



Abraham's Journeys

Hebrew Bible

Genesis 12:1-9

¹The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.

²I will make of you a great nation,
And I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
And you shall be a blessing.

³I will bless those who bless you
And curse him that curses you;
And all the families of the earth
Shall bless themselves before you."

⁴Abram went forth as the Lord had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the wealth that they has amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, at the terbinth of Moreh*. The Canaanites were then in the land.

⁷The Lord appeared to Abram and said. "I will assign this land to your offspring." And he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.

⁸From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to the Lord and invoked the Lord by name. ⁹Then Abram journeyed by stages toward the Negeb.

English Translation: JPS 1985

Introduction

Perhaps surprisingly, Abraham's journey to the Promised Land, Canaan, actually begins with his father Terah. En route, the family settles in Haran, and Terah dies there. Geographically, Haran is North of Canaan.

At this early stage in God's relationship with Abraham, Abraham's name still Abram, and his wife is called Sarai. Later, their names are changed to represent their roles as patriarch and matriarch of a people with whom God has made a covenant.

*Text note: a *terebinth* is usually understood to be an oak tree

א וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ מֵאֶרֶץ
וּמְנוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
אֲרָאָךְ בַּאֲעֵשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאַבְרָכְךָ וְאַגְדִּלְךָ
וְשָׁמְךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה ג' וְאַבְרָכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ
וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אֶאֱרָא וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְּךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפָּחֹת
הָאָדָמָה ד' וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי ה'
וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בֶּן חָמֶשׁ שָׁנִים
וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן ה' וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם
אֶת שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת לוֹט בֶּן אָחִיו וְאֶת כָּל
רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ
בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לְלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן ו' וַיַּעֲבֵר אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ עַד מְקוֹם שְׁכָם
עַד אֵלוֹן מוֹרָה וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי אָז בְּאֶרֶץ ז' וַיִּרְא
ה' אֶל אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְזָרְעֶךָ אֶתְּן אֶת הָאֶרֶץ
הַזֹּאת וַיְבָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי ה'
ח וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם הַהֵרָה מְקֹדֶם לְבַיִת אֵל וַיֵּט
אֶהְלֶה בַּיִת אֵל מִיָּם וְהָעִי מְקֹדֶם וַיְבָרֵךְ שָׁם
מִזִּבְחַת ה' וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם ה' ט וַיִּסַּע אַבְרָם
הַלּוֹךְ וְנִסּוּעַ הַנֶּגֶב.



Abraham's Journeys

New Testament

Hebrews 11:8-16

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, ‘as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.’

¹³ All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, ¹⁴for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

⁸Πίστει καλούμενος Αβραάμ ὑπήκουσεν ἐξελθεῖν εἰς τόπον ὃν ἤμελλεν λαμβάνειν εἰς κληρονομίαν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν μὴ ἐπιστάμενος ποῦ ἔρχεται. ⁹Πίστει παρώκησεν εἰς γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ὡς ἀλλοτρίαν, ἐν σκηναῖς κατοικήσας μετὰ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ τῶν συγκληρονόμων τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῆς αὐτῆς: ¹⁰ἐξεδέχετο γὰρ τὴν τοῦ θεμελίους ἔχουσαν πόλιν, ἧς τεχνίτης καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ θεός. ¹¹Πίστει καὶ αὐτὴ Σάρρα στείρα δύναμιν εἰς καταβολὴν σπέρματος ἔλαβεν καὶ παρὰ καιρὸν ἡλικίας, ἐπεὶ πιστὸν ἠγήσατο τὸν ἐπαγγειλάμενον: ¹²διὸ καὶ ἀφ' ἐνὸς ἐγεννήθησαν, καὶ ταῦτα νενεκρωμένου, καθὼς τὰ ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ πλήθει καὶ ὡς ἡ ἄμμος ἢ παρὰ τὸ χεῖλος τῆς θαλάσσης ἢ ἀναρίθμητος. ¹³Κατὰ πίστιν ἀπέθανον οὗτοι πάντες, μὴ λαβόντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας, ἀλλὰ πόρρωθεν αὐτὰς ἰδόντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι, καὶ ὁμολογήσαντες ὅτι ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς: ¹⁴οἱ γὰρ τοιαῦτα λέγοντες ἐμφανίζουσιν ὅτι πατρίδα ἐπιζητοῦσιν. ¹⁵καὶ εἰ μὲν ἐκείνης ἐμνημόνευον ἀφ' ἧς ἐξέβησαν, εἶχον ἂν καιρὸν ἀνακάμψαι: ¹⁶νῦν δὲ κρείττονος ὀρέγονται, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐπουρανίου. διὸ οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς θεὸς ἐπικαλεῖσθαι αὐτῶν, ἠτοίμασεν γὰρ αὐτοῖς πόλιν.

English Translation: NRSV

Introduction

The letter to the Hebrews investigates the connection between Jesus and the Law of Moses. It attempts to convince the Jewish Christians of the time not to forsake their faith in Jesus in order to avoid persecutions. The author argues that Jesus is the complete revelation of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This passage is one example among many that the author draws from the Hebrew Bible; he uses them to show how faith in God requires trusting in God's promises, even when not receiving the things promised. The letter's recipients are encouraged to look to this 'great cloud of witnesses' and to endure their current suffering and persecutions, trusting that God will reward them, as he rewarded Jesus, who endured the cross.



Abraham's Journeys

Quran

Chapter 14 (Abraham): 37

"Our Lord, I have established some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley, close to Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they may keep up the prayer. Make people's hearts turn to them, and provide them with produce, so that they may be thankful.

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ
الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ
تَهْوَى إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

English Translation: Abdel Haleem

Introduction

This passage is from chapter 14 of the Quran. It was revealed in Mecca (possibly the last of the Meccan revelations) and deals with Abraham and his family (Hagar and Ishmael) and specifically their travels to Mecca and the "uncultivated valley". It further goes on to describe the construction of the Holy House (al-Kaba) in the valley with his son and the prophet Ishmael.

Chapter 21 (The Prophets): 71-73

71 We saved him and Lot [and sent them] to the land We blessed for all people, 72 and We gave him Isaac and Jacob as an additional gift, and made each of them righteous. 73 We made all of them leaders, guiding others by Our command, and We inspired them to do good works, to keep up the prayer, and to give alms: they were Our true worshippers.

وَجَعَلْنَاهُ لُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ
﴿٧١﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۗ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا
صَالِحِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ
الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

English Translation: Abdel Haleem

Introduction

This passage is from chapter 21 of the Quran. It was revealed in Mecca and takes its name from stories of the Prophets and tells the famous account of Abraham and his destruction of the idols. After breaking them, Abraham is brought to task and the townsmen declare he be burned for this sacrilegious act. The Quran mentions that the fire was miraculously made 'cool' and 'peaceful' for him. The passage taken leads from this account as Abraham, his people and Lot emigrate. There is a difference of opinion as to their destination, though it is surmised between Haran, Mecca and Syria.