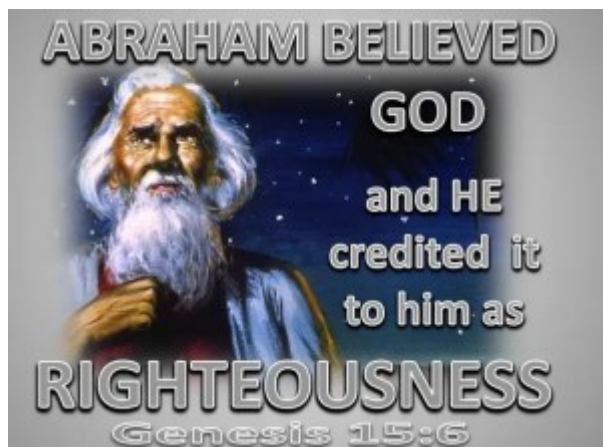


The Divine Programme of The World's History Chapter III. The Abrahamic Programme – Part I.



The Covenant of Daniel 9:27 is the Covenant God made with Abraham.

Continued from [Chapter II. The Noahic Programme. – Part III.](#)

TRAVELLING recently from Baden to Switzerland, as we emerged from the beautiful Black Forest and approached Schaffhausen, we crossed a small stream which we looked at, at first, without any special interest. It reappeared, however, again and again; and as we ran for some time along its banks, one of our party, looking at the guidebook, exclaimed, "Why, this is the Danube!" The Danube? We looked at the little stream with new interest. The mind's eye followed it at once from this its upland cradle amid the mountains, close to the sources of the northward and westward flowing Rhine; from this its spring in a watershed more than 3,000 feet in height, down through Wurtemberg and Bavaria, past Passau and Lintz and the castle where Coeur de Lion fretted in his captivity, past Vienna, Presburg, and Buda-Pesth (now Budapest), through Hungary on to Belgrade, till we seemed to see its broad waters rolling between Bulgaria and Wallachia, through Bessarabia and Russia, and the great delta at the end of its course of 1,400 miles. Bavarian, Hungarian, Austrian, and Turkish in turn, we remembered how for ages this great river had been one of the northern boundaries of the old Roman empire –the great moat that guarded it from the invasion of barbarian hordes. We recalled how it forms now a highway for European commerce –an international barrier whose navigation has been the subject of treaties between rival empires, and whose banks have been the scene of memorable historic battles.

Small and unimportant as seemed the little stream dashing over its rocky bed beside the railway, all that we knew of its after course made it most interesting in our eyes. When sailing on the Danube years previously through the "Iron Gates," which it has cut in the Carpathian mountains, we had marvelled at the might of the current which had worn for itself so stupendous a gorge, gazed with interest at the Cossack villages and Turkish towns studding its banks, and spent day after day on its broad bosom as it rolled majestically through the rich pasture lands of Moldavia and Wallachia into

the Black Sea. How could the infancy of such a stream fail to interest us?

With similar feelings an historian and Bible student ponders *the biography of Abraham in the Book of Genesis*. The brief story consists of slight and simple memorials of the quiet life led by a Semitic patriarch four thousand years ago. It tells us how he wandered over the pastures of Chaldea and Syria, growing rich in flocks and herds and in retainers, but living in tents with his wife and children; how he worshipped God in spirit and in truth, though in utter simplicity, without temple, ritual, or image; a man of child-like obedience and strong faith, not without faults and frailties, but yet loved and respected in his day. He had none of the legislative power of Moses, nor of the poetical pathos of David, much less of the far-sighted wisdom of Daniel. But there was about him a benignity, a faith, an obedience, a courtesy, a piety, and especially a paternal dignity, which are peculiarly his own; while the age in which he lived, the lands in which he wandered, and the simple tent-life of his pilgrimage, throw over the story "the light as of an early Eastern morning, and the freshness as of a breeze from the wilderness."

