

# Genesis 15 Commentary

Previous

Next

CLICK VERSE  
To go directly to that verse

Genesis 15:1 Commentary  
Genesis 15:2 Commentary  
Genesis 15:3 Commentary  
Genesis 15:4 Commentary  
Genesis 15:5 Commentary  
Genesis 15:6 Commentary  
Genesis 15:7 Commentary  
Genesis 15:8 Commentary  
Genesis 15:9 Commentary  
Genesis 15:10 Commentary  
Genesis 15:11 Commentary  
Genesis 15:12 Commentary  
Genesis 15:13 Commentary  
Genesis 15:14 Commentary  
Genesis 15:15 Commentary  
Genesis 15:16 Commentary  
Genesis 15:17 Commentary  
Genesis 15:18 Commentary  
Genesis 15:19 Commentary  
Genesis 15:20 Commentary  
Genesis 15:21 Commentary

Abraham believed God (Gal 3:6+, Ge 15:5,6)

**Genesis 15:1** After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."

- in (KJV): Ge 46:2 Nu 12:6 1Sa 9:9 Eze 1:1 3:4 11:24 Da 10:1-16 Ac 10:10-17 Ac 10:22 Heb 1:1
- Fear (KJV): Ge 15:14-16 26:24 46:3 Ex 14:13 De 31:6 1Ch 28:20 Ps 27:1 Isa 35:4 Isa 41:10,14 43:1,5 44:2,8 51:12 Da 10:12 Mt 8:26 10:28-31 Mt 28:5 Lu 1:13,30 12:32 Rev 1:17
- thy shield (KJV): De 33:29 Ps 3:3 5:12 18:2 84:9,11 91:4 119:114 Pr 30:5
- and thy (KJV): De 33:26-29 Ru 2:12 Ps 16:5,6 58:11 142:5 Pr 11:18 La 3:24 1Co 3:22 Heb 13:5,6 Rev 21:3,4
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:1-6](#) - Making God's Promises Yours - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:1-7](#) - S Lewis Johnson
- [Genesis 15 How to Overcome Fear](#) - Ray Pritchards

**Septuagint** - Genesis 15:1 meta de ta rhemata (spoken word) tauta egenethe (3SAPI) rhema kuriou pros Abram en oramati (orama = a supernatural vision, given as a means of divine communication, to be distinguished from a dream) legon **me phobou** (aorist imperative - Do not fear!) Abram ego huperaspizo (verb - huperaspizo in present tense = continually = defend as with a shield - Dt 33:29, 2 Ki 19:34, 20:6, Isa 31:5) sou o misthos (reward) sou polus (much, large, great) estai (will be) sphodra (exceedingly)

**LXE** Genesis 15:1 And after these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I shield thee, thy reward shall be very great.

**DO NOT FEAR!**  
**"I AM" YOUR SHIELD**

**Ray Pritchard** introduces this chapter noting that "Genesis 15 has rightly been called one of the most important chapters in all the Bible. In it we discover the details of the Abrahamic covenant, which is the most important covenant in all the Bible. Hundreds of years later the New Testament writers (especially Paul in Galatians 3:6, 18-note but also Peter in Acts 3) will look back on this covenant as the foundation for the Christian gospel.

Since the word Genesis means "beginnings" we shouldn't be surprised to discover several important "firsts" in this chapter:

1. The first use of the phrase "the word of the Lord came" (Ge 15:1). This phrase is used over 100 times in the Old Testament.
2. The first time God said "fear not" to anyone (Ge 15:1).
3. The first time God is called a "shield" (Ge 15:1). Frequently used in the Psalms to describe God's protection for His people (see Psalm 3:3, 5:12, 28:7 - [see all uses below](#)).
4. The first time anyone is said to have "believed" in the Lord (v. 6). The New Testament uses the word "believer" as a synonym for

"Christian" (see 1 Timothy 4:12). ([Genesis 15 How to Overcome Fear](#))

**Bruce Waltke** summarizes Genesis 15 - Chapter 15 consists of two divine encounters (Ge 15:1-6 and Ge 15:7-21) involving dialogue between the Lord and Abraham and powerful images symbolizing God's presence and promises. The first occurs at night (Ge 15:5) as a vision (Ge 15:1) and pertains to the promised seed. The second occurs at sundown (Ge 15:12), partially in a deep sleep (Ge 15:12), and pertains to the promised land." (Genesis Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001, 238)

A C Gaebelein - The Fourth Communication and the Covenant and the Vision

1. The Fourth Communication (Genesis 15:1)
2. Abram's Answer (Genesis 15:2-3)
3. The Promised Seed (Genesis 15:4-5)
4. Abram Counted Righteous (Genesis 15:6)
5. Continued Communication (Genesis 15:7-8)
6. The Divided Animals (Genesis 15:9-11)
7. The Vision (Genesis 15:12-17)
8. The Covenant Made (Genesis 15:18-21)

The connection with the previous chapter is extremely precious. Abram had honored the Lord and now the Lord honored him. Then the seed is promised. That seed promised is Isaac; Christ is typified by him. (Annotated Bible)

**John Phillips outlines Genesis 15** (BORROW [Exploring Genesis](#))

The Building of Abram's Family (Genesis 15:1-7)

The Word of God's Power (Genesis 15:1-4)

The Pledge (Genesis 15:1)

The Plea (Genesis 15:2-3)

The Plan (Genesis 15:4)

The Witness to God's Power (Genesis 15:5-6)

The Working of God's Power (Genesis 15:7)

The Basis of Abram's Faith (Genesis 15:8-12)

Calvary Shadowed: He Apprehends Its Mystery (Genesis 15:8-10)

Calvary Shared: He Apprehends Its Misery (Genesis 15:11-12)

The Brightness of Abram's Future (Genesis 15:13-21)

The Specific Time Involved (Genesis 15:13-16)

The Permissive Will of God (Genesis 15:13-14)

The Personal Will of God (Genesis 15:15)

The Preordaining Will of God (Genesis 15:16)

The Specific Territory Involved (Genesis 15:17-21)

The Guarantee of the Land (Genesis 15:17)

The Greatness of the Land (Genesis 15:18-21)

**After these things** - Dear diligent disciple desiring to divide the Word accurately, always pause and query [expressions of time](#) such as this one. You can always ask at least "To what time does the writer refer?" Or "After what things?" This question will usually force you to read the [context](#) (especially the preceding passages), which is never a bad habit to develop. I call it P & P, "Pausing to Ponder." What you are doing when you slow down and begin to [interrogate the text](#) is that you are beginning to practice the lost art of [Biblical Meditation](#). You may be saying "So what? I've got other things to do today!" Here's "WHAT" - You will be richly blessed by your Father in Heaven and by your Teacher, the Spirit of Jesus, for that is what God's Word promises and He is always faithful to keep His promises (cf Joshua 23:14). Here are God's promises to those who meditate on His Word of Life...

But his (her - the diligent student willing to slow down, to "P & P") delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. **He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.** (Ps 1:2-3-[note](#))

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; **for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success** (Joshua 1:8-[note](#))

So back to the question "**After what things?**" The answer of course is Abram's "operation rescue" of Lot from his captors in Genesis 14:1-24. Then the LORD God makes His gracious visit to Abram in Genesis 15. As Matthew Henry says "Those that show favour to men shall find favour with God." The caveat of course is that we don't show favor in order to merit favor, for God's favor is always a gift of His unmerited (and unearnable) grace!

**Warren Wiersbe**- Abraham had just defeated the kings (Genesis 14:1-24) and overcome a great temptation from the King of Sodom. Now God stepped in to encourage him. How wonderful that Christ comes to us when we need Him! (Ge 14:18) God is our protection (shield) and provision (reward); we need never fear. Abraham did not need the protection of the King of Sodom or the treasures he offered. Abraham had all he needed in God. Abraham did not

want a reward; he wanted an heir. He was now 85 years old (**Ed**: Estimate because we know he was 75 in Ge 12:4 and 86 in Ge 16:16), and for 10 years he had been waiting for his promised son to be born. If he had no son, all his inheritance would fall to Eliezer, his steward. Had not God promised in Ge 12:2NKJV, "I will make you a great nation"? Then why was He not fulfilling His promise? God answered Abraham's supplication by lifting his eyes from himself and his steward to the heavens (Ge 15:5). (Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the OT)

**Matthew Henry** also suggests that Abram's victory over the 4 kings in Genesis 14 may have given him a sense of elevation, pleased with the outcome. And so Henry says "Lest Abram should be too much elevated and pleased with that, God comes to him, to tell him he had better things in store for him. Note, A believing converse with Spiritual blessings is an excellent means to keep us from being too much taken up with temporal enjoyments. The gifts of common providence are not comparable to those of covenant love."

## THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME

**The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision**- God manifested Himself to His servant Abram (Ps 105:42), which is a wonderful picture of how He desires to speak with each of His children! Today we have His Word of Truth fully revealed in the Bible, so that our responsibility in this interchange is to open the Book that His Spirit might open our mind and heart (Lk 24:45-note) to the Father's will for our life. Remember that the will of God is best found in the Word of God. These thoughts beg the question -- Do you begin your day in communion and conversation with the Living Lord in His Living (life giving) Word? If not you are missing out on the most important "appointment" you will have that day. Jesus was quite clear when He declared that "Man shall not live (spiritually) by bread alone (a physical necessity) but by every word (a spiritual necessity) which proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4, Lk 4:4, Dt 8:2-3). Is your "Quiet Time" too quiet? Beloved, it is not my desire to place you under Law, for you are under grace (Ro 6:14b), but if your AM time is too rushed for Jesus, take some time this week and read the article [Quiet Time: 7 Minutes With God](#). As Matthew Henry says "God's good Word does us good when it is spoken by his Spirit to us in particular, and brought to our hearts. The word says, *Ho, every one* (Isaiah 55:1), the Spirit says, *Ho, such a one*."

**Word of the Lord** ([see all uses below](#)) - Thomas Constable notes that "'The word of the LORD came' is a phrase typically introducing revelation to a prophet, e.g., 1 Sam 15:10; Hos 1:1; but in Genesis it is found only here and in v 4 of this chapter. Abraham is actually called a prophet in Ge 20:7. It prepares the way for the prophecy of the Egyptian bondage in Ge 15:13-16.

**In a vision** - Apparently Abram was awake when he received this supernatural revelation. The other primary means of divine revelation in the OT were **dreams** and **direct communication** (Nu 12:6-8)

**Abram** = "exalted father" (cp Abraham = "father of a multitude") Note that God knew His name and He called him by name. Dear reader, He knows your name and calls you by your name. In fact He has written you a letter expressing His love for you! It's called the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation God is calling fallen men and women back to Himself, much as He spoke those words to Adam asking "Adam, where are you?" (Ge 3:9-note)

[Warren Wiersbe](#) observes that "God spoke to his friend by name (John 10:3). When I was a lad, I often went shopping for my mother; and the clerks in the stores would call me by name and ask about my family. When my parents went to the bank, the tellers usually knew who they were and greeted them. With very few exceptions, the clerks I meet today see me only as a number in the computer. It seems incredible, but the God Who names and numbers all the stars also knows your name and is concerned about your needs (Ps. 147:3-4)." (Be Obedient)

Dear follower of Christ, you may be going through a difficult time and are doubting whether He knows or whether He even cares. Take heart beloved, because HE KNOWS YOUR NAME!!! Take a moment and thank Him that even though you may not feel He knows, you will declare by faith (even as small as a mustard seed) that "Father, You know my name. Thank You God!" Then take a few minutes and listen to the following songs asking Him by His Spirit to minister to your heart and mind and soul and spirit. He will!

