

Abraham (Part Three)

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Let us get back to Abraham and the Bible, and we are in Genesis 12.

When we left Abraham the last time, he had been called out of his area and he had proceeded from Ur to Haran, left Haran and had gone into the land of Canaan.

Genesis 12:4-6 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

So he went south into Canaan, and then we find,

Genesis 12:7-9 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

Well Abram eventually got to Beersheba. Beersheba seems to have become the center of his operations, and we will get to that in just a little bit. I want to spend a little bit of time right now on Sarai. Later on, I plan to come back to her and spend most of a Bible study on her. I feel that she is very frequently overlooked because of maybe being associated with Abraham,

and there seems to be so much written about Abraham, but I feel as if Sarai needs to be understood as well. She is a very important person to you and me, and I will explore that as we go through that Bible study.

If you will turn with me just a couple of chapters, to Genesis 17.

Genesis 17:5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

Abram means highly honored father, exalted father. Abraham means father of many nations. Undoubtedly the name has to do with God's purpose, His promises, the role that he was going to be playing in the purpose God was working out. So God gave the name change as both a sign and a seal to Abraham for his altering role in the purpose that God is working out.

Genesis 17:15-16 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

It takes two to tango. If Abraham was going to be the father, Sarah was going to be the mother. She is very important to us as well. Sarai means female noble, or queen. Sarah means essentially the same thing.

Adam Clarke in his commentary makes an interesting suggestion that Sarai seems to indicate position in family and Sarah within or over nations. Sarai describes a position in relation to Abram and Sarah describes her role as Abraham's wife, the wife of the father of many nations.

There are some disagreements over what Sarai means. Sarai means female noble, that is the one that is most consistent with those who do research into this kind of thing. There was one though, a man named Elson Smith. He felt that Sarai indicates someone who is contentious and quarrelsome. Nobody seems to doubt that of the names come from the same root, Sar, and it is the feminine of the masculine word that we would translate "captain or commander." In Isaiah 49:23, Isaiah used this word and it is there translated

in the English Bibles, “queen,” Sar is translated queen. The root idea gives one the impression of ruling, as a captain would over a group of men, or as a queen would. It indicates ruling.

This is undoubtedly why Adam Clarke feels that Sarah’s name was changed in order to indicate position and relation to Abraham. Just as his name was changed to indicate his role in God’s purpose, so her name was changed to indicate her changing role within God’s purpose as well. As Abraham was to be father of many nations and be a ruler in that sense as a patriarch over them, so Sarah is to be a matriarch, and she also a queen bearing rule over nations. Notice what it says in verse 16.

Genesis 16:16 and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.”

To me that indicates the name change indicates that the covenant was made with both Abraham and Sarah. We tend to think of it only in relation to Abraham, but I think the name change indicates, to me any way, very clearly with Sarah as well. It is not something just for a male. You will find reference to something like this in Galatians 3, for example, where it says,

Galatians 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

We find in Genesis 20 when Abraham, on his way into Egypt, contrived a deceit and worked together with Sarah, and it says there regarding her,

Genesis 20:12 But indeed she is truly my sister.

She was his *half*-sister. Thye had the same father, Terah, but they had different mothers. Adam Clarke quotes Ebn Batrick, that Terah first married a woman named Yona, from whom Abraham was born and then another lady, Tehevita, from whom Sarah was born. They do not know what

happened to Yona, whether she died and Terah remarried, or this was another wife or concubine or whatever, Abraham and his wife Sarah had the same father but different mothers.

When I give that Bible study on Sarah we will go into her a little more deeply. Her name appears in other places in the Bible in interesting contexts and I think you will find it interesting. I began to study into that a little bit today, and I almost did not get this prepared.

Genesis 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

Eventually, in this chapter, Abraham gets to Egypt. In verse 10 we have the motivating reason for going there, there was a famine.

Genesis 12:11-13 And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.”

I mentioned a similar incident there in chapter 20, that occasion was not in Egypt but with Abimelech in the land of Canaan. However, that was the second time that he tried that. It says there that Sarah was a woman of beautiful countenance. I believe the King James has fair. Years ago when I was studying into this, the word translated in my New King James, “beautiful” and the word translated “fair” could indicate a couple of things. The New King James has taken the approach that she was beautiful, and I have no doubt about that at all. There is an alternative though that is interesting: it could mean fair in the sense of complexion. Meaning that she would be light complexion, possibly a blonde.