Why has this old oriental biography so profound an interest still in this busy nineteenth century to men and women all the world over, not to those who profess and call themselves Christians only, but also to Jews and Arabs and all the followers of the False Prophet (the prophet of Islam)? Strange! That out of the hundreds of such ancient Eastern sheiks of wandering pastoral tribes, the name of *one* should still be a household word, honoured alike by Moslem, Jew, and Christian throughout the world. Yet so it is. In mosque and synagogue and Christian church alike, in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South, the patriarch Abraham is still esteemed as "the friend of God" or as the Father of the Faithful. He never occupied a throne nor wielded a sceptre; he never made a discovery nor produced an invention; he never published a volume nor framed a code of laws; he never conquered a country nor enslaved his neighbours, like the Pharaohs and the Nimrods of those early times; he reared no huge monuments to immortalize his name, nor carved on the rocks the story of his exploits: yet he lives in the loving memory of mankind while multitudes of those who did all these things are forgotten. He is held in filial respect and affection by myriads of men, who to Egypt's greatest kings and Chaldea's mightiest monarchs accord but an unsympathetic and disapproving wonder. What has ennobled and distinguished this ancient patriarch? The answer is, He believed and obeyed the God who had chosen him to be the channel of the world's redemption,—and *to him was communicated the third section of the Divine programme of the world's history*.

In order to the right appreciation of the importance of this programme and of the real character and career of Abraham, we must, before considering it, recall for a moment the state of the world at the time when it was given, and the general course of human history during the interval between the deluge and the call of Abraham. It was a long one of several centuries; it witnessed the second development of the human race through the stages of its childhood, youth, and early maturity. These centuries have until lately been considered prehistoric, but they cannot in the future be so regarded. The figures of the

patriarch and his family no longer loom out dimly from a thick mist of historic obscurity suggestive of doubt as to their actual reality. The days are past in which the story of Abraham, told in the thirteen chapters of the Book of Genesis, can be called in question or treated by any well-informed person as unauthentic or legendary. The old isolation of the Pentateuch has passed away never to return. Formerly it presented almost all we knew about the earliest times and the pristine experiences of mankind. It stood alone, unconfirmed, and sceptics found no barriers in the way of treating it as "unhistorical" (a euphemism for "fabulous"); but all that is utterly altered now. Modern explorations and discoveries in archaeology enable us to confirm almost every detail of the narrative, and to perceive its perfect and most striking harmony with the period to which it belongs. The geographical, historical, and social allusions in the story are very numerous; and the similar incidents recorded in contemporary documents enable us mentally to reproduce the days of Abraham with wonderful exactitude and vivid reality.

We can now, in the light of its own records, study and understand the ancient and idolatrous civilization from which the patriarch was originally called out, and that with which he subsequently came in contact in Egypt. The evil and corrupt state of society in which he mixed becomes clear to us, as do the characters and exploits of his great contemporaries both in Chaldea and Egypt. The length and the direction of his various journeyings, the true nature of his momentous emigration, the size and peculiarities of the cities with which he was connected, and a hundred other particulars of his life which before seemed comparatively vague—all stand out now real and life-like, supplying the true background to the Biblical portrait of the patriarch.¹

¹ The works of Sir Henry Rawlinson and Professor Rawlinson, of Dr. Birch, the late George Smith and others connected with the British Museum, of Professor Sayce, Lieutenant Conder, Captain Warren, Layard, Lenormant, and many more; "The Records of the Past" (Bagster), "The Inscriptions of Western Asia," published by the Trustees of the British Museum, the "Transactions" of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, and many similar works, conspire to throw a flood of light on the environment of the patriarch and the history of his times.

It is important that this should be realized, for it strengthens the foundations of our argument. The promises and predictions we have to consider were, as we hold, given to Abraham two thousand years before Christ, as we have them embodied in the books of Moses. But is the story that they were so given *authentic*? Any argument derived from fulfilment clearly depends on this previous inquiry; that is, on the *date* of the predictions and on the *general trustworthiness* of the narratives in which they are embodied.

Some "Studies on the Times of Abraham" have lately been published by a member of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, who devoted five years to the work of elucidating the relation between three chapters only of Abraham's story and the results of recent research. The investigation of even this small portion of the narrative makes a volume. It is illustrated with photo-tint cuts of buildings, idols, statues, engraved seals and cylinders, portraits of various carved heads of Egyptian, Chaldean, Hittite, and Arab heroes, and of hieroglyphic inscriptions, and enriched by full references to the original oriental sources from which the facts are drawn,—enabling even readers who are unlearned in archaeological lore to judge for themselves as to the nature and value of the light thrown on the life of Abraham by existing monuments,

and inscriptions of antiquity. These studies have profoundly impressed their author with the close connection between facts in the Bible biography and facts of the times as learned from other sources.

