

PART IV

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel,
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you.
(Ex.3:15.)

Chapter XV

ABRAHAM

THE MAN OF FAITH

He looked for a city which
hath foundations, whose builder
and maker is God.
(Heb. 11:10.)

Abraham! The mention of his name evokes an image of nobility, courage, loving-kindness, spiritual authority, and faithfulness. *Josephus* draws a compelling picture of Abraham as he dwelt among the Chaldeans. Such qualities as righteousness, greatness, sagacity, spiritual persuasiveness, virtue, and unbounded enthusiasm in publishing his conviction that there is but one God, the Creator of the universe, made of Abraham a dynamic figure. Add to these qualities the fact that Abraham was skilled in the celestial sciences, and you have a man who would be a leader in any age, in any land. (See *Josephus*, Book I, Chapter VII.)

The Chaldeans were a pagan people. They worshipped Sin — the moon-god and goddess, *Ninar* and *Ningal*. They were given wholly to idolatry. Their sensuous practices were notorious. Ur, the principal city of Chaldea, was the center of organized occultism — the highly developed powers of the carnal mind. Even though Abraham lived among these people, his faith in his God was so complete, his divine nature so dominant, his mind so spiritually logical, that he was not influenced by their pagan beliefs and practices. Instead, he sought to change their concepts of the Supreme Being. And even though he was not successful in this effort, he remained steadfast in his allegiance to his God. The thinker and doer of the twentieth century A.D. might do well to take a close look at the record of this twentieth century B.C. thinker and doer.

We first know him as Abram, the son of Terah. Perhaps fearing that some harm might come to his son because of his outspoken

opposition to the carnal-mindedness and paganism of his countrymen, Terah gathered together his whole family and all their possessions and left Ur of the Chaldees. In the Bible we read:

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.— Gen.11:31.

Although the determination to leave Chaldea appeared to be Terah's, this move was implemented by a power beyond Terah's comprehension. The move was the irresistible movement of Abram's spiritual unfoldment, impelled by the power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, within him, which, like the current of a mighty river, took with it all that was in its path.

Terah and his family paused in their journeying at Haran in Mesopotamia in the region of Padan-aram. Contrary to popular belief, the city of Haran was not named for Abram's brother Haran. These names are different in the Hebrew: *Haran*, the man; *Charon*, the place. The city of Haran (*Charon*) was no isolated hamlet. It was located at the head of the great trade route of the Fertile Crescent, which extends in an arc northwest from Chaldea, through Babylon, paralleling the Euphrates River, up through Mesopotamia, thence westward toward the Mediterranean Sea, and down through the land of Canaan to Egypt. Other trade routes from the east, from the north, and from the west passed through this ancient metropolis.

No reason is given for this pause in their journey to the land of Canaan. Probably they felt at home there, since Abram's brother Nahor and his wife Milcar lived in Haran. They must have migrated to this area before Terah took Abram and his family from Chaldea, since there is no record that they accompanied Terah and Abram. At a later date Abram spoke of Haran as the land of his kindred, the home of Nahor and his family. (Gen.22:20;24:4,10).

In Haran Abram's mode of living changed drastically. In Ur, probably the most sophisticated city of the time, Abram had been an integral part of the cultural life of the community. He was an astronomer and was highly educated in the sciences. Today he

would be classified as an intellectual. But we are told that in Haran Abram accumulated much wealth in cattle, or miqueh (a Hebrew word meaning live stock of any kind), in men-servants and women-servants, and in other substance, which was great. In modern times we might say that Abram went into the cattle business. This change led to the development of a latent talent — that of shepherding the flock — of leading instead of pushing, of persuading instead of challenging. There is no indication that Abram actually went into the fields to shepherd his flocks. But from this time the nature of the tender shepherd was manifested throughout his experience.

Terah died in Haran (Gen.11:32). We do not know how long Abram remained in that land after his father's death. But we do know that after a time the divine hand prodded him to move on. The forces of the Spirit of God swept him forward in his spiritual unfoldment. Under divine orders Abram embarked on a divine adventure, though he knew it not — an adventure in which he was to rise to unprecedented heights in spiritual understanding of the nature of the Supreme Being. He was to be taught the spiritual nature of the universe and the scientific relation of God to man. The Covenant of God with man, revealed in the first chapter of Genesis, was to come alive in his unfoldment. And his human life was to become a part of the divine allegory written in the Holy Scriptures, in which the divine nature in man and the universe was to be revealed to the world. We read:

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.— Gen.12:1-3.

When the Biblical record declares that God says "I" or "I will" to an individual, this is proof positive that there is a response within the individual to the divine purpose. Abram did not at first comprehend that his response to the divine *Ego* was the divine Mind Itself speaking as his own mind or ego. But from the beginning of his divine adventure, the divine *Ego* established Itself as the "I" of his being and revealed in him a dynamic individuality

that felt rather than heard the will of God. Thus the divine decrees were inscribed indelibly in his nature so that he responded spontaneously to the divine will.

When the divine *Ego* said to Abram: "*I will bless thee; I will make of thee a great nation; I will make thy name great; Thou shalt be a blessing; In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" — Abram naturally believed and was in accord with God's promises. As a reward for his obedience in responding to the divine demand that he be God's representative on earth, the divine blessing began at once to work its power in him. But let us not underestimate God's requirement of Abram. First, under divine directions, this great man had given up a prestigious position in Ur, a city of wealth, material progress, intellectuality, but also a city of idolatry, of gross materialism, and sensuality. At God's command Abram had left this city, or consciousness of what constitutes life, and had gone to Haran in Mesopotamia, where he literally began life all over again. We might say he took on a new job in a new country and changed his whole life pattern. And he was a success. Now, at the age of seventy-five, he has been commanded by God to again pull up stakes and begin a new life in a strange country, away from all his kindred. And so in tune was he with his God that he obeyed without question, "and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb.11:8).

What was this divine blessing which caused Abram to be great and made him a blessing to present and future generations? Recall the Hebrew word translated *blessing* comes from a primitive root meaning prosperity. The word *bless* has many different meanings, chief among which is: to be divinely favored, to make successful in spiritual happiness and temporal concerns; to magnify and increase. The sense is to go forward, to take off material limits, to make holy, to consecrate. Throughout the Bible the idea of fruitfulness, spiritual and material prosperity, and well being is repeated again and again as an integral part of God's blessing — the continual unfoldment of good, with never any depletion or lack. In the degree that we love and obey God and know no will but His, the divine blessing is at work in our consciousness and experience, causing us to increase and be fruitful — to continually manifest God's power and never be in want of any good thing. (See pp.63-64.)

In Chaldea Abram had come to know God as the creative Principle of the universe. Although he called the Supreme Being by the name of *Jehovah, or yawah* — translated *Lord* in the *King James Version of the Bible* — it is evident that his understanding of *Yawah* transcended the earlier and later concepts of *Jehovah* as a manlike God, capable of both good and evil, blessing and cursing. When the Jews adopted the name *Jehovah, or Yawah*, as their national Deity, this name took on their own limited, circumscribed, and anthropomorphic sense. It came to mean: The Supreme Being, Self-existent, all-powerful, knowing good and evil, and proclaiming both blessing and cursing of His people. But Abram's sense of God took on the original meaning of the Hebrew word *Yawah, or Yaweh*, the Creator of the universe; to cause to be. And with every period of spiritual unfoldment in his life, his understanding of the nature of Deity rose higher and higher.

The Bible represents Abram as a towering figure, a great and noble man. His nobility was perfectly balanced with humility — a subjective sense of self so complete that his communion with God was uninterrupted by human will and human opinions. He heard and obeyed without question the Word of God which came to him. Whether this Word came as an audible voice or whether it came as the silent voice of his own divine Mind, or intelligence, we know not. But we do know that he heard or felt an impelling spiritual directive and followed it. His faith in his God was absolute. In the *New Testament, or New Covenant*, of our Bible we find this testimonial of Abram:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.— Heb.11:8-10.

The city for which Abram was seeking was not a material city. This unusual man was searching for an unusual city — a citadel or consciousness which had foundations, an understanding founded in principle and law, not on material observation and human reason. He was pursuing knowledge of the very substance of crea-

tion. And this was to be a grand adventure of spiritual discovery.

God chose Abram as His representative to reveal to the world the understanding of the nature of Spirit, to manifest this divine nature, or express the qualities of Spirit, and through his example, to help humanity understand the holy, spiritual nature of the earth and heaven and man and the divine authority which goes with this understanding. God chose Abram for this holy work because He found in him the qualities essential to accomplish such an unprecedented mission — qualities of humility, spirituality, teachableness, faith, strength, grace, wisdom, patience, virtue, obedience — qualities which make for true greatness. Further, Abram had proved that he had courage to stand in the face of overwhelming opposition to his convictions. He was a scientific thinker; hence he could not be shaken from logical conclusions, reached through scientific observation and unfoldment.

Abram's spiritual journeying is of vital interest to us in our own unfoldment. As we trace his holy pilgrimage we will learn with him that the city for which each one searches is the citadel of spirituality, a scientific consciousness of God, man, and of all creation — the dominion of Spirit which Christ Jesus declared is the kingdom of God within each one of us (Luke 17:20,21).

St. John, from the Mount of Revelation, discovered this Holy City, this Kingdom of God, this citadel of spirituality — a new concept of heaven and earth — which he described particularly as *the city which lieth foursquare*, in the fourth dimension of scientific thought, the only place it may be found (Rev.21:2,3,16).

The discovery of the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, is awaiting each one of us. As we walk with Abram in the way of holiness, we will discover it with him.

Faith gives substance to our
hopes, and makes us certain of
realities we do not see.
(Heb.11:1, NEB)

Chapter XVI

SPIRITUAL EXPLORER, SURVEYOR, AND HOMESTEADER OF THE 20TH CENTURY B.C.

Haran

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and
Lot his brother's son, and all their substance
that they had gathered, and the
souls that they had gotten in Haran; and
they went forth to go into the Land of Canaan;
and into the land of Canaan they came.
(Gen.12:5.)

It should not be difficult to picture the colorful caravan which accompanied Abram and Sarai in their journey from Haran to the land of Canaan. The following account vividly describes the entourage:

This couple's caravan was impressive in the beginning; and Abraham increased his wealth as he travelled. Their long entourage consisted of menservants and maidservants as well as sheep, oxen, asses, and other herds and flocks. The extent of their household later may be imagined by the fact that, at Abraham's word, no less than 318 servants, born in his house and trained to arms, accompanied him to the rescue of his nephew Lot. Those left to attend flocks and herds, which he possessed in great numbers, must have been in equal proportions. . . . We can picture their long caravan with its riding animals brilliantly attired with wool and head trappings, as were their riders, forming a cavalcade of color as it moved. (Edith Deen, *All the Women of the Bible*, p.10.)

We may also picture the scene as the caravan stopped each night for food and rest. When Abram spread his tents beside the great trade route and gathered his flocks together for safety, the assembly must have resembled a small village. Few people today realize what a tremendous undertaking was involved in this migration.

Damascus

En route to the land of Canaan, Abram and his large caravan sojourned for a time at Damascus. *Josephus* writes thus of Abram in quoting *Nicolaus of Damascus* in the fourth book of his *History*:

Abram reigned at Damascus, being a foreigner, who came with an army out of the land above Babylon, called the land of the Chaldean: but, after a long time, he got him up, and removed from that country also, with his people, and went into the land then called the land of Canaan, but now the land of Judea. . . . Now the name of Abram is even still famous in the country of Damascus, and there is shown there a village named for him, *The Habitation of Abram*. (*Josephus, Book I, Chapter VII.*)

At the time Abram came into the land of Canaan it was inhabited by many different tribes. Some of their names are identified with the sons of Canaan. The Hittites, Amorites, Phoenicians, Jebusites, Girgasites, and Hivites are only a few who called Canaan their homeland. The Nephilim, Anakim, or Rephaim — giants believed by many to be descendants of “the sons of God and the daughters of men” (Gen.6:2), who escaped the flood — were also in the land. (See Num.13:33; Deut.2:10; Josh.11:21,22; 14:12.)

Canaan probably took its name from the Canaanites, so named because they were descendants of Canaan, Ham’s son. But there are many who believe that the Canaanites took their name from the land of Canaan. There are still others who believe that the land of Canaan was so named because for many years the descendants of Ham — the Hamites, or ancient Egyptians — dominated the area and the land was thought of, metaphorically, as Egypt’s, or Ham’s son.

Although the land of Canaan was a kind of melting pot, the people apparently lived together in the land without enmity. There was no central government — only a loose coalition of tribes. Probably they were held together by a kind of religious bond, for, so far as can be determined, most of them worshipped the pagan god Baal.

Baal worship, or Baalism, was paganism of the grossest sort. It was infamous for perverted sex practices and sacred prostitution. It was notorious for child sacrifices and barbaric rites. Further,

these people used divination; they were enchanters, necromancers, charmers, wizards and witches, and consultants with familiar spirits (Deut.18:9-12). This land was as pagan and idolatrous as the land which Abram had left. And while the culture of Canaan was primitive compared with the advanced civilization of Chaldea, the people were as grossly material as the sophisticated inhabitants of Chaldea. What made the land of Canaan more desirable than Chaldea for Abram's spiritual journeying?

Even though the Canaanites were as pagan, idolatrous, sensuous, and grossly material as were the Chaldeans, their Baal worship was not as highly organized as was the moon-god worship in Chaldea. The Canaanites appeared to be unconcerned about the religious beliefs of others. However, in Chaldea it was dangerous for anyone to disagree with the hierarchy of the priest-craft of the moon-god and goddess, as Abram had learned.

In Canaan Abram was received kindly. His large herds and flocks were allowed to wander far and wide in search of pasturage without interference. There is no record that his shepherds were resented or opposed. He was free to build his own altars and worship his God in his own way, even though it was a way completely at variance with the idolatrous Baal worship. There was no apparent opposition to his great faith in God as the Creator of the universe, even though the Canaanites believed that Baal was lord of heaven and earth, that he owned the land, and that his kingdom was eternal.

Shechem

However, Abram's spiritual journeying ran into a kind of opposition he had not before encountered — opposition like an invisible wall. What was it? The answer lies in the following verse — a verse so simple its profundity is lost to the casual reader:

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land— Gen.12:6.

Figuratively, *Sichem*, or *Shechem*, meaning shoulder-burden, and *Moreh*, meaning soothsayer, are typical of the state of mind through which Abram was passing at this time. He was burdened

and depressed — mentally and physically. His clear thinking, his sense of dominion, seemed to be blocked by an unseen influence. It was as though a soothsayer had taken possession of his mind. His thinking was not his own. As though to emphasize what had happened, the statement is made: "And the Canaanite was then in the land."

Abram was walking in the mental atmosphere of the Canaanites, in a powerful, penetrating, sensual climate of carnal mindedness which seemed to permeate his thinking and to produce a kind of mental miasma — confusion, mesmerism, and apathy. Abram had been in other lands where the mental atmosphere had been far more dangerous to his peace of mind, but it had not affected him in this way. Why was the mental atmosphere of the Canaanites more disturbing to Abram than that of the Chaldeans? Why did the recorder of Abram's story feel it was important to stress the fact that the Canaanite was then in the land? Why not call attention to the fact that there were others in the land whose thinking was unspiritual? Who were the Canaanites?

Canaan was Noah's grandson, the son of Ham. Recall that these two had endeavored to discredit Noah's great mission by presenting circumstantial evidence that Noah had disgraced himself by drinking too much wine. Whereas the drunken stupor in which Noah appeared to be was a mesmeric trance produced by Canaan before making an indecent attack on Noah. (See pp. 200-204.) But Noah knew what Canaan had done, and declared:

Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he
be unto his brethren.— Gen.9:25.

Noah did not cause a curse to fall upon Canaan. His pronouncement was a statement of the inevitable result which Canaanite thinking and acting bring upon their perpetrators. We do not know the kind of service or servitude Canaan was forced to give to his brothers. But succeeding years have confirmed that the land of Canaan was made to serve the progeny of Shem and Japheth. And the land of Canaan was made to serve Abram — to provide for him a peaceful home and plentiful pasturage for his great flocks — during his spiritual journeying.

The mentality associated with Canaan appears to have been transmitted to his descendants from generation to generation.

Moses certainly knew of the devastating influence of the Canaanite mentality on the people of God, for more than 400 years after Abram's entrance into that land he warned the children of Israel of the kind of thinking they would encounter when they went into the land of Canaan. We quote again the great lawgiver's words as he prepared his people for their return to the land God had promised to Abram and his seed:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer,

For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.

For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.— Deut. 18:9-14.

Moses' words project a picture of Canaanite mentality which explains the dense mental atmosphere Abram encountered when he came into the land of Canaan. The grossness of the Canaanites (typical of the seed of the serpent) and the spiritual ascendancy of Abram (typical of the seed of the woman) met head on! The nature of Canaan, antagonistic to the nature of Shem, is manifested in the enmity of the unrighteousness of the Canaanites toward the righteousness of Abram. But the people of Canaan were never at enmity with Abram, never antagonistic toward him. That is why it was so difficult for Abram, and for us, to understand the chemicalization their unholiness produced in Abram. It was as though two powerful counteractive chemicals had been assimilated in one body. Truly, *the Canaanite was then in the land*. The gross, sensual, hypnotic influence of the Canaanitish mentality, like a deadly poison in the atmosphere of thought, had seeped into Abram's subconscious mind, and, acting like a drug in his body and a drag on his mental and physical footsteps, had

neutralized, for the moment, the clear scientific thinking typical of his nature.

The first evidence we have that a destructive influence was at work in his mind was that he became depressed and felt he was carrying a shoulder-burden (Sichem). Humanly he had every reason to be disappointed in the land of Canaan. Certainly it was not typical of the Kingdom of Heaven. And the cities of Canaan bore no resemblance to "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He went down unto the plain of Moreh — soothsayer — completely dejected and mesmerized. The serpent must have thought it had Abram in its power. But at that moment —

The Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.—
Gen.12:7.

"The Lord appeared unto Abram!" The divine Mind spoke to him as his own mind or intelligence, and the voice of the land was silenced, the hypnotic influence of the Canaanite was broken. Then Abram heard again the divine promise of dominion in the land for himself and his seed. And for a moment he glimpsed the truth that the land belonged to God — not to the Canaanites, not to the carnal mind, not to paganism, idolatry, witchcraft, necromancy, and the like. It was God's land to give to whom He would. The land belonged to the divine Mind, which is Spirit. And He had given it to Abram!

Wherever he settled, even for a short time, Abram built an altar at which to worship God. It is true he communed with God without an altar at which to kneel. But the building of altars was in response to an inner demand that he put God first in any settlement. The building of altars was also a way in which Abram took possession of the land in the name of his God. And like an explorer, surveyor, and homesteader going into a new country, he staked out his claim to the land with altars of worship to the one God.

When Abram built an altar at Sichem, he thereby took possession of that land in the name of his God. But he did not remain in the land of Moreh where he built his first altar. According to the record he moved on to higher ground — mentally and physically.

Bethel

He removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.— Gen.12:8.

Abram moved to a mountain (an exalted state of consciousness) and pitched his tent (established his thinking on this high plane), having Bethel on the west. Now *Bethel* means the abode of God, and is typical of the consciousness which feels God's presence and declares with confidence, "The Lord is in this place" (Gen.28:16). But the record also tells us that east of the place where Abram pitched his tent was Hai. *Hai* means ruin, as if overturned. Abram had pitched his tent, made his mental abode, between two opposite states of mind: the acknowledgment that God was present where he was but that the land around him was outside of God's presence. It was as though he saw on the one hand the spiritual universe of God's creating, typified by Bethel, and on the other he saw an inverted picture of God's universe, as if overturned, typified by Hai. In this mental state of duality, Abram stood, figuratively, between the first and second chapters of Genesis — between the scientific record of creation, which declares the goodness of God and man's oneness with that infinite good, and the material concept of creation, which declares evil to be as real as good and more powerful.

How often have we stood in the same place. On the one hand good appears to be real and powerful, and we feel we are standing in the presence of God. At the same time we see evil to be equally real and powerful in places all around us.

Abram attempted to correct this sense of duality. He built an altar unto the Lord between Bethel and Hai, thereby taking possession of the place where he had pitched his tent in the name of his God. And he called on the name of the Lord — he prayed for the divine nature to be established in him. But he must have feared what he saw in Hai — an overturning or reversal of his new-found state of mind. Possibly he did not feel strong enough spiritually to remain true to the vision of the spiritual nature of the universe — typified by Bethel, the abode of God, Spirit — when the evidence of materialism appeared to be so strong. And in this

unsettled state of mind, he hurried on, without waiting for divine directions.

Egypt

And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.— Gen.12:9,10.

It is not surprising that Abram found a famine in the land, for at this time his consciousness appeared to be barren of spiritual refreshment. And he went down into Egypt. Throughout Bible literature Egypt stands for the material world, for great material wealth and spiritual darkness. Abram was very rich in material goods, but for the moment his spiritual riches seemed to be at low ebb. His thinking was not scientific. He was still wandering mentally, looking for his city, forgetting that the dominion which God had given him was within himself, not in or because of any particular location in time and space. He had indeed gone down into Egypt, into a material concept of his world. But he did not remain long in that place. God routed him out of that state of mind and out of that country in a very unique way.

To understand the events which transpired in Egypt, it is needful to reach backward into the record for a moment. Before leaving Haran Abram had made an agreement with his wife that when they traveled she would say that she was his sister. This was true, for Sarai was his half-sister, the daughter of his father though not of his mother. His words describing this agreement are repeated as they journeyed toward Egypt:

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.— Gen.12:11-13.

Sarai was very beautiful and Abram was wealthy. In those days it was not unusual for a rich husband to be murdered and his wife and all his possessions taken by a powerful chieftain or ruler. Abram and Sarai were traveling in countries where they were strangers, and this arrangement was a safeguard, even though a sense of fear impelled it. The plan had evidently been successful, but in Egypt it was not.

Obviously Abram and Sarai moved naturally in the highest social circles. Association with the royal family of Egypt was accepted by the historian who recorded their story as a matter of fact. Further, the Pharaoh gave Abram permission to confer with his most learned wise men of Egypt. "from which conversations his virtue and his reputation became more conspicuous than they had been before." (*Josephus*, Book I, Chapter VIII.)

But the thing Abram greatly feared came upon him. The record tells us that the princes of Pharaoh, greatly impressed by Sarai's beauty and nobility, praised her to the Pharaoh. And the king sent and took and brought her into his house (Gen.12:14,15).

