

## June 7 - Saturday

*And Abram journeyed on by stages  
toward the Negeb.*

### Genesis 12:9

It's a very brief statement – ‘journeyed on by stages.’ The travel from Haran to the Land of Promise was long and exhausting. One cannot do it all at once. Because of the difficult roads, the treacherous weather conditions and the volume of persons and livestock that went with Abram and Sarah, the journey had to be done in different stages. They needed to rest fully and regain strength. They needed to refill their water containers and they should see to it that the supply they carried will be enough to reach another source, either a well or a stream of living water. Think about food supply and other provisions, remember there were no malls or super markets where you can just go in and swipe your card or pay in cash.

In a world of relative easy and comfort, we think that everything can be done swift and fast. Most people don't have the patience to ‘journey on by stages.’ We want direct flights and as much as possible no stopovers whatsoever. People are willing to pay the price as long as it is quick and comfortable. Of course we don't have to go back to that period when travel was a burden and lot of hassle. The good side of development and technology is the power that it provides to people to do things as easy as possible. But we should not lose the perspective that ‘journeying on by stages’ is still the best option. Let us remember that even machines need rest. An engine can run so fast or can pull or push great amount of weight but not all the time. It needs to rest to cool it off or for maintenance check up such as changing oil or batteries or tightening loosen screws. At some point the engine needs to be shut off even for a while to make it ready for the next stage of work.

Think about your life – the things that you desire, the goals that you set in life. How far are you to your destination point? Are you moving fast and quick without rest or are you taking it like Abram and Sarah – ‘journeying on by stages.’ We can do it fast and quick

with all the tools that we have but at what price? A journey is not just reaching the destination it is also about enjoying the beautiful scenery along the way. The best way to do it is dividing the journey in different stages. This is God's advice for us today – life is like traveling into a destination, journey on by stages.

## Prayer

*Take you for reminding us, O God  
that in life's journey we don't have to race  
we can live our lives one day at a time. Amen.*



## June 6 - Friday

*Then the LORD appeared to Abram,  
and said, "To your offspring  
I will give this land."  
So he built there an altar to the LORD,  
who had appeared to him.  
From there he moved on to the hill country  
on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent,  
with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east;  
and there he built an altar to the LORD  
and invoked the name of the LORD.*

### Genesis 12: 7-8

What is an altar? An altar is a 'sacred space' intended to be a meeting ground between God and humanity. It is a place of worship and sacrifice, a holy ground where God's power is acknowledge and God's guiding voice is seek out. In our text today, we are told that Abram '*built an altar to the Lord.*' Two reasons were given; first he built an altar because the Lord appeared to him, on the second time, he built an altar to invoke the name of the Lord.

Altars or sacred spaces are important in the lives of those who believe in God. God does not need an altar. We intentionally create one because we need God. An altar becomes hallowed ground not because of what we made out of it but because God blessed our altars with God's presence. The theology behind altars, sacrifices and worship changed significantly from the time of Abram and Sarah until the time of Jesus. But the central theme about altars as meeting points between human and divine remains the same.

What we learn from Abram's experience is that every time he sensed that God was so close and within his 'hearing' distance and every time he needs to seek intimate communion with God – he built an altar to the Lord. Each of us needs to have that altar, that sacred space where we seek God's abiding, assuring and comforting presence. This altar could be the space where we express our utmost joy because of what God has done to us. For many who are wounded in life, this sacred ground is the space where we pour out our deepest fears and our innermost pains. Above everything else this is the holy ground where God meets us. Abram built an altar to the Lord. Will you build one for the Lord?

## **Prayer**

*Visit us O God in our altars,  
in the sacred spaces that we build  
for your presence shall make these altars  
what it ought to be – a meeting ground. Amen*



## **June 5 - Thursday**

*When they had come to the land of Canaan,  
Abram passed through the land  
to the place at Shechem,  
to the oak of Moreh.  
At that time the Canaanites*

*were in the land.*

### **Genesis 12: 5b-6**

In reading the story swiftly we compressed a lot of timeframe. There were a lot of details that were not included in the text. Events that transpired between the time when Abram and Sarah “set forth to go to the land of Canaan” and the period “when they had come to the land of Canaan.” Traveling as a caravan tagging along movable properties and servants in a very hostile environment was not easy. We do not know how many years did this journey take place. Perhaps there were times when Abram look at the stars on the skies and wondered whether what he did was right. Moments when he pondered deeply whether the voice he heard was that of God or just a pigment of his imagination. Finally, Abram and Sarah reached Canaan and ‘passed through the land.’ until he reached the place called Shechem.

The phrase ‘passed through the land’ is worth reflecting. There are times in life when like Abram we travel from afar and cross deserts and wild territories but what we need is a little bit of patience not to dig on the grounds yet but to ‘pass through the land.’ This posture allows us to take a wide view of the landscape and observe its surroundings. Given the exhaustion of a long journey it is but natural for many to stop and rest and eventually succumbed to the temptation to settle right then and there. After reaching the first line of the destination most do not have the energy to ‘pass through the land.’

Today, let us look back at Abram and Sarah’s long journey to the Promised Land. Let us remember that it took a while for them to settle because they took time to ‘pass through the land.’ Let us not be on a hurry, let us enjoy the journey and savor the beauty of the scenes around us. Let us be patient and not be impulsive on our quest to finally settle in the Promised Land that God invites us to go.

