

Lesson 7: The Abrahamic Covenant (See L7 [Study Guide](#))

Purpose: To help us understand the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant.

Have you received your patriarchal blessing? †1. The First Presidency [Patriarchal Blessings: General Guidelines](#)
What does it mean to have the patriarch declare our lineage in a blessing?

“When a patriarch declares our lineage, he reveals to us that we are descendants of the prophet Abraham through Ephraim, Manasseh, or another of Abraham’s descendants.” (*Lesson Manual*)

1. God covenants with Abraham.

- Read and discuss [Abraham 1:1–4](#); [Abraham 2:1–11](#); and [Genesis 12:1–8](#); [Genesis 17:1–9](#).
- Abraham 1:2-4. What blessings did Abraham desire? †2. S. Michael Wilcox †3. Alfred Edersheim
“[Abraham, Covenant of](#),” Bible Dictionary, page 602.

Blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant:

1. A promised land to live in ([Abraham 2:6, 19](#); [Genesis 12:7](#); [Genesis 17:8](#));
Eternal Parallel: The celestial kingdom ([D&C 88:17–20](#))
2. A great posterity ([Abraham 2:9–10](#); [Genesis 12:2–3](#); [Genesis 17:2, 4–6](#));
Eternal Parallel: Eternal marriage and increase ([D&C 132:19–22](#))
3. The gospel of Jesus Christ and priesthood for Abraham and his posterity ([Abraham 2:9–11](#); [Genesis 17:7](#));
Eternal Parallel: Exaltation and eternal life ([D&C 132:23–24](#))

2. We are heirs to the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant.

All “Church members are the ‘seed of Abraham,’ which means we are his descendants.” (*Lesson Manual*)

†4. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith †5. Elder Bruce R. McConkie †6. Joseph Smith

- Read [D&C 58:8-12](#). †7. Elder Boyd K. Packer †8. Joseph Fielding McConkie
What does this analogy teach about our responsibility to help others receive the blessings of the gospel?

Responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant:

1. Help all of God’s children receive the full blessings of the gospel ([Abraham 2:9, 11](#))
2. Obey God’s commandments ([Genesis 18:19](#))

How is the declaration of lineage in our patriarchal blessings like a call to fulfill our responsibilities as heirs to the Abrahamic covenant? †9. Patriarchal Handbook, p 3

3. The challenge of living in the world.

The “ancient Israelites were surrounded by many nations whose people did not believe in the true God. These nations included the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and others.” ... (See map 2 in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible.) (*Lesson Manual*)

- Read [Deuteronomy 4:6-8](#). Why do you think the Lord put his covenant people in the middle of the ancient world instead of where they could be left alone? †10. John A. Widdsoe
- Read [2 Nephi 2:13-14](#), and especially [2 Nephi 2:26](#).

Lead others to God and His ways or follow the world and its philosophies?

Many “stories in the Old Testament show the success or failure of the Lord’s people to keep their covenants and influence others toward righteousness. Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and many others were righteous influences. Samson, Ahab, the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness, and others allowed the world to influence them.”

“As he did with ancient Israel, the Lord has placed us, his latter-day covenant people, in the middle of the world. **Our challenge is to influence the world in righteous ways rather than allowing the world to influence us in unrighteous ways.**” (*Lesson Manual*)

Next Week: L8 Living Righteously in a Wicked World; See L8: [Class Member Study Guide](#).

(You can download a free LDS Institute manual at: [Old Testament Manual: Religion 301 and 302](#).) † •

†1. **The First Presidency:** “Patriarchal blessings [are] an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient, and also, where so moved upon by the Spirit, an inspired and prophetic statement of the life mission of the recipient, together with such blessings, cautions, and admonitions as the patriarch may be prompted to give. . . . The realization of all promised blessings is conditioned upon faithfulness to the gospel of our Lord” (letter to stake presidents, 28 June 1957; quoted in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 558).

†2. **S. Michael Wilcox:** “One of the unique benefits we receive as members of the Church is the privilege of receiving a patriarchal blessing. These blessings are named ‘patriarchal’ because they are administered by ordained patriarchs. But there is another reason this title is appropriate, and it has to do with one of the most significant things given to us in our patriarchal blessings—lineage.

“Regardless of our race, nationality, or ethnic background, our patriarchal blessings declare that we are of the lineage of Abraham and therefore heirs to all the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. A patriarchal blessing is a great and remarkable assurance that if we remain faithful, we may receive all the promises made to the great patriarchs of old. It is also encouragement to fulfill the responsibilities that accompany those and associated promises. It is imperative then that we understand the Abrahamic covenant, with its blessings and attendant responsibilities.” (“[The Abrahamic Covenant](#),” *Ensign*, Jan. 1998)

†3. **Alfred Edersheim:** “Hitherto, God had only interposed, as in the flood, and at the confounding of the tongues, to arrest the attempts of man against His purposes of mercy. But when God called Abram, He personally and actively interfered, and this time in mercy, not in judgment.” (*The Bible History: Old Testament*, Volume 1: The World Before the Flood, and the History of the Patriarchs, Chapter 11.)

