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Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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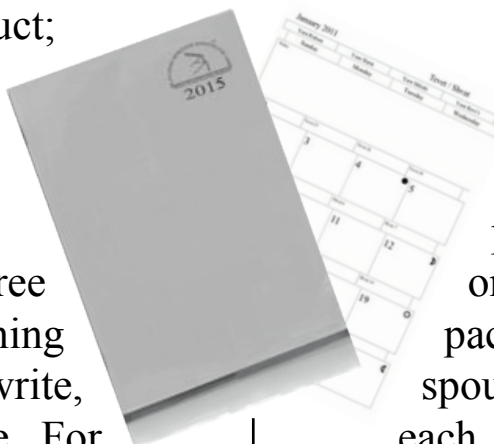
November & December 2014

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In closing, I just want to say thank you again to all those who have taken part in this ministry! Please remember to share Living Springs Institute with others, so they too may learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! May God bless you all; and as always, we pray you will be blessed by this issue of *Shaqah*!

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

As with our last segment, we again will start this segment by going over some of the verses in a verse by verse way that we covered in an overall way already. This, because we start with Genesis chapter 12 verse 4, where Abram packs up his household and begins his journey totally away from his father's house and into the land God had truly called him to sojourn in as a stranger.

Verse 4 specifically makes the point that this journey Abram takes, away from Haran, where his father Terah had brought him, was done according to the words God had instructed Abram. This means it was not only done in the right way but at the right time. As we talked about in our earlier segment, this is where Abram truly leaves his father's house, and Terah's part of the story comes to a close. This is why in the book of Acts, Stephen says Abram takes his leave after the death of his father. Terah was not literally dead; but like the genealogy lays out in other verses, the details of this man's life were no longer a part of the main story line. Terah had taken his son as far as he could without hindering Abram from truly departing his father's house. Genesis 11:26 tells us Terah was 70 years old when he begat Abram, and this verse tells us Abram was 75 when he leaves his father. This would make Terah about 145. However, Terah was setting Abram free from the traditions of men to do the work of God, and it had to be a very emotional time for both of them.

Abram would also take with him his nephew Lot, who had lost his father years before they left Mesopotamia. Now, upon leaving what to Lot would have been his grandfather's house, he too would be very free from family tradition to be his own man as well. This is important to understand. It was Terah who by tradition had the responsibility of Lot after his father's death, not Abram. While Abram took Lot with him into Canaan, Abram was not an authority over Lot as Terah had been, or Abram's older brother Nahor would have been after Terah's death. Whether Lot chose to follow Abram or go his own way would ultimately be his choice. Of course, Lot would stay with Abram for a time; but in the end, they would eventually gather so much wealth in cattle and flocks, they needed to physically separate their houses. All this would leave Abram to truly be the autonomous figure God wanted him to be by moving him to Canaan, but also setup some future events for the nation of Israel to have much related people around them as they came out of Egypt to take the land of Canaan for themselves!

These facts are why we need to understand what we talked about last time, when I emphasized God's words in calling Abram was that he would be the father of a great nation. The promise Abram would be the father of many nations would not be given until later. Abram was entering this land to set the stage for the nation of Israel to come upon the world scene, and remain upon it through this world's existence as

God's chosen nation. The plan to make this nation would also very much specifically involve Sarai, as it would come through the only son she and Abram would have together. Thus, verse 5 specifically makes the point, Sarai is still with Abram as he leaves Haran on this journey, along with Lot.

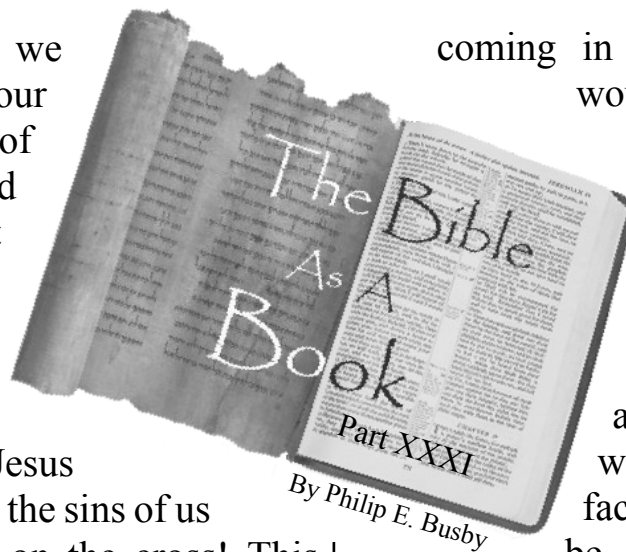
The other specific point of verse 5 is that Abram would not take everything from his father which they had brought out of Mesopotamia. However, he would take with him everything they had gained by being industrious while there in Haran. All the substance and all the servants they had gained there would be Abram's possession; and as is rightfully so, this would not be part of what Nahor would inherit upon Terah's death as the heir to Terah's house. With this, Abram would be set to enter the land of Canaan as a man deserving respect, and with no reason to be a man without a house who might become a servant or absorbed in some way into a family of Canaan. At the same time, Abram was not some large family group who was, at that period, considered a threat to anyone in Canaan, as the nation of Israel would later be seen when they came out of Egypt. This would give Abram, his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob a chance to be in Canaan and establish a presence along with a right to be in the land. Later, when this right was denied to Israel, it gave God the righteous ability to send Israel into the land with force and claim it. This truth is why it was important that during Isaac's lifetime he reestablish the wells and feeding grounds Abram had established during his life, and which others had attempted to erase. (Gen. 26:14-22) Through the centuries, and even millennial now, people have and do try the same old tactic of claiming God's chosen nation has no right to

the land. However, in spite of what man says, into Canaan Abram came, and established this right in very ancient times. The Bible makes it clear this was and is God's unshakable will!

One of the facts we have to keep in mind at this point is that we start to see some of the names given for places Abram, and even later events were talked about taking place in, that the places did not receive until later in time. However, this is done to help us understand where certain events took place that we might have no clue about their locations if it had been referred to by the Canaanite name, or the like, in these earlier stories. Also, this is done to emphasize the names that relate to that establishing presence in the land Abram and his family accomplished. A good example of this is the place known as Bethel. This name means house of God, and was given this name by Jacob as he flees from Esau on his way back to Abram's original family, and is met by God there. Jacob promises if God will do as He had spoken to him, keeping him and return him to his father's house, God would be his God. (Gen. 28:10-22) However, Bethel gets used as this places name, beginning right here at the start of Abram's journey into the land. Doing this makes even more sense when we look at the fact the written words we know as these first five books of the Bible (The Torah) were not written down until the time of Israel coming out of Egypt. Up until then, these stories had only been conveyed in the traditional word of mouth, keeping of traditions way. By the time of Israel's journey into Canaan, many of the names given to places by Abraham and his descendants had already stuck, or they would be reestablished. Certainly from then on any older Canaanite name would vanish

In this segment we will continue our overview of the book of Leviticus. We ended our last segment talking about the fact a priest was to eat the flesh of most sin offerings because it represented the fact Jesus would bear in His body the sins of us all by giving His life on the cross! This brought us through Leviticus chapter 6 verse 26, and we will start this segment with verse 27.