The story of Lot's rescue, for instance, given in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, mentions some fifty facts of geography, history, and chronology; it gives the names of *fourteen* kings, chiefs, and other individuals living at the time; of *eight* different tribes and peoples, and of no less than *twenty-three* different places. It has, moreover, three notes of chronology, and several statements of number. Now most of these become possible points of contact with ancient contemporary records, or else with existing facts as to present names, sites, and distances. We do not pause to remark on the *a priori* evidence of truth and authenticity offered by the very existence of such a narrative so full of statements which if false would be easily proved so. But we ask, is this remarkable narrative of the first great organized military expedition recorded in history—a narrative which bristles thus with biographical, historical, local, and chronological notices—confirmed or contradicted by comparison with extraneous authorities? *It is most amply confirmed.*

"All that is hitherto known tallies in the most remarkable manner with the firm, strong outline in the Book of Genesis of facts which, as M. Lenormant justly pronounces, have 'a historic character the most striking;' and when we estimate at its true value the decisive interposition of Abraham in his only recorded act of warfare, we do not wonder at the honourable acknowledgment of the sons of Kheth, 'A prince of God art thou among us'" — (From Tomkins' "Studies on the Times of Abraham" p. 203 (Bagster : 15, Paternoster Row).

This expedition against the king of Elam and his confederates seems to have been a far more important affair than one would have judged from the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, though the native inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria amply confirm the main and most surprising facts contained in that story. Canon Rawlinson says:—

"A certain amount of light is thrown on the narrative contained in Genesis xiv. by the inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria. We learn from that narrative that in the time of Abraham (about B.C. 2100-1900) an important monarchy was established in Elam, under a king named Chedor-laomer (more properly Kedor-Lagomer), to whom Babylonia and other adjacent countries were subject, and who was powerful enough to carry his arms into Syria, and to exercise dominion for the space of twelve years over the more eastern parts of Palestine. The position of Elam is well marked by the Greek and Roman geographers, who place it between Persia proper and Babylonia, to the east of the Lower Tigris. In classical times and in oriental history as made known to us by the classical writers, the country appears as insignificant; it is never independent, and though it has a line of native kings, they at no time show themselves of much importance, even among vassal princes. Till recently the passage of Genesis stood alone in representing Elam as a great kingdom, one capable of exercising for a time the chief authority in Western Asia, of establishing her supremacy over Babylonia, and making expeditions to the distance of a thousand miles from her proper

frontier. But the later Assyrian inscriptions have now shown that from the time of Sargon (B.C. 722) to nearly the close of the empire, Elam was the second power in Western Asia, that she sturdily maintained her independence, and long resisted the utmost efforts of Assyria to bring her into subjection. . .

"Documents, probably fourteen hundred years older, found in Babylonia itself, establish the fact that at least one king of the country held his crown as a fief under an Elamitic monarch, who had placed and maintained him on the throne. Kudur-Mabuk, whose probable date is about B.C. 2100, and who is distinctly called 'king of Elam,' established his son, Ardu-Sin, in Babylonia, and names him with himself in his inscriptions, invoking the blessing of the gods upon him. Similarly Ardu-Sin mentions and invokes blessings on his father, 'Kudur-Mabuk, lord of Elam.' It is further remarkable that this same 'Kudur-Mabuk, lord of Elam,' calls himself also 'lord of Syria,' thereby implying that his dominion reached from the mountains of Luristan on the one side to the Mediterranean upon the other, which is exactly what Scripture implies of Chedor-laomer.

"The native inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria tell us, therefore, three things concerning this early period; namely—first, that there was a powerful dynasty established in Elam about B.C. 2300-2000; secondly, that this dynasty exercised authority over Babylon; and thirdly, that it had carried its arms into Syria; thus confirming three of the main and most surprising facts contained in the narrative of Genesis xiv." (Canon Rawlinson, "The Bible Educator," vols. i, and ii. pp. 67, 68.)

The Bible, and especially the Book of Genesis, passes rapidly over long intervals of time during which no special advance was made in the work which it is written to record—the redemption of the human race. It presents only one incident and two genealogical tables as bridging over the interval between the death of Noah and the call of Abram. The story of Babel is narrated and the subsequent dispersion of mankind, and "the generations of the sons of Noah in their nations," which we have considered in our last section, follows.

