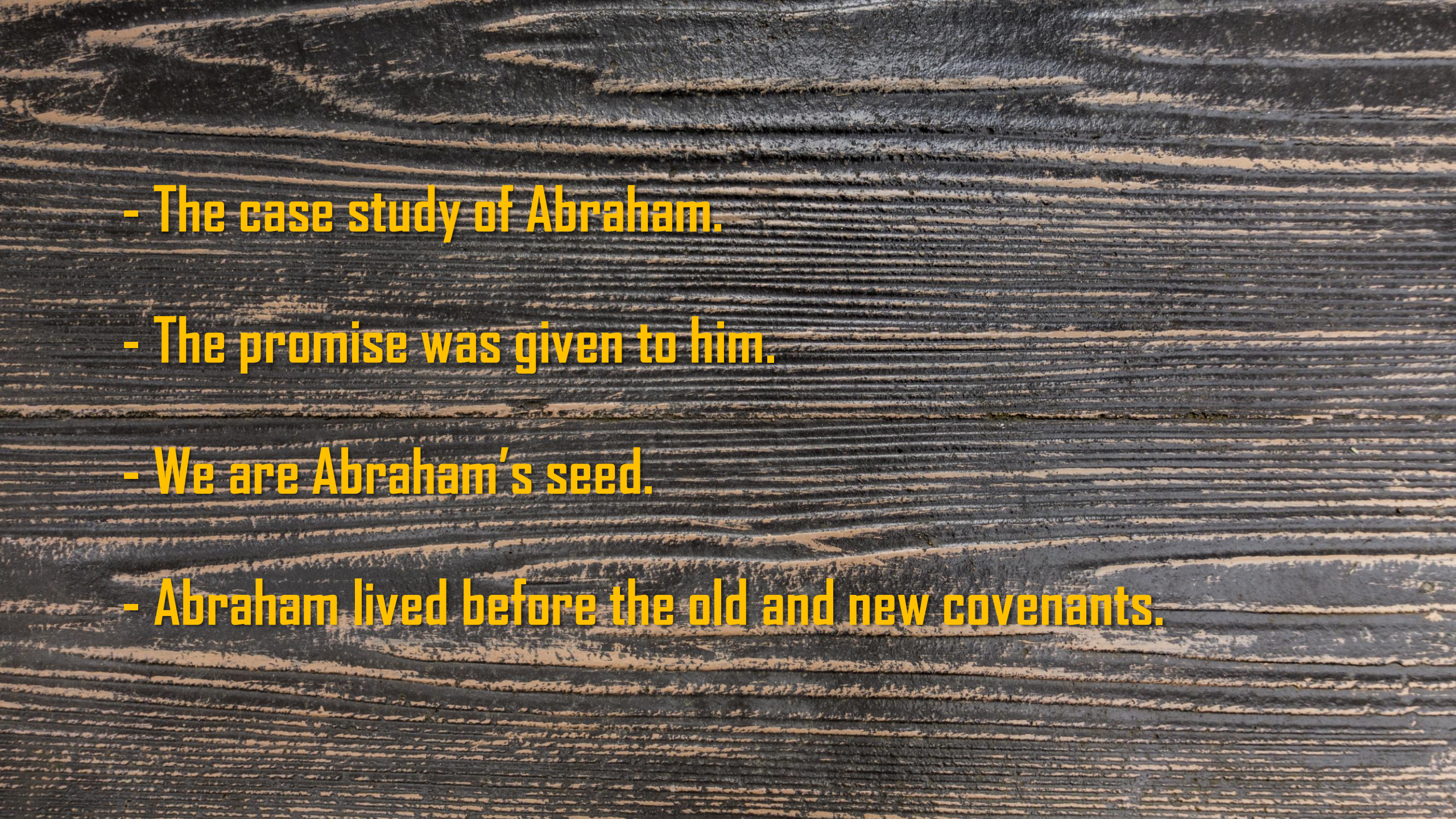


**Understanding Altars from
a
Scriptural Perspective.**

- 
- The case study of Abraham.
 - The promise was given to him.
 - We are Abraham's seed.
 - Abraham lived before the old and new covenants.

Abram's Family (Genesis 11:27-32 NIV)

- ²⁷ This is the account of Terah's family line. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.
- ²⁸ While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth.
- ²⁹ Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah.