**He Knows My Name** (By [The McRaes](#)) (By [Paul Baloche](#))

**Who Am I? (Casting Crowns)**

"Who am I  
That the Lord of all the earth  
Would care to know my name,  
Would care to feel my hurt?"

**Do not fear** - The first "fear not" in the Bible ([see all uses](#)) The Hebrew imperfect tense conveys the idea of "Stop being afraid," which implies Abram was fearful. In the Greek (Septuagint) this is translated as a command ([present imperative with a negative](#)) which means "stop fearing" (can also mean don't begin fearing), and it is possible fear had begun to overwhelm his faith, and fiery missiles were coming into his mind that the four kings might rally their forces and come against him. The command to "fear not" is repeatedly given by Jesus to His disciples (including us). And remember that God commandments ALWAYS include His "enablements."

**John Trapp** - "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Gen. 15. 1. If God speak comfort, let hell roar horror.

Another consideration is the fact that mountaintop spiritual experiences are often followed by deep valleys. For example, we recall Elijah's fear of Jezebel's threats after his great victory over her false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:1-3). And in Abraham's case if the 4 kings returned and killed him how would God fulfill His covenant promises?

**Do Not Fear** - 58x in 57v in Scripture -

Gen. 15:1; 21:17; 26:24; 35:17; Exod. 14:13; Num. 14:9; 21:34; Deut. 1:21; 3:2, 22; 31:8; Jos. 8:1; 10:8, 25; Jdg. 6:23; Ruth 3:11; 1 Sam. 12:20; 2 Sam. 9:7; 13:28; 1 Ki. 17:13; 2 Ki. 6:16; 17:34; 1 Chr. 22:13; 28:20; 2 Chr. 20:15, 17; 32:7; Ps. 55:19; 64:4; Isa. 10:24; 40:9; 41:10, 13f; 43:1, 5; 44:2; 51:7; 57:11; Jer. 10:5; 46:27f; Lam. 3:57; Joel 2:21f; Hag. 2:5; Zech. 8:13, 15; Mal. 3:5; Matt. 10:26, 28, 31; Lk. 5:10; 12:7; 18:4; 1 Pet. 3:14; Rev. 2:10

**Keith Krell** remarks that "**Fear** has been stalking Abraham at every turn. When he's told to leave Haran (Ge 12:1), it's fear that would hold him back, fear of

stepping out into the unknown and leaving behind the safety and security of life, as he knew it. When he arrives in the land and finds it occupied (Ge 12:6), we can imagine fear raising questions of whether this major uprooting has been in vain. When he travels to Egypt (Ge 12:10-13), fear looks over his shoulder, and capitalizes on a vulnerable moment. He fears for his life and lies about his wife's identity. When he reflects on his wife's barrenness (Ge 15:2) he fears that his inheritance will go to his servant Eliezer. Fear has been stalking him at every turn." ([Fear Factor](#))

So whatever there was in Abram's mind and heart that was the seedbed for fear, Jehovah says stop fearing, don't let the destructive bush of fear bear fruit in your heart. And then He explains the "enablement," or why Abram had no reason to fear -- he had a "**Shield**" and that "**Shield**" was the omnipotent God Almighty. Dear believer, perhaps you struggle with fears (we all do from time to time). If so remember that the basic battle is really between **fear** and **faith**. Our enemy traffics in fear and lies and God in faith and truth. And faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ (Ro 10:17-[note](#)). In the present context recall that God (Who knew Abram's fear) sends His Word to Abraham (see above for first use of "The word of the LORD came.") This Word would serve to bolster Abram's faith which we see him exercise in the following verses. In this case the Word of God came to Abram, but we have the finished revelation of God and it is our responsibility to come to His Word!

---

**D L Moody** - ABRAM might have thought that the kings that he had defeated might get other kings and other armies to come, and he might have thought of himself as a solitary man, with only three hundred and eighteen men, so that he might have feared lest he be swept from the face of the earth. But the Lord came and said:

"Abram, fear not."

That is the first time those oft-repeated words "Fear not" occur in the Bible.

"Fear not, for I will be your shield and your reward."

I would rather have that promise than all the armies and all the navies of the world to protect me—to have the God of heaven for my Protector! God was teaching Abram that He was to be his Friend and his Shield, if he would surrender himself wholly to His keeping, and trust in His goodness. That is what we need—to surrender ourselves up to God, fully and wholly.

---

**Ray Pritchard** - There are at least four reasons Abram could have doubted God's promise of a son:

1. He was too old.
2. Many years had passed since the promise had been given.
3. Nothing like this had ever happened before.
4. Sarah also doubted God's promise.

When you think about it, there was no reason to believe-no reason except that God had promised to do it. The question now is simple: Will God's promise be enough for Abraham?

**To all our fears God says, "I am your shield."**

In answer to that question, God declares, "**I am your shield.**" We should not think of a small shield that covers only the chest area, but rather of a shield that stretches from head to toe and completely protects every part of the soldier's body. Such a shield offers complete protection from every attack of the enemy.

To call God our shield means two specific things:

1. He protects us in times of doubt.
2. He rescues us in times of danger.

Note that God does not say, "I will give you a shield," but "I am your shield." The very God of heaven says that he will be our shield, which means we have a shield that is omnipotent, universal, eternal. *That shield cannot be defeated.* It is as strong as God himself.

*We could not be in a better position.* Who can defeat us when God himself is our shield?

The great message is certainly clear. If God is your shield, fear not! ([Genesis 15:1 Fear Not!](#))

---

## THE REMEDY FOR FEAR KNOWING WHO GOD IS

**I am a shield to you** - As [Ray Pritchard](#) says "God's answer to fear is not an argument or a formula. It's a Person. That's why he said to Abraham, "Fear not. I am your shield." God himself is the final answer to every fear of the human heart." God does not give us a shield. He Himself is our Shield! A shield is for protection so God is telling Abram "I am your Protector." Abram had experienced victory over his enemies in Ge 14 but now was fearful. As mentioned above spiritual mountain tops are times of vulnerability for all of God's saints. And so God gives Abram one of His great Names (metaphorically speaking) of a "Shield." As discussed above, the first place we need to run when we are fearful is to the Word of Truth and the God of the Truth (and when we do we are in effect running into His Name). Remember that "The Name of Jehovah (in this case "Shield") is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are safe (they are lifted up - the fray may still be ongoing but they are elevated above it. The Hebrew word is [sagab](#))." (Proverbs 18:10-[note](#)). Jehovah was not just Abram's "Shield" but He is also your "Shield." And now we "run into" the Name of God by running prayerfully to His all sufficient Word of Truth. We see this juxtaposition of Word and shield in 2 Sa 22:31

As for God, His way is blameless; The **word** of the LORD is tested; He is a **shield** to all who take refuge in Him.

See also a series of articles including numerous Scriptures and devotionals to help you deflect a spirit of fear...

- [How To Handle Fear \(1\)](#)
- [How to Handle Fear \(2\)](#)

- [How To Handle Fear \(3\)](#)
- [How to Handle Fear \(4\)](#)

**Wiersbe** sums up this section noting that "God's remedy for Abraham's fear was to remind him who He was: "I am thy shield, and thy exceedingly great reward" (Ge. 15:1). God's I AM is perfectly adequate for man's "I am not." "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). Your life is only as big as your faith, and your faith is only as big as your God. If you spend all your time looking at yourself, you will get discouraged; but if you look to God by faith, you will be encouraged. God is our shield and our reward, our protection and our provision. Abraham didn't have to worry about another battle because the Lord would protect him. And he didn't need to regret losing the wealth offered him by the King of Sodom because God would reward him in far greater ways. This is the Old Testament equivalent of Matthew 6:33-[note](#) and Philippians 4:19-[note](#). (Be Obedient)

## GOD OUR SHIELD, PROTECTOR AND DEFENDER

**Shield** (04043)(**magen** from **ganan** = to cover, surround, defend) is a masculine noun which most often refers to a shield, indicating some kind of protection, literal or figurative. A shield is described as a weapon (Jdg. 5:8; 2 Sa 1:21; 1 Ki 14:27; Job 15:26), as an ornament (1 Ki. 10:17; 14:26), as the protective scales of a crocodile (Job 41:15).

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be,  
As long as life endures.

[Amazing Grace](#)

**Krell** says "The shield was the primary defensive weapon of the OT warrior. It was a portable fortress, a defensive wall that could be taken with the warrior into battle. It provided a barrier between the vulnerable flesh of the warrior and the dangerous impact of various weapons. It's a recurring image, particularly in the Psalms, of God's protection."

**James Anderson** - The word rendered "shield" is in the Hebrew text מָגֵן, magen, which was a short buckler intended merely for defence. The word rendered "buckler" is צִנְחָה tsinnah; it was double the weight of the magen, and was carried by the infantry; the magen, being lighter and more manageable, was used by the cavalry.

Figuratively **magen** refers to God as a Source of protection or escape, a refuge. Magen is used figuratively to refer to Israel's king in (Ps 84:9 cp Ps 84:9NLT, Ps 89:18, rulers in Ps 47:9), a shield describes God's truth in (Ps 91:4KJV)

In the Lxx the word for **shield** when it figuratively refers to God is either the verb hyperaspizo = to hold a shield over (Ge 15:1, Dt 33:29, Pr 2:7, ) or the noun hyperaspistes = one who holds a shield over, a protector (2 Sa 22:3, 31, 36, Ps 18:2, 30, 35, 28:7, 33:20, 59:11, 115:9-11, 144:2)

The most important figurative use of magen is the description of Jehovah as **ashield** to those who are His, which emphasizes that He is our Protector or our protection. This of course implies we need protection. Indeed, we have 3 enemies, the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#) , and God is Our Protector from each.

Dear name! the rock on which I build,  
My shield and hiding place,  
My never failing treasury filled  
With boundless stores of grace!

Perhaps you are under attack and fearful like Abram. Can I encourage you to pause for a moment and sing a declaration of your faith in the Eternal God as your Shield from the attack...

### [A Shield About Me](#)

**When (not "if") the attack comes hold on to the truth that Jehovah Himself is your Shield. Then the truth that you are holding on to will hold you fast and secure! See Ephesians 6:16-[note](#)**

in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

**By faith Spurgeon** comments on David's figurative use of shield in Ps 3:3 - Here David avows his confidence in God. The word (magen) in the original signifies more than a **shield**; it means a **buckler** ([see buckler](#)) round about, a protection which shall surround a man entirely, a shield above, beneath, around, without and within. (**Ed:** See this picture in Ps 5:12 [below](#)) Oh! what a shield is God for His people! He wards off the fiery darts of Satan from beneath (Eph 6:16--[note](#)), and the storms of trials from above, while, at the same instant, he speaks peace to the tempest within the breast."