The generations of Shem—that is, of *the* son of Noah in whose race the knowledge of God was to be preserved, and in which deliverance for a ruined race was destined to arise—are given very fully, "the generations of Terah," the father of Abraham, coming last. These are all comprised in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the Book of Genesis, from which we may also gather some passing indications of the state of things in the early post-diluvian earth, though it would have been beside the purpose of the book to deal with facts having only a remote connection with its main subject. From later scriptures we may glean a few other particulars as to this period, while from classical authors, and especially from the most ancient oriental sacred classics, some of the earliest hymns and prayers of which go back nearly to Noah's days—such as the Zend Avestas of Persia, the Brahminic Vedas of India, the She-king of China, and The Book of the Dead, or funeral ritual, of ancient Egypt—and, above all, from the monumental remains and inscriptions still extant and

deciphered by modern research, we can, as we have seen, to a great extent fill up the outline.

Combining the rays of light proceeding from these different sources, we learn that during the early centuries after the flood a very rapid development of the race had taken place, leading to extensive colonization of even distant regions; that the earth had been already in the days of Peleg divided into nations, and that the international strifes which have characterized all subsequent time had at once arisen; wars and fightings had become common; and though the wide world lay open before the young human race, and though their utmost fruitfulness and multiplication could not have replenished it, they nevertheless fought for territory and for supremacy, displaying the same lust of conquest and of power that all subsequent nations have done. Hence there arose empires, with all their concomitant slavery, cruelty and pride, inordinate pomp and luxury on the part of some, with cruel toil, suffering, and oppression on the part of others.

The original unity of speech and of religious faith which had prevailed in the family and immediate descendants of Noah, and of which distinct traces abound in all the most ancient writings of every land, was gradually lost in these altered circumstances, and a great variety of idolatries sprung up in the earth, especially the worship of the host of heaven. The primitive monotheistic faith—the worship of one invisible God, the maker and judge of all—lingered on in certain families and in a few spiritual oases, but the desert waste of an idolatrous world was evermore encroaching even on these, and threatening towards the close of the period to swallow them up.

It is not easy for us to conceive the condition of the world four thousand years ago, when neither the Christian Church nor the Jewish nation were in existence, when men possessed neither the Old Testament nor the New, when tradition and conscience were the only sources of religion, and when the fathers of the race—who had known something of the antediluvian world, been eye-witnesses of the deluge, and recipients of the gracious revelations that followed it—had passed away. No line of special witnesses for God had as yet been selected or invested with responsibility for the maintenance of the true faith. The family of Shem retained apparently more of piety and morality than the descendants of his two brothers, but even Shem's posterity had for the most part lapsed into creature worship. The adoration of the sun and moon were common, as also the worship of Jupiter and Saturn, Mercury and Venus, and idolatry was fast spreading in the earth.

Egypt had already become mighty and grossly idolatrous; the Hittite power had developed into an extensive empire, and together with the Hamitic races occupying Southern Babylonia and Palestine, had also sunk into unblushing polytheism. Traditions of the creation and fall of man, of the flood, and of Babel, existed in all lands, and were recorded on monuments and tablets, on papyri and mummy cases, which we can still read and study after four thousand years. But they were all more or less distorted and corrupted. Gleams of the light of revelation were retained in different lands, and backed by the teaching of nature and by conscience—the voice of God in the soul of man—they saved some from the almost universal apostasy of deifying the heavenly bodies, the elements, and the passions, together with men and animals,

reptiles and vegetables, and even stocks and stones.

This corruption had not in Abraham's day become as universal as the wickedness of man before the flood, when one righteous man alone remained on earth, for there were such men as Melchizedek here and there—true priests of God. Yet even in the elect line of Shem, and in the chosen family of Terah, idolatry prevailed. As the Lord said to Joshua, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (or Euphrates) in old time, and they served other gods; and I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan."

