

Abraham and Moses were the two pillars of faith regarded as fathers by the Nation of Israel. While David was a prominent man of faith his life is not enlarged upon here in the epistle.

We have already considered the formative years of Abraham's walk of faith. Other aspects of His faith are also referred to in chapter 6:12-15. And no less than 70 verses refer to him in the New Testament. After his death in Genesis 25 he is referred to 66 times in the Old Testament, truly a man of renown before God and men.

Now the Spirit brings before us what may be the most monumental act of faith revealed in scripture, Abraham offering his son of the promise, Isaac. Here again in the New Testament we receive insights into Abraham's mentality of faith not openly revealed in Genesis. He accounted God was able to raise Isaac from the dead if he was sacrificed. He reasoned? Faith reasons. This reasoning is based upon the clear unmistakable promise of God which he received directly from the mouth of God Himself. But a promise which when made and believed carried no hint of the supreme test of faith it would bring with it. In fact the promise came as a relief in the midst of another heart wrenching test of Abraham's faith. It was given almost incidentally as God reassured Abraham he should heed Sarah's demand that he send Ishmael away. This young teen was mocking her toddler son Isaac and was a perceived potential threat to his safety. Abraham loved Ishmael, his son by the bondwoman, and had pleaded with God to bless him. Earlier, before Isaac was conceived, he had pleaded with God to make Ishmael the heir of the promise. But God refused and promised a son by Sarah. Later God instructed Abraham to send away Hagar and Ishmael promising to bless him. He permanently severed the tie between Abraham and Ishmael to make room for His choice for the heir of promise, Isaac..

Genesis 21:12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

There are those wonderful words of promise,

for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Wonderful but fateful words believed wholeheartedly in Abraham's enthusiastic, optimistic faith. Faith soon to be tested more severely than he could have ever conceived. Sending Ishmael away in obedience of faith and now this? We don't know how long Abraham mulled this over before he went ahead with preparations to take Isaac with him to Moriah. Did he immediately receive that blessed insight? Resurrection! That was the answer! There is no hint of doubt in the narrative. But this was not as simple as sending Ishmael away had been and that had been hard. To kill a youth in cold blood. His only son? He knew God abhorred human sacrifice. The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, Genesis 15:16, and they practiced it. "How could He askme... to do... *this?!'*" Even with the

assurance of resurrection it would be a horrible thing to have to do. Not any thing like an animal sacrifice and that was hard enough.

What a relief when the angel's voice called it off. "God will provide a sacrifice" and He did. Not only a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. But the very Son of God, Abraham's Seed, caught by His love for His God. He was nailed to a cross, crowned with a crown of thorns, the "thicket" symbolizing the curse of man's sin on the earth. A substitute! For me, for you.

What a traumatic experience for Isaac, too! Grown, he lived a long rather quiet life as an alien in the promised land. Although there are instances of his faith described in Genesis only one incident is noted in Hebrews. Both he and his son Jacob are noted only for their faith in blessing their sons and, in Jacob's case, his grandsons. These blessings were not a simple "best wishes, goodbye and good luck." They were powerful, authoritative, prophetic pronouncements made by faith, calling down God's blessing upon the one being blessed. (Curses carry the same weight with God as blessings. Be careful not to curse and be careful whom and how you bless.) An unnamed homemaker is warned to avoid supporting or blessing a visitor who brings not the doctrine of Christ, 2John 10. Gaius, a householder is encouraged to bless visitors having gone out in faith bringing the truth, 3John 5-8. The Hebrews are too, 13:2 as are others in other epistles.

Moses was born about 390 years after Abraham died and about 190 years after Joseph died. Joseph commanded, in faith, his descendants bring his bones back to the promised land when they returned. And they did, but until then his mummy was a reminder of the promise. Though after Joseph's death and things turned for the worse for the children of Israel in Egypt, some remained faithful to God. Among them Moses' parents.

Consider. Was their faith why Levi's line, not Joseph's or Judah's, was chosen for the deliverer? Clearly Moses was not in the line of the Messiah according to Jacob's prophetic blessing, Genesis 49.