**Spurgeon** quotes [Thomas Tymme](#) on "shield" in Ps 3:3 - Persuade yourselves, with David, that the Lord is your defender, who hath compassed you round about, and is, as it were, a "shield" that doth cover you on every side. It is he only that may and will compass you about with glory and honour. It is he that will thrust down those proud hypocrites from their seat, and exalt the lowly and meek. It is he which will "smite" your "enemies on the cheek bone," and burst all their teeth in sunder. He will hang up Absalom by his own long hairs; and [Ahithophel](#) through desperation shall hang himself. The bands shall be broken and you delivered; for this belongs unto the Lord, to save His from their enemies, and to bless His people, **that they may safely proceed in their pilgrimage to heaven without fear.**"

**Gilbrant** on **magen** - Some have sought to associate māgen with a verb, nāghan (HED #5235), "to touch," which has a nuance in Middle Hebrew and the Dead Sea Scrolls of "to strike." This association is not well founded, however. Two verbal roots may explain occurrences of this noun. The verb māghan (HED #4181), "to hand over," "to give as a gift," has a derived noun which occurs in Hos. 4:18. Some think that a derived noun from this verb (attested in Punic and Ugaritic) points to another usage, that of "sovereign" (e.g., Gen. 15:1; Ps. 7:10).

This word for "shield" designates a small, generally round, wooden shield that was usually covered with leather. The other common word for shield is tsinnāh (HED #7065), which refers to the larger, oblong shield that covered most of the body. When the words appear apart from each other, they are both generally translated as "shield," but when they occur in the same verse, the KJV, RSV and NASB translate the pair as "shield and buckler." A buckler is a small round shield, but there does not seem to be any strict consistency in associating buckler with māgen in such cases.

The shield was usually a weapon of defense. When Israel turned to other gods, the song of Deborah indicates that no one could find a single shield or spear among 40,000 in Israel (Judg. 5:8). By this she meant that they had no source of protection before their enemies. The shield is also mentioned along with other weapons of war: the quiver and chariots (Isa. 22:6), arrows and siege mounds (Isa. 37:33), the buckler and bow (Jer. 46:3, 9), chariots, wagons, buckler and helmets (Ezek. 23:24) and arrows, swords and weapons of war (Ps. 76:3). Ezekiel prophesied that after the battle against Gog and Magog, Israel would collect the shields and other weapons of war and burn them for fuel for seven years (Ezek. 39:9). This indicates the massive size of the army which will attack Israel, yet over which the Lord will give them victory.

In the battlefield, soldiers carried their shields, but in the city, they would line them up along the top of the wall to provide an added line of defense. This is the imagery found in S.S. 4:4 where the author likens the neck of the woman to the tower of David on which are hung 1000 shields.

Soldiers treated their shields with oil (Isa. 21:5; 2 Sam. 1:21). This was a way of preserving the leather coverings. In 2 Sam. 1:21, David says Saul's shield has been defiled. Some have suggested that this means that Saul's shield was either soiled with his own blood or that it was uncared for and rotting in the open field. The parallel statement that it is no longer rubbed with oil suggests that the latter meaning is more accurate. In keeping with the basic meaning of the verb, however, the KJV translation of "vilely cast away" captures the idea of David's statement. The shield had failed to do its job, so it was loathed and rejected. It is a symbolic statement of being mortally wounded and defeated in battle.

Solomon made 200 large, full-body shields, each containing about seven and one-half pounds of gold. He also made 300 of the small round shields, each containing about three and three-quarter pounds of gold. It is difficult to determine if the shields were of solid gold or if they were wooden shields covered with gold. Solomon placed these shields in his palace, and they were a symbol of his great wealth. During the reign of his son, Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem and took the shields as part of his booty. Rehoboam replaced the golden shields with bronze ones, indicating the nation had experienced a decline in prosperity. First Kings 14:26f indicates that these shields were used as part of the royal procession whenever the king went to the temple of the Lord, and they were also used by the palace guards. These shields were for decorative and prestige purposes and were never intended for use in battle.

In several passages, the term "shield" is used in a metaphorical sense for a ruler. Depicting the king as a shield presents him in his role as protector of the state. In Ps. 47:9, "shields" is paralleled with "princes of the people"; in 84:9, it is paralleled with "[God's] anointed," and in 89:18, it is paralleled with "our king."

The shield is associated with God from several different angles. From the negative angle, wicked men charge against God with a thick-bosSED shield in defiance of God (Job 15:26). In some way, the wicked attempt to protect themselves from God's judgments against them.

From the positive angle, God is pictured as providing protection for his people. In some passages, He is pictured as a shield (Deut. 33:29; Pss. 7:10; 18:2). In Ps. 35:2, the psalmist calls to the Lord to take up his shield and buckler and come as a Warrior against his enemies. In this case, the Lord is not only a Defense for the righteous but also on the attack, as an avenger of the righteous, in his actions. In 2 Sam. 22:36, the Lord gives his shield of victory to the warrior.

The Lord appeared to Abraham in a vision and declared that he was Abraham's shield and very great reward (Gen. 15:1). Abraham proceeded to ask Him what He would give him since he was childless. This is one of the contexts assigned to the noun derived from the verb māghan. It is thus translated by some as "I am your sovereign who will reward you greatly." This then provides a more natural introduction to Abraham's question of what the Lord would give him.

In Job 41:15, the term is applied to the leviathan. It is employed here to hyperbolically underscore God's power over all of creation in face of Job's charge that he was lax in his duties, namely in protecting Job. God describes the leviathan's back as having rows of shields tightly fit together. This depicts the animal as having some kind of scaly skin structure which provided it with a source of protection. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Here are some of the uses of magen especially describing our Great and Mighty God, our Rock and our Fortress, Jehovah Jesus...

Dt 33:29+ "Blessed are you, O Israel; Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, Who is the **shield** of your **help** ([ezer](#); Lxx - [boethos](#) = Helper - only in Heb 13:6+ in NT) And the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, And you will tread upon their high places."

2 Sa 22:3+ My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, My **shield** and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence.

2 Sa 22:31+ "As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tested; He is a **shield** to all who take refuge in Him.

2 Sa 22:36+ "You have also given me the **shield** of Your salvation, And Your help makes me great.

Ps 3:3+ But You, O LORD, are a **shield** about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.

Ps 5:12+ For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor as with a **shield**.

**Spurgeon** - This is a promise of infinite length, of unbounded breadth, and of unutterable preciousness. As for the defense which the believer needs in this land of battles, it is here promised to him in the fullest measure. There were vast shields used by the ancients as extensive as a man's whole person, which would surround him entirely. So says David, "With favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield." According to Ainsworth there is here also the idea of being crowned, so that we wear a royal helmet, which is at once our glory and defense. O Lord, ever give to us this gracious coronation!

Ps 7:10 My **shield** is with God, Who saves the upright in heart.



**Andrew Bonar** - "My defense is of God." Literally, "My shield is upon God," like Psalm 62:8, "My salvation is upon God." The idea may be taken from the armor-bearer, ever ready at hand to give the needed weapon to the warrior.

Ps 18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

**Spurgeon** - Dwelling among the crags and mountain fastnesses of Judea, David had escaped the malice of Saul, and here he compares his God to such a place of concealment and security. Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm of trouble. The clefts of the Rock of Ages are safe abodes. "**My deliverer**," interposing in my hour of peril. When almost captured the Lord's people are rescued from the hand of the mighty by him who is mightier still. This title of "deliverer" has many sermons in it, and is well worthy of the study of all experienced saints. "My God;" this is all good things in one. There is a boundless wealth in this expression; it means, my perpetual, unchanging, infinite, eternal good. He who can say truly "**my God**," may well add, "my heaven, my all." "**My strength**;" this word is really "**my rock**," in the sense of strength and immobility. My sure, unchanging, eternal confidence and support. Thus the word rock occurs twice, but it is no tautology, for the first time it is a rock for concealment, but here a rock for firmness and immutability. "**In whom I will trust**." Faith must be exercised, or the preciousness of God is not truly known; and God must be the object of faith, or faith is mere presumption. "**My buckler** (shield), warding off the blows of my enemy, shielding me from arrow or sword. The Lord furnishes His warriors with weapons both offensive and defensive. Our armory is completely stored so that none need go to battle unarmed. "**The horn of my salvation**," enabling me to push down my foes, and to triumph over them with holy exultation. "My high tower," a citadel high planted on a rocky eminence beyond the reach of my enemies, from the heights of which I look down upon their fury without alarm, and survey a wide landscape of mercy reaching even unto the goodly land beyond Jordan. Here are many words, but none too many; we might profitably examine each one of them had we leisure, but summing up the whole, we may conclude with Calvin, that David here equips the faithful from head to foot.

Ps 18:30 As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tried; He is **ashield** to all who take refuge in Him. ("He is a buckler to all those that trust in him." - KJV)

**Spurgeon** - No armor of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the covenant God of Israel protects his warring people. He himself is the buckler of trustful ones; what a thought is this! What peace may every trusting soul enjoy!

Ps 18:35 You have also given me the **shield** of Your salvation, And Your right hand upholds me; And Your gentleness makes me great.

**Spurgeon** - Above all we must take the shield of faith, for nothing else can quench Satan's fiery darts; this shield is of celestial workmanship, and is in all cases a direct gift from God himself; it is the channel, the sign, the guarantee, and the earnest of perfect salvation.

**W. Wilson, D.D.** - "The Lord is my strength" *inwardly*, "and my shield" *outwardly*. Faith finds both these in Jehovah, and the one not without the other, for what is a shield without strength, or strength without a shield? "My heart trusted in him, and I am helped:" the idea of the former sentence is here carried out, that outward help was granted to inward confidence.

Ps 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my **shield**; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him.

**Spurgeon** - Thus David found both sword and shield in his God. The Lord preserves his people from unnumbered ills; and the Christian warrior, sheltered behind his God, is far more safe than the hero when covered with his shield of brass or triple steel

Ps 33:20 **Our** soul waits for the LORD; He is **our** help and **our shield**.

**Spurgeon** - Our help in labor, our shield in danger. The Lord answers all things to His people. He is their all in all. Note the three "ours" in the text. These hold fast words are precious. **Personal possession** makes the Christian man; all else is mere talk.

Ps 59:11 Do not slay them, or my people will forget; Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, **our shield**.

**Spurgeon** - We are in good company when we hide beneath the buckler of the Eternal; meanwhile he who is the shield of his people is the scatterer of their enemies.

Ps 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and **shield**; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

**Spurgeon on sun and shield** - Pilgrims need both as the weather may be, for the cold would smite them were it not for the **sun**, and foes are apt to waylay the sacred caravan, and would haply destroy it if it were without a **shield**. Heavenly pilgrims are not left uncomfortable or unprotected. The pilgrim nation found both **sun and shield** in that fiery cloudy pillar which was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, **and the Christian still finds both light and shelter in the Lord his God. A sun for happy days and a shield for dangerous ones. A sun above, a shield around. A light to show the way and a shield to ward off its perils. Blessed are they who journey with such a convoy; the sunny and the shady side of life are alike happy to them.**

**Warren Wiersbe** - Grace--that's how the spiritual journey begins. We are saved by God's grace. We trust Jesus, and in grace God saves us. Glory--that's how it ends. One day we will be in heaven and share the glory of the Lord forever. But between grace and glory, life can be rather difficult. We read in 1 Peter 5:10 that the "God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, [will] perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you." Whatever begins with grace leads to glory, but how do we make the journey between grace and glory? "For the Lord God is a sun and shield" (Psalm 84:11). He is a sun. That's provision and sufficiency. He is a shield. That's protection and security. We start the journey with grace; we continue the journey trusting God's provision and protection; and we end the journey by entering into the glory of the Lord. What does it mean to walk uprightly? It means walking in the light, obeying His word, loving Him and trusting Him. Psalm 84:11 is a great verse

to claim for your pilgrim journey. Begin with God's grace and end in His glory. Along the way you have the promise of His provision and protection. Do you qualify for God's provisions for the journey? Determine always to walk uprightly by obeying the Word of God and trusting its promises

William Secker. - Why need a saint fear darkness, when he has such a sun to guide him? Or dread dangers, when he has such a shield to guard him?

