GENESIS 17

Circumcision

1 When Abram was 99 years old, Yahveh appeared to him. He said, "I AM El Shaddai.[i] Walk before Me and be perfect.[ii] **2** I will establish My covenant[iii] between us. I will give you many descendants."

3 Then Abram fell on his face. Then Elohim talked with him. He said, **4** "As for Me, look! My covenant is with you. You will be a father of noisy, chaotic, and unruly[iv] nations. **5** They will no longer call Your name 'Abram.'[v] Instead, your name will be 'Abraham.'[vi] I have made you a father of many nations.[vii] **6** And I will make you exceedingly[viii] fruitful. I will make nations of you. Kings will come out of you. **7** I, Yeshua,[ix] will establish My covenant with you and your seed[x] after you in their generations. It is an everlasting covenant. I will be an Elohim to you, and to your seed after you. **8** And I will give you, and your seed after you, the land in which you are a foreigner. I will give you all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. I will be their Elohim."

9 And Elohim said to Abraham, "You will keep Yeshua's covenant,[xi] you, and your descendants[xii] after you in every generation. **10** This is Yeshua's covenant,[xiii] which you will keep between Me and your seed after you. You will circumcise every man child among you. **11** And you will circumcise the flesh of your foreskin. That will be Yeshua's sign[xiv] of the covenant between Me and you.

12 "And you will circumcise the boy who is 8 days old among you. You will circumcise every man-child in your generations. You will do this whether he is born in the house or bought with money from any foreigner. You will do this even for those who are not your blood descendants. **13** You must circumcise every man-child who is born in your house, and every man who you buy with your money. My covenant will be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. **14** You will cut off from his people the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin has not been circumcised. He has broken My covenant."[xv]

15 And Elohim said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai,[xvi] you will not call her name Sarai. Instead, Sarah will be her name. **16** And I will bless her, and also give you a son by her. Yes! I will bless her, and she will be a mother of nations. Kings of people will come from her."

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed. He said in his heart, "Will a child be born to him who is 100 years old?" and "Will Sarah, who is 90 years old, give birth?"

18 So Abraham said to Elohim, "O that Ishmael might live before You!"

19 But Elohim said, "Your wife Sarah will bear you a son indeed. You will call his name[xvii] Isaac. I will establish Yeshua's covenant[xviii] with him and his descendants after him. It will be an everlasting covenant. **20** And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Look! I have blessed him and will make him fruitful. I will give him many descendants. He will be the father of twelve princes. I will make him a great nation.[xix] **21** But I, Yeshua,[xx] will establish My covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time in the next year."

22 And He stopped talking with him. Elohim then left Abraham. **23** On that very day, Abraham gathered Ishmael his son, along with all born in his house and all he bought with his money. He circumcised them, cutting off the flesh of their foreskins. This was just as Elohim had said to him.

24 Now Abraham was 99 years old when they circumcised the flesh of his foreskin. **25** And his son, Ishmael, was 13 years old when they circumcised the flesh of his foreskin. **26** They circumcised Abraham and his son Ishmael on the same day. **27** They circumcised all the men of his house with him. This included those born in the house and those bought with money from[xxi] a foreigner.

[i] The Hebrew אֵל שַׁדַּי means "El Shaddai" = "GOD Almighty." The root שַׁדַּי means powerful. El Shaddai is the Almighty God. The LXX wrongly uses εὐαρέστει (be well pleasing). A good Greek equivalent would have been παντοκράτωρ (all-powerful, Rev 19:6) or even παντοδύναμος.

[ii] The Hebrew תָּמִים means complete, whole, sound, innocent, and having integrity.

[iii] The Hebrew בְּרִית (*b^{e}-reet*) refers to a solemn, binding agreement, often initiated by God. *B^{e}-reet* recalls the ancient covenant ceremonies where animals were cut as a sign of the seriousness of the commitment. *B^{e}-reet* forms the covenantal foundation of the biblical relationship between God and humanity. "The core of the biblical teaching about the relationship between God and humans and among humans rests on *b^{e}-reet*, the covenantal foundation, and *cheh-sehd*, the dynamic that makes God's new covenant work." To prevent *b^{e}-reet* from becoming a mere legal contract, *cheh-sehd* — God's loyal love — acts as the moral force that sustains and enlivens it." (Daniel J. Elazar, "HaBrit V'HaHesed: Foundations of the Jewish System," Jerusalem Center of Public Affairs; http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/britvhesed.htm.)

[iv] The Hebrew הָמוֹן does not simply mean "many." It carries three distinct semantic dimensions: (1) noise and uproar, (2) crowd-chaos and commotion, and (3) moral disorder or unruliness. Most English translations flatten this into "many nations," but that loses the full force of the Hebrew. One English word cannot carry the complete semantic load of הָמוֹן. Therefore, this translation uses three words to reflect its three dimensions. "Noisy" captures the uproar and loudness. "Chaotic" reflects the restless commotion of the crowds. "Unruly" conveys the moral disorder and rebellious character of the nations. God's promise to Abraham is not merely numerical; he will become the father of nations that are noisy, chaotic, and unruly.

[v] Exalted Father.

[vi] Father of a multitude. In Hebrew, Abram is אַבְרָם (exalted father) and Abraham is אַבְרָהָם (father of a multitude). The addition of the letter He symbolizes the Holy Spirit. God is calling His people and giving them a new name. A new name implies a new nature.

[vii] Romans 4:17.

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

[ix] The Hebrew is אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. The maqqeph links the **Aleph-Tav** with covenant. Grammatically, בְּרִיתִי ("My covenant") carries the first common singular suffix. Yet the **Aleph-Tav** consistently points to Jesus (Rev 1:8), so the phrase holds a dual meaning. It is both "My covenant" (God speaking) and "Jesus′ covenant" (the covenant belonging to Yeshua). See the article "The **Aleph-Tav**."

[x] The Hebrew זַרְעֲךָ (seed) is a singular construct that holds a dual meaning. First, "seed" is grammatically singular, but it regularly functions as a collective referring to offspring as a whole rather than to an individual. God's promise is to all of Abram's descendants (Gen 17:9). Second, "Seed" refers to Jesus, the Gen 3:15 "Seed of the woman," through whom the promise is secured. He will rule the land during the 1,000 year Millennium.

[xi] The Hebrew is אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. The maqqeph joins the **Aleph-Tav** to "covenant" and the first person suffix emphasizes possession. In this context, the speaker is Yahveh, yet the **Aleph-Tav** signals that the covenant is ultimately centered in Yeshua. The translation preserves both the divine voice and the Christological significance of the **Aleph-Tav**. See the article "The **Aleph-Tav**."

[xii] The Hebrew זַרְעֲךָ (seed) is a singular construct that holds a dual meaning. First, "seed" is grammatically singular, but it regularly functions as a collective referring to offspring as a whole rather than to an individual. God's promise is to all of Abram's descendants "**IN EVERY GENERATION**." Second, "Seed" refers to Jesus, the Gen 3:15 "Seed of the woman," through whom the promise is secured. He will rule the land during the 1,000 year Millennium.

[xiii] The Hebrew is אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. The maqqeph joins the **Aleph-Tav** to "covenant." The context has already identified Yahveh as the speaker. The suffix makes it "Jesus′ covenant" or "the covenant of Yeshua." See the article "The **Aleph-Tav**."

[xiv] The Hebrew לְאוֹת begins with the letter Lamed, normally a preposition meaning for or as. Grammatically, it could indicate "for the sign." Most translations ignore the preposition because it does not naturally fit the context. Yet the Lamed does more than mark a grammatical relation. Shaped like a shepherd's crook, it points to Yeshua as the authority behind this covenant. Just as the **Aleph-Tav** in אֶת־בְּרִיתִי marks Christ's presence, the Lamed in לְאוֹת signals that the covenantal sign is not merely symbolic, but established and governed by Him.

[xv] The Hebrew is אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. The maqqeph joins the **Aleph-Tav** to "covenant." It clearly points to Jesus (See footnote to Rev 1:8). Reasonable options are "Jesus′ covenant" or "the covenant of Yeshua." See the article "The **Aleph-Tav**."

[xvi] In Hebrew, Sarai is שָׂרַי (princess) and Sarah is שָׂרָה (noblewoman). Her new name is the addition of the letter He, a letter that symbolizes the Holy Spirit. God is calling His people and giving them a new name. A new name implies a new nature.

[xvii] The Hebrew is אֶת־שְׁמוֹ. A maqqeph joins the **Aleph**-**Tav** to "name." It is literally Yeshua's name. What makes this exciting is that it precedes the name of Isaac who is a well-known type of Jesus. There is a delightful play on words going on here.

[xviii] The Hebrew is אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. The maqqeph joins the **Aleph**-**Tav** to "covenant." It clearly points to Jesus (See footnote to Rev 1:8). Reasonable options are "Jesus′ covenant" or "the covenant of Yeshua." See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

[xix] The word גּוֹי (*goy*) refers to a nation, often Gentile. It highlights collective rebellion against Yahveh. Unlike גֵּר (*geyr*), a foreigner protected under Israel's law, or תּוֹשָׁב (*to-shawv*), a resident alien with limited rights, נָכְרִי (*nawch-ree*) and זוּר (*zoor*) imply foreigners more distant or hostile to Israel's covenant.

[xx] The Hebrew is אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. The maqqeph links the **Aleph**-**Tav** with covenant. Grammatically, אֶת־בְּרִיתִי ("My covenant") carries the first common singular suffix. Yet the **Aleph**-**Tav** consistently points to Jesus (Rev 1:8), so the phrase holds a dual force: it is both "My covenant" (God speaking) and "Jesus′ covenant" (the covenant belonging to Yeshua). See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

[xxi] The Hebrew מֵאֵת is a Mem-**Aleph**-**Tav**. The letter Mem represents waters. So, Mem-**Aleph**-**Tav** represents covenant judgment flowing from God. Here, God favors Israel by sending them money from a foreigner. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."