Abram's Family (Genesis 11:27-32 NIV)

- ³⁰ Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.
- ³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.
- ³² Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

The Call of Abram

- ¹The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.
- ²“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
- ³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”

Promises to Abram

- ¹ Now the LORD had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.

- ² I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.

- ³ I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

- ⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.
- ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.
- ⁶ Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.
- ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Altar #1

- **7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” **So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.**
 - i) An altar built because the Lord appeared to him. He was not specifically instructed to build an altar, yet he did.
(An Altar can be built as a result of a personal encounter with the Lord).
 - ii) ...“To your offspring I will give this land.”... Therefore, the altar could be referred to as the **Altar of Hope.**



Haran

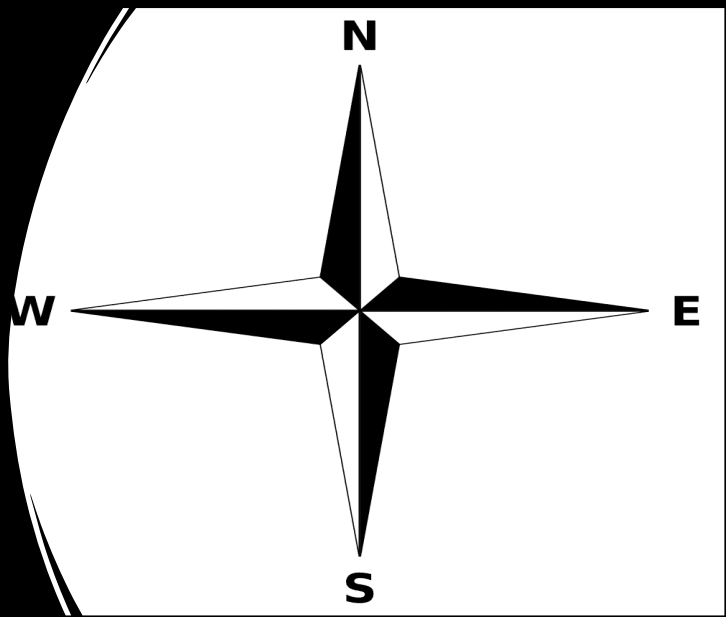
SHECHEM

Shechem

ASSYRIA
& OTHER COUNTRIES ADJOINING CANAAN
ILLUSTRATING THE CAPTIVITIES OF THE JEWS

Scale of Miles

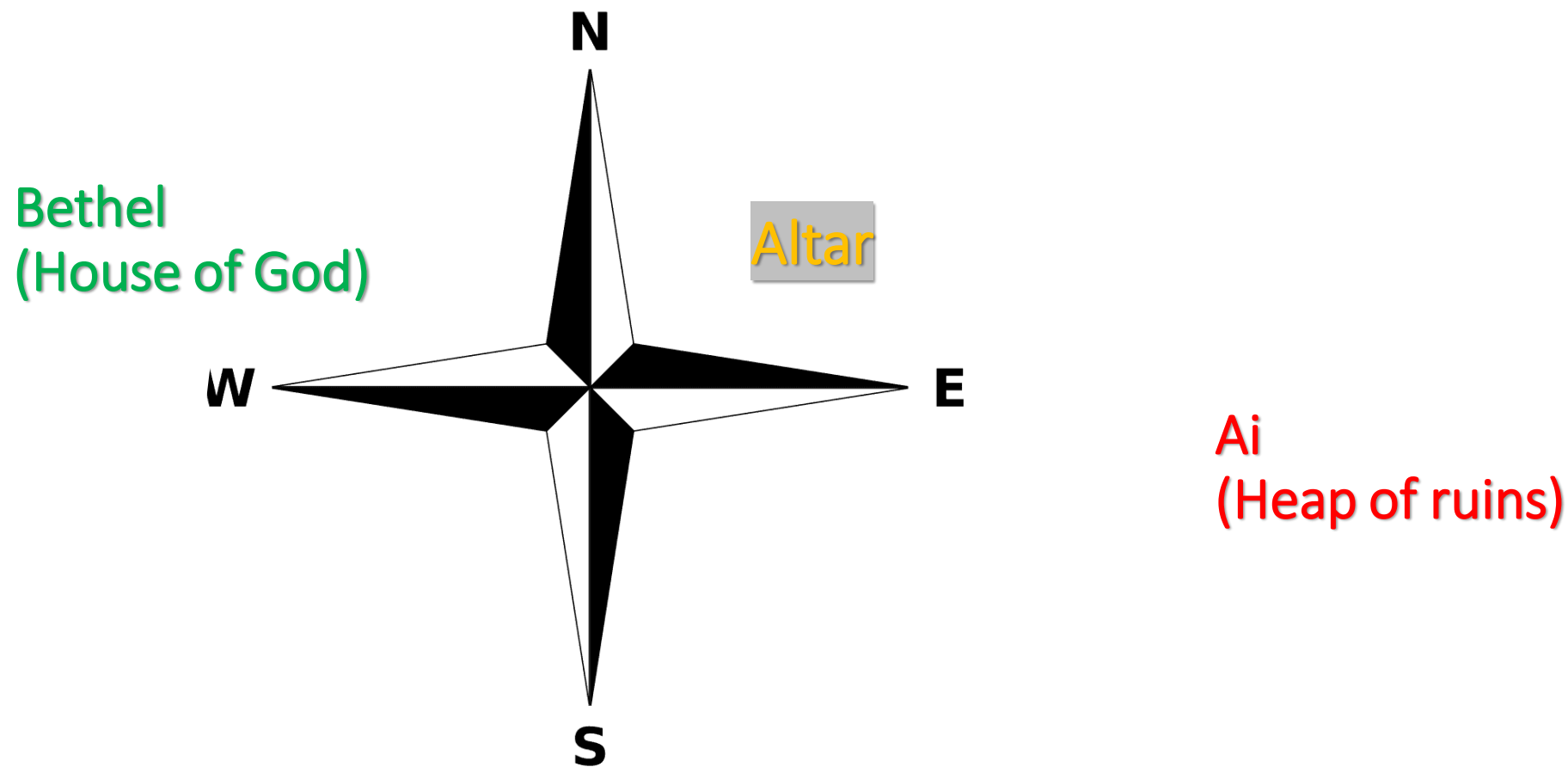
- **8** From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.