Ps 115:9 O Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their **shield**.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their **shield**.

11 You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their **shield**.

Ps 119:114 You are my hiding place and my **shield**; I wait for Your word.

**Warren Wiersbe** - Where are you hiding? "You are my hiding place and my shield." Are you hiding in the Lord? Is He your Shield? Christians have enemies who want to rob us of the blessing of God. Maybe you are hurting today. Run and hide in Jesus Christ.

Ps 144:2 My lovingkindness and my fortress, My stronghold and my deliverer, My **shield** and He in whom I take refuge, Who subdues my people under me.

Pr 2:7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a **shield** to those who walk in integrity,

Pr 30:5 Every word of God is tested; He is a **ashield** to those who take refuge in Him.

Here are some other figurative uses of magen that apply to God's saints...

Ps 5:12 For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor **as with a shield**.

**Timothy Rogers, 1691.** - When the strong man armed comes against us, when he darts his fiery darts, what can hurt us, if God compass us about with his lovingkindness as with a **shield**? He can disarm the tempter and restrain his malice, and tread him under our feet. If God be not with us, if he do not give us sufficient grace, so subtle, so powerful, so politic an enemy, will be too hard for us. How surely are we foiled, and get the worse, when we pretend to grapple with him in our own strength! How many falls, and how many bruises by those falls have we got, by relying too much on our own skill? How often have we had the help of God when we have humbly asked it! And how sure are we to get the victory, if Christ pray for us that we do not fail! Luke 22:31. Where can we go for shelter but unto God our Maker! When this lion of the forest does begin to roar, how will he terrify and vex us, till he that permits him for awhile to trouble us, be pleased to chain him up again!

**Spurgeon** on the phrase "As with a shield." - Luther, when making his way into the presence of Cardinal Cajetan, who had summoned him to answer for his heretical opinions at Augsburg, was asked by one of the Cardinal's minions, where he should find a shelter, if his patron, the Elector of Saxony, should desert him? "Under the shelter of heaven!" was the reply. The silenced minion turned round and went his way.

**William Gurnall** - The **shield** is not for the defense of any particular part of the body, as almost all the other pieces are: helmet, fitted for the head; plate designed for the breast; and so others, they have their several parts, which they are fastened to; but **the shield is a piece that is intended for the defense of the whole body**. It was used therefore to be made very large; for its broadness, called a gate or door, because so long and large, as in a manner to cover the whole body. And if the **shield** were not large enough at once to cover every part, yet being a movable piece of armor, the skillful soldier might turn it this way or that way, to catch the blow or arrow from lighting on any part they were directed to. And this indeed doth excellently well set forth the universal use that **faith** is of to the Christian (**Ed**: Cp Eph 6:16-note). **It defends the whole man: every part of the Christian by it is preserved.... The shield doth not only defend the whole body, but it is a defense to the soldier's armor also; it keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as head, from the breast and breastplate also. Thus faith, it is armor upon armor, a grace that preserves all the other graces.**

**All 60 uses of magen** - Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29; Jdg. 5:8; 2 Sam. 1:21; 22:3, 31, 36; 1 Ki. 10:17; 14:26f; 2 Ki. 19:32; 1 Chr. 5:18; 2 Chr. 9:16; 12:9f; 14:8; 17:17; 23:9; 26:14; 32:5, 27; Neh. 4:16; Job 15:26; 41:15; Ps. 3:3; 7:10; 18:2, 30, 35; 28:7; 33:20; 35:2; 47:9; 59:11; 76:3; 84:9, 11; 89:18; 115:9ff; 119:114; 144:2; Prov. 2:7; 6:11; 24:34; 30:5; Cant. 4:4; Isa. 21:5; 22:6; 37:33; Jer. 46:3, 9; Ezek. 23:24; 27:10; 38:4f; 39:9; Hos. 4:18; Nah. 2:3

O worship the King, all glorious above,  
O gratefully sing His power and His love;  
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

**Morris on I am thy shield.** Many of the great claims of Christ began with the words "I am." "I am the light of the world." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am the door." Last of all, He said: "I am the Alpha and Omega," and then "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:13, 16). In fact, His very name is "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14). Jesus said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). When they questioned how Abraham could have seen Him, He simply answered: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). They recognized this claim as a claim to be God Himself, and immediately tried to stone Jesus. But, in truth Abram had seen Him! It was probably this very occasion to which Jesus referred, when He first identified Himself to Abram as the self-existing God, the One who was able and willing to supply every need in time and eternity. (Genesis Record)

## GREAT REWARD

**Your reward shall be very great** - Ge 12:2 describes in part Abram's **reward** - "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing." So not only would Abram receive eternal salvation, but he would also become the heir of all others who would inherit salvation. In Genesis 14:22-24 Abram turned down the reward from a pagan king of Sodom (Ge 14:21) but in Genesis 15 receives by faith the rich reward from the King of Heaven! We as Abram's children energized by the Holy Spirit should seek to imitate Abram's example (Heb 6:12-note) and "**Set**



([present imperative](#) = a command to do this as our lifestyle, something we can ONLY do by relying wholly on the the Holy Spirit to graciously give us the desire and the power - Php 2:13NLT-[note](#)) our mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." (Col 3:2-[note](#))

**NET Note** - Abram has just rejected all the spoils of war, and the LORD promises to reward him in great abundance. In walking by faith and living with integrity he cannot lose.

Our shield and our great reward,  
To Thee all praise be given;  
Who with Thy saving help afford  
Until we come to Heaven.

**NET Note** on **reward** - Heb "your reward [in] great abundance." When the phrase הַרְבֵּה מֶעוֹד (harbeh méod) follows a noun it invariably modifies the noun and carries the nuance "very great" or "in great abundance." (See its use in Gen 41:49; Deut 3:5; Josh 22:8; 2 Sam 8:8; 12:2; 1 Kgs 4:29; 10:10–11; 2 Chr 14:13; 32:27; Jer 40:12.) Here the noun "reward" is in apposition to "shield" and refers by metonymy to God as the source of the reward. Some translate here "your reward will be very great" (cf. NASB, NRSV), taking the statement as an independent clause and understanding the Hiphil infinitive absolute as a substitute for a finite verb. However, the construction הַרְבֵּה מֶעוֹד is never used this way elsewhere, where it either modifies a noun (see the texts listed above) or serves as an adverb in relation to a finite verb (see Josh 13:1; 1 Sam 26:21; 2 Sam 12:30; 2 Kgs 21:16; 1 Chr 20:2; Neh 2:2).

**Wiersbe** - At times even the most dedicated Christian feels "in the dark" and wonders why God seems so far away. During the Boxer Rebellion, the China Inland Mission suffered greatly; and its founder, J. Hudson Taylor, said to a friend, "I cannot read; I cannot think; I cannot even pray; but I can trust." It was a dark time, but God eventually gave light. Abraham had an experience of what spiritual directors call "the dark night of the soul." The term comes from a sixteenth-century spiritual classic of that title by St. John of the Cross. Based on the night scenes described in the Song of Songs, the book tells how the child of God enters into deeper love and faith by experiencing temporary darkness and seeming separation from God. It is not an easy thing to experience, but sometimes necessary. (Be Obedient)

---

**The Word of the Lord** - This exact phrase occurs 257x in 255v in all the Scriptures (NAS) - Genesis 15:1 is the first use of this phrase and the only use in the entire book of Genesis.

Ge 15:1, 4; Ex. 9:20f; Nu 3:16; 15:31; 36:5; Dt. 5:5; 34:5; Jos. 8:8, 27; 1 Sam. 3:7, 21; 15:10, 23, 26; 2 Sam. 7:4; 12:9; 22:31; 24:11; 1 Ki. 2:27; 6:11; 12:24; 13:1f, 5, 9, 17f, 20, 26, 32; 14:18; 15:29; 16:1, 7, 12, 34; 17:2, 5, 8, 16, 24; 18:1, 31; 19:9; 20:35; 21:17, 28; 22:5, 19, 38; 2 Ki. 1:17; 3:12; 4:44; 7:1, 16; 9:26, 36; 10:10, 17; 14:25; 15:12; 20:4, 16, 19; 23:16; 24:2; 1 Chr. 10:13; 11:3, 10; 12:23; 15:15; 22:8; 2 Chr. 11:2; 12:7; 18:4, 18; 30:12; 34:21; 35:6; 36:21f; Ezr. 1:1; Ps. 18:30; 33:4, 6; 105:19; Isa. 1:10; 2:3; 28:13f; 38:4; 39:5, 8; 66:5; Jer. 1:2, 4, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 31; 6:10; 7:2; 8:9; 9:20; 13:2f, 8; 14:1; 16:1; 17:15, 20; 18:5; 19:3; 20:8; 21:11; 22:2, 29; 24:4; 25:3; 27:18; 28:12; 29:20, 30; 31:10; 32:6, 8, 26; 33:1, 19, 23; 34:4, 12; 35:12; 36:27; 37:6; 39:15; 42:7, 15; 43:8; 44:24, 26; 46:1; 47:1; 49:34; Ezek. 1:3; 3:16; 6:1, 3; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26; 13:1f; 14:2, 12; 15:1; 16:1, 35; 17:1, 11; 18:1; 20:2, 45, 47; 21:1, 8, 18; 22:1, 17, 23; 23:1; 24:1, 15, 20; 25:1, 3; 26:1; 27:1; 28:1, 11, 20; 29:1, 17; 30:1, 20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:1, 23; 34:1, 7, 9; 35:1; 36:1, 4, 16; 37:4, 15; 38:1; Dan. 9:2; Hos. 1:1; 4:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 7:16; 8:12; Jon. 1:1; 3:1, 3; Mic. 1:1; 4:2; Zeph. 1:1; 2:5; Hag. 1:1, 3; 2:1, 10, 20; Zech. 1:1, 7; 4:6, 8; 6:9; 7:1, 4, 8; 8:1, 18; 9:1; 11:11; 12:1; Mal. 1:1; Lk. 22:61; Acts 8:25; 11:16; 12:24; 13:44, 48f; 15:35f; 16:32; 19:10, 20; 1 Th. 1:8; 4:15; 2 Th. 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:25

---

### Ray Pritchard - Genesis 15 "Fear Not!" - The Answer is a Person

God's answer to fear is not an argument or a formula. It's a Person. That's why he said to Abraham, "Fear not. I am your shield." God himself is the final answer to every fear of the human heart.

