

Genesis 13:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Analysis

Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

מִמָּרֶ֣ א	בְּאֶלְנֵ֣י י	וַיֵּשֶׁב־	וַיָּבֹ֣א	אַבְרָ֣ם	וַיֵּצֵ֣א ל
removed his tent	Then Abram	and came	and dwelt	in the plain	of Mamre
H167	H87	H935	H3427	H436	H4471
לִיהוָ֑ה:	מִזְבֵּ֖חַ	שָׁ֑ם	וַיִּבְנֶ֣ה	בְּחֶבְרֹ֣ן	אֲשֶׁ֔ר
unto the LORD	there an altar	H8033	and built	which is in Hebron	H834
H3068	H4196		H1129	H2275	

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 14:13 (Parallel theme): And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

Genesis 18:1 (References Lord): And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

Genesis 35:27 (Parallel theme): And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

Genesis 8:20 (Sacrifice): And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Psalms 16:8 (References Lord): I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

1 Timothy 2:8 (Parallel theme): I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Genesis 13:4 (Sacrifice): Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Genesis 37:14 (Parallel theme): And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

Numbers 13:22 (Parallel theme): And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

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