That would have interesting ramifications if you know anything about the Egyptians. The Egyptians were a brown race. They were swarthy in comparison to Abraham and Sarah, dark haired. And I am sure, if Sarah

indeed was blonde, that would have been something very interesting to Egyptian men.

Abraham had a lesson to learn. That is, cleverness is no substitute for faith. Now he contrived this deceit, which was half true, but it may as well been all untrue, but it was half true, indeed she was his sister. But he did this in order to save his own life. He had not learned yet the type of faith that he would trust in God to the extent of actually giving up his life. He had to learn a lesson that sin does not solve problems, it only produces more problems. That is the lesson of unleavened bread, how that sin spreads. This deceit that he pulled not only began to affect him, but also began to affect the Egyptians as well because God plagued the Egyptians because of the sin that was being committed here.

Genesis 12:14-15 So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house.

Abram could not just sneak into Egypt. Now you have seen Egypt on the map, and it is a pretty big country. I would imagine at that time that their territory was somewhat similar to modern day Egypt. Now why could he not just sneak in? Surely the population was not so great in those days so that there were a lot of wide open spaces. It is not like you and me maybe coming into Los Angeles. Why we could be absorbed into Los Angeles county with seven million people and nobody would ever know the difference, nobody would ever know we were here. Well, with the populations not being so great, maybe one man with his wife, or wives because he still had Suzanna with him, Achaim was with him. They had not been sent back to those other areas yet.

Do you have the idea that when Abraham made his way to Egypt it was just a small family group that came into Egypt with him? Well, I think not. Let me give you some sort of an idea of how large Abraham's retinue was.

Genesis 14:14 Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Genesis 14 took place only a few years after the events of chapter 12. Now we see that Abrahams trained servants, in this particular case he was fighting a small skirmish, he had 318 trained servants. Now because of the circumstance, I take that to mean that this was a personal bodyguard, a retinue of soldiers that he had with him, you might say his crack troops. This would be the ones that surrounded a man of position, the patriarch, and protected him and others that were on the journey with him. Three-hundred and eighteen who were born in his house.

Let us just make some assumptions to that. These are all soldiers, 318 soldiers. Now suppose each one of those soldiers had a wife. If they were soldiers, I would say they were probably about 20 or 30 years old of age, it is very likely that they had wives, and I think just for the sake of counting here, let us say each one had two children. Now by this time we are multiplying four times three-hundred and eighteen. We are now in the neighborhood of twelve hundred people that may involve just his crack troops, the bodyguard that surrounded the patriarch that protected him and his party as they went along.

Now what about cooks? What about people who took care of the herds and the flocks, the shepherds, the caretakers of one kind or another? What about household servants? We know that Abraham did not have a house per say, but I am sure, when we get into chapter 13 where it says Abraham was very rich, even though he lived in a tent it was probably one of the nicest tents you will ever see. Maybe a ten, twelve, or fourteen room tent. I do not know. At any rate, I get the picture of a man who led a group of somewhere in the neighborhood of at least one-thousand people and maybe up to two thousand people.

Genesis 12:5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.

We are talking about a large portion of Terah's family, Lot's family, all of that group of people, all of their possessions, and the people whom they had acquired. These are not, I get the impression here, those born in his house,

the three-hundred and eighteen, but the people he had acquired. Remember that I was on that verse the last week. These could have represented people that he hired to be carriers, scribes, whatever, mule drivers, donkey drivers, you name it, whatever they needed in the way of beasts of burden. They could have been people who were convinced by the teaching of Abraham and decided to attach themselves to him and made the pilgrimage with him down into Canaan and down into Egypt.

Now, if you are in Egypt and a group of one-thousand or so people come into your nation, I think that you would notice it. Because surely the Pharaoh of Egypt had people on the borders guarding the areas, the roadways, keeping him apprised of what was going on, what was passing down the road.

So when Abraham came into town, it was not a single nomad and his wife who was sneaking in under the cover of darkness, but rather we find someone with a very large retinue of people with him and it was not possible for him to sneak into Egypt.

I think if that occurred and they had newspapers, it probably would have been front page headlines in Egypt where he came in. So, it attracted Pharaoh's attention and I feel certain that with Abraham being there, he would have asked for grazing lands, a water supply, and whatever it would take for those people, the retinue, to continue to live.