### **Prayer**

*O God, teach us the patience*

*to walk for one more mile  
so that we see with our own eyes  
that your promise is indeed worthwhile. Amen.*

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## **June 4 - Wednesday**

*So Abram went, as the LORD had told him;  
and Lot went with him.  
Abram was seventy-five years old  
when he departed from Haran.  
Abram took his wife Sarai  
and his brother's son Lot,  
and all the possessions  
that they had gathered, and the persons  
whom they had acquired in Haran;  
and they set forth  
to go to the land of Canaan.*

### **Genesis 12: 4-5a**

Who said God has no sense of humor? Imagine a 75 year old and childless Abram sharing what the Lord told him to a friend, “You know, God told me to move from Haran because God will make a great nation out of my offspring.” A friend would probably take it as a joke or a classic old man’s unfulfilled dream resulting into wishful thinking. If the conversation is cast in modern terms, it would not be unusual to hear responses like ‘tell that to the marines.’ The words ‘tell that to the marines’ is a British expression used by sailors. It implies the gullibility of marines ‘who readily swallow any sort of tale that may be told to them, in contrast to sailors who reject all tales and are not easily duped.’ (Moe, American Speech, Vol. 34, No. 4, Dec. 1961)

Imagine also the sense of disbelief when Abram began gathering all his possessions and finally the ultimate shock when Abram indeed fulfilled what he told them. Definitely, there were people

who thought of him as Abram, the crazy old man. With all his wealth and possessions and at his age why will he venture into an uncertain future? The story line is plain and simple, “*So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.*” But out from this story of faith comes out both humor and hope. God made a lot of funny choices among people whom God called. This is God’s way of telling us what hope is all about – do not dismiss what is absurd and ridiculous. How many times we said to someone ‘tell that to the marines’ and at the end were surprised at the outcome of events. If the odds are not on your side, just think of a 75 year old man with a barren wife claiming, ‘out from my offspring a great nation shall rise’ but with a qualifying phrase of course, ‘according to the Lord.’ This is incredible humor and unwavering hope.

## **Prayer**

*Many times you make us smile O God  
with your choices and in the way you work.  
Thank you for your humor  
that teach us about hope. Amen.*



## **June 3 - Tuesday**

*I will make of you a great nation,  
and I will bless you,  
and make your name great,  
so that you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and the one who curses you I will curse;  
and in you all the families of the earth  
shall be blessed."*

### **Genesis 12:2-3**

One of the favorite hymns that we sing on birthday celebration is the one written by Ira B. Wilson and George S. Schuler – “Make

Me a Blessing.” Many may not be able to recall the all the verses but who can forget the lines of the chorus – *Make me a blessing, make me a blessing; Out of my life may Jesus shine. Make me a blessing, O Savior I pray, Make me a blessing to someone today.* I do not know what inspired the writers in writing this hymn but the whole message is reflective of the purpose of God’s calling to Abram and Sarah. God called because God wanted not only to bless but to make them a blessing.

The act to bless is inherent in God’s nature but becoming a blessing to others is an act that requires cooperation from our side. The whole idea is that we are a conduit, a channel upon which God’s blessings will reach others through us. Imagine a world where each one shares each other’s blessing. What a wonderful world it would be. But it is also possible that one receives so many blessing and yet fails to pass on these blessings to others. People in the Bible were conscious of God’s blessing, they take pride of the fact that they were particularly called by God but they often forget the purpose of God’s calling – they were called not only to be recipient of blessings but also to be a blessing to others.

A lot of folks look at their relationship with God as an avenue where they can receive blessings. This we acknowledge when we sing the doxology – *“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”* But the complete picture of this relationship includes an intentional posture on our part – to pray to God each day to make us a blessing.

## **Prayer**

*Lead us O God  
so that all that we have and all that we are  
can be a blessing to others. Amen.*



## June 2 - Monday

*Now the LORD said to Abram,  
"Go from your country and your kindred  
and your father's house  
to the land that I will show you.*

### **Genesis 12:1**

The story of God's people in the Bible started with this one word – go! To go means to depart, to move to another place away from the familiar, in the case of Abram from the comfort and the security of his country, his relatives, his home. We were not told how God spoke to Abram – through a dream, a vision an inner prompting. A time frame was also absent – did God spoke to Abram earlier in his life, did it took him sometime to decide or was it quick and fast. Whatever it was, this particular call was so real to this man, he obeyed and life was never the same again.

Moving away from 'your father's house' was a very risky proposition in those days. It was not easy as packing a bag and riding on a jet plain. We were not told what transpired during the final moment of departure. For sure there were a lot of hugging and crying, scenes that are familiar in airports.

What possible questions would Abram asked? Why me, God? Why now? Do I still have time to return to my father's home sometime? Perhaps the most important one – where do you want me to go? God was specific in his command go but the details were not laid out clearly. God just said, "to the land that I will show you." Imagine also a setting where Abram did not obey and just stay foot in Haran and at the closing of his life wondered, "What would have happened if I followed God's command to go?"

The journey of Abram serves as a prototype of our own journey. In some mysterious ways each of us hears God's call. It does not necessarily mean to become a pastor or to work full time in the church or as a missionary. God's call is not limited to church work. But God's call always involves leaving a life of security, comfort and familiarity into the unknown territory where only you and God have to face each other. And only those who obeyed the call to go

know what this experience is all about, what it means to “walk in the faith.”

### **Prayer**

*Help me overcome my fears, O God  
so that I can take the first step  
of the exciting journey of faith. Amen.*