There were many momentous events and acts of faith in Moses' life and there are more incidents described here than for any other named here. Events that were truly foundational to the Hebrews, and to the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Moses, what a story is his, a favorite of young and old, full of faith, of God's interventions, exciting action, victories, God-given revelations and decrees and tragic disasters along the way. As forecast in Genesis 15, before entering the land promised Abraham, Moses led the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. They were now 600,000 men besides their women and children. He led them through the Red Sea on dry land, then through a wilderness to Mount Sinai. There God gave him the ten commandments and the Law of Moses, a highly detailed and comprehensive standard of obedience, righteousness and holiness even today. Moses quickly discovered the people God had put in his charge

could not keep the Law nor would they. He faithfully shepherded them forty years as they wandered in the wilderness to the border, ready to enter Canaan, then he died. No less than five specific incidents of Moses' faith, very familiar to Hebrew believers, are recalled and briefly described here.

The faith of Moses' parents is first described. Through their faith God not only preserved their son from certain death but brought him into a place of certain safety, the court of the very king that had decreed the death of all Hebrew babies. She obeyed the king's command, placing Moses in the very river meant for his death. His mother was assigned the task of nursing him. Some think she raised him for the princess. If so, she used the opportunity to instill in him the knowledge of the creation, the faith of the patriarchs, the flood and the promises given Abraham regarding his descendants by God all mentioned here in Hebrews 11. Others think that once he learned of his true origin, memorialized in his very name (meaning drawn out) he dug into his roots. Some think at some point he had come into possession of clay tablets brought to Egypt by Jacob containing the source material for the book of Genesis which Moses compiled and edited. Either way God led Moses to a most extraordinary act of faith.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

This moral and spiritual life changing, life defining, God enlightened decision he reached is the marvel and delight of all the faithful, but an unfathomable mystery to the worldly mind. What an example! It anticipates the Lord's desire expressed in His prayer for us.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

He referred to Moses after His resurrection on the way to Emmaus with two disillusioned disciples.

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Moses' momentous decision was a pivotal point in the fulfillment of God's promises and purposes regarding His Son. Though very different in character, Moses' decision rivals Abraham's faith when he believed in God's ability to raise Isaac from the dead if necessary. Abraham had respect for the reward. It was God Himself., Genesis 15:1. Moses had respect for the recompense as well. He enjoyed an eighty year walk with God here on earth and eternity with Him above.

Moses by faith forsook Egypt. Forty years earlier he had fled the wrath of the king after having acted on his own, killing an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite slave. This time Moses forsook Egypt. He had already refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, rejecting a position of authority in Egypt. Forty years later he forsakes the nation itself. What does this mean? The

actual exodus did not occur until after the Passover and the death of the firstborn. Up to that point God, through Moses, was incredibly merciful to Pharaoh. Over and over He pleaded though Moses "Let my people go." He repeatedly relented when Pharaoh asked for relief from successive plagues. God tolerated his folly when he hardened his heart and changed his mind. Every time God in His goodness relented it only hardened Pharaoh's heart. (Unwary parents can spoil their children this way.) Finally God had enough. Moses had been giving the king a gracious chance to retain his dignity and to preserve the nation under his rule. Pharaoh blew his last chance for a dignified acquiescence to God's respectful request to release His people. Just think how history might have changed if he had? Even then, God seems to have had a special place in His heart for Egypt. It harbored His people Israel during the famine in Joseph's day and harbored the Lord Jesus in Herod's day.

Moses' forsaking of Egypt is graphically described in Exodus 10 & 11.

*Exodus 10:27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. 28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. 29 And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more. . . . 11:3b Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt 4 And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, . . . 8b **And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.** 9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. 10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.*

Moses by faith forsook Egypt at this point.

The Passover was also a remarkable act of faith not only for Moses but for the thousands of families who slaughtered their own spotless lamb, brushed its blood on their doorposts and lintel and withdrew safely inside. They roasted and ate the lamb while they waited, awaited freedom for themselves and doom for the Egyptians. Their first experience at collective faith was soon to be tested. But by faith they passed though the Red Sea and safely on the other shore watched their pursuers drown.

Not mentioned here are the next tests of faith they encountered in the wilderness and their huge lapse of faith leading to the giving and prompt breaking of the law. Nor are the forty years in the wilderness or the crossing of the Jordan mentioned. But conquering Jericho by faith, not force, and the salvation by faith of a lowly harlot and her family in her house on the wall preserved when the walls collapsed are briefly called to our attention. Rahab is named for her faith in eight instances in scripture. God is watching and seeking both the disgusting great, like Pharaoh, and the disgusting lowly, like Rahab. She will be with Moses and Abraham in glory. Will you?