The sin offerings, which include those known specifically as trespass offerings, are most holy unto The Lord, because they represent the blood of The Messiah which would be shed because our death cannot atone for our sins. Burnt offerings, which represented a person giving their life wholly unto God, were completely burned on the altar; but the flesh of sin offerings had to be handled by the priests and prepared for eating in order to fulfill the representation. Because there is no way for all the blood to be removed from flesh during the initial process of killing the animal, this flesh would still contain some blood, and that blood would need to be dealt with, because God commanded humans not to eat blood. (Gen. 9:1-4) When it comes to handling sacrifices, not just this stipulation needed to be dealt with, but also the fact the blood would come in contact with those things you used to prepare the meat for eating. Thus, God would instruct that anything



coming in contact with this flesh would be considered holy, and as such, separated out for God's purposes. This would not just mean you wouldn't use things you commonly used to handle and cook with, but it would also emphasize the fact none of this flesh should be taken outside the tabernacle's courtyard or handled by anyone but the priests.

It would be specifically pointed out that if any blood from this flesh ended up on any clothing, it was not to be taken home to wash out, no matter if it was a priest's garment or something such as clothes a priest might have on to carry the ashes from the side of the altar. Any clothing with this blood on it would need to be washed there at the tabernacle so the blood would not be taken anywhere but there on holy ground. One of the main points in this is that the flesh should be handled with great care and separation from other things! This point continues to be made in that even the vessels used to cook the meat had specific handling practices. If an earthen vessel - such as a clay pot or the like - is used, there is no way to truly wash out all the blood because of the nature of the material. Thus, such a pot was to simply be destroyed, as to not use it again and allow its pieces to return to the earth, much as the ashes of the sacrifices itself was to do. However, if something such as a brass pot was used, it could be

cleansed for reuse, but it was not to just be rinsed out. Such a pot was to be scoured to ensure any remnant of the sacrifice was scrubbed off the pot's surface, and then it was to be washed specifically with clean water.

While the flesh from such offerings were to be consumed by the priest who handled the sacrificing process, all the males of Aaron's house who were priests were eligible to carry out the process. However, it is specified again for clarity that those sin offerings - such as those offered for a priest or the congregation - where blood is to be taken into the Holy Place to be sprinkled, were not to be eaten. The remainder of any such sacrifice is to be taken outside the camp and burned instead, as prescribed during the instructions for such offerings. It is also specified again that for each category of animal allowed to be brought for a trespass offering, they are to be killed in the same spot where such an animal would be killed for a burnt offering. The blood also was to be sprinkled on the outside of the altar of burnt offering. However, these offerings are most holy, and only the fat should be burned on the altar, and here God lays out the specifics of what that means should be burned. Just like the offerings specifically described as sin offerings, all the male priests were eligible to carry out the process and eat the appropriate portions there on the holy ground of the tabernacle's courtyard. Here it is also specified that the trespass offering and the sin offerings really are to be handled the same, with the same stipulation that the priest who handles the sacrificing process should be the one to eat

the flesh. This, because both sin and trespass offerings are all about the remission of sins.

Next, it is specified that the skin, which is a very useful part of the animal, but not to be burned on the altar during a burnt offering, is something that is kept for the uses of the priest. This too would belong to the priest who handled the sacrificing process. This stipulation is also true of any of the plant-based offerings of a more finished product such as those baked or fried. The remaining pieces of such offerings, after what is to be offered on the altar, belonged to the priest handling the offering. However, when it came to the more raw product of flour mingled with oil which is brought as an offering, these were to be equally shared for the use of all the sons of Aaron. This, because cooked products can't be kept for long without spoiling and molding. The priest who specifically received this offering needed to be sure it was consumed and not allowed to spoil. However, flour could hold over a period of time, and be shared to help ensure all the priests and their families were provided for.

The instructions turn next to the peace offerings; again, to tell of some added points to bringing these offerings beside just what you do with the animal. If a peace offering was brought, along with the animal was to be brought another element of the feast peace offerings were meant to prepare. This would be of the three plant-based oblation offerings made of fine flour, which were of a more finished product. These were the two oven baked

types: one of unleavened cakes and the other unleavened wafers, both anointed with oil. The third was cakes cooked over a fire, these also anointed with oil. However, along with these there would be one of a fourth bread, and this bread would bring into the peace offering the representation of sin by having leaven in it. This was to remind us that even while living in our sinful state God still blesses us, and can be with us if we continually offer our lives to Him. Because of the leaven in it, no portion of this bread was to be burned on the altar. Instead, it would be offered to God as a heave offering, where the priest would raise it into the air toward heaven to present it. Then, as with the flesh of a sin offering, this bread would specifically belong to the priest who handled the offering.

Because the flesh of a peace offering would be taken out of the tabernacle and handled by the one who offered it, the next instructions were necessary to guide those who were not of the priesthood or under their direct supervision in handling it. Thus, the meat from the animal of a peace offering of thanksgiving is to be eaten in the same day the sacrifice is made. It is not to be kept for other purposes, it is strictly to hold a feast of thanksgiving unto The Lord, and that includes the butchering of the animal as much as it does the eating of the food itself. Thanksgiving offerings were also not a great testament to others if the person did not desire to invite enough people to consume the flesh that day, and anything remaining was to be burned. Now, if the peace offering is brought to

hold a feast consecrating a vow, it might be more of a solemn or personnel occasion. Also, if the offering was simply a voluntary offering where one brings an animal they intend to butcher and/or simply desire to worship God with, the flesh from these kinds could be eaten the day of the offering and the next. However, it is still not to be kept for long, as any remaining flesh is to be burned the third day. This practice certainly encouraged the sharing of the food with one's neighbors if a house was too small to consume the flesh, but also gave a way to dispose of it if that was not something the person wanted to do. This had to be done or the offering would not be accepted as an offering to God, and anyone who ate of it after the second day would be sinning against God.

Now, if any of the flesh of a peace offering came in contact with something the Law defined as unclean, that portion of the flesh was to be burned and not eaten. It is also made clear that any person who knew they had not accomplished what was necessary to be considered clean after doing something which made them unclean, or anyone who had become unclean by touching anything defined as unclean, was not to eat of the sacrifice. If such a person did so, they were to be separated out from the nation of Israel and no longer considered a part of those who demonstrated the Laws of God! This punishment was also to be laid on those who ate of the fat of those animals which could have been brought as sacrifices, even if the animal was something that died of natural causes or was killed by another

animal. The fat from such animals that were not brought as sacrifices could be used for other purposes, but never eaten. This punishment was also to be used across the board for those who ate blood, no matter what animal it came from!

