism, this is not to be taken literally--the Lord appeared unto him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk thou before me and be thou perfect." God can never speak to us but through our own consciousness. No race or person who had not a concept of the ideal could hear such words as these. The covenant made with Abram is another instance of the spiritual development of the race.

A covenant is an agreement, the law of prayer, the means through which we transmit the gifts of the Spirit to our own consciousness. Prayer is acceptance of God's gifts. In disagreement we repel; in agreement we open the way for negotiation and transmission. And Abram was given a new name, he who had been childless was to be the father of many nations, Abraham (father of nations). It is after our agreement with God that we become creative and fruitful. There are no barren lives in God, but out of him we cannot conceal our unfruitfulness.

Sarai also received a new name, Sarah (princess). Her son was the heir and his name was Isaac (laughter). It is significant that the son of the free woman should be spontaneous joy, which is laughter. There is no heaviness in spiritual life; life, love and work are all interspersed with laughter. No one can be a pessimist and see Principle. Optimism is compulsory to the one who lives in Spirit and in Truth.

The son of the bond woman is born "after the flesh," and all flesh is unruly, unspiritual, untrue. The son of the free woman is by promise, free, true, real. "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond woman and her son; for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." Cast it out, the false concept of yourself. There is the eternal YOU, and the temporal unreality. Do not hesitate, temporize nor waver, cast it out; as long as it lingers with you, you are an house divided against itself, and defrauded of your inheritance.