We have evidence that Abram made his presence felt, for we are told that the Pharaoh offered Abram sheep and oxen and asses, menservants and maidservants and camels, and entreated him well for Sarai's sake (Gen.12:16). We do not know how long the Pharaoh kept Sarai in his house, but something happened which made him realize that all was not well:

And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with
great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.—

Gen.12:17.

In the Bible there are many references to some plague or curse or famine which the Lord sent. Then as now, the Lord is blamed for events whose causes are not understood. We know not the exact nature of the plagues which tormented Pharaoh and his house. But whatever they were, they caused Pharaoh to know that he was being plagued because of Sarai. He must have sensed that Sarai was not Abram's sister, for he called Abram and demanded:

What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why
didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

Why saidst thou, she is my sister? So I might have
taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy
wife, take her, and go thy way.

And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.— Gen.12:18-20.

Abram's experience in Egypt awakened his spiritual senses. He learned a lesson which influenced his whole life. From this time on he trusted God's disposal of events.

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.— Gen.13:1-4.

Return to Bethel

Once again Abram found himself between Bethel and Hai, halting between the consciousness of the omnipresence of God (indicated in the meaning of Bethel) and the fear of ruin, the overturning or reversal of his great mission (indicated in the meaning of Hai). But Abram had come *up* out of Egypt, and this upward trend of thought was more receptive to spiritual truth than the previous downward trend had been. In humility he returned to the place of the altar he had built before going down into Egypt, and there claimed the land anew in the name of his God.

Writing of Abram's experience at Bethel before and after his Egyptian sojourn, a commentary in *The Interpreter's Bible* records a powerful Lesson-sermon which each one of us should hear and heed:

What was symbolized here in the case of Abraham can be a saving fact in every life. Suppose at the beginning of each chapter of a new experience a man sets up the altar of a new consciousness of God, his own Bethel where he perceives and acknowledges his need of heavenly light and guidance. It is well for him that he has that first altar to which he can go back in humility and penitence for renewal of his dedication. (*IB*, Vol.1, Expos. p.584.)

On his return to Bethel we read that "Abram again called on the name of the Lord." What does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord? At times it means simply the cry of "Lord, Lord, Have mercy on me." But in its higher sense, calling on the name of the Lord is prayer, a humble desire to see God's name or nature glorified in one's self and in all the earth. It is literally laying down a mortal, personal sense of one's self and praying, as did the Master Christian in centuries to come, "Not my will, but Thine be done" (Luke 2:42). Calling on the name of the Lord is a kind of atonement, an all-encompassing desire to be at-one with God and a willingness to sacrifice everything that would separate one from God or prevent one from expressing the divine nature.

Abram And Lot

When Abram called upon the name of the Lord at this time he waited for an answer. The answer was forthcoming, but it was not in words. It was in action! *God separated Abram from his nephew Lot.*

In the Hebrew the name *Lot* means a veil or covering, that which conceals. (And this is also a definition of *occultism*.) In Abram's spiritual unfoldment, the presence of Lot indicated some veil or covering, some occult influence, which, like the mist in the second chapter of Genesis, obscured the clearer, higher view of God's creation.

Lot was a materialist whose unholy influence in Abram's life was so completely hidden or concealed that Abram did not detect it. Abram's love for his nephew blinded him to Lot's gross nature. He did not realize that Lot's influence was a deterrent, a hidden restraint in his spiritual unfoldment.

Lot's presence with Abram explains the reason Abram had not been able to throw off or rise above the subtle, occult, mesmeric influences of the Canaanite mentality, which hung like a veil around him. Unlike Abram, Lot had not left the occultism of Chaldea behind; he had brought it with him. He was like-minded with the Canaanites and was receptive to their mode of thinking. His psychic senses were the medium, or agency, through which the mesmeric impressions of the occultism of the land of Canaan had impressed themselves upon Abram's sensibilities. Lot's presence

with Abram was not a part of the divine plan. The command God had given to Abram was:

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred,
and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will
shew thee.— Gen.12:1.

Abram had been obedient to all but one of these commands; he had not gotten away from all his kindred. It is significant that four times the record stresses the fact that Lot was with Abram (Gen.12:4,5; 13:1,5). And Lot was still with him. In the metaphor of Abram's unfoldment, Lot stood for Chaldean influences which were concealed and latent in Abram's own consciousness — influences from which he must separate himself. The separation from Lot and his disassociation from all Chaldean influences was accomplished in God's own unique way.

The record tells us that both Abram and Lot had great flocks and herds and tents and their substance was very great (Gen.13:5).

And the land was not able to bear them, that they
might dwell together: for their substance was great,
so that they could not dwell together.

And there was a strife between the herdmen of
Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and
the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the
land.— Gen.13:6,7.

The strife was really the conflict between Spirit and the flesh, between Abram's spirituality and Lot's materialism and is typical of the carnal mind always at enmity with the divine Mind. "Their substance was great." But Lot's concept of his substance was material while Abram's concept of his substance was spiritual. Lot's dominant materialism was overshadowing Abram's more loving, quiet spiritual nature. This God would not permit.

It was not necessary for Abram to take action. The herdsmen of Abram and Lot precipitated the incident which separated the two. And as though to explain some of the difficulty we are told that "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land," indicating that the mesmeric influences of the land had penetrated their midst. Abram's handling of this difficult situation established a pattern of righteous action for all time. To Lot he said:

Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then, I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go the the left.—
Gen.13:8,9.

There was no arguing, no bickering, no accusation in Abram's consciousness and attitude. His greatness shines forth. When he said to Lot, "Is not the whole land before thee," it was as though Abram saw a concept of infinitude at that moment, for the words whole and holy are alike. Could Abram have been saying to Lot, and to us, "Is not the holy land before you? Is not the comprehension of the wholeness or infinitude of God's creation within your grasp? Can you not see that each one has his own holy land, his own complete sphere of activity, which does not intrude upon or interfere with another's dominion?"

But Abram and Lot lived in different worlds. They were not marching to the beat of the same drummer. And it was right that they should go their separate ways. Abram was seeking the city, or consciousness, which has spiritual foundations, whose architect and builder is God, Spirit, while Lot was seeking something which looked like the land of Egypt and the Garden of Eden — locations compatible with his mentality.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest into Zoar.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before [against] the Lord exceedingly.—

Gen.3:10-13.

Lot deliberately chose the way of life typical of Sodom and Gomorrah; it was attractive to him; he felt at home there, for it

evidenced his carnal concept of life. He was greedy, selfish, sensuous, and weak. Lot was a true son of Adam, while Abram had glimpsed the spiritual fact that he was the son of God.

Abram Discovers His Holy Land

There is no record that the Word of God had come to Abram from the time he had started wandering toward Egypt with Lot until after Lot was separated from him, although his godliness had shown forth in all his human relationships. But now, with Lot's influence gone, he heard the divine voice loud and clear:

And the Lord said unto Abram after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.—

Gen.13:14,15,17.

The confusion which had seemed to take hold of Abram after he entered the land of Canaan, causing him to wander down into Egypt, was completely dispelled, "after that Lot was separated from him." He had regained his stature of spiritual manhood. And from this higher vantage point, he could see and understand more clearly the unfolding of God's divine purpose for him. Returning to the place where he had originally pitched his tents and from which he had seen only the Canaanites in the land, he now saw the same scene through a different lens. The physical view which met his human eyes was discounted. His scientific senses beheld the spiritual concept of creation. He saw everything in a new light. He glimpsed the *foursquare* nature of God's creation, extending *northward, southward, eastward, westward*, as far as the eye could see — as far as his comprehension of spiritual infinity would permit him to see. He saw, as did the Revelator, a new concept of heaven and earth (Rev.21:1).

It was as though God said to him: "Lift up your spiritual vision. Lift it above the evidence of the material senses. *Look from the place where thou art*, from the place where you now are in spiritual

understanding; and from this exalted vantage point, comprehend the scientific sense of what your eye beholds. All that you see and understand scientifically of the infinitude of spiritual creation is yours; you have dominion over it. And this understanding will make a place for you wherever you spread your tents. Further, your seed, they which are of faith (Gal.3:7), will inherit the same spiritual concept of the universe which has come to you and will have dominion on earth.”

This was the place, or spiritual vantage point, to which God had brought Abram when he first came into the land of Canaan. But then he appeared to be searching for a material city that would be “beautiful for situation” (Ps.48:2) — a city that would be symbolic of “the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” But now, the mist of materialism, the evil of occultism, typified by Lot, had been removed. He saw clearly a new concept of creation and the wholly spiritual nature of his city. And he heard the voice of God distinctly, commanding:

Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and
in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto
thee.— Gen.13:17.

It was as though God commanded: “Explore the spiritual infinitude of this holy land you have discovered. Let your thought expand to take in the glory of this consciousness of the spiritual nature of heaven and earth and man. Be active in this understanding of holiness — of wholeness — for only what you see or comprehend spiritually of this infinitude do you possess. What you comprehend and claim scientifically of this wholeness or holiness is yours — your dominion!”

Abram Finds His City Hebron

Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt
in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built
there an altar unto the Lord.— Gen.13:18.

Abram moved his tent from between Bethel and Hai. In his spiritual journeying his abode between these two cities, typical of the two records of creation — the two covenants — was symbolic

of Abram's state of mind when he first pitched his tent there. But after his communion with God in which God revealed to him the spiritual nature of his inheritance and his dominion therein, he removed his tent — changed both his mental and physical abode — and dwelt in Hebron by the oaks of Mamre. Here he built an altar unto the Lord, thus taking possession of the land in the name and nature of the Creator. Of great significance is the fact that after building *this* altar and pitching his tents at Hebron in the plain of Mamre, Abram began to feel the power and authority of the divine *Ego* within himself — the same Mind that was also in Christ Jesus (Phil.2:5).

The meaning of the names *Mamre* and *Hebron* have great spiritual significance in Abram's divine adventure. *Mamre* means strength. *Hebron* means spiritual alliance. These places are typical of Abram's new state of mind, his new spiritual outlook. Here, fortified with divine strength and the knowledge of his spiritual alliance, or oneness with God, the divine *Ego*, Abram found his citadel of spirituality, his scientific understanding of creation, *his holy city*. Ever after, and even to this day, *Hebron is known as Abraham's city*.

Abram became established in his city, in Hebron, both mentally and physically, and gained the enviable reputation of being known as a friend of God and man. His divine strength (*Mamre*) and his spiritual alliance with God (*Hebron*) caused him to be at peace with everyone and everything. His city evidenced his state of mind. And this divine state of Mind acted as a passport to happy relationships with one and all and gave him freedom to walk undisturbed through all the land, in accordance with God's promise: "All the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it" (Gen.13:15). You have dominion there!

The people of the land recognized Abram's dominion, and he became known as a mighty prince among men.

Chapter XVII

A SOLDIER OF GOD

How long Abram dwelt at Hebron before the following event took place we do not know. Some records indicate a period of about five years elapsed. The event was no ordinary happening. Four kings from the land east of the Euphrates River invaded the greater part of the land west of the Arabian Desert, plundered the cities, and took captive many of the inhabitants.

Abram's city was not touched. In fact Abram and his large retinue knew nothing of the invasion until word was brought them of the tragic event. His instant response to the news reveals an aspect of this great man's character not yet apparent to us. The Biblical account of the invasion, confirmed by historical records, is recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis:

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arloch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;

That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which in in Zoar.

All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims [a race of giants] in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zumims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim.

And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.

And they returned, and came to the Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazerontamar.

And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of

Zebolim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vail of Siddim;

With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.

And the vale of Siddim was full of slime-pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.—

Gen.14:1-12.

Overthrow Of The Kings Of The East

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, the brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.— Gen.14:13-16.

There is historical evidence to substantiate the invasion of the lands west of the Euphrates River by the four kings, who have been identified as rulers in the days of Abraham. The most famous of these kings, Amraphel, has been indentified with Hammurabi. Their conquest extended over vast territories which later became the Babylonian and Assyrian empires, and included Syria and Canaan.

It is not surprising that there was war in the land in which Lot dwelled. Conflict of some sort accompanied him wherever he went. Although he was in no way responsible for the battle between the kings, there was no spiritual mindedness in him, no intuition to warn him of the danger. When Abram heard that Lot

and his family and all his possessions had been taken captive, he armed his servants, three hundred and eighteen men, and together with three trusted friends, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre, pursued and completely routed the invaders and brought back all the captives and the goods which had been taken away.

Abram's ability to overcome trained armies when he himself was not a soldier is significant. It gives us further insight into his character. This soldier of God was equal to any emergency. His righteousness (his right relationship with God) and his virtue (his capacity or power adequate to the production or performance of a given effect) equipped him to outwit and defeat the larger and physically stronger armies of his opponents.

This was a practical demonstration of Abram's God-given dominion. It illustrates the fact that one spiritually minded man, thinking and acting scientifically, can lead a small company of men to victory against numerically stronger forces of carnally minded men who depend on material armaments alone for their strength.

Lot did not see the significance of this victory, this overcoming of material aggression by spiritual strength. He continued to make his dwelling place in Sodom. The city of wickedness housed his thinking and was a fitting framework for his activity.

In Abram's victory over the kings of the East we discover a far greater victory than the mere overcoming of physical forces. The pursuit and overcoming of invading forces was a test of his ability to utilize the power of his Godlikeness, the dominion of the Spirit of God within him. He rose majestically to meet this challenge and was triumphant.

Chapter XVIII

ABRAM MEETS MELCHIZEDEK

The Man Made Like Unto the Son of God.
(Heb.7:3.)

Abram's spiritual victory, in which he demonstrated his God-given dominion over the aggressive forces of the kings of the East, brought him face to face with one of the most extraordinary figures in all history. This man, a great king who was also a priest, went forth to meet Abram on his return from battle and blessed him. Who was this royal priest? He was the precursor of the royal priesthood of Christ Jesus, the exemplification of the human and divine coincidence. His name — *Melchizedek!*

In three short verses the Bible presents the human history of this royal priest of whom it was said in centuries to come that the Lord, Christ, was "a priest forever after the order of, or after the similitude, of Melchizedek" (See Ps.110:4; Heb.5:5-10, 7:1-21).

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.— Gen.14:18-20.

The title *Priest and King* is used in the Bible to denote complete dominion, or spiritual authority. In the Book of Revelation (1:6; 5:10), St. John declares that the Christ has made us all kings and priests unto God, to reign on earth.

We read of Melchizedek in the book of Hebrews:

For this Melchizedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.— Heb.7:1-3.

The seventh chapter of the book of Hebrews is devoted entirely to the establishment of the fact that the royal priesthood of the Christ is after the order of Melchizedek, not after the similitude of the Levitical priesthood, and that this priesthood abides forever and supersedes all other priesthood.

There is ample historical evidence to convince even the skeptic that before Abram migrated to the land of Canaan there was in Salem (later Jerusalem) a Hebrew settlement whose inhabitants originated in some other branch of the Hebrew race. And that a king lived there who was also a priest of the Most High God. From *Dummelow's Bible Commentary, The Companion Bible*, and other sources, the following information is gleaned:

Melchizedek was king of Salem, the chief town of the Jebusites, known to us as Jerusalem. The armana letters, 1400 BC, written in cuneiform characters on clay tablets, show that Palestine was at this time in possession of Egypt and the Tablets are letters to the Pharaohs Amenophis III and IV. One is from Ebed-Tob the successor of Melchizedek. Three times he says, "not my father; not my mother installed me in this place, but the *Mighty King*" (cp Heb.7:1-4); i.e., he did not inherit it by succession but by the gift of "the arm of the *Mighty King*." (Note is made that Melchizedek made no sacrifices or burnt offerings.) The priests of Jerusalem, when David "took the city," were not of the tribe of Levi, but were acknowledged by David to be priests of the Most High God, and he paid tithes to them. Some commentators say that David was aware that they were of the priesthood of Melchizedek, or that their priesthood emanated from the time of Melchizedek or earlier.

Ps. 110:4 confirms David's awareness that Melchizedek was a royal priest and that the priesthood of Melchizedek superseded the Levitical priesthood.

Reference made by the writer of the Book of Hebrews (7:3), that Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, without de-

scent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth continually," does not imply that Melchizedek was a mythical figure. He had his place in history. Melchizedek appeared on earth by the power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God. He was the figure of him (Christ Jesus) who was to come.

Melchizedek's understanding of the nature of the Supreme Being is revealed in the fact that he was priest of The Most High God — *El Elyon* — a Hebrew name meaning The Superior One, possessor of heaven and earth, source of all supply, and dispenser of divine blessings on the earth.

The presence of Melchizedek in Abram's unfoldment confirmed to Abram and indicates to us that Abram's understanding of the nature of the Supreme Being had expanded to embrace the concept of Divinity not only as the Creator and possessor of heaven and earth, but also as the source of all supply and the dispenser of divine blessings on the earth. The presence of Melchizedek in Abram's unfoldment also reveals the fact that some understanding of the royal priesthood of the Christ had touched Abram's consciousness. He knew that he must, in some degree, emulate this royal priesthood.

Melchizedek was not only priest of the Most High God. He was also king of Salem. Salem is Jeru-salem, "city or foundation of peace." Throughout the Bible the name *Jerusalem* is used symbolically to describe the new heaven and new earth — heaven and earth seen in a new light — which St. John called the *New Jerusalem*, "the holy city, the city which lieth foursquare" (Rev.21:1,2,16). Symbolically, Abram's meeting with Melchizedek, king of Salem, of the New Jerusalem, confirms the truth already stated, that Abram had seen heaven and earth in a new light and that a new concept of the city which hath foundations — the consciousness of the spiritual nature of God's creation — was unfolding in him.

The understanding of God and of man's relationship with God which came to Abram through his association with Melchizedek revealed to Abram the transcendent fact that he too was a priest unto God — a spiritual leader able to commune with God — and a king, or ruler of his human experience; thus having complete dominion or spiritual sovereignty on earth.

The First Communion Service

“Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine to Abram.” This is the first Biblical record of a communion service. In the metaphor of Abram’s story, this holy communion reveals the fact that Abram had indeed partaken of the body and blood of Christ — imbibed the substance and essence of Christliness. In this communion service there is no burnt offering. The sacrifice demanded of Abram, and of us, is: *Present your body, your very selves, as a living sacrifice*. That this is the sacrifice which is acceptable to God is clearly stated by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Christian Jews living in Rome:

Therefore, my brothers, I implore you by God’s mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart.

Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.— Rom.12:1,2 (NEB).

In recognition of Abram’s understanding of the nature of the Supreme Being as *El Elyon* — the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, source of all supply, and dispenser of divine blessings on earth — and in recognition of the dominion of heaven on earth which this understanding had given him, Melchizedek invoked the divine blessing upon him:

Blessed be Abram of [by] the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.— Gen.14:19.

Melchizedek did not bless Abram. He acknowledged what he saw to be true, namely, that God had blessed Abram. As with Noah and Shem, God’s blessing was upon Abram because of his expression of the divine nature and because of his willingness to go forward in a higher understanding of God. This divine blessing accompanied Abram during his entire sojourn on earth. He was ever conscious of a sense of well-being, of increase, prosperity, and progress. And — now fast, now slow — he continued to go forward in his understanding of God, in his demonstration of the

power of the divine nature, and in consecration of his holy mission on earth.

Abram Discovers the Law of Tithing

We also read in this brief account that "Abram gave Melchizedek tithes of all." In this action Abram acknowledged Melchizedek worthy to receive his tithes. He thus established a pattern of active gratitude for us in acknowledging God as possessor of heaven and earth, source of all supply, and dispenser of divine blessings on earth. This active gratitude opens the very windows of heaven and pours out for us blessings infinite — makes us conscious of spiritual realities ever present, available to meet our every need. This outpouring of blessings is invisible to a selfish, limited, materialistic sense, but it is abundantly visible to the selfless, infinite, spiritual senses of man.

The Hebrew word *ma'aser*, translated *tithe*, and used here for the first time in the Bible, challenges the imagination. *Ma'aser* comes from *'aser*, meaning ten, but used only in combinations: i.e., teen (fourteen, fifteen, etc.). This word, in turn, comes from *'eser*, the masculine form of *'asarah*, which means: an accumulation to the extent of the digits by tens or teens, as 5 is extended to 15, to 25, to 35, etc. The primitive root from which all of these words come is *'asar*, identical with *'ashar*, meaning: to accumulate, to grow, to make rich. In tracing *ma'aser* to its original meaning, we find that the *tithe* is that which extends or increases each digit by tens and teens, *ad infinitum*. (*James Strong, S.T.D., LL.D.*)

The giving of a tenth part of our income or supply for any good purpose or cause is a token of spiritual tithing which expands our supply in much the same way that a pebble dropped in water expands in ripples or waves. The pebble drop, governed by the law of concentric action, determines all wave expansion, from the smallest wave at the center to the largest at the continually expanding circumference. As each new wave forms it does not take from but gives impetus to the larger waves already moving out from the center. The giving of a tenth part of what we have sets in motion in our consciousness and in our experience the law of tithing which governs the infinite expansion of every item of our supply. In fact, the action of tithing is that of unfoldment, which increases our lives by every spiritual touch.

The prophet Malachi exhorts us to prove the law of tithing:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows [sluices] of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.— Mal.3:10.

As we identify everything in its spiritual nature, we bring all the tithes, the whole idea of tithing, into the storehouse of Spirit — not only tithes of money or supply, but also tithes of love, joy, mercy, justice, patience, faith, loyalty, grace, duty, consecration. Everything concerning us, our whole substance, when thus identified with Spirit, is enlarged, increased, or multiplied by our former measurements instead of being limited or divided by them.

When Christ Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes he was tithing in a magnificent way. At one time the Master Christian fed five thousand men, besides women and children, with only five loaves and two fishes. At another time he fed four thousand men, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few fishes. Jesus looked away from the material evidence. He looked up to heaven and gave thanks. He then blessed the apparently meager supply, invoking the law of blessedness, the law of increase. The supply was more than enough to prove the infinitude of spiritual substance, for more was left over after feeding the multitudes than the disciples had seen as the entire supply. The Master saw the infinite, spiritual nature of God's supply, of which the few loaves and fishes were but the symbol. Further, his scientific acknowledgment of God as the source of all supply and his spiritual understanding of the infinite nature of every item of supply, acted as a law of sufficiency that brought into view the manifestation of abundant provision. The visible came forth from the invisible. Thus did the Master prove the law of tithing, stated by Malachi, to be a law of sufficiency. (See John 6:5-13; Matt.14:14-21; 15:32-38.)

Through Melchizedek Abram discovered the law of tithing, and at every spiritual touch his substance increased. When he was offered a great reward by the king of Sodom after routing the kings of the East, Abram refused. Such action was unprecedented. Abram does not leave us in doubt as to his reason for refusing the bounty offered by the king:

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.—

Gen.14:21-24.