†4. **Elder Joseph Fielding Smith:** “The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs” (“How One May Become of the House of Israel,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1923, 1149).

†5. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie:** “Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation); then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase; finally he received a promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity. (Abraham 2:6–11; D&C 132:29–50.) Included in the divine promises to Abraham was the assurance that Christ would come through his lineage, and the assurance that Abraham’s posterity would receive certain choice, promised lands as an eternal inheritance. (Abraham 2; Genesis 17; 22:15–18; Galatians 3.)

“All of these promises lumped together are called the Abrahamic covenant. This covenant was renewed with Isaac (Genesis 24:60; 26:1–4, 24) and again with Jacob. (Genesis 28; 35:9–13; 48:3–4.) Those portions of it which pertain to personal exaltation and eternal increase are renewed with each member of the house of Israel who enters the order of celestial marriage; through that order the participating parties become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (D&C 132; Romans 9:4; Galatians 3; 4.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 13).

†6. **Joseph Smith:** “. . . the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 149)

Recommended Reading:

1. Elder Boyd K. Packer, “[Feed My Sheep](#),” *Ensign*, May 1984, 41–42
2. S. Michael Wilcox, “[The Abrahamic Covenant](#),” *Ensign*, Jan. 1998.
3. Nancy Jensen, “[Old Testament Lesson #7 The Abrahamic Covenant](#),” at LDS Gospel Doctrine Plus, February 7, 2010. (Her blog contains a fine analogy subtitled: The Leaven of Righteousness.)
4. Ellis T. Rasmussen, “[Abrahamic Covenant](#),” at Encyclopedia of Mormonism; accessed 2/21/14.
5. John Gee, “[Abraham and Idrimi](#),” at Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship; accessed 2/21/14.
6. David Larsen, “[The Bird as Angel of the Lord in Book of Abraham Facs. 1](#)” (Old Testament Lesson 7) at Heavenly Ascents, February 11, 2010.

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†7. **Elder Boyd K. Packer** made the following analogy to emphasize our responsibility to share the gospel with others:

[Lesson writers summarized it for our benefit.]

“Imagine that our bishop has appointed us to plan a picnic for ward members. It is to be the best social in the history of the ward, and we are to spare no expense. We reserve a beautiful picnic ground in the country. We are to have it all to ourselves.

“The day arrives and everything is perfect. The tables are set and the feast is spectacular. Then, just as the blessing is being said, an old car turns into the picnic grounds and sputters to a stop. A worried man lifts the hood, and a spout of steam comes out. Several children climb out of the car. An anxious mother takes a box to a nearby table. She puts a few leftovers on the table, trying to make them look like a meal for her hungry children. But there is not enough.

“Then one of the little girls sees our table. She pulls her little brother over to us and pushes her head between you and me. We move aside. The little girl says, ‘Look at that; I wonder what that tastes like.’

“What would we do? Would we ignore the people or ask them to be quiet? Would we show them back to their table and give them some of the food we don’t really need? Or would we invite them to come and join us, to sit between us and share the feast, and to let us help fix their car and give them something for their journey?

“Elder Packer asks: ‘Could there be more pure enjoyment than seeing how much we could get those hungry children to eat? Could there be more satisfaction than to interrupt our festivities to help [them] fix their car? ...

“... There are people across the world and about us—our neighbors, our friends, some in our own families—who, spiritually speaking, are undernourished. Some of them are starving to death! If we keep all this to ourselves, it is not unlike feasting before those who are hungry” (*Lesson Manual*, see “[Feed My Sheep](#),” *Ensign*, May 1984, 41–42).

†8. **Joseph Fielding McConkie**: “In claiming to be a chosen people, we make no pretense to be a superior to any other people but simply claim to have been chosen to serve as the Lord’s messengers in declaring the message of salvation among the nations of the earth. Ours is a call to service, not to privilege, though the service itself is such. The promise given to Abraham was that his posterity would be called upon to bear the ministry and priesthood among all nations.” (*Answers: Straightforward Answers to Tough Gospel Questions*, 181-182)

†9. **Patriarchal Blessings—Lineage**: “The patriarch is to discern and declare a person’s lineage through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The declaration of lineage is not determined by a person’s race or nationality. Because of the scattering of Israel among all nations of the earth, the lineage of Israel is found in people of most races and nationalities.... Because the tribes of Israel have intermixed with one another, most people are of mixed lineage. Even family members can be of mixed lineage, and occasionally children of the same parents receive patriarchal blessings that declare their lineage to be from different tribes. The blessing of one tribe may be dominant in one child, and the blessing of another tribe may be dominant in another. Some Church members may not have any of the lineage of Israel. For these members a patriarch may not be prompted by the Spirit to declare lineage from a particular tribe. Instead, he may declare that the individual will receive his or her blessings through Abraham.” (*Patriarch’s Handbook*, p. 3)

†10. **John A. Widtsoe**: “This covenant with Abraham was also a call to leadership. Therefore, it has been interpreted to mean that Abraham and his descendants were chosen to conserve in purity and to advance on earth the eternal plan for human salvation.” (*Gospel Interpretations*, 95)

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