

Abraham's Covenant

Here is a summarised account of the life of Abraham, from the Book of Jasher.

Terah the son of Nahor took a wife whose name was Amthelo the daughter of Cornebo. Amthelo conceived and gave birth to a son and Terah called him Abram. Terah was 70y old when Abram was born. Terah was a prince of Nimrod's host, and was highly respected by the king, his princes and his subjects.

The night Abram was born, all the wise men of Nimrod and his conjurors, came and ate and drank in the house of Terah, to rejoice over Abram's birth. As the wise men left Terah's house, they looked up into the sky and saw one very large star, which came from the east, move across the sky and swallow up four stars from the four sides of the heavens. The wise men were astonished at the sight and understood this to mean that Abram would conquer four great kings and he and his descendants would possess their lands. The wise men decided to tell the king about what they had seen. Nimrod took the advice of his wise men, who advised the king to kill Abram before he could grow up and accomplish what he was destined to do.

Nimrod sent for Terah and gave him three days to bring the child to him. Nimrod promised to recompense Terah for his loss with silver and gold. On the third day Nimrod threatened Terah saying, if he would not bring the child to him, he would kill all those living in Terah's house. Terah hurried home and he took a child from one of his handmaids who had been born that day. Nimrod paid Terah the promised value for the child, then he dashed the child's head to the ground, thinking he had killed Abram. Terah took Abram, his mother and nurse, and concealed them in a cave. Terah brought them their provisions monthly. Abram was in the cave for ten years whilst Nimrod and his princes, soothsayers and sages, presumed that Nimrod had killed Abram.

Haran, the son of Terah, Abram's oldest brother, took a wife in those days. Haran was 39y old when the woman conceived and gave birth to a son they called Lot. She conceived again and gave birth to a daughter called Milca; and she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter called Sarai. Haran was 42y old when he had Sarai. Abram was by now 10y old when he and his mother left the cave. The king and his subjects had forgotten all about the affair of Abram. Abram went to live with Noah and his son Shem, and he remained there, learning the instruction of the Lord. No one knew where Abram was, and Abram served Noah and Shem for a long time.

Abram was living in Noah's house for 39y, and Abram knew the Lord from 3y old onwards. All that generation of people were wicked, they created their own gods and served them. Only Noah and his household was righteous and knew the Lord in those days. Nimrod built a tower in Babel, east in the land of Shinar, and the Lord destroyed it. Confusing the single language into many new languages, and scattering the inhabitants of the region all over the earth. Peleg the son of Eber died in those days, and this was the 48th year of the life of Abram.

In the 50th year of the life of Abram, he left the house of Noah, and went to stay at his father's house. Abram discovered that Terah had twelve gods in his house and Abram vowed to destroy them. Terah was still serving king Nimrod as the captain of his host. Abram took a hatchet and smashed all Terah's gods, and Terah took Abram to Nimrod for judgement. Abram rebuked the king and his father for serving false gods and told them to worship the true God of the universe. Nimrod threw Abram in prison for ten days whilst he consulted with his advisors. They said, "The man who reviles the king should be hanged on a tree; but having despised their gods Abram should be burned to death, for this was the law in this matter."

When the advisors saw Abram, they recognised him as the child of the event of the stars. Nimrod was furious at being tricked by Terah. Terah blamed Haran his eldest son, but Haran was innocent of any involvement in deceiving the king. Nimrod ordered that Haran should also be burned in the fire with Abram, for rebelling against the king's orders. Nimrod ordered the furnace at Casdim to be heated up for three days and three nights. Haran and Abram were both bound with linen cords and cast into the fiery brick furnace. The Lord loved Abram and had compassion on him, He delivered Abram from the fire and he was not burned. Haran did not know the Lord and he was burnt to ashes. Abram walked about in the midst of the fire for three days and three nights. The linen cord which had bound Abram was burned up, but not even Abram's clothes were burned. All the king's servants, princes, lords, governors, and judges, and all the inhabitants of the land, about nine hundred thousand men, came and stood opposite the furnace to see Abram. Nimrod approached and called Abram to come out of the fire. Then Nimrod and his servants saw that Abram was totally untouched by the fire. Nimrod asked Abram why he had survived the fire when his brother had not. Abram told the king, "The God of heaven and earth in whom I trust and who has all in His power, He delivered me from the fire into which you cast me."