Through his understanding of the true meaning of tithing, Abram knew that thereby he had access to the whole of spiritual substance. Therefore, he could not take anything from the king of Sodom which might give the king or anyone a reason for saying that someone besides God had made Abram rich. The king of Sodom, recognizing Abram's majesty and power, greatly desired to have Abram recognize and acknowledge him as his benefactor. But Abram was obedient to God's command that he take nothing from materialism that would adulterate his spiritual sense of substance and his understanding of God as possessor of heaven and earth, source of all supply, and dispenser of divine blessings on the earth.

The nature of Deity as *El Elyon, the Most High God*, Abram's new concept of the Supreme Being, revealed to him a higher, more spiritual concept of his relationship with God. The meaning of this holy name — The superior One, possessor of heaven and earth, source of all supply, and dispenser of divine blessings on earth — turns thought instinctively to the record of spiritual creation in Genesis, where we learned that God blessed everything He had made and gave man dominion over it. Let's see how this new understanding of God relates the infinitude of good to Abram's humanhood and to our own:

When we think of God as *The Superior One*, we have no difficulty in relating this name to the Supreme Being, to *Elohim*, the name which defines *The Triune God Himself* — the highest concept of Deity revealed in our Bible. Abram has yet to even glimpse this concept of God, nor has he found his place in the Trinity. But he will.

When we think of God as *possessor of heaven and earth*, we are reminded that in the beginning, or of first importance for us to

understand, God revealed His nature as the *Creator of heaven and earth*. This was Abram's first concept of the Supreme Being. Now, through the revelation of His holy name as *El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth*, God reminds Abram, and us, that He possesses what He creates. God holds His creation in the palm of His hand — in His power — safe in Spirit. Abram certainly comprehended the nature of God as Both *Creator and possessor of the earth*, for when God gave him "all the land which thou seest," he must have realized God possessed, the land, or He could not have given it to him.

When we think of God as the *dispenser of divine blessings on the earth*, we see the Creator dispensing, or distributing to mankind, blessings infinite, where and as needed. This divine dispensation is not administered on a personal basis, but acts through law — the law of blessedness, the law of well-being, the law of progress. The nature of God as the *dispenser* is one which Abram must have grasped, for no matter where he was, whatever he needed was there also — a place to spread his great tents, food for his large retinue, pasturage for his cattle, money to pay for needed things, loyal friends, kindly neighbors who had great respect for him. The law of blessedness through which God dispenses good to mankind is a law of sufficiency, meting out according to one's receptivity. Abram's absolute faith in his God opened all the channels of receptivity in his consciousness so that he was the recipient of an abundant measure of divine blessings. Consequently his days were literally "days of heaven upon the earth" (Deut.11:21).

There is little doubt that Abram was led to the land of Canaan because Melchizedek was there. So far as we know Melchizedek was the only individual in the whole world who had any comprehension of the Supreme Being as *El Elyon, The Most High God* — The superior One, possessor of heaven and earth, source of all supply, dispenser of divine blessings on earth — and of man as the beneficiary of that divine nature. Certainly Melchizedek was the only individual in the world who exemplified the royal priesthood of the Christ, typical of the human and divine coincidence in which his Christliness embraced his whole human experience and gave him spiritual authority on earth.

When Melchizedek acknowledged that Abram was blessed by *El Elyon, the Most High God*, he literally crowned Abram with the dual title, *Priest and King*, thus acknowledging that Abram was a priest, a spiritual leader, and a king, or ruler, having divine authority over his human experience. The compound title, *Priest and King*, is one each one of us must strive to earn, to be worthy of; for it is symbolic of the human and divine coincidence — a coin-

vidence in which we discover the divinity of our own Christliness having divine authority in our human experiences, the Son of God having complete oversight of the son of man.

Abram's search for a city which hath foundations had led him to Hebron, where God revealed to him the spiritual nature of the universe and of his dominion therein. But his understanding had not yet reached the exalted state of Melchizedek's city, or holy consciousness, typical of the New Jerusalem. His mental grasp, or comprehension, of spiritual reality must expand yet more. The marvelous revelation which had come to him at Hebron of his alliance, or oneness, with God and with all that is good must develop and grow in him. There was still much to overcome and much to learn before Abram could fully comprehend the nature of "the city which lieth foursquare." But he had seen the city! He had glimpsed the spiritual realities of heaven on earth. And they would mature in him.

Abram's search for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," might well be likened to that of an explorer setting out to discover and to settle a new world. The universe Abram was exploring was unknown to mankind. His venture into an unknown world, "not knowing whither he went," was as thrilling and challenging as must be the experiments undertaken by a great natural scientist who has glimpsed a hitherto unknown principle which startles his imagination and sets him at work to prove his theories to be facts — facts that will change the whole world's thinking.

Although Enoch and Noah had discovered the spiritual nature of the universe, this understanding had been lost sight of, buried in material mindedness of idolatrous generations. This precious and priceless spiritual understanding had to be rediscovered. And because of his spiritual mindedness, Abram had been chosen by God to be the discoverer.

Until his meeting with Melchizedek, Abram, the spiritual explorer, had been alone in his divine adventure. Now he had a friend who understood his high calling and fostered it. He knew that God had sent him on a holy mission, and he was faithful to his trust. But the higher and holier concept of Deity and of his relationship with God, which had been revealed to him in his association with the royal priest, increased his faith. What before had been a simple trust in God became a deep toned spiritual convic-

tion which transcends blind faith. So great was Abram's faith in God and in God's promises that his name has become synonymous with faith.

What is faith? The great writer of the book of Hebrews defined it thus:

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.— Heb.11:1.

Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen.— Heb.11:1 (JM).

Faith is the substance of all the things we ever hoped for. It was this spiritual faith that enabled Abram to be obedient to all God's commands — some of which must have seemed strange, even to him. Through faith he walked with God, expressing dignity and spiritual authority — the dominion of heaven on earth. And even among the idolatrous people of the land of Canaan, he was known as a mighty prince among men (Gen.23:6).

Chapter XIX

CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COVENANTS

Individuals often reach a cross-road in their development, and questions arise within themselves as to which way to turn. Abram had reached, not a cross-road, but an apparent impasse. He was confused. When he first glimpsed the spiritual nature of God's creation, he heard the divine promise:

All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it,
and to thy seed for ever.— Gen.13:15.

It was natural that Abram accepted God's promise that he would father a great nation and that his seed would inherit the land. But there was no seed of Abram! His bewildered senses cried out: "To me thou hast given no seed" (Gen.15:3). In answer to his anguished cry, the Lord came to him in a vision, saying:

Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.— Gen.15:1.

Once before the divine *Ego* had identified Itself to Abram as his own mind or ego (See pp. 234-235). But now for the first time we hear the enunciation of the name of the Supreme Being that is to echo and re-echo through-out the Bible. Here God identified Himself to Abram and to us, as *I AM, The Divine Esse, The One Who Is!* The name *I AM* embodies our divine Father's tender assurance: "*I am* with thee; *I am* your shield; *I am* your protector; *I am* your strength; *I am* your ability; *I am your very being; I am your I am.* This is my name, my divine nature in man. The power of my Fatherhood will father the child of promise through whom thy seed shall spring forth and bless the whole earth."

But Abram appeared not to have heard the enunciation of God's holy name. He did not glimpse the meaning or the power of the divine message. Consequently the idea of divine Sonship that God

was waiting to reveal to him did not unfold or develop in his consciousness. His fearful, mesmerized senses continued to question:

What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?
And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.— Gen.15:2,3.

In the ancient Orient if a man died and had no male heir, his estate was inherited by his chief steward or by the oldest male slave born in his house. Abram's concern for the posterity God had promised him was not without cause. So God renewed His promise to Abram, leaving no doubt that Abram's own seed would be his heir and inherit the land. God said to him:

This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.— Gen.15:4.

God then spoke to Abram's scientific senses, skilled in the celestial sciences:

Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.
And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness [faithfulness].— Gen.15:5,6.

God then reminded Abram that He was the same God who had directed him to leave his homeland and had given him a new home in a new land:

And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.— Gen.15:7.

Again we hear the *I AM*'s loving assurance: *I was with thee, I am with thee, I will be with thee*. But again, mesmerized by fear that his mission might not be accomplished, Abram did not really hear what the *I AM* was declaring to him and in him. He seemed to be totally unaware that God — Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omniactive Being itself — was saying: *I AM* your I am; *I AM* the Actor, you are the action; *I* perform the thing that is appointed for you.

The idea of God as The Great *I AM* and of himself as the individual idea through which the *I AM* expresses its mighty power seemed to be beyond Abram's comprehension. A note in *The Interpreter's Bible* is of utmost importance to us, for it tells something of what God was really saying to Abram — a wondrous *something* that we, like Abram, fail to comprehend:

If the name of the God I worship is *I AM*, it seems to follow that only through what *I am* can I worship Him aright.

(*IB*, Vol. I Expos. p. 875.)

Abram missed this point completely. Immediately after God's mighty enunciation of the divine nature expressed in man, we hear the little "i" of personal sense begging God for further assurance that he and his seed would inherit the land:

And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?— Gen.15:8.

Lord God! Where did we first hear of this anthropomorphic, manlike concept of the Supreme Being? In the second chapter of Genesis, where we found creation depicted in the likeness of a finite Deity — a manlike concept of God who created all things out of the dust of the ground, a God who loves and hates, who blesses and curses, whose creation is at enmity with the Creator and with itself. (See. p. 98.) The dual name *Lord God, or Jehovah God*, reveals a confused concept of Creator and creation, a concept which tends to belittle the Infinite and to finitize man. A prayer with such a concept of Deity in mind would attempt to bring God down to man instead of lifting man up to God.

Abram made his prayer to this primitive manlike concept of Deity instead of to *El Elyon*, the God he had learned to know and love. He seemed to have lost sight of the nature of the Most High God, The Superior One — the Creator, possessor of heaven and earth, dispenser of divine blessings on earth — the advanced understanding of Deity revealed to him through his association with Melchizedek. And he failed to comprehend the *I AM*, the new name and divine nature God had revealed to him.

Mesmerized by fear, Abram appealed to a man-like God and so failed to think of himself as a Godlike man. Too often a sense of fear causes one to humanize one's concept of Deity and to

materialize and limit one's concept of one's self. And so it was with Abram at this time. Instead of standing still and waiting for the divine promises to be fulfilled in God's own way, he fearfully asked for a material sign as a confirmation of God's promises.

A material sign was forthcoming. But God, who is Spirit, could never have devised anything so grossly material as the suggestion which came to Abram. It was the voice of the land, not the voice of God, which Abram heard. And this voice directed Abram to prepare for the signing of a covenant with God after the manner of the Oriental practice of sealing a compact between two individuals. (See Gen.15:9-11.)

According to the custom of the land, a sacrifice would be prepared by slaying animals, dividing them into two parts to symbolize the two parts of the contract, and placing them on an altar. The persons making the contract met between the two parts of the sacrifice, their presence symbolical of making the two parts one, thus making sure of the conditions of their agreement and sealing the compact.

Abram prepared the sacrifice and then waited for a sign whereby he would know that the Lord God had ratified the covenant, making it sure. But no answer from the Lord God was forthcoming. The sacrifice became stale, and when the vultures descended upon it Abram drove them away and waited patiently for a sign from the Lord God. But there was no divine presence to sanctify the sacrifice or ratify this covenant. The Covenant of God with man is not in two parts; it is *one*, and God makes all the conditions. Man's part in this holy Covenant is to be in conformity with and obedient to the terms of the agreement.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep
fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness
fell upon him.— Gen.15:12.

Abram had been asking for a material sign, and a material sign was what he got. The evidence which came to him in the deep sleep was indeed an horror of great darkness, for he foresaw the material history of his descendants — history which included four centuries of mental and physical bondage in Egypt. He saw his children's children coming up out of Egypt with great material substance, but he saw no spiritual light. (See Gen.15:13-16.) When this vision had passed he saw:

... a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.— Gen.15:17.

The burning lamp symbolized to Abram the presence of the Lord God. In a primitive sort of way this indicated to Abram that the Lord God had confirmed and sealed the covenant which he had made with him. But what does this experience reveal to us?

The *deep sleep* which fell upon Abram was the same deep sleep which fell upon Adam — the mesmeric sense which descends upon us in times of confusion and fear. The words *deep sleep*, in the Hebrew, mean literally *a trance*. What Abram saw while in this hypnotic trance is comparable to what a necromancer or a consultant with familiar spirits might have told him of the future. A voice of doom predicted that his seed would be strangers in a land that was not theirs. Horrible slavery was pictured, and the dark prophecy showed four centuries of unremitting affliction. He was shown his own death, not his life. He saw his descendants coming up out of Egypt under the cloud of occultism: "For," said the voice, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen.15:16), not fully understood and not fully destroyed! He saw the iniquity of the Amorites — the use of hidden mental means of accomplishing evil — menacing the free thoughts of his descendants. In his deep sleep Abram saw this iniquity to be as real and powerful four hundred years hence as it appeared to his mesmerized senses at that moment. He saw the "smoking furnace" of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.16:17; 19:28). Slavery, death, destruction! Truly, "an horror of great darkness [had fallen] upon him."

But it was only a dream! Had the Word of God been heard by Abram at that time, it would have awakened him and told him of the glory of these people who left Egypt at God's command, whose great leader, Moses, overcame the occultism of the magicians and soothsayers of Pharaoh's court with the knowledge and power of God, and who led his people — Abram's seed — through the Red Sea on dry ground. The Word of God would have told him of the great nation whose law was the Ten Commandments and who, in the midst of deceit, occultism, necromancy, spiritualism, witchcraft, and the like, kept its thoughts fixed on the God of Abraham; a people who, even when their leaders became weak and vain and their greatness as a nation began to wane, guarded the knowledge of God; and even in captivity in Assyria and in Babylon wrought

miracles, converted pagan kings, and found safety in the fiery furnace and in the lions' den! The Word of God, which is perfect in knowledge, would have told him of that greatest of all his "seed" — the man Jesus — who healed the sick, reformed the sinner, walked on the water, and raised the dead; who proved the invincible power of the God of Abraham, and brought forth his own body from a sepulcher. The divine Word would have told him that this precious son proved what Abram was even then being asked to prove: namely, that God is the only Father of man, and that man is the Son of God. The Word of God would have told him of Paul, and of the early Christians who were Abraham's seed by adoption. And the Word of God would have told him of that great army of Christians who, today, are going forth armed with the knowledge of God and of the Son of God to rout the forces of evil, to silence the lies of a sensuous philosophy, to outshine the dark sayings of necromancy and its mesmeric influences, and to neutralize the power of occultism, that the knowledge of the God of Abraham might fill the minds of men and cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

But Abram was asleep! And there was none to answer, for there was none to hear. God does not reveal spiritual facts to His people through a spiritualistic seance or hypnotic trance. But after the darkness had passed and it was *day*, spiritual enlightenment returned to Abram. Then *he heard the Word of God*.

The Covenant of the Land

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:

The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.— Gen.15:18-21.

When he was awake, Abram heard what God was really saying to him. And he saw that God had given him and his seed complete spiritual authority over all the elements of wickedness

represented by the people whose tribal names are synonymous with necromancy, sensuality, witchcraft, and the gods of mythology, "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Between these two rivers was the greatest concentration of occult powers in the world. And Abram and his seed were given dominion over them! Not domination over the people of these lands, but dominion over the dominant carnal mental powers and the abominations that have become synonymous with their names. This promise was fulfilled. Abram expressed dominion, spiritual authority, wherever he went. And in centuries to come his seed were respected by neighboring nations because they knew that these people were protected and defended by a divine power and presence which wrought miracles for the people of God.

God's Purpose For Abram Did Not Fail

Again and again the carnal mind (enmity against God) attempted to superimpose its pictures upon the scene of Abram's experience. This evil influence seemed, at times, to confuse his spiritual senses, to blind and to bind him with human misconceptions. In Abram's record we see a moving picture of the opposition of materialism in all its forms to the fulfillment of his great mission. But even when, at times, his faith seemed to fail, God's purpose for him did not fail. God's will was firmly established in him and would not let him go. Each time fear seemed to weaken his faith, a sense of God's purpose strengthened him and kept him in the way of holiness. Hence, he never lost his dominion.

Abram was required to make his human life an illustration of man's likeness to God and let his Godlikeness shine so brightly that it would outshine the darkness of materialism and dissolve the dark visions of superstition, the dark images of paganism, the dark sentences of the carnal mind, the dark assumptions of occultism.

Abram's task was stupendous. He must walk consistently in the straight and narrow way of scientific understanding. He must disregard the evidence of the material senses and abide strictly in the spiritual, scientific knowledge of God and of the spiritual nature of God's universe — the first and primary lesson he was taught in his search for his city which hath foundations — the first lesson we are taught in our Bible.

Like the modern physicists or scientists of our day who, through years of scientific research and discovery, favor a spiritual interpretation of the universe and discount the materialistic view of creation held by physicists of centuries gone by (See p. 8), so Abram, the modern scientist of his day, through divine revelation and discovery, favored a spiritual interpretation of the universe including man and discounted the materialistic view of creation held by the people of his generation. Abram gradually forsook the matter-oriented concepts which had limited his demonstrations of divine power and found himself in agreement with the spiritual facts of creation revealed in the New Covenant (Gen.1:1-31; 2:1-3).

If anyone doubts the magnitude of Abram's task, let him read closely the record of this man of God and compare it with his own spiritual achievements.

Abram's task was doubly difficult because, except for Melchizedek, he stood alone in his divine adventure on the threshold of an unexplored new world. Not even his beloved wife Sarai at first understood the spiritual significance of his life. Some years later Sarai did become a part of Abram's Covenant understanding. In fact, Abram's story is really the story of *Abram and Sarai*. Their life together illustrates the fulfillment of the spiritual Marriage Covenant in its divine sense of completeness — the oneness of the male and female of God's creating, which reflects the compound nature of God as Father-Mother.

Chapter XX

AN ALLEGORY OF THE TWO COVENANTS

Ten years had passed since Abram first came into the land of Canaan with God's promise:

I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.— Gen.12:2,3.

Abram had found his place in the land of Canaan. He had prospered in everything he had done. He was truly blessed. His progress in the understanding of God and of the divine nature was marked. But no seed of Abram had come forth to inherit the promised blessing. Then we learn that Abram's beloved Sarai was barren. Abram's faith was sorely tested. However, it was God who was testing his faith, preparing him spiritually for the great miracle of grace that was to come.

In the unfolding of Abram's spiritual journeying, Sarai's barrenness indicates to us that Abram's consciousness was barren, or bereft, of the understanding of the nature and power of God's Motherhood. Abram, whose name means *exalted father*, understood in some measure the nature of the Fatherhood of God and his relationship with his heavenly Father. But he appeared to be totally unaware of Sarai's relationship with God and of the fact that God had inscribed in her His divine nature as Mother. Manhood generally did not then and does not now seem to realize that God created both man *and* woman in His own image and likeness: "Male and female created he them" (Gen.1:27). Nor does manhood seem to understand that if man and woman, the male and female of God's creating, are made in God's image and likeness — and they are — then the nature of God must be compound. God must be and is both Father and Mother!

This understanding of God is set forth clearly in the very beginning of our Bible, where the nature of God as *Elohim* is revealed.

Elohim, a uni-plural name, is the Hebrew name for the Supreme Being which reveals the nature of God as Father-Mother. (See p. 26.)

Abram had not yet attained the advanced but primitive understanding of the complete nature of God as Father-Mother; nor had he even glimpsed the correlative fact that man and woman are co-equal. The male of the species does not yield readily on this point. Abram was no exception. But yield he must. This is the lesson which is now before him. And he learned it the hard way.

As much as Abram loved his wife, he did not realize that his marriage covenant symbolized the spiritual Marriage Covenant, the union of man and woman as co-equal partners, with neither subservient to the other. The nature of God's Motherhood, which *Elohim* had inscribed in Sarai, was hidden from Abram. Hence his understanding of the complete nature of God was spiritually immature. But God had determined that Abram should learn this vitally important lesson.

Even to this day mortal manhood rebels at learning this great lesson — a lesson which, when understood, will bring to light in individual human consciousness the complete divine nature of men and women and the spiritual authority which goes with this understanding — authority which is the dominion of heaven on earth. Abram apparently had not begun to comprehend this divine completeness. He did not realize that he was incomplete, lacking the understanding of the Motherhood of God, the power of divine conception. We know not how many private conversations between husband and wife had taken place before Sarai made a suggestion which, when carried out, changed the course of world history.

Sarai and Hagar

And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.—

Gen.16:2.

In those days a barren wife was permitted, even encouraged, to give her bondmaid to her husband. And a child born of that union

became the child of the wife by adoption, and not the child of the bondmaid. Sarai succumbed to the subtle suggestion of the serpent that an Oriental custom of the times be adhered to in order that God's promises might be fulfilled. Abram readily agreed to Sarai's suggestion.

The tempter probably caused Sarai to reason thus within herself: "I am standing in my husband's way, thwarting God's will for him. The selfless thing for me to do is to give my maid to him so that he might have a son. After all it is my fault, not his, that God's promise to him has not been fulfilled." This suggestion was a not so subtle attempt of the serpent, the carnal mind, to prove that sensuous womanhood, in the figure of Hagar, was better equipped than was spiritual womanhood, in the figure of Sarai, to bring forth the child through whom a great nation was to emerge — a nation in which the knowledge of God would be the guiding light.

When reading the account of Sarai's action in giving her maid to Abram as his wife, it is not immediately apparent that this was also an attempt of the serpent to obscure the compound nature of God and to break the spiritual Marriage Covenant of Abram and Sarai. But this could not be. They were one in their demonstration and exemplification of the compound nature of God and of man.

Hagar, an Egyptian bondswoman, showed her unreadiness to mother the child of promise, for when she knew she was to bear the heir of Abram, she became haughty and despised her mistress. Hagar was a sturdy, independent, self-assertive Bedouin woman. She ridiculed the spiritual idea of womanhood which Sarai exemplified and scorned Sarai's nobility.

When she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid unto thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee.

And Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.—

Gen. 16:4-6.

