

# Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 11, Abraham's Journeys (Gen. 12:4-14:24) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Mathews, Genesis, Session 11, Abraham's Journeys (Gen. 12:4-14:24), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Kenneth Mathews's Genesis Session 11 lecture focuses on Abraham's journeys, interpreting his physical travels as metaphors for his spiritual development. The lecture **analyzes the covenant promises** God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, highlighting the themes of **land, descendants, and blessing**. Abraham's journey to Egypt, his encounter with Pharaoh, and the subsequent separation from Lot are examined as pivotal moments in his spiritual growth. The lecture also **discusses the significance of Melchizedek**, a mysterious figure who foreshadows Jesus Christ. Finally, the recurring motif of separation within Abraham's lineage is explored, emphasizing the narrowing path toward the fulfillment of God's promises.

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathews, Genesis, Session 11 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).**



**Mathews\_Genesis\_  
Session11.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Mathews, Genesis, Session 11, Abraham's Journeys (Gen. 12:4-14:24)

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Mathews\_Gen\_EN\_Session11.pdf," with relevant quotes.

#### Briefing Document: Genesis, Session 11 - Abraham's Journeys

##### Introduction

This session focuses on Abraham's physical and metaphorical spiritual journeys as described in Genesis chapters 12-14. Dr. Mathews emphasizes that Abraham's movements reflect his spiritual highs and lows, directly linked to God's covenant promises. The core of the lesson revolves around understanding the promises God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and how they are manifested in Abraham's journey.

##### Key Themes and Concepts:

#### 1. The Covenant Promises (Genesis 12:1-3):

- **The Call:** God commands Abraham to leave his country, people, and father's household to go to a land God will show him. Mathews notes this command mirrors the language used in chapter 22, where God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, creating "bookends of the Abraham journey spiritually." The initial command is a "movement away from the backstop in his life, the comfort zone."
- Quote: "'Leave your country, your people, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you.'" (Gen 12:1)
- **The Promises:** God makes multiple "I will" promises to Abraham:
- **Land:** God promises to give Abraham a land, though it is not specified. Abraham must trust God's guidance.
- Quote: "He really doesn't have a map other than this very important point, and that is the map that God will show him."
- **Nation:** God will make Abraham into a great nation, despite Sarah's barrenness. This promise requires a leap of faith for Abraham.
- Quote: "I will make you into a great nation." (Gen 12:2)
- **Blessing:** God will bless Abraham with progeny and prosperity, both physical and spiritual. This blessing extends beyond material wealth to include God's favor.

- **Great Name:** God will make Abraham's name great, resulting in an international reputation, enabling him to influence others and share knowledge of the true God.
- Quote: "I will make your name great. What's in view here is that God... will come to have an international reputation."
- **A Channel of Blessing:** Abraham will be a blessing to all people, a "funnel" through which God's blessings will reach the world, contingent on people's relationship with Abraham's God.
- Quote: "And you will be a blessing... So that's how he's going to be a funnel, a means by which God will bring blessings to all people."
- **Blessing/Curses:** God will bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse him, emphasizing the importance of a right relationship with Abraham and, consequently, with his God.
- Quote: "I will bless those who bless you...and whoever curses you, I will curse." (Gen 12:3)
- **Universal Blessing:** Ultimately, all peoples on earth will be blessed through Abraham, which provides the resolution to the dispersion caused by the Tower of Babel incident.
- Quote: "All people on earth will be blessed through you." (Gen 12:3)

#### 1. **Abraham's Faith and Obedience:**

- **Immediate Response:** Abraham's immediate departure after God's command in Genesis 12:4 demonstrates his strong faith and obedience. The Hebrew word for "left" is the same in both the command (12:1) and Abraham's action (12:4).
- Quote: "So Abraham left. But that is the same word in the Hebrew Bible that is found in chapter 12, verse one... This immediately shows that Abraham exhibited a strong up-and-running faith in God's word."
- **Age:** Abraham's age (75) when he leaves is significant because it emphasizes the long wait of 25 years until the birth of Isaac.

