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Risky Hope: A Proflection Through Abraham's Spiritual Journey

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Abstract

Abraham's journey, initially marked by forced displacement and uncertainty, evolves into a profound exploration of hope amidst hardship. This qualitative study delves into Abraham's spiritual evolution, elucidating how he navigates through adversity to grasp a risky hope promised by God. Through descriptive data analysis, the research constructs a narrative of proflection, wherein Abraham embraces vulnerability to transcend conventional expectations. The findings highlight Abraham's transformative journey, revealing how he ultimately embraces risky hope as a beacon of resilience and spiritual growth.

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Introduction

Following a setback for the universal themes found in Genesis chapters 1–11, Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg highlights a change

in course. A new chapter begins when the LORD chooses Abram, a Mesopotamian, and promises to use him to create a powerful nation that will be different from the seventy nations mentioned in Genesis 10.¹

Abraham is a beloved figure in the Bible. Abraham is regarded as "the father" of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam because he is fundamental to the stories of these three religions and is often referred to as their founder. Even with his shortcomings as a person, he was nevertheless able to put his faith and trust in his covenant God, particularly during the most trying times in his life.

God assures Abram of three things: 1) the formation of a great nation from him; 2) blessings upon Abram; and 3) the elevation of Abram's name. Through the collaborative efforts of Abram and God, the nations of the world will also partake in God's blessings.

God promised to give Abram as many descendants as the stars in the sky even though they had no descendants. The seed of hope planted in Abraham and Sarah hearts is the hope they have for their children. However, fulfilling that promise proved to be far from as simple as turning one's hand, as we discover in the subsequent chapters of the Book of Genesis that recount the story of Abraham. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, traversed a journey fraught with numerous challenges and hardships as they obediently followed God's call. Their path was marked by trials that tested their faith and resilience. From leaving their homeland to facing uncertainties in unfamiliar territories, Abraham and Sarah encountered various obstacles, difficulties such as barrenness, the complexities of building a family, and the uncertainties of a nomadic life. The narrative of Abraham and Sarah exemplifies the profound resilience and steadfastness required in answering the divine call.

However, how to understand Abram's risky hope in the context of what people understand about hope, whilst in the contemporary context hope seems described as optimism or positivism. As a result, positivism or optimism which appears to bring encouragement but also shallows Christian understanding and has the capacity to deceive someone into believing in something utopian, is the hope that many comprehend and live by in this postmodern period.

According to Amir Syarifuddin, in the current situation, it appears that the idea of hope is degrading and changing. The evolution of the human intellect has progressed in a favorable direction, and this is what has led to the advancement of contemporary society, philosophy, and science. As expectations are made certain, real, correct, and useful, modern individuals are more prone to generate hope based on positivism.² Another study, even considered that the ideas of hope and optimism appear to be interchangeable. This study focuses on the value of optimism in terms of physical health, well-being, and overall quality of life.³

So far, previous research has concentrated on the discourse on the concept of hope in the context of Roman culture, where having hope is regarded as a useful trait since it can encourage individuals to persevere in the face of challenges and hardships. Optimism, a positive outlook on the future, and the conviction that better things are possible are all related with hope.⁴ Another study from Roe Fremstedal illustrates how a pragmatic approach can justify hope against hope, involving seemingly unrealistic expectations, by evaluating practical concerns and reasonable hope criteria in the framework of believing ethics.⁵

The aim of this paper is to complement the shortcomings of existing (previous) studies, at least firstly, which do not analyze carefully how Abraham's risky hope is related to the spiritual journey, secondly, the author's intention to emphasize Abraham's hopes profectively through spiritual journey to help the church continue to live as a spiritual pilgrim in contemporary reality.

The author provides Joas Adiprasetya "profection" in order to fully examine Abraham's risky hope. This concept of profection highlights two points. First, it supplies an idea for visualizing the past reality by focusing on the future; second, it validates actions of kindness and support for others.⁶

The argumentative author contends that the concept of profection is critical to developing the idea of risky hope, particularly in the context of Abraham's spiritual journey has the potential to deepen people's relationships with God and motivate actions of kindness and support for others.