Those who might feel that neither Sarai nor Abram dealt justly with Hagar will be interested in the following addenda concerning the Sumerian law governing such cases:

One of the criteria by which a society can fairly be judged is the position which it accords to women. In Sumer monogamy was the law of the land, and though in practice this was modified by the toleration of concubinage, yet the status of the legitimate wife was so well protected that the principle was not seriously impugned. . . . A barren wife might present to her husband one of her own slaves as a concubine; on giving birth to a child the slave-woman automatically became free, but was by no means the equal of her mistress; indeed, should she rashly aim at becoming the rival, the mistress could reduce her again to slavery and sell her or otherwise get rid of her from the house. The domestic sentence involved banishment from the city. The history of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar is an illustration of this, for in every detail Abraham was not acting weakly or arbitrarily but was putting into practice the old Sumerian law in which he had been brought up.

(Dr. C. Leonard Woolley, *The Sumerians*, pp.100, 103.)

Sarai admitted that she had been wrong in giving Hagar to Abram. She learned that taking matters into her own hands instead of asking God for directions resulted in sadness for everyone concerned. But Abram was also at fault — not according to the law, but because he should have stood fast and waited for God to unfold His divine purpose instead of attempting to fulfill God's promise through human expediency. Abram's faith in God's disposal of events had been temporarily weakened. But he was quick to acknowledge his wrong. He did not defend Hagar or himself, nor did he accuse Sarai, as may be seen in his statement:

Thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee.— Gen.16:6.

Abram and Sarai were disciplined by God. But what of Hagar? Though she knew not the God of Abram and Sarai, God knew her. And the all-loving Father-Mother God both disciplined and comforted her:

And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur,

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren [live at odds with all his kinsmen, NEB].— Gen.16:7-12.

The fact that the angel of the lord called Hagar *Sarai's maid*, told her that she was not to think of herself as Abram's wife. She was told plainly that she must return not to Abram, but to Sarai, and submit herself to her mistress. But the angel also assured her that this son, whom she was to name Ishmael, would be her very own, and not Sarai's, and that both she and her son would be cared for. Through His angel, God told Hagar that her son would not be the heir of Abram nor of Abram's Covenant with God. He would dwell in the presence of his brethren and would prosper — he would have a land of his own where he would have authority.

In the name *Ishmael*, a Hebrew name meaning *God hears*, Hagar glimpsed something of the nature of the Supreme Being as the *All-hearing God*, the God who hears and answers our need even before we ask Him. Her momentary glimpse of the divine nature opened her ears to hear the voice of the angel of God's presence bringing to her the message of the Comforter.

And she called the Lord who was speaking to her by the name of El-Roi (that is God of a vision), for she said, "Have I indeed seen God and still live after the vision?"

That is why men call the well Beer-lahai-roi (that is, *The Well of the Living*).— Gen.16:13,14 (NEB).

In her acknowledgment of Deity as *Thou God Seest me*, Hagar glimpsed, though faintly, something of the nature of God as the All-seeing Presence which watches over all. And she was comforted, and for the moment, humbled in this divine Presence. Hagar was obedient to the angel's voice and returned to Hebron and to her mistress.

The Birth of Ishmael

And Hagar bare Abram a son; and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. — Gen.16:15,16.

Abram had a son, but Ishmael was not the child of promise. Although it was customary for the child of the bondmaid to become the child of the barren wife by adoption, Sarai did not adopt Ishmael. He was his mother's child, as the angel of the Lord had said.

Twelve years passed, during which time Ishmael came to think of himself as Abram's heir and joint heir with Abram in the Covenant. Abram too seemed to think of Ishmael as the child of promise — the promised seed who would inherit the promises and in whom all nations of the earth would be blessed. There is no record of any divine unfoldment in Abram's life during these twelve years. His spiritual journeying seemed to be at a standstill. He appeared to be satisfied that, with the birth of Ishmael, his mission on earth had been accomplished. And he rested! But this rest was not the Sabbath Rest of divine completeness, as Abram soon learned.

Chapter XXI

THE COVENANT OF GODLIKENESS

Let's turn back the calendar of Abram's life for a moment and rediscover the divine purpose which had launched this man of God on his divine mission. His conviction that God, Spirit, was the Creator of the universe had led him out of Chaldea — a land typical of gross materialism and of carnal mindedness — the land of occultism. His search for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," reached the vital point of discovery when God revealed to him the spiritual nature of the universe.

Although Abram acknowledged freely that God was the Creator of the universe, he resisted the fact that God was also the Creator of man. This understanding was essential to Abram's spiritual progress. In fact, the understanding of God, Spirit, as the Creator, Source, and Cause of all creation was the keystone of the arch of all Abram's spiritual building. However, this essential element of his unfoldment was dormant. He was ninety-nine years old before the spiritual scientific sense of God as the Creator of the universe *including man* matured in him sufficiently to dispel the mist of material knowledge concerning the divine origin of man.

As previously stated, Abram had some understanding of the nature of the divine Fatherhood of the Creator, as the meaning of his own name or nature — *exalted father* — indicates. But he had not yet learned that God is the Father of man, a profound truth Christ Jesus taught centuries later. (See Matt.23:9.) Nor had he learned that it is the power of the Motherhood of God which conceives and brings forth those children who call God Father. He had yet to learn the compound nature of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God. But this lack of understanding of the complete nature of *Elohim* was soon to be corrected.

Twice The Great *I AM* had spoken to Abram, proclaiming the power of the Divine *Ego* in man — Almighty power that performs all things that are appointed for man. (See p. 267.) Had Abram comprehended what the *I AM* proclaimed, he would never have fathered a child by his wife's bondmaid in order that God's promise

of an heir be fulfilled. He would have waited for God's purpose to be fulfilled in God's own way. Now The Great *I AM* speaks again. And this time Abram listens!

God Makes His Covenant With Abram

Hear the words of the *I AM* proclaiming the divine nature of God in man to be Almighty — All-mighty:

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.— Gen.17:1,2.

Though Abram knew it not, and few individuals in time past or in time present realize it, the *I AM* proclaims not only the nature of the Fatherhood of God and the divine Sonship of man, but also the nature of the Motherhood of the Supreme Being — the nature of God which is Almighty. This is the keynote of God's Covenant with man. The patriarch Job, who knew God as *The Almighty*, understood the all-might of God's Motherhood, who, he said, "performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14.)

The term *Almighty God* — translated from the Hebrew *El Shaddi*, meaning *The Breasted One, The Nourisher* — is a term through which we may comprehend the nature of God's Motherhood. The nature of Deity as *El Shaddi* reveals the all-might of the Creator, Omnipotence in operation, the God who knows all and performs all things for Her people, and in whom all the divine attributes are concentrated. (See *The Companion Bible*, Ap.4,p.6)

The record declares emphatically that this new-old concept of the nature of the Supreme Being *appeared* to Abram. He began to comprehend this advanced, but primitive, understanding of Deity. It was as though The Almighty, in tender loving-kindness, said to Abram: "Son, if you would father the child of promise, you must understand that God is the Father *and* Mother of man. Sarai's barrenness is but the evidence of your own barren understanding of the nature of the divine Motherhood, which brings forth after its own kind and is almighty to perform all things. Sarai reflects this divine Motherhood. You must understand that I have engraved

this divine nature in her just as I have indelibly written the nature of divine Fatherhood in you."

El Shaddi had a further message for Abram which embodied the law of the New Covenant: "Walk before me and be thou perfect." This *Me* is the *I AM*, demanding: "Walk ever mindful that *I AM* your I am, your divine *Ego*, the very *I* of your being. Identify yourself aright by learning how to say *I am*, and you will walk in the way of holiness and be perfect."

The understanding of the nature of God as *I AM* brings man very close to God. When we learn to say *I* and *I am* aright, a newer, more spiritual concept of our divine being unfolds in us, giving us a larger, more dynamic sense of our abilities and capabilities — our God-being.

Because the *I AM* is *Being*, everything that exists is saying *I am*, thus identifying itself with *The Great I AM*, divine Being, with the Life which is God. When the bird sings, it is saying *I am*. When the flower opens, it is saying *I am*. When the dog barks joyously, it is saying *I am*. When each one of us breathes, we are saying *I am*. When we think, talk, walk, work, play, we are saying *I am*. As we learn to say *I am* aright, we will be perfect.

The New Covenant records the *I AM*'s demand thus: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" — the desires of your lower nature will not have dominion over you. To walk before God and be perfect is to live in the Spirit, not in materialism, hence, not subject to material conditions. To walk before God is to be ever conscious of God's presence. To walk before God is to walk in the way of holiness, in the path of righteousness, and thus avoid the pitfalls of evil which, sooner or later, engulf one in degradation. To walk before God is to be dedicated to doing God's will — having no will of one's own. To walk before God is to live in humble obedience to divine law, which supplies our every need by causing the visible manifestation of good to come forth from the invisible spiritual reality of all that God has made. To walk before God is to be conscious of the dominion of heaven on earth, to be mindful of the divine presence everywhere.

Think what it means to be always mindful of God's presence, to be conscious of walking with God everywhere we go. There is no evil in God's presence; hence no evil can come into our presence when we walk with God. There is no limitation or lack in God's

presence, no sorrow or sickness, no fear or danger; hence none of these things can invade our presence when we are mindful of the divine presence. The Psalmist sang: "In thy presence is fulness of joy. At thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Ps.16:11). What greater joy can we have than to walk with God!

Perfection is Godlikeness — like God. The word *perfect* has a compound meaning and embodies the sense of both *being* and *doing*. To be perfect means to be complete, whole, entire; to be full of integrity and truth; without blemish; that which is perfect has all its parts or elements entire, full, whole. However, to be perfect also means to do, to act, to perform, to finish; that which is perfect has all its properties, characteristics, and wholeness developed to the fullest degree and is not lacking in any essential element, quantity, or development.

The first time the word *perfect* appears in the Bible is in the story of Noah: "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations" (Gen.6:9). Now, in God's demand that Abram be perfect, we find the first commandment concerning perfection. Throughout the Bible we hear this command as a kind of theme song of the prophets, kings, Christ Jesus, and the apostles. Moses demanded: "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God" (Deut.18:13). David observed: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace" (Ps.37:37). Solomon admonished: "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments" (I Ki.8:61). Christ Jesus decreed: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt.5:48). St. Paul declares: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" — that he "may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind" (II Tim.3:16,17 KJV, NEB). James, the brother of Jesus, besought all mankind: "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas.1:4).

In the divine demand of The Almighty God: "Walk before me and be thou perfect," Abram was required to understand the complete nature of God as Father *and* Mother. He was to live in this full realization of the divine nature and to be completely operative

in expressing the divine completeness — in manifesting the majesty and dominion of the Father, who sets His beloved child on high, and in demonstrating the all-might of the Mother, who performs all things for Her children. It was as though *El Shaddi* said to Abram: “Express this divine completeness. But remember, you cannot do this without Sarai. Together you are representative of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of the Supreme Being. Realize this momentous Truth, and this realization will develop in your consciousness the image and likeness of Divinity and will bring forth into your experience the child of promise.”

But Abram could not seem to grasp this truth. He was convinced that Sarai's barrenness barred her from being any part of the Covenant promise concerning the child of promise. And his mind seemed closed to any idea which even suggested that Ishmael was not the promised heir.

It is worthwhile here to consider the word *barren*: Anything that is not obedient to the divine command, *Be fruitful*, is barren — unprofitable, non-productive, yielding no intellectual stimulation. It were well for each one to contemplate the problem which confronted Abram — the lack within himself which manifested itself as Sarai's barrenness.

When our land is unproductive, when our efforts are not fruitful, when our business is not successful, when we are confronted on all sides with incompleteness — we should seek out the barrenness, or lack, within ourselves. For the law is that we bring forth that which is within us. The Motherhood of God expressed in each one of us causes us to be fruitful in good works, having ability to conceive ideas and the power to bring them forth. The all-might of *Elohim*, the Motherhood of God in all Her strength and power, the Creator putting Omnipotence into operation, performs this vital function for each one of us. When our activity is unprofitable, when our land is barren, we need to learn more of the nature of the Almighty Motherhood of God, which causes all creation to conceive and to bring forth fruit after their own kind.

Although there seemed to be no response in Abram to the voice of his divine Mother, the power of the Word was working in him. The irresistible Spirit of God moved upon the waters — stirred the elements of Abram's consciousness — causing him to be receptive to the divine message. And we read: “He fell on his face”

(Gen.17:3). He bowed low in reverent humility before the revelation of the nature of God's Motherhood — *El Shaddi, The Almighty God*.

Of special interest to us here is a new interpretation of the Hebrew name *El Shaddi* as *God-All-Knowing*. This interpretation in no way conflicts with the translation *The Almighty God*. Rather it confirms the annunciation "I, The All-Knowing, AM All-Mighty."

Immediately the nature of the *I AM as All-Mighty and All-Knowing* dawned in Abram's consciousness, we read that "God talked with him." God, *Elohim*, the Father and Mother of the universe including man, spoke to Abram! And Abram heard!

This is the first time the name *Elohim, God*, has been introduced into Abram's unfoldment. Humble before the revelation of the nature of The Almighty, the Motherhood of God, as All-knowing, his consciousness became receptive to the unfoldment of the highest concept of the Supreme Being revealed in the Bible. The understanding of the Triune divine Principle of the universe began to dawn in him. This revelation marks the beginning of Abram's understanding of the spiritual significance of his Covenant with God and the magnitude of his divine adventure.

Hear again the trumpet call which awakened Abram to a higher, holier understanding of God and of man in God's likeness, possessing God's power and authority. Note the continued insistence of The Almighty that Abram identify the "I" of his being with *The Great I AM, The All-knowing Mind*. Feel the power of the *I AM* in all God's talks with Abram. In this enunciation we hear the divine demand that we identify the "I" of our being with the *I AM*. Never ignore or pass lightly over God's use of the pronoun "I," for therein we hear the trumpet call which strikes the keynote of our divine mission.

I am the Almighty God; walk before me [be ever conscious of my presence], and be thou perfect.

And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful.—

Gen.17:1,2,6.

We hear in these words an echo of the climax of creation, stated in the first chapter of Genesis:

And God [*Elohim*] said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion . . . over all the earth . . . Male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion . . .

And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.— Gen.1:26-28,31.

Thus we see that the original Covenant of Godlikeness and the Covenant of Perfection which God made with Abram are one and the same. God proclaimed the provisions of the New Covenant and called upon Abram to perform his part. *Elohim*, the Triune divine Principle, the All-inclusive Creator, the Father and Mother of the universe including man, has spoken!

Abram's New Name Abraham

Now note how the *I AM*, Omniscient, All-knowing divine Mind Itself, speaks in Abram's consciousness:

And God talked with him, saying,
As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.— Gen.17:3-7.

The higher, holier concept of God as *Elohim*, the Father and Mother of the universe, had not only elevated Abram's concept of the nature of God as Mother, but had also lifted his concept of the nature of God as Father. And immediately his concept of himself was changed. Through this higher concept of the nature of the

Supreme Being, a holier concept of man in God's image and likeness appeared to him. Abram's advanced understanding of man in God's likeness is confirmed by the divine proclamation which bestowed on him his new name:

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.— Gen.17:5.

No longer was he to think of himself as Abram, an exalted human father. He must understand that God is the Father of man. And in this understanding he would comprehend, in some measure, the transcendent truth which Christ Jesus taught, namely, that man is born,

... not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.— John 1:13.

Not all at once was Abram, or Abraham, able to comprehend that man is "not born by fleshly desire of a human father, not dependent on the course of nature nor on any impulse or plan of man, but is the offspring of God Himself" (NEB, JBP). But his thought began to expand to behold something of the divine nature and origin of man. Through the absolute statement of the Covenant: *Be ye perfect*, or *Ye be perfect*, this great but humble man began to understand that he was Godlike — like God, like Mind, or Spirit — and not like Adam.

In this unfoldment of the divine nature, Abram began to comprehend, in some measure, that the *I AM* was his mind or ego, and that he was empowered to speak and act with the divine authority of *The Great I AM*. Further, he glimpsed the spiritual fact, although not completely understanding it, that his seed would be the offspring of God.

Then Abraham, the new man, heard God, *Elohim*, the Father and Mother of the universe including man, reaffirm his possession of the land and of his dominion therein:

And I will give thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.— Gen.17:8.

Abraham was given dominion in the land of Canaan — dominion not only in the land itself, but also spiritual authority over the gross materialism of the land — the enchantments, necromancy, sorcery, witchcraft, and other forms of carnality that enslave the minds of men. Further, Abraham heard the promise repeated that his seed would inherit the land for an everlasting possession, but with this irrevocable provision: *I will be their God!*

When the *I AM* says *I WILL* — that is the law which can never be revoked! God's will stands forever! If these people turned from God, if they forsook the Covenant of Godlikeness, they would be cut off from the provisions and the blessings of the Covenant.

A Material Token of the New Covenant

At this time, as if to deny the revelation that had come to Abraham, the tempter superimposed a picture of the Old Covenant and its provisions upon the imagery of his thought. It was as though “a mist went up from the earth” (Gen.2:6). A confused, materialistic interpretation of the Covenant of Perfection and Godlikeness dimmed and blurred Abraham's vision of God and of his relationship with God, which had been so clear moments before. How like the records of the New Covenant and of the Old (Gen.1:1-31; 2:1-3 and Gen.2: 4-26; 3:1-24). One seems to merge into the other as though the second were a continuation of the first. So now another covenant is presented to Abraham as “a *token* of the covenant betwixt me and you” (Gen.17:11). One has only to read this second covenant to see how utterly different it is from the Covenant of spiritual Perfection which God made with Abraham:

This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my

covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.—

Gen.17:10-14.

The same difference exists between God's Covenant with man and this spurious counterfeit that exists between the spiritual record of creation in the first chapter of Genesis and the material picture which is presented immediately thereafter in the second and third chapters. One is spiritual, the other material. One is filled with the goodness of God, the other partakes of the nature of both good and evil. One exalts the spiritual nature of man, the other emphasizes the sensuous nature of a mortal.

The Covenant of Perfection with its spiritual conditions and rewards had been plainly stated: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" — Walk ever mindful of my presence, the presence of Spirit, the Presence of Mind, and so be entire, complete, accomplished, and able to bring all things to fruition. Abraham had heard this message clearly. He knew that if he walked in the Spirit, he would not fulfill the lust of the flesh — the desires of his lower nature would not be made manifest in his experience. Thus God's Covenant of Godlikeness and spiritual Perfection could be established in him. And yet, immediately thereafter, the serpent, with cunning subtlety, insinuated its suggestions into his thoughts, as though saying: "This is the way the Covenant of Perfection must be kept: Every man child shall be circumcised. This is a *token* of the Covenant of Perfection, the *symbol* that each one has been spiritually purified and brought into the Covenant." The Almighty God did not say or even intimate this, for God, who is Spirit, could never have sent forth a suggestion of physicality so unlike Himself. Further, The Almighty God, *El Shaddi*, the Motherhood of God, would not have left womanhood without a token or symbol of the Covenant.

Circumcision is practiced in modern surgery as a sanitary method and in no way determines one's spirituality or materiality. The Apostle Paul declared emphatically:

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.— 1 Cor.7:19.

Why did Abraham accept the idea that this ancient rite could be even a token of the Covenant between God and man? Some have projected the theory that this was a way, all be it a very material way, in which the people of God would be separated from the ungodly. However, circumcision was practiced by ancient peoples as a religious ceremony long before Abraham's time. The more probable reason Abraham accepted circumcision as a token of the Covenant was that it was a way in which Ishmael could be brought into the Covenant with God — whether or not he walked in the way of holiness. Or so Abraham thought.

The tempter used Abraham's fierce human love for Ishmael as a wedge through which to insinuate the conditions of the Old Covenant into Abraham's thinking and experience and thereby to belittle the wondrous Covenant of Perfection which God had made with him. And Abraham, to whom the glorious statement of the Covenant had just been given, was so immersed in the mesmeric picture of the Old Covenant and its token of circumcision, that he lost sight of the great significance of what *El Shaddi* had said to him. But above the voice of the tempter the divine voice is heard, as though saying: "Listen and understand: What you are hearing is but a human misconception of the requirements of the Covenant of Godlikeness and spiritual Perfection. Harken to my Word. It concerns *Sarai*, not Ishmael!"

Sarai's New Name Sarah

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. — Gen.17:15,16.

God was insistent that Abraham acknowledge Sarai's place in the Covenant. What Abraham did not seem to understand was that the revelation of the nature of the Almighty God regenerated Sarai, as it had regenerated him, and gave to her her new name *Sarah*. No longer was he to think of her as Sarai, a lovely princess. Her new name and divine nature was *Sarah* — *mother of nations*.

Through her the nature and power of God's Motherhood was to be exemplified. For the revelation of the nature of The Almighty — the mighty power of the Motherhood of God, who performs all things for Her people — had removed the reproach of Sarai's barrenness and equipped her with power from on High to be *Sarah, a mother of nations*.

Through the bond of union called marriage, God had made His Covenant with both Abraham and Sarah. The fulfillment of the Covenant would come to them through a higher understanding of the significance of the spiritual Marriage Covenant, typical of the oneness of man and woman, expressing the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God.

The revelation of God as Father-Mother reveals and establishes the holiness and completeness of the marriage covenant, in which husband and wife go forward together in spiritual unfoldment and blessedness. Abraham could not walk before God and be perfect — be complete — without Sarah; he could not be completely operative in his expression of the complete nature of God, nor could He exemplify the nature of God as Father-Mother alone. The *male and female* of the sixth period of spiritual unfoldment of the Covenant of Godlikeness must be exemplified by man *and* woman.

It is natural that men and women reflect the qualities of both their parents. It is natural that men and women embody and express the compound nature of *Elohim*, God, and thus manifest the divine completeness indicated in God's holy name, Father-Mother. Each one of us must express the tender, gentle, intuitive, faithful, loving, all-seeing, and all-knowing qualities of God's Motherhood and the strong, courageous, powerful, intelligent qualities of God's Fatherhood. Otherwise we are pitifully incomplete and bereft of the dominion which the divine completeness bestows — the dominion of the perfect, completely operative man made in God's own likeness.

Abraham probably felt that he expressed the divine completeness; and in a sense he did. But he denied Sarah her right to do the same. All unwittingly he epitomized human manhood in all ages which denies to womanhood its right to be Godlike, complete, and to exercise dominion. Abraham — the new man — must understand that in the unfolding consciousness of the Covenant conditions, Sarah — the new woman — must walk side by side

with him in his ascending spiritual footsteps and in the understanding and demonstration of the divine nature.

