

GENESIS 12

The Abrahamic Covenant

¹ Now Yahweh said to Abram, “Leave your country, andⁱ your kindred, and your father’s house. Go to a land that I will show you.”ⁱⁱ

² I will make a great nation of you.
I will blessⁱⁱⁱ you.
I will make your name great.
You will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you.
I will curse those who curse you.
You will be a blessing for all families of the earth.”^{iv}

⁴ So Abram left just as Yahweh told him. However, Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai, and his brother’s son Lot, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran. Then they left for the land of Canaan.

When they came into the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land and came to the place of Sichem.^v It was near the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites^{vi} were in the land at that time. ⁷ Then Yahweh appeared to Abram.

He said, “I will give^{vii} your descendant^{viii} this covenant^{ix} land.”

So he built an altar there to Yahweh, who appeared to him. ⁸ Then he moved from there to a mountain on the east side of Bethel^x and pitched his tent. Bethel was on the west. Ai^{xi} was on the east. He built another altar to Yahweh there and called upon Yahweh’s name. ⁹ After this, Abram continued his journey going on toward the south.^{xii}

The First Famine

¹⁰ When *the first* famine came on the land, Abram went down to Egypt to live^{xiii} because the famine was so severe in the land. ¹¹ It came to pass, when he was about to enter Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “Now look! I know that you are a beautiful woman to look at. ¹² Therefore, it will come to pass that when the Egyptians see you, they will say,

‘This is his covenant^{xiv} wife.’

“They will kill me, but save you alive. ¹³ Now please tell them that you are my sister. Then it may be well with me for your sake, and my soul will live because of you.”

¹⁴ And it came to pass, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw that the woman was very^{xv} beautiful. ¹⁵ When the princes of Pharaoh also saw her, they commended her to Pharaoh. So they took the woman to Pharaoh’s house. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, female donkeys, menservants, maidservants, and camels. ¹⁷ However, Yahweh plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai,^{xvi} Abram’s wife.^{xvii} ¹⁸ So Pharaoh called Abram and said,

“What is this covenant^{xviii} violation that you have done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say,

‘She is my sister?’

“I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife. Take her and go your way.”

²⁰ Then Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him. So they escorted^{xix} him, and his wife, and all that he had away from there.^{xx}

- i The literary technique of Polysyndeton uses multiple “and”s (or other conjunctions) in a series. It slows the reader and gives emphasis to each item.
- ii Acts 7:3.
- iii The Hebrew root כָּרַךְ is a picture of bowing down. It has a double sense. First, humans bow down to God. We kneel in reverence, offering honor, praise, or thanksgiving. Second, God to human. God bends down to us in grace, granting life, favor, fruitfulness, or prosperity. Here, God’s blessing is more than material well-being. God stoops down to bestow covenantal favor on Abraham. This blessing becomes the channel through which all nations share in God’s favor.
- iv This covenant is still valid. It has never stopped. Acts 3:25, Galatians 3:8.
- v The place was later known as Shechem.
- vi Genesis 10:6, 15-17 identified the Canaanites as sons of Canaan and grandsons of Ham. Here, the reference hints at a fearsome nation. Josephus, in describing the Gen 14 war of giants, describes the kings of Sodom as the children of giants (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, 9:1). This passage simply notes that the Canaanites were fearsome. They had interbred with the Rephaim (Gen 14:5, 15:20). The Rephaim were the offspring of fallen angels. The devil is already preparing for the future battles when Israel comes to claim its right to live in God’s land. Moses told the Israelites to “utterly destroy them” (Deut 20:17).
- vii The Hebrew is נָתַן. This is an **Aleph-Tav-Nun**. It refers to giving when referring to an oath, covenant, or promise. God is giving Abraham the land in terms of a one-sided covenant. See the article “The **Aleph-Tav**.”
- viii The Hebrew is לְיוֹרֵךְ. It is a masculine singular noun. Wordplays are impossible to translate with few words. It applies to the one nation of Israel and to the one King Jesus who will rule the earth during the Millennium. The reader should see both national Israel and King Jesus at the one same time.
- ix The Hebrew root is חָטַט (Zayin-**Aleph-Tav**). Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely translates this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article “The **Aleph-Tav**.”
- x The Hebrew is בֵּית־אֵל (Beth-El = “House of El”). Bethel was known as Luz at the time of Abram (Gen 28:19, Josh 18:13, Judges 1:23).
- xi The Hebrew is אֵי (The Ai). The definite article may be proleptic, treating the site as already known in view of its later significance in Israel’s history. Ai is an important place in the Book of Joshua.
- xii “The Negev.”
- xiii The verb גָּוַר (*gūr*) means “to sojourn” or “to dwell temporarily” as a non-native. It reflects the condition of living as a dependent or vulnerable outsider, often without legal rights or permanent settlement. This root is closely related to the noun גֵּר (*gēr*), meaning “sojourner” or “resident alien.”
- xiv The Hebrew root is חָטַט (Zayin-**Aleph-Tav**). Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely translates this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article “The **Aleph-Tav**.”
- xv The Hebrew is מְאֹד. The root means vehemently. Synonyms include very, greatly, exceedingly, fervently, passionately, violently, intensely, much, mightily, and vigorously.
- xvi God’s promises to Abraham depend on Sarai as well. If something happens to her, then God’s promises will fail. Abraham, on his own strength and wisdom, is about to cancel God’s promises. God must intervene supernaturally.
- xvii The Hebrew is נָשָׂא. This is an **Aleph-Shin-Tav**. The **Aleph-Shin-Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong’s defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Sarai was the mother of God’s covenant nation of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.
- xviii The Hebrew root is חָטַט (Zayin-**Aleph-Tav**). Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely translates this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article “The **Aleph-Tav**.”
- xix The Hebrew root שָׁלַח means to send away. Synonyms include bring on the way, cast out, reach out, set, shoot out and escort.
- xx Abraham leaves Egypt with a lot of goods. We in the West think prophecy is future fulfillment. Yes, that is true. But the main Bible view of prophecy is the fulfillment of a pattern. This scenario will repeat itself in Exodus.