#### 1. **Abraham's Travels and Spiritual State:**

- **Initial Journey:** Abraham travels from Ur to Haran (600 miles) and then from Haran to Canaan (400 miles).

- **Building Altars:** Abraham's pattern of building altars wherever he goes demonstrates his faith and trust in God's provision and protection. This occurred at Shechem and Bethel, "a sign of his faith and trust in God."
- **Journey to Egypt:** Due to a famine, Abraham descends to Egypt. This move is linked to the later story of Joseph and Jacob's family going to Egypt because of a famine, thus showing a connection between the ancestors of Israel and their experience of God's deliverance.
- Quote: "My point is that when the people of Israel read these early stories about their ancestors, they could see themselves in these stories."
- **Deception in Egypt:** In Egypt, out of fear for his life, Abraham lies to Pharaoh, claiming that Sarah is his sister, not his wife, which resulted in Pharaoh taking Sarah into his harem. This act is later repeated with Abimelech in chapter 20, showing it as a "habit".
- **God's Intervention:** God intervenes by inflicting diseases on Pharaoh, preventing the threat to the promise of progeny.
- Quote: "The Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh...interrupting the normal course of sexual relations."
- **Abraham's Enrichment:** Despite his deception, Abraham is enriched by Pharaoh with wealth and livestock. This highlights the paradox of God blessing Abraham even in his failures.
- **Failure and Stumbling:** Mathews notes that despite his strong start, Abraham stumbles in Egypt, because the rejection of Abraham is a curse on him and his God.
- Quote: "And yet here we have him stumbling because the promise says that whoever blesses you will be blessed. Whoever curses you will be cursed. Well, transparently, this is a rejection of Abraham."

#### 1. **Abraham and Lot:**

- **Growing Wealth:** Both Abraham and Lot become wealthy, leading to tension and quarreling between their herdsmen.
- **Separation:** Abraham, exhibiting mercy and grace after his Egyptian experience, allows Lot to choose his land, ultimately separating from him.

- Quote: "Abram, I think has learned something from his Egyptian experience because an act of great mercy and grace enlarges, he says to the younger Lot, he says, let's don't quarrel."
- **Lot's Choice:** Lot chooses the fertile land of the Jordan plain, near Sodom, driven by greed and self-interest. Mathews argues that Lot's greed makes him an idolater of himself.
- Quote: "Lot was a very greedy person who would fall somewhat under the spell of the great wealth and prosperity of the cities of the plain. And it is identified as idolatry."
- **God's Reassurance:** God reaffirms the land promise to Abraham, encouraging him to walk through it and claim it by faith.
- Quote: "Go walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."
- **Motif of Separation:** This separation is part of a larger theme in Genesis of divisions between groups (heaven/earth, Cain/Seth, Noah's sons) and a narrowing lineage of promise. The separations in Genesis are designed to "differentiate the righteous lineage" and show the lineage that will produce the deliverer.
- Quote: "Separations are an important idea, a motif that runs through all of Genesis... these separations are narrowing the lineage that will produce the deliverer."

#### 1. **Abraham's International Significance (Chapter 14):**

- **Eastern and Western Kings:** The chapter details a conflict between Eastern and Western coalitions of kings, in which Lot is captured.
- **Abraham as a Rescuer:** Abraham, as a powerful and influential figure, rescues Lot and his possessions.
- Quote: "...because of his role in rescuing Lot, his role in his relationship to the King of Sodom as an equal player on the international board, that he was a very important figure who will now become increasingly a figure of influence."
- **"Hebrew":** This is the first time Abraham is identified as a "Hebrew," and Mathews explains this could be connected to either the ancestor Eber or the idea of a traveler, and it also has a social meaning, of being an outsider.

