

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ABRAHAM**

THE Bible indicates the fundamental Science of being,—that which can be learned systematically and proved to be basic truth. The more we study it with humility and in an ordered way and thus let its Science unfold to us, the more we appreciate the Bible as embodying the answer to every questioning. It is a textbook for all time, because its symbols are irrepressibly fresh, and it meets our need whether we are looking for the most transcendent vision of spiritual things or for relief from some situation which seems desperately difficult.

In our opening chapter we looked at the basis of the Bible,—the story of the seven days of creation, which presents in a nutshell the nature of the infinite as it appears to humanity. Then, in the second chapter, we saw something of the significance of the Adam story, which occupies the first thousand-year period of Bible history. In the third chapter we considered the second thousand-year period, with the story of Noah's deliverance from the flood illustrating the second day of creation as a dynamic factor in our experience. Now we come to the story of Abraham, which ushers in the third thousand-year period; it illustrates the third day of creation, in which the dry land first appeared and brought forth vegetation. The appearing of dry land symbolizes the formation of definiteness in our thinking,—definiteness about spiritual facts,—and that must always bear fruit.

The story of Abraham is one which comes home to us very forcibly every time we find that our spiritual aspirations set us on a new and more worthwhile course. It describes the returning springtime in our lives, when

discontent with the old limitations pushes up the seeds of progress into strong young shoots. It is the story of the fulfillment of a great vision in spite of all handicaps and mistakes. The setbacks and temptations which Abraham encountered were always due to his own fear or laziness or impatience or sensuality. And so the record is useful for us in pointing out the dangers which beset a progressive purpose once it has taken its first definite shape in our thought and before it is fulfilled in its perfection.

### **"Get Thee Out of Thy Country, . . ."**

We first hear of Abram (he was not given the name Abraham till later) towards the end of Genesis n; there we read of Abram's father, Terah, taking him and his wife (Sarai) and his nephew (Lot), and leaving Ur of the Chaldees for the land of Canaan. Ur was a centre of the cult of the Babylonian moon-god and the Chaldees were keen astrologers, and so it is as if we to-day should reject the current superstitions of our time and the systems of science, theology, and medicine offered by human intellectualism and set out to find some definite understanding of the basic Principle of our being. But instead of going forward into Canaan, the four of them went as far as Haran and then stayed there. There was no more progress till Terah died. "Terah" means "delay" or "wandering," and it is never until we lose the tendency to procrastinate and be indefinite that we can make real strides. If we say, "Oh, there's no hurry—let's be satisfied with the little progress we have made," then we soon settle down into carpet-slipper ways.

But it was a divine demand which had come to Abram, and so it had to be obeyed. That demand was, first, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy

kindred, and from thy father's house." The "country" in which we all find ourselves is mortality,—the universal belief that we are born into a physical body, live in it for a brief period of mixed pleasure and pain, and then die. What a pathetic notion of a being who can think about eternity and infinity, or who can love unselfishly without regard to his own survival! But the truth about man, as the Bible puts it, is that he is made in the image and likeness of God. That leads us to ask, What is the nature of God ? and the answer is first summarized in the story of the seven days of creation at the beginning of Genesis and then illustrated throughout the Scriptures. Jesus showed constantly that it is possible to use an understanding of man's relation to God to disprove the lie of mortality. So each one of us needs to see that in our true state of being we are not imprisoned in a corporeality and liable to a thousand ills, but eternally existent as incorporeal expressions of the infinite good. How could an idea of infinite good be confined to one place or have a beginning and an ending? To think that it could is as absurd as to think that  $2 + 2 = 4$  suddenly came into being or is not always available.

Who are our "kindred"? They are the collection of beliefs which we have in common with some of our fellow-beings. Each of us thinks that we are of a certain race and colour and nationality; that we are either male or female, and of a certain social class and occupation; that we are a certain number of years old, and that we are living in a particular historical period. We believe that those classifications colour our whole lives and make us behave according to them. You hear people saying, for instance, "Mr. So-and-so is a typical elderly English professor." This kind of false label is highly adhesive unless we accurately identify ourselves as fundamentally quite apart from it.

