

Abrahamic Covenant

by Randall Radic, PhD

Genesis 12:1ff. read, "The Lord had said to Abram, Leave your country, your people and your fathers household and go to the land I will show you. 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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." This is the beginning of the covenant with Abram.

One portion of Shem's descendants eventually moved into Ur of the Chaldees (Iraq of present day). And here, even today, still exist the remains of a temple that was dedicated to the moon god, Nanna (su-en, in Sumerian), and his wife, Nin-gal (the great lady). And Ur of the Chaldees of the ancient world was a sacred city, a city consecrated to the worship of Nanna and Nin-gal. And all the citizens of Ur were sacred servants of the moon god.

Within this city, Terah, a descendant of Shem, lived and worked, according to tradition, as an idol-maker. Terah had three sons: Nahor, Abram, and Haran. Haran had a son called Lot before he died. Thus, Terah and his family were moon worshippers. In some manner, "the God of glory" revealed Himself to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees. At this point, God commanded Abram to leave Ur. For having discovered the Living God, Elohim, Abram had to separate himself from the moon worshippers. And Abram responded to his God.

However, Abram was commanded to leave his family and his father behind, for Terah had not believed in the revealed God. But Terah and Lot went with Abram. Terah accompanied Abram perhaps because of family ties, but more probably because of impulse. And Lot accompanied Abram because part of the promise from God included a child. But Abram was 75 and Sarai 65 at this time. Now why didn't God select a young couple in the prime of their sexuality? To demonstrate Who and What He was and is. "God specifically chose Abram and Sarai because they could not have children. And this demonstrates that helplessness is the way to faith." [134] Thus, Abram carried Lot along to assist God in keeping His promise, i.e., Abram thought he had discovered a reasonable

method to facilitate the fulfillment of the promise. For both Abram and Sarai were unable to propagate due to the sexual decline of age.

And as Abram traveled up the Fertile Crescent, Terah became lonely for his god, Nanna. For this reason, they went to the city Haran rather than Canaan. Eventually, Terah died in Haran. Then Abram went to Canaan. And Canaan was a land of idolatry and religious sexual perversions, including bestiality, and homosexuality. While in Canaan, both Lot and Abram were successful in business and both became wealthy. However, they argued and went separate ways.

Abram at this juncture was discouraged; for he saw no hope of the promise of a child being fulfilled. Then he has an idea: he decided to adopt one of his servants, Eliezer. At this point, God again entered. God said, in Genesis 15:4, "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from you own body will be your heir." And here the blood covenant between God and Abram is "cut." Genesis 15:18 reads, "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates -- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites." Thus, Abram became the covenant representative of all the descendants that would come from him.

The other representative was God. Genesis 15:1 reads, "Do not be afraid Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." God here, then, gave Himself as the sign of the covenant. For remember, each party of the covenant would give an emblem of their strength. But God has no physical sword or physical shield to give -- for God is God and does not carry or require implements. Yet He gives Himself to Abram as a shield. This is awesome, striking, and grand in its implications. This is beyond words. This is nonpareil! And remember, each representative would then walk through the blood of the animals. Here, though, God places Abram in a supernatural sleep; for Abram sees what transpires.

And God, as a great furnace of fire, moved through the pieces. Fantastic! This is God walking through the halved carcasses of the slain

animals and their blood. God commands Abram to rest in Himself. For God takes the place of both representatives in the covenant. God Himself took the place of Abram! God took an oath by Himself "that in blessing I will bless you." God, then, is the sole representative. Thus, God entered into covenant with Himself in Abrams behalf, and Abram became the inheritor of the covenant. God took the initiative, and Abram understood in faith. That is all that Abram could do -- for he is resting. Abram did absolutely nothing but believe! The ramifications are extravagant, to say the least.

A question dramatically imposes itself in ones mind: Why would God do such a thing? Why? Hebrews 6:17 provides the answer: "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged." In other words, God performed this remarkable act to demonstrate Who He is, and how He operates: He is unconditional Love, and He functions on the basis of Grace. There is no linear logic, no worded thought that can express what this implies to mankind -- it can only be acknowledged and felt.

