

# Genesis

## The Roots of Abraham

Lesson #6 for May 7, 2022

Scriptures: Genesis 12-14; Isaiah 36:6,9; 48:20; Jeremiah 2:18; Hebrews 7:1-10; 11:8.

1. This lesson covers the beginning of the story of Abram/Abraham, the central story (except for the story of God) of the book of Genesis. Remember that about half of the history of this world is covered by the book of Genesis. In this lesson, we will follow the lead of Ellen G. White and others and use *Abraham* except in quotations which have *Abram*. We do this even though there is significance to his name being changed.

This section takes us on a journey from Babel to the Promised Land-but with a new hero, Abram, who leaves his home without knowing his destination. **Abram's first steps toward the Promised Land** are not easy and rather hesitant. Abram struggles to inherit the land. When he finally arrives in Canaan, he cannot stay there, because there is a famine. He, therefore, **must move to Egypt**. But Abram cannot settle there, either, because of a conflict with Pharaoh. Abram is then obliged to turn back, and so he goes up to **Canaan again**. But even there, things are complicated. Abram and his nephew **Lot** agree to part ways because of a land dispute. Afterward, a **war breaks out** that involves the whole country, the very place that God has established Abram. After the battle, Abram is met by a stranger, **Melchizedek**, to whom he gives his **tithe**, a way of acknowledging that nothing belongs to him. These episodes are rich with spiritual lessons in which issues of faith and ethics are intertwined.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 80.†

2. Abraham was challenged: (1) To go away from his home in Ur of the Chaldees, and later, (2) To go and sacrifice his son at Mount Moriah. In effect, he was being asked to leave his past and to destroy his future! Thus, Abraham became a kind of migrant, always on the move and totally dependent on God. These are some of the central texts in the life of Abraham.

**Genesis 12:1:** The LORD said to Abram, “**Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home**, and go to a land that I am going to show you.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*\* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Genesis 12:1). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].†† [Abraham almost certainly came from what today is in southeastern Turkey, from a city now known as Urfa.]‡

**Genesis 22:2:** “Take your son,” God said, “your only son, Isaac, whom you love so much, and **go to the land of Moriah**. There on a mountain that I will show you, offer him as a sacrifice to me.”—*Good News Bible*.\*†

**Genesis 17:8:** [God said:] “I will give to you and to your descendants this land in which you are now a **foreigner**. The whole land of Canaan will belong to your descendants for ever, [sic] and I will be their God.”—*Good News Bible*.\*††

3. With the promised child yet to be born, Abraham needed to move forward by faith. He needed to trust God's promise. In the next three weeks of our study, we will focus on Abraham's movements, his trust in God, and the words from God, "Do not be afraid." (Genesis 15:1)

4. We recognize that Scriptures have cited Abraham as a great example of faith.

**Nehemiah 9:7-8:** <sup>7</sup> "You, LORD God, chose Abram

and led him out of Ur in Babylonia;  
you changed his name to Abraham.

<sup>8</sup> You found that he was faithful to you,  
and you made a covenant with him."—*Good News Bible*.\*

5. So, why did God call Abraham from his comfortable home in Ur to go to an unknown land?

**Genesis 12:1-9:** <sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Abram, "**Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you.**" <sup>2</sup>I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,  
But I will curse those who curse you.  
And through you I will bless all the nations."

<sup>4</sup> When Abram was 75 years old, he started out from Haran, as the LORD had told him to do; and Lot went with him. <sup>5</sup>**Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the wealth and all the slaves they had acquired in Haran, and they started out for the land of Canaan.** [How many people were involved in this move?]

