GENESIS 12

The Abrahamic Covenant

1 Now Yahveh said to Abram, "Leave your country, and[i] 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 bless[iii] 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.
All the people of the earth may[iv] receive a blessing through you."[v]

4 So Abram left just as Yahveh told him. However, Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. **5** Abram took his wife Sarai, and[vi] his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions they had gathered, and all the people they had acquired 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 Shechem.[vii] It was near the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites[viii] were in the land at that time. **7** Then Yahveh appeared to Abram.

He said, "I will give[ix] your seed[x] this covenant[xi] land."

So he built an altar there to Yahveh, who appeared to him. **8** Then he moved from there to a mountain on the east side of Bethel[xii] and pitched his tent. Bethel was on the west. Ai[xiii] was on the east. He built another altar to Yahveh there and called upon Yahveh's name. **9** After this, Abram continued his journey going on toward the south.[xiv]

The First Famine

10 When *the first* famine came on the land, Abram went down to Egypt to live[xv] 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[xvi] wife.'

"They will kill me, but spare your life. **13** Now please tell them that you are my sister. Then it may be well with me for your sake, and I 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[xvii] beautiful. **15** When the princes of Pharaoh also saw her, they recommended 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, male servants, female servants, and camels. **17** However, Yahveh struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai,[xviii] Abram's wife.[xix] **18** So Pharaoh called Abram and said,

"What is this covenant[xx] 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[xxi] him, and his wife, and all that he had away from there.[xxii]

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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 בָּרַךְ 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 The Hebrew הָיָה appears in a clause with no temporal anchor and functions inside a conditional reciprocity structure, where blessing or cursing depends on human action rather than on time. Because the Qal Perfect can express a potential resultant state when the outcome is contingent, English does not need to use a future tense such as "will be blessed," which implies predictive certainty and adds futurity not present in the Hebrew. By contrast, the phrasing "may receive a blessing" preserves the conditional nature of the clause, avoids introducing a time reference, reflects the Perfect's potential-result nuance, is a natural American idiom, and has minimal non-interpretive additions.

v This covenant is still valid. It has never stopped. Acts 3:25, Galatians 3:8.

vi 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.

vii Shechem was an important city in central Canaan, located between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. It later became a major religious and political center for Israel. Abraham's arrival here marks the first recorded stop in Canaan after God's call to leave his homeland.

viii 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).

ix The Hebrew אֶתֵּן 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**."

x The Hebrew לְזַרְעֲךָ means "to your seed." The root זֶרַע (*zeh-rah*) means seed. It is singular in form but can refer either to a single descendant or to many offspring, children, or descendants. 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 same time.

xi The Hebrew זֹאת is a Zayin-**Aleph**-**Tav**. Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely renders this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

xii The Hebrew בֵּית־אֵל means "Beth-El" = "House of El." Bethel was known as Luz at the time of Abram (Gen 28:19, Josh 18:13, Judges 1:23).

xiii The Hebrew is הָעַי ("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.

xiv "The Negev."

xv The Hebrew גּוּר (*goor*) 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. It is closely related to the noun גֵּר (*geyr*), meaning "sojourner" or "resident alien."

xvi The Hebrew זֹאת is a Zayin-**Aleph**-**Tav**. Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely renders this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

xvii The Hebrew מְאֹד (*m^{e}-od*) means vehemently. Synonyms include very, greatly, exceedingly, fervently, passionately, violently, intensely, much, mightily, and vigorously.

xviii God's promises to Abraham depend on Sarai as well. If something happens to her, God's promises will fail. Abraham, on his own strength and wisdom, is about to cancel God's promises. God must intervene supernaturally.

[xix] The Hebrew אִשָּׁה 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.

[xx] The Hebrew זֹאת is a Zayin-**Aleph**-**Tav**. Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely renders this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

[xxi] The Hebrew שָׁלַח means to send away. Synonyms include bring on the way, cast out, reach out, set, shoot out and escort.

[xxii] 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.