⁸ From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.



8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.



Altar #2

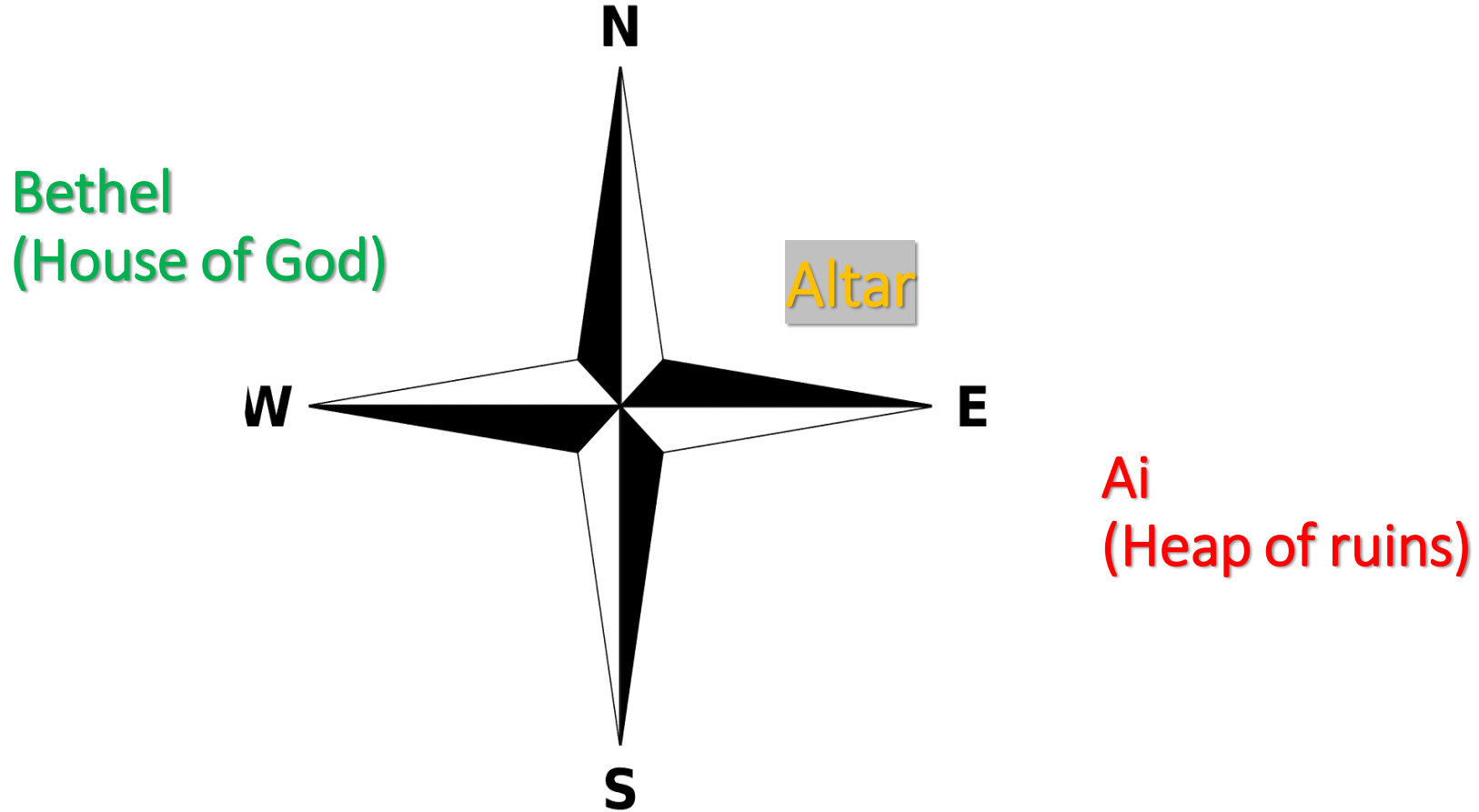
- **8** From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.
-

