

## Faith's Tent and Altar

### The Faith of Abraham – part 2

*Genesis 12:10–13:4*

June 14, 2026

God's people live in a context: the tent and the altar. The **tent** reminds us that this world is not our home. We're just passing through. Heaven is our real home. Only heaven can be a real home. An **altar** is a sacred place, a place God meets us, forgives us, re-centers us, and empowers us.

#### **DAY 1: Famine in Canaan**

- **A failure of faith**

*Genesis 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe*

1. There are times early in our walk with God that stop us in our tracks. Getting rid of some of our old sins is more difficult than we imagined. We lose that initial joy when we first came to Christ. Problems try to rob our peace.
2. Canaan, modern day Israel, has a similar climate to ours in California, an arid climate with limited rainfall. We are dependent on snow from the Sierras. There are no Sierras in Canaan.
3. Abraham was a nomad, a herder of flocks, requiring pastureland. When there is a drought his way of life is threatened.

- **God, what do You want me to do?**

*Genesis 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe*

4. There is something missing in this verse. We have no record of Abraham wrestling with this conundrum. "God, You've called me to Canaan, and I came, but now there is a severe drought. How am I to think about this conundrum? What do you want me to do? Is there another part of Canaan that has pastureland? Which way should I go?"
5. Instead, we have Abraham in a panic. He reacts out of fear.
6. As we've found in Genesis, the "land" is a metaphor for our life as a Christian while on planet earth. We have times of drought and famine, times when God seems far away, when following God is confusing, when our soul is parched and weary.
7. Are you in a famine now? A famine is like long-running difficulties. Your neighbor smokes pot outside your open windows and plays his music too loudly at night. Your boss is too demanding and rarely gives you credit for your work product.
8. When difficulties persist Egypt can look very tempting! There are a lot of "Egypt" all around us. Besides the obvious "Egypt," two others often go unseen. For some, we become perpetually busy, where you have no time to be depressed. For others "Egypt" is the opposite, to retreat from life as much as possible. When we attempt to find our ultimate satisfaction in what the world offers us we are marching toward Egypt.

## **DAY 2: Folly in Egypt – part 1**

*Genesis 12:11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. <sup>12</sup> When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. <sup>13</sup> Say you are my sister; so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”*

*<sup>14</sup> When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. <sup>15</sup> And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. <sup>16</sup> He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.*

1. There are vital lessons to learn from Abraham’s folly in Egypt.

### **Lesson 1: Foolish decisions sometimes bring initial “good” success.**

*Hebrews 11:25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the **fleeting pleasures of sin.***

2. The pressure’s off! And voila, it’s a lot more comfortable to live in a house than a tent. Sarah was taken into the palace. Abraham was “treated well” and became wealthy. What could be wrong with all of that, right? (sarcasm).

### **Lesson 2: When fear overtakes faith, we can lose our honor and courage.**

3. Abraham realized that there were sexual wolves in Egypt who would not think twice about killing him and raping Sarah. Abraham’s deceit of calling Sarah his sister was half-true. She was his half-sister, born to Abraham’s father by another wife. When we are tempted to choose the dishonorable course, we naturally justify our decision. He thought this lie would keep Sarah out of danger.

### **Lesson 3: Our foolish decisions can harm multitudes of people**

4. Though Abraham found temporary relief from famine, his failure of faith back in Canaan would bring hardship, not only on Sarah and him, but upon even innocent people!

### **Application:**

5. Abraham grabs control of the situation rather than casting himself on God for control of the situation. Abraham grabs the steering wheel. Ironically, it plunged Sarah into greater danger, adding her to Pharaoh’s harem!

a. Are you tempted to grab the steering wheel of your life? And justify it with some excuses?

b. Are you willing to run your plan by some godly counsel, a wise friend(s)?

6. When we move away from our “land,” (our responsibilities and relationships), away from the **tent**, and away from the **altar**, we put our self and others in danger.

### **DAY 3: Folly in Egypt – part 2**

*Genesis 12:17 But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. <sup>18</sup> So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" <sup>20</sup> Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.*

1. Let's continue lessons from Abraham's folly in going to Egypt. Today we look at lessons 4-7.

#### **Lesson 4: When we seize control, others eventually suffer.**

2. Not only was Sarah in greater danger, but his nephew Lot was as well. The effect of Egypt on Lot will be horrific. When it came to dividing the land of Canaan with Abraham, the decision would be up to Lot. He would choose that part of the land that most resembled Egypt, which turned out to be a frightful decision ending in tragedy.

#### **Lesson 5: Money can have devastating effects on relationships.**

3. Abraham became rich. There is nothing wrong with riches. Money is not a moral component. How we gain money, use money and how money uses us is a different story, Jesus taught about "the deceitfulness of riches" (Mark 4:19). Abraham was given a fortune in flocks, herds, and servants. But when he gets back to Canaan, the first thing that happens is a major fracturing between Abraham and Lot over their wealth.

#### **Lesson 6: A foolish idea that looks wise can bring eventual harm on many.**

4. Instead of Abraham being a blessing to people, he became a curse to many. "The Lord afflicted the Egyptians with great plagues" because of his folly. He became abhorrent to them, They deported him back to his country of origin.

#### **Lesson 7: What may appear to be a blessing to you may be a curse you never saw coming.**

5. Abraham was given menservants and maidservants, a common practice at the time. That made life easier, right? One of the maidservants was a young woman named Hagar. Abraham would eventually father a child with Hagar that turned into the longest lasting international feud in human history. Hagar's son would be named Ishmael, who would become the "father of the Arab nations," which has hated Abraham's progeny, the nation of Israel for thousands of years.

#### **Lesson 8: The move that appeared to provide plenty may prove to be humiliating.**

6. Egypt turns out to be humiliating. Here is Abraham, who has started to walk with God, strayed from God, still protected by God and yet rebuked by pagan Pharaoh.

7. What lesson most resonates with you?

## DAY 4: Fullness of God

1. One of the wonders about walking with God is what happens after our failures.

*Proverbs 24:16 For a righteous man falls seven times but gets up again but the unrighteous are overthrown by calamity.*

2. Mercy is new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).. Grace awaits. God can redeem our failures and still use our lives as He sees fit.

3. As Abraham lumbers back to Canaan, he discovers a fullness of the land and the God he seeks to follow and serve!

*Gen. 13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. <sup>2</sup> Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.*

*<sup>3</sup> From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his **tent** had been earlier <sup>4</sup> and where he had first built an **altar**. There Abram called on the name of the Lord.*

4. Abraham returned to the exact place where he had walked with God in obedience, to the place between Bethel and Ai, to the tent and the altar!

a. The tent was his visual aid that he was dependent on God in the greatest sense.

b. The altar was his visual aid and place of cleansing and worship, a place of being re-centered in his heart and soul, daily.

5. Abraham returned to Canaan a wealthy man, but it came at a terrific price. He lost the respect of his wife, and his own self-respect. He lost his honor, his name and reputation, his spiritual and personal strength to deal with the challenges of life. He was an empty man. He was a broken man.

6. Was the land still in a famine? We're not directly told but the text infers that it was. First, remember that Abraham was "driven" out of Egypt. He did not want to leave of his own volition. Second, when they returned, there was a great conflict with Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's herdsmen over a lack of pastureland. Third, the first thing Abraham did when he returned to Canaan was to "call upon the name of the Lord." The name of the Lord includes the resources of God.

### Conclusion:

7. One of the greatest things about walking with God is that when we fail there is always a simple path back to God. Remember the tent and the altar.

We live with a context: the tent and the altar

8. "God, you are telling Your Larger Story. God, what do you want me to do? What would help move your Larger Story forward through my smaller story?"

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?