In the metaphor of Scripture the meaning of Sarai's name — noble lady or princess — reveals her nobility and tells us not only of her status in her home land of Chaldea, but also of the high place she held in Abraham's affections and in his household. However there is no indication that Abraham as yet recognized the spiritual status of her womanhood and her place in the Covenant. Even at ninety years of age Sarai was still a beautiful woman. But she was too old, or so Abraham thought, to be considered as a part of the Covenant relationship through whom the promised *seed of Abraham* would come. Yet God's promise was, "I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her." Abraham seemed totally unaware that through the law of the spiritual Marriage Covenant, which was the real bond that united him with his wife, *Sarai* was now *Sarah*, and *Sarah* must accompany him in his growing understanding of God, in every progressive spiritual footstep, and in the unfolding of the Covenant. But there was another problem which kept Abraham from immediately accepting the divine promise that a son would be born of Sarah. He had come to think of himself as an old man, incapable of fathering a son. We read:

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, shall a child be born of one that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarai, that is ninety years old, bear?— Gen.17:17.

"Abraham laughed!" He must not have heard God aright! Such a thing was incredible! It was much easier to believe that Ishmael might become a righteous man than to believe that the law of the Covenant could set aside the laws of nature and that the child of promise might be born of Sarah by promise of God. There was nothing in Abraham's experience or knowledge that he could use as a precedent for the unprecedented demand being made upon his faith and understanding — the demand that he trust God to bring forth a son of Sarah by divine power. The order of human generation was deeply ingrained in his concept of life and productivity.

Combined with his incredulity that a son could be born of Sarai, who was barren and old, was the yearning of a human father for his first born son after the flesh. His human heart cried out:

O That Ishmael might live before thee!— Gen.17:18.

Sarah Shall Bear Thee a Son.

But the divine Word was insistent that Abraham hear and understand the promise of God and obey the divine demand — the demand that Abraham recognize Sarai's spiritual status and her new name, *Sarah—mother of nations*. He *must* acknowledge womanhood as co-equal with manhood in God's Covenant with His children. He was to learn that with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26). But Abraham continued to question God's promise that Sarai would bear him a son. Then *Elohim* thundered:

Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.— Gen.17:19.

And then the all-loving Motherhood of God answered the plea of a human father for his first born son after the flesh:

As for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.—
Gen.17:20.

God had not condemned Ishmael. God blessed him and bestowed upon him all of the divine good that Ishmael was capable of receiving. But Ishmael was not the one whom God had appointed to establish the nation through whom the knowledge of God and of the Son of God would come to the world. As though to re-emphasize this point, God, *Elohim*, the divine Father-Mother said;

But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.— Gen.17:21,22.

“He left off talking with him.” God closed the interview. He had nothing more to say on the subject. Abraham *must* accept the terms of the Covenant. The *I AM* had spoken!

The Struggle Between The Old and New Covenants Continues

It had been comparatively easy for Abraham to accept the wholly spiritual nature of the universe. His scientific senses discounted the evidence of the material senses, enabling him to see through the mist of material reasoning to the spiritual reality — the universe created by God, Spirit, in the likeness of Spirit. But it was not easy for him to accept the spiritual fact that God, the only Creator, is the Father and Mother of man. What appeared as Sarai's barrenness was, in the spiritual unfolding of Abraham's life, not only an indication of the fact that his consciousness was barren of the understanding of the nature of the Almighty — the All-might of God's Motherhood, Who performs all things for Her children — but also a stubborn refusal of mortal manhood to admit the vitality and power of the Motherhood of God reflected by womanhood. The higher spiritual order of generation — man brought forth by promise of God and not by physical law — had to mature in his consciousness and outshine the sensual material beliefs concerning the reproduction of man. But it was more than this. Abraham loved Ishmael, his first born son. The fierce love of an Oriental father for his elder son was a form of worship, and this adoration of Ishmael stood between Abraham and his acceptance of the fulfillment of the promise that Sarah would bear a son. *The generations of Adam were dying hard.*

Abraham's great human love for the members of his household-family was another weak point through which the tempter took possession of his reason. Abraham wanted all of them to be gathered into the Covenant of Godlikeness and spiritual Perfection. This was commendable. But he was reluctant to impose upon his loved ones the same stern discipline which God exacted of him. He seemed unwilling to set the same high standard of perfection for others which he was willing to abide by. The compassion of his human love caused him to pass lightly over the shortcomings of others. The conditions of the Covenant were Godlikeness and spiritual Perfection. Yet Abraham hoped to enfold all of his household within the Covenant through a token, or symbol, of the Covenant instead of insisting on implicit obedience to the demand which God made upon him: "Walk before me and be thou perfect." He probably reasoned that if he could identify them with the Cove-

nant by a token of circumcision, no harm could come of it, and much good might result. And so, even though God had declared emphatically what the demands of the Covenant were and had stated repeatedly that the Covenant concerned Sarah, and not Ishmael,

Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of his house, and circumcised them.— Gen.17:23.

Abraham and his seed continued to regard circumcision as a religious rite which set them apart from all other peoples of the earth, although he must have known that circumcision was practiced by other ancient tribes — the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, and other peoples. The custom was followed by all Hebrew people, even by Christ Jesus' immediate disciples, who at first insisted upon circumcision of the Gentiles as a condition of their acceptance into the Christian Church. Not until the Apostle Paul became active in the Church was this rite challenged. In a letter to the churches in Galatia he wrote:

In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.—
Gal.6:15.

The question was not and is not whether circumcision was right or wrong, but that it should not be considered as a religious rite.

Abraham seemed to be satisfied that Ishmael was the heir of the Covenant, and he rested in this mistaken concept of the fulfillment of God's promise. Ishmael had been circumcised. Abraham was confident that by this "token of the Covenant," Ishmael had been brought into the Covenant relationship with God and was the heir of the promises. But Abraham appeared to have forgotten, or was unmindful of, the message enunciated by *El Shaddi*, The Almighty. He seemed unwilling to admit that the annunciation concerned not Ishmael, but Sarah, and her place in the Covenant. Hear again the divine message:

Thou shalt not call her name Sarai [lovely princess]
but Sarah [mother of nations] shall her name be.

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.— Gen.17:15,16.

Abraham may have thought he had forgotten what The Almighty said. But the soul-stirring words iterated and reiterated by his Mother-God had been inscribed on the very tablet of his being, and though apparently dormant, the divine message was very much alive. The mighty power of *Elohim* was having its way with him, though he knew it not.

Abraham's New Birth

Subsequent events disclosed something of the upheaval which took place in Abraham as the force of the divine message began to stir within him and to clash with old concepts which had been deeply rooted in the bedrock of traditional beliefs. The Spirit of God, moving resolutely on the waters, or elements of his thought, was changing his whole body of consciousness, as leaven changes the properties of meal. The leavening influence of scientific unfoldment was transforming his whole concept of creation. The generations of Adam were being swallowed up in the regeneration of Spirit.

St. Paul beautifully describes the change that was taking place in Abraham:

Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.— Rom.12:2 (NEB).

The *Phillips'* translation strengthens the spiritual meaning of Paul's words:

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within (let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed), so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves you toward the goal of true maturity.— Rom.12:2 (JBP).

Listen as the Apostle enunciates the spiritual law of transformation and transfiguration:

When anyone is united to Christ he is a new creature: his old life is over; there is a whole new world; the old order is gone; a new life has already begun.— II Cor.5:17 (NEB).

Abraham had been touched by the law governing the new birth, which transforms mind and body. He was learning the mighty lesson embodied in Christ Jesus' declaration that the only way to understand the power of the kingdom of heaven on earth was to be reborn of Spirit (John 3:3), to be transformed spiritually. Only thus could he be fully obedient to the demands of the New Covenant, "Walk before me and be thou perfect." Walk in the Spirit, ever conscious of God's presence, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, the desires of your lower nature will not be fulfilled in you. (See Gal.5:16, JBP.)

Abraham did not realize it, but the chemicalization which had been going on within him was really transformation, the process of the new birth. His faint conception of the nature of God's Motherhood had actually changed his mind, transformed his thinking, given him a new spiritual concept of himself. Even though he had resisted this change, the new birth had gone on. And from this spiritual conception a new creature had come forth. Abram himself had been born again and given his new name *Abraham* by The Almighty, his Mother God. So completely did the *I AM* write its name or divine nature as *The Almighty God* in Abraham's consciousness that for all time to come The Almighty God — God-Almighty, God-All-Knowing, God-Omniscience — is known as *The God of Abraham*.

Abraham's new birth had been labored and protracted. He had clung to the "pattern of this present world." But at last he was freed from the cocoon of materialism in which his thinking had been enmeshed. Having emerged into more spiritual latitudes of thought, he now saw God *face to face* — he beheld the nature of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of *Elohim*, which before he had seen but faintly, as through a glass darkly. From the vantage point of his more spiritual vision, old things were passing away, old concepts based on a material conception of existence were yielding to

a more spiritual interpretation of life. At long last he began to comprehend the truth which *El Shaddi* had been enunciating — that Sarai too had been transformed, reborn, and given her new name Sarah, and that together they would exemplify the compound nature of God as Father-Mother, a fact which their new names blazoned forth: *Abraham and Sarah — father and mother of multitudes, in whom all the nations of the world would be blessed!*

Abraham comprehended for the first time that the divine law which had transformed and reborn him and his wife was the same law that would usher the child of promise into human presence. And he rested in this new-old concept of spiritual creation: that God, *Elohim*, was the *only* Creator, and that He created the universe and all that is therein, including man, and brought forth His creation through divine law in His own way and in His own time. Abraham was now ready to acknowledge the possibility that Sarah would indeed conceive and bring forth a son, and that this child of promise would be born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, not by the fleshly desire of a human father, not dependent on the course of nature, but the by the will of God Himself. (See John 1:13.)

Abraham had completely outgrown the old garment of material selfhood with which his human parents had clothed him and which had been tailored according to tradition and commonly accepted beliefs and opinions of mortals. He was now ready to put on the garment of praise, the robe of righteousness, the transfiguring raiment of spiritual enlightenment, the vesture of the new-born of Spirit, given to him by his Father-Mother God.

Abraham had learned what the beloved Revelator, St. John, learned in his new birth on the Isle of Patmos, namely, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4). Or, as the *Phillips’* translation puts it: “God’s ‘heredity’ within us will always conquer the world outside us.”

A new day had dawned in Abraham’s spiritual journeying. He had risen to a spiritual dimension of thought he had never before attained. He was now prepared to hear, to comprehend, and to heed the voice of *Elohim* that would reveal to him and to the world the pattern of the Trinity, the revelation of the threefold nature of *THE GREAT I AM* whose Word brings creation to light:

Because God is the only Creator, He is the only Father and Mother of man and the universe.

Hence the son who was to be born of Sarah would be conceived, developed, and brought forth by divine law, not by laws of nature.

The Spirit of God, the mighty force of the Almighty, the Creator — Omnipotence in operation — would accomplish this.

And the human appearing of the Son of God would be called *the child of promise*.

Let us turn to the Bible and learn how this understanding of the mighty spiritual forces of creation revealed in the Trinity unfold in Abraham's consciousness and experience.

Chapter XXII

THREE HEAVENLY MESSENGERS

With Three Heavenly Messages

And the Lord appeared unto him (Abraham) in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day.

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.— Gen.18:1-8.

In the metaphor of Abraham's unfoldment, the appearance of the three men indicates to us that the threefold nature of *Elohim*, the triune divine Principle, which had been revealed to Abraham during his spiritual journeying, had come into the focal point of understanding in his consciousness.

Abraham and Sarah lived in Hebron in the plains, by the oaks of Mamre. Recall that *Hebron* means *spiritual alliance*; *Mamre* means *strength*. Here, in this holy citadel, or consciousness of his alliance, or oneness with God and fortified with spiritual strength,

Abraham sat in the tent door (with open mind, in a state of spiritual receptivity) in the heat of the day (at noon, in the meridian light of spiritual contemplation). He lifted up his eyes (his spiritual perceptive faculties) and, looking from this higher vantage point, he saw three men! Abraham ran to meet them and bowed himself to the ground. He humbled himself in recognition of the representatives of the divine Trinity. He welcomed the visitors warmly, and, with true hospitality, he set before them the best of his provisions. He stood while they ate, an indication of his awareness of their divine status. His warm welcome revealed his state of mind; he was receptive to their message. But the messengers would not speak until they inquired after Sarah, for what they had to say concerned her. *She* must hear their words, and the spiritual import of their message must be impressed upon her consciousness. Recall that Sarah had not been present when the Almighty Motherhood of God had spoken to Abraham concerning her place in the Covenant relationship with God. At that time, Abraham had turned a deaf ear to the divine message. But now, being assured that Sarah was in the tent behind them, the voice of the Trinity spoke:

Sarah Shall Have a Son

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife?
And he said, behold, in the tent.

And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah, thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?

And the Lord said unto Abraham, wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

Is anything too hard for the Lord?— Gen.18:9-14

The "I" which spoke to Abraham and Sarah was the Holy Spirit, the *I AM* appearing in its interpretative aspect, to make plain to

their receptive thought the message of the Trinity, namely, that the Science of creation would usher into human presence the Son of God whom they would know as the child of promise and the seed of Abraham.

Sarah, in joyous incredulity, laughed within herself and said: "Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?" Her unspoken question was quickly challenged by the Spirit of God: "Wherefore did Sarah laugh? Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Sarah fearfully denied laughing; but the divine voice insisted: "Nay, but thou didst laugh." As though to say, "Be sure that not one single element of doubt be found in you to delay the fulfillment of the divine will, for nothing is too hard for the Lord, the triune divine Principle of the universe. Nothing is impossible with God." Then the divine promise was reiterated:

At the time appointed I will return to thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.—
Gen.18:14.

When Abraham and Sarah listened *together* to the voice of the Trinity, this togetherness acted as a spiritual force which silenced the voice of godless materialism and sensuous reasoning. When they listened together to the divine voice, the doubt was dispelled which had delayed the fulfillment of God's promise that a son would indeed be born of Sarah, not by laws material, but by the promise of God; not by the will of the flesh, but by the will of God. At long last they understood that when the *I AM* said *I WILL*, the law of fulfillment was inscribed in it.

For the first time the voice of the Old Covenant was completely silenced. Listening together to the Message of the Trinity, Abraham and Sarah were spiritually united in the holy relationship of God's Covenant, in which the divine completeness was revealed to them. And in this understanding a realization of the power and law of the creative Principle which ushers invisible spiritual realities into visible presence dawned on the horizon of their human comprehension and experience. Sarah *conceived this idea* and in fullness of time she brought forth a son — *the child of promise*.

Sodom and Gomorrah

There was a further message of great import for Abraham and Sarah from the three representatives of the Trinity. This message concerned Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities which Lot had chosen for his dwelling place.

And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom.— Gen.18:16-22.

In order that we may comprehend these and other passages aright (Gen.18:16-23; 19:1-26), we must understand that they are, in part, an *anthropopatheia*, a figure of speech ascribing to God what belongs to rational beings, an interpretation of God's acts from man's point of view, an explanation of what God says and does on the analogy of human motives. (See *The Companion Bible*, ap.6,p.8; and *Dummelow*, p.15)

"The interpretation of God's acts" from a spiritual point of view is quite different from "The interpretation of man's point of view." Spiritually interpreted, the passage above tells us that the voice of the Trinity, the mighty Spirit of God, was demanding that Abraham recognize the utter degradation of all that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah stood for and included; further he must understand that such evil includes its own seed of destruction.

These cities were infamous for their perverted sex practices and were typical of carnal mindedness and sensuality at its worst. And Sodom was the dwelling place of Abraham's beloved nephew Lot!

Abraham had separated himself from Lot soon after coming into the land of Canaan, but Lot's persistent association with sensuality, perversion, vice, and all forms of corruption was very grievous to Abraham. The cry, or sorrow, of Sodom — the iniquity of sodomy — was great within him. And although Lot's determination to abide with such wickedness was grievous to him, yet the Lord knew that Abraham would literally turn heaven and earth to help this wilful nephew if he thought Lot was in danger.

Although the voice of the Trinity had not yet pronounced the divine verdict against these cities, Abraham sensed the inevitability of their destruction. He was being forced to learn a vital, but to him a sad lesson, namely, that depravity embodies the seeds of self-annihilation and that he, Abraham, must not interfere with the law which brings about — effects or accomplishes — sin's destruction. He must realize that if he tried to save the Sodomites when they refused to change their evil ways, he was giving his unconscious consent to sodomy. He must understand that he could not condone iniquity because of his great human love for humanity.

Abraham was not yet willing to agree that there was a principle involved in the destruction of the cities of wickedness and that the dwelling place of vice and corruption would destroy itself. He pleaded with the Lord, as an attorney might plead for a client before a judge, that something should be done to save the city and its people:

But Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find forty and five, I will not destroy it.

And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

And he said unto him, O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned to his place.— Gen.18:22-33.

Abraham's human sense of mercy pleaded that perhaps there was something good to be found in these cities of wickedness, something good to be found in the sensuous perverted mentality typical of Sodom and Gomorrah that would be worth saving. But there was nothing. Not ten people nor even a tenth part of such depravity was good enough to be saved. It must sink into the mire of its own making.

We must not overlook another side of this narrative, viz., the value of a good man. Ten righteous men in Sodom would have saved the city! How priceless and how powerful is the divine quality of righteousness!

Abraham did not plead further. "The Lord went his way." Abraham knew that the case was closed. In times past he would have gone into the city and forcibly saved as many as he could by his own strength, as he had done when the inhabitants of those same cities had been carried away captive by the four kings of the East. But Abraham saw at last, though reluctantly, that these people, including Lot, had to learn to save themselves. And if there

was not enough moral strength within them to turn them from their wicked ways, then they would have to learn, in another world, how to forsake wickedness and learn righteousness. This good man saw now that he could not save mortals from the penalties attached to their own wrong doing. Abraham was learning the lesson of divine justice — the lesson which Christ Jesus preached centuries later in his Sermon on the Mount, when he said:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.— Matt.7:6.

Abraham was learning a lesson which all of us must learn — a lesson that we are just as reluctant to learn as was he: We must permit our loved ones, and mankind generally, to learn from the things they suffer, rather than attempting to temper divine justice, which demands repentance and complete reformation of everyone.

We read that “Abraham returned to his place.” He returned to his place of spiritual observation and scientific thought and left off trying to save any part of the cities of wickedness — the perverted concepts of existence. It was as though he finally understood that the divine voice which had told him of things to come was not circumscribed, and that those who had ears to hear would hear the same warning and save themselves. He did not attempt to save Lot by his own human strength and love. He remained at his post of spiritual observation and left Lot with God.

The Angelic Warning and Deliverance of Lot

Two angels or divine messengers went to warn Lot of the impending disaster. Whether these angels were two of the representatives of the Trinity who had visited Abraham, or whether they were guardian angels ever at hand when they are needed, we know not. But we do know they had a divine duty to perform, and they completed their task of saving Lot and his family from the chemicalization of evil which precipitated the doom of the city he had chosen as his own.

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him.

And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.

But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

And they smote the men with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:

For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters [which were to marry his daughters], and said, Up, get you out of this place; for

the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

But when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord.

Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.

And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.— Gen.19:1-26.

Lot apparently had no idea of the divine nature of the two angelic visitors whom he invited into his house for the night. He received them with Oriental hospitality, but there was no evidence of moral stamina within him. For when the lustful men of Sodom besieged his house, demanding that he give them his visitors to

serve their perverted sensuous purposes, he, in a feeble attempt to observe an Oriental custom of providing safety for a guest beneath his roof, offered his own daughters as appeasement to the depraved aggressors who were storming the door. However, the holy visitants smote the men of the city with blindness, with utter confusion, so that they could not find the door of the house.

When told of the impending destruction of his city and urged to save himself and his family, Lot delayed, reluctant to leave his home. Finally the angelic visitors took hold of their hands — his, his wife's, and his two daughters' — and led them outside the city. They were all loath to go, for this city, with its grossness and materialism, seemed to be substance to all of them, and they lingered on the outskirts. They were urged on:

Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.— Gen.19:17.

“Escape to the mountain!” Lot was being urged to rise to higher dimensions of thought, to holier concepts of life, and to find safety from evil's self-destruction in exalted spiritual observations. But Lot was afraid to leave the plain — the flat evidences of materiality. He was unable to rise above the low level of materialism. He simply couldn't make the grade.

Lot was self-centered and was circumscribed by his own self-centeredness. His thoughts ever flowed inward instead of outward; hence he knew no unfoldment — material or spiritual. He could not find dominion, even with an angel leading him by the hand. The thought of striking out on his own to make a new life for himself and his family appalled him. “Find me a little city, just a little one will do. I cannot go to the mountains; don't ask me to rise up and build a new life; I must live in a city, in an environment others have made; I must have people around me to make my life complete.” Lot still lingered on the outskirts of Sodom but was finally turned away from the city when the angel promised that he might settle in the little city of Zoar.

Immediately Lot and his family were escaped, the destruction of both Sodom and Gomorrah began. The description of the cities' destruction by fire and brimstone is vivid. It was the spontaneous combustion of sensuality and lust which had been building up in-

ternal fires of self-annihilation. Lot and his family were commanded not to look back, not to turn back mentally or physically to the wickedness with which they had become identified. But Lot's wife could not resist a last look at the place which had been her home; and turning back, she was consumed, turned into a pillar of salt — literally crystallized by the chemicalization of evil.

Can we not conjecture that the fifteen-word Old Testament biography of Lot's wife was written for those who love the things of the world more than the things of the Spirit . . . ? Does not her biography also speak a message to those who are unwilling to flee from iniquity when all efforts to redeem iniquity have failed? . . . Lot's wife still stands as a permanent symbol of the woman who, faced toward salvation, still turns to look longingly on material things she had left behind.

(Edith Deen, *All the Women of the Bible*, pp.17-20.)

It is little wonder that Christ Jesus admonishes us all — male and female alike — “Remember Lot's wife” (Luke 17:32).

But what of Lot? When he left Abraham's protection he had great substance in herds and flocks, in herdsmen and servants. What happened to them? It is evident that Lot had not only turned from shepherding his flock but also from shepherding his thinking.

Probably the saddest part of Lot's story is that, with the priceless advantage of having been a part of Abraham's family and of having Abraham as his mentor and guide, he turned away to do his own thing, as we might say. He not only turned away from everything Abraham stood for, he also turned away from God. Human will, which for a time had seemed to be a constructive force within him, became a destructive force that reduced him to its own level and so weakened him mentally and physically that he was unable to develop his God-given potential of greatness. The evil, occult, carnal mind which had promised to set him on high and make him as a god cast him down to the earth instead. Even when he escaped from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and was given sanctuary in the little city of Zoar, he did not find peace. He fled in terror from that place and dwelt in a mountain. But instead of finding in the mountain an exalted place of spiritual observation where he might have regained some semblance of dominion, he dwelt in a cave with his two daughters. And the last we hear of him, he had become drunken with wine, and in a

drunken stupor he lay with his own daughters, and they begat sons by their father.

It can be clearly seen why it was necessary that Abraham be separated from Lot before he could progress in his divine adventure. Lot would have continued to be a subtle, unholy, occult influence in the large company that dwelt with Abraham in his holy city. Further, though he was a close blood relation, Lot could never have become a part of the family circle surrounding the child of promise.

It was nothing Lot had done which caused him to be saved when the city in which he lived was destroyed. It was because —

God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.— Gen.19:29.

It was Abraham's love for this willful, weak nephew that saved Lot's life. But Lot took his sensuous concept of existence with him. And the record of his daughters having children by their father in order to preserve their father's seed is utterly unpalatable (Gen.19:30-38). Truly, the end of that man is worse than at the first.

We do not hear of Lot again. In later years we do hear much of his ungodly offspring, who had been conceived by his daughters, and of their descendents — the children of Moab and Ammon, who were enemies of the Israelites all the days of their lives.

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham stood again at the place where he had communed with the Lord, and —

He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.— Gen.19:28.

We know not what Abraham's thoughts were as he viewed the destruction of Lot's dwelling place. Perhaps he recalled the vision of "a smoking furnace" which had come to him many years before when he had seen "the horror of great darkness fall upon him" (Gen.15:12,17). Perhaps he saw in the complete annihilation of the

cities of wickedness the utter end of the hypnotic influence of mental darkness, the mesmeric spell of occultism, which had fallen upon him.

In Abraham's spiritual journeying the destruction of Lot's city signifies that the last vestige of Lot's influence in Abraham's life was destroyed. Further, the obliteration of all that Lot stood for tells us that at long last Abraham understood he could not save his beloved nephew from his own undoing. Lot escaped from Sodom, but he did not escape from his own thoughts. He took them with him wherever he went, and they continued to bring forth fruit after their own kind.

After the soul-rending experience of watching his beloved adopted son go out of his life, Abraham turned away from the contemplation of the cataclysm of self-destroying evil. When he saw the ultimate degradation to which sensuality and occultism descends, he let Lot go his own way.

We know that Abraham found his peace, for he returned to the place of his communion with the triune divine Principle of the universe, who had revealed to him the full meaning of the Covenant of Godlikeness and its fulfillment in his life. He rose again to the height of spiritual observation and understanding which he had gained when he and Sarah listened together to the revelation of the threefold nature of the Infinite and realized with joy their part in the exemplification thereof.

Chapter XXIII

THE CLIMAX OF ABRAHAM'S DIVINE ADVENTURE

The time for the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham was near:

Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.— Gen.17:19.

Let us follow his footsteps as he and Sarah make ready for the birth of the child of promise.

Abraham and Sarah Sojourn in Abimelech's Country

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.— Gen.20:1.

Well might one ask: Why did Abraham and Sarah leave Hebron, typical of their holy city, and go into a strange country to await the birth of the child of promise? We need to reach forward in their story to learn the answer to this question. Their sojourn in "the south country" was for the purpose of establishing their son in a land where he could grow spiritually and learn to prosper. Hebron was *not to* be his home, or mental abode, for many years — until he grew to spiritual maturity, as had Abraham and Sarah. And so, "They dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar."

The names of these places are important in Abraham's spiritual journeying. *Kadesh* means *holy*, *Shur* means *wilderness*, *Gerar* means *a dwelling place*. In Gerar they found a resting place for themselves while the new idea of divine sonship was maturing in them. But what does their residence between Kadesh and Shur — between holiness and wilderness — indicate? Simply this: although they were conscious of the holiness that was unfolding

within them, a wilderness experience lay before them. As in all wilderness experiences, however, a great spiritual lesson awaited them. There was something vitally important for them to learn.

In Gerar they had an experience similar to the one that they had in Egypt. In the repetition of this experience we may see that they had not learned the lesson which they should have learned years before. You recall that when traveling Abraham introduced Sarah as his sister, as indeed she was, for they were both children of the same father, but of different mothers (Gen.20:12,13). Abraham saw in Sarah the supremely attractive woman and feared that some powerful king or chieftain would desire her and kill him in order to have her. Everywhere they went Sarah was much admired and sought after. Hers was the *beauty of holiness*. But hers was also *the beauty of nobility*, which kings desired. Recall that when they were in Egypt the Pharaoh sent and took her by force. But he released her when he learned she was Abraham's wife. Now, about twenty-five years later, when they came into Gerar, the same problem arose again. We read:

Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.—
Gen.20:2.

It is interesting to recall that a short time prior to this Sarah had thought of herself as being old, stricken in age. And yet here again she is the very beautiful and much sought after woman. What has happened? Something humanly wonderful but divinely natural.

When God established His Covenant with Abraham and Sarah they had accepted the conditions of the Covenant, and these conditions were that they walk before God and be perfect — live always in His presence, live the life that is spiritual, obey God's laws, and strive to do His will at all times. They were reaping the blessed reward of obedience — dominion! In the words of St. Paul, they had been "transformed by the renewing of their minds" (Rom.12:2). They had refused to be "conformed to this world." They had discovered their God-being and had put off the old man and the old woman — the old concept of man as a finite mortal subject to age and decrepitude — and had put on the new man and the new woman, embodying and expressing vitality, beauty, immortality — qualities of the compound nature of their Father-Mother God. In their spiritual unfoldment they had literally been

born anew. Thus Abimelech saw Sarah as a beautiful, desirable woman and took her into his harem.

Why would Abraham not trust God to care for both himself and Sarah in their journeying? Why, when they had come so far in their divine adventure and had demonstrated so much of their God-given dominion, would they again resort to deception as a means of protection? Nothing but fear! But this was no idle fear, for Oriental princes and chieftains exercised the right to claim beautiful women for their harems. Abraham knew no fear in most things, as he had proved in his pursuit of the armies of the kings of the East (Gen.14:1-16). But his great human love for Sarah caused him to be vulnerable where she was concerned. Further, his concern for her safety was heightened by the fact that Sarah was carrying the child of promise. However, the time had come for Abraham's faith in God and in God's disposal of events to be absolute.

There is no record that Abraham prayed for Sarah. But Sarah's own innocency and the dominion of her God-being, expressing the power of The Almighty, her Mother-God, came to her defense in a most unusual way. We read:

God [*Elohim* — the Father-Mother] came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou has taken; for she is a man's wife.

But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? —

Gen.20:3,4.

So far as we know Abimelech was a pagan. But he was a good man, and this great human goodness made him receptive to the Word of God, *Elohim*, which came to him. He pleaded with God that he was not guilty of taking another man's wife, for he had been assured that Sarah was Abraham's sister.

And God said unto him in a dream, Yes, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.—

Gen.20:6-8.

Prior to this Abraham had been known as a great and good man, even a prince among men, and a scientific thinker. But now God revealed to Abimelech that Abraham was a *prophet*, one appointed of God to speak for Him. Abimelech was able to comprehend this, and he called his whole household together and told them what God had revealed to him. The king did not know the Almighty God, but he certainly recognized and acknowledged a divine power and presence greater than any authority he had before known.

The next morning Abimelech sent for Abraham and asked him what he had seen in his kingdom that caused him to say that Sarah was his sister and not his wife. Abraham replied:

Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.— Gen.20:11.

Abraham explained to Abimelech the agreement which he and Sarah had made before leaving Chaldea and the reason for it (Gen.20:12,13). The king accepted Abraham's explanation and gave him a bond of a thousand pieces of silver, paid in the presence of witnesses, that no harm had come to Sarah. The payment of such a bond was not unusual in those days. It was, in a sense, a bond of good behavior not only for the past, but also for the present and future.

In this experience Abraham learned that "the fear of God" is everywhere. Remembering that the word fear means: to give power to, to stand in awe of, to reverence, we can see that Abraham learned a great lesson in this wilderness experience — a lesson that remained with him forever — a lesson each one of us must learn, namely, that everywhere we go God's presence and power are with us, and that there will be evidence of this omnipotent power and presence wherever and whenever we need it. Otherwise God would not be Omnipotent and Omnipresent.

Abimelech's true majesty is revealed in his words to Abraham:

Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.— Gen.20:15.

We read further:

So Abraham prayed unto God; and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid-servants; and they bare children.

For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.— Gen.20:17,18.

“Abraham prayed unto God” — *Elohim*. And God, the divine Father-Mother, healed Abimelech and all his house of barrenness and impotence — restored to them the power of conception.

Although this record may appear to be very material to us today, its spiritual significance transcends the material senses. To the Oriental mind nothing is more tragic than the barrenness of womanhood and the impotence of manhood. We do not know how long Sarah was kept in Abimelech's harem, but it was sufficiently long for the king to realize that his posterity was being threatened and cut off. Not to have heirs in the royal house was both a personal and a national calamity. The king's gratitude to Abraham was expressed in many ways during the time he sojourned in that land.

Abimelech was a Philistine. In the time of Abraham the land of the Philistines was a pastoral country, and Abimelech was a powerful, intelligent, and peaceful king. It was good for Abraham to have this good man's friendship and oversight while he and Sarah were awaiting *the appointed time* for the child of promise to appear.

In Abraham's spiritual unfoldment, Abimelech symbolizes a type of human goodness which gives sanctuary to seekers after righteousness, and in the mystery of godliness serves the divine purpose even while not understanding it. Abraham found a sense of establishment in Abimelech's country. He digged wells and found pasturage for his large herds and flocks. Symbolically, he digged deep for the water of Life, for the pure stream of spiritual understanding, and found both spiritual and material abundance.

Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.— Gen.21:34.

Move To Beer-Sheba

But the land of the Philistines was not to be the birthplace of the child of promise. Before this momentous event Abraham and Sarah moved to Beer-Sheba, in the south of the land of Canaan.

When The Almighty gave Abram and Sarai their new names, Abraham and Sarah, He gave them their new spiritual identity: *father and mother of multitudes, in whom all nations of the world would be blessed*. Together Abraham and Sarah exemplify the first aspect of the threefold divine nature of the Triune God Himself. In their human lives we discover an illustration of the compound nature of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of *Elohim* and the power of the Spirit of God to bring forth the human expression of the Son of God, not by laws of nature, but by the mighty force of The Almighty, the Creator — Omnipotence in operation.

Birth of Isaac, the Child of Promise

The time was at hand for the appearing of the one in whose life would be illustrated the nature of divine Sonship, the one who would be the exemplar of the second aspect of the Trinity, the one who, for all time, would be known as *the child of promise*. This child was born to Sarah at the time the holy messengers of the Trinity had promised. Let us turn to the Bible and read of this great spiritual event:

And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, which Sarah bare him, Isaac.

And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. — Gen.21:1-3,5,6.

Those who had ears to hear might have heard the herald angels announcing the birth of this child. By the power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, a great nation had been born — a nation born to

inherit the blessing of the Covenant of Godlikeness, a nation which was to be cherished by the love of the heavenly Father-Mother, a nation chosen of God through whom the omnipotent power of *Elohim*, the triune divine Principle of the universe, would be revealed to the world for all time to come, and through which the scientific relationship between God and men would be made plain to humanity. This was the birth of a nation in which the Spirit of God would move with such force that all the world would know that Omnipotence was at work in them to accomplish the divine purpose on earth as it is in heaven.

Only Abraham and Sarah knew that the birth of this child was the fulfillment of the New Covenant promise — that Isaac was *the child of promise*, the human appearing of the seed in whom all nations of the world would be blessed.

Intrusion of the Old Covenant

And then, as though to deny the holiness of the event we read:

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.—

Gen.21:4.

Abraham had not yet learned the simple truth, voiced by the Apostle Paul, that

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.— 1 Cor.7:19.

The persistent adherence to circumcision as a religious rite instead of as a simple sanitary method did nothing to forward Abraham's spiritual unfoldment. He could not have foreseen that this practice, which apparently originated as a pagan religious rite among the priests of Egypt in ancient times, would have developed into a fetish in years to come, and that his people who practiced it would have thought more of this so-called *token* of the Covenant than they did of the *conditions* of the Covenant, which demanded Godlikeness and spiritual perfection of the people if they were to inherit the blessings of the Covenant.

Isaac's name means laughter — joy expressed. And this child was a joy to Abraham and Sarah, who had waited long for God's promise to be fulfilled in them. Joy, not alone because Isaac was their beloved son, but joy in the power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, which had ushered the child of promise into human presence.

And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.— Gen.21:8.

In that age a child was weaned at about the age of three years. The feast was the customary family feast on the occasion of weaning a child — an occasion of a special celebration when the child was the first-born son. There was great rejoicing in that household. There was also great rejoicing in the large company of servants and herdsmen, together with those trained to bear arms, over whom Abraham exercised both spiritual and material oversight. But the rejoicing was dulled.

The Child of the Flesh Mocked the Child of Promise

Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.— Gen.21:9.

The child of Hagar, the bondwoman mocked the child of Sarah, the freewoman. The child of the flesh ridiculed the idea of divine sonship. But remember: "These things are an allegory" — the description of one thing under the image of another, portraying the way in which the Old Covenant of materialism belittles the New Covenant of spirituality, and treats with contempt our growing spiritual endeavors and accomplishments. (See Gal.4:22-26.)

Sarah knew the promises concerning Isaac. The idea of divine Sonship, in whom all nations of the earth would be blessed, was too precious to be mocked by a sensuous sense of manhood. Ishmael, through Hagar the Egyptian, was a descendant of Ham, the evil son of Noah. In the allegorical meaning of this record, Ishmael mocked Isaac and the divine nature which he had come to

express as Ham had mocked Noah and the righteousness and grace he expressed.

Hagar and Ishmael Banished from Abraham's Household

Sarah saw that this condition could not be tolerated:

Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.— Gen.21:10.

Sarah's action in demanding that Hagar and her son be sent away, though apparently severe, was divinely just, for she knew that nothing could stand beside her son that would mock or belittle his spiritual status and his divine mission. There could be nothing within his home environment that would act as a counteracting influence to hinder the spiritual unfoldment of the child of promise. That which mocked Isaac mocked the Covenant of God with man and belittled or scorned the understanding of the scientific relationship between God and man, which had come to Abraham and Sarah and which was exemplified in the birth of Isaac.

Abraham loved Ishmael, his son by the bondwoman. But Ishmael exhibited the same rebellious nature his mother expressed. Both Hagar and Ishmael were as alien to Abraham's household as Lot had been. Neither seemed to have any comprehension of the New Covenant and its spiritual demands. Ishmael was seventeen years of age at this time, yet he seemed not to have embraced any of the godliness his father expressed so abundantly. Ishmael's consciousness was so darkened by selfwill and self-exaltation that he was unresponsive to the spiritual influence which motivated Abraham's every thought and act. However, the idea of parting with Ishmael was grievous to Abraham. He turned to God for the answer:

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.



And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.— Gen.21:12,13.

The word of God to Abraham confirmed the divine justice of Sarah's action. And Abraham's humility before God, and his instant obedience to the divine command lifted his thought to behold God's all-encompassing nature as divine Mother Love, who cares for all Her children, wherever they may be.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.— Gen.21:14.

Hagar had not been sent out into a part of the world which she knew not. Abraham had dug seven wells in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. And it was here that he had pasture for his great herds of cattle, sheep, and camels. Nor had Hagar been sent away from God. The words of the Bible reveal clearly that God's presence was with her, though she knew it not.

And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.— Gen.21:15-19.

For the first time Hagar, the arrogant Egyptian bondwoman, expressed an emotion akin to humility; and immediately an angel of God, an idea of God's presence, came to her consciousness and spoke to her: "What aileth thee, Hagar? What's the matter with you? Open your eyes and see what God has prepared for you. Your resentment and despair have blinded you to the good that is before

your eyes. You are perishing from thirst, and yet there is a well of water beside you. Rouse yourself from self-pity and you will see that God is with you. Fear not: for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."

God heard Ishmael's voice *where he was*, not where he wanted to be. Ishmael had mocked — disbelieved and ridiculed — the idea of divine Sonship which Isaac represented. Therefore, it was impossible for him to receive the blessing of the Son of God, for the level of his belief determined the measure of his receptivity. The divine blessing is never withheld by God, for God's blessing is infinite, limitless. But the door of one's own receptivity must be opened wide in order to receive the full flow of God's blessing. Ishmael's thought was darkened by materialism, and his receptivity to the things of Spirit was thereby limited. But God blessed him where he was — as the point of his receptivity.

And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.—

Gen.21:20,21.

God's promise to Abraham for Ishmael was fulfilled:

As for Ishmael, . . . Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall be beget, and I will make him a great nation.— Gen.17:20.

Ishmael received his inheritance, and it was as large, materially, as was Isaac's. His was not the heritage of spiritual dominion which Isaac received, but it was an inheritance which Ishmael could understand. Hagar "took him a wife out of the land of Egypt," from whence she had come. And Ishmael fathered twelve sons and a daughter, Mahalath (Bashemath) who, many years later, married Isaac's son, Esau (Gen.28:9; 36:3).

Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:

And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations; the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,
Hadar, and Tema, Jerur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.

And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty seven years; and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.—

Gen.25:12-18.

Ishmael's descendants dwelt in the desert of northern Arabia. And many of them still dwell there. They were a nomadic people. Like Ishmael, they were celebrated for their skill with bow and arrow. The statement that they lived in towns and in castles is more properly translated villages and encampments. So far as can be determined, only the Nabateans established permanent residence. But mostly they perpetuated the inherent nature of Ishmael, who dwelt in the desert, "a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him" (Gen.16:12, RSV). True to God's word, the Ishmaelites, known today as Arabs, became a great nation.

Abraham's Covenant of Peace with Abimelech

Abraham continued to live in the south country for many years after the birth of Isaac. He pitched his great tents in the region of Beer-Sheba and there sprang up about him a veritable city. His large herds of sheep and cattle found good pasturage in the land, and wherever they roamed Abraham dug wells to keep his flock well watered. There was peace within his gates because there was peace within his heart. This unique man had become known as a mighty prince among men and Abimelech soon recognized that Abraham had it within himself to exert great power. Therefore the king sought to make a treaty of peace with him.

And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest:

Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

And Abraham said, I will swear.— Gen.21:22-24.

We do not know whether the following incident took place before, after, or during the meeting of Abimelech and Abraham. That it was a current matter is indicated in the fact that there is no break in the record:

And Abraham reproved [complained to] Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.

And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but today.

And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them to Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant.

And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

And Abimelech said unto Abraham, what mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?

And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.

Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them.

Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phicol the chief captain of his host, and they returned unto the land of the Philistines— Gen.21:25-32.

In this record we see the spiritual authority which Abraham expressed at all times. He was loving but firm in defending his rights, but he did so in such a way that he kept the friendship and respect of those in the land in which he dwelt. Having made a Covenant with God, it was natural that he also made a covenant of peace with man. His harmonious relationship with God was reflected in his harmonious relationship with all men. His outward experiences manifested his inner peace — peace not only with God and man, but also peace with his environment, peace with everything in God's universe.

Chapter XXIV

ABRAHAM'S GREATEST TRIAL OF FAITH

And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the ever-lasting God.— Gen.21:33.

“The everlasting God” is *'el 'alam*, literally translated *The Ever-Living Eternal God*. This is a new understanding of the nature of Deity revealed to Abraham. Each successive stage of Abraham's unfoldment has been preceded and accompanied by some new revelation of the nature of the Infinite. Revelation is not ecstatic, illusory, theoretical, or abstract. Hence, as each new view of the divine nature has come to light in his consciousness, Abraham has been called upon to prove, or demonstrate, the power of the new unfoldment in his own life.

It should not be surprising then to discover that Abraham was soon forced to prove his understanding of the nature of God as *Ever-living*. He received a message from God which he did not read aright. And it was his absolute faith in God as The Ever-living Eternal Life, or The Everlasting God, which preserved his soul and saved the life of his beloved son.

Sacrifice Isaac! Misinterpretation of God's Command

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee unto the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the

burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

And on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.— Gen.22:1-6.

Authorities differ as to Isaac's age at this time. Some suggest he was a lad of 14, others 18, and *Josephus* declares he was 25 years of age. Since a boy was not considered to be a man until he reached the age of 30, he might have been any of these ages and still called a *lad*. We have heard nothing of the child of promise since he was an infant, indicative of the fact that he had been living in the shadow of Abraham's greatness. We hear of him now in one of the most dramatic incidents recorded in the Bible.

This was truly a testing time for both Abraham and Isaac. For Isaac, it was the first great spiritual demand to be made upon him. For Abraham, it was the last and the greatest test of his faith in God. Throughout Abraham's many experiences, each time he was ready to take a momentous spiritual step forward in the establishment of the New Covenant, the Covenant of Godlikeness, there had been persistent attempts of the tempter to confuse him and to superimpose the conditions of the Old Covenant upon the imagery of his thought. Prior to this, when the serpent had attempted to insinuate its suggestions into the divine message and scramble the Word of God, it had been subtle. But now, with diabolical cleverness, it projects itself into Abraham's thinking, causing him to attribute to God a directive completely unlike God — the human sacrifice of his son — a suggestion which God, divine Love, could not possibly have conceived.

God had called Abraham to go to the land of Moriah, in which is Salem, or Jeru-salem, Melchizedek's city, to a certain mountain there — Mount Moriah — typical of the New Jerusalem. On this mount, in centuries to come, Solomon built the great temple and all Israel came there to worship God (Chron.3:1; *Dummelow*, p.30). This is the place where Abraham came at God's command to build an altar — not to worship God, but to sacrifice his beloved son, in

the mistaken belief that this was God's will. This was *not* God's will. But because the written word records Abraham's concept of the experience, that is what we hear.

Symbolically, Abraham had been called to go up higher in the understanding of Isaac's place in the Covenant. In Abraham's spiritual unfoldment his journey from Beer-sheba to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem was a divine demand that he seek again the understanding of God revealed to him through his association with Melchizedek, who was king of Salem — Jerusalem — and priest of the Most High God. Recall that Melchizedek is a prototype of the Christ. And in the unfolding of the Trinity, in which the triune nature of the Infinite was revealed to Abraham, Melchizedek represented to Abraham the idea of divine Sonship, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God" (Heb.7:3). It was necessary that Abraham regain the concept of the Son of God which had been revealed to him. Hence his return to the land of Moriah in which is Salem — typical of the New Jerusalem — and to the elevation of thought God called *Mount Moriah*.

Here, in the mountain of divine revelation, God demanded that Abraham sacrifice, or give up, a material concept of sonship and release Isaac from the binding influence of human fatherhood which held the growing lad in the bonds of childhood. Abraham must sacrifice this sense of a human father-son relationship, however precious it was to him, and let Isaac expand and grow in spiritual understanding and individuality and find his place in the Covenant. God was demanding of Abraham that he let Isaac come into the same scientific sense of man's relationship with God which Abraham had found in his own spiritual unfoldment.

But even while the word of wisdom was telling Abraham that he must stop binding Isaac and must sacrifice a material sense of his son, the dread word *sacrifice* took on the meaning of the land, for the Canaanites were notorious for their child sacrifices. In every temptation which had come to Abraham, it had been some custom of the land, some common consent, some general belief, which had been the pivot, or axis, on which his thought had turned to take in what the tempter had been suggesting. So, instead of hearing the full import of the message from God, which told him to go to the mountain of divine revelation and take Isaac with him to learn

what he had learned there, Abraham heard *the voice of the land*, with *its* materialistic interpretation of the word *sacrifice*.

Though the veil of occultism hung about him like a mist, obscuring the spiritual sense of the divine message, yet he plodded on up the mountain in blind faith, obedient to his highest concept of what God had said to him. Through it all his faith in his God never faltered. But the mist of material reasoning was dark within him.

But what of Isaac? What was he thinking during Abraham's night of agony? He was ever the obedient and loving son. His faith in his father was as great as Abraham's faith in God. Only once did he question Abraham:

Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.— Gen.22:7,8.

Did Abraham at that moment catch a glimpse of the Christ-idea, the Lamb of God, through which we learn that every sacrifice of a material sense of life leads us to a higher understanding of divine Life, which is eternal? The record continues:

So they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.— Gen.22:8-10.

Abraham built an altar and laid the wood *in order* upon the altar. Even at a moment such as this Abraham's well-ordered sense disciplined his hand. His human sense of order was a link to the divine order that was never disturbed. Still obedient to what he believed to be God's will, he bound Isaac and laid him upon the altar. Then, stretching forth his hand, Abraham took the knife to slay his son. And Isaac, with complete confidence in his father, submitted to this preparation for sacrifice! Can you picture this scene? A loving father, who would have given his very life for his son, about to offer his beloved child as a burnt offering to a God of Love who gives life to all! What a fantasy! What a mockery of God's will!

The Angel Of The Lord Stayed His Hand

Even as Abraham raised the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord stayed his hand: "Abraham! Abraham!" There was urgency in the call:

Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.—Gen.22:12.

What was this angel that spoke to Abraham? It was God's own thought which had gained such ascendancy in his consciousness that it overshadowed and embraced his human thought. This angel thought of God's presence broke the mesmeric spell under which Abraham had been struggling and awakened him to see the real meaning of God's message. A scientific sense, a divinely logical sense, from the *Logos*, the Word of God, shined through the mist. This logical scientific sense told Abraham that action which was not in accord with the nature of God was not directed by God. It told him that all he needed to sacrifice was a mortal, material, possessive concept of his son. Abraham learned that giving his son's life to God did not mean sacrificing him as a burnt offering, but dedicating his life to the fulfillment of the Trinity as the exemplar of divine Sonship. The time had come for Isaac to find his place in the Covenant — to know God as his Father and not to look to Abraham as his highest authority.

But let us return for a moment to the text, for there is another vital message in it for us. After God's angel thought had taken possession of his consciousness, "Abraham lifted up his eyes." His spiritual perceptive faculties were awakened, his vision was spiritualized, lifted up above the evidence immediately before his eyes, and he saw a holier concept of God which requires no sacrifice of good as evidence of faith and love:

And behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.— Gen.22:13.

God had provided Himself a lamb for a burnt offering! From ancient times the male lamb, or ram, has been the figure of sacrifice

for atonement. Symbolically, the lamb was supposed to symbolize the worshipper himself, sacrificing his material life for the divine, giving up a material sense of existence for the spiritual. Christ Jesus was called *the Lamb of God* because he laid down his material life that he might give to the world the proof of immortal life in his Resurrection.

Ancient records reveal that the figure of the ram as a symbol or crest, was significant of highest authority, and its use was reserved for royalty. Among pagan religions the ram was used as a sacrificial animal whose life was sacrificed that an individual's life might be preserved, or made immortal. In recent archaeological excavations at Ur in Old Chaldea (modern Iraq), there was found a tomb of a queen who was buried some fifteen hundred years before Abraham was born. The funeral bed of the queen was made of gold with four gold posts, one at each corner. Each of these golden pilasters was carved in the figure of a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. (See Dr. C Leonard Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, pp.67-68, Plate VI.)

Abraham could not have been unaware of this symbol and its meaning, for he was one of the most learned men of his day. Hence, the appearance of a ram caught in a thicket by his horns must have had great significance for him. In the metaphor of the story, the appearance of this figure revealed to Abraham and indicates to us that Abraham had glimpsed the true meaning of the nature of *The Everlasting God — The ever-Living Eternal Life* — who gives eternal Life to man, His image and likeness. This incident also tells us that Abraham had come into the understanding of the divine royalty of his being, for only a prince or a priest could sacrifice a ram. Thus Abraham showed forth some comprehension of the compound nature of spiritual man as both priest of God and king on the earth, the human and divine coincidence, of which Melchizedek was the type. Further, Abraham showed that he was willing to sacrifice a material sense of life for the immortal idea of being.

With deep spiritual insight, the great writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote of Abraham's momentous testing time:

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.— Heb.11:17-19.

Moffatt's translation of the last verse sheds much light:

... for he considered that God was able to raise man from the dead. Hence he did get him back, by what was a parable of the resurrection.— Heb.11:19 (JM).

Some elements of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension may be glimpsed in this experience: Abraham's anguish over the prospective loss of his son, his joy at receiving Isaac as though raised from the dead, and the realization that he must ascend still higher in his understanding of God and man.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.— Gen.22:14.

The Zenith Of Abraham's Spiritual Unfoldment

This period in Abraham's spiritual journeying in his divine adventure brought to him a new understanding of God as *Jehovah-jireh* — *The Revealing Lord*. Literally translated this name for Deity means: *God sees*; but it also means *God-vision*. In the mount of revelation the vision of *Elohim* becomes the vision of man — scientific thought which sees above and beyond the evidence of the physical senses; vision that can never be dimmed, obscured, confused, mistaken, fooled, mesmerized; vision which penetrates and dissolves the mist of materialism and beholds the spiritual realities of God's creation on earth as it is in heaven. This is the vision of the spiritual seer, the prophet, who sees creation as God sees it, who sees God's children as God sees them, who sees Godlikeness everywhere.

God's revelation to Abraham on Mount Moriah of His name and nature as *Jehovah-jireh* proclaims the fact that Abraham was indeed a *prophet* — one whose heart is so close to God that *he sees as God sees*.

Jehovah-jireh is the symbolical name for the mount of Moriah and is typical of the height of Abraham's understanding of God and the *zenith* of his spiritual unfoldment. *His Covenant with God had come to its communion.* God's promise rings anew in his ears:

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.—

Gen.22:15-18.

Once more the *I AM* pronounces the divine will: "*I WILL* bless thee . . . *I WILL* multiply thee . . . In thy seed *SHALL* all the nations of the earth be blessed." This is the last record we have of the *I AM* speaking to Abraham "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex.33:11). After this, the divine voice became to him the inner voice, the "I" of his own being, which speaks with divine authority.

In the New Covenant, or New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote thus of the seed of Abraham: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.3:29). They who worship the God of Abraham and acknowledge His Christ, these are the seed of Abraham. The seed is not of blood, but of faith, as the Apostle further declared: "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal.3:9). And *in these* shall all nations of the world be blessed.

Again the intent of the serpent to destroy the seed of the woman has been foiled and the child of promise, the new messenger of the Covenant, is made ready for his great mission — the exemplification of divine Sonship in the unfolding of the Trinity.

Abraham and Isaac returned to Beer-sheba, where Isaac grew to maturity. After some time, we know not how long, Abraham and Sarah returned to Hebron, their city of the Covenant, after having established Isaac in his city. They had come full circle in

their understanding and demonstration of the divine completeness.

On their return to their city we note a wonderful change which has taken place. They now call Hebron by its original name — *Kirjath-arba*, a Hebrew name meaning *city of four* (Gen.23:2). Metaphorically this name is typical of the nature of their foursquare city, their consciousness of the spiritual dimension in which they abode — the consciousness of holiness, or spiritual wholeness, so beautifully described by St. John as “the city which lieth foursquare and cometh down from God out of heaven” (Rev.21:2,16). The Genesis of their understanding had unfolded to include the Revelation of their divine completeness.

The conditions of the Covenant of Godlikeness — of spiritual perfection: *Walk before me and be thou perfect* — had been fulfilled. Abraham and Sarah had been true to the trust invested in them. They expressed the nature of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God, the compound nature of *Elohim*, and thus exemplified the first aspect, or statement, of the Trinity: *God, the Father-Mother*. Upon their life-work was stamped the seal of divine approval: “And God saw that it was good.” Their Sabbath Rest had come!

Chapter XXV

S A R A H

Mother Of Nations

The Almighty God chose Sarah through whom to reveal to the world the nature of the Almighty Motherhood of God and to exemplify the power of divine conception in bringing forth the child of promise. Throughout her human life Sarah had demonstrated in some measure the dominion of spiritual womanhood. Recall that her name was *Sarai*, a Hebrew name meaning *princess, noble lady*. Metaphorically, this name reveals something of her nature. She had glimpsed her divine royalty and spiritual ascendancy. She demonstrated her God-given dominion in a world dominated by mortal men — a world in which woman was subordinate to father, husband, son, or to any male member of her family. But even the lovely name *Sarai* did not describe her divine nature.

The Almighty revealed to Abraham and to Sarai her new name *Sarah, Mother of Nations*, a name and nature indicative of her expression of the Motherhood of God. This revelation gave her power to conceive of her divinely royal status as the daughter of God, having spiritual dominion on earth. Further, this new name, or divine nature, gave her divine power to conceive and to bring forth the child of promise, “whose birth depended not on the course of nature nor on any impulse or plan of man, but on God” (John 1:13, NEB).

In Abraham’s story we learned that he had gained some understanding of the nature of the Fatherhood of God, indicated in the meaning of his new name *Abraham* — *father of a multitude of nations*. But not until he understood the nature of God as *El Shaddi, The Almighty*, the Mighty Motherhood of God, who performs all things for Her children, could Abraham fulfill the conditions of the New Covenant: “Walk before me (the Almighty) and be thou perfect.” Walk in the Spirit, in the way of holiness, ever mindful of the divine presence and of the spiritual nature of God’s universe! Be perfect! Be Godlike! Express spiritual maturity, the

compound nature of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God, and thus have dominion over all the earth!

At first Abraham had thought God made His Covenant with him alone. This beloved man was slow in comprehending the reason he and Sarah were joint tenants in the Covenant. The Covenant with *Elohim* must be made with husband and wife, exemplifying the oneness of the male and female of God's creating, expressing the Fatherhood and Motherhood of *Elohim*. When Abraham still seemed unable to comprehend this fundamental spiritual fact, the tender Motherhood of God, *El Shaddi*, the Almighty Mother, literally thundered: *Sarah! Sarah! Sarah is the key figure in the Covenant!* Three times God had spoken to Abraham declaring: "Sarah shall bear a son, and I will make my Covenant with him." But Abraham could not believe that Sarah, who was barren and old, could conceive and give birth (Gen.17:16,19,21).

But the time was at hand for the Covenant to be ratified. And The Almighty sent a message to Sarah by three divine messengers, typical of the Trinity, to make plain to both Sarah and Abraham the power of the Almighty to accomplish the divine purpose. They appeared to Abraham as he sat in the open tent door of his home, and he received them graciously — he was receptive to their message. But what they had to say concerned Sarah. Being assured that Sarah was listening, the voice of the Trinity spoke:

I will certainly return unto thee, according to the
time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a
son.— Gen.18:10.

The "I" which spoke to Abraham and Sarah was the Holy Spirit, the *I AM* appearing in its Interpretive aspect, to make plain to their receptive thought the message of the Trinity — the *I AM* who speaks and creation comes to light. Sarah was incredulous. But the divine messenger exclaimed: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen.18:14).

Sarah received the divine message with joy. Abraham also believed. The power of God's Motherhood to perform all things for Her people had dawned in their consciousness. The Spirit of God had moved upon the face of the waters.

When Abraham and Sarah listened *together* to the voice of the Trinity, this togetherness acted as a spiritual force which dispelled the disbelief which had delayed the fulfillment of God's promise that a son would indeed be born of Sarah, not by the will of the flesh, but by the will of God. At last they understood that when the *I AM* said *I WILL*, the law of fulfillment was inscribed in the divine mandate.

The Covenant had come to its communion: Abraham and Sarah, now comprehending in some measure the nature and power of the Fatherhood *and* Motherhood of God, became exemplars of this compound divine nature and thus became joint tenants in the Covenant. And in fulness of time, Sarah did indeed bring forth a son, the child of promise, born by promise of God, and not by laws of nature. And in Isaac, her son, all nations of the world have been blessed.

The birth of the child of promise did not bring joy to all of Abraham's household. Both Hagar and Ishmael were rebellious because the son of the wife took precedence over the son of the bondmaid. Ishmael despised Isaac and "mocked" the idea of divine sonship. It was mandatory that a separation be made between Sarah's son and Hagar's son.

This separation has been discussed in the context of Abraham's story. Now let us see it through the eyes, or spiritual discernment, of the Apostle Paul:

It is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar (Hagar).

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuteth him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.— Gal.4:22-26, 28-31; 5:1.

Paul's words do not imply that the allegory of Sarah and Hagar is unhistorical myth. He points to the spiritual meaning of the text. A commentary in the *Interpreter's Bible* sheds light on the Apostle's words:

The Jerusalem which now is was a most unholy "Holy City," full of injustice, violence, and murder, and subject to the cruel and wicked rulers imposed by a Gentile empire. But over against this Jerusalem of slavery lay an ideal celestial city, unseen at present, but destined soon to supersede it. Paul called it the Jerusalem above. Sarah, the freewoman was the ancestress of its citizens, who were the people of faith and of freedom in Christ. (*IB*, Vol.10, Expos. pp.540-541.)

The power of God's Motherhood is revealed in this allegory — the power of the divine Mother-nature in each one of us which performs the miracle of grace for Her children — power revealed in Sarah's conception of Isaac. This allegory — this description of one thing under the image of another — when understood, enables us to conceive the spiritual fact that now are we the sons and daughters of God, free from the binding conditions of the Old Covenant of materialism, free to do the will of God, free to be partakers of the blessings of the Covenant of Godlikeness, free to be kings and priests unto God, having the dominion of heaven on earth. This freedom is the heritage of all who acknowledge that God is not only the Father of man and the universe, but also the Mother of all.

Although the figures of Hagar and Ishmael are used to portray the Old Covenant and Sarah and Isaac the New Covenant, it is not correct to assume that all of Hagar's descendants are bound by the Old Covenant and that all of Sarah's offspring are enfolded within the New Covenant. These things are an allegory, and it is as an allegory they must always be considered.

The children of the bondwoman (Hagar) are typical of the children of the flesh — in doubt of God's way. These walk in the way of Adam and inherit Adam's unholy legacy of bondage to materialism in all its forms. The children of the freewoman (Sarah) are typical of those who have been new-born of Spirit, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, transformed by the renewing of their minds. These walk in the way of holiness and inherit the blessings of the New Covenant — freedom from the bondage of materialism, having the dominion of heaven on earth.

Actually the children of the bondwoman and the children of the freewoman are not particular people — either individuals or nations. They are characteristics, qualities of thought, idiosyncrasies of disposition, which all people of the world embody and express at various times and in various degrees.

What does this mean to us today? Even this: We strive to express the qualities of spiritual freedom typical of the son of the freewoman. But too often we seem to be the offspring of the bondwoman, with an inheritance of bondage, limitation, and fleshly cares which persecute and obstruct our spiritual instincts of liberty, freedom, joy, accomplishment, and dominion. Well might we ask: Is there no deliverance from this bondage, from this heritage of mortality?

What saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman
and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not
be heir with the son of the freewoman.— Gal.4:30.

St. Paul echoes this divine demand in words which enunciate the transforming power of the Spirit of God to born us anew:

Leaving your former way of life, you must lay aside
that old human nature which, deluded by its lusts, is
sinking towards death. You must be made new in
mind and spirit, and put on the new nature of God's
creating, which shows itself in the just and devout
life called for by the truth.— Eph.4:22-24 (NEB).

We can cast off the bondage of the Old Covenant that binds us to a material, sensuous concept of existence and holds us in the bonds of mortality. We can cast out the bondwoman and her son. We can put off the old man and the old mortal nature. And we can put on the new man and the new divine nature and be made new in mind

and body. Then we naturally walk in the Spirit, ever conscious of the spiritual nature of everyone and everything in the world. Thus we fulfill the conditions of the New Covenant and are the beneficiaries of its blessings.

The nature of God's Motherhood has been obscured throughout the ages. But through Sarah's exemplification of the power of God's Motherhood, some understanding of the nature of The Almighty God — the All-might of God's Motherhood and the Almighty power of spiritual conception — has been revealed to mankind. In the understanding of the Motherhood of God and of man's expression of this divine nature is power to conceive and to bring forth the unseen spiritual verities of God's creation and power to conceive the wondrous fact that now are we the sons and daughters of God.

Few of us acknowledge the unique place Sarah holds in Biblical history. Few of us give her the honor due her exemplification of the Almighty power of God's Motherhood. Few of us realize her place in the Covenant.

The New Covenant, with its provisions and its promises, was made with Abraham. But it was made by *El Shaddi*, The Almighty Mother-God. And Sarah was and is the key figure, yea the key-note, in God's Covenant with man — the New Covenant of Godlikeness, of divine completeness, which gives us the dominion of heaven on earth.

Edith Deen wrote of Sarah, Abraham's beloved wife, thus:

Sarah was a princess in bearing and character, as her name signifies. . . .

Sarah's life became Abraham's. Where he went she went, not as his shadow but as a strong influence. . . . The beautiful confidence and true affection existing between Sarah and Abraham are reflected in the authority she had over their household during his absence. He recognized her as his equal. She never subjected herself to a lesser role, and Abraham never demanded it. . . . The intensity of their union deepened and became like a mighty force that nothing, not even Hagar, a secondary wife and mother of Abraham's first child, Ishmael, could diminish. Sarah surely had developed great faith or she could not have become the mother in the Bible's first story of a miracle birth.— (Edith Deen, *All the Women of the Bible*, pp.9-13.)

And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old; these were the years of the life of Sarah.

And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.— Gen.23:1,2.

Sarah, Abraham's beloved, is gone. But her mission in life was fulfilled. She lives in our hearts and minds as the mother of the child of promise who was born by promise of God and not by laws of nature. She is remembered as the one who was found worthy to prefigure the Virgin Mary's divine conception of Jesus, "who was born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

We glimpse something of the respectful attitude of the people of the land toward Abraham when he asked that he might buy the field, the cave that was therein, and all the trees that were in the field as a burying place for his beloved. They said:

Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sephulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sephulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.— Gen.23:6.

But Abraham wanted the plot of land near his home. He asked that a sum of money be named. Although the price Ephron the Hittite declared the land was worth was far in excess of its value, Abraham made no attempt to bargain with him. In the presence of witnesses he paid the full price, thus making sure his title to "the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about. And there he buried Sarah his wife" (Gen.23:1-20).

It is significant that the only property Abraham owned was the field of Ephron in Hebron, the city of the Covenant. In Hebron he and Sarah had reached their pinnacle of spiritual unfoldment. Here their Covenant with God came to its communion in the understanding of the nature of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of *Elohim*, God, which they exemplified. It is natural that Abraham should have buried his beloved in Hebron, as though in so doing he knew that she still lived in God's spiritual universe, of which their city of the Covenant was the symbol.

Chapter XXVI

THE QUEST FOR A WIFE FOR ISAAC

Abraham and Sarah, expressing the Fatherhood and Motherhood of *Elohim*, had ushered Isaac into his Covenant relationship with God and prepared him for his great mission — that of exemplifying the nature of the Son of God, the second aspect of the Trinity. However, Abraham had one more vitally important task to perform for Isaac before the child of promise was ready to embark on his divine adventure.

Isaac must learn more of his divine completeness in order that he properly exemplify his place in the Covenant of Godlikeness. In years to come each individual would find divine completeness through expressing the qualities of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of *Elohim*. But the unfoldment of the Trinity demanded that Abraham find a wife for Sarah's son who would be a true helpmeet in exemplifying the compound nature of the Son of God.

The task before Abraham was not an easy one. The womanhood of the land of Canaan embodied none of the spiritual qualities that would have qualified any one of them for marriage with the new representative of the Covenant. Isaac must have a wife who would be to him what Sarah had been to Abraham — a spiritual partner who would stand side by side with him in establishing the Covenant, having co-equal responsibility for upholding its provisions. She must be chosen prayerfully.

The future of the race, the history of the people of God, and the unfoldment of the knowledge of God and of the Son of God depended largely upon the wife chosen for Isaac. Abraham knew this. He had learned that the deep discernment and spiritual intuition of the Motherhood of God, reflected by righteous womanhood, cut through occult influences in mortal thought. Abraham had reason to know that woman's intuition and spiritual vision quickly see through the veil of matter and material circumstances to the unfoldment of divine purpose. She is more apt

to see in the events before her the *seed* of God's purpose and to know how important it is that the seed be preserved so that its fruitage may appear in due time, and that it may grow and multiply and fill the earth.

Abraham's deep human love for his first-born son would have caused him to give to Ishmael the blessing of the child of promise. But Sarah saw that the blessing of God must go to the son chosen of God, and that no matter how humanly unjust such action might seem to be, "the son of the bondwoman cannot be heir with the son of the freewoman." Abraham had come to trust Sarah's vision and intuition. And he knew that Isaac needed such a wife as Sarah had been to him.

His thought turned instinctively to his brother Nahor, who, with his large family, lived in Padan-aram — the land into which Abraham and his father and family had gone when they migrated from Chaldea. Abraham had learned that Nahor's wife had born him eight sons, and that one of these sons had begotten a daughter whose name was Rebekah (Gen.22:20-23). Spiritual intuition told Abraham that the search for a wife for his son would begin and end in his brother's house. He quickly put thought into action:

Eliezer Abraham's Faithful Steward

And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.

The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I

give this land; he shall send his angel with thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.— Gen.24:2-9.

Abraham had been wise never to return to Chaldea — the land of organized occultism, idolatry, necromancy, and the like. He was equally wise in refusing to permit Isaac to leave Canaan and go where his pure mind might become adulterated and enslaved by the influences of the highly developed powers of the carnal mind. Even in Padan-aram, the powerful occult influence of the carnal mind was felt. This area was a kind of crossroads of mortal thought through which travellers from Chaldea, Babylon, Egypt, and all parts of the civilized world passed. The great trade route of the Fertile Crescent from Chaldea to Egypt arched through Padan-aram. Here merchants not only sold their goods but also exchanged news of their respective worlds. Abraham knew that it was not knowledge of the world but knowledge of God which Isaac needed to prepare him for his great mission as heir of the Covenant of Godlikeness.

“The eldest servant that ruled over all that he had,” was Eliezer of Damascus, who had been Abraham’s chief steward since he first came into the land of Canaan (Gen.15:2). It is evident, from subsequent events, that Abraham had instructed Eliezer in the things of Spirit. This trusted servant prepared for his journey carefully and prayerfully. He took costly presents of gold, silver, and raiment for Rebekah and her family. But most important of all, he took with him a spiritual sense of his mission. He realized the deep significance Abraham placed on finding the proper wife for his son. And he was mindful of the complete trust Abraham accorded him in this undertaking. But let us turn to the Bible and read one of the most precious stories in all scripture: The quest for a wife for Isaac by Abraham’s trusted servant:

And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.— Gen.24:10.

When, with his small caravan of camels and camel drivers bearing costly presents, Eliezer came to the outskirts of the city of Haran,

He made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.— Gen.24:11.

And then this faithful servant of Abraham prayed:

And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

Behold, I stand here by the well of water; the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.— Gen.24:12-14.

Immediately his prayer was answered:

It came to pass, before he had done speaking, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcar, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him to drink.

And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.— Gen.24:15-21.

The events followed exactly the pattern of his prayer. He was convinced that the Lord had made his journey prosperous. So much so that when Rebekah identified herself as the daughter of Bethuel, he gave her "a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold." He then asked her if there was room in her father's house for him and also both straw and provender for his camels (Gen.24:22-25).

And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord.

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.

And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things.— Gen.24:26-28.

Abraham had foreseen that the same God who had led him out of Chaldea into his promised land would send His angel, His holy thoughts, to accompany this faithful servant on his journey and lead him in the right way. And so it was that this righteous man was ever conscious of God's presence with him, guiding and guarding. Faithfulness, humility, consecration, gentleness, trust in God's guidance — Godlike qualities which this servant possessed and expressed — reveal the fact that Abraham had taught his servants to love and honor the God he worshipped. They also show us why Abraham had given all things he possessed into the hand of his chief steward, and why he had entrusted to him the vitally important mission of finding a wife for Isaac.

And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban:

And Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.—

Gen.24:29,30.

Laban's hospitality was based entirely on the evidence of wealth that Abraham's servant had brought with him. With feigned graciousness he said:

Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.

And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.— Gen.24:31-33.

Eliezer identified himself as Abraham's servant and told of his mission:

The Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels and asses.

And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.—

Gen.24:35-41.

Eliezer then told Rebekah's family of his prayer that he would be guided aright and of his meeting with Rebekah. He begged that they would give Rebekah as a wife to Isaac (Gen.24:42-49). And Laban, Rebekah's brother, and her mother said:

The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth.

And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.—
Gen.24:50,57,58.

The Betrothal of Isaac and Rebekah

The servant then gave to Rebekah and to her mother and brother the presents which he had brought, jewels of gold and of silver, and raiment, and many precious things. After they had tarried all night, Abraham's servant asked that they depart immediately. And although Rebekah's mother and brother sought to delay their departure for a time, they consented when Rebekah agreed to go.

And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels and followed the men: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.—

Gen.24:59-61.

Rebekah was thus married to Isaac by proxy through a verbal contract or betrothal. No other ceremony was required to make the marriage binding. So Rebekah left her home in Haran to go into the land of Canaan to Beer-sheba to become Isaac's wife. Through the marriage covenant she became an integral part of the New Covenant with Isaac — the same Covenant which God had made with Abraham and Sarah, the same conditions prevailing: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." Live ever mindful of the divine presence and be fruitful in expressing the divine nature.

At journey's end we find Isaac going out to meet the caravan:

And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide.— Gen.24:62,63.

The child of promise was entering a new era in his unfoldment. We do not know what his meditation revealed to him. But the fact

that he paused to meditate by *the Well of the Living One of Vision* (NEB) before going to meet this bride indicates that he felt the need for communing with God, of prayerfully listening for a message, a vision, that would tell him that this marriage was a part of God's divine plan for him. Perhaps he was remembering vital truths concerning the spiritual Marriage Covenant which his father and mother exemplified so faithfully. Perhaps too, in his sacred meditation he saw a vision of divine Love that governs the true Marriage Covenant. For he went forward to meet Rebekah, satisfied that she was the wife chosen of God to go hand in hand with him in the unfolding of the New Covenant.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.

And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.

And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. — Gen.24:63-67.

He loved her! Thus began a marriage unique in Oriental life, for Rebekah was the only wife of Isaac. It was a marriage fit for the child of promise. And Rebekah was a daughter worthy of Abraham and Sarah.

It is significant that Isaac brought Rebekah into Sarah's tent. This simple act tells us that Isaac recognized in Rebekah the same qualities of spiritual womanhood he had seen and loved in his mother. However this act tells us something of far greater significance: Isaac recognized that Rebekah inherited the blessing of the Covenant which *El Shaddi*, the Almighty God, had bestowed on Sarah — the blessed power of the Motherhood of *Elohim*. That Isaac still maintained his mother's tent long after Sarah, with Abraham, had left Beer-sheba and returned to Hebron, reveals the tender love of the child of promise for his mother, and a recognition of the spiritual wonder of Sarah's life, reflecting the All-might of God's Motherhood.

In arranging for Isaac's betrothal to Rebekah, Abraham had led Isaac into the marriage covenant in which he learned something of the divine completeness of which the marriage covenant is symbolic. Having fulfilled his duty, Abraham left Isaac to work out his own life under the direction of his Father-Mother God. And we hear no more of Abraham entering the unfoldment of the child of promise. Isaac's individual divine adventure had begun!

Chapter XXVII

ABRAHAM'S MARRIAGE TO KETURAH

Abraham's duty to Sarah's son, through whom all nations of the world would be blessed, had been completed. It was now his task to be active in the establishment of other nations whose history would intertwine with the history of the seed of Isaac. For, when bestowing his new name upon Abraham, The Almighty God had declared, "A father of many nations have I made thee" (Gen.17:5). In furtherance of this task he entered into a marriage covenant with Keturah (Gen.25:1). Although Keturah is referred to as a *concubine* in some Bible texts, the record states plainly that he thought of her as a legitimate wife. We read:

Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.— Gen.25:1.

This union brought forth six sons:

Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian; and Ishbak, and Shuah - Gen.25:2.

The genealogy of only two of these sons is given:

Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epner, and Hanoah, and Abidah, and Eldaah.— Gen.25:3,4.

A descendant of Midian, Jethro-Reuel, gave Moses sanctuary when he fled from the wrath of Pharaoh in Egypt about four hundred years after Abraham's sojourn on earth (Ex.2:16-21; 3:1). Abraham must have imparted some understanding of the Royal Priesthood of Melchizedek to his sons, Keturah's children. For Jethro bore Melchizedek's dual title: He was *prince of Midian and priest of the Most High God*. Recall that it was through Melchizedek that Abraham learned the nature of the Christ and

the dominion of the Christ indicated in the dual title *priest and king* (Gen.14:18-20, pp. 257-258).

And so it was that a descendant of Abraham and Keturah — Jethro-Reuel — protected the *seed of the woman*, Moses and the children of Israel, who were the progeny of Abraham and Sarah. Through Jethro, the Royal Priesthood of Melchizedek became Moses' tutor at Mount Horeb and in the wilderness of Sinai. Jethro also opened Moses' thought to the idea of giving his people laws to govern them, thus paving the way for the establishment of the first great commonwealth in the world. Jethro gave them refuge while they were growing into the recognition and understanding of their national status and their spiritual responsibility as the only nation of ancient times who walked in the high road of worship of the one God, and through whom the knowledge of God and of the Son of God could come in such abundant measure to the world.

Abraham's Legacy

The conclusion of Abraham's story in the Bible records what might be called his last will and testament:

And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

But unto the sons of the concubines [Hagar and Keturah] which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.— Gen.25:5,6.

Abraham gave to Isaac all that he had, not only all of his huge material estate, but also all that he had learned of the spiritual nature of God, man, and the universe. Isaac's inheritance was probably the finest, the grandest, the most wonderful heritage any son ever received from a human father. Abraham was a rich man — rich in the things of Spirit, rich in material wealth, rich in wisdom, rich in friends — rich in heaven and on earth. And all these riches were Isaac's.

And what of the sons of Hagar and Keturah? He gave them gifts. And knowing Abraham's love, generosity, and his wondrous sense of justice, we know that these gifts to his sons were appropriate and adequate to care for them abundantly when he sent them into the east country, where they founded nations.

The generations of Keturah's children and of Hagar's son Ishmael are recorded in Gen.25:1-4, 12-18. Some of the names of Keturah's children have been identified in Arabia as tribes. The Midianites (Midian) became a considerable nation, spreading over the country south and southeast of Palestine, from Moab to the Gulf of Akaba. The descendants of Ishmael settled generally in northern Arabia, and with the Joktanites (Gen.10:26) formed the great Arab race scattered over Syria and the shores of the Persian Gulf. (See *Dummelow*, pp.31-32 for other references to the descendants of Keturah and Hagar.)

And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.— Gen.25:7-11.

And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, . . . and he was called the Friend of God.— Jas.2:23.

It seems strange to read the words: "Abraham died." For even now, after nearly four thousand years, he is one of the most alive individuals in all history. Actually, Abraham never stopped living, but went right on into a new divine adventure in a spiritual dimension of life which mortal eyes cannot see.

The revelation of the Covenant relationship of God with man and with every living thing was illustrated in Abraham's human experience. The Dominion of the New Covenant was exemplified in his life. The coincidence of the human with the divine is evident throughout his long sojourn on earth. He was a spiritual leader and a ruler of his human experience. He wore the metaphorical crown of the royal priesthood of Melchizedek. His harmonious relationship with God and with men was acknowledged wherever he spread his great tents. He was known as "a mighty prince among men." And he won the distinct honor of being called "the Friend of God."

ABRAHAM'S WALK WITH GOD

When God revealed His nature to Abraham as *I AM*, the Almighty God, the revelation was accompanied by the demand: "Walk before me and be thou perfect" — Live ever mindful of my presence and so be blameless (Gen.17:1). The reward for obedience to the divine demand was: "I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly" (Gen.17:2).

Abraham's whole life was truly *a walk with God*. He was ever mindful of God's presence. He talked with God. He was obedient to God. Every footstep, mental and physical, was taken at God's direction. His great desire was to please God. And he did. In his human footsteps we discover a divine adventure in which he grew to understand the nature of God and how to be Godlike. The Covenant was written in the very fiber of his being. His relationship with God was so close he won the singular honor of being called "the Friend of God." What greater honor and reward could anyone desire! So faithfully did this Godlike man walk with God, always conscious of God's presence, always doing God's will, that he had dominion everywhere he went. And he prospered in everything he did. He reigned as Priest and King unto God on the earth and was known as a mighty prince among men. (See Jas.2:23; Rev.1:6; 5:10; Gen.23:6.)

Abraham is the first character in the Bible in whose human life we may trace *a progressive understanding of the divine nature of the Supreme Being*. So important is his growing concept of Deity we will review briefly his human footsteps — footsteps that are a divine adventure in which is revealed not only higher and holier concepts of Deity, but also spiritual concepts of man and the universe. In the record of his divine adventure we may also see something of what it means to be ever conscious of having a Covenant with God.

Abraham learned to know Deity first as *Yaweh, Jehovah*, the Lord, Self-existent Being — the God of his father Terah and of his

noble ancestor Noah. In the metaphor of Scripture, his name *Abram*, meaning exalted father, indicates that some understanding of the nature of the *Fatherhood of God* had been written in his nature.

As the idea of the Fatherhood of God grew in him he came to know Deity as *Bara, The Creator*. This higher concept of the Supreme Being led Abraham out of the pagan city of Ur in search of "a city which had solid foundations, of which God himself is both architect and builder" (Heb.11:10, JBP). As he journeyed the spiritual nature of the universe began to dawn in him — creation like the Creator. He heard and heeded the divine demand to look to the north, south, east, west — to the four points of the compass and, metaphorically, to the infinite foursquare spiritual nature of the world. The divine voice commanded: "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it thee" (Gen.13:17). The command was that he explore this new concept of creation, with the promise — all that you understand or comprehend of its spiritual nature is yours, you have dominion there. In this understanding of the divinity of God's world Abraham found his "city," his citadel of spiritual consciousness. The human appearing of his "holy city" he called *Hebron* — a Hebrew name meaning *alliance*, typical of his alliance or Covenant with God.

The revelation of Deity as *El Elyon, the Most High God*, Possessor of Heaven and Earth, source of all supply, and dispenser of divine blessings on earth, came to Abraham as he was finding his establishment in the new spiritual concept of God's universe — the land of Canaan being but the human appearing of that holy land. The understanding of God as *El Elyon* was confirmed in Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek, who was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. The appearing of Melchizedek in Abraham's experience is symbolic of the appearing in Abraham's consciousness of the idea of divine Sonship, the Christ, through whom the nature and dominion of the Most High God is revealed. At this time the nature of his own Christliness was made plain to Abraham. He discovered the human and divine coincidence — his own dual office as priest and king, which made him a spiritual leader of his people and ruler over his earthly experience. In this revelation of the nature of God as *El Elyon*, source of all supply, he also discovered the law of increase, the law

of spiritual multiplication — the law of the tithe, which made him rich — which multiplied, or magnified, every item of good in his experience (Gen.14:18-20).

The nature of God as *Elyeh*, *I AM*, was revealed to Abraham when the divine *Ego*, Supreme Being, declared its nature as *The Almighty God* — God All-Knowing, Omniscience itself (Gen.17:1,2). Because it is vitally important that we understand the nature of God as *I AM*, we will pause briefly in tracing Abraham's unfoldment to trace the unfoldment of the divine *Esse*, the *I AM*, in our Bible. For this understanding brings to light a mighty, dynamic individuality which develops in us the power and presence, the knowledge and action of the divine *Ego*.

Although the revelation of the nature of God as *I AM* has been with us from the beginning, this holy name, or divine nature, has been obscured by a limited, personal, material sense of God, of man, and of the universe. In the first chapter of Genesis we read: "In the beginning . . . God said." This is the *I AM*, who spoke into visible manifestation the whole universe and all that is therein, patterned after the divine nature. The *I AM* enunciated the creative mandate: *Let there be!* "Let there be light!" And there was light: "Let there be a firmament!" And the firmament was there. "Let the dry land appear!" And the dry land appeared. "Let the earth bring forth!" And tree, grass, herb, and all manner of vegetation came forth. "Let there be lights in the firmament!" And sun, moon, and stars appeared. "Let the waters bring forth!" And the great moving creatures of the sea and the winged fowl of the air appeared. "Let the earth bring forth!" And the magnificent living creatures came forth. Then the climax of creation: The *I AM* brought forth its own image and likeness to manifest the power and presence, the knowledge and action of the divine *Ego*: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion. And it was so!" It is so! The divine *Us* is the *I AM*, the *Esse*, who spake and it was done.

The forever nature of the name *I AM* is confirmed in *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (p.39):

The Hebrew name EHYEH denotes, not abstract being, but manifestation in a definite character, or name; for its form indicates habitual manifestation in past, present, or future. Since English requires a tense, the best rendering is *I will be as I will be*. The famous declaration (to Moses) signifies that God is

known in his dynamic confrontation of man and in man's active response to God.

When we read in the Scripture: "And God said, I am the Lord, I am God, or the name of the Lord" — this is confirmation that the voice of the divine *Esse*, the Great *I AM*, has been heard as the voice of conscience, whether or not it has been heeded.

In the revelation of Deity as *El Shaddi*, *The Almighty God*, the Nourisher, who performs all things for Her people, Abraham glimpsed something of the nature of the Motherhood of God, the all-might of the Great *I AM*. The divine Mother gently but firmly declared: "*I AM* the Almighty God." Now note how the *I AM*, Omniscient, All-knowing divine Mind, spoke in Abraham's consciousness: "Walk before *me* — the *I AM* — and be thou perfect." Walk ever mindful of my presence, the presence of Mind, or Spirit; let the divine *Ego* be the 'I' of your being and think my thoughts after Me. And so be perfect — be complete, entire, accomplished, blameless, and thus bring all things to fruition."

In this revelation of the nature of the Supreme Being, Abraham discovered the Covenant relationship of God and man, the inseparable oneness of Creator and creation. In this discovery he also glimpsed his harmonious relationship with everyone and with everything in God's universe. Hear the divine mandate, or law, which the *I AM* proclaimed: "And *I will* make my covenant with thee, . . . *I will* multiply thee exceedingly, . . . *I will* make thee fruitful, . . . and *I will* give thee the land wherein thou art a stranger." And then this righteous man, whose name had been *Abram*, heard the divine decree that sealed the Covenant promises. The Almighty, his divine Mother, gave him his new name, *Abraham*, declaring with prophetic certainty, "A father of many nations have I made thee." No longer was he to think of himself as an exalted human father. He must acknowledge God as the Father of man. And this understanding would bring to light in his consciousness the idea of divine Sonship.

But this was not all. The revelation of the nature of God's Motherhood also revealed to Abraham his wife's new name *Sarah*. He heard clearly the mandate of the *I AM*: "I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations." This irrevocable mandate assured Abraham that Sarah would conceive the idea of divine Sonship that had been revealed to him, and that she would bring forth a

son in the divine likeness. In this revelation Abraham discerned, though faintly, that the compound nature of God as Father-Mother is manifested in the compound nature of the male and female of the species, and that woman stands co-equal with man in relationship with God and with all that God has made, and in man's God-given dominion over all the earth. (See Gen.17:1-7, 15-19.)

The threefold nature of *Elohim, The Triune God Himself*, which had been unfolding in Abraham and Sarah, was confirmed by the appearance of three representatives of the Trinity. Their understanding of the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God had come to its communion. The power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, enabled Sarah to conceive the idea of divine Sonship and, in fullness of time, to bring forth a son whom they and future generations would know as *The Child of Promise*. (Gen.18:1-15; 21:1-3; Heb.11:11.)

The nature of God as *The Judge of All the Earth* came to Abraham when God judged Sodom and Gomorrah and revealed the true nature of Lot. In the metaphor of Abraham's story, it was his own understanding of the Trinity, the complete nature of the Infinite Triune divine Principle, the Great *I AM*, which judged evil and condemned Sodom and Gomorrah, even while his human heart pleaded for the cities of wickedness and their inhabitants. (Gen.18:16-33.)

The nature of God as *Ever-Ministering Divine Love* was revealed to Abraham in the care of Hagar and Ishmael, even though they were rebellious. The loving divine Mother nature of the *I AM*, active in his consciousness, assured Abraham that Ishmael, like Isaac, would become a great nation, even though Ishmael would not be the one through whom the divine promises would be fulfilled. Nor would Ishmael be the one through whom the knowledge of God, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God would be revealed to the world. Ever-ministering divine Love imprinted its message on the "I" of Abraham's consciousness: "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee; Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly." The nature of divine Love never failed to find expression in the life of this man of God. (Gen.17:20; 21:12-21.)

The nature of Deity as *'El Olam, The Everlasting God, Eternal Life*, was revealed to Abraham at Beer-sheba. The understanding

of the nature of God as Life itself helped to sustain Abraham when later he misunderstood God's command and believed he was supposed to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering. The angel of the Lord, a message from The Everlasting *I AM* Herself, appeared to him and awakened him to understand the real meaning of the divine directive. Abraham learned that giving his son's life to God did not mean sacrificing Isaac as a burnt offering, but rather dedicating Isaac's life to the fulfillment of the Trinity. Isaac's life was to symbolize and foreshadow the human appearing of the Son of God, and to portray, in some measure, the nature of God as eternal Life, "by what was a parable of the resurrection." (Gen.21:33; Heb.11:17-19, JM.)

The nature of God as *Jehovah-Jireh*, *The Revealing God* — God-sees, God-vision — was made plain to Abraham in the revelation on Mount Moriah. Here the revelation of the nature of God as the All-seeing Mind, the *I AM* itself, reflected by man, enabled Abraham to see with God-vision. This was the pinnacle of Abraham's understanding of the nature of the Infinite, an understanding reflected in words from the climax of creation in Genesis: "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Gen.22:14; 1:31).

Abraham's progressive understanding of the nature of God and his faithful endeavor to let his life be an image and likeness of Divinity enabled him to present to the world a figure of majesty and dominion wherever he was. When reading the record of his life, we might be tempted to think of his accomplishments as something possible only in the dim and distant past. But recall the Apostle Paul's words:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.— 2 Tim.3:16,17 (RSV).

The record of this great man's life should not be confined within the pages of a book, even so sacred a book as the Bible. It must be lifted into our hearts where it will live and act as a powerful influence for good — a divine influence that will give spiritual authority and vitality to our every thought and deed.

In the degree that we learn to know and love and obey God and live in harmony with the conditions of the Covenant as Abraham did, we will comprehend in some measure the spiritual nature of God and of the spiritual universe as he did. And we will find that we are living in a divine dimension of thought and action which the material world cannot invade, a state of Mind in which it is divinely natural to demonstrate the harmony of heaven on earth, to feel and to express the Dominion of the New Covenant.

Biblical names for God through which the divine nature was revealed to Abraham:

<i>Yaweh</i>	<i>Jehovah, The Lord, Self-existent Being.</i>
<i>Bara</i>	<i>The Creator</i>
<i>El Elyon</i>	<i>The Most High God</i>
<i>El Shaddi</i>	<i>The Brasted One, The Almighty God .</i>
<i>Ehyth</i>	<i>I AM, the divine Ego, Supreme Being</i>
<i>Elohim</i>	<i>The Triune God Himself</i>
<i>Shaphat</i>	<i>The Judge of all the earth</i>
<i>Malak</i>	<i>The Angel or Messenger of the Lord; Ever-Ministering divine Love</i>
<i>'El Olam</i>	<i>The Everlasting God, Eternal Life</i>
<i>Jehovah-Jireh</i>	<i>The Revealing God; God-Vision</i>