i) Notice that no one told him to build the second altar.

(An altar can be built solely to call upon the name of the Lord).

ii) ...“There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.” Therefore, the altar could be referred to as the **Altar of Prayer.**

- ⁹ Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.
- ¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

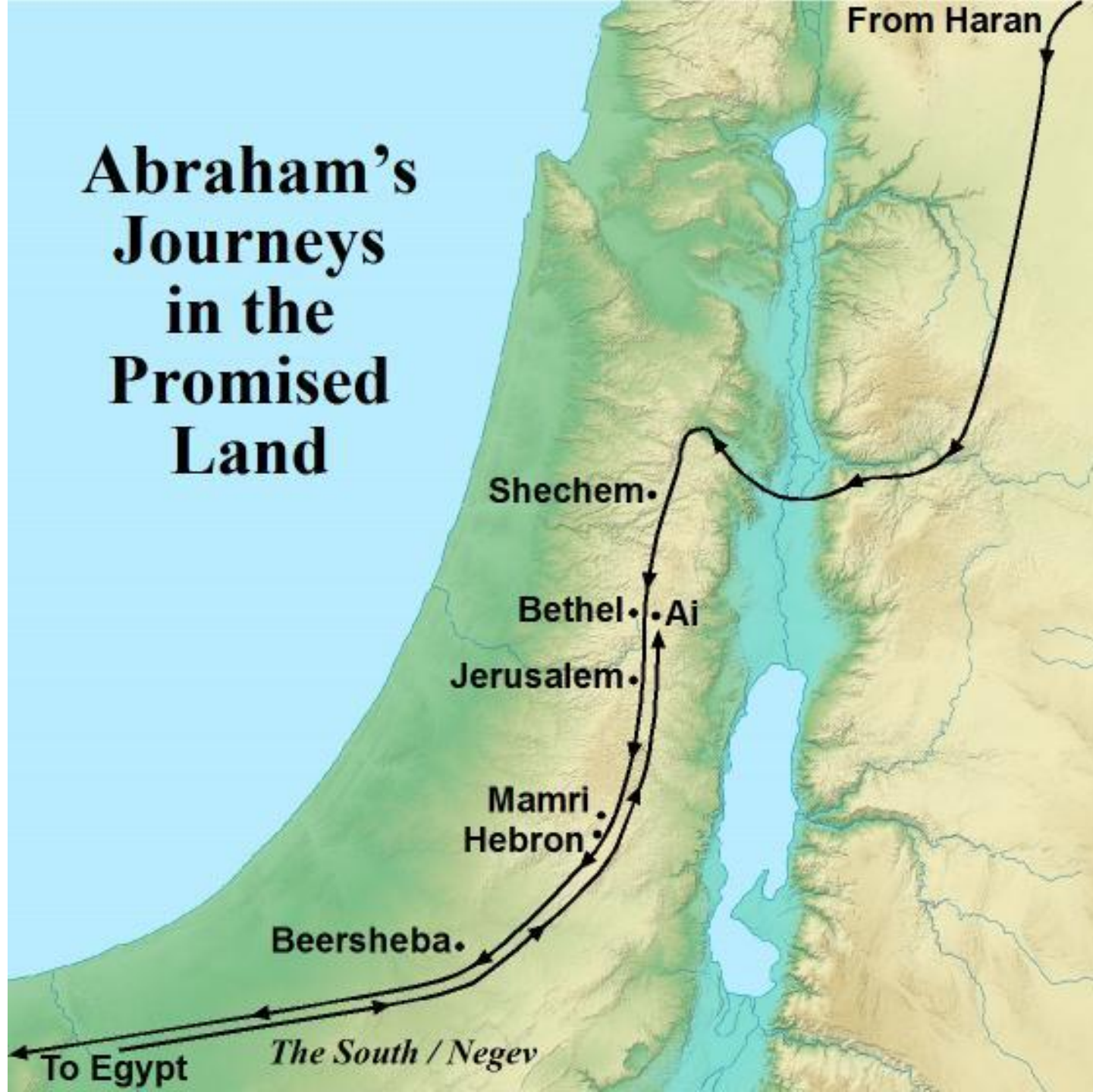


- Negev
- Egypt

- South is usually indicative of 2 things
- Geographical location
 - To deteriorate, reduce in value, fail

Negev - To Wipe Dry
Egypt - Idolatory

Abraham's Journeys in the Promised Land



Noteworthy...

i) The altar is a place where humanity meets divinity. (vs 8)

(Abram built an Altar of Prayer – to call on the name of the Lord)

ii) The altar is not meant to control our will power but rather to engage it (vs 8, 10)

Bethel (west – house of God);

Ai (east – heap of ruins);

Negev (south – dry);

Egypt (down – idolatry).

Noteworthy...

iii) The altar reveals to us our true affinity (vs 10)

Bethel (west – house of God);

Ai (east – heap of ruins);

Negev (south – dry);

Egypt (down – Idolatry).

- **¹¹ As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are.**
- **¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live.**
- **¹³ Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”**

14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman.

15 And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace.

16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

17 But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai.

¹⁸ So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?”

¹⁹ Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!”

²⁰ Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Abram and Lot Separate (Genesis 13 NIV)

- ¹ So Abram **went up from Egypt to the Negev**, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him.
- ² Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.
- ³ From the Negev he went from **place to place** until he came to **Bethel**, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier
- ⁴ and where he had **first built an altar**. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Noteworthy...

iv) The redemptive powers of an altar make it a place to return to.

(cp 13 vs 1-4)

- Genesis 13:4 (NLT)

⁴This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the LORD again.

- ⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.
- ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together.
- ⁷ And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.
- ⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are **close relatives.**"

- ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."