Based on the foregoing, the author intends to develop a study centered on three discussions: first, The Journey: From City Dweller to Desert Wanderer. Second, Intersectionality of Abraham's Spirituality in Personal Hope and Impersonal Hope. Third, Exploring Abraham's Spiritual Desert: Profecting through the journey

The Journey: From City Dweller to Desert Wanderer

In the ancient city of Ur, where the clamor of daily life echoed through bustling streets, there lived a man named Abram. Little did he know that his life was destined for a profound transformation—a journey that would take him from the familiarity of city dwellings to the vast and unpredictable desert. The call came to Abram like a whisper in the wind, a divine summons that echoed in the depths of his being. "Go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you," the voice urged. It was a call to leave behind the security of city walls, the comfort of familial ties, and the predictability of urban life.

The name Abram carries the meaning of an "exalted father," with the components "אב" (av, meaning "father") and "רם" (ram, meaning "exalted" or "high"). On the other hand, the name Abraham, an evolved version of Abram, includes the additional letter "ה" (he), representing the sound "h," and is interpreted as "אב" (av, meaning "father") and "המון" (hamon, meaning "multitude" or "many"). Thus, Abraham is commonly understood as the "father of a multitude" or "father of many nations," reflecting the biblical promise that he would become the patriarch of numerous descendants, as described in the Book of Genesis.

The home of Abraham was in the fertile valley of the Euphrates, in or, more probably, near the populous city of Ur. The Chaldeans had attained a high degree of civilization, but were debased by the most profligate rites of idol worship.⁷ Abraham's early life is unrecorded in holy writ. The biblical account first mentions him living in Ur of Chaldea when he and his brother Nahor "took them wives" (Gen. 11:29).

In this journey, Abram faced trials that tested the core of his being. The barrenness of the desert mirrored the uncertainty of his path, yet his faith remained unwavering. The promise of a land, a legacy, and a covenant fueled his resolve,

transforming him from a city dweller into a desert wanderer by faith.

However, a life guided by faith is not confined to a singular act of obedience or a solitary journey to a distant place. It is an ongoing encounter with the unseen and the eternal. Its emblem is a tent, and its essence lies in an altar. This was the reality for Abraham. By faith, he became a resident alien in the land of promise, as though in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise.

With a heart stirred by an unseen force, Abram embraced the call of faith. He gathered his belongings, bid farewell to the city that had cradled his existence, and set forth into the unknown. The desert lay ahead, a realm untamed and vast, where the stars in the night sky became his guiding lights.

As Abram journeyed through the rugged terrain, each step seemed to deepen his connection with the divine. The city, with its clamor and constraints, became a distant memory as he ventured further into the desert. The expansive landscapes mirrored the boundless possibilities of faith, and the silence of the desert echoed the whispers of a presence that guided him.

Through the heat of the day and the chill of the night, Abram's journey unfolded like a sacred tapestry woven by the divine. The desert, once a place of challenge, became a sacred space where the divine and the human intersected. Abram's encounters with the mysterious unfolded like chapters in an ancient saga, each revealing new facets of his character and deepening his connection with the divine. And so, the city dweller became a wanderer, navigating the uncharted expanses of the desert with faith as his compass. Abram's journey, from the familiar cityscape to the untamed desert, became a timeless narrative—a testament to the transformative power of faith and the mysterious allure of the divine call.

God summoned Abram to leave the city of Haran and travel to a place where he would never establish a permanent residence. Deuteronomy 26:5 describes him as a "wandering Aramean. Abram needs to rely on God's word and guidance to find his significance, security, and success made this way of life by nature more God-centered. He had to set out, not knowing where he was going," as it says in Hebrews 11:8. However, comprehending Abraham's story involves grasping a crucial set of indicators related to how he distinguished himself from his distant relatives residing in Mesopotamia, as narrated in Genesis 11. The narrative encompasses the construction of the Tower of Babel, a significant event that underscores the divergence between Abraham's chosen path and the collective aspirations of his Mesopotamian kin.