Have you ever wondered why God called himself by the name "I AM" in the Old Testament? Above all else, it means that God is eternally existent and therefore all creation depends on him. God stands alone. No one can be compared to him. He is complete in himself. God doesn't need us but we desperately need him.

God doesn't need us but we desperately need him.

Think of it this way. To say that God is the great "I AM" means that when we come to him, he is everything we need at exactly that moment. It's as if God is saying . . .

I am your strength.  
I am your courage.  
I am your health.  
I am your hope.  
I am your supply.  
I am your defender.  
I am your deliverer.  
I am your forgiveness.  
I am your joy.  
I am your future.

God is saying to you and me, "I am whatever you need whenever you need it." He is the all-sufficient God for every crisis.

### From Fear to Faith

Let's wrap up this message by looking at four principles that will move us from fear to faith.

#### 1. Faith focuses on God, not on your problems.

A woman told me that she had changed her phone number and left it unlisted because she is gripped with fear as she thinks about certain people and what

they might do to her. As we talked together, I finally said, "It's time to move from fear to faith. Are you ready to move with me?" She smiled hesitantly and then said yes. We prayed, claiming God's promises of protection. When I saw her the next day she said that she had slept much better that night because she wasn't focusing on her fears.

Think of Abraham. The past argued against his ever having a child. So did the present. His only hope lay in the promises of God for the future. As long as he looked back, he would never have faith to believe God. His only hope was to step out into the future, trusting that somehow, someday God would keep his promises.

## **2. Faith trusts in God's timing, not your own.**

So many of our struggles with fear start right here. Deep down, we fear that God has somehow made a mistake in his dealings with us. Like Abraham, we have waited and waited-sometimes for years on end. Even though we may have seen many remarkable answers to prayer, the one thing that means the most to us has not been granted.

As I write these words I am thinking of certain people I know who pray faithfully week after week for their loved ones to be saved. Some of them write notes each week asking prayer for an unsaved husband or wife. Week in and week out the requests come in and the staff prays for them faithfully. One husband has been praying for his wife for many years with no real change in sight. Another wife faithfully requests prayer for her husband. Sometimes he seems interested in spiritual things, and then his interest suddenly seems to disappear.

Where is God? Why doesn't he answer the fervent, heartfelt prayers of his people?

Of the many answers that might be given to that question, one answer must be that God's timing and ours are often quite different. Sometimes it seems like we live in one time zone and God lives in another.

## **3. Faith grows by believing God in spite of your circumstances.**

Sometimes our circumstances make it easy to believe in God; other times we have to struggle. As I write these words I have a friend who is entering the final stages of his battle with cancer. After long and difficult treatments, there is nothing else the doctors can do. He is one of the finest men I know; a man whose gentle spirit endears him to others. No one knows how much time he has left, but it seems to be a matter of a few days. The last time I talked with him, he spoke about the goodness of God. He added that he and his wife had had a long and happy life together and they knew that God would take care of them. His wife said simply, "No matter what happens we are trusting in the Lord." That's biblical faith rising above circumstances to lay hold of the eternal promises of God.

## **4. Faith obeys God one step at a time.**

This principle is often overlooked by those seeking to do God's will. God promised a child and Abraham desperately wanted to see the fulfillment of that promise. So what does God tell him to do? Round up the animals for a sacrifice (see Genesis 15:9-11). How do you get from there to the nursery? Abraham doesn't have a clue and God doesn't tell him a thing. But Abraham now has a choice. He can choose to obey God, round up the animals, and get ready for a sacrifice, even though it doesn't seem to connect with the son of his dreams. Or he can argue with God or decide to take matters in his own hands.

God weaves an unseen pattern that one day will lead us in a new direction.

How often we stumble over this. We slight the near in favor of the far, shirking the duties of today because we are dreaming about some distant tomorrow. But until we have done what God has called us to do today, we will never be prepared for what he wants us to do tomorrow.

In the end 99 percent of life turns out to be humdrum, ordinary routine. It's the same old thing day after day. Yet out of the humdrum God is weaving an unseen pattern that will one day lead us in a new direction. Faith take the next step- whatever it is-and walking with God wherever he leads us. Sometimes it will make sense, other times it won't. But we still have to take that step if we are going to do God's will.

## **Can God Be Trusted?**

Everything I've been trying to say comes down to one simple question: Can God be trusted to do what is right? If the answer is yes, then we can face the worst that life has to offer. If the answer is no, then we're no better off than the people who have no faith at all. In fact, if the answer is no or if we're not sure, then we really don't have any faith anyway.

I have chosen to believe because I must believe.

When my father died 38 years ago, I came face to face with the ultimate unanswerable question of life. I didn't know then why such a good man would have to die at the age of fifty-six or why he would leave my mother and her four sons without a husband and a father. I had no clue about what God was doing. In the years since then I have learned many things about life, but I confess that I still don't understand why my father died. It doesn't make any more sense to me now than it did then. I am older and wiser, but in the one question that really matters I have no answers. But I have learned since then that faith is a choice you make. Sometimes you choose to believe because of what you see; often you believe in spite of what you can see. As I look to the world around me, many things remain mysterious and unanswerable. But if there is no God, and if he is not good, then nothing at all makes sense. I have chosen to believe because I must believe. I truly have no other choice.

## **"But I Can Trust"**

Pioneer missionary J. Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission in 1865. During the terrible days of the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901), when missionaries were being captured and killed, he went through such agony of soul that he could not pray. Writing in his journal, he summarized his spiritual condition this way: "I can't read. I can't think. I can't pray. But I can trust."

There will be times when we can't read the Bible. Sometimes we won't be able to focus our thoughts on God at all. Often we will not even be able to pray. But in those moments when we can't do anything else, we can still trust in the loving purposes of our heavenly Father.

Fear not, child of God. No one knows what a day may bring. Who knows if we will all make it through this week? But our God is faithful to keep every one of his promises. Nothing can happen to us except it first passes through the hands of God. If your way is dark, keep on believing. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he cares for you. ([Genesis 15:1 Fear Not!](#))

---

**John Phillips** - The building of Abram's family was to be by spiritual power, not by the energy of the flesh, and spiritual power is inherent in the Word of God. First there was the pledge (Ge 15:1). "Fear not Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." "Never mind, Abram," God said, "you still have Me!" He had proved that already by sending Melchizedek to shield Abram from the snare of Sodom's king. "I am thy shield," He said. "Abram, are you worrying about the military situation? Remember, Melchizedek is a king and I am thy shield. Are you worrying about the monetary situation? the spoils of war you have nobly refused? Remember, Melchizedek is a priest and I am your reward. You cannot lose, Abram. You have a king to protect you and a priest

to pray for you, and above all you have Me." (BORROW [Exploring Genesis](#))

---

#### **James Smith - SALVATION OF THE LORD.**

"The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1).

This Salvation contains—

1. A REVELATION OF GRACE. "The word of the Lord came." The "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).
  2. A PROMISE OF SHELTER. "I am thy shield." A man shall be an hiding place.
  3. An ASSURANCE OF SUFFICIENCY. "I am thy exceeding great reward." "Whoso findeth Me findeth life" (Prov. 8:35).
  4. A WORD OF COMFORT. "Fear not." "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matt. 28:20). (Handfuls of Purpose)
- 

**W H Griffith-Thomas** - Times of spiritual reaction are not uncommon among the people of God. Elijah experienced a great reaction (1 Kings 19) after the eventful and critical day on Carmel (1 Kings 18) So it evidently was with Abraham. The new, remarkable, and in some respects exciting events connected with the rescue of Lot brought about the inevitable swing of the pendulum, as we can easily see in studying this chapter, which is closely connected with the preceding one.

179

**I. The Divine Revelation (Ge 15:1).—**There were nine successive manifestations of God to Abraham, of which this is the fifth. The phrase 'the word of the Lord came' is very noteworthy as occurring first in this passage. It is found frequently afterwards throughout the Old Testament. (Cf. Exod. 9:20; 1 Sam. 3:1.) The revelation seems to have been in the form of a vision, not a dream (Ge 15:5).

When did it come? 'After these things.' The reference is, of course, to the events of Ge xiv., and shows the direct and essential connection between the two chapters. God's revelations to His people are always intimately connected with their needs, as we see in this case.

Why did it come? 'Fear not, Abraham.' Then Abraham must have had some fear. What was this? Was it not a natural dejection after victory? May it not have been caused by inevitable physical, mental, and moral reaction after the strain involved in the recent events? Fear before battle is the characteristic of cowards; fear after battle is the mark of a hero. This is the first occurrence of the Divine 'Fear not' which is afterwards found so often as God's message to His weary and tried servants. Either 'Fear not,' or its equivalent 'Be not afraid,' occurs some eighty-four times in Holy Scripture. The silence of six centuries after Malachi was broken by the Divine 'Fear not' (Luke 1:13), and the announcement of the Incarnation was made in the same way (Luke 1:30).

What was it? 'I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.' How appropriate to the need of the moment was this twofold revelation of God to His servant!

(a) God as a shield against all foes. (Cf. Psalm 3:3; 18:2; 18:30; 84:9; 91:4.) (6) God as a reward after victory. Abraham had refused the spoil of Sodom and Gomorrah; but God would not allow Abraham to be a loser. He Himself would be His servant's 'exceeding great reward.' ([Genesis 15:1-6 The Great Encouragement](#))

---

#### **[THE BELIEVER'S REWARD BY THEODORE EPP](#) Genesis 15:1-6**

God assured Abraham that He was Abraham's "exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1).

The king of Sodom had offered Abraham all the riches that Abraham and his servants had brought back, but he turned them down. Notice that the tense is not past or future, but present. Not "I was" or "I will be" but "I am"—"I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (v. 1).

We see from God's promise to be Abraham's reward that God never permits His children to lose when they honor Him and seek His glory. God never leaves His child without spiritual blessings after His child has taken a stand for the glory of God.

Although Abraham had no children at this time, his faith in the Lord is recorded in verse 6: "He believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Because of Abraham's faith in God, he was able to look into the future and trust God for everything.

Ephesians 1:3 tells us that present-day believers have been blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

But we, too, must set our eyes on the future. We must be those who look to their reward for glorifying God, rather than looking at the temporal satisfactions of the present.

