



We Are
Abrahams
Seed

The Family *of* Promise

We are Abraham's Seed

**A Study on the life of Abraham in relation to the current day
Christian**

Class 1 - Introduction

Why this Class ?

- Why study the life of Abraham?
- Is he really relevant today?
- Do you feel like you have any connection to Abraham?
- What do we learn about God through Abraham's life—and how does it connect to ours?
- If Paul builds entire arguments around Abraham's story, what happens if we misunderstand the story?

Paul's Challenge

Gal 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, **then you are Abraham's seed**, heirs according to promise.
(Legacy)

- Paul is talking to Gentile believers, reassuring them they are already Abraham's seed
- Why was this important to Paul?
- It is an identity that we normally do not reflect upon.

Resources

- BibleProject - Tim Mackie- Classroom series - Abraham
- AlephBeta - Rabbi David Fohrman - Abraham's Journey 1 and 2
 - The Parsha Companion - Genesis
- Bema Podcast - Marty Solomon
- Covenant and Conversation - Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
- JPS Torah Commentary - Genesis

Goals of the Class

- Understand why the Bible calls you *Abraham's seed* and what that means for identity and belonging in Christ.
- Understand God's nature by watching how He interacts with Abraham.
- Read Abraham's narrative in its ancient Near Eastern and Jewish context instead of through modern assumptions.
- See how the Abraham story frames God's plan of restoration from Genesis to Revelation.

Evolution of the Class

- Initial class was “Our Scripture is Jewish”
- In that class some foundational understandings
 - Our Bible is written by Jewish authors, in a Jewish setting, using Jewish thought and customs, and (in the OT) largely in Hebrew.
 - To read the Bible solely through our western lens may lead to a misunderstanding of what the authors intended.
 - John Walton articulated the principle for years, but Michael Heiser popularized the exact phrasing: **The Bible was written for us, but not to us.**

Two Seminal Events in OT

- Two events overshadow all other narratives in the OT
- Call of Abraham and Abraham narrative
- Exodus from Egypt
- Even the NT relies on these two events as foundational

Reason for their Importance

- Abraham
 - Counter-move (grace) to Gen 1-11 (Eden, Cain, Gen. 6/Flood, Babel)
 - Beginning of Israel - predates even Moses
 - Introduces the Abrahamic covenant (unilateral)
 - Establishes Israel's identity

Reason for Their Importance

- Exodus
 - The 10 words - I am YHWH God who brought you out of Egypt...)
 - The birth of the nation
 - It is the beginning of how Israel is to live - covenant life, holiness

Nehemiah

9:5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah, said, “Arise, bless the Lord your God forever and ever!

O may Your glorious name be blessed
And exalted above all blessing and praise!

6

“You alone are the Lord.

**You have made the heavens,
The heaven of heavens with all their host,
The earth and all that is on it,
The seas and all that is in them.
You give life to all of them
And the heavenly host bows down before You.**

7

“You are the Lord God,
**Who chose Abram
And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees,**
And gave him the name Abraham.

8

“You found his heart faithful before You,
And made a covenant with him
To give *him* the land of the Canaanite,
Of the Hittite and the Amorite,
Of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Gergashite—
To give *it* to his descendants.
And You have fulfilled Your promise,
For You are righteous.

9

**“You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,
And heard their cry by the Red Sea.**

10

“Then You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,
Against all his servants and all the people of his land;
For You knew that they acted arrogantly toward them,
And made a name for Yourself as *it is* this day.

11

“You divided the sea before them,
So they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground;

New Testament Foundation

- Abraham is mentioned more than any other OT character
- Model of faith, promise and heirship
- He is the theological root of salvation history
- Exodus is the controlling metaphor for the work of Christ
- Paul sees the Exodus as the Christian story (baptism in the sea...)
- Lord's Supper rooted in the Passover

New Testament Foundation

- Luke 9:28 But it happened after these words, about eight days later, Yeshua took Shimeon and Yaqob and Yohannan and he went up a mountain to pray. ²⁹And as he prayed, the appearance of his face was transfigured and his garments became white and they were shining. ³⁰And behold, two men were speaking with him, who are Moses and Elijah, ³¹Who appeared in glory, but they were **speaking about his exodus** which was going to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. (Aramaic Bible in plain English)