Terah's home, UR of the CHALDEES, was the name both of a city and of a country. The former is now identified with Mugheir, which stands about six miles from the Euphrates on its right bank. In Abraham's day it was a large, busy maritime place on the Persian Gulf, the capital and the port of Southern Babylonia. The beautiful region around was the natural home of the wheat plant, which would produce two and even three hundred-fold in the soil of which classic writers speak as the richest in all Asia. Shady palm groves embowered the country laden with their golden clusters; and Professor Rawlinson says that the region was amongst the most productive on the face of the earth, yielding spontaneously some of the best gifts of God to man, and capable under careful management of being made one continuous garden. Sir Henry Rawlinson supposes that the Garden of Eden was in this neighbourhood. The situation of the ruins *now* was not the situation of the ancient city, for the alluvium (loose clay, silt, sand, or gravel that has been deposited by running water) brought down by the Tigris and Euphrates encroaches very rapidly on the Persian Gulf. Geologists consider that the increase of the land in that direction has been at the rate of a mile in thirty years on an average all through the historic period, so that the ruins which now stand considerably *inland* mark the site of a city which was a seaport town in Abraham's days.

The patriarch was, it would seem, a citizen of no mean city. Ur was the residence of a great monarch called Uruk, remains of whose immense idolatrous temple are still in existence, as also the ruins of his palace. The walls which once defended his city are traceable as low sandy mounds surrounding an oval space some two miles in extent, in the midst of which the temple mound still rises seventy feet above the plain. Several of the Assyrian and Babylonian monuments allude to this country of UR. Contracts between citizens, transfers of land duly attested by witnesses and preserved in duplicate, astronomical and political records as well as royal inscriptions relating to this place and kingdom, exist in abundance; its traffic by land and its commerce by ships are described, and its monarch, Uruk, must have had ample resources to have been able to erect the buildings he describes, the ruins of which still attest the truth of his accounts. The people were—as in all seaport towns—a mixture of various races and nationalities. The merchants of Ur traded with countries in Arabia and on the African coast, the Chaldeans themselves being a Cushite or Hamitic people, though Semitic tribes had also descended into their country. Terah's ancestor Arphaxad seems to have dwelt on the borders of Armenia, where a district of country bore his name; but some of his posterity had migrated southward, and

Terah, at the time of Abraham's birth, was resident either in the country or the city of Ur.

The one fact which is more prominent than any other in all the inscriptions of the period is the *rank polytheism and idolatry* which prevailed. The heavenly bodies were worshipped, and the great gods Ra and Bel or Belus, with their respective wives, together with Vul and Shamas and Sau, and especially Hurki, or the moon-god, who was esteemed the leading protector of the land, Merodach, Nergal, Ishtar, Nebo, and a host of other deities too numerous to mention. They attributed to their gods the caprice and the evil notions of which they were conscious in themselves, and a base and degrading superstition had replaced the Noahic faith in the justice and mercy of God, and the ante-diluvian hope of a mighty coming deliverer.

Most of the Chaldean literature which has been deciphered consists of formula for warding off disease and sorcery, charms for bewitching people or for exorcising evil influences, treatises on omens and divinations, and records of business transactions. Long hymns for ritual worship and prayers both for public and private use show that the popular religion was of a base and sensual type, and that it must have had the effect of degrading rather than of elevating its adherents,

Yet many fundamental truths were still retained in the minds of men, and the Akkadian and Semitic records alike prove that a consciousness of sin and of its guilt, a fear of death and of future punishment, an appreciation of righteousness and a yearning after holiness, found constant expression, together with allusions to the flood as a great proof of God's justice, to the fall of men and angels and the existence of a tempter, a belief in a future life and judgment to come, an observance of the Sabbath, and, above all, a recognition of the value of vicarious sacrifice. The nearer we draw to the days of Noah, the clearer do all such allusions become. They had even some notions of resurrection, though these latter were hazy. All the truth they retained was, however, smothered by corruption, superstition, and error.

Whatever Abraham's after life, we must picture his earlier years therefore as spent in a renowned and much-venerated city, where was the then magnificent temple of a popular faith, the seat of a flourishing commerce, and which was moreover a garrison town, the frontier walled fortress of the empire on the western side of the Euphrates. It seems to have been also a sacred burial city, where the dead in innumerable multitudes were gathered round the walls, as at the present day around the sacred cities of the Mohammedans and Jews.