The Tower of Babel story (Gen. 11:1-9) comes before Abraham's origins. This tower forever became known as the "Tower of Babel" *מִגְדַּל בָּבֶל* (*migdāl bāḇel*), or literally "the tower of confused speech." It is an important bridge that demonstrates God's consistency in His merciful dealings with frail and sinful humanity. Bruce K. Waltke, a renowned biblical scholar, has provided insight into contrasting nature of Abraham's journey and the efforts of the builders of the Tower of Babel. Abram puts his trust in God's guidance, rather than on human device. In contrast, the tower builders believed that by their own skill and ingenuity, they could devise a tower "with its top in the heavens" (Gen. 11:4), and in so doing achieve significance and security in a way that usurped God's authority.⁸ Jack M. Sasson further adds that the Tower of Babel is a well-known episode in Genesis which concludes the Hebrews' assessment of mankind's history previous to the election of

Abraham as the first patriarch of God's chosen people.⁹

Abraham was willing to go wherever God led him, while the builders attempted to huddle together in their accustomed space. Waltke underscores the God-centered purpose in Abraham's journey. Abraham's faith is rooted in his acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and his willingness to submit to God's plan for his life. Whilst, the builders' efforts at Babel are characterized by a man-centered purpose. Their desire to build a tower is driven by a collective human ambition to make a name for themselves, in defiance of God's intended purpose for humanity.

God initiates contact with Abraham at the outset of his narrative, saying, "Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1-3). God pledged to transform Abram into a great nation, a concept encapsulated by the Hebrew phrase גוי גדול (goy gadol), literally meaning "big or great nation." It's noteworthy that Hebrew positions adjectives after nouns, unlike many other languages. While English uses "big nation," Hebrew employs גוי גדול (goy gadol) – "nation big."

The plural form of the Hebrew word for "nation" is גוים (goyim), often translated as "Gentiles" or "the [other] nations." In Hebrew, the verb "to bless" is בָּרַךְ (barakh), linked to the word for "knee" בִּרְכָּה (berekh). This connection suggests a possible interpretation: "bending the knee," which could imply rendering service to someone. Thus, an alternative understanding of Genesis 12:3 could be: "I will serve those who serve you!" Serving entails doing good to someone, leading to reciprocal benefits for the recipient. The pivotal point in Abraham's life was founded not just on God, but also on others. This is demonstrated by Abraham's spirituality, which corresponds to his hospitality and giving to others. As if he was hosting the Lord, Abraham welcomed three foreign guests (Gen. 18:2). This is as precise as it is, described by Ephraim Meir in *Adiprasetya* as a friendship with a stranger, God as 'self-circuited with creation meaningfully.¹⁰ In this perspective, the author illustrates Abraham's spiritual proclivity in his hopes, which will be discussed more in this work.

Intersectionality of Abraham's Spirituality in Personal Hope and Impersonal Hope

People will live in tension, violence, and so forth without hope. No one can live without hope, according to Paul Tillich, even if it is merely for the little things that bring happiness even in the darkest circumstances, such as poverty, illness, and societal failure.¹¹ Without hope, our lives lose their tension toward the future and come to an end in despair. In the words of Jürgen Moltmann, "Life without hope is not life." According to the views expressed by Tillich and Moltmann above, hope is a fundamental human need that enables people to confront and overcome significant obstacles in life.¹²

In today's ever-changing world, hope is frequently pitted against despair and dread. The word "desperate" implies a lack of hope. Despair frequently generates natural hope, sometimes known as optimism. However, optimism is not the same as hope. The challenge here is how to tell the difference between hope and optimism. Is there any value in optimism or hope? Several understandings of hope that are understood in the modern sense.

Hope is an emotion¹³, a cognitive process¹⁴, an existential stance¹⁵, a state of being¹⁶, a disposition¹⁷, an attitude¹⁸, a state of mind¹⁹, an emotion which resembles a state of mind²⁰, an instinct²¹, an impulse²², an intuition²³, a

sociohormone²⁴, a subliminal 'sense'²⁵ Is it a biologically-based reaction shaped by natural selection²⁶ or a socially constructed pattern of behavior²⁷, Is it an anthropological constant such that 'the human being is incapable of not hoping²⁸, or a learned thinking pattern such that some human beings are capable of not hoping because they were not taught to think in this manner²⁹, Faced with such as an array of competing conceptions, should we conclude that hope defies all categorization.³⁰

Based on the meta-analysis of all the available literature data, our result indicated hope is conceptualized, measured, and influenced by various factors. The conclusions drawn from such meta-analyses would depend on the specific research questions and criteria used.