TaNaK

Torah

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

Nev'im (Prophets)

Former:

- Joshua
- Judges
- Samuel
- Kings

Latter:

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- The Twelve

Ketuvim (Writings)

- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Job
- Song of Songs
- Ruth
- Lamentations
- Ecclesiastes
- Esther
- Daniel
- Ezra- Nehemiah
- Chronicles

Honor/Shame-Guilt/Innocence-Fear/Power

- Three Cultural lenses, though all cultures have elements of each, normally one is dominant
- All exist today, in various forms
 - USA is Guilt/Innocence with Honor/Shame in subcultures
 - Guatemala is Honor/Shame however Mayan Fear/Power influence
 - Zambia/Angola is Fear/Power with a strong Honor/Shame
 - ANE - Strong Honor/Shame

Honor defined by:

ANE → kinship & divine order

Israel → honor by covenant faithfulness

Greece → virtue & excellence

Rome → power & domination

Cultural Lenses

Honor–Shame (Dominant in Bible)

Focus:

- Community reputation
- Family identity
- Public status
- Loyalty vs. betrayal
- Honor gained / shame removed

Biblical Dynamics:

- Abraham's heir
- Barrenness and honor
- Covenant loyalty
- Exile as shame
- Jesus restoring honor
- Key Question: "Do I belong? Am I honored or shamed?"

Guilt–Innocence (Dominant in modern West)

Focus:

- Individual responsibility
- Right vs. wrong
- Law and justice
- Internal conscience
- Innocence or guilt before a standard

Biblical Dynamics:

- Legal metaphors
- Sacrifice dealing with guilt
- Paul's courtroom language (partly)

Key Question: "Am I right or wrong?"

Fear–Power (Common in ANE & spiritual cultures)

Focus:

- Spiritual forces
- Power encounters
- Protection vs. vulnerability
- Curses/blessings
- Who controls outcomes

Biblical Dynamics:

- Egyptian magicians
- Plagues as divine power displays
- Balaam
- Territorial gods
- Elijah vs. Baal
- Demonic confrontations in Gospels

Key Question: "Who is in control? Who protects me?"

What happens if you share the gospel from a guilt-innocence culture to an honor shame culture?

Community versus Individual Culture

Individual (Western)

Core Values

- Personal freedom
- Self-choice and self-expression
- Individual rights
- Personal identity & achievement
- Internal guilt (you violated your conscience)

How Meaning is Processed

- **“What does this mean to me?”**
- Decisions are personal and private
- Success/failure belongs to the individual

Religion Tendency

- “Personal relationship with God”
- “Jesus as my personal Savior” (true, but incomplete if isolated)

Community (ANE, Bible, Latin America)

Core Values

- Group identity
- Family lineage and clan
- Collective honor or shame
- Loyalty to community
- Harmony within group

How Meaning is Processed

- **“What does this mean for us?”**
- Decisions affect the whole family/clan
- One person’s actions can bless or dishonor the group

Religion Tendency

- God deals with households, tribes, nations
- Salvation and covenant are corporate realities
- The blessing to Abraham is for all families of the earth

We read “you” passages as talking to me, Community cultures read “you” passages as talking to us

Genesis 1-11 - Preface to Scripture

- Gen 1-11 sets the stage for all of scripture - introducing themes that are carried throughout the pages of the Bible.
- Sets of narratives interspersed with genealogies.
- We are to look for repeated words in future narratives in order to tie them into earlier narratives to help in interpretation.
- Gen 1 begins with God setting boundaries, which are good, then we get narratives in which boundaries are crossed.

Three Escalating Rebellions

- #1 Garden narrative - Tree of Knowledge of Tov (Good) and Ra (Bad)
 - Serpent rebels against God and deceives woman to eat who gives to man
 - Serpent and ground cursed
 - Adam and Eve exiled to east
 - Grace found in the clothing of Adam and Eve
 - Nowhere in scripture is this called the “Fall” nor is it the climax of the first 11 chapters

Three Escalating Rebellions

- #2 Sons of God/Daughters of Men and Flood
 - Gen 6 - Sons of God take daughters of men
 - Spiritual beings rebel and transgress boundaries of heaven and earth
 - Rebellion spreads to all mankind ruining the world
 - God brings ruin on the earth with the flood
 - Grace found in Noah

Three Escalating Rebellions

- #3 Babel
 - Men migrate to east and settle in a plain
 - Rebel against God to build a tower to heaven, transgressing the boundary of heaven and earth
 - God confuses the languages and divides up the nations
 - Deut 32:8 - apportions the nations to sons of God (spiritual beings) but reserves Israel as His inheritance
 - Grace found in Abram through whom all nations will be blessed to be brought back into family with God

The Hinge Point

- **Gen 3 as the hinge point**
 - As Christianity became largely Gentile, Greek philosophy and Roman legal thinking reshaped the questions being asked, and Genesis 3 fit a model focused on corrupted human nature and guilt. (*What is wrong with human nature?*)
 - Augustine systematized Genesis 3 as a universal “fall,” making it the starting point for salvation theology rather than Genesis 11’s problem of fractured nations.
 - Genesis 11’s story of dispersion and restoration through Abraham was harder to systematize, so Western theology gravitated toward the simpler guilt-and-forgiveness framework of Genesis 3.
- **Gen 11 as the hinge point**
 - Genesis 11 marks the climax of escalating boundary crossings in Genesis 1–11, where personal mistrust (Gen 3) and violent domination (Gen 6) give way to collective, organized rebellion against God’s ordering of the world. (*How has God’s good order been disrupted?*)
 - Babel represents humanity’s attempt to erase God-given boundaries—geographic, political, and divine—by centralizing power and securing a name apart from God.
 - God’s response is not destruction but redirection: dispersing the nations and calling Abraham to begin the long work of restoring blessing, order, and shalom to a fractured world.

Justice and Grace

- The rebellion narratives highlight God as a God of justice and grace
- The Hebrew expression would be mishpat and tzedakah
- **Mishpat** - (justice) appropriate response, the right, just, fair response
 - Judgment that is impartial
 - Upholding what is right in the community
 - Establishing order and protection
- **Tzedakah** - (righteousness) restorative goodness, compassionate action
 - Doing what is needed to restore life, dignity or relationship
 - Generosity, charity, grace, mercy, restorative justice
 - Giving what someone needs, not what they earned
 - Righteousness for us is moralistic, personal and rule oriented
- Mishpat and tzedakah are the two **ethical pillars** that *create, restore, and protect shalom.*
- **Shalom** (peace) is wholeness, flourishing, everything in right relationship.

Righteousness

“For example, most Pauline scholars now agree that in the OT and in Paul “righteousness” designates conduct or activity appropriate to a relationship rather than an inherent quality, static attribute or absolute moral norm.”

Sam Williams, JSTOR, Vol 99, June 1980 “*The Righteousness of God in Romans*”

Chesed

- Chesed - steadfast love, lovingkindness, grace
 - Covenant loyalty
 - Faithful mercy
 - Love that acts to preserve relationship
 - Will I remain faithful even when you are vulnerable and failing

Chesed

"What is hesed? It is usually translated as 'kindness,' but it also means 'love' - not love as emotion or passion, but love expressed as deed. Theologians define hesed as covenant love. Covenant is the bond by which two parties pledge themselves to one another, each respecting the freedom and integrity of the other, agreeing to join their separate destinies into a single journey that they will travel together, fearing no evil, for You are with me (Ps. 23:4). Unlike a contract, it is an open-ended relationship lived toward an unknown future .

"In one of the loveliest lines in the prophetic literature, God says to Israel through Jeremiah, I remember the kindness [hesed] of your youth, the love of your betrothal - how you were willing to follow Me through the desert in an unsown land (Jeremiah 2:2).

Hesed is the love that is loyalty, and the loyalty that is love. It is born in the generosity of faithfulness, the love that means being ever-present for the other; in hard times as well as good; love that grows stronger, not weaker, over time. It is **love moralized into small gestures of help and understanding, support and friendship: the poetry of everyday life written in the language of simple deeds**. Those who know it experience the world differently from those who do not. It is not for them a threatening and dangerous place. It is one where trust is rewarded precisely because it does not seek reward. Hesed is the gift of love that begets love." J Sacks - To Heal a Fractured World

Chesed

חֵסֶד denotes the grace that a person shows when they make a **commitment** to someone and there was no reason for them to do so, and the **faithfulness** that a person shows to someone when they carry on being faithful to them after the person has acted in such a way as to forfeit any right to such faithfulness. I think the nearest English equivalent to *hesed* is “commitment,” but I haven’t convinced anyone. (John Goldingay, website)

How we see God

- **Chesed** is the motive
 - God acts because of his covenant loyalty, not because people deserve it
 - **I will be faithful** even when you are not
- **Mishpat** is discerning judgement
 - God's faithfulness aims at **restoring order, dignity, and life** — especially for the weak.
 - What destroys life **must be** confronted and removed
- **Tzedekah** is action
 - God does **whatever is required** to bring about restoration — mercy, discipline, forgiveness, rescue.
 - I will do what the situation **requires** for life to flourish
- **Shalom** is the result
 - It is **not achieved directly**, It emerges when the other three are rightly held together
 - This the life as God intended, flourishing, all things set in order

How does God act?

Jer 9:23 Thus says YHWH:

Do not let the **wise** boast in their wisdom;
do not let the **mighty** boast in their might;
do not let the **wealthy** boast in their wealth;
24 but let those who boast boast in this,
that they understand and know me,
that I am YHWH;
I act with **Chesed**,
Mishpat,
and **Tzedakah** in the earth,
for in these things I delight, says YHWH.

Ps 89:14 **Tzedakah** and **Mishpat** are the foundation of your throne
Chesed and 'Emet (faithfulness) go before your face.

Is 32:17 The work of **tzedakah** will be **shalom**
the outcome of **tzedakah** will be enduring calm and security.

CHESED

Covenant loyalty · steadfast love · faithful kindness

- Relational faithfulness, not sentiment
- Love that acts for the good of the other
- Loyalty that persists even when undeserved
- God's commitment to remain present and faithful
- The covenant bond that holds relationships together

THE MOTIVE:
Love that refuses to abandon



SHALOM

Wholeness · flourishing · restored life

- Life lived without fear
- Restoration of a right relationship
- Life as it is meant to be, flourishing
- Harmony between God, people, and creation

THE RESULT:
The world put back together



MISHPAT

Justice · right ordering · accountability

- Restrain what causes harm
- Restoring order and protection
- Setting things right when order is broken
- Impartial justice that protects the vulnerable

THE DISCERNING JUDGEMENT:
Justice that confronts disorder and names it

TZEDAKAH

Right relationship · faithful action · doing what is needed

- Giving what is needed, not earned
- Acting rightly within relationships
- Trust expressed through obedience
- Faithfulness expressed in concrete action
- Doing what restores dignity, life, and relationship

THE ACTION:
Doing what needs to be done for the sake of the other person

THE PATH OF GOD – LIVING WITHIN THE TRIANGLE

CheSED sustains relationships · MiSHPAT confronts disorder · TZEDAKAH embodies faithfulness

Shalom emerges when all three are lived together

James 3:16 For where you have envy (**anti-chesed**) and selfish ambition (**anti-mishpat**), there you find disorder (**anti-shalom**) and every evil practice (**anti-tzedakah**).

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure (**mishpat + tzedakah**); then peace-loving (**shalom**), gentle (**chesed + mishpat**), open to persuasion (**mishpat**), full of mercy (**chesed**) and good fruit (**tzedakah**), impartial (**mishpat**) and sincere ('emet + chesed). And the fruit that consists of righteousness (**tzedakah**) is planted in peace (**shalom**) among those who make peace (**shalom**).

James is describing anti-shalom wisdom vs kingdom wisdom

Gen 1-11 - God's Mishpat and Tzedakah

- Adam and Eve
 - Mishpat - Exiled
 - Tzedakah - He clothed them
- Wickedness prior to Flood
 - Mishpat - Flood
 - Tzedakah - Noah
- Babel
 - Mishpat - Confuse languages, dispersion, divorce of the nations
 - Tzedakah - Abraham

The Seed of the Woman

3:14 YHWH, God, said to the snake:

Because you have done this,
More cursed be you from all the herd animals
and from all the beasts of the field;
Upon your belly shall you walk
and dust shall you eat all the days of your life.

15 I put enmity between you and the woman,

Between your seed and her seed:

He will strike you on the head,
you will strike him in the heel

We rightly confess Jesus as the seed, but the biblical story invites us to sit with the tension first. As the narrative unfolds, we're repeatedly asked who the seed will be and why it matters, because the seed carries God's promise, blessing, and vocation forward through the Abraham story.

Parsha Sections

- A parsha section is the weekly reading of Torah in the synagogue
- Torah is divided into 54 weekly readings that end and begin on Simchat Torah (late September) (following Feast of Booths (Sukkot)
- There is an intentional division of the sections and each section is named
- Abraham has 3 sections:
 1. **Lech-Lecha (Gen 12:1–17:27)** – Call, covenant, Ishmael, circumcision
 2. **Vayera (Gen 18:1–22:24)** – Visitors, Sodom, Isaac's birth, Hagar, Akedah
 3. **Chayei Sarah (Gen 23:1–25:18)** – Sarah's burial, Isaac's marriage, Abraham's death

Abraham's story is read in the Jewish calendar immediately after the High Holy Days, positioning him as the model of how renewed people actually walk with God over time.

Parsha Sections

- ***Lech-Lecha* - Gen 12:1-17:27 - Go forth, Go to yourself**
- Theme - God calls Abram, establishes covenant identity
 1. Call of Abraham
 2. Abraham in Egypt
 3. Abraham and Lot separate
 4. Battle of the Kings and Melchizedek
 5. Covenant of the Pieces
 6. Hagar and Ishmael
 7. Covenant of Circumcision

Parsha Sections

- **Vayera Gen 18:1-22:24 - And He appeared**
- Theme - God reveals his justice, mercy and covenant faithfulness, Abraham intercedes, the son arrives, and Abraham is tested
 1. Three visitors and the Promise of Isaac
 2. Abraham intercedes for Sodom
 3. Destruction of Sodom
 4. Abraham and Abimelech
 5. Birth of Isaac, expulsion of Ishmael
 6. Treaty with Abimelech
 7. Binding of Isaac (Akedah)
 8. Nahor's genealogy

Parsha Sections

- ***Chayei Sarah* Gen 23:1-25:18 The life of Sarah**
- Theme - Securing the covenant future, burial, marriage, inheritance
 1. Death and Burial of Sarah
 2. Finding a wife for Isaac
 3. Abraham's last years and death
 4. Ishmael's genealogy

Lech Lecha

- **Go for yourself** — this journey is for your good
- **Go to yourself** — discover your authentic calling
- **Go from yourself** — leave behind old identities
- **Go by yourself** — take a unique, countercultural journey of faith
- **Go forward** — walk into an unknown future led only by God

The Abraham Narrative

Gen 11:27 Now these are the **generations** (*toledot*) of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot.

The toledot introduces a new section in the narratives of Genesis to alert the reader to the major story lines (Adam-Noah-Shem-Terah-Jacob...)

Background in Gen 11

11:27 Now these are the generations of Terah:

Terah begot Avram, Nahor and Haran

And Haran begot Lot.

28 Haran died in the living-presence of Terah his father

In the land of his kindred

In Ur of the Chaldeans

29 Avram and Nahor took themselves wives;

The name of Avram's wife was Sarai,

The name of Nahor's wife was Milca

Daughter of Haran, father of Milca and father of Yisca

30 Now Sarai was barren,

She had no child.

Background in Gen 11

11:31 Terah took Avram his son

And Lot, son of Haran his son's son

And Sarai his daughter-in-law,

Wife of Avram his son

They set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans

To go to the land of Canaan.

But when they had come as far as Harran

They settled there

32 and the days of Terah were five years and two hundred years

Then Terah died

In Harran (Crossroads).

Key Takeaways

- Abraham is God's answer to Genesis 1–11.
- His call begins the reversal of curse, exile, and fragmentation.
- Abraham's identity becomes ours in Christ.
- Understanding Abraham helps us read the whole Bible more clearly.



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