Another stipulation of a peace offering would extend the oblation portion of these offerings, as part of the animal itself would be for the sustaining of the ministry by being given to the priests. These portions would be the breast and right shoulder. As the person butchered it, they would give the fat of the animal to the priest to be burned on the altar. They would also give the breast to the priest to wave before The Lord as a witness they had given it to God's work, and this flesh would provide food for the priests and their families. The right shoulder would also be given, and the priest would heave offer this in the same manner as the leavened bread. This portion of the flesh would, like a sin offering, belong to the specific priest who performed the ceremony of that particular offering. These oblations were to be given without exception throughout time from the peace offerings brought to God.

All these rules and stipulations about what to bring for an offering, how to handle each offering, and what portion belonged to the priest not only go back to the day Moses anointed Aaron and his sons to serve as priests in the tabernacle, but they are exactly what Moses was instructed to have God's chosen nation do and observe as he was in Mount Sinai at the very beginning of receiving the Law. None of it had changed from then until the day

Aaron was first anointed and the practices actually started, and none of it was to change throughout Israel's generations, no matter what interruptions in the practices might take place or how much time might change for or around Israel!

The next verses would go back to cover again that very first day these practices began, by going over the anointing of Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle itself. On that day Moses gathered Aaron and his sons, along with the priestly garments made for them, the bullock and two rams for sacrificing, and the basket of unleavened bread to be used during the ceremony. Moses would then call all the congregation of Israel to the courtyard gate of the tabernacle, which had been erected for the first time, and tell them they were to witness what God had instructed them to do in representing the Law of God. (Ex. 20:18-21, Deut. 5:22-31) Moses then took Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. He then put on Aaron, the High Priest's coat, girdle, robe, the ephod, the curious girdle of the ephod, and tied it all together. Moses put the breastplate on Aaron along with the highly polished stones to reflect the light and perfection of God, and which contained the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. He put the special hat on Aaron's head and tied around it the ribbon holding in place, upon Aaron's forehead, the gold plate which was inscribed, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all the elements inside. Coming back out he sprinkled the oil seven times on the altar of

What About God's Chosen People?

Part V

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

In our last segment we were talking about the history of God's chosen nation, in order to see how they came about and what has happened to them through the following centuries. We are doing this to see the truth of the fact God was not interested in simply accepting whatever man came from Abraham as being His chosen nation, while at the same time seeing that God has and continues to focus us all on those He used to create and continue His nation, even if that meant narrowing the existing group down. We ended last time by covering the fact, after Israel had an earthly king in place they eventually separated into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. Because the southern kingdom continued to possess the temple in Jerusalem, the northern king - named Jeroboam - became concerned the people of the North would return to the southern king of the house of David by going to the temple in Jerusalem. In an attempt to keep his power, he created a false religion so people of the North might stay in the North.

As I mentioned before, Jeroboam knew he could not wipe from the people's minds the Laws and traditions of following God's Law, overnight. However, he was willing to do what he could to give the people in the North a religion of convenience that would win the hearts of those not truly dedicated to the Laws of God. The fact he chose calves as the graven image is also no coincidence, as this was the

chosen image to produce in the wilderness when Israel believed Moses was not coming back. This meant that even though it should have been clear to anyone who really understood the story of what happened in the wilderness, this was a fallacy on Israel's part; among those who did not really know the history well, it would be easy to convince them the calves dated back just as far in Israel's history as the Laws of God. Others would readily accept that there was something to be said for the idea the calf really did then, as well as now, represent The God Israel was to serve, because their ancestors believed it! (Ex. 32:1-35)

Whether it worked for everyone or not was not Jeroboam's concern. He knew it would grow and become the main religion and tradition of the North, creating the separation that he believed would maintain his throne. Now, one might ask why God would allow this to happen, and the answer is, again, what we've been driving at. God was not interested in maintaining the entire nation of Israel as his chosen nation if the people did not want to be a part. God wanted those who, at the very least, had a desire and belief that what He asked of them in the Law was their true history and tradition. Those from the North who believed this way would continue to come to Jerusalem and see its importance. Over the years, as certain kings of the North made this difficult for people to do, even more of these dedicated people would choose to

move to the South. It is also worth noting that the opposite would be true as well. Those who felt the Laws of God were not important, and especially those who truly rejected them as too restrictive and/or burdensome, would choose to go to the North and follow the religion there, or something else for that matter. Why not? It was, after all, a kingdom just like the South, made up of people all from the original twelve tribes of Israel!

What this created was more and more of an intermixed population in both the North and the South, where tribal affiliations - meaning the knowledge of which of the twelve tribes you descended from - became less and less important. As the decades went by, the names of the individual tribes were only maintained by those who cared about their family history, and somewhat as it related to certain territory known as that which had belonged to one specific tribe or another. What really began to define and separate the people was whether you were of the northern kingdom or of the southern kingdom. As this happened, the names of these two kingdoms really began to stick. The people in the North who held the land designated to a majority of the original twelve tribes, took the name Israel. The southern kingdom encompassed the land mostly held by the tribe of Judah and that of Benjamin.

If we study the history a little more in depth, we find the tribe of Benjamin had become a very small tribe and not well preserved, even over the events which proceeded the north/south split. This is referred to by Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin, when Samuel was in the

process of telling him he had been chosen of God to be the original king over all Israel. "And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" I Samuel 9:21 One of the key stories that shows us just when this decline really began in earnest is found beginning in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Judges. That chapter begins a story that showed there was great evil in Gibeah - which was a city of Benjamin. This evil was comparable to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Israel as a people decided it could not stand. Benjamin, as a tribe, was not willing to destroy the evil out of their tribe, so the rest of Israel ended up in a very bloody war against Benjamin that eventually all but destroyed the tribe of Benjamin.

The rest of Israel had also determined they would no longer give their daughters to Benjamite men for wives. This all but sealed the fate of Benjamin disappearing as a tribe. However, at the time, no one liked the idea of one of the tribes disappearing altogether. To solve this problem, there was a couple solutions for wives to be obtained out of Israel for the men of Benjamin, without anyone in the other tribes having to specifically make a marriage arrangement with a family in Benjamin. (Judg. 19:1-21:25) Benjamin would survive but never grow to be significant in size; and with the exception Saul was from Benjamin, it never had great significance among Israel. All this is simply to point out that when the split happened, Benjamin was almost ignored at that point. God told Jeroboam He would

take ten tribes away from the house of David, which left two; but it is recorded that God was only leaving one tribe to the house of David. This tribe would specifically be the tribe David was from - which was Judah; thus, this statement all but ignores Benjamin existing as a tribe of its own at all. (I Kin. 11:26-40) In the end, there was also no attempt made to recognize the southern kingdom with a name that indicated it consisted of two tribes. The southern kingdom was called Judah, and this is where we see the foundation of there being people simply known as Jews!