In essence, hope is a complex and multidimensional concept, and its nature likely involves a combination of biological, psychological, and sociocultural influences. Whether it defies categorization depends on the specific framework and context in which it is being examined. Hope is a subject of ongoing research and debate, and scholars from various fields continue to explore its intricacies.

As a result, the author will refer to optimism as impersonal hope and hope as personal hope in order to help readers better understand the meaning of the phrase.

In Christianity, hope is a theological virtue that always points in the direction of human hope. In this instance, the object of this hope is God. This sort of hope reduces God to an inanimate object. Optimism is frequently linked with other types of hope that are more impersonal. Optimism is a form of positive thinking. Charles S. Carver and Michael F. Scheier agreed that optimism does not require active planning due to the nature of fantasy.³¹ As Michael Milona pointed out, "Optimism has received great attention in the field of psychology. When academics in other fields discuss optimism, they tend to use similar definitions, borrowed from the field of psychology."³² Nevertheless, Tillich says that some people devalue hope by calling it wishful thinking or utopian fantasy. Ephesus's narrative more clearly illustrates that hope is not a hope at all without Christ (Eph. 2:12-16). So, it is clearly mentioned above that Scripture shows the contrast between hope and optimism.³³

More clearly, Ephesians 2:16 affirms that true hope is communal and not individual. There is a distinct distinction between this personal and impersonal hope. Personal hope, according to Paul, has relational and reconciling components. Paul alludes to hope for humanity in this type of hope, which gives peace while breaking down the quarrel. Whilst, impersonal hope is focused toward individual expectations, which is referred to as optimism in physiological terms. This impersonal hope is a natural virtue that has nothing to do with God. In other words, this impersonal hope is synonymous with the phrase "expecting hope." This impersonal hope is nothing more than a reflection of God's grace (Matt. 5:45).

Impersonal hopes give rise to natural human expectations like prosperity, virtue, abundance, morality, or what is known as natural virtue. Although natural virtue comprises positivity and certain qualities, it is misplaced to use this impersonal expectation as the foundation for true hope. Paul compares this personal hope to an impersonal hope in (Rom 4:18). Impersonal hope is characterized as mere chance, whereas personal hope is a guaranteed belief based on divine promise. Before the time of Christ, the early Greeks grasped the problem of hope apart from God. The Greek word for this

is *elpis* (ἐλπίς). According to Stephen Beale, *elpis* was not a virtue, but a vice." It is one of the negative desires that plague the human psyche, along with eros, which is related with sexual desire or lust. People who have *elpis* are delusory, cursed by the gods, and doomed to a terrible fate.³⁴ The author underlines that while there are qualities inherent in impersonal expectations that should not be disregarded, it's crucial to recognize that not all hope is from God. The difference between the two is that personal hope results from God's promise rather than impersonal expectations, which are above and beyond God's promises. In other words, *elpis* refers to the optimistic expectation of a positive outcome or a better future. In different contexts, it can refer to trust, confidence, and a belief in favorable circumstances.

Whilst, Paul in his epistle contrasts this personal and impersonal hope in the term "hoping against all hopes," he refers to the context of Abraham (Rom. 4:18). Before Abraham experienced true personal hope, God needed to seem to intervene in Abraham's impersonal hope, which only led to natural hope. John D. Caputo argued that the impossibility of hope is a condition of possibility. If we have a good reason, then it is not hoped but a reasonable expectation. If it is really unfounded then it is not a hope but a useless and arbitrary desire.³⁵ This natural hope, according to Paul's letter to the Romans, is a hope in vain. Paul emphasizes that man's innate hope is a dead end that he cannot get out of by being merely optimistic. In other words, this worldly optimism is perhaps more appropriately described as spiritual bankruptcy, which is wholly incompatible with the hope that comes from God. Such impersonal expectations, as Moltmann argued in Tony Lane, are a result of sin. He compares this kind of hope to trying to foresee what God will do without His promise.³⁶ However, God also intervened in this impersonal hope, so that Abraham could eventually receive personal hope. Abraham had to be drawn into natural hopelessness, and then he found true hope from God. This impasse was used by God to explain the situation of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham would not have acquired personal hope from God if he had not faced journey and stifling distress throughout his life.