- Quote: "It comes from the root word meaning to cross over. And it has the idea of a traveler that's crossing boundaries... it can refer to people who are on the outside of civil authorities, fugitives, and outlaws."
- **Melchizedek:** Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of God Most High (El Elyon), blesses Abraham. This interaction highlights a figure who worships the same God as Abraham despite not being part of his lineage. Melchizedek represents someone, who, in paganism, worships the one true God of Abraham. Mathews points out this is a generic form of God (El, El-yon) not the personal name Yahweh.
- Quote: "This was not a Hebrew person. This was a person, probably a Canaanite, we can say, who is worshipping the one true God of Abraham."
- **Tithing:** Abraham gives a tenth of his possessions to Melchizedek, foreshadowing the later practice of tithing in Mosaic law.
- Quote: "This would have been readily recognized by the people in Mosaic times as giving a 10th part of their resources to the tabernacle priesthood for their use in carrying out worship."
- **Refusal of Sodom's Spoils:** Abraham refuses to accept any spoils from the King of Sodom, to ensure it will be understood that it was his God, not Sodom, that made him rich. He does accept the bread and wine from Melchizedek, but he will not be enriched by the pagan king.
- Quote: "That is, he would not have Sodom say, I have enriched Abraham. Rather, Abram is going to want it said that it is Abraham's God who has enriched him."
- **Melchizedek's Mystery:** Mathews previews next week's study, as Melchizedek is a mysterious character who will be further explored through Hebrews 7:1-4 and how this relates to Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion:

Session 11 provides an overview of Abraham's journeys and the important themes of covenant, faith, obedience, separation, and international influence. Abraham's spiritual journey is marked by moments of strong faith and also stumbles. This session lays the groundwork for understanding the nature of the covenant, its impact on Abraham's life, and its implications for the nation of Israel and the entire world.

## 4. Study Guide: Mathews, Genesis, Session 11, Abraham's Journeys (Gen. 12:4-14:24)

### Abraham's Journeys: A Study Guide

#### Short Answer Quiz

1. What is the significance of the phrase "leave your country" in Genesis 12:1? This phrase signifies Abraham's break from his known world, including his land, his people, and his father's household, representing both a physical and spiritual separation, and a complete trust in God. This act of leaving is a key example of his faith.
2. How does the barrenness of Sarah impact the promises given to Abraham in Genesis 12? Sarah's barrenness creates a paradox against God's promise of a great nation from Abraham, emphasizing that the fulfillment of this promise will require divine intervention, thus demanding that Abraham trust in God's power rather than in his circumstances.
3. Explain the three concentric circles of loss Abraham faces when God calls him to leave. These three circles represent Abraham's departure from his land, his clan, and finally, his father's household. These separations highlight the comprehensive nature of Abraham's commitment to God's call and the increasing intimacy required of his faith journey.
4. What does it mean that God says to Abraham "I will bless you" in the covenant? This divine blessing is not just material prosperity but also encompasses spiritual favor, as well as a progeny. This blessing extends beyond earthly wealth, promising that Abraham will be the channel through which others will be blessed.
5. Why did Abraham go down to Egypt, and what does this decision reveal about his faith? Abraham went down to Egypt during a famine in Canaan, seeking food. This reveals a lapse in his faith and trust in God's promise, as he chose a more tangible solution instead of relying on divine provision.
6. How does the story of Abraham in Egypt parallel the story of Jacob's family later in Genesis? Both Abraham and Jacob's families descended into Egypt due to famine, highlighting a pattern of God's people seeking refuge there. Both stories demonstrate that God has a plan to both provide for and bless His people.

7. How does Abraham deceive Pharaoh, and what are the consequences? Abraham deceives Pharaoh by claiming that Sarah is his sister to protect himself, and Pharaoh takes her into his harem. As a result, God inflicted diseases on Pharaoh's household, leading Pharaoh to discover the deception and expel Abraham, along with wealth he gives to Abraham for the harm done.
8. Why does Lot's decision to settle near Sodom indicate a problem with his faith? Lot's decision indicates that he was prioritizing personal gain and prosperity over spiritual values, choosing the fertile but wicked plains of Sodom over the less prosperous land in Canaan, signaling a form of idolatry of self and personal prosperity.
9. Why is the distinction of the term "Hebrew" in Genesis 14 significant? The term "Hebrew" highlights Abraham's ethnic distinctiveness from other groups in the region, marking him as an outsider or a traveler. It emphasizes that Abraham's identity is not linked to any specific place but is tied to his relationship with God and His promises.
10. Who is Melchizedek and why is he important in the narrative? Melchizedek is the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, demonstrating that there were people of God outside the lineage of Abraham. His blessing of Abraham and worship of the same God is crucial for showing the universality of God and the blessing that extends beyond ethnic lines.