When they arrived in Canaan, <sup>6</sup>Abram travelled through the land until he came to the sacred tree of Moreh, the holy place at Shechem. (At that time the Canaanites were still living in the land.) <sup>7</sup>The LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "**This is the country that I am going to give to your descendants.**" Then Abram built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup>After that, he moved on south to the hill country east of the city of Bethel and set up his camp between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There also he built an altar and worshipped the LORD. <sup>9</sup>Then he moved on from place to place, going towards the southern part of Canaan.—*Good News Bible*.\*††

6. How difficult is it for one to leave his/her roots and never to return? You have probably heard the expression: It was much harder to get "Egypt" out of Israel, than it was to get Israel out of Egypt! It is very likely that if Abram had remained in Ur, we would never have heard about him because of family influences for evil.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] **This Hebrew phrase ["go" in Genesis 12:1] means "go in order to find yourself."** The call to Abram to "get out" of his country and move away from his roots should take him on a journey to find himself, to fulfill himself and establish his identity. It is not enough for

Abram to get out of Babel; **in order to find his real self, Abram needs to get rid of the Babel that is still in him—the idolatry of his fathers and the arrogant mentality of Babel.** For that purpose, Abram not only must leave the place where he has been until now; he also must always be on the move. It is significant that this “moving” destiny is reflected in the language that covers the stories of his life. **The verb “go,” *halak*, is a keyword** that pervades the narratives about Abram from chapter 12 to chapter 22, which constitute the central section of the book of Genesis. It also is significant that the phrase *lekh lekha*, “go,” frames the spiritual journey of Abraham. This expression appears twice: the first time when **Abraham is called to leave his past (Gen. 12:1)**, and the second time when **he is called to abandon his future (Gen. 22:2)**. Suspended in the void, disconnected from his roots, Abraham depends only on God. Abraham exemplifies “faith.”—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 80-81.<sup>†§</sup> [See Item #2 above for quotations of Genesis 12:1 and 22:2]<sup>‡</sup>

7. What might God be calling us to leave behind? Someday soon, will we have to leave our “roots” and “flee to the mountains”?
8. The last prior recorded time in which we know about God speaking to some human being was His promise to Noah as He gave the sign of the rainbow.

**Genesis 9:15-17:** [God said:] <sup>15</sup> “I will remember my promise to you and to all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings. <sup>16</sup>When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on earth. <sup>17</sup>That is the sign of the promise which I am making to all living beings.”—*Good News Bible.\*†*

9. Abraham’s original home was in Ur of the Chaldees. The Chaldeans later came to rule the city of Babylon. The **call from God to leave Babylon** has a long history among the biblical prophets. (See Genesis 11:31; Isaiah 13:9; Isaiah 48:20; Revelation 18:4.)
10. God repeatedly told Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his descendants. Was that because of Jesus? Or, was it to be even before Jesus?
11. Not long after Abraham arrived in Canaan and was starting to settle in the southern part of the land, a great famine came. What do you think Abraham thought when this famine descended upon him? At God’s direction, he had moved from a place that was close to the Euphrates River; he was not used to famines, and he had large flocks and herds.
12. But, of course, the closest major river to him in southern Canaan was the Nile River in Egypt. Although we do not have record that he had received any indication from God that he should go there, he went.

**Genesis 12:10-20:** <sup>10</sup> But there was a famine in Canaan, and it was so bad that Abram went farther south to Egypt, to live there for a while. [What happened to all of his herds when he went to Egypt? Did he take them with him?] <sup>11</sup>When he was about to cross the border into Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, **“You are a beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup>When the Egyptians see you, they will assume that you are my wife, and so they will kill me and let you live. <sup>13</sup>Tell them that you are my sister [she was his half-sister]; then**

**because of you they will let me live and treat me well.”** <sup>14</sup>When he crossed the border into Egypt, the Egyptians did see that his wife was beautiful. <sup>15</sup>Some of the court officials saw her and told the king how beautiful she was; so she was taken to his palace. <sup>16</sup>**Because of her the king treated Abram well and gave him flocks of sheep and goats, cattle, donkeys, slaves, and camels.**

<sup>17</sup> But because the king had taken Sarai, the LORD sent terrible diseases on him and on the people of his palace. <sup>18</sup>Then the king sent for Abram and asked him, “What have you done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she was your wife? <sup>19</sup>Why did you say that she was your sister, and let me take her as my wife? **Here is your wife; take her and get out!**” <sup>20</sup>The king gave orders to his men, so they took Abram and put him out of the country, together with his wife and everything he owned.—*Good News Bible*.\*†‡

13. How do you feel about Abraham’s half-lie, half-truth regarding his sister-wife? Is it all right to say something that is half true? When we give testimony in our legal system, we declare or swear that we will “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Was Abraham doing that? Is it all right to say you are fine in the morning when you really are not?
14. How did God turn this experience in Egypt to the eventual good of Abraham’s descendants?

