

Dear everyone, greetings.

At the recent conference on outreach among Ms, held in MI by the NAD, Dr Doukhan from the Seminary gave a beautiful sermon on the God of Abraham. I tried to keep up with him on my phone, and here are my imperfect notes. I hope and pray they are as much a blessing for you as they were for me!

Who is the God of Abraham?

We find insights into the God of Abraham when we look individually at the stories of God interacting with Abraham.

1. Genesis 12. Abraham did not just go with his immediately family to the Promised Land. No – he took a large group of people with him, quite possibly slaves / servants. God said “get up and go,” the same as Gen 22 with the command to get up and go to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice Isaac. The God of Abraham wishes to see as many as possible enter the Promised Land. His salvific purposes are for all peoples of the earth.
2. Genesis 12, the story of Pharaoh, who was more ethical than duplicitous Abraham in his treatment of Sarah. Was she really only Abraham’s sister? In this story, the God of Abraham is active among the nations and the ostensibly pagan.
3. Genesis 14. Melchizedek blessed Abraham in the name of the God of the heavens and earth. The God of Abraham is God over all creation. The God of Abraham is not contained within creation, but is transcendent over creation.
4. Genesis 15. Abraham worries over his future. How will his line be secure when he as yet has no child? He is old, as is Sarah. Yet, God is Abraham's shield (Ps. 47.9). God promises children like the stars of heaven to Abraham, thus the God of Abraham takes care of the future. This is what it means to be saved – trusting God with our eternal future. The future is in the hands of the God of Abraham, so don't worry about the future.
5. Genesis 17. Responding to Abraham’s laughter and disbelief at the promises of God is the God who laughs. The name “Isaac” means that God laughs. The God of Abraham laughs – has a sense of humor, and He does not laugh at His faithful followers but with them.
6. Genesis 18. Three people come to Abraham, who is delighted to see them from a distance and runs to them. He “looked and behold”, a phrase that introduces God in the OT stories. “Adonai thee.” This expression of Abraham reflects the truth of the Trinity as both words are plural. The God who meets and dialogues with Abraham is a Triune Being. Abraham then wants to offer food to the God who first gave food to humanity in Genesis 1-2. The first instance of “Nathan” (meaning, “He gave”) is of God giving food to man. Abraham then bargains with God for Sodom. We can talk with the God of Abraham and challenge Him. We tend not to do this. Why? Possibly because we lack faith in Him. Thus the God of Abraham is He who comes close to us, who wants us to talk and challenge Him with our deepest concerns.
7. Genesis 20. The story of Abimelech, a foreign king not within the visible community of faith. God speaks to this foreign king in the story, and not with Abraham. Abimelech then bargains with God. God doesn't speak with Abraham in this story. Abraham however prays, and God accepts Abraham's prayers.

Abraham realizes the unreachable may actually be closer to God and wiser in the ways of God than he himself, yet the God of Abraham hears and answers the prayers of Abraham for this foreign king.

8. Genesis 22. "Lech leha" (Get up, and go!") The second time this command is given, the first being the call of Abraham in Genesis 12.1-3. Sacrifice your son. Where is the lamb? Isaac spoke twice (in the Hebrew narrative). He spoke. Silence (in the Hebrew). He then spoke again and asked, "Where is the lamb?" In the local culture it was common to sacrifice a child, e.g. to Molech. Abraham responds with a term of deep personal endearment, "beni" ("my son") which expresses the depth and love of the relationship between father and son. Jehovah Jireh. "God will provide." The Hebrew here is a reflexive verb. Not just "God will provide" but "God will provide Himself as the lamb." The God of Abraham is the lamb. He will make Himself the lamb.

Who then is the God of Abraham? In the stories of Abraham He is as follows:

- 1) The God of Abraham wishes to see as many as possible enter the Promised Land.
- 2) The God of Abraham is active among the nations and the ostensibly pagan.
- 3) The God of Abraham is not contained within creation, but is transcendent over creation.
- 4) Our salvation is secure in the God of Abraham, for He enters into a covenant with us, as He did with Abraham, and promises to take care of our future.
- 5) The God of Abraham laughs – has a sense of humor, and He does not laugh at His faithful followers but with them.
- 6) The God of Abraham is He who comes close to us, who wants us to talk and challenge Him with our deepest concerns.
- 7) The God of Abraham hears and answers the prayers of His representatives on behalf of the unreachable.
- 8) The God of Abraham not only provides a Lamb, but He Himself is the Lamb. .

This then is the God of Abraham, the shield of Abraham (Psalm 47.9), and all that He did for Abraham, He wishes to be and to do in our lives today!

Have a blessed Sabbath!

Conrad.