"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.... And in keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:9,11)

---

#### **Woodrow Kroll - Genesis 15:1 Fear Not - Fear is everywhere. Even people who appear brave, if they're honest, will admit to moments of immense fear.**

During World War II, a military governor met with Gen. George Patton in Sicily. When he highly praised Patton for his courage and bravery, the general replied, "Sir, I am not a brave man the truth is, I am a craven coward. I have never been within the sound of gunshot or in sight of battle in my whole life that I wasn't so scared that I had sweat in the palms of my hands." Patton's honesty is refreshing, but God offers the best solution for our fears. Abraham was just as human as you and I. Even though he had 318 trained soldiers in his personal army and had just won a major victory over four mighty kings (Gen. 14:13, 14, 15, 16, 17), he still experienced times of apprehension and dread. That's why God said, "Do not be afraid." God then told Abraham why he need not be afraid: "I am your shield [to protect you from evil], your exceedingly great reward [to meet all your needs]." Our fears fall into two broad categories. We fear that something will harm us or that we will suffer need in some way. God promises that He is sufficient for both of these concerns. The psalmist speaks of God's protection from evil when he says, "A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you" (Ps. 91:7 - Spurgeon's note). And in another psalm we are assured of God's provision: "The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Ps 34:10 - Spurgeon's note). What troubles you today? Put aside your fears and trust God. The God of Abraham is sufficient both to protect you and to provide for all your needs. Where God stands, fear falls. ([Back to the Bible](#))

- what (KJV): Ge 12:1-3
- childless (KJV): Ge 25:21 30:1,2 1Sa 1:11 Ps 127:3 Pr 13:12 Isa 56:5 Ac 7:5
- the (KJV): Ge 24:2,10 39:4-6,9 43:19 44:1 Pr 17:2
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:1-6](#) - Making God's Promises Yours - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:1-7](#) - S Lewis Johnson

## ABRAM AND SARAI STILL CHILDLESS

**Abram said, "O Lord GOD** - Lord is **Adonai** which means Lord, Master, Owner (See study of [Adonai - My Lord, My Master](#)). God is the Hebrew YHWH or Jehovah (see study of [Jehovah](#)) The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates Adonai in this verse with [despotes](#) which means one who possesses undisputed ownership and absolute, unrestricted authority, so that the Greeks refused the title to any but the gods. The **despotes** was one who has legal control and authority over persons, such as slaves.

**Mattoon** on Adonai - This is the first time we find the word Adonai in the Scriptures. It is translated by the word "Lord" in the name "Lord God" in verse two. In the Old Testament, it occurs about 300 times. Most of the time it appears in a plural form, not singular, thus, confirming the doctrine of the Trinity. When Adonai is used to describe a man, it is translated master, lord, or owner and is used in a singular form. When Adonai is used in reference to God, it is in a plural form. Adonai signifies mastership or ownership. It implies that God is our owner, creator, and master, and expects our obedience to Him. Abram was saying to the Lord that He was his master. He did this by yielding to the Lord, trusting Him completely, and obeying His commands. Is the Lord the master of your life? Have you surrendered all to Him? Is He your Adonai? If not, make Him your master today. God's Word says we belong to the Lord and should give ourselves to Him (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Romans 12:1). Moses, Gideon, and Jeremiah were other men who used this word (Ex. 4:10; Judges 6:15; Jeremiah 1:6). (Treasures from Genesis)

**RYRIE** - Abraham did not doubt God's promise or power to fulfill His covenant with him, though 10 years had passed without progeny. In referring to Eliezer (born in Abraham's house, Ge 15:3), Abraham is suggesting to the Lord that he be permitted to adopt Eliezer as his heir. Tablets that have been discovered show that it was customary for wealthy, childless couples to adopt a servant and make him their heir. But God assured Abraham he would have his own son (Ge 15:4).

Recall the previous divine promise passages that would have prompted Abraham's question...

Genesis 12:2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;

Genesis 13:16 "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.

**What will You give me, since I am childless** - In light of the previous promises of making him a "great nation" with "descendants as the dust of the earth," Abram knew that he must have an heir but as yet had none.

**Wiersbe** - One of the basic lessons in "the school of faith" is: God's will must be fulfilled in God's way and in God's time. God did not expect Abraham and Sarah to figure out how to have an heir; all He asked was that they be available so He could accomplish His purposes in and through them. What Abraham and Sarah did not realize was that God was waiting for them to be "as good as dead" so that God alone would receive the demonstrate His power and receive the glory. It is good to share your concerns with the Lord, even if what you say seems to evidence unbelief or impatience in your heart. God is not deaf to your questions or unconcerned about your feelings. He did not rebuke Abraham; instead, He gave him the assurances that he needed. "Casting all your cares (anxiety) upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Pe 5:7). ([Be Obedient](#))

**John Phillips** - "I go childless!" he said. Abram had yet to learn that fruit for God cannot be produced by natural means. At the same time, that godly man pointed to himself as the source of the problem. He did not blame God, or Sarai. He did not say, "Sarai is barren." He said, "I go childless." How easy it is to shift the blame for lack of spiritual fruit. (BORROW [Exploring Genesis](#))

**And the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus:** A common practice in contemporary Mesopotamian culture was for couples without an heir was to adopt a son. Abraham did not doubt God's promise or power to fulfill His covenant with him, though 10 years had passed without progeny. In referring to Eliezer (born in Abraham's house, v3), Abraham is suggesting to the Lord that he be permitted to adopt Eliezer as his heir. Tablets that have been discovered show that it was customary for wealthy, childless couples to adopt a servant and make him their heir. If the man later had a child, then the natural child would replace the adopted son as the principal heir. Similar laws were part of the legal codes of the Near East, including the famed Code of Hammurabi of Babylon.

Later we learn that Abram had six sons by a concubine named Keturah (Ge 25:1-6) but that must have occurred after the events of this chapter.

---

**W H Griffith-Thomas - II. The Human Response (Ge 15:2-3).**—Notice his despondent inquiry. 'What wilt Thou give me?' It is evident from this inquiry how overstrained Abraham was. The long waiting and the spiritual loneliness had been making their mark, and now he almost complains as he asks what reward there can be for him. Mark his disappointed hope. 'Seeing I go childless.' Ten years had elapsed since his entrance into Canaan, and, in spite of the promise of a seed, there was no sign of fulfilment. Sarah and he were so much older, and everything seemed against even the possibility of the realisation of God's promises. Observe his discouraging prospect. 'One born in my house is mine heir.' Abraham seems to have almost lost hope, and was settling down to the conviction that, after all, his steward would be his heir. ([Genesis 15:1-6 The Great Encouragement](#))

---

**Woodrow Kroll - Genesis 15:2-3 I Wonder - Henry Drummond, a 19th-century Scottish evangelist, observed,**

"Christ never failed to distinguish between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is can't believe; unbelief is won't believe. Doubt is honesty; unbelief is obstinacy. Doubt is looking for light; unbelief is being content with darkness."

When God promised to bless him (Ge 15:1), Abraham responded, "How are you going to do it?" This was not a lack of faith, because Abraham believed God was going to keep His promise; he simply didn't understand how God would do it. Since "blessings" were always believed to come through children (Ps. 127:3, 4, 5 - - [Spurgeon's note v3](#); [note v4](#); [note v5](#)), and Abraham had none (nor from a human perspective did it look like he would have any), he inquired as to how God was going to do it. God honored that question and told him, "One who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Abraham was satisfied. The case was closed. It's not wrong to ask questions about God's plan; it's only wrong to question the rightness of God's plan. There's a subtle but important difference here. It's only natural for people to want to know, "God, how do You plan to pull this off?" In essence Abraham said, "I'm to be the father of a great nation, and yet I have no children. I know You can do it, Lord. But I'd sure like to know how." If you're wondering how God will work His will and His way in your life, it's perfectly legitimate to ask. But always ask in faith. Feel free to question how God is going to work out His plan, but never question His ability to work out that plan. The first is inquiring faith; the second is irreverent unbelief. Doubt asks how; unbelief asks why. ([Back to the Bible](#))

#### Genesis 15:3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

- Behold (KJV): Ge 12:2 13:16 Pr 13:12 Jer 12:1 Heb 10:35,36
- born (KJV): Ge 14:14 Pr 29:21 30:23 Ec 2:7
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:1-6](#) - Making God's Promises Yours - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:1-7](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**AND ABRAM SAID SINCE THOU HAST GIVEN NO OFFSPRING** (seed, descendants Ge 3:15; 15:5, 13, 18 Gal 3:16).

**Offspring - zera** ([see below](#)) - masculine singular - seed. Recall that zera' in Ge 3:15 has enormous implications. It is masculine singular "Seed" = Messiah . Cp "Seed" in Ge 22:18 (Ga 3:16) This first announcement of the Gospel (cp Ga 3:8) was enlarged with the Abrahamic covenant (Ge 12:7), made more specific in David's lineage (2 Sa 7:12; 22:51; Ps 18:50; 89:4, 29, 36) and finally realized in Jesus Christ (Ga 3:16) Ro 16:20.

The most important theological usage of zera is Ge 3:15, the word "seed" is regularly used as a collective noun in the singular (never plural). This technical term is an important aspect of the promise doctrine, for Hebrew never uses the plural of this root to refer to "posterity" or "offspring." The Aramaic targums pluralize the term occasionally, e.g. the Targum of Ge 4:10, but the Aramaic also limits itself to the singular in the passages dealing with the promised line. Thus the word designates the whole line of descendants as a unit, yet it is deliberately flexible enough to denote either one person who epitomizes the whole group (i.e. the man of promise and ultimately Christ), or the many persons in that whole line of natural and/or spiritual descendants.

**TO ME ONE BORN IN MY HOUSE IS MY HEIR** Abe did what we all do when the fulfillment of a promise of God is not evident immediately or in the way we had wanted. We devise ways to help God fulfill His promise.

**Spurgeon** - Perhaps he did not doubt the promise, but he wanted to have it explained to him. He may have wondered if it meant that one born in his house, though not his son, was to be his heir; and that, through him, the blessing would come. He takes the opportunity of making an enquiry, that he may know how to act. At the same time, there does seem to be a clashing between Abraham's question, "What wilt thou give me?" and the declaration of God, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." There is a great descent from the language of the Lord to that of the most stable believer, and when you and I are even at our best, I have no doubt that, if all could be recorded that we think and say, some of our fellow-believers would feel that the best of men are but men at the best, and that God's language is after a nobler fashion than ours will ever be, till we have seen his face in glory.

**Offspring/descendants** ([02233](#))(**zera** from **zara** = to sow, scatter seed) means a sowing, seed, offspring. The first use in the Bible refers to literal seed (Ge 1:11, 29). In Ge 3:15-note "**seed**" refers to the offspring of the devil and the offspring of the woman. Seed meaning descendants is common in Genesis (Ge 4:25, 9:9, 12:7, etc) and especially in the context of covenant (see notes below).

**Zera** is translated in NAS as - carnally\*(1), child(1), children(3), descendant(3), descendants(105), descent(1), family(6), fertile(1), grain(3), intercourse\*(2), line(1), nation(1), offspring(38), offspring's offspring(1), origin(1), posterity(1), race(1), seed(48), seedtime(1), seminal(4), seminal\*(1), son\*(1), time(1), what you sow(1).

**Baker on Zera** - ([Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT](#))

- A masculine noun meaning sowing, seed, descendants, offspring, children, and posterity. The literal use of the word indicates seed of the field (i.e., seed planted in the field). When Israel entered Egypt, Joseph instructed the Israelites to keep four-fifths of the crop as seed to plant in their fields and to serve as food for them (Gen. 47:24); the season for planting seed was guaranteed by God to continue without fail (Gen. 8:22); and successful, abundant harvests were promised right up until the sowing season if Israel followed the Lord's laws and commands (Lev. 26:5). God had created the seed of the field by decreeing that plants and trees would be self-perpetuating, producing their own seed (Gen. 1:11) and that the seed-producing plants would be edible (Gen. 1:29). Manna, the heavenly food, resembled coriander seed (Ex. 16:31). Any seed could be rendered unclean and not usable if a dead body fell on it after the seed had been moistened (Lev. 11:38).
- The noun is used to describe the seed (i.e., the offspring) of both people and animals. The seed of Judah and Israel would be united and planted peacefully in the land together with animals in a pleasant setting (Jer. 31:27).
- Seed can be translated as son (i.e., seed as when God gives Hannah a promise of a son [1 Sam. 1:11]).
- The seed of a woman mentioned in Genesis 3:15 is her offspring.
- The offspring of humans is described many times by this word. Hannah was given additional children to replace Samuel, whom she gave to the Lord's service (1 Sam. 2:20).
- The most important seed that the author of Genesis describes is the seed of Abraham, the promised seed, referring to Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons (Gen. 12:7; 15:3). The author of Genesis uses the word twenty-one times in this setting (Ex. 32:13; Dt. 1:8).