- ¹⁰ Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)
- ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the **east**. The two men parted company:

- ¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.
- ¹³ Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.
- ¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west.

- **15** All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.
- **16** I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.
- **17** Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.”
- **18** So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. **There he built an altar to the LORD.**

Altar #3

- **18** So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. **There he built an altar to the LORD.**
-

i) Notice that no one told him to build the third altar.

(An altar can be built when we move to a new level in life.)

Abram at this point was enjoying newfound peace after separating with Lot.

ii) Therefore, the altar could be referred to as the **Altar of Peace.**

Mamre = strength/fatness, vigour

Hebron = Association, company

Genesis 22:9-14 (NIV)

- **9** When they reached the place God had told him about, **Abraham built an altar** there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.
- **10** Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.
- **11** But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

- **12 “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”**
- **13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.**
- **14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”**

Altar #4

- **9** When they reached the place God had told him about, **Abraham built an altar** there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

i) The Lord directed Abraham step by step to build this altar.

(An altar can be built because the Lord instructs us to build one.)

Abraham learnt sacrifice and surrender at a whole new level

ii) Therefore, the altar could be referred to as the **Altar of Surrender.**

Believer's Magazine Definition

The word "altar" in Scripture means a place of slaughter and sacrifice, where blood was shed and death took place; it symbolized acknowledgement of, approach to, and appreciation of God, in other words "worship".

An Altar Is...

- A gateway to the spiritual realm.
- A place of fellowship, communion, invocation with the supernatural.
- A place of worship (sacrifice).
- A place of covenant.

An Altar Is...

- A place of remembrance.
- A place of exchange
- A place of power.

An Altar Is...

- A refuge, a hiding place, a citadel of protection.
- A place of vindication and judgement.
- A place of meeting with divinity.
- A place of divine encounter.