We all know from the history before our eyes today that the Israel name did not disappear completely, as the nation we know today that resides on a piece of the land God told Abraham the chosen nation would possess is named Israel. However, the people living in that nation are not all of God's chosen nation. In truth, there are many who can say they are Israeli, but only those who identify as being of the line of the chosen nation are referred to as Jews. This is true of those inside and outside of the national land we call Israel. How did this come to be? To understand that, we must continue to go down the history of what happened after Israel split into north and south.

The division between north and south took place about 945 B.C.; and as the years moved forward, God would send many prophets to warn both kingdoms of their failures to be the people He wanted them to be. At times there would be a great

response to this, and at others there would not. Even in the South, the true Laws of God were all but lost at times, and many prophets were killed for even having the nerve to question the authority of the kings to do as they pleased. It's hard to truly say just which nation had more of this kind of activity; because while Judah generally had more kings who at least recognized God, that fact was often the very reason more prophets were active in the South. The northern kingdom became so corrupt, most of the time when God sent a prophet to them it was to warn them their kingdom was going to fall if they did not turn from their wickedness. The result of all this is that while God maintained His promise David's throne would continue to be held by David's descendents, the northern kingdom would see a change in dynasty quite often. Many of which did not last long enough to appropriately be called a dynasty.

This became particularly true as the end of the northern kingdom grew closer and closer. God would continue to change the king in order to give a new king the chance to turn things around, but it never happened. Thus, God really did this to prove that the corruption of the North had grown so bad there simply was no house left that could be trusted to lead the people in God's ways. Certainly the North did not desire to rejoin with the South under the house of David; but from the prophesy of the split, God had said the house of David would not be afflicted forever. (I Kin. 11:39) This serves as a good example of how much people believe they know what prophesy is all about, but are often very

surprised when the actual event takes place!

Many people who knew of this prophesy no doubt believed that one day the northern kingdom would rejoin with the southern, and again Israel would be one. However, that is not what happened. Instead, the northern kingdom only lasted for about 224 years. The last six kings of the North would come from five different houses, and leaving out Pekah, who reined for twenty years, the others only reigned somewhere from as little as six months to a high of one decade. Samaria, which had for most of the North's existence, served as the capital of the North, fell to the Assyrian empire in about 721 B.C. At this time, the prophesy about not afflicting David's house forever came to pass, but, again, not in the way many had suspected it would. Instead of a rejoining of the land, there would only be the end to any dynasty being considered the rightful king of all Israel, save the line and lineage of David.

Now, the Assyrians, who had taken the North, had a habit of not just conquering an area and making an attempt at assimilating the people by destroying much of their past culture. The Assyrians believed in mixing people up so as to destroy in the greatest possible way the cultural identity of people and make them simply people of the Assyrian empire. To do this, they employed the practice of taking one people off their land and putting them on the land of another people who they had also transplanted to another place, etc. This, of course, did not have to be done with significant efficiency when it came to transplanting everyone, because those few left would have no choice but to die out as

a people or intermarry with those brought in. This would help a great deal in making sure no one group held to their original identity, no matter how much certain groups came to be known by the name of the people that had preceded them just because it had become the regional name.

This kind of action was carried out by the Assyrians on the Israelites of the northern kingdom. This fact is why people who talk about Israel's history, many times, like to talk about "the ten lost tribes of Israel." Now, some will argue there really are ten lost tribes, and some will argue there is not. The real problem comes in the fact both views are right and at the same time wrong! This is where we must really pay attention. Those who believe there really are not ten lost tribes are correct, but they don't often understand the truth of why they are. Many believe and teach there are not ten lost tribes because the ten tribes maintained their identity in spite of the transplanting the Assyrians did. Others believe those handful of Israel that were able to stay on the land were able to maintain their identity. Both of these thoughts have a little bit of truth to them, but the reality is that other than relatively small pockets of those dispersed maintained their identity as part of God's chosen people. Many intermarried with those outside the nation to such a degree they did not really maintain the bloodline.

This problem even shows up at the time of Jesus, as many Jews in the South looked down on the Samaritans who lived in the northern areas, because they were not of a pure Jewish blood, and considered by many Jews not to be of Israel at all. Setting

that issue aside because it leads heavily into a whole other discussion, I think the more important point to our question about the Jews being God's chosen nation is the more dangerous teaching that many people in the world who have for centuries, at the very least, not even attempted to identify themselves as God's chosen nation - are! This is the teaching that there is not ten lost tribes because countless people around the world might have a portion, or a lot, of Israeli blood in their family tree. However, this is like making the argument that just anyone who is of Abraham is God's chosen nation. Because of what the Assyrians did, there is no doubt Israeli blood is in the line of countless families, but this does not mean they are of God's chosen nation. As we have talked about before, from the start the Law had stipulations about people joining the nation, as well as how one can be cut off from the nation no matter what your bloodline. Those stipulations, at their base, have to do with a desire to be part of the chosen nation or being forced out because you do not care to respect and represent the Laws God entrusted to the nation.

These stipulations about being cut out of the nation would have pretty much disqualified almost everyone in the nation at many points; but because the nation was just as much about proving how hard it is for any of us to hold on to God and His righteousness in this world of sin (especially as a group of any size), as it was/is about demonstrating it, God preserved His chosen nation with those from it, who at least had the desire to continue identifying themselves as it. We could spend a lot of time going over the ends and outs of all this, and even today

there are arguments among Jewish people of a stricter thinking about who is and who isn't truly of the nation, even among those who identify themselves as Jewish. However, the really important point is this - as it was at the time of The Messiah - is an internal Jewish affair, and has nothing to do with people who have not, at least for many generations, if ever, maintained identifying themselves as Israel. Because of what we talked about earlier in this series, how being of the nation or not has nothing to do with true eternal salvation, there is simply no point in anyone who has not, through the centuries, maintained an identity of being of Israel in any way, trying to insert themselves at this point! It is simply a blessing that there are those who have held their identity and bloodline. We can be assured through this fact God's plan is still in place, and look to them for God to fulfill His ultimate promises for this earth, of sending The Messiah the second time to them!