[From the writings of Ellen White=EGW:] During his stay in Egypt, Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. **In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care, a lack of that lofty faith and courage so often and nobly exemplified in his life....**

Abraham had been greatly favored by the king; even now Pharaoh would permit no harm to be done him or his company, but ordered a guard to conduct them in safety out of his dominions. **At this time laws were made prohibiting the Egyptians from intercourse [interaction] with foreign shepherds in any such familiarity as eating or drinking with them.** Pharaoh’s dismissal of Abraham was kind and generous; but he bade him leave Egypt, for he dared not permit him to remain. He had ignorantly been about to do him a serious injury, but God had interposed, and saved the monarch from committing so great a sin. Pharaoh saw in this stranger a man whom the God of heaven honored, and he feared to have in his kingdom one who was so evidently under divine favor. **Should Abraham remain in Egypt, his increasing wealth and honor would be likely to excite the envy or covetousness of the Egyptians, and some injury might be done him, for which the monarch would be held responsible, and which might again bring judgments upon the royal house.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 130.1-2.†‡

15. **It was these Egyptian laws, made at that time, that later protected the descendants of Jacob from dwelling among the Egyptians and adopting their habits and religion and, thus, melting into Egyptian society when they moved to Egypt to avoid the**

**famine.** The Israelites were given a special place in Goshen where they were able to grow in numbers, separate from the Egyptians, and multiply to become a nation.

Ironically, Abram, who has just arrived in the Promised Land, decides to leave it for Egypt because “there was a famine in the land” (*Gen. 12:10, NKJV*). Evidence of people from Canaan going into Egypt in times of famine is well attested in ancient Egyptian texts. In the Egyptian teaching of Merikare, a text composed during the period of the Middle Kingdom (2060–1700 B.C.), people coming from Canaan are identified as “miserable Asiatic” (*aamu*) and described as “wretched . . . short of water . . . he does not dwell on one place, food propels his legs.”—Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 103, 104.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Monday, May 2].<sup>‡§</sup>

16. Many times throughout the Old Testament, Israel was tempted to either return to Egypt or to depend upon Egypt for military assistance or protection. But, in each case, this would signify dependence upon human beings instead of God. See, for example:

**Numbers 14:3:** “Why is the LORD taking us into that land? We will be killed in battle, and our wives and children will be captured. Wouldn’t it be better to go back to Egypt?”—*Good News Bible*.\*

17. It is important to notice in the Abraham story that **in spite of his fairly significant mistakes, sometimes running ahead of God, God still worked with him step-by-step.** That is what it means to be *led by God’s grace*. Without it, there would be no hope.
18. When Abraham returned to Canaan with his nephew, Lot, it soon was apparent that they both had many flocks and herds. There was constant fighting among the herdsmen of the two. They had obviously returned from Egypt with a lot of people and animals.

**Genesis 13:8-13:** <sup>8</sup> Then Abram said to Lot, “We are relatives, and your men and my men **shouldn’t be quarrelling.** <sup>9</sup>**So let’s separate.** Choose any part of the land you want. You go one way, and I’ll go the other.”

<sup>10</sup> Lot looked round and saw that the whole Jordan Valley, all the way to Zoar, had plenty of water, like the Garden of the LORD or like the land of Egypt. (**This was before the LORD had destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.**) <sup>11</sup>So Lot chose the whole Jordan Valley for himself and moved away towards the east. That is how the two men parted. <sup>12</sup>Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, and Lot settled among the cities in the valley and camped near Sodom, <sup>13</sup>whose people were wicked and sinned against the LORD.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

19. While Lot moved to what appeared to be a very lush place in the Jordan Valley where he could easily have water and feed his flocks, he had left Abraham; Abraham was depending upon God.