In truth, the answer to finding personal hope is found in Jesus' teaching that "Blessed are the poor in God's eyes, for they are the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:3). Despite the fact that this verse embodies the essence of bankruptcy, it is not a celebration of failure or poverty, but rather demonstrates the virtues of hope that are hard to attain without suffering. Suffering became an effective tool for God in preparing Abraham's heart to receive true hope. Thus, true hope can exist only if it is followed by spiritual bankruptcy.

The story of Abraham is one of dangerous hope that can be found in the book of Genesis. It seemed, as though Abram had come to a standstill at the edge of the promised land. Abram spent most of his life following God's call in a liminal space, where he was kept by the majority of God's guidance. According to Ewert Cousins' writings, this is the mystical aspect of Abram's journey, which he refers to as apophatic. Cousins explains,

*Pilgrimage involves the process of dying to oneself to find oneself. This mystical dimension of pilgrimage, whether experienced on a pilgrimage to a particular site or through a personal inner journey. The apophatic relates to the spiritual dimension accessed through what medieval Christian thinkers such as Bonaventure called the "spiritual senses." God is found in negative experiences-darkness, or via negativa. this differs from cataphatic experiences which refer to encounters with God through positive experiences.*³⁷

Furthermore, John Bethancourt links this apophatic connection to the elusive story of Abraham, as he points out,

The apophatic way, or the way of “unknowing,” leads to the greatest “knowledge” of God and His kingdom. I mean Abraham left his homeland at the age of 70. He left everything and left. Sarah holds an impossible promise.³⁸

Charles R. Swindoll added, God's guidance is unpredictable from a human perspective. He often leads His people into place and circumstances that are surprising because He does not color within the lines drawn by humans.³⁹ Whilst, considering the Abrahamic narrative, Swindoll's remarks about this apophatic connection illustrate a paradoxical journey. According to Patrick Henry, people can only look beyond their immediate situation to the ideal outcome. Temporary uncertainty is frequently spatially distant and can only be partially understood.⁴⁰ The background of Abraham's sacred story also seems to point to a mysterious, perplexing, and transitional journey.

‘..... sufferings give rise to perseverance, and perseverance gives rise to test resistance, and test resistance gives rise to hope (Rom. 5:3-4).’ In verse 5 above, it is said that hope does not disappoint, not because of the certainty of the future, but because of the certainty of God's love. The scary thing about suffering is not actually suffering itself, but the absence of God's love in it. The person who places his hope in impersonal hope only places his hope in the certainty of the future. Such hope will disappoint because the certainty of God's love is ignored. What does it mean to have a future but not be loved by God? Exchanging God's love, solely for the certainty of the future, is dangerous.

Hope and faith are inextricably linked in the mind of a Christian. This is in contrast to modern people's positive mindset. As Taylor points out in Lisa Bortolotti, the concept of optimism as a positive illusion reflects this idea. Positive illusions are defined as systematic tiny distortions of reality that make things appear better than they are. This concept of impersonal hope or optimism does not appear to allow room for doubt and uncertainty. This implies that optimism has an intriguing benefit, but it is also frequently wrong.⁴¹

Impersonal hope can be referred to as a positive illusion. Ellen J. Langer and Jane Roth describe this as an illusion of control, occurring ‘when we believe that we can control external events independently.’⁴² Furthermore, this has also been identified as an illusion of superiority,⁴³ for example, taking a better-than-average view in a variety of areas, including attractiveness, intelligence, and even moral character.⁴⁴ Finally, optimism bias arises when we have a tendency to predict that our future will be largely positive and will result in progress and that negative events will not be part of our lives.⁴⁵ It can be said that these impersonal hopes try to create false promises from their self-projection of God, while God never gives such promises.