The emotions of any believer should demand an explosive burst of fanfare at this moment; one should stand, arms outspread, and bellow in response to Gods Love and Graciousness. This is irresistible, if one comprehends it! For here is the definitive verdict! This is our inheritance from God. And as believers in the Church Age we have an even more intimate relationship with God; for we are in Christ, and He in us! For we are the Bride of Christ. We are wedded into the very family of God. [135]

Although Abram, at this juncture, had come to that point of rest in God and response to Gods word, Abram still has much to learn about faith and the essence of a promise from YAHWEH. For when a famine descended upon Canaan, Abram hurriedly left and traveled to Egypt. He failed to trust God to provide for him in Canaan (Abram failed, but he is not a failure, for his faith is growing and God is growing Abram up.)

And as they entered Egypt, Abram notified Sarai that since she was so beautiful the King of Egypt would desire her for his own; thus, Abram advised Sarai that she was to pretend that they were brother and sister because Abram refused to risk death just because his wife was so desirable. In effect, then, Abram morally abandoned his wife. Abram has misunderstood the meaning of faith, and the meaning of the promise concerning the son he is to beget. Abram defines the word promise as God instructing him, Abram, in how to achieve the promise. Abram interpreted this as "you, Abram, must find a way to have a son." Abram did not understand that God made the promise, therefore God must fulfill the promise. And how is up to God and Gods omnipotence.

And Sarai, too, has misunderstood the promise and its method of fulfillment. For she decides to help God. She presents Abram with a servant girl, and the servant girl, Hagar, is to bear Abrams child. At the birth of the child, the child was placed in Sarai's lap (a type of adoption), and then Sarai presented the child to the Abram. This child, then, was to be the fulfillment of the promise from God. This was Ishmael. And Ishmael was told that he was the covenant child, until he was 13 years old.

At this juncture, Abram is 99 and Sarai is 89, and Abram has forgotten about the fulfillment of the promise, for he has the son, Ishmael. Then God entered and re-iterated the promise, but this time God stated that Sarai would bear the child. At this point, Abram started to laugh -- a laugh that began deep in his belly and worked its way up to a full-blown bellowing guffaw. Have a son? Me and Sarai? Ha, ha, ha, ha! I'm 99 and she is 89, there is no possibility. Abram thought God was crazy. And God, as it were, laughed with Abram; for He declared that Sarai that would have a child. And they were to call the child Isaac (the sound of laughter). God laughed at human helplessness and reasonable human attempts to resolve impossible obstacles. For with God, "nothing is impossible."

At this juncture, then, Abram had arrived at the position of total helplessness. For God had allowed Abram and Sarai to try every possible method of fulfilling the promise. And then, then, when every possible avenue had been explored, and they were way too old to even think of ever

having a child of their own, then God said, "Now you are ready. Now you have no one and nothing to trust in but Me." Gods power, then, must now fulfill the promise.

Circumcision and Name Change

Now God changes Abrams name. For remember, that in the ancient covenant ritual each nation would alter its name to include the others name. Abram meant "exalted father." Abraham meant "the father of a multitude." And this name change was a statement of faith. For to change your name to "the father of a multitude" at age 99 is either sheer insanity, or sheer faith in the power of God to effect the name change.

And it is interesting to note that the median sound of Yahweh is "aha," and that Abraham is formed by adding the "aha" infix, as is Sarah, being changed from Sarai by changing the suffix. And more, YAHWEH Himself became known as "the God of Abraham." The covenant continues. [136]

Moreover, from the physical/sexual death of Abraham and Sarah came life; in other words, Abraham and Sarah had to be sexually and physically resurrected to have a child. Again, a picture of the Cross to come. YAHWEH swallowed up death through resurrected or, in this case rejuvenated, life. Just as Christ swallowed up the spiritual and physical death of mankind on the Cross and by means of resurrection.

The sign or seal of the covenant was circumcision, which is the cutting away of the foreskin of the male phallus. And at the juncture that this cutting took place, Abraham was 99 years of age. This cutting or circumcision represented not only the sexual/physical rejuvenation of Abraham, but also commemorated the establishment of a new race, the Jews. For before the cutting, Abraham was an Akkadian, through Shem. And remember, that Abraham was the representative of all that were in him; thus every Jewish male thereafter was to be circumcised -- the living scar or seal of the covenant. Thus, every time a Jewish male urinates, he is to be reminded of the covenant with God, the Grace of God, the Promises of God, and Gods power to fulfill those promises. For to Abraham, Gods promise had more power and more meaning than his own sexual impotence. In other words, Gods promise became more corporal

to Abraham than the reality of his physical existence.