It used to be a matter of vague conjecture as to whether Abraham was acquainted with the art of writing, but, as we have seen, modern research has shown that it was in familiar use in his native place. In the daily transactions of business, in loan and sale contracts, and indeed in all important transactions, duplicate memoranda on terra-cotta tablets or on papyrus were preserved. Multitudes of these exist, and such multitudes more have perished that immense heaps of fine powder-like dust are composed of their remains. Libraries and stores of records were common, so that Terah's family registers were doubtless preserved in this permanent form, and Abraham himself may very probably have left similar memorials of his own life, to be

subsequently utilised by Moses.

Abraham was doubtless trained in military exercises, as is proved by his ability and promptness in undertaking the expedition for the rescue of Lot; and he was probably accustomed to river navigation on the great Euphrates, as well as to seafaring customs and to the sight of foreigners "brought in the ships of Ur" to his native town. So great a mixture of races prevailed in the country that he was equally well acquainted with Semitic, Hamitic and Japhethic tribes. Indeed, these names are found in cuneiform texts as *ethnic expressions*, and are identified in meaning (according to Professor Sayce and Mr. Boscawen) with the different hues of complexion—yellow, black, and fair respectively. Abraham was therefore no mere wandering Arab sheik, but familiar with all sorts and conditions of men, and with various phases of human society.

It was no easy thing for one accustomed to the life of Ur to forsake home and country and break up his family and social ties. "He was born and grew up in his father's house: a man of rank surrounded by all the conditions and influences of civilized life; in the centre of the world's interests and rivalries; the hive which had thrown off the strong swarms of ASSUR, of CANAAN, and it may be, before that, of MIZRAIM; a land thick with conflicting powers, where his own kindred the sons of *Shem* had been in the ascendant, but were now for a while once more thrust down by the Cushite lords of Susa." (Tomkins' "Times of Abraham," p. 49.)

What moved the patriarch to obey so readily the call of God? "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham," said Stephen, "when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran." A revelation—in what form or style we know not—of God, the God of glory: that was the motive power with Abraham, as with Saul of Tarsus in later days. The first command to leave his country and kindred was not accompanied by the promise of Canaan. The patriarch had to go forth not knowing whither he went—in simple obedience; and from that day to the day when, at God's command, he offered up his son, his only son, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, the same strong faith and implicit obedience to God characterized the father of the faithful. When, later on, Jehovah made a covenant with him to which the mark of circumcision was attached, Abraham lost not a day in assuming that mark himself, and requiring Ishmael and all his house to do the same. When Jehovah desired him to offer his only son, he rose up early in the morning to start on the mournful expedition. Obedience became a habit with him, and faith was strengthened by long trial.

Providential circumstances seem to have facilitated the original removal of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees. Many movements of Semitic tribes and families westward were then taking place. His father Terah, for some reason not assigned, resolved about this time to emigrate with his family. Whether the premature death of his son Haran was the cause of this removal (as Josephus asserts), or whether his son Abraham's influence had recalled the aged father to the faith of his ancestors and made him anxious to free his family from the degrading idolatrous usages around them—whatever the impulse, Terah and his tribe, as well as Abraham, forsook Chaldea, and journeying slowly some six hundred miles up the stream of the Euphrates,

reached the district and town of KHARRAN, or Padan-Aram, where the emigrants and their flocks halted for some years, and where Terah ended his days. This was an important commercial town on a rich alluvial plain in Northern Babylonia, a station on the high-road from Syria to Palestine. It is well known in secular history as a busy and important town of ancient date, the key of the highway from east to west. Its name, which is still attached to the spot (Kharran, "a road"), as also the mention of the place in Ezekiel xxvii, 23, implied this; and it was dedicated to the same moon-god worshipped in Ur. There is an inscription in the British Museum (K 2701) mentioning this temple.

Nahor and his wife Milcah, who had at first been left behind, joined the family party again at Kharran, where they prospered greatly and increased in number and grew rich. But the place was an outpost of the old Chaldean rule, and full of, and surrounded by, the very idolatries that had prevailed in Ur, and it was consequently no suitable home for the chosen race. It was not the land which God had promised to show Abram; and when, after fifteen years, Terah died at the age of two hundred and five, Abraham, relieved of filial duties, was once more free to pursue his pilgrim path.