### **Answer Key**

1. This phrase signifies Abraham's break from his known world, including his land, his people, and his father's household, representing both a physical and spiritual separation, and a complete trust in God. This act of leaving is a key example of his faith.
2. Sarah's barrenness creates a paradox against God's promise of a great nation from Abraham, emphasizing that the fulfillment of this promise will require divine intervention, thus demanding that Abraham trust in God's power rather than in his circumstances.
3. These three circles represent Abraham's departure from his land, his clan, and finally, his father's household. These separations highlight the comprehensive nature of Abraham's commitment to God's call and the increasing intimacy required of his faith journey.



4. This divine blessing is not just material prosperity but also encompasses spiritual favor, as well as a progeny. This blessing extends beyond earthly wealth, promising that Abraham will be the channel through which others will be blessed.
5. Abraham went down to Egypt during a famine in Canaan, seeking food. This reveals a lapse in his faith and trust in God's promise, as he chose a more tangible solution instead of relying on divine provision.
6. Both Abraham and Jacob's families descended into Egypt due to famine, highlighting a pattern of God's people seeking refuge there. Both stories demonstrate that God has a plan to both provide for and bless His people.
7. Abraham deceives Pharaoh by claiming that Sarah is his sister to protect himself, and Pharaoh takes her into his harem. As a result, God inflicted diseases on Pharaoh's household, leading Pharaoh to discover the deception and expel Abraham, along with wealth he gives to Abraham for the harm done.
8. Lot's decision indicates that he was prioritizing personal gain and prosperity over spiritual values, choosing the fertile but wicked plains of Sodom over the less prosperous land in Canaan, signaling a form of idolatry of self and personal prosperity.
9. The term "Hebrew" highlights Abraham's ethnic distinctiveness from other groups in the region, marking him as an outsider or a traveler. It emphasizes that Abraham's identity is not linked to any specific place but is tied to his relationship with God and His promises.
10. Melchizedek is the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, demonstrating that there were people of God outside the lineage of Abraham. His blessing of Abraham and worship of the same God is crucial for showing the universality of God and the blessing that extends beyond ethnic lines.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the spiritual journey of Abraham as reflected in his physical travels described in Genesis 12-14, noting specific instances of growth and setbacks in his faith.
2. Discuss the significance of God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. How do these promises shape the narrative of Abraham's life and the future of Israel?

3. Compare and contrast the choices of Abraham and Lot regarding where they chose to live. How do their choices reflect their values and their understanding of God's promises?
4. Examine the role of covenant in Abraham's life as portrayed in the studied chapters. How does the concept of covenant influence his actions and relationship with God?
5. Explore the importance of the character Melchizedek in Genesis 14. What does his appearance reveal about God's nature and his relationship to humanity?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or promise between God and humans, often involving specific terms and obligations.
- **Barren:** The state of being unable to bear children, which is particularly significant in the context of God's promise to Abraham of a great nation.
- **Progeny:** Offspring or descendants; children of a person or family.
- **Polytheism:** The belief in or worship of more than one god.
- **Harem:** A group of wives or concubines belonging to a king or ruler.
- **Hedonism:** The pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification as the highest good.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or false gods. This can also refer to placing any other priority over the priority of worshipping and following the one true God.
- **El Elyon:** The Hebrew term for God Most High, used by Melchizedek. This is a general term for God and not His personal name.
- **Yahweh:** The personal name of God in the Hebrew Bible, often associated with His covenant relationship with Israel.
- **Hebrew:** A term used in the Old Testament to identify a specific people group, often linked to the descendants of Abraham. This term is also used to refer to those who are outside the established social order.