To get back to our point about people being right and wrong when they say there is and isn't ten lost tribes, I want to turn to those who say there is. These are right in an aspect important to our question. There are ten lost tribes. Remember what I said about the split and the fact two tribes stayed with David's house as their king and Jerusalem as their capital? However, the one, Benjamin, did not remain recognized as a tribe, and its identity was simply absorbed into being those of Judah. In this sense, the tribe of Benjamin was lost, but not because the people were no longer of the chosen nation. There simply became no reason for this tribe to hold on to their identity as a tribe separate from Judah, which had become the

southern kingdom's name. This was also true of those who moved out of the northern kingdom and into the southern. While I'm sure there were those who for many years found it important to identify with being of one tribe or another, and those who at least believe to this day they can trace which tribe they are from, it by and large is not a relevant point. Especially without the temple service which requires Levites to be known.

The point is that the system of tribes holding the land which was designated to their tribe, totally fell apart at the time the Assyrians took over the North. Never again was there such a system reestablished as it had once been. It's not as if Judah was divided into small chunks of land at any point after the split to accommodate separation of tribes into territory. In this way it can not only be said that there are ten lost tribes of Israel, but eleven, as only the tribal name and identity of Judah remained. This is the way those who say there are lost tribes are right and wrong. As the northern kingdom failed, and eventually fell, there were even more Israelites who crossed into the South and became part of Judah. While tribal territory was lost to a great degree (though God did send an indication to Assyria they had not fully captured the land as they supposed), (II Kin. 17:24-33) and even tribal identity eventually faded, to say the ten tribes of the North were any more lost than the tribe of Benjamin is untrue!

To truly grasp all this, we need to turn again to the history of God's nation following the fall of the North. Judah

survived, and anyone who was desirous to hold to their identity as part of God's chosen nation had to move to the South or, for those among the dispersed, to other parts of the world; Judah became what you needed to identified with in order for your cultural past to have any significance in the world. This is why I say the fall of the North really fulfilled God's promise that He would not afflict the throne of David forever. For those of God's chosen nation, David's throne and Jerusalem as your capital city is what needed to be held onto in order to maintain your cultural identity. This is why Jews today will never give up Jerusalem, no matter the political pressure!

Now, the etymology of the word "Jew" is, as with so many things, a very long conversation about how the word comes out of the Hebrew language and later languages which might be best described as rooted in ancient Hebrew, then specifically through languages such as Greek, Latin, and eventually English. Again, this is something I find unnecessary for this study, to go into all the details of. Many people would be lost as we waded through linguistic technicalities that would take us far from our main point. Suffice it to say one can do this study for themselves if one desires to, but the end result is that whether you believe the word is spelled or pronounced correctly or even has the right to be taken all the way to an English form, is not the point of the question at hand. The point is, "Jew" is the recognized English term for referring to those of God's chosen nation, and the base word in ancient text it comes to us from can be translated as

“Jews” or “Judeans,” both of which simply mean, “of Judea,” or what might make more sense to modern English to say, “of Judah.”

Again, some would argue this is still a reference to all those who lived in the region known as Judae, but let's not be foolish. No group other than those desiring to maintain their identity as the ancient nation God established as His chosen people have, through the centuries, attempted to hold onto a name which has brought with it the great persecution Satan and evil hearted men have pursued against God's nation. Even today, those who desire to pickup the identity as a claim to God's promises in some higher way than they believe is available to all mankind, would and likely will flee from it the moment the seeming good in doing so begins to be outweighed by the persecution it brings! Those not of the chosen nation, but truly desirous of the ways of God do not attempt to hijack the term for themselves, but make the statement they stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jews. Those with this attitude are the ones who traditionally have and will be willing to say to this world, if you want the Jews your going to have to come through me as well!

To understand the persecution and politics issue better, we again turn back to our look at the event of history and the attempts to rid the world of God's chosen people as well as their very name! God would spare Judah from the Assyrian attacks during Hezekiah's reign - who was the king of Judah when the North fell. However, his son Manasseh would be very evil during his reign, and the Assyrians

would be allowed to gain enough control over Judah that Judah became a tributary state to the empire. This is a far cry from what had happened to the North, in light of the fact Judah and most of its people would remain on the land. This would allow the Jews to continue a presence and identity, which the North was not able to do. It would also hold Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people, and solidify it for all God's chosen nation as the one true capital of their people.

Another thing would happen during Manasseh's reign as king, and that would be the true determination that even Judah would fall eventually; for Manasseh had done and caused Judah to be more evil than the pagan nations God drove out in order to give Israel the land in the first place. (II Kin. 21:10-16) Manasseh would turn to The Lord near the end of his life, but the damage he had done to the nation was not something he could completely turn around. (II Chron. 33:9-20) His son Amon would take the throne and also be evil. Amon would only last for two years before he would be assassinated. The people of Judah would kill those who had assassinated the king, and put his eight year old son Josiah on the throne. Josiah would be a good king who would turn to God like no other. He would reign for thirty-one years and he would begin to repair God's temple in Jerusalem. This process would reveal a true copy of the books of the Law which had been forgotten. When Josiah heard how Judah was truly suppose to be living before God, he started tearing down temples and monuments built to false gods, some which dated all the way back to the reign of Solomon. He did this not just in the

territory of Judah, but also in some of the territory the northern kingdom had held. Josiah would bring back the following of the Law like it had not been seen for a very, very long time!

God would not turn back from the decision to destroy Judah, but God would promise Josiah it wouldn't happen during his lifetime, because he cared so much for God's Law. This opened a door of hope that the kings and people of Judah had a chance to keep extending their nation and be on the land, if those who came after them would just continue to seek The One True God! Sadly, this did not happen. Josiah's son Jehoahaz would come to the throne upon his father's death and return to the evil ways. The Assyrians had begun to fall to what would be known as the Babylonian empire, and they no longer had the hold over the region they once had. However, Jehoahaz would only reign three months before the Pharaoh of Egypt would take him off the throne and make Judah a tribute state to Egypt. Pharaoh would put another of Josiah's sons on the throne named Eliakim, whom Pharaoh renamed Jehoiakim. This son would be no better at serving God.

Also, instead of Egypt, Jehoiakim would quickly be made a servant of the rising power of the Babylonians. He would be warned by God's words through Jeremiah to serve Babylon and remain the people God wanted Judah to be, and on their land. However, the king would not listen and rebelled against Babylon's power. All in all, he would spend eleven

years at war with the Babylonian vassals in the region. All this would erode Judah and its territory greatly, and even Jerusalem itself would begin to be ravished. After dieing in disgrace, his son, named Jehoiachin, came to the throne about the time Babylon had subdued even Egypt itself. In spite of this, and again against God's warnings, Jehoiachin would continue to be evil, and rebel against God's instructions. Babylon would soon show up at Jerusalem's gates, and when they did, Jehoiachin would go out to surrender, likely hoping he would remain in Jerusalem as a vassal king of Babylon. Instead, he, his family, princes, officers, most all the skilled people of Judah, and much of the treasures left in Jerusalem and the temple would be removed to Babylon.