It was then that a second and more definite call came to Abraham, and this time a glorious promise was attached to it (Gen. xii, 1-3): "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto 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 thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

From time to time in the life of the patriarch and in those of his son and grandson, additional particulars were added to this promise, as we shall see; details were filled in, the predictions were enriched and defined in their scope; but here is the third programme of the world's history *in outline*. A childless man was to become the father of a great and blessed nation; the nation was to possess a land which would be indicated later on, and the whole human family were to be blessed through it.

For many a year already Abram had pondered in his heart the first revelation of the God of glory granted to him in his own home. It had molded his life and his hopes, sanctified his spirit, and separated him from an idolatrous world. Hence this command finds him prompt to obey, and with all the souls he had gotten in Haran, and great wealth in flocks and herds, to separate himself from his brother Nahor, and plunge into the wide wilderness which divided Haran from Canaan. The expression, "the souls he had gotten in Haran," may imply that his large household had learned the true religion from their master. Many Jewish and Christian commentators take them to signify that he had converted them to the worship of Jehovah, and taught them his own faith. He rejoiced doubtless to sever himself and his dependents from the idolatries of Babylonia, and he went forth to the unknown west leaning on the promised guidance of God. "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came."

The pilgrim party must have been, like those still often to be seen in the

East following some Arab sheik, furnished with large numbers of the black goats'-hair tents for encampment so familiar to oriental travellers. If Abraham's retainers numbered over twelve hundred, as is with good ground supposed, judging from the number of his well-trained servants, it was rather the emigration of a tribe than that of a family. The route taken seems to have led them to Damascus, for there are local traditions distinctly indicative of a prolonged visit of Abraham to the neighbourhood of that great and ancient city. A secretary of Herod the Great, Nicolaus of Damascus, says: "Abraham ruled at Damascus. He was a foreigner, who had come with an army out of the land beyond Babylon, called the land of the Chaldees." And he adds that he migrated to Canaan, and that his name is well known even to this day in Damascus; a village in the suburbs being pointed out which is still called the house of Abraham, and a well also being named from him. (Josephus' "Antiquities," Book I. chap. vii.)

We know that the steward of his house was one Eliezer of Damascus; but the narrative proves that he cannot have remained long in the city, even if he did visit it. Crossing the land of Bashan and the Jordan River, he descended into Palestine probably near the plain of Esdraclon, and passing through it made his first encampment at Sychem. There between Ebal and Gerizim, in one of the loveliest valleys in Palestine, was his first home in the land of promise; and before we follow him we must ask, What was the condition of the country and who were its inhabitants at this time?

We are told that the Canaanite was then in the land, or, as it might be better rendered, was already in the land. Various tribes of the children of Ham had at this time settled in the country, though their number was not as yet great, and they seemed to have had no inclination to oppose the residence of so mighty a "prince" as Abraham. Four hundred years later these Hamitic tribes had grown up into the seven nations of Canaan whose gross corruptions led to their extermination.

In Abraham's day the Amorites and the Hittites were chief among them. Both of these are largely mentioned in the Egyptian records, and a head of one of the Amorite kings may be seen in the British Museum. It was here at Sychem that Abraham received a definite gift of this very country to his posterity, the second promise from God, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." We believed the promise and built an altar to the name of the Lord who appeared unto him. His obedience to the Divine call in forsaking Chaldea was rewarded by this gift of the land of Canaan. But the promise must have tested his faith, for its accomplishment seemed impossible. It was given to a childless man, and it related to a country already in the possession of others. But he staggered not at the promise of God either on this occasion or on any subsequent one: he was strong in faith giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform.

Journeying still towards the south of Canaan, Abraham was led at last by the stress of famine to a brief and unhappy tarriance (sojourn) in Egypt, where he came in contact with another phase of the high civilization then existing among the sons of Ham, accompanied as usual by gross idolatry and polytheism. How long his sojourn in Egypt lasted is not recorded, probably only a few months. Josephus says that he went there not merely to share the plenty of

the land, but to examine into the state of religion, and ascertain whether the Egyptian priests had any true light; to endeavour also to teach them the truth, if, as he expected, he found them ignorant of it; that he convinced many of the superiority of his own faith, and gained the reputation of a learned philosopher. But we have no confirmatory testimony for these statements, and look upon his sojourn in Egypt as a period of failure in faith, and a time of leaning to his own understanding—one illustration of the fact that Egypt and its antitype have always been scenes of temptation to the people of God.