**Genesis 13:14-18:** <sup>14</sup> After Lot had left, the LORD said to Abram, “From where you are, look carefully in all directions. <sup>15</sup>I am going to give you and your descendants all the land that you see, and **it will be yours for ever.** [*sic*] <sup>16</sup>I am going to give you so many descendants that no one will be able to

count them all; it would be as easy to count all the specks of dust on earth!  
17Now, go and look over the whole land, because I am going to give it all to you.” 18So Abram moved his camp and settled near the sacred trees of Mamre at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.—*Good News Bible*.\*†‡

20. It is important to notice that Lot thought that he was choosing the best part when he moved down into the Jordan valley. He ended up being a prisoner and needed to be rescued by his uncle Abraham. Lot’s choice of the best part of the land for himself reminds us of the antediluvians when the descendants of Seth (sons of God) chose the ones they liked from among the daughters of Cain (daughters of man).
21. **Abraham had managed to reconnect with God.** Notice specifically what God said to Abraham.

In fact, this is the first recorded time in the Bible that God speaks to Abram since his call at Ur. “ ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; **for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever**’ ” (*Gen. 13:14, 15, NKJV*). **God, then, invites Abram to “ ‘walk’ ” on this land as an act of appropriation** [taking for oneself, typically without the owner’s permission]. “ ‘Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you’ ” (*Gen. 13:17, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, May 3.†‡§ [The expression *walk* in this context suggests that one was claiming it as his own.]‡

[BSG:] Yet, unlike Abram’s move, the “going” of Lot has no spiritual connotation; instead, it is associated with his wealth (*Gen. 13:5*). Moreover, not only is the way they “go” different—but also the way they “dwell.” While Abram relates his “dwelling” to his relationship with God, Lot views his “dwelling” only in connection to himself and his material possessions. The difficulty of their cohabitation (*Gen. 13:6*) is not merely the result of outside factors; it essentially has to do with the **profound spiritual divergences between them**. Their worldviews are irreconcilable worldviews (*Gen. 13:7–9*), and therefore tensions between them are unavoidable. Although the biblical text reports a strife between the herdsmen, **the dispute goes beyond the herdsmen and involves spiritual matters**. Abram understands, then, that separation is the only way for peace. Lot takes the initiative and selects the territory of the rich plains. Abram takes what is left: the mountains of Canaan (*Gen. 13:12*). Unlike Lot, who decides by himself to lift his eyes and see (*Gen. 13:10*), Abram does this only at God’s injunction (*Gen. 13:14*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 81-82.†‡§

22. Why was Abraham’s future-oriented perspective superior to Lot’s present-oriented thinking? What kind of thinking do we have today? We need to take the larger view involving the entire universe and the great controversy over the character and government of God in order to correctly understand the plan of salvation.

23. God made it very clear that at this point, He was giving that land to Abraham. But, Abraham's life was not to remain peaceful and quiet. War broke out around him.

**Genesis 14:1-17:** <sup>1</sup>Four kings, Amraphel of Babylonia, Arioch of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer of Elam, and Tidal of Goiim, <sup>2</sup>went to war against five other kings: Bera of Sodom, Birsha of Gomorrah, Shinab of Admah, Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (or Zoar). <sup>3</sup>These five kings had formed an alliance and joined forces in the Valley of Siddim, which is now the Dead Sea. <sup>4</sup>**They had been under the control of Chedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.** <sup>5</sup>In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and his allies came with their armies and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in the plain of Kiriathaim, <sup>6</sup>and the Horites in the mountains of Edom, pursuing them as far as Elparan on the edge of the desert. <sup>7</sup>Then they turned round and came back to Kadesh (then known as Enmishpat). They conquered all the land of the Amalekites and defeated the Amorites who lived in Hazazon Tamar.

<sup>8</sup> Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela drew up their armies for battle in the Valley of Siddim and fought <sup>9</sup>against the kings of Elam, Goiim, Babylonia, and Ellasar, five kings against four. <sup>10</sup>The valley was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah tried to run away from the battle, they fell into the pits; but the other three kings escaped to the mountains. <sup>11</sup>**The four kings took everything in Sodom and Gomorrah, including the food, and went away.** <sup>12</sup>**Lot, Abram's nephew, was living in Sodom, so they took him and all his possessions.**

<sup>13</sup> But a man escaped and reported all this to Abram, the Hebrew, who was living near the sacred trees belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his brothers Eshcol and Aner were Abram's allies. <sup>14</sup>When Abram heard that his nephew had been captured, he called together **all the fighting men in his camp, 318 in all**, and pursued the four kings all the way to Dan. <sup>15</sup>There he divided his men into groups, attacked the enemy by night, and defeated them. He chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus, <sup>16</sup>and **recovered the loot** that had been taken. He also brought back his nephew Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other prisoners.