- The seed of the royal line of David was crucial to Israel's existence, and the term is used nine times to refer to David's offspring or descendants (2 Sam. 7:12).
- In a figurative sense, seed refers to King Zedekiah and perhaps to Israelites of royal lineage, whom Nebuchadnezzar established in Jerusalem (Ezek. 17:5). Royal lines or seed were found outside Israel, such as in Edom, where Hadad belonged to the royal line (1 Kgs. 11:14), and in Judah, where the wicked Athaliah attempted to destroy the royal seed (2 Kgs. 11:1; 25:25; Jer. 41:1).
- The seed or offspring of a particular nation can be characterized in moral and religious terms as well. Three verses stand out: The seed of Israel was called a holy seed (Ezra 9:2; Isa. 6:13); and, in the case of Ezra 9:2, the seed corrupted itself by mixing with the peoples around them.
- The seed of Israel is a seed of God or a divine seed (Mal. 2:15) through its union with God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4).
- An offspring could be described as deceitful and wicked (Ps. 37:28; Isa. 57:4).
- It was important in Israel to prove that one's origin or seed stemmed from an Israelite ancestor, for some Israelites and Israelite priests who returned from exile could not show their origin (Ezra 2:59).
- The word also refers to the seed or posterity of the Messiah (Isa. 53:10).

Zera has four basic semantic categories:

1. The time of sowing, seedtime;
2. the seed as that which is scattered or as the product of what is sown;
3. the seed as semen and
4. the Seed as the offspring in the promised line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or in other groups separate from this people of promise.

**The primary meaning comes from the realm of agriculture. Seedtime or sowing**, as over against the time of harvest, will recur according to a promised pattern which God guaranteed to Noah after the flood (Gen 8:22; cf. Lev 26:5). This sowing or planting takes place in the fields (Ezk 17:5) and thereby accords well with the Akkadian *zēru* "cultivated land." The seed itself which is planted in these fields has the same name (Gen 47:19, 23; Lev 11:37–38; Num 24:7; Deut 28:38; Isa 55:10; Amos 9:13). The product produced has the same designation (e.g. the seed of the herbs and trees in Gen 1:11–12, 29 or the seed that is gathered into the barn in Job 39:12; cf. Deut 14:22; Isa 23:3). Thus, the whole agricultural cycle is practically summed up in the word *zera'*; from the act of sowing to the seed planted, to the harvest taken. *zera'* is used figuratively in referring to Judah's idolatry (Isa 17:11). They are planting "pleasant plants" along with "strange slips." This refers either to the Ugaritic *n'mn* of the Tammuz-Adonis cult or to the folly of planting thorns and thistles and expecting a crop of flowers or vegetables.

***zera'* refers to semen** in Num 5:28, "she shall be made pregnant with seed." Frequently it occurs in the expression "flow of semen" (Lev 15:16, 15:32, 22:4). It is also used as the accusative of mode and translated euphemistically as "lying carnally with a woman" (Lev 15:18; 18:20; Num 5:13). Note the same use in the promise of Jer 31:27. The Lord will sow the houses of Israel and Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast in the latter days.

**The most important theological usage is found in the fourth category.** Commencing with Gen 3:15, the word "seed" is regularly used as a collective noun in the singular (never plural). This technical term is an important aspect of the promise doctrine, for Hebrew never uses the plural of this root to refer to "posterity" or "offspring." The Aramaic targums pluralize the term occasionally, e.g. the Targum of Gen 4:10, but the Aramaic also limits itself to the singular in the passages dealing with the promised line. Thus the word designates the whole line of descendants as a unit, yet it is deliberately flexible enough to denote either one person who epitomizes the whole group (i.e. the man of promise and ultimately Christ - **Ed**: see Gal 3:16-note), or the many persons in that whole line of natural and/or spiritual descendants. Precisely so in Gen 3:15. One such seed is the line of the woman as contrasted with the opposing seed which is the line of Satan's followers. And then surprisingly the text announces a male descendant who will ultimately win a crushing victory over Satan himself. **This promise to Eve was enlarged and made more specific in the Abrahamic Covenant.** God would grant a land and a numerous offspring through Abraham's son Isaac and his offspring: Gen 12:7; 13:15–16; 15:13, 18; 16:10; 17:7–10, 12, 19; 22:17–18; 24:7; 26:3–4, 24; 28:4, 13–14; 32:13; 35:12; 48:4. This whole line builds and the promise continues in Ex 32:13; 33:1; Deut 1:8; 11:9; 34:4; Josh 24:3. The same can be said for David and his offspring. The promise is continued in 2 Sam 7:12; made parallel to the term "Messiah" in Ps 18:50 [H 5] (see 2 Sam 22:51); and repeated in Ethan's commentary on the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam 7 in Ps 89:4, 29, 36 [H 5, 30, 37]. This corporate solidarity found in the seed of Eve, Abraham, and David receives theological comment in Isa 41:8; 43:5; 44:3; 45:19, 25; 48:19; 53:10; 54:3; 59:21; 61:9; 65:9; 66:22; Jer 31:36–37; 33:26; II Chr 20:7. ([TWOT](#))

**Zera** - 204 uses -

Gen. 1:11f, 29; 3:15; 4:25; 7:3; 8:22; 9:9; 12:7; 13:15f; 15:3, 5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7ff, 12, 19; 19:32, 34; 21:12f; 22:17f; 24:7, 60; 26:3f, 24; 28:4, 13f; 32:12; 35:12; 38:8f; 46:6f; 47:19, 23f; 48:4, 11, 19; Ex. 16:31; 28:43; 30:21; 32:13; 33:1; Lev. 11:37f; 15:16ff, 32; 18:20f; 19:20; 20:2ff; 21:15, 17, 21; 22:3f, 13; 26:5, 16; 27:16, 30; Nu 5:13, 28; 11:7; 14:24; 16:40; 18:19; 20:5; 24:7; 25:13; Dt. 1:8; 4:37; 10:15; 11:9f; 14:22; 22:9; 28:38, 46, 59; 30:6, 19; 31:21; 34:4;

Jos. 24:3; Ruth 4:12; 1 Sa 1:11; 2:20; 8:15; 20:42; 24:21; 2 Sam. 4:8; 7:12; 22:51; 1 Ki. 2:33; 11:14, 39; 18:32; 2 Ki. 5:27; 11:1; 17:20; 25:25; 1 Chr. 16:13; 17:11; 2 Chr. 20:7; 22:10; Ezr. 2:59; 9:2; Neh. 7:61; 9:2, 8; Est. 6:13; 9:27f, 31; 10:3;

Job 5:25; 21:8; 39:12; Ps. 18:50; 21:10; 22:23, 30; 25:13; 37:25f, 28; 69:36; 89:4, 29, 36; 102:28; 105:6; 106:27; 112:2; 126:6; Prov. 11:21; Eccl. 11:6;

Isa. 1:4; 5:10; 6:13; 14:20; 17:11; 23:3; 30:23; 41:8; 43:5; 45:19, 25; 48:19; 53:10; 54:3; 55:10; 57:3f; 59:21; 61:9; 65:9, 23; 66:22; Jer. 2:21; 7:15; 22:28, 30; 23:8; 29:32; 30:10; 31:27, 36f; 33:22, 26; 35:7, 9; 36:31; 41:1; 46:27; 49:10; Ezek. 17:5, 13; 20:5; 43:19; 44:22; Dan. 1:3; 9:1; Amos 9:13; Hag. 2:19; Zech. 8:12; Mal. 2:3, 15



**Sow seed** (verb) ([02232](#))(zara) means literally to scatter seed, to sow, to bear seed. Zara is used figuratively of sowing the wind in Hosea 8:7.

#### TWOT on zara -

**Literally**, zāraʿ refers to the action of sowing seed in the fields (Gen 26:12; Isa 37:30). It is used with the accusative of the type of seed sown, e.g. sowing wheat (Jer 12:13), or with the accusative of the field sown (Ex 23:10; Lev 25:3). Occasionally, it is also followed by the double accusative of both seed and field (e.g. Lev 19:19; Deut 22:9, “You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed”). In this prohibition, a reference is made, no doubt, to the Canaanite ritual inducing fertility. Finally, this verb is also used of sowing salt in a captured city (Jud 9:45).

**Metaphorically**, the action denotes the Lord’s sowing (planting or establishing) Israel in the land of Palestine in a future day (Hos 2:25) or of his confession that though he has scattered (i.e. sown) Israel among the countries of the earth, he will also gather them one day in the future (Zech 10:9).

**Zāraʿ is also used figuratively in connection with moral actions:** to sow justice (Prov 11:18), righteousness (Hos 10:12), light, i.e. happiness (Ps 97:11), wickedness (Prov 22:8), trouble (Job 4:8), and wind (Hos 8:7). In Isa 17:10 the verb depicts Israel as practicing idolatry by sowing plants or slips to an alien god, while in Ps 126:5 it is a figure of the grief of hard work followed by joyous results. It can also refer to reigns of kings and princes under the figure of trees (Isa 40:24). Finally, in the Niphal it refers to a woman being made pregnant (Num 5:28) or bearing a child (Hiphil Lev 12:2). (TWOT)

**Vine** - zaraʿ (2232, זָרַע), “to sow, scatter seed, make pregnant.”

It occurs first in Gen. 1:29 in the summary of the blessings of creation which God has given to mankind. In an agricultural society such as ancient Israel, zaraʿ would be most important and very commonly used, especially to describe the annual sowing of crops (Jdg. 6:3; Gen. 26:12). **Used in the figurative sense**, it is said that Yahweh “will sow” Israel in the land (Hos. 2:23); in the latter days, Yahweh promises: “I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast” (Jer. 31:27). Of great continuing comfort are the words, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Ps. 126:5). The universal law of the harvest, sowing and reaping, applies to all areas of life and experience.

A good example of the need for free translation of the inherent meaning rather than a strictly literal rendering involves zaraʿ, in both its verb and noun forms. This is found in Num. 5, which describes the law of trial by ordeal in the case of a wife accused of infidelity. If she was found innocent, it was declared: “... She shall be free, and shall conceive [zara] seed [zeraʿ]” (Num. 5:28). This phrase is literally: “She shall be acquitted and shall be seeded seed,” or “She shall be made pregnant with seed.” An Old Testament name, Jezreel, has been connected with this root. Jezreel (“God sows”) refers both to a city and valley near Mt. Gilboa (Josh. 17:16; 2 Sam. 2:9) and to the symbolically named son of Hosea (Hos. 1:4).

**Zara** is translated in the NAS - conceive(1), gives birth(1), perpetuated(1), plant seed(1), scatter(1), set(1), sow(28), sowed(2), sower(2), sowing(2), sown(10), sows(2), unsown\*(1), yielding(4).