The patriarch speedily returned to the place where his tent had been in the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, and it was here that when trouble arose with Lot, he showed his noble forbearance and unworldly generosity, by giving his nephew the choice of the land, and accepting for himself the inferior portion. It was on the occasion of this separation, when his own act had broken the link between himself and the last of his kindred, that the Lord appeared the *third* time to Abraham.

“And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee” (Gen. xiii. 14-17).

Yet again a fourth time was the promise renewed to the patriarch after his rescue of Lot and the inhabitants of Sodom from Chedor-laomer, king of Elam, and his confederates. “After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” But Abram, unable to see in his childless condition how the promises of God could be fulfilled, sadly pleaded: “Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.”

God had pity on his perplexity, and “Behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This Eliezer of Damascus shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness. And He said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it” (Gen. xv. 4-7).

In connection with this promise the announcement was also made that Abraham’s seed would be a stranger in a land not their own. “And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in

peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. xv. 13-16).

This prediction was full of contrasted elements, calculated some to sadden and some to rejoice the heart of Abraham. His posterity was to suffer, to be brought into bondage, to endure hardness, not to possess the promised land at once, but only after a long course of discipline. On the other hand, they were to possess it, they were to inherit the land on which their father merely pitched his tent. Why might they not take possession of it at once, and without the preliminary suffering? They would not be numerous enough to people the land, for one thing, not warlike enough to drive out its inhabitants; moreover, and this was the reason assigned, the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. That of the Canaanites settled in the plains of Jericho among whom Lot had rashly elected to reside, was almost full; their cities were a very hotbed of corruption. But the moral condition of Aner and Eschol and the sons of Heth, or Hittites, at Hebron, seems to have been at that time widely different, and for four hundred years they were to be still spared and tested. The cup of iniquity was filling—not yet full.

It should be noted that the limits assigned to the promised land are here broadly stated as from the Nile to the Euphrates, "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." This large and important territory was the one bestowed by God on Abraham, and is still the entailed inheritance of his seed, "or the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

Note from the webmaster: I strongly disagree with Rev. Guinness that the land that God gave to the children of Abraham still belongs to people who call themselves Jews today! Yes, the *gifts* and *calling* of God are without repentance, but *their right to live in that land was conditional upon their obedience* to God's law!

Leviticus 18:26 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:

27 (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)

28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.

*Leviticus 20:22 Ye shall therefore **keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them:** that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out.*

For more what that Bible has to say about this, please see: [God's Promise to Physical Israel to Live in the Land Was Contingent on Obedience](#)

Another point: The so called Jews living now in the modern state of Israel may not even be biological descendants from Abraham but [are the descendants of a Turkish tribe, the Khazars](#), descendants of Japheth, not Shem.

Moreover, Paul clearly says in Galatians chapter 3 that only those of faith in Jesus Christ are the children of Abraham!

*Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith**, the same are the children of Abraham.*

Luke 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The Apostle John wrote:

*John 1:11 He came unto his own (the Jews), and his own received him **not**. 12 But as many as received him, to **them** gave he power to become the sons of God, even **to them that believe on his name** (Jesus): 13 Which were born, **not of blood**, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*2 John 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, **hath not God**. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*

10 ¶If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

*11 For he that biddeth him God speed is **partaker of his evil deeds**.*

Ask yourself, are those people who call themselves Jews today who live in the modern state of Israel obeying God? Not of they reject Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah!

John 8:22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

*24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for **if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins**.*

Why would any brother or sister who calls on the Name of Jesus for their salvation disagree with me on this point? I'll tell you why: The doctrines of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism were heavily promoted by C.I. Scofield in the Scofield Reference Bible from the early 20th century. Influential seminaries such as the Dallas Theological Seminary was founded on the doctrines of Dispensationalism which includes Futurism and Zionism. All sorts of false doctrines were spread abroad including two peoples of God, Israel and the Church. The Bible does not teach that at all! This is a VERY deep subject and I have written a [multitude of articles about it!](#)

Also see: [Israel is the Church & the Church is Israel](#).

So it seems to me that H. Grattan Guinness was somewhat under the influence of 19th century doctrines of Christian Zionism. I won't hold that against him. Nobody's perfect, including your webmaster.

Continued in [Chapter III. The Abrahamic Programme – Part II.](#)

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