<sup>17</sup> When Abram came back from his victory over Chedorlaomer and the other kings, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (also called the King's Valley).—*Good News Bible*.\*†

24. The situation was that four armies from Mesopotamia and Persia attacked five Canaanite armies who had rebelled against them. Among many others, Lot was taken captive.
25. It is interesting to note that while Abraham had been promised by God that this land would belong to him, he saw war taking place on his property!
26. Clearly, at the beginning, Abraham was not involved because he was up on the highlands not in the Jordan Valley. He had not depended upon military might to take control of the land which God had given him.

Abraham, dwelling in peace in the oak groves at Mamre, learned from one of the fugitives the story of the battle and the calamity that had befallen his nephew. He had cherished no unkind memory of Lot's ingratitude. All his affection for him was awakened, and he determined that he should be rescued. **Seeking, first of all, divine counsel, Abraham prepared for war.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 135.1.†

27. We do not know, of course, how large those armies were. But, it seems like they were significant in size. After being warned by a man who escaped from the Babylonians, Abraham, with the assistance of two or three of his close associates, followed the Babylonians. Why do you think these Canaanite kings were willing to follow the leadership of Abraham? Abraham organized an attack at night from different sides and quickly won the battle because God was fighting on his side. Think of the story of Gideon.
28. What kind of additional influence on the local people did this victory give to Abraham? How are people around us impacted or influenced by our behavior?
29. Last quarter, we spent much time talking about Melchizedek since he is discussed in the book of Hebrews. Notice these words:

**Genesis 14:18-24:** <sup>18</sup>And **Melchizedek**, who was **king of Salem and also a priest of the Most High God**, brought bread and wine to Abram, <sup>19</sup>blessed him, and said, "May the Most High God, who made heaven and earth, bless Abram! <sup>20</sup>May the Most High God, who gave you victory over your enemies, be praised!" **And Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the loot he had recovered.**

<sup>21</sup> The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Keep the loot, but give me back all my people."

<sup>22</sup> Abram answered, "I solemnly swear before the LORD, the Most High God, Maker of heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup>that I will not keep anything of yours, not even a thread or a sandal strap. Then you can never say, 'I am the one who made Abram rich.' <sup>24</sup>I will take nothing for myself. I will accept only what my men have used. But let my allies, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, take their share."—*Good News Bible*.\*†

30. We already know that Melchizedek, whose name means "king of righteousness" was also called the "king of Salem" or the "king of peace." That is quite a name for a small, local king, living in the land of Canaan not far from Sodom and Gomorrah!
31. What do we know about Melchizedek? We know nothing about his ancestry or his descendants.

[BSG:] This mysterious king seems completely out of place in the context of the narrative. First of all, Melchizedek comes from the city of Salem, the ancient name of Jerusalem, which was not involved in the war. Additionally, the name *shalem*, "Salem," which means "peace," contradicts the activities of war, which have been central to the story so far. Justice (*tsedeq*), which is included in the name of the king, stands in opposition to the evocations of "evil" and "wickedness" in the names of *Bera* ("in evil"), king of Sodom,

and *Birsha* (“in wickedness”), king of Gomorrah. Melchizedek is called a “priest of God Most High.”

This is the first occurrence in the Bible of the word “priest” (*kohen*). Melchizedek’s priesthood predates the Levitical priesthood. The fact that Abram uses the same title *‘el ‘elyon* (“God Most High”) for his God as does Melchizedek (*Gen. 14:20, NKJV*), in which he joins the name of YHWH to the name “God Most High” (*Gen. 14:22, NKJV*), suggests that Abram considered Melchizedek as a legitimate priest of the Creator God. Although Melchizedek belonged to the Canaanite community, God had chosen him to be His representative among the people of that time. In spite of his foreign origin, Abram gives him a tithe and is blessed by him. In addition, the numerous references to God, the sacred meal of the bread and the wine, and the blessing and hymn addressed to God imbue the Canaanite figure of Melchizedek with a spiritual significance, pointing beyond a simple meeting of kings. Notably, the subsequent scriptures maintain this spiritual connotation. Psalm 110 associates Melchizedek with the future Davidic Messiah (*Ps. 110:4*), followed by the authors of the New Testament, who relate the unique priesthood of Melchizedek to that of Jesus (*Heb. 5:5–6:10, Hebrews 7*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 81-82.†§

