

STRUCTURE OF THE ABRAHAM STORY (GENESIS 12:1-21:7)

David A. Dorsey and David Carr

1. **Introduction**: Journey to Canaan and the promise of descendants (12:1-9)
2. **Abram lies about Sarah** in Egypt; God protects her in foreign king's court (12:10-20)
3. **Lot** settles in Sodom (and Abram settles in Hebron) (chap 13)
4. **Abram intercedes for Lot and Sodom**, militarily (chap 14)
5. **Promise** of a son: from Abram himself (chap 15)
6. **Ishmael's birth**; promise to him (chap 16)
7. **CENTER: Yahweh's covenant:**
Abram and Sarai's names changed;
circumcision instituted; promise of a
son reiterated (17:1-21)
- 6'. **Ishmael and Abraham circumcised** (promise
to Ishmael) (17:22-27; cf. vv 18, 20)
- 5'. **Promise** of a son: from Sarah herself (18:1-15)
- 4'. **Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot**, in prayer (18:16-33)
- 3'. **Lot** flees Sodom, which God destroys; settles in Moab (chap 19)
- 2'. **Abraham lies about Sarah** in Gerar; God protects her in foreign king's court
(chap 20)
- 1'. **Conclusion**: **Birth of Isaac** (and tension resolved) (21:1-7)

SYMMETRICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PENTATEUCH AND JOSHUA

1. **Primeval history:** The nations receive their allotted territories (Genesis 1-11)
 - Nations' territory (*gebûl*) are "according to their families" (*lemišpeḥōtām*)
 - Introduction of Israel's forefathers in Mesopotamia: Terah, Nahor, Abraham
2. **Abraham;** Yahweh's promise to give (*ntn*) Canaan to his descendants (Gen 12:1-21:7)
 - Abraham builds altar in Shechem; lives in area between Bethel and Ai; Hebron
 - Military victory against enemy from north; sudden attack, pursuit past Dan
3. **Isaac and death of Israel's founding father,** Abraham (Gen 21:8-28:4); theme of death, blessing
4. **Jacob:** A story illustrating evils of social and family discord (Gen 28:5-37:1)
 - Story of social and family strife, murder, lying, theft, abuse of aliens, etc.
 - Plight of unloved wife, hired man; younger and older siblings; birthright
5. **Joseph:** A story of how God rewards faithful obedience (Gen 37:2-50:26)
 - Theme of faithfulness rewarded, disobedience punished
6. **Exodus from Egypt** (Exod 1:1-13:16); Yahweh saves Israel in foreign land
 - Host king fears Israel is too numerous; calls magicians to oppose; fails
7. **Failure and divine grace in the wilderness** (Exod 13:17-19:2)
 - Nation in migration; ends: arrival at Sinai; date; meeting Jethro
 - Complaining (*hitlîn*); provision of water from rock; manna; quail
- ✱ **CENTER: TREATY AT SINAI** (Exod 19:3-Num 10:10) 7 part
- 7'. **Failure and divine grace in the wilderness** (Num 10:11-21:20)
 - Nation in migration; begins: departure from Sinai; date; meeting Jethro
 - Complaining (*hitlîn*); provision of water from rock; manna; quail
- 6'. **Victory in Moab** (Num 21:21-Deut 3:29); Yahweh saves Israel in foreign land
 - Host king fears Israel is too numerous; calls magician to oppose; fails
- 5'. **Call to obedience;** based on lessons from history (Deuteronomy 4-11)
 - History teaches that faithfulness is rewarded, disobedience punished
- 4'. **Laws for stability and justice in society and families** (Deuteronomy 12-26)
 - Laws to counter social and family strife, murder, lying, theft, abuse of aliens
 - Laws for unloved wife, hired man; younger and older siblings; birthright
- 3'. **Moses' final words, and death of Israel's other founding father,** Moses (Deuteronomy 27-34)
 - Theme of death and life (in following the covenant); theme of blessings
- 2'. **Conquest of Canaan;** promise to Abraham is fulfilled; Yahweh gives (*ntn*) Canaan to Abraham's descendants (Joshua 1-12)
 - Shechem altar; battle in area between Bethel and Ai; Hebron conquered
 - Military victory against enemy from north; sudden attack, pursuit past Dan area
- 1'. **Allotment of land of Canaan to Israel** (Joshua 13-24)
 - Israel's tribal territories (*gebûl*) are "according to their families" (*lemišpeḥōtām*)
 - References to Israel's forefathers in Mesopotamia: Terah, Nahor, Abraham (chap 24)