The Babylonian king would put another of Josiah's sons on the throne, named Mattaniah, who would be renamed Zedekiah. After all Josiah had done to restore God's Word to the people and the land, after all that had befallen the evil kings which followed Josiah, after all the ravaging of the beautiful city of Jerusalem and the temple which Solomon had built, surly a third son of Josiah, when given the chance to set on the throne and follow God's instructions, would turn to serve The Lord, and take every opportunity God would give him to spare what was left!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

burnt offering to anointed it, and he anointed the washbasin and all the tabernacle's vessels. He poured the oil on Aaron's head to anoint him, and Moses put on Aaron's sons their priestly coats, girdles, and hats. After this, Moses, acting in the priest's position, would bring the bullock for a sin offering, killing it as Aaron and his sons had their hands upon its head. Moses collected the blood and put the first blood on the altar of burnt offering by placing it on all four horns at its top corners as was to be done for a leader or common person's sin offering. He then poured the rest at the altar's base. Moses would burn the fat from the bullock on the altar, but because this was a sin offering for the priests, he would burn all the remaining pieces of the bullock outside the camp.

Next, Moses brought one of the rams to offer as a burnt offering, killing it with Aaron and his son's hands upon its head. He collected the blood to sprinkle upon the altar and pour at its base. Moses cut the ram into its appropriate pieces, washed the appropriate parts, and burned the ram on the altar as prescribed for a burnt offering. Moses brought the second ram to offer as an offering to consecrate Aaron and his sons. He killed it with their hands, once again, upon its head, and collected the blood. However, before putting it upon the altar Moses would use it to dedicate Aaron and his sons from head to toe by putting it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, his right thumb and his right big toe. He would do the same to Aaron's sons, then take the blood to sprinkle upon the altar. Moses

would take the required fat from the ram. He would also take the right shoulder portion, which normally would be the priest's who handled the offering. However, because this was for the consecration of the priests, Moses would put the fat with the shoulder, and upon that, the required plant-based oblations of a peace offering, which consisted of an unleavened oven-baked cake and wafer, and an oiled fried cake. These together would be given to Aaron and his sons, but instead of heave offering in preparation of a priest keeping the shoulder or any portion of the bread, all this would be waved before God to show they, as priests, were giving it to God. Giving it back to Moses, he would put all this on the altar to be burned.

Moses would then take the other oblation portion of the ram, which was the breast, and wave it before The Lord, as was to be done. However, because this portion of a peace offering would normally be given to the house of Aaron, and during this consecration Moses was acting in place of Aaron's house in order to anoint and consecrate Aaron's house, Moses would accept the breast in their place. Moses would then take of the oil and blood from off the altar itself and sprinkle it upon Aaron and his priestly garments, then do the same to Aaron's sons.

The meal a peace offering was intended to lead to would then begin. Aaron, with his sons, were instructed to boil the remaining meat from the ram, which Moses had accepted in their stead, and eat it before God at the door of the

tabernacle along with the remaining unleavened bread that Moses had brought in the basket. When they were finished eating, any remaining meat and bread were not to be left but burned with fire to dispose of it. To symbolize the completion of their consecration, Aaron and his sons would not leave the tabernacle's courtyard for a full week - or seven days. They were to be broke in as the watchmen of God's ordinances and keepers of His tabernacle by staying there day and night for these seven days, and if they left they would die. So, just as God had instructed through Moses for them to do, they did!

After the seven days were completed, it was time for Aaron and his sons to start performing the ceremonies they had been consecrated to perform. On day eight, Moses collected the elders of Israel and instructed Aaron to bring a prime specimen young calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. Aaron was then to instruct Israel to bring prime specimens for their offerings, a young goat for a sin offering, and a first year calf and a lamb for burnt offerings. They were also to bring a bullock and ram for peace offerings along with a plant-based offering of fine flour and oil. This was a full range of offerings, for God was going to appear to the entire congregation that day. Everyone brought what they were instructed to bring, and the entire congregation of Israel gathered to the tabernacle. Moses told the people this was another part of what God had instructed them to do, and God's glory would appear unto them.

Moses told Aaron to go to the altar and offer the offerings he was to bring in order to atone for himself, his house, and the people all as one group. Then, truly acting as their priest, he was to offer the people's offerings. So Aaron went to the altar, and because the calf was a sin offering for himself and the congregation, he killed the calf; but his sons as presiding priests would collect the blood and bring it to him. This was a time of consecrating the people, joining them with the newly anointed priests in God's service. Thus, the time had not come to go into the tabernacle before The Lord, so Aaron would put the blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, again as would be done for a leader or common people's sin offering. He would then pour the remainder of the blood at the base of the altar. He would burn the appropriate fat portions on the altar, and as with sin offerings for a priest or the congregation, the remainder of the animal was burned outside the camp. Aaron would next represent the giving of his life, the lives of his house, and the people's lives unto God's service, by killing the ram for a burnt offering. His sons brought the blood for him to sprinkle around and pour at the base of the altar, and then brought the rest of the pieces of the ram to be burned. Aaron would wash the appropriate pieces, and as prescribed, put all the parts on the altar to be burned.

To consecrate the people, Aaron would next bring their sin offering of a goat. A goat was not the sin offering for when the congregation had sinned, but for an individual of the common people. This

was done so it would be as if each person was offering an initial sin offering, and not so much as a congregation. The rest of the process would be much like the sin offering Aaron had started the day offering. Aaron would kill the goat, his sons would bring the blood to be put on the altar's horns and poured at its base. Aaron would burn the fat as prescribed and burn the rest outside the camp. Next, he would carry out the burnt offerings for the people, of both a calf and a lamb. Aaron would then move to the oblation offering of fine flour mingled with oil, this would require him to put a handful of the flour on the altar's fire, placing it alongside the burnt offerings he had already done.

Next, Aaron would carry out the people's peace offerings of a bullock and a ram. He would kill the animals and his sons would, once again, bring the blood to him to sprinkle about the altar and pour at its base. They would also cut the animals into the appropriate pieces and put the fat with the breasts and give them and the right shoulder pieces to Aaron. Aaron would burn the fat upon the altar and wave the breasts before The Lord as with a regular peace offering. However, because this was a whole set of offerings, and all the priests were involved in offering them, the right shoulder pieces would have no specific priest to whom it belonged. Because of this, the shoulders would not be heaved but waved on this occasion, and belong to all the priests.

When he had finished all this, Aaron would raise his hands and bless the people. He and Moses would then go into the

tabernacle itself to stand before God and conclude this initial start up of the tabernacle and all its service. When they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of God appeared as promised. Then, a fire came forth from God's appearing and fully consumed the offerings that had been placed upon the altar. When the people saw this they shouted and fell on their faces before The Lord!