Personal hope, on the other hand, is not the kind of hope in which Abraham did not experience doubt. Abraham and Sarah are getting older, but they still do not have any children. God promised to make Abraham a great nation, but how could this happen if Abraham had no offspring? As a result, Sarah took the initiative and requested that Abraham approach Hagar. Abraham followed Sarah's advice, and Hagar bore Abraham a son named Ishmael. God reaffirmed his promise to Abraham about a decade later, stating that he would have children through Sarah. Abraham questioned God, believing he was too old, and proposed that Ishmael be designated as God's promised child. However, the Lord insisted

the promise child would come through Sarah, and this message was repeated when three angels visited Abraham to tell him that Sarah would give birth to Isaac, within the next year (Gen. 16:1–15, 17:1–19).

From the above events, it can be understood that in his hope, Abraham himself experienced doubts. Doubt is a human thing. God himself tolerated Abraham's doubts. Timothy Keller pointed out,

*Faith is without a doubt like a human body without antibodies in it. Those who live a life without ever struggling with important questions about why they believe in God, will find themselves so easily destroyed. Our faith will collapse in a short time if we fail to notice the doubts within ourselves, which we should be able to overcome once we are willing to enter into a long struggle. Keller said believers should learn to find reasons behind their faith.*⁴⁶

However, it is important to note that the phrase doubt referred to in Abraham does not represent all types of uncertainties found in the scriptures. Abraham questioned God at the appropriate time. Abraham's faith in God developed. Instead of bitterness and despair, he addressed hardship with hope and courage. It is intriguing to consider the connection between retirement and misery. Paul remarked in a letter that all creatures are equally groaning. Because they deal with pain or suffering, Groaning is part of the expression of hope. Here it is clear that Paul did not provide an instant solution to the problem of suffering but desired believers to lament (Rom. 8:22–26). Even in this chapter, the Holy Spirit invites believers to participate in the holy groaning. Lamentation is the way to be more human in this fallen world. Regarding hope, Brueggemann quotes O'Connor, "tears can give birth to watery hope. They washed away the space once occupied by despair, anger, or sadness, and in that space, hope could emerge uninvited."⁴⁷ Hope arises regardless of human desire, decisions, or optimism. God's particular hope is a gift from God, not from man. Hope is an unwanted guest, not an optimistic will, and true hope is a gift from God. Suffering (holy groaning) is the means. As a result, the author highlights that, impersonal hopes, such as illusions, imply that human journeys only develop in one direction, which is constantly expanding. Personal hope, on the other hand, is the ability to endure and not give up in conditions that get increasingly challenging.

As a result, Abraham's hope was founded on what God had promised, not on what was conceivable or impossible. In the hope that, despite his obviously risky situation, he (Abraham) would be the father of many nations, as he had been told. (Rom. 8:18). Although Abraham saw no way to make that promise a reality in his old age, he believed in faithfulness to God. Abraham's hope here, indeed, seems to contrast with the image of himself that is not ideal, to have the condition of experiencing God's promise naturally. However, here, through Abraham, God contrasted the hope that God had with the hope of the world. Divine hope is present without negating Abraham's vulnerability. While the hope of the world, as much as possible, negates and rejects doubt and vulnerability, that is why it is said in Romans 8:18 that Abraham remained hopeful even though there was no basis for hope. This verse can be interpreted to mean that, in the end, the hope is received not in strength but in its vulnerability. Aristotle, in Scott Gravelle, attributed hope to the "virtue of courage." Hope, according to Aristotle, can lead to wisdom, courage to suffer, justice, and self-control.⁴⁸ Hope creates a consensus that will lead to the courage to suffer because of God's love (Matt. 4:18). Paul writes that what makes hope not disappoint is that God's love is poured out (Rom. 5:5). Thus, love ultimately eliminates fear (1 John 4:18).