**Psalm 110:4:** The LORD made a solemn promise and will not take it back:

“You will be a priest for ever [*sic*]

in the priestly order of Melchizedek.”—*Good News Bible*.\*†

32. But, Abraham apparently recognized Melchizedek as a man of God and a priest. After returning home with considerable loot from the war, he paid tithe to Melchizedek.
33. This tithe-paying preceded the tithe-paying mandated by God for the Levites and the children of Israel after their exodus from Egypt. Who else paid tithe? Jacob. (See Genesis 28:22.)
34. Why is the giving of tithe a great indicator of faith?

[EGW:] Christ’s church is to be a blessing, and its members are to be blessed as they bless others. The object of God in choosing a people before all the world, was not only that he might adopt them as his sons and daughters, but that through them he might confer on the world the benefits of divine illumination. **When the Lord chose Abraham it was not simply to be the special friend of God, but to be a medium of the precious and peculiar privileges the Lord desired to bestow upon the nations. He was to be a light amid the moral darkness of his surroundings.** Whenever God blesses his children with light and truth, it is not only that they may have the gift of eternal life, but that those around them may also be spiritually enlightened.... “Ye are the salt of the earth.” And when God makes his children salt, it is not only for their own preservation, but that they may be agents in preserving others....

Do you shine as living stones in God’s building? ... We have not the genuine religion, unless it exerts a controlling influence upon us in every business transaction. We should have practical godliness to weave into our life-work.

We should have the transforming grace of Christ upon our hearts. We need a great deal less of self, and more of Jesus.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,\* February 3, 1890, par. 1-2<sup>†‡</sup>; *Reflecting Christ*\* 205.2-7.<sup>††</sup>

35. What did Melchizedek offer Abraham that led to their being together and Abraham offering tithes to him? He brought bread and wine to Abraham. Our Bible study guide goes to considerable lengths to show that the word *wine*, in this setting could mean fresh grape juice.

**2 Chronicles 31:5:** As soon as the order was given, the people of Israel brought gifts of their finest corn, wine, olive oil, honey, and other farm produce, and they also brought the tithes of everything they had.—*Good News Bible*.\*

36. It is interesting to note that the Bible study guide quotes Deuteronomy 14:23, talking about the *new wine*; but, it failed to continue to verse 26 which gives a very different picture.

**Deuteronomy 14:23-26:** <sup>23</sup> “Then go to the one place where the LORD your God has chosen to be worshipped; and there in his presence eat the tithes of your corn, [new] wine, and olive oil, and the firstborn of your cattle and sheep. Do this so that you may learn to honour the LORD your God always. <sup>24</sup>**If the place of worship is too far from your home for you to carry there the tithe of the produce that the LORD has blessed you with, then do this:** <sup>25</sup>**Sell your produce and take the money with you to the one place of worship.** <sup>26</sup>**Spend it on whatever you want—beef, lamb, wine, beer—and there, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families are to eat and enjoy yourselves.**”—*Good News Bible*.\*<sup>†‡</sup> [We should also note that further in the text, it recommends that one invite the Levites (the pastors) to join in the eating and drinking!]<sup>‡</sup>

37. How do we explain those verses? Is God recommending the drinking of alcoholic beverages? No. **What He was saying was that it is very important to come before Him and worship according to His directions. We are to do so in cooperation with His representatives, the pastors and church leaders.** The wine/beer that they made in those days was very mild in terms of alcohol content. They had no way to “distill” it to concentrate the alcohol.

38. What can we learn about tithing from the story of Abraham and Melchizedek? Is a faithful tithe an important part of Christian duties in our day?

39. Abraham was “called out” more than once during his life.

How does God’s call to His people to “get out” apply to you personally in relation to your social life? How does this appeal concern the character-building work you do each day? How does this expression apply to your experience of conversion?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 83.

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