After this, two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took hand-held instruments (called censers) to hold fire and burn incense upon before The Lord in a way that had not been instructed for them to do. When they did this, fire came out from God and killed them for their disobedience. Moses told Aaron that this is what he had warned Aaron God had said, which was that the priests who served before God were to follow God's instruction and neither add nor take away from them. Aaron understood and made no protest to what had happened. Moses then called for two of Aaron's cousins to carry Nadab's and Abihu's bodies out of the camp, which they did, using their coats as stretchers. Moses then warned Aaron and his remaining two sons not to do any of the traditional mourning practices, such as uncovering their heads or rending their garments. That would only cause their deaths and bring God down on the people as a whole. Instead, they were not to even leave the tabernacle, but carry on with their priestly duties as prescribed, and allow the rest of Israel take up the mourning for Aaron's two sons!

Moses went on to warn them,

throughout their generation, they were never to take the risk of being impaired by drinking wine, and especially drink that was known to have fermented, when they came to do God's service, or they would die. They needed to be able to clearly discern what was right and wrong according to God's instructions while doing their job, and be able to teach the people as well. Moses then instructs them to go back to their work by eating their portion of that day's peace offerings, without leaven, and while there in the tabernacle's confines. Moses also goes over again the fact the wave breast and the right shoulder piece that is normally heave offered was to always be eaten in a clean place, but all in the priests' house could eat of them because the meat belonged to them to sustain their families and the work they did as priests. This was never to change!

Some time after all this had taken place, and Aaron, with his sons, had returned to the service which lay before them on the day, Moses began looking for the flesh of the goat, which had been the people's sin offering and had been sacrificed earlier. However, he could not find it, and he knew it was not because the priests had already eaten it. Moses eventually found that the goat's flesh had been burned, and this made him very upset with the two remaining sons of Aaron. After what had happened to their brothers due to their disobedience, Moses couldn't understand how Eleazar and Ithamar could do such a thing! Moses goes over the fact that because the goat was a sin offering, they, as priests, were to eat the flesh of

such an offering there in the tabernacle's confines, in order to represent the taking on of the sins of the people. By burning it, they had not completed the ceremony. Moses goes on to make clear that while this was a sin offering for the people, the blood was not brought into the Holy Place before the veil, this made it an offering they were to eat, not burn outside the camp!

Aaron steps in to explain to Moses that on that very day he and his sons had offered sin offerings that were meant to cover them as priests, but after doing so, two of his sons who were priests had been killed by God for disobedience. While it was not he or his two remaining sons who had committed any sin, they could not help but be affected by the circumstances. Moses had already warned them not to make any move in mourning for their family members or they would die, and Aaron could not see how they could possibly have taken in the holy sacrifice for the people when the grief was still inside them, and it be accepted before God. Because all this was true, they had chosen not to eat the flesh of the sin offering, and instead simply carry out the procedure for when all the flesh of a sacrifice could not be eaten in the same day it was offered. Upon hearing this, Moses decided they had, in truth, followed the proper procedure and was calmed by the fact Aaron had shown he was able to interpret the Law and make proper judgments.

Let's stay in God's Word!

FBS continued from pg. 4

without much, if any trace!

Verse 6 tells us the first place Abram would come to as he began his true sojourning among the Canaanite inhabitants of this land God had told him to come into: specifically the first place where God appeared to Abram. This was a place called Sichem, and better known in later times by the slight spelling variation of Shechem. Moreh is also mentioned, which likely refers to the fact Abram was not in a city but a place filled with a specific native tree. This brought Abram very far south, not only from where he started in Haran but deep into the territory Israel would one day possess. In truth, this brought Abram to a place that would be very much the middle ground of the north/south borders known as Israel in the traditional reference of being from Dan unto Beersheba. (I Sam. 3:20, II Sam. 3:10) Most of Abram's journeying would take him even further to the south of this place. This would later be the truth of Isaac's life, as well as Jacob's dwelling, before the family went to Egypt. However, the best way to see this issue is to understand that Abram had taken a tour - so to speak - of the northern areas as he traveled down to this place, he would soon move and live further south to know southern areas even better. However, here he stopped, and was met by God. It was as if this was a good place for God to tell Abram he was truly in the midst of the land God would give to the chosen nation. Here Abram would build the first of many altars he would build unto God in this land. Here God would confirm to Abram he had arrived!

At this place, Abram would also begin what would pretty much define his journeys in this new land. There is a ridge of higher

hills that runs north/south along this land. If one goes west of this ridge, you find yourself descending to the coast of the Mediterranean, which was simply known at this time as the Great Sea! If one goes to the east of this ridge, you directly descend into the Jordan valley, and further south you drop to the Dead Sea. Not only was it appropriate for Abram to hear from God in this place for the first time and confirm what God had told Abram about why he had been sent here, but it was also appropriate for Abram and the next two generations to live mostly to the south of here. The area south of here is the region God intended to bring Israel into as they come out of Egypt. (Num. 13:21-14:5) It was also the area Judah would continue to hold, with Jerusalem as their capital, after the children of Israel split into a northern kingdom and a southern one. Not only would Judah, as a nation, survive longer than what had split off as the northern kingdom, but it would be the area Israel would be reborn and concentrated for many centuries after even Judah had been allowed to fall, and returned from the captivity in Babylon. All this would have deep ramifications as to why we know those of God's chosen nation simply as Jews today!

There are other interesting facts about this first place in the land where God appeared to Abram. One of the most interesting is that as Abram's grandson Jacob returns home with his wives and children, after being among Abram's original family, Jacob does not descend into the land from the north on a line west of the Jordan. Instead, he comes to the east side of the Jordan. After receiving the blessing of his name being changed to "Israel," and a very favorable meeting with his brother Esau, Jacob would stay for a while. In this place to

the east of Jordan, Jacob would choose to build stalls for his cattle, and for that it would be called Succoth. What's interesting is Succoth is almost directly east and across the Jordan from this first stopping point for Abram in the land; and this region, which Jacob established a presence in, would be the same region Israel would first possess as they came from Egypt into the promised land. Because of Israel's disbelief in God's power to take the land of Canaan, the nation spent forty years wandering in the wilderness until a new generation could take over. (Num. 14:26-39) Instead of going in at the southern end of the land, to the west of the Dead Sea, Israel would travel to the east of the Dead Sea and conquer the first land of their possession in this same region to the east of Jordan, where Jacob had been given the name Israel. (Num. 21:21-22:1)

Also, not long after Jacob builds Succoth for his possessions, to remain for a time, Jacob would cross the Jordan and buy a piece of land right here in Shechem where Abram had first heard from God. This, again, would be God showing that this was truly the middle ground of the land God intended Israel to possess, and this is not where these kinds of concurrent events would end. Later, when the nation of Israel did cross the Jordan to finally begin to take the land Abram had sojourned in, they would cross just south of Succoth next to Jericho. (Josh. 3:14-17) They too would head west and end up in the next place Abram would build an altar. Genesis 12 verse 8 tells us Abram went next to the area between Bethel and Hai. Hai was later known as just, Ai. This area would be the jumping off point for the nation of Israel to go north and south to conquer the land.

Verse 8 tells us Abram specifically stayed in the hills and not in cities with the Canaanites, even though stopping here put him right between two places very close together. This hill would be just to the east of the city later called Bethel, and it is no doubt very much the same spot Jacob was in when he gave the name Bethel to this place, as Jacob also did not stay in a city during his travel through the area. What's interesting is that it's not recorded God specifically appears to Abram here, at this time; and while Abram did not linger in this place, something prompted Abram to stop and build an altar to call upon the name of The Lord. Here, many decades later, God would appear to Jacob with such great intensity, Jacob would proclaim that surely this was the house of God!

Verse 9 records the fact Abram would continue his journey south. However, verse 10 tells us circumstances would pull Abram on south and complete a full sweep of the land. Starting from Haran far in the North, Abram had traveled to this middle ground; but as he traveled further south, a harsh famine came upon the land. This would take Abram all the way to where the family would eventually grow to become a nation. That place was Egypt, and this journey would complete Abram's tour of the land God fully intended Abram's seed to possess one day. Genesis 15:18 records, "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:"

Verse 11 tells us, before they get to Egypt Abram knew it was a much more

heavily populated place than where they had been and one where they could not, especially under the circumstances of needing food for his house and animals, avoid interacting with the people and government. Through his experience of living in Haran, Abram likely felt he had a much better idea of what Egypt was like. However, this did not make him more comfortable, but feel this was truly a strange place with customs they did not know and people who did not serve The One True God. What he asks at this point shows us even Abram had lessons to learn in trusting God. God had not brought him this far only to let him be killed by the people God had sent Abram to journey among. Nevertheless, Abram was fearful the Egyptians would see the beauty of his wife Sarai and kill him to obtain her. All other things aside, this is quite a tribute to Sarai, for she was only ten years younger than Abram, and unless you believe a lot of time had passed since they left Haran - making her even older - Sarai was a woman no younger than her mid sixties.

Abram requests that Sarai go along with the idea he would not present her as his wife, and she would say she was his sister. As we have covered before, this is not a lie because she was the daughter of Abram's brother, making her what we would say was his niece. However, not only did their culture not care about specifying the idea of this close a relative as being different from a sister, Sarai's father had died leaving her in the care of Abram's father Terah. In this respect, she truly was his sister! I don't say this because I'm trying to get out of saying Abram lied in this matter, but to clarify the cultural truth of the story, which is important. While Abram could truly say she was his sister, it did not get him far removed

from being her husband. Without an elder male of the family you could tell a man he would have to talk to before they could have Sarai, Abram was still in the position of authority over her.

In ways, this brings what I believe many would see as an even uglier twist into the story than the idea he might be lying about her being his sister. What he is asking Sarai to do is to allow herself to be taken by another man in order to save Abram's life. His argument is that one way or another, if what he feared came about, Sarai would live on as another man's wife whether she liked it or not. The only difference would be that if she was presented as his wife, Abram would be killed for the other to have her. Whereas if she was only presented as his sister, Abram could give her up and live on. Now, before we all judge Abram too harshly, let's remember they are coming to Egypt not just as a couple, but as a household which Abram is responsible for. They are also coming because of a famine, and all the servants and animals needed food. We may not fully grasp all the cultural differences, but what Abram was asking of Sarai was not just to do this for his sake but the sake of all those with them, which included her brother Lot!

It really never occurred to Abram that by doing this he might be encouraging the very thing he feared would happen. Abram had completely prejudged the people of Egypt, and gave no credit to the idea they might just have enough morality not to kill him for his wife. When they get to Egypt, the men there do, in fact, agree Sarai was beautiful. Having come from Mesopotamia, she may also have seemed to them to be what we might describe as exotic; and sure enough, the princes of Egypt take her to be

part of Pharaoh's house. However, there's another point in this. We should understand this was not done with no care for Abram. It actually turned out just the way Abram hoped it would, should this come about, and that is why verse 16 records Pharaoh entreated Abram and his household well for Sarai's sake. By taking Sarai into his house, and especially since Abram was not of the land, it was as if Pharaoh was making a union with Abram's family, and as a people. If for no other reason, this is why kings often had so many wives. This activity could happen between any common men's houses, but in no greater way did it happen than with kings. Women were often given as a way to seal a deal, and most often as what we might call a political token of the highest degree, to solidify peaceful relations or enter into protective unions with another house, tribe, or nation.

Abram and his house received the supplies and food they needed through this arrangement. However, because Sarai was not just Abram's sister, but the woman through whom God would bring His chosen nation as much as Abram was the man, God intervened where Abram had failed! God plagued the house of Pharaoh because he had taken Sarai. From what happens next we can not judge what Pharaoh may have known or believed about The One True God, but we see he understood very quickly there were godlike forces at work against him. While he had treated Abram well, Pharaoh was being harmed every day she was in his house. It is not specified if Pharaoh got the truth out of Sarai, God revealed it to him, or he simply figured it out on his own. My guess is God used such a typical action against Pharaoh

which lined up with Egypt's pagan beliefs, that the latter is the case. One way or another, Pharaoh calls for Abram, and in great anger asks him why he had not been honest about who Sarai truly was! Pharaoh sees the power of God, and understands that what Abram had done to him was not a good thing but a raw deal for Egypt. Pharaoh shudders at the thought of what might have happened if he had actually consummated the relationship with Sarai!

This is where the, all things work together for good to those who love The Lord and called according to His purposes, truth comes in. (Rom. 8:28) Abram was not to get caught up in Egypt and the comforts of its advanced civilization. God had also sent Abram to sojourn as a stranger and not to become absorbed into another culture or be in league with a world power. What God was going to do with Abram, God was going to do. No man or other people were going to take credit for it, hinder it, or stain it. God used Abram's mistake to solidify Abram would never become entangled with the great civilization of Egypt. Pharaoh would not just return Sarai to Abram; Pharaoh would not just tell Abram to leave Egypt; Pharaoh would demand Abram and his entire household leave Egypt at once! They would even be escorted out of the land by Pharaoh's men just to be sure they truly left. Abram and Pharaoh got a chance to see how serious God was about using Abram and Sarai's lives. Abram would live; and, no doubt, Pharaoh would never dare mess with Abram or his house, again!

Until next time, Shalom!