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BIB 102: Old Testament Literature

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Was Abraham a true man of faith and can we look up to his example as Christians?

As Christians, can we argue that Abraham sets a good example of a man of true faith? Reading scripture dictates our understanding and progression of the different stages of growing in our faith with the Lord. Therefore, seen in the Bible in **Gen. 12:1-2** when the Lord calls Abram and says *“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”* Later on in **Gen. 12:5** Abram takes in account what the Lord told him and flees Haran along with his wife Sarai and Lot, his brother’s son. This action of Abraham portrays his faith in the Lord as he also takes along all his possessions that they had gathered. This act of gathering all possessions that he has collected tells us that he had no doubts of what great plans the Lord had set for his life when he left Haran. If Abram had any doubts on his faith he would have left some possessions behind just in case he had to fall back where he started. However, further on in scripture we see his faith in trial as he tells his wife Sarah in **Gen 12:11-13** the following *“When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife I know that you are a woman in beautiful appearance and when the Egyptians see you, they will say this is his wife. Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go*

well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake". Of course scripture doesn't set a tone of fear in this text, as well as other texts in the Bible. However, you can identify that Abraham had fear against the Egyptians due to his denial in telling the Egyptians he is Sarah's husband. This places his level of faith upon his own personal struggles in which is the area that needs healing and needs to be touched by God.

The story of The Call of Abram from **Gen. 12:1-20** and the story of Abraham and Abimelech on **Gen 20:1-18** have similar ideas as a result of Abram's level of faith in the Lord. In both stories it is seen that Abram tends to keep denying Sarah as her wife. He believes that if Sarah reveals to both kings Pharaoh and Abimelech that he is her husband it will result in his death. These two stories also pertain to Abraham's fear against the face of power that is not the Lord's. In other words, by Abraham's denial you can dictate his faith is not steady in the face of human power. Also in both scenarios both king's suffered consequences due to Abraham's denial and this is seen in **Gen 12:17** as it mentions *"But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife."* Another example is found in **Gen 20:3** as it states the following: *"But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."* The Lord continues on by saying in **Gen 20:7** *"Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours"*. Overall, Abraham's fear against the power of both kings portrays his weakness against people who are higher in society, economically, and social status.

Some differences that we can evaluate in the two accounts is the ending result in both scenarios. For example in the first account in **Gen. 12:19-20** Pharaoh states *“Why did you say, “she is my sister, so that I took her for my wife? Now then. Here is your wife; take her, and go.”* *“And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had”*. However, the second account in **Gen 20:15** it states *“And Abimelech said, “Behold my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you.”* Further on, in the text in **Gen 20:17** *“Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children”*. In the first story Pharaoh didn’t think twice on kicking out Abraham from his land, however in the second story there was more insight into King Abimelech due to his communication with the Lord as a result of a solution for both problems.

As Christians we are called to have full faith in our savior and to dwell on his understanding and the plans he has set for us. However, even if that is God’s plan we don’t consistently fall through with his plan. This conflict is caused by ignorance, flesh desires, self-restraint, doubts and so on. Whatever it may cause this lack of faith, Abraham was wrong for making Sarai deny in front of the leaders that she was his wife. If we circle back after Abimelech asks Abraham why he lied and Abraham replies in **Gen. 20: 11** *“I did it because I thought, there is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife”*. This text illustrates that Abraham knew it was a wrong action on his part, but added an excuse towards the end saying the land where he relied on had no fear of God. Similar to how we as Christians today know that we’re doing wrong, but in human behavior there will always be an excuse. We won’t entirely fall into the responsibility for that action that took place, leading to blaming others etc.

In conclusion, after evaluating both stories and accounts we can learn that God in his mercy finds a way to glorify himself in our storm even when we lack faith in him. Abraham showed fear in both scenarios, meaning that even when God saved him in the first account he still had doubts of God's power and ability to protect him from his enemies. We can also learn that God keeps his promises as he made a covenant with Abraham in **Gen. 12: 1-2** saying "*Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, that you will be a blessing*". Another great example is God being a loyal God as it illustrates in the first story sending plagues to Pharaoh's kingdom and coming to king Abimelech in a dream about his death and all due to protecting Abraham and his wife.

Some may agree that the Bible can be used as a good reference for our day to day life decisions and some may say that these stories are just placed there to know about the lives of God's people and not to apply it to our lives. I disagree, Abraham and just like other characters in the Bible lived through the same struggles as us today. We may not have to face Pharaohs or seek kings for help for cows, shelter, or even work for them if the case may be. However, just like Abraham we struggle with fear of higher power like our managers at our job or it can even maybe having a fear of the ocean like thalassophobia people do. The lesson to learn here is to trust God even if the power or authority of the person or thing may look inevitable. We are God's children and saved by grace. Our challenges and battles are God's successes.

Work cited

<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/English-Standard-Version-ESV-Bible/>