**Zara** - 55v - Gen. 1:11f, 29; 26:12; 47:23; Exod. 23:10, 16; Lev. 11:37; 12:2; 19:19; 25:3f, 11, 20, 22; 26:5, 16; Num. 5:28; Deut. 11:10; 21:4; 22:9; 29:23; Jdg. 6:3; 9:45; 2 Ki. 19:29; Job 4:8; 31:8; Ps. 97:11; 107:37; 126:5; Prov. 11:18; 22:8; Eccl. 11:4, 6; Isa. 17:10; 28:24; 30:23; 32:20; 37:30; 40:24; 55:10; Jer. 2:2; 4:3; 12:13; 31:27; 35:7; 50:16; Ezek. 36:9; Hos. 2:23; 8:7; 10:12; Mic. 6:15; Nah. 1:14; Hag. 1:6; Zech. 10:9

---

#### Rod Mattoon - WORD'S OF GREAT PROMISE—Genesis 15:4, 5

Abram asked his question and God gives His reply. Abram will have a son from his own bowels. God was making His promise and He does keep His word. Look to the sky and see the stars Abram. Your seed will be as countless as the stars. What an awesome revelation to a man who had no children at all! Our God is amazing, isn't He! The Bible gives us several insights about the promises of God.

- They are **Certain**—1 Kings 8:56
  - They are **Completed** by God's ability—2 Cor 1:20
  - They are **Confident** in Christ—2 Cor. 1:20
  - They are **Cherished**—2 Peter 1:4
  - They **Climax** in everlasting life—1 John 2:25
  - They are **Confirmed** by Christ—Romans 15:8
  - They are **Centered** in Christ—2 Tim. 1:1
  - They are **Countless** and great—2 Peter 1:4
  - They are not **Crawling** or slow—2 Peter 3:4-13
- Mattoon's Treasures from Genesis.

**Genesis 15:4** Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."

- shall come (KJV): Ge 17:16 21:12 2Sa 7:12 16:11 2Ch 32:21 Phm 1:12
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:1-6](#) - Making God's Promises Yours - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:1-7](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**Spurgeon** -Now was his faith tried indeed, he had no child, he was himself old, and his wife also was old, yet the Lord's promise was, "So shall thy seed be" as the stars of heaven. Could he believe it? He did.

**The word of the LORD came** - The second time in Genesis 15 and revealed to His servant, His divine plan. As David Livingstone used to say, "It is the word of a Gentleman (God) of the strictest and most sacred honor, and that's an end of it!"

**Wiersbe** - God made it clear that Abraham alone would be the father of the future heir. Heirship depends on sonship (Rom. 8:14–17). Then God dramatically assured Abraham that this one heir would be the father of so many descendants that nobody would be able to count them. Even when life is dark, you can still see the stars. Someone has well said, "When the outlook is bleak, try the uplook." Abraham had been looking around, trying to solve his problem; but the answer lay in looking up. (Ibid)

**W H Griffith-Thomas** -III. The Divine Assurance (Ge 15:4, 5).—Now we shall see how God dealt lovingly and faithfully with His tried and troubled servant. His faithlessness was corrected. 'This shall not be thine heir.' God had not forgotten to be gracious. He was still mindful of His promises (Gen. 12:7, and Ge 13:16).

His faith was instructed. 'He that shall come... shall be thine heir.' Thus God particularised in a way that had not been done previously in connection with the promise, and taught His servant, by giving him new ground for trust.

His faith was encouraged. 'Tell the stars... so shall thy seed be.' Abraham was bidden to look toward heaven, and in so doing he would doubtless realise something of the wide sweep of God's purposes for him and his seed. Notice the three metaphors connected with Abraham's seed: 'The dust of the earth' (Gen. 13:16); 'the stars of heaven' (Gen. 15:5); 'the sand of the seashore' (Gen. 22:17). ([Genesis 15:1-6 The Great Encouragement](#))

**Genesis 15:5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."**

- tell (KJV): De 1:10 Ps 147:4 Jer 33:22 Ro 9:7,8
- So (KJV): Ge 12:2 13:16 16:10 22:17 28:14 Ex 32:13 De 1:10 Dt 10:22 1Ch 27:23 Ro 4:18 Heb 11:12
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:1-6](#) - Making God's Promises Yours - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:1-7](#) - S Lewis Johnson

Septuagint - exegagen (3SAAL: lead out Mk15:20) de auton exo kai eipen (3SAAL) auto anablepson (2SAAM) de eis ton ouranon kai arithmeson (2SAAM:arithmeo =count Mt10:30) tous asteras ei dunese (2SFMI) exarithmesai (AAN) autous kai eipen (3SAAL) houtos estai (3SFMI) to sperma sou

Click to enlarge

**AND HE TOOK HIM OUTSIDE:** See the woodcut above by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*.

**AND SAID NOW LOOK TOWARD THE HEAVENS:** Someone has well said, "When the outlook is bleak, try the uplook." Abraham had been looking around, trying to solve his problem; but the answer lay in looking up. Whether Abraham looked down at the dust (Ge13:16) or up at the stars (15:5), he would recall God's promise and have confidence.

God did not say that Abraham would have that many descendants but that, like the stars, there would be too many to count. Whether Abraham looked down at the dust (Ge 13:14) or up at the stars (Ge15:5), he would recall God's promise and have confidence. This promise was repeated to Abraham (22:17) and reaffirmed to Isaac (Ge 26:4).

Then God dramatically assured Abraham that this one heir would be the father of so many descendants that nobody would be able to count them. Even when life is dark, you can still see the stars. Someone has well said, "When the outlook is bleak, try the uplook." Abraham had been looking around, trying to solve his problem; but the answer lay in looking up.

**AND COUNT THE STARS** (Ge 22:17 26:4 Ex32:13): Qal Imp: More than 8,000 stars are clearly visible in the darkness of a Near Eastern night. Only God can count the stars (Ps 147:4 Isa 40:26).

**John Phillips** - Men used to think they could count the stars. We now know they are innumerable. Sir James Jeans has said that there are more stars in space than there are grains of sand on all the seashores of all the world. God's promise to Abram was one to stagger the imagination. Yet it was not impossible. A God who can create galaxies and nebulae and countless worlds can certainly give Abram a countless seed. (BORROW [Exploring Genesis](#))

**Stars** - According to recent findings, the number of stars in the universe totals approximately 10 to the 23rd power (a number that also approximates the sum of the grains of sand on the seashores). (The Finger of God, Hugh Ross, Promise Pub., 1991, p. 153)

**IF YOU ARE ABLE TO COUNT THEM:** CAPHAR: About 30,000 stars are listed in the General Catalog used by astronomers, but it is estimated that there are 100 billion more! God did not say that Abraham would have that many descendants but that, like the stars, there would be too many to count.

**AND HE SAID TO HIM SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE:** **Descendants** translates the Hebrew word **zera** for **seed** which is the 2nd person masculine singular cp [Ga 3:16] This word is used to refer to the **coming Messiah** (Nu 24:7 Isa 6:13).

**Wiersbe** - The answer to Abraham's fear was God's presence—I AM. The answer to Abraham's concern about his heir was God's promise—I WILL.

Paul identifies this **masculine singular Seed** in Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his **seed**. He does not say, "And to **seeds**," as referring to many, but rather to **one**, "And to your **seed**," **that is, Christ**.

Paul also quotes this in Romans 4:18

In hope against hope he (Abraham) believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

The write of Hebrews also quotes Hebrews 11:12 (an allusion to Ge 22:17 which goes back to Ge 15:5)

Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.

In Genesis 13:16 God had promised "descendants as the dust of the earth" and here in Ge 15:5 as numerous as the stars. This promise is repeated

Ge 16:10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."

Ge 22:17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Ge 28:14 "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

---

## You Can Depend On Him

Read: Genesis 15:1-6 | Bible in a Year: Genesis 13-15; Matthew 5:1-26

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. —1 John 5:9

Prince Albert of England once visited the laboratory of a scientist named Lyon Playfair. According to Playfair's biographer Sir Wemyss Reid, as the prince and the scientist stood near a caldron of boiling lead, Playfair asked, "Has your royal highness any faith in science?"

"Certainly," answered Prince Albert. Playfair washed the prince's hand in a special solution and then told him to use his hand to ladle out some of the hot metal. The prince plunged his hand into the caldron and scooped up some in his palm—and he wasn't injured.

If Prince Albert could place that kind of faith in a respected scientist, how much more may we trust God's Word! Abraham trusted God's promise to make of him a great nation even though he and his wife were very old (Gen. 15:5-6; Heb. 11:8-12). He set an example we would be wise to follow. "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20).

It is not always wise to trust in the assurances made by fallible human beings. But surely we can put our confidence in the teachings, promises, and warnings of the truly dependable One.

God's promises have no expiration date.

By Vernon C. Grounds

## Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

- he believed (KJV): Ro 4:3-6,9,20-25 Ga 3:6-14 Heb 11:8-[note](#) Jas 2:23-[note](#)
- he counted (KJV): Ps 106:31 Ro 4:11,22 2Co 5:19 Ga 3:6-[note](#)
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:1-6](#) - Making God's Promises Yours - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:6](#) - Justification by Faith Alone - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:1-7](#) - S Lewis Johnson

Greek (Septuagint) kai episteusen (3SAAI: [pisteuo](#), James 2:23-[note](#) Ro 4:3-[note](#)) Abram to theo kai elogisthe (3SAPI: Ro 4:3 = reckoned = [logizomai](#); see Ps 32:2 = "impute") auto eis dikaiosunen ([dikaosune](#))

BBE And he had faith in the Lord, and it was put to his account as righteousness.

ESV And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

HCSB Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness.

KJV And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

NET Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD considered his response of faith as proof of genuine loyalty.

NIV Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

NLT And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

Wiersbe And he said AMEN to the Lord, and He put it to his account for righteousness"

YLT And he hath believed in Jehovah, and He reckoneth it to him -- righteousness.

## THE DAY OF ABRAHAM'S SALVATION

**AN APPLICATION AT THE BEGINNING** - If you have Jewish friends that you would love to see enter the Kingdom of Heaven, then let me encourage you to

memorize this passage in Genesis. Why do I say that? First, because it is the passage Paul appealed to most strongly in his defense of the doctrine that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Gal 3:6-note, Romans 4:3-note). James also appealed to this passage in his exposition of a faith that saves (James 2:23-note). Secondly, the timing of Abraham's salvation in Genesis 15 preceded the command to be circumcised, leaving not one iota of doubt that the great "father Abraham" was saved by faith alone in the Gospel of Christ alone (see Gal 3:8-note, Gal 3:16-note) and not by circumcision or works of the Law. The circumcision that was commanded by God in Ge 17:9,10, 11 was not until many years later (some have slightly different ages but this could be as long as 14 years later -- Ge 16:16 = 86 yo, Ge 17:1 = 90 yo). The logic of such a Scriptural presentation to a Jewish friend is "airtight" and simply cannot be refuted if one accepts the simple, literal meaning of God's Word. So take time to memorize this passage and make a mental note that Genesis 15 (justification) precedes Genesis 17 (circumcision). And then pray for an opportunity to share this truth with the Jewish friend you dearly love! God had never intended for the physical act of circumcision to be an "end" in itself, but this is exactly what the Jews did with this command. They made it a "prