

Why the Bible Reveals Abraham's Doubt and Sin in So Much Detail

In Judaism, Abraham is referred to as the father of our faith, and when we pray, we often pray to the G-D of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—our patriarchs. Because we do so, we often find ourselves attributing an unrealistic level of faithfulness upon our patriarchs, but especially upon Abraham. I say unrealistic because while Abraham was clearly a man of great faith and obedience, he was also a real man who demonstrated doubt, unbelief and disobedience.

It is interesting that Bible covers G-D's speaking the entire world into existence, the creation of all living things, including Adam and Eve, the fall of man and expulsion from the garden of Eden, Cain killing Abel and the flood of Noah in only 10 chapters, which, in my Bible, takes up nine pages of text. The first nine pages of the Bible cover 10 generations and thousands of years in time. Then, in chapter 11, we are introduced to Abraham and the next three generations, and a few hundred years take 40 chapters and 45 pages of text. Have you ever wondered why in some cases you turn the page of your Bible and hundreds and even thousands of years and many generations pass by with that single flip of a page and yet, the story of this one man and his son, grandson, great-grandsons is spoken of in such detail and takes up the majority of the book of Genesis?

When we look at the events of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the sons of Jacob, we find in this one family a case study in both faithfulness and unfaithfulness, in love and betrayal, in greed and generosity, in patience and lack of patience. I could go on, but you should be able to see the pattern that within the family of the man that we point to and say, "we are

children of Abraham through faith," we can find both extremes of righteousness and unrighteousness. In these four generations, 40 chapters and 45 pages, we can find examples of everything that is good and bad in the human experience.

Let me give you a few quick examples. We start out the story of Abraham with G-D telling him to leave his family and go to the place to which he would be led. Abraham demonstrates extreme faith by getting up and going. Yet, at the same time he shows lack of faith and disobedience by bringing Lot with him when he had been told to leave his family behind. (Gen. 12:1). While Abraham trusted G-D enough to travel across great distances without any idea of where he would end up, he didn't trust G-D to protect him and Sarah from the Pharaoh of Egypt. Instead, Abraham basically trades Sarah for his life (Gen. 12:11-13). This ends up bringing a curse upon Egypt (Gen. 12:17). So, instead of Abraham's faith causing all the nations to be blessed (Gen. 12:3) we find Abraham's lack of faith causing a nation, Egypt, to be cursed.

Abraham's lack of faith in G-D's promise to make him a great nation (Gen. 12:2) ends up establishing a nation through Ishmael, which becomes a chief enemy of Abraham's descendants. Over and over through the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph we find example after example of powerful faith and disastrous unbelief. The faithfulness establishes a nation that changed the world, preserved the oracles of G-D, and ultimately through this family's genealogy, the Messiah, Yeshua (Jesus) was born. Through their unfaithfulness, we see broken homes, unfaithful marriages, sibling rivalry, deception, and sins too many to list in this article.

So, if we see the family of Abraham, the father of our faith, as so flawed, why is so much of the Bible written about them and their lives? I believe it is because the Bible was written for people like you and me. People who live lives that many times swing a pendulum between great unwavering faith in G-D and His promises and at the other extreme, fear and doubt

which causes us to fail miserably and quite often hurt the very people we love the most. I believe so much space is written about this family because they, in a real way, are our families and our congregations. The story of Abraham and his sons and their families is not a story of hypocrisy; it is a story of humanity.

These chapters and experiences are written in such detail to remind us that the same people that we look at as mentors because of their great faith and faithfulness, may also at times fail and fall. Abraham didn't cease to need G-D's help and forgiveness simply because he had accepted G-D as his G-D and began his journey to follow Him. These chapters and pages were written so that we would see the reality of walking with G-D as humans. They were provided so that we would see the good, the bad and the ugly. We would see the blessings that come from being faithful and the curses with their resultant crises that come from unfaithfulness. But, more than that—much more than that—they were written to show us clearly that G-D's faithfulness, love and forgiveness do not end with our failures.

The story of Abraham begins with disobedience that starts a snowball of a broken family filled with hatred and fighting, but it ends with forgiveness and restoration, as Joseph and his brothers close the breach that Abraham opened. The story of these generations provides the backdrop that allows us to see past our sins and failures to our complete forgiveness and restoration brought about by Yeshua. {eoa}

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