And it is interesting to note that circumcision was customary among many ancient peoples: for the Egyptians it was a hygienic precaution; for the Africans it represented a tribal initiation; to others it was used as a substitute for human sacrifice, an offering to the gods. [137]

The prophet Jeremiah, in Jer. 6:10, reminded the Jews of the covenant God that they had forgotten about: "To whom shall I communicate Gods word? To whom shall I give a warning that they will listen? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised. They will not listen. Behold, the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them. They have no delight in it."

Furthermore, in Jer. 9:25, God Himself attempted to remind the Jews of the covenant: "Behold, the days are coming, decrees the Lord, that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised." And in Deut. 10:16, "Moses said, Therefore circumcise your heart and resist no more." And according to Ex. 12:48, no Jew could participate in the Passover Feast without having been circumcised.

"The Hebrews deemed themselves invincible, the Chosen People, by virtue of the Yahwic mark of a covenant cut in the sacred flesh of their infancy." [138] Indeed, the location where Joshua circumcised the Jewish males in Canaan was thereafter "known as GILGIL, the Circle, in allusion to the denuded corona and circular scar of circumcision: And Yahweh said to Joshua, This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." [139]

Moreover, the phrase, "bridegroom of blood," is the traditional name for every newly circumcised Jewish infant. And this phrase, CHATHAN DAMIM, has its provenance in the words spoken by Moses wife, Zipporah, in Exodus 4:25, when she called him "a bloody bridegroom," and then abandoned him.

The Covenant Meal

Genesis 18 narrates the Covenant meal. Three men arrived to Abraham's tent, one of which was the Lord Himself. As the meal took place, Sarah was secreted, listening from behind the curtain to what was taking place. And remember, Sarah is

about 90 now. And as the Lord declared, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son. Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure? Then the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh and say, Will I really have a child, now that I am old?" (Genesis 18:10-13)

And Hebrews 11:11 states, "By faith Abraham, even though he was past the age -- and Sarah herself was barren -- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise." So both Abraham and Sarah came to believe in God's promise, and God's power. And for this to occur, i.e., the physical rejuvenation necessary for pregnancy, Sarah would have had to become young once again. And, indeed, she did. For in Genesis 20, Abraham again ventured into Egypt, Gerar to be specific, and again Abraham stated that Sarah was his sister. And because she was so beautiful, King Abimelech took her. In other words, a woman of about 95 years of age has been so restored to youth, that she is the most beautiful woman in Egypt.

Isaac, then, was born. Isaac was the first son of Abraham, and Jesus Christ was the last. And YAHWEH, God, has laughed at mankind's helplessness.

Provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant constantly refers to "the land" and Abraham's "descendants." And the term for "descendants" may also be translated "seed." Who, then, are the descendants of Abraham? All of the Semitic peoples would certainly be included in this term, including the Arabs. However, the covenant refers to a specific group; for God is selective.

Isaac had two sons: Esau and Jacob. However, Jacob is the bearer of the promise. Jacob emerges into twelve tribes, but only one of those tribes is the specific bearer of the covenant promise: Judah. The promise would come through Judah, and His name shall be Shiloh, which means the "worthy one."

So within Israel there comes to be "a remnant." There is, of course, the collective Israel, those who descended from Abraham; but there are also those who are "like Abraham." This group consists of those who have "faith" in God and the promise. The remnant are those who are the true Israel, those who have faith. They have a faith, a heart that comes from God; and true Israel also has the blood of Abraham in their veins.

Matthew 3:9 reads, "And do not think you can say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham." Here, then, John the Baptist told the collective Israel that they were not true Israel. In other words, John the Baptist said prove that you are the children of Abraham -- do the works of Abraham, i.e., have faith. John 8:33ff. reads, "They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free? Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin... If you were Abraham's children, said Jesus, then you would do the things Abraham did... You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire." Our Lord, then, is stating that these Jews are Israelites, they are the descendants of Abraham, but they are not really true Israel, even though the blood of Abraham flows in their veins. So a very fine distinction is being drawn.

And in Luke 19:9, our Lord made the following statement: "Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham." Thus, Christ said that Zacchaeus' heart was like Abraham's: a lifestyle of love and of salvation, and faith.

And Paul, in Romans 2:28, said, "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God." Paul said, then, that a real Jew is one by faith like Abraham.