{ But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you; therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life. (Isa 43:1-4) }

Haran his brother was 82y old when he died in the fire of Casdim. When the king, princes, and inhabitants of the land, saw that Abram was delivered from the fire, they came and bowed down to Abram. And Abram said to them, "Do not bow down to me, but bow down to the God of the world who made you, and serve Him, and go in His ways for it is He who delivered me from out of this fire; it is He who created the souls and spirits of all men, and formed man in his mother's womb, and brought him forth into the world; it is He who will deliver those who trust in Him from all pain."

The king gave Abram many gifts, presents of silver and gold and two head servants from his house, called Oni and Eliezer. Then Nimrod sent Abram away in peace.

{ Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it: "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."
(Isa 42:5-9) }

Two years after this incident and Abram was now 52y old. Nimrod dreamt a dream which upset him greatly. The king's advisors interpreted the dream to mean the same as the vision of Abram's birth; that one day, Abram and his descendants would conquer Nimrod in battle. Nimrod sent some of his servants to seize Abram that they might kill him. Eliezer was present when the advisors spoke to the king, and he warned Abram of the king's orders. Abram fled to the house of Noah and Shem and was concealed there for a month. Terah came to see Abram and discuss the situation. Abram suggested that they had better move to the land of Canaan to get away from the king. Noah and his son Shem agreed that it was the correct thing to do.

Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abram, and all the souls of his household went with them from Ur Casdim to go to the land of Canaan. They travelled as far as the land of Haran for it was good land for pasture and they remained there. Some of the people of the land of Haran saw that Abram was good and upright with God, so they came and joined Abram, and he taught them the instruction of the Lord and His ways. After Abram had lived in the land of Haran for three years, the Lord appeared to Abram. He told Abram that it was He who brought Abram from the land of Ur Casdim and delivered him from his enemies. The Lord told Abram to take his wife and all those belonging to him and to go to the land of Canaan and remain there.

Abram did as the Lord had told him and he was 55y old when he left Haran. Abram lived in the land of Canaan for 3y and in that year Noah died, which was the 58th year of the life of Abram. Abram lived in the land of Canaan but Nahor, Abram's brother, Terah his father, and Lot the son of Haran and all belonging to them, stayed in Haran.

In the 5th year of Abram's dwelling in the land of Canaan the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and all the cities of the plain revolted against Chedorlaomer, king of Elam; they had served Chedorlaomer for twelve years, and given him yearly tax, but in the 13th year they rebelled.

In the 10th year of Abram's dwelling in the land of Canaan, Nimrod king of Shinar fought against Chedorlaomer king of Elam. Chedorlaomer had been one of the princes of Nimrod, but when the tower of Babel fell Chedorlaomer rebelled against Nimrod and went to Elam to reign over it. Nimrod went to battle with seven hundred thousand men and met Chedorlaomer with his five thousand men in the valley of Babel between Shinar and Elam. Nimrod lost the battle against Chedorlaomer, his son Mardon died along with six hundred thousand of Nimrod's men.

Nimrod was totally disgraced and was placed in subjection to Chedorlaomer. Chedorlaomer made covenants with Arioch, king of Elasar, and Tidal, king of Goyim, and these three kings were obedient to Chedorlaomer's command.

In the 15th year of Abram living in the land of Canaan, Abram's 70th year, the Lord appeared to Abram and made a covenant with Abram. The Lord told Abram that his descendants would be afflicted for four hundred years but they would inherit the land, and the fourth generation would return there. Abram built an altar, called on the name of the Lord and sacrificed animals on it.

At that time Abram returned to Haran with all belonging to him. Many of the people of Haran, about seventy-two men, followed Abram, and Abram taught them the instruction of the Lord and His ways. Abram lived in Haran for five years. The Lord appeared to Abram again and reminded him of what He had told him twenty years ago. The Lord instructed Abram to leave Haran again, and to return to the land of Canaan. Abram took his wife Sarai and all belonging to him also those souls he had acquired in Haran. Lot his brother Haran's son went with him. Abram was 75y old when he left Haran to return to the land of Canaan. They pitched their tents and lived in the plain of Mamre. The Lord appeared to Abram and promised him that his descendants would inherit the land, and he built an altar there to the Lord.