Now it was just as Abraham feared,

Genesis 12:14-16 So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

Now I got a chuckle out of that when I was reading it today because the male and female servants were listed, sandwiched between the male and female donkeys. And I wondered about that. We are supposed to live by every Word of God and why are the servants in between the donkeys?

Genesis 12:17-20 But the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way." So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

I am going to read something to you from Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, chapter 8, paragraph 1.

Now, after this, when a famine had invaded the land of Canaan, and Abram had discovered that the Egyptians were in a flourishing condition, he was disposed to go down to them, both to partake of the plenty they enjoyed, and to become an auditor of their priests. . .

Keep that in your mind. That is something that is not mentioned in the Bible, but it is something very interesting to consider. So we begin to see a second reason for him to go down to Egypt. Not only to continue to survive, but to become an auditor of their priests. Now when you audit a class, what you do is you sit in on the discussions, the teaching sessions that are going on.

. . . and to know what they said concerning the gods; designing either to follow them, if they had better notions than he, or to convert them into a better way, if his own notions proved the truest. Now, seeing he was to take Sarai with him, and was afraid of the madness of the Egyptians with regard to women, lest the king should kill him on occasion of his wife's great beauty, he contrived this device : he pretended to be her brother, and directed her in a dissembling way to pretend the same, for he said it would be for their benefit.

Now, as soon as he came into Egypt, it happened to Abram as he supposed it would; for the fame of his wife's beauty was greatly talked of; for which reason Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, would not be satisfied with what was reported of her, but would needs see her

himself, and was preparing to enjoy her; but God put a stop to his unjust inclinations, by sending upon him a distemper, and a sedition against his government. And when he inquired of the priests how he might be freed from these calamities, they told him that his miserable condition was derived from the wrath of God, upon account of his inclinations to abuse the stranger's wife.

He then, out of fear, asked Sarai who she was, and who it was that she brought along with her. And when he had found out the truth, he excused himself to Abram, that supposing the woman to be his sister, and not his wife, he set his affections on her, as desiring an affinity with him by marrying her, but not as incited by lust to abuse her. He also made him a large present in money, and gave him leave to enter into conversation with the most learned among the Egyptians; from which conversation his virtue and his reputation became more conspicuous than they had been before.

Now this Pharaoh's name is Mentuhotep II. Here is a little bit of background. Mentuhotep II was of Dynasty 11 of Thebes. That dynasty began its rule about 1990 BC and lasted 140 years until 1847. Mentuhotep II was its most powerful ruler. He ruled from 1918 until 1867 BC. He was significant for a pretty important reason.

Noah died in 1974 BC, two years before Abraham was born. Abraham was born in 1972 BC. Shem, appears in ancient Egypt history as a man named [names unclear on audio] of Dynasty 1. Shem left Egypt the same year that Noah died. When Shem left, war broke out almost immediately, dividing the country. Most of the squabbling occurred between cities: the city of Thebes and Heracleopolis, over a third city, Thinis, also called Abydos. Thinis is the city from which Shem ruled.

Now the breach between these two cities would not be over until Mentuhotep II won the battle that united all of Egypt under him. The word Pharaoh means "great house," which implies lesser houses under it. So it appears Egypt was a confederation of city-states, with one great house ruling over others. These city states had their own dynasty of rulers, but the great house, the Pharaoh, was not always in one place. At the time of Abraham, the great house was from Thebes and Mentuhotep II was its ruler.

The important thing about Mentuhotep II was that he was the man that succeeded in uniting Egypt under him, and to put down the squabbling between the various city-states and have a firm grip over the entire country. That occurred around 1891.

Abraham was caused by God to come into Egyptian history, and thus world history, just at the time that Egypt was united again under a single strong ruler, and it seems as though God was going to be using Abraham to do something to further their unity and to prepare them for something else.

Remember the things I told you about Abraham and the things known about him in terms about him being an astronomer, a mathematician, a very fine speaker, a publisher of accounts that had to do with proving the existence of God. Let me read again from Josephus, this time from the very next paragraph, which is Book 1, chapter 8, paragraph 2.

For whereas the Egyptians were formerly addicted to different customs, and despised one another's sacred and accustomed rites, and were very angry one with another on that account . . .

We get a picture here of a nation divided not only politically, but also religiously as well, with one group worshipping their god, another group another god, another group another god, and so on. Not all that unusual, but the people fighting one another over whose god was the greatest.