Exploring Abraham's Spiritual Desert: Proflecting Through the Journey

Before discussing Abraham's spirituality, it is critical from a Christian viewpoint to consider what Abraham's spirituality actually entails. Alister McGrath asserts that spirituality is the actualization of one's religious beliefs—what a person does in practice to live out what they believe. It is about a full understanding of God's reality.⁴⁹ Philip Sheldrake explained that spirituality comes from the Latin word *spiritus*; in Greek it is called “*pneuma*” and “*pneumatic*.”⁵⁰ The spiritual adjective is a Christian neologism used by Paul to describe what relates to the Holy Spirit. Whilst, S.P. Pretorius explains, spirituality as physical reality and contact between self and divinity, supreme reality or supreme being. Thus, based on the explanation by McGrath, Sheldrake, and Pretorius above, the author concluded that spirituality is a way to live and a way to exist, or the way of living and being.⁵¹

In this essay, the author will demonstrate how Abraham's spirituality and hope throughout his time in the desert helped to develop him not just personally but also communally. Abraham was called by God from the Chaldeans, but God did not immediately direct Abraham to a specific location. Abraham was taken on an excursion by him into the desert. The Bible depicts spiritual treks in the desert. The desert is a fascinating and frightening place. Many passages in the Bible mention deserts, both literally and metaphorically, but desert imagery is frequently used to proflect on man's relationship with God.

According to Thomas F. McKenna, being in the desert helps someone become more sensitive to the limits of their mental vision and experience. In order to evaluate the worth of any creation of the present reality, one must accept something that has not yet happened.⁵² T.S. Eliot, on the other hand, depicts the desert as a potent symbolic image that is thought to represent spiritual sterility, soul dryness, and annihilation.⁵³ This symbolic image is precisely likened to the condition of Abraham. The desert becomes the meeting point of the void that is both natural and spiritual. Abraham was led in a field of distress, even the barrenness of the desert, identical to the barren condition of Abraham and Sarah. Furthermore, Nicole Hill pointed out, desert is a place, pride and self-confidence are stripped away.⁵⁴ Related to what Hill said, D. Keith Innes pointed out, the desert is a place where we are stripped of our masks, faced with the challenges of seeking the word and the demands of God's love.⁵⁵ Bratton in Robert Barry Leal added, the desert projecting individuals interacting with the divine.⁵⁶ The author stresses the desert as a spiritual formation area for radical self-honesty, drawing on the views of Eliot, Hill, Innes, and Bratton. This type of spirituality has humility at its core.

Abraham's desert experience is not merely a physical journey but a spiritual one marked by uncertainty, challenges, and growth. Through proflection, we gain insight into Abraham's ability to navigate the desert with faith and resilience. His encounters with God reveal his willingness to trust in God's guidance despite the uncertainty of his circumstances (Gen 12:1–3). Fredy Simanjuntak shows that the Bible repeatedly depicts characters who, despite the difficulties and discomfort of the desert, become a place of meaningful encounter with God. God spoke to Abraham while he was in the desert. God led the Israelites into the desert. God met Elijah in the wilderness, and He also spoke to John Baptist, who spent the majority of his life in these difficult conditions. It's known as “the voice calling in the desert” (Gen. 12:7; Exod. 13:17-18; 19:1-25; 1Kings. 19:1-8).⁵⁷

Accordingly, it can be said that Abraham's wilderness experience exemplifies a way of life marked by a “focus towards the

divine calling" that is central to the Judeo-Christian tradition, according to which God watches over His people during their wilderness wanderings as a place of testing for purification, heart change, and, by self-attestation and obedience to orders, Lord.

Profection, as elucidated by Adiprasetya, becomes indispensable in comprehending Abraham's spiritual journey. According to Adiprasetya, profection is a way of peering into the future, realizing that there is somebody in their vulnerability in front of us.⁵⁸ The author argues profection enables us to appreciate Abraham's relational dynamics, particularly his hospitality towards strangers as seen in Genesis 18:2. This act of welcoming others, even in the midst of his own journey, demonstrates Abraham's compassion and openness to divine encounters, reinforcing the interconnectedness of spirituality and human relationships. This forward-looking perspective allows one to recognize the vulnerability inherent in others and appreciate the intricate relational dynamics exhibited by Abraham.

Abraham's unique perspective on time, characterized by "remembering the future and imagining the past," offers a profound insight into his spiritual journey. In his recollection of the future, Abraham envisions the promises of God yet to be fulfilled, anchoring his faith in the certainty of divine providence (Gen 22:8). This forward-looking mindset enables him to navigate through present challenges with unwavering hope and confidence.

Conversely, Abraham's ability to imagine the past allows him to reflect deeply on his personal history and the faithfulness of God throughout his journey. By revisiting past experiences, Abraham gains wisdom, discernment, and a deeper understanding of God's enduring faithfulness. And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him, "Raise your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west (Gen. 13:14).