In that year there was a heavy famine throughout the land of Canaan so Abram and all belonging to him left and went down to Egypt. Abram told Pharaoh that Sarai was his sister, for fear of being put to death, and Pharaoh took Sarai into his house. Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts of gold, silver, precious stones, cattle, men and maidservants, and he exalted Abram in the court of his house. The angel of the Lord struck the house of Pharaoh that night, on account of Sarai and then Pharaoh asked Sarai who she really was. Sarai told Pharaoh that she was Abram's wife. Pharaoh gave them more gifts of cattle, people and riches, so that the plague would be removed from his house. Pharaoh also took a maiden whom he had by his concubines and gave her to Sarai for a handmaid. Abram returned to the land of Canaan. Lot's men caused quarrels between the people of the land and Abram, over grazing for their livestock. So Lot's family separated from Abram's, and went to the plain of Jordan where they lived in Sodom.

Chedorlaomer, Nimrod, Arioch and Tidal came to strike the towns of Sodom and its inhabitants after they had rebelled against Chedorlaomer for thirteen years. These four kings of Elam and their camps, about eight hundred thousand men fought with the five kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboyim, Bera king of Sodom, Bersha king of Gomorrah, and Bela king of Zoar, went out to meet them together in the valley of Siddim.

These nine kings made war in the valley of Siddim; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were beaten before the kings of Elam. The kings of Elam plundered all the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and they also took Lot, Abram's brother's son, and his property. Abram heard about this and with three hundred and eighteen men he pursued the kings by night and struck them. All fell before Abram and his men and only the four kings escaped. Abram recovered all the property of Sodom, and he also recovered Lot and his property, so that nothing was lost.

Adonizedek (Melchizedek) king of Jerusalem, who was Shem, met Abram on his return with bread and wine. Adonizedek was a priest before God and they remained together in the valley of Melech. Adonizedek blessed Abram, and Abram gave him a tenth from all the spoil he had taken. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah approached Abram and begged him to return their servants and their property, and Abram gave them all he had taken, keeping nothing for himself. Lot, his people and property, returned to his home in Sodom and Abram and his people returned to their home, Hebron, in the plains of Mamre.

At the end of ten years of Abram's dwelling in the land of Canaan, which was the 85th year of Abram's life, Sarai was still barren, so she gave Hagar her maidservant to Abram. Hagar conceived and became arrogant and despised Sarai. Sarai afflicted Hagar so she fled into the wilderness. An angel of the Lord met Hagar at a well, he sent her back to Sarai with the promise that her son, Ishmael, would produce many descendants. Abram was 86y old when Ishmael was born.

Abram was 99y old when the Lord appeared to him again and made the covenant of circumcision with Abram. The Lord changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah. Ishmael was circumcised at the age of 13y and Abraham at the age of 99y. All the males of his household were circumcised that day. Three days later three angels came to visit Abraham and he prepared food and drink for them. The Lord sent two of the angels to rescue Lot from Sodom, and to destroy Sodom and its cities. The angels stayed the night with Lot, and in the morning only Lot, his wife and his two daughters left Sodom. Lot's wife looked back towards the destruction of Sodom and was turned into a pillar of salt. Lot and his two daughters escaped to the cave of Adullam where they remained for some time.

Abraham journeyed from the plain of Mamre and went to the land of the Philistines and lived in Gerar. It was the 25th year of Abraham being in the land of Canaan and the 100th year of the life of Abraham. Abimelech, king of the Philistines asked Sarah what relation she was of Abraham, and she said that she was his sister. This was to escape the evil of the inhabitants of the land. Abimelech blessed Abraham with land on account of Sarah. That evening the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to afflict Abimelech, and the angel was also seen striking the inhabitants of the land with the sword. Abimelech confronted Abraham and Sarah in the morning, he gave them flocks and herds, men and maidservants, a thousand pieces of silver, and he returned Sarah to Abraham. Abimelech told Abraham to dwell wherever they chose, so they dwelt in the land of Gerar. Abraham prayed on account of Abimelech and his subjects, and the Lord heard the prayer of Abraham, and healed Abimelech and all his subjects.

