

## **A FAST Biblical Portrait: Abraham** *Chosen and Tested*

John Kain, 2010

*Born “Abram” in the city of Ur in Babylonia, the man we know as Abraham was the son of Terah who, according to Jewish tradition, was an idol merchant. Abram questioned his father’s faith, sought the truth, and came to believe that the universe was the work of a single creator. Abram tried to convince his father of the folly of idol worship. Eventually, the one true creator whom Abram worshipped called him into a special relationship and issued him a unique command and promise.*

### **A Life Marked by Journeys**

With his father, Abram left Ur to travel to Canaan, but when they arrived in Haran, they settled there. That is where his father Terah died (Genesis 11:31-32), and that is where Abram heard the Lord’s call to separate himself from his people and go to a new country. God did not specify the length of the journey, and he didn’t provide a map or itinerary. But God did promise Abram divine favor, countless descendants, and a future when he would be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1–3).

Raised as a city-dweller, Abram nevertheless adopted a nomadic lifestyle and—in obedience to God—traveled through what is now the land of Israel. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions they had accumulated.

When a severe famine struck, Abram moved to Egypt. Concerned that he might be killed if Sarai were not free to be another man’s wife, Abram led Pharaoh to believe that she was his sister. When Pharaoh did in fact take a liking to her, Abram was treated well for her sake. He acquired “sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels” (Genesis 12: 16). Pharaoh discovered the deception only after suffering from diseases the Lord inflicted on him because of the inappropriate presence of another man’s wife in his palace. Ironically, Pharaoh sent Abram on his way as a rather wealthy man.

Although God apparently forgave Abram’s moral weakness, his continued adventures meant further challenges. God eventually changed Abram’s name to *Abraham* (“father of many”), and Sarai’s to *Sarah* (from “my princess” to “princess”). Sarah bore Abraham a son named Isaac, who is recognized as the ancestor of the Jewish people.

## **The Test of Faith**

After a long life of journeying with God, Abraham was asked to sacrifice his long-awaited son: “Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about’” (Genesis 22:2). The interactions between God and Abraham and between Abraham and Isaac reveal incredible levels of trust. God asked Abraham to perform a task that only God would have the right to request. Abraham made all the necessary preparations. Abraham asked Isaac to put his life in his hands. Since this request came from his loving and faithful father, Isaac complied. As Abraham was about to offer up his son, an angel of the Lord intervened: “‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son’” (Genesis 22:12).

Due to both his faith in God and God’s faithfulness to give him descendants through Isaac, Abraham ultimately became leader of that host of believers who seek a city whose architect and builder is God himself (Hebrews 11:8–10). And we who name Jesus as our Savior and Lord are among that blessed group of Abraham’s descendants.