Gal. 3:6ff. states, "Consider Abraham: He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham." A son of Abraham, then,

has nothing to do with the blood in ones veins, but everything to do with what is in the heart.

Then, in Gal. 3:26,29 Paul is speaking to Jews and Gentiles: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Who, then, is a descendant of Abraham? Anyone who believes in Christ. Thus, anyone who believes in Christ is an heir of the promise that God made to Abraham. Paul is insisting, then, that the covenant is for both Jew and Gentile.

Who is the seed? Gal. 3:16,17 provide the answer: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say and to seeds, meaning many people, but and to your seed, meaning one person, who is Christ." Christ is the seed. And all those in Him become the descendants of Abraham. So what does that make you, the reader? If you are in Christ, a believer, then you are related directly back to Abraham, and you are true Israel or Abraham's offspring. Not by blood, but by faith. Thus, in effect, you are on every page of the Bible. Again, not by blood, but by faith.

So all those in Christ are blessed. And the word blessing means "empowered, and successful" in body, mind, spirit and thought. Thus, when the Church Age believer is filled with the Spirit, this believer is blessed or empowered with success in every way. For "through you (Abraham) all nations of the world will be blessed." (Gen. 12:3)

For Gal. 3:13 states plainly, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." So your receiving of the Holy Spirit was the promise that God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12. Then, when you believe in Christ, you are an heir of the promise. Thus, you also may be "like Abraham" and walk with God, and express and receive agape love. So if you are in Christ, then you are in the real family of God, a descendant of Abraham. Again, not by blood, but by faith.

What of the "land?" When Adam fell, he ceded rulership of the earth to Satan. However, when the end comes, man will again be lord of the earth. Thus, the "land" becomes salient of what is to come. The "land" is a shadow of something to come. The receiving of the land was part of a covenant; Deut. 5:32,33, state that if the covenant was obeyed they would live long in the land. Deut. 6:3, states that if they obey God, they will live in the land. Deut. 8:19,20, state that if they fall into idolatry, they will lose the land. Deut. 11:13-15, state that if they obey, then good weather will be theirs, if not, they will perish from the land. Thus, the land was conditioned by obedience. The land was a reflection of their hearts. They could not sin against God and stay in the land. For the land is conditional; for the land is that place where faith in God exists and persists. Thus, when the Jews became apostate, they began to lose the land; for, again, it is a "land" of faith.

And Romans 4:13 states that Abraham was to inherit the whole world. And according to Hebrews 11:10, Abraham was looking beyond the "land" to the "city that God would build." God, then, gave Abraham the "land" in a geographical sense, but Abraham saw beyond the shadow "land," the geographical land, to "the new heaven and the new earth." And remember, the "land" was given to Abraham as an "everlasting possession." This, then, would be a land in Gods scope, and of Gods making. Thus, Abraham finally understood Gods promise. He saw the "everlasting" aspect of the promise; and he looked forward to the real land that was promised, not just the physical/geographical land of Canaan. So Abraham saw beyond the shadow land, the one made of dust and dirt, to the land that was promised. For the covenant spoke of a covenant land, a heavenly land.

The geographical/physical/shadow land of the covenant was given to Israel, according to Joshua 21:44,45; I Chronicles 18:3-8; and II Chronicles 8:7,8. Yet the real land of the promise, the heavenly land, the "everlasting" land, was that which Abraham saw in the future. And for this reason, he lived in a tent, because he "believed in the promise of God," and he believed "that what God had promised, He is able to do." Thus, those scholars that maintain that the land portion of the covenant has yet to be fulfilled are correct, as long

as they comprehend that the portion that remains to be fulfilled is the "everlasting" portion. And Abraham saw this, and believed it.

The "everlasting" city or land that Abraham awaited is the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21. This Holy City is described as a "city in the clouds," [140] one that hangs above the earth. And this Holy City is that one "made by God," and it is specifically for the Jews, those that comprise the true Israel (Jews by blood and by faith). For it is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. And this is why Abraham resided in a tent while living here on earth; for Abraham knew that his permanent residence, the "everlasting" aspect of his covenant with God, was still to come.

Abraham's inheritance of "the whole world," found in Galatians 4:13, refers to the inheritance of Abraham's seed, i.e., those who though not Jewish by blood, are Abraham's seed by faith. These, then, will inherit the "new earth" of Rev. 21:1, which reads, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new

earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there was no longer any sea."

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