The Hebrew words used to indicate the four directions in which Abram was asked to direct his gaze are: "north" צָפוֹנָה (tsafonah), "south" נֶגְבָּה (negbah), "east" קֶדְמָה (kedmah), and "west" יָמָה (yamah). While these words in English convey exclusive and highly specific directions, their origins in Hebrew reveal a richer meaning. For example, "negbah," which translates to "to the South," actually refers to the Negev desert, while "yamah," meaning "to the West," actually denotes the direction of the sea. Similarly, "kedmah," translated as "to the East," evokes the idea of "returning to something from the past," connected with the concept of "ancient times" or a distant past. Its root is related to the notion of the "ancient world" like the Garden of Eden, which God planted "to the east" at the beginning of history (Gen 2:8), and the direction of the sunrise. The Hebrew phrase translated as "to the North" צָפוֹנָה (tsafonah) is linked to Mount Tsafon or Zaphon (Isa 14:13), now known as Jebel Aqra on the border of Syria and Turkey. This mountain was located to the north of Abram when God commanded him to look in all directions.

Together, this dynamic interplay between remembering the future and imagining the past shapes Abraham's spiritual resilience and fortifies his commitment to God's call. It underscores the transformative power of faith, which transcends the constraints of linear time and illuminates the eternal promises of God.

Furthermore, profection through Abram's journey allows for a deeper understanding of his spiritual transformation. His willingness to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:23–33), reflects a profound sense of empathy and solidarity with others, transcending personal concerns for the greater good. Abraham's concern for Lot was clearly visible when God

intended to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot was. He interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, even though the most inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were foreigners, and he did not live there or be associated with them. Abraham had the opportunity to care for them (Gen. 18:23–33). Up to this point, Abraham's spirituality grew in his concern for others.

The practice of hospitality was a vital part of the ancient Semitic world's culture.⁵⁹ Abram displays exemplary hospitality when three strangers, later revealed to be divine messengers, approach his tent in the heat of the day. Despite not knowing who they are, Abram immediately offers them water to wash their feet, a gesture of hospitality and respect at that time. He then invites them to rest in the shade of his tent and prepares a lavish meal for them, demonstrating his willingness to go above and beyond to ensure their comfort and well-being. Abram's hospitality is characterized by warmth, generosity, and genuine care for the strangers (Gen. 18:1-19).

In contrast, the people of Sodom are depicted as notoriously inhospitable. When two angels arrive in the city, Lot, Abram's nephew, invites them to stay at his house for the night. However, the men of Sodom surround Lot's house and demand that he hand over the guests so they can sexually assault them. This starkly contrasts with the principles of hospitality upheld by Abram. The people of Sodom display hostility, selfishness, and a complete disregard for the sacred duty of protecting and providing for guests. Their actions ultimately lead to their destruction, as their lack of hospitality symbolizes their moral corruption and depravity (Gen. 19:1-9).

Meanwhile, Abram showed how deeply he cared for his nephew Lot, despite the conflict that occurred between the shepherds Abram and Lot which resulted in a serious feud between their shepherds which ultimately led to Abram's separation from Lot (Gen. 13:2-6, 13:7-14).

Abram was handling of the dispute with Lot's herdsmen exemplifies his commitment to resolving conflicts peacefully, as well as his embodiment of generosity and humility in his interactions with others. These qualities are integral to Abram's character and reflect his deep spirituality and moral integrity.

Conclusion

From all the discussion above, it can be concluded: First, Abraham's spiritual journey stands as an inspiring testament to the transformative power of faith and the significance of surrendering to God's will. Second, the contrast between personal and impersonal hope underscores the importance of anchoring hope in God's promises rather than relying solely on human expectations. Third, Abraham's desert experience, both literal and metaphorical, is characterized by uncertainty and divine encounters. Through the practice of profection, Abraham gains profound insights into his vulnerability and relational dynamics, nurturing qualities of humility, compassion, and openness to divine encounters. Thus, Abraham's journey not only showcases courage in facing the challenges of risky hope but also equips him to care for others with a deeper understanding and empathy.

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