

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

I. Obeying God Regarding Our Relatives

(Genesis 11:27-12:8)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 11:27-12:8 on the need to obey God regarding our relatives for our insight and application:

II. Obeying God Regarding Our Relatives, Genesis 11:27-12:8.

- A. Abram repeatedly failed fully to obey the Lord that he leave his relatives to go to the Promised Land:
 - 1. When God first called Abram when he still lived in Ur in Mesopotamia, the Lord told him to leave his country and his kindred and go to a land that God would show him, Acts 7:1-3.
 - 2. We know from Genesis 11:27-31 that Abram did not at first leave his kindred. Rather, after his brother Haran had died in Ur (Genesis 11:27-28), and Abram and his other brother Nahor had taken wives, with Abram marrying Sarai and Nahor marrying his niece Milcah, daughter of the deceased Haran (Genesis 11:29), Terah, the father of Abram and Nahor, took Abram, Lot, Terah's grandson through the deceased Haran, and went to the city of Haran north of Canaan with the plan to enter Canaan, Genesis 11:31.
 - 3. Terah then settled in Haran with Abram, Sarai and Lot, and there Terah eventually died, Genesis 11:32.
 - 4. Genesis 12:1 records God's call that He originally gave to Abram back in Ur of Mesopotamia, and this record shows that the Lord urged Abram to leave his kindred and specifically his father's house and go to the land that He would show Abram. The Lord added that He would make of Abram a great nation, that He would bless him, that He would make Abram's name great, that God would make him a blessing, that He would bless those who blessed Abram and curse those who cursed him and that in Abram all the families of the earth would be blessed, Genesis 12:2-3.
 - 5. Abram thus traveled south from Haran into Canaan, but he still did not part company with his nephew Lot, for Abram took Lot along with his wife Sarai to go to the land of Canaan, Genesis 12:4-5.
 - 6. Genesis 12:6-7a relates that when Abram arrived in Shechem in the center of the land of Canaan, God appeared to him and informed Abram that this was the land that the Lord would give him. Abram thus built an altar there to the Lord, Genesis 12:7b.
 - 7. Abram then moved further south to the hill country of Bethel where he built another altar to the Lord and there he called upon the Lord in prayer, Genesis 12:8.
- B. Abram's failure fully to obey God and leave his relatives later led to problems for Abram and his descendants:
 - 1. In Genesis 13:1-13, Lot and Abram had to part ways due to conflict between their herdsmen because both Abram and Lot had too many animals for them to dwell together, Genesis 13:1-6.
 - 2. Abram let Lot choose where he would go while Abram would go another direction. Lot chose the Jordan Valley that was well-watered, so he moved to the very wicked city of Sodom, Genesis 13:7-13.
 - 3. In Genesis 14:1-13, a coalition of city states attacked the Jordan Valley cities and captured Lot and his family, so Abram had to pursue the coalition and rescue Lot and his family from them, Genesis 14:14-16.
 - 4. When God then decided to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abram had to plead with God to save Lot's family from destruction (Genesis 18:1-33).
 - 5. God rescued Lot, but when Lot's wife disobediently looked back at Sodom, God judged her to be turned into a pillar of salt. Lot's two daughters who were influenced by Sodom's low morals then got him drunk and cohabited with him, bearing Moab and Ammon, fathers of nations named after them, Genesis 19:1-38.
 - 6. Those nations became problems for Abram's descendants, the nation Israel: the Moabites and Ammonites bordered Israel to the east and at times fought against Abram's descendants (2 Chronicles 20:1-30 et al.).

Lesson: *By failing fully to obey the Lord's call that he leave his relatives and his father's house to go to the land God had promised to him, Abram brought upon himself and upon his descendants future unwanted trials.*

Application: *(1) If God directs us to part fellowship even with relatives for our spiritual welfare, we must heed the Lord or suffer the consequences. (2) However, though parting fellowship with ungodly relatives, God still wants us to respect them, for God called Israel to respect the properties of both Moab and Ammon in Deuteronomy 2:9, 19.*