Our "father's house" which, like Abram, we also have to leave is a symbol of our personal inheritance,—the belief that our particular bodies and characters have much the same advantages and disadvantages as those of our parents and ancestors. And yet if the fact of our being is entirely apart from the belief of having been born through sex into a physical body, then there is no necessity to pay the penalty for that belief. "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" says Malachi, and Paul writes, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him,"—prove our sonship in the face of all opposing evidence,—"that we may be also glorified together."

### **"Thou Shalt Be a Blessing"**

So the demand on 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: 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:"—the purpose of life is surely to let our own individual sense of things be such that it is a blessing:—"and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:"—if we start from the right individual standpoint, then all things in our experience can only "work together for good," as Paul says:—"and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." What a majestic vision! Abram saw that to realize the truth about ourselves is to see our individual, collective, and universal significance. This, then, was the shining inspiration of all Abram's journeyings. We soon hear that he and his wife and nephew and household "went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

As we leave "country" and "kindred" and our "father's house"—and we don't leave them in a moment, but only through persistently rejecting them—we are ushered towards the "land" of our true selves. Instead of seeing ourselves in the light of the world's labels, we begin to see ourselves as God sees us,—as filled with the intelligent thinking symbolized by the light of the first day of creation; filled with the discernment of abiding good symbolized by the firmament of the second day; filled with the certainty symbolized by the dry land of the third day; filled with the sense of right relationship symbolized by the solar system of the fourth day; filled with the unlimited abundance symbolized by the birds and fishes of the fifth day; filled with the dominion symbolized by the man of the sixth day; and filled with the peace of perfection symbolized by "and he [God] rested on the seventh day." This new sense of ourselves is nothing less than revolutionary.

### **Abram in Egypt Disowns His Wife**

Soon after this great vision, Abram "builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord;" his sense of God had become much more definite to him. But he allowed fear to get the better of him when a severe famine caused him to go down into Egypt: there he told his wife Sarai that she must pass as his sister, because she was so fair that the Egyptians would kill him in order to have her for themselves.

What does this signify to us in our journeying towards the "promised land" of our true identity? If we let there be a "grievous famine" of spiritual vision in our thinking, so that we see only the want and woe evidenced by the physical senses, then we go down into the paganism of "Egypt" and

become afraid to identify ourselves fully with our ideal. "Wife" in the Bible stands for the best to which a man is wedded in his thinking, – his highest sense of things. And so we sometimes haven't the moral courage to admit that we are intimately associated with our "wife", we imagine that we shall lose something if it is known we have a wonderful spiritual ideal, and therefore we minimize its relation to us.

The result in this case was that Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's house – and in consequence material riches were showered upon Abram; but "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Pharaoh and his household were smitten by the Lord with diseases because of Sarai –their materialism couldn't stand the ever-present rebuke of a high ideal – and so eventually Pharaoh demanded of Abram why he hadn't told then that Sarai was his wife, and then he had them both sent away. They at length got back to the altar which Abram had previously set up; in other words, every time we falter in identifying ourselves definitely with our ideal, because we fear the consequences, we temporarily forfeit the respect we might have won and we only have to retrace our steps.

When blind Bartimeus wanted to attract the attention of Jesus (see Mark 10:46-52), he refused to put off (unlike Abram in this incident) he had the courage to be persistent in identifying himself with his highest vision of man and his God-given rights, although "many charged him that he should hold his peace," probably feeling that his was a hopeless case. This only intensified his appeals, until finally "Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called," and Bartimeus, "casting away his garment," – his sense of identity, –"rose, and came to Jesus." He then asked that he might receive

his sight, –a true perception of God and man and everything in the universe, – and he was healed.

### **Abram Separates From Lot**

The next important step in our progress comes every time we separate from Lot, as Abram had to do." And Lot also, which went with Abram had flocks, and herds and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great." Abram decided that as there wasn't room for both of them they must separate, and so he invited Lot to choose which way he he would go. Lot chose the well-watered plain, be cause it looked like the " garden of the Lord" (the garden of Eden, is a symbol of the physical body, as we have already seen) and like Egypt (materialism and paganism again); he pitched his tent towards Sodom, the men of which were "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

We find our spiritual progress constantly impeded y the easy-going "Lot",--a natural sponge for absorbing the evidence of the senses. Lot loves to gossip away the hours, filling our minds with his "flocks, and herds, and tents," – keeping our thoughts busy in mere speculation about pleasure or pain in the future, in remembering pleasant or unpleasant experiences in the past and in ruminating on our own or other peoples feelings in the present. This accomplishes nothing in the right direction and crowds out definite thinking based on God, but it appears so harmless that we don't really see the extent of the damage which Lot had done to our progress until we resolve to give our sense of fundamental realities the room it

needs. Then we see that Lot is not only just lazy, but is also heading towards the self-indulgence of Egypt and towards Sodom, or sensuality.

### **"Look From the Place Where Thou Art"**

"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." It was only when Abram had separated himself from Lot that he could rise to the point of seeing that he could inherit as much of the "land" of his true self as he saw clearly. Lot , keeps our vision of that "land" blurred.

How can we today look "northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward" from the place where we are in thought? The four points of the compass are a Biblical symbol of four profoundly important aspects of the infinite as it appear to us. By means of them we can always plot our course to a definite conclusion. The first impulse of any value in solving a problem is the search for an answer, the second turning-point is when the answer dawns on us individually; the third is our acceptance and use of that answer; and the fourth is when we forget that there was ever a question, or ever a search , ever a mental conflict of any kind. The Bible is full of wonderful natural illustrations of this fourfold process.

To take a simple example: in Matthew's story of the birth of Jesus there is first the diligent seeking of the wise men for the young child; the "the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." Then the wise men "rejoiced with exceeding



great joy" at the sight of the star and offered gifts to the child, who was taken down into Egypt to avoid being slaughtered according to Herod's decree; and finally Joseph and Mary and the child could all go back to Israel because "they are dead which sought the young child's life." This symbolizes what happens every time we turn to the Science of reality when faced by some unhappy state of affairs. First we seek diligently for an answer in what we know of God; then the specific answer we need is shown to us as unmistakably as the young child's dwelling was identified for the wise men; then we not only rejoice in that answer, but we also use it in practical ways to overcome our difficulty—we take the young child into Egypt, and thus prove that the spiritual fact is supreme over materialism; and finally the spiritual truth we have learned becomes so normal and natural to us that there is no longer any opposition to it—"they are dead which sought the young child's life."

So Abram was to look "northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward," and he was further told to arise and travel the length and breadth of the land which he saw. When we have taken our bearings according to the highest that we know of God, we then have to familiarize ourselves with the new realm which opens out before us.

### **Abram Rescues Lot and Is Blessed by Melchizedek**

Chapter 14 is concerned with a story of warfare between four kings and five other kings near the Dead Sea; in this warfare Lot (who was now living in Sodom) became embroiled and was taken prisoner. Abram then had to go with a body of men and rescue him by defeating the enemy kings.

We have seen that Abram stands for a clear vision of our true self, whereas Lot stands for a drifting, worldly sense of things. The Abram in us may separate himself from Lot but until he can finally repudiate Lot altogether as part of his make-up, he always has to rescue him by exercising dominion over the sorry conditions to which Lot falls victim. It is no use ignoring the plight in which our foolish complacency lands us; instead we have to face the issue decisively and turn the experience into a blessing.

This is exactly what happened with Abram, because as soon as he had delivered Lot, he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem (which means "peace"), who brought him bread and wine and then blessed him. The writer of Hebrews describes Melchizedek as "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God." This writer saw that Abram realized at this point his own eternal spiritual selfhood, which is all that enables us to have dominion over the effects of the Lot state of thought.

Mark records that Jesus was once in a ship and "there were .also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Jesus himself was unworried by the storm, but he arose and rebuked it for the sake of those around him, just as Abram rescued Lot from being overwhelmed in the storm of sensual conflict. In the same way, we can begin to use our dominion as "children of God" to bring

peace into conditions stirred up by the wind,—by anything which seems overwhelmingly violent,—and moved by tides of fear.

### **Abram Promised His Own Heir**

The story goes on that the Lord appeared to Abram in a vision and said, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Then Abram said, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." But the answer came, "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir."

If we are alive to it, this is a promise which is fulfilled for every one of us. The promise is that the right idea of any situation will be born to us individually. So we need never imagine that we are not spiritually-minded enough to have our own "heir;" nor should we ever be content with someone else's right idea of the situation or with a merely intellectual sense of a spiritual truth which we don't yet feel within ourselves. When we are sincerely seeking the solution to some difficulty, we may first of all discern that we need to bring into our experience some particular aspect of the divine nature, but this is often an acknowledgment by the head of a truth which we don't at once feel with the heart. But always, if we are in earnest, the idea will be born to us in our own way and with a certainty and a joy which are unmistakable.

It is something like learning to ride a bicycle: at one time it seems to the child that he will never get the knack, although he knows what he is supposed to do, and then suddenly there comes the moment when he first

gets the feeling of it and can keep his balance as he goes forward. Then the ability to ride a bicycle is his for good.

To Abram the stumbling-block was that Sarai was barren; we are told that right at the beginning of the story. The symbol of a barren woman and a childless couple recurs throughout the Bible: think of the Shunammite woman and her husband (II Kings 4) and of the parents of Samson (Judges 13) and of Samuel (I Samuel 1) and of John the Baptist (Luke 1). To all these came the promise of a son, and its fulfillment in spite of every human impediment.

The Lord now said to Abram, "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." Stars are a wonderful symbol of distinctness and infinity.

Abram's sacrifice of animals and birds at this point indicates that in order to inherit the "land" of our true identity we have to give up a merely physical sense of ourselves as endowed with animal propensities. He also had a vision of the four hundred years' oppression and bondage which his descendants were to endure—another symbol of the fact that the inheritance of good does not come about without a struggle. But Jesus said to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"—and individually we too have to overcome all mortal beliefs.

## **Abram Takes Hagar to Wife**

Abram was still very conscious that Sarai had borne him no children, and so he accepted her advice to have a child by her Egyptian maid Hagar. The result was friction between Hagar and her mistress, and Hagar was told that her child would be a wild man with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.

Sometimes we cease to trust that our ideal can possibly conceive and bear us a "child," and discouragement and impatience turn us to some human expedient—with unsatisfactory results. We try to substitute a forced birth through dubious means—an Egyptian slave could have been a symbol only of a grossly material point of view—for the birth which always comes about in due order when we resist the temptation to forsake our ideal.

Jesus said to the Pharisees when they tried to get him to show them a sign from heaven, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Because he prayed to the Lord, Jonah was vomited out onto the dry land after three days and nights in the whale's belly. If we look for a "sign," our affection for spiritual things becomes adulterous and we are really putting the cart before the horse. But if we have a pure affection for and understanding of the eternal foundations of health or happiness or whatever it is we long for, then we inevitably come out onto the "dry land" of definite salvation, both divinely and humanly. In other words, the cart comes after the horse of its own accord when our love for spiritual ideas is not just "cupboard love," and we trust those ideas to care for us, not necessarily as we outline, but in the way that is divinely right.

## **God's Covenant with Abraham**

In Genesis 17 we read of the everlasting covenant which God made with Abram and his descendants; a sure sense of relationship was established between God and them. God promised that Abram would be "exceeding fruitful," and in token of this he was told that his name was no longer to be Abram ("exalted father") but Abraham ("father of many nations"). When we begin to see that there is a definite and ever-present relationship between ourselves and God (the fundamental Principle of our being), then our sense of our purpose in life expands immeasurably. Our vision of the truth about ourselves is bound to multiply, because it enables us to see more and more of the truth about all things.

It is interesting that Abram didn't receive his new name until he "fell on his face,"—until he had the genuine humility which is willing to give up every vestige of identity not based on the divine nature.

Abraham's obligation under this new covenant was to circumcise every man child, including all his slaves. Paul saw very clearly that this rite was only a symbol of inward purification; he said, "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter."

Sarai's name was also changed—to Sarah—and she was promised a son. Sarai means "Jah [Jehovah] is prince," whereas Sarah means "princess." Abraham was beginning to add womanhood to his sense of God, and that sense will always enable our ideal to conceive a son for us. Luke tells us in Chapter 13 of his Gospel that Jesus once healed a woman who had had "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no

wise lift up herself." Jesus described her as "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound," and he said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity"—he loosed her from any sense that her womanhood was unable to express itself fully. Abraham had the same sort of experience with his own sense of womanhood, symbolized by his wife.

God also made provision for Ishmael,—Abraham's child by Hagar. He was to be the father of a great nation. If we are in earnest, then even if we make a mistake, the consequences will be cared for and will finally prove a blessing.

### **Three Men at Abraham's Tent**

As Abraham was sitting in the doorway of his tent at noon, 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, . . ." There were three men, but Abraham addressed them as "My Lord"—a wonderful symbol, as we shall see, of the threefold nature of the infinite, which is always the One. Abraham hastened to fetch his guests water and bread and begged them to rest themselves under the tree and to "comfort [their] hearts." He then set before them butter and milk and "a calf tender and good," which he had had dressed by a young man. All these are symbols of the fresh, young sense of motherhood which was coming to Abraham and which enabled him to welcome and nourish a full sense of God in his thought.

The purpose of the visit was to announce to Abraham that Sarah was indeed going to have a son, Isaac. Sarah laughed at this because it

seemed impossible on account of her age, but she was to find that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Her bitter laughter was to turn into the laughter of real joy; "Isaac" means "laughter."

Why should the essential nature of the infinite be threefold? Because, in order to be complete, it must embody fatherhood, motherhood, and sonship. It must be creative and sustaining; it must be conceptive and a comforter; and it must have a perfect offspring. Think what a good symbol we have of this in every home where the father provides the income and the wise guidance, the mother cares for and loves unstintingly every member of the family, and the children respond to their parents' provision and care by being healthy, happy, and intelligent.

And so it suddenly comes to us as clear as the noonday as we meditate on the nature of the infinite—this is what happened with Abraham—that the only reason why anything good takes place in our experience is that the eternal Father is always revealing to the seeker useful ideas of Himself; that the all-loving Mother is forever fulfilling the divine purpose, which covers all human needs; and that the perfect Son is continually expressed in the acknowledgment of this Father and Mother. It is only the dense blindness of mortality which beholds all this so dimly that it sees for the most part lack, fear, and victimization.

### **Sodom To Be Saved Even For Ten Righteous**

Next comes a little story of how Abraham interceded with the Lord for Sodom, the city notorious for sin. He begged that Sodom might be saved if there were fifty righteous men in the city; then if there were forty-five; then



thirty; then twenty; and then just ten. The Lord agreed each time to save Sodom for the few righteous. This symbolizes that whatever is of good in the worst situations will be saved, and that if we have only a very small understanding of spiritual things, it will never be unavailing if we use it.

We read in II Kings 4 that when a widow came to Elisha and told him that her husband (who had been a member of the prophetic order) was dead and that her sons were going to be taken as slaves by her creditor, Elisha asked her what she had in the house; she answered, "Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil"—oil was used for cooking and for light. Elisha thereupon told her to borrow empty vessels from her neighbours and fill them with this oil when she had shut the door upon herself and her sons. She found that she could go on pouring the oil until she had filled all the vessels. Then Elisha told her to go and sell the oil to pay her debt and use the rest to live on. If only we will use what we already have in our consciousness of the oil we need! That oil signifies all that we have learned of God through reason and revelation, and the way to use it is to pour it fearlessly into our thoughts of everything around us. As we do that, we find that we have a regular income of ideas and can cancel all debts to what Peter calls our "adversary the devil," who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

### **The Two Angels and the Last of Lot**

"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." He persuaded them to stay the night with him, and did his best to keep at bay all the men of Sodom, who clamored for intercourse with the two strangers. Lot was

nearly overwhelmed, but the two angels pulled him into the house with them, shut the door, and struck the Sodomites with blindness. The only way they could get the still easy-going Lot to leave the city, which was to be burned, was to take him by the hand and bring him out themselves. All this was done for Abraham's sake, but even so Lot couldn't finally be saved. He was told not to look back towards Sodom, but his wife disobeyed and was turned into a pillar of salt. The last we hear of Lot is that he was duped into incest with his daughters, who made him drunk.

Now, this is a story of what happens in our experience as our ideal begins to bring forth for us. At this point we have to repudiate Lot; however anxious we are to avoid doing so, we are forced to see that his outlook is a completely stagnant one without a spark of real life, and finally that he is nothing but a mesmerized absorption in the things of the body.

We begin to see that Lot stands for all the manifestations of sex, which is basically the deep-rooted belief that man is imprisoned in a physical body and constituted in such a way that he seeks satisfaction through contact with other physical personalities. It is this belief which makes mortals full of self-consciousness and self-advertisement, full of loneliness and dissatisfaction, full of a sense of inferiority, and of resentment when they fail to draw attention to themselves in the way they would wish. The sex belief gives free play to the male instinct to be dominant and aggressive and to the female instinct to be subtle, seductive, and possessive. But the whole belief is one of blindness,—blindness to everything that the "two angels" represent.

The "two angels" are the right idea of manhood and womanhood. The more we entertain these angels, the more we see that it is our birthright to enjoy both manhood and womanhood; then we refuse to let the sex belief degrade us to the level of animals and blind us to the wonderful truth about universal manhood and womanhood, identified both in our individual selves and in happy relationships which bring deep and abiding satisfaction.

The Scriptural writers symbolize manhood and womanhood elsewhere by Michael and Gabriel, the two angels who appear in the Books of Daniel and Revelation and in Luke's Gospel. Michael represents true manhood; he strengthened Daniel and confirmed him in the truth, and in Revelation he led the victorious hosts of heaven against the great red dragon. Gabriel, on the other hand, represents true womanhood; he came swiftly to Daniel in order to give him "skill and understanding," and brought to Zacharias and to Mary glad tidings of birth and blessings to come and dispelled their fears. The vision and strength of manhood and the lovely tenderness of womanhood – both can be ours if we choose, because both are ours inherently, although hidden in varying degrees by the lies of the sex belief.

### **The Birth of Isaac**

The next important incident is the actual birth of Isaac, the name which means "laughter." Sarah said, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" – that which is divinely natural seems joyfully miraculous on earth . But it is divinely natural that there should be the birth of an Isaac for every Abraham, because the sincerely seeking thought must bear fruit. Isaiah writes, "For as the rain cometh sown, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it

bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

### **"Cast out this Bondwoman and Her Son"**

When Abraham made a great feast at Isaac's weaning, Sarah noticed Hagar's son Ishmael mocking, and so she told Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwomen shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Abraham was at first loath to do this, because Ishmael was his son, but God told him to obey Sarah.

Taken literally this would indicate great harshness, but its deeper meaning is that when a "son" is born to us in God's due time and through adherence to our highest spiritual ideal, then our proper course is to get rid of the mocking reminder of our past mistakes, The past always mocks us, but the remedy once we have profited by its lessons is to rejoice quite freely in our newborn "son" and see that our mortal history has nothing to do with our eternal being as immortal idea; then we cease to pay the penalty for a mere record of dreams, just as we never go on paying the penalty for a miscalculation in arithmetic once we have corrected it.

John wrote in Revelation, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." – symbolized here by Isaac, for what is our "son" but our sense of heaven and earth, created through our understanding of God? – "for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away," –Ishmael cannot be the heir alongside Isaac, our mistakes need never remain with us once we have

learned from them, – " and there was no more sea" – no more uncertainty, but only the flourishing "dry land."

Again we see in this story of Abraham how our mistakes are cared for, because when Hagar was banished with Ishmael and was weeping in the wilderness at the thought of her child starving to death, an angel told her, "fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise lift up the lad ... for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened Hager's eyes so that she saw a well of water and was able to give her son something to drink. So an understanding of God redeems every mistake, enables us to exalt our sense of it. And opens our eyes to the inexhaustible source of ideas (the " well of water") forever at hand to quench all dissatisfaction and regret.

### **The Temptation to Sacrifice Isaac**

Now comes the story of a temptation; God (or rather, Abraham's sense of God) told Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, but just as he was about to do so , his hand was stayed and God told him that as he had not withheld his only son he must not sacrifice him. Instead Abraham sacrifices a ram which he saw caught in a thicket by his horns.

When we are perfectly willing to give up our highest human concept of good at this moment, because we love above all the spiritual fact which it represent, then we only find that we don't have to give up anything good .All w have to give up is our confused sense – a ram caught in a a thicket by his two horns – that the spiritual fact can ever be without a representative. If it could be, then there would be a vacuum, and we

should be subscribing to the notion that "God's in His heaven," but "all wrong with the world," and that that is how God wishes it to be!

Religious belief often makes people think that suffering is more holy than happiness, and that in order to show our love for God we must be patient martyrs and go with out affection or without love, or without health, or without gaiety or without adequate supply. We sometimes think that we should expect only a little bit of heave and a whole lot of hell, whereas we can always be expectant of infinite good when we see that divine ideas must be identifiable here and now at every level of experience, Our thought just has to be flexible enough – like Abraham's – not to cling desperately to our present sense of heaven on earth. Then we are never deprived of anything we need, because we see it as a good human expression of the divine fact – nothing more and nothing less.

Jesus constantly had to deal with a similar belief, – the belief that the Sabbath day was on of repression; healing on the Sabbath day was looked upon askance as too much like good to be justifiable or respectable! Yet the Sabbath day was instituted to commemorate God resting in the perfection of His creation. That is why Jesus restored a withered hand on the Sabbath day; his conscious resting in the perfection of God's creation set free a sense of God-given worth in the man, and this in its turn could not help but impel a healing of his hand, for the withered condition of the hand was solely an expression of the dried-up sense of manhood in thought, since the greater controls the lesser. The divine Motherhood of the seventh day sense of things meets our need for wholeness and

fulfillment at every level, as Abraham found in this incident. God is Love, not a being who strictly rations His kindness!

### **A Summary**

After the account of the temptation to sacrifice Isaac, the story of Abraham merges into the story of Isaac. So if we now think of the story of Abraham as a whole, what is the main impression it leaves with us? That when we resolve to leave the mortal sense of ourselves in order to realize more of our true selfhood, then that resolve inevitably bears tangible fruit—in other words, the "dry land" of definite purpose begins to appear in our thought and then to bring forth. Even though we may become disheartened and make mistakes, that purpose cannot be frustrated if we are sincerely striving to follow the leadings of the divine demand, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."