## 5. FAQs on Mathews, Genesis, Session 14, Abraham's Journeys (Gen. 12:4-14:24), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions about Abraham's Journeys in Genesis 12-14

1. **What is the significance of Abraham's physical journeys, and how do they relate to his spiritual journey?**
2. Abraham's physical travels are not just geographical movements but also metaphors for his spiritual growth and relationship with God. The text suggests a correlation between his physical location and his spiritual highs and lows. The journeys, like his initial call to leave his homeland, are bookended by the command to sacrifice Isaac, representing the beginning and culmination of his spiritual development.
3. **What are the main promises God makes to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, and what is their importance?**
4. God makes several key promises to Abraham: (1) a land, (2) a great nation, (3) blessing, encompassing both material prosperity and God's favor, and (4) a great name. God also promises that Abraham will be a source of blessing for all people. These promises are initiated by God and are dependent on His faithfulness, not Abraham's merit. Abraham responds in faith by traveling to the unknown land. These are seen as the foundation of a covenant with Abraham, which establishes the basis of the nation of Israel and their role in God's plan for the redemption of the world.
5. **Why does Abraham travel to Egypt, and what does this episode reveal about his faith?**
6. Abraham travels to Egypt due to a famine in Canaan. This move demonstrates a lapse in his faith. Rather than trusting in God's provision in the promised land, he seeks sustenance in Egypt, the "breadbasket" of the ancient Near East. Additionally, in Egypt, Abraham deceives Pharaoh by claiming that his wife, Sarah, is his sister. This highlights a moment of fear and lack of faith, and a departure from his initial, up-and-running faith.

**7. What is the significance of the conflict between Abraham's and Lot's herdsmen, and how does Abraham resolve it?**

The conflict between Abraham and Lot's herdsmen arises due to the abundance of their possessions and the limited land. Abraham, in an act of grace, allows Lot to choose his portion of land first to avoid further conflict. This contrasts with Lot, who is more concerned with his immediate benefit and selects the fertile Jordan Valley, foreshadowing his later difficulties. Abraham's response demonstrates the growth in his character and his desire for peaceful reconciliation.

- 1. What is the significance of Lot's choice to live in the cities of the plain, particularly Sodom?**
2. Lot's decision to settle near Sodom is portrayed as an act of greed and self-centeredness. He chooses the fertile and prosperous region for his own benefit despite the moral wickedness of those cities. His selection of Sodom and the description of that region as "like the garden of the Lord" serves as a foil for his ultimate downfall and emphasizes his misplaced priorities. His character provides a stark contrast to Abraham's focus on the promise and the will of God.
- 3. How does Abraham's rescue of Lot and the encounter with Melchizedek elevate Abraham's status in chapter 14?**
4. Abraham's rescue of Lot from the Eastern kings elevates him to an international figure. He is seen as a significant leader and a military force who commands the respect of other kings and city-states. The encounter with Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of God Most High, further confirms Abraham's stature. Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham and Abraham's tithe to him reveal the recognition of Abraham's favor with God and of the unique relationship that they have both have with God. It is in this chapter where Abraham is for the first time called a "Hebrew," demonstrating his increasing significance.

5. **What is the significance of the figure of Melchizedek, and how does Abraham respond to him?**
6. Melchizedek is a mysterious figure, both king and priest of "God Most High," who is not an Israelite but who worships the same God as Abraham. He brings out bread and wine, and blesses Abraham, recognizing that Abraham's God is also the creator of heaven and earth. Abraham responds by giving a tenth of the goods he has recovered from battle, recognizing that this was all enabled by the grace of God. This exchange underscores the universality of God and his presence with people across ethnic and geographic boundaries.
7. **How do the themes of separation and division contribute to the overall narrative of Genesis, and specifically in chapters 12-14?**
8. The theme of separation and division is a recurring motif in Genesis, beginning with the creation narrative and continuing throughout the patriarchs. In these chapters, this is exemplified in the separation of Abraham from his homeland, from his extended family with Terah, from his clan when Abraham and Lot separate, and from other nations. These divisions, including separations between brothers such as Cain and Abel or Jacob and Esau, are shown to narrow the lineage through which the messianic promise would come, highlighting the selective nature of God's covenant and the importance of maintaining righteousness within that chosen line. In addition, separations can also function as warnings against idolatry or the danger of a lifestyle that doesn't honor God.