Abram conferred with each of them, and, confuting the reasonings they made use of, every one for their own practices, demonstrated that such reasonings were vain and void of truth: whereupon he was admired by them in those conferences as a very wise man, and one of great sagacity, when he discoursed on any subject he undertook; and this not only in understanding it, but in persuading other men also to assent to him. He communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy; for before Abram came into Egypt they were unacquainted with those parts of learning; for that science came from the Chaldeans into Egypt, and from thence to the Greeks also.

We find Abraham providing them a more sophisticated approach to many of the things they would need for making their culture much more sophisticated, complex, and able to support a nation that would be a world power. In other words, he gave them much of the information that they needed to provide an infrastructure for education, for providing social services, for unifying things that might have to do with business, for trade, such as arithmetic, weights, measures, standards so that they could become a commercial success, enabled to compete on a world scene with other nations that were more highly technologically advanced.

What we find then is, the information that Abram gave them helped to give rise to what is known in history as Dynasty 12 of Thebes, and this group ruled from 1848 to 1636 BC. It was during this period of time that Israel came into Egypt. Dynasty 12 was ruling when Israel came into Egypt and indeed Joseph the son of Jacob, his period of rule in Egypt was 1690 to 1624 BC. Now Jacob came into Egypt in 1682 BC and when they came, they were coming into a nation that was well on its way to becoming the leading nation of the world.

If we ever get to Joseph, we will find that Egypt survived another very great famine because of the foresight of Joseph, because of the vision God gave to Joseph, and we find that part of the world coming into Egypt in order to get food to eat, to survive, and the Egyptians were ready for them.

They had a sophisticated, well-functioning commercial nation going at that time. Even before this time, history shows that Egypt was conducting military campaigns all over that Middle Eastern area. So it appears that Abram was used by God to introduce to Egypt the things they would need to provide an infrastructure for commercial and technological development of that nation. He gave them what they need to provide for a stable and refined culture.

Genesis 13:1 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.

When it says he went to the south, you know if you went south from Egypt you would go to Ethiopia. But it means he went to the south of the land of Canaan, to the Negev, into the area of Beersheba. But he did not stop in Beersheba.

Genesis 13:2-5 Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord. Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents.

Now, we have not just one very rich man, but we have two. Lot is not called very rich, but he was also quite well off.

Genesis 13:6-7 Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

That is hard for me to imagine, two men, so wealthy that the land could not support the two of them together. That is the indication, it could not bear them.

Genesis 13:8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren."

Now Lot means concealed by some definitions, others say it means myrrh, the perfume. It is no matter, but he is an interesting subject.

Abraham magnanimously gave Lot his choice. What do you think Lot should have done? I think it is interesting to at least to think about it. The Bible does not have all of the details, but do you not think that Lot should have given way to Abram? Was Abram not the patriarch? Do you not think that a person

of humility would have said, “This is too big for me. I don’t have the mind, I don’t have the capacity, I don’t have the understanding, I don’t have the wisdom.” Do you not think that he should have bowed before the patriarch and said, “You make the choice. You’re the head of the family.” Now maybe they did say that. I do not know.

But whenever Lot made his choice, he chose the area that was, I think we would have to say, most worldly. Now because he made that choice, it gives me the impression that they did not discuss it in that manner. That Abraham made his statement to Lot, “go ahead, you take your choice,” and Lot very legally took the land that he thought was the better land, which gives an indication, I think, into his pride when he left to Abram what seems to be the less favored land—the hills, the mountains, the more rocky areas, the areas that were away from the center of action, away from the big city, away from the areas of excitement and entertainment, where real living was.

Now I think that what Lot did was the choice that any person with his mentality or his approach would have made. I think it was a worldly approach. But his mind was not on getting into the Kingdom of God, I think that his mind was on grasping, increasing his wealth ever more—he took the best land. His mind was also on the entertainment and excitement that the city could provide. Now I have no doubt that he continued to become very wealthy, but he almost lost it. And I think Lot’s choice revealed the goal of his life.

Now he is called righteous in II Peter 2 but the Old Testament shows a man very inconsistent in character.

II Peter 2:8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)

The Old Testament shows that he was inconsistent in character, and eventually, what happened? He lost everything but his life. He lost his possessions, he lost his wealth, he lost the city that he currently lived in, he lost his wife, his daughters brought shame on his name, and what was he left with? Well, he had to depend on the patriarch who had given him the choice in the first place.

Well, let us go on.

Genesis 13:14-18 And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.” Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.

Verse 15 is certainly an indication that the promise involved eternal life.

Genesis 14:1-5 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim.

Just a little bit of background here. What we have here is a confederation of Assyrian states. They are not called Assyrian here, but Josephus in the *Antiquities*, Book 1, chapter 9, paragraph one, implies them being Assyrian. Now Amraphel was the son of Horus, and he ruled Shinar in the south parts of Mesopotamia in the land of Cush, Nimrod, and Semiramis. Arioch was also a son of Horus, and he ruled in Ellasar which is just another name for Asher, that is in northern Mesopotamia. Now Chedorlaomer, identified as being of Elam, and Elam is identified as being between Palestine and Shinar. And then there is Tidal. He is called here the king of nations, while he was leading a confederation of Assyrian city-states, who are the present day Turkey.

I want to give you an idea from the *Antiquities* of the land mass that this confederation covered. If you can get a picture of the Middle East and picture where Turkey is, jutting out there between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, a very large land mass all by itself. Well, this group of kings ruled over an area that stretched all the way from Turkey, in a crescent, up into Mesopotamia, down into the Tigris and Euphrates valley, all the way to the Persian Gulf. It was no small land mass, and undoubtedly involved a fairly large population of people.

Now by comparison the area that is encompassed by these five kings that is confederated here against them, is very tiny, and I do not think we would consider them to be much more than mayors of small city-states. When they rebelled in the fourteenth year of Chedorlaomer, who seems to be the chief king here, they counter attacked against these five kings. They did alright. They defeated the five kings.

Genesis 14:11-16 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram. Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

So we find again in the *Antiquity of the Jews*, that these kings were slaughtered. I am talking about Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer, and Tidal. They were killed in this battle and in this, Abraham devastated the leadership of the Assyrian Empire all in one battle. All the kings were dead!

Now in the wake of a disaster like that, what do you think would take place? Do you think it would be a smooth transition of power in Assyria? I think not. Chaos erupted with various officials under Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer, and Tidal. They broke out in bidding for power and position and in the vacuum that occurred, with such a lack of sufficient leadership, it destroyed the Assyrian Empire down and I believe that the course of world history was changed. Assyria never became a power again on the world scene until the 700 ^{BC}, and they rose to power under a series of kings: Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, not necessarily in that order, and attacked Israel and took them captive in 722 to 719. But in that space of time, from Abraham all the way to 722 when the Assyrians once again come on the scene and defeated Israel, they are mentioned in the Bible only one time. It is in Judges 3. An Assyrian king was shown harassing the Israelites during the period of the judges.

We might ask the question, why did God allow this to occur? First of all, understanding a little bit the way the Assyrians operate. Their history shows them to be a quite war-like people. They were consistently making war against other nations and doing very well at it. They had a habit of wiping out nations, installing them under one government, and replacing their religion with one that was in harmony with what they believed. You can see that history when Israel was conquered back in that 722 to 719 ^{BC} period. They cleared the land out, took away all the people back to Assyria, and sent other people in to inhabit the land. That was their pattern of operation.

Now, can you imagine what it would have been like for God to have allowed Assyria to continue as a great power while His people, the children of Abraham, the children of Isaac, and the children of Jacob were beginning to grow into a group that could eventually become a nation? Well, what God did is He sent Abraham down into Egypt and Abraham added to their knowledge such things that would enable them to become a commercial power, a trading power, a technology power, a military power on the world scene. He added to what they already had so that they began to rise as a nation of power to be contended with in the world.

You know if Assyria had continued to exist, it would not have been long before there was a major confrontation between Assyria and Egypt. And it

very likely would have been fought where? It would have been fought in Palestine, maybe over the land, and is very likely that the Assyrians have won and pushed the Egyptians back.

But see, God was thinking *way* ahead and He was preparing His people Israel to grow up in to being a nation. When Jacob and his children began to grow up into a nation, they did not do it in the land of Canaan, they did not do it in Assyria. They did it in Egypt, the nation that God had prepared. They went down there; they came out of there. In the meantime, Assyria had been subdued through the working of God's servant Abraham, and the resulting chaos, confusion, and turmoil that arose following the death of those four kings. So it allowed something to occur that may not have occurred had God not intervened in that way.