At the end of a year and four months of Abraham's dwelling in the land of the Philistines in Gerar, God visited Sarah and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Abraham called his son Isaac and circumcised him when he was eight days old. Abraham was 100y old and Sarah 90y old, when Isaac was born to them. Shem and Eber, all the great people of the land, Abimelech king of the Philistines, his servants, and Phicol the captain of his host, came to eat, drink and rejoice at the feast, which Abraham made on the day of his son Isaac's being weaned. Ishmael was 14y old when Sarah gave birth to Isaac. When Isaac was 5y old Ishmael drew a bow and arrow, intending to kill Isaac. Sarah saw this and told Abraham. Abraham gave Hagar twelve loaves with a bottle of water, and sent Hagar and Ishmael away, to live in the wilderness of Paran.

Many years later Ishmael came back to live with Abraham, with his wife and children. At the twenty-sixth year of Abraham living in the land of the Philistines, the servants of Abraham had disputes over water wells with the Philistines. Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech over a well he had dug, and gave him seven ewe lambs as a witness, and he called the well, Beersheba. Terah died in the 35th year of Isaac son of Abraham.

When Isaac was 37y old Ishmael his brother was going about with him in the tent. Ishmael boasted of himself to Isaac. He said he was 13y old when he was circumcised and gave his soul to the Lord. { Isaac answered Ishmael, "Why do you boast to me about this, about a little bit of your flesh which you did take from your body, concerning which the Lord commanded you? As the Lord lives, the God of my father Abraham, if the Lord should say to my father, 'Take now your son Isaac and bring him up an offering before Me,' I would not refrain but I would joyfully accede to it." And the Lord heard the word that Isaac spoke to Ishmael, and it seemed good in the sight of the Lord, and He thought to try Abraham in this matter. }--- This was the answer to a question, that had been bothering me for some time i.e. How could a loving God ask a righteous man to sacrifice his son? So it had all came about through Isaac's boasting to Ishmael!

Without working through the rest of the Book of Jasher: What you may ask, happened about the Covenant which the Lord made with Abraham?

Well, we know that Isaac married Rebecca when he was 40y old, but she didn't produce sons till Isaac was 60y old. Rebecca gave birth to twins, Esau and Jacob. Abraham died when Jacob and Esau were 15y old. When Jacob was 18y old, Isaac sent him to the house of Shem and Eber to learn the instructions of the Lord. Jacob remained in the house of Shem and Eber for 32y. Esau was not willing to go and he remained in his father's house continually hunting in the fields. Shem died when Jacob was 50y old and Jacob returned to his father's house. Jacob had twelve sons, and Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. When Joseph became the governing authority over Egypt, Jacob went down to Egypt in his 130th year. Seventy people, descendants of Abraham, went into Egypt. Jochebed, Moses mother was born as they arrived in Egypt. Jochebed married Amram when she was 126y old. She gave birth to Miriam and Aaron, later Moses was born when she was 130y old! Moses was 80y old when they left Egypt, with the children of Israel.

So the descendants of Abraham were Isaac, Jacob, Jochebed, Moses, four generations. The years are calculated from when Isaac was born. Isaac was 60y when Jacob was born, Jacob was 130y when they went down to Egypt. Jochebed was born then. Jochebed was 130y when Moses was born. Moses was 80y old when they left Egypt, so 60y + 130y + 130y + 80y = 400y. That is exactly what the Lord told Abraham. Abraham's descendants were afflicted for four hundred years, of which 210y were spent in Egypt.

Isn't it good to know that whatever the Lord tells us will come to pass, comes to pass? By studying the prophecies of the past and their fulfillment, it strengthens our faith, to believe and trust in the prophecies for the future.

-oOo-

Quotes from The Book of Jasher edited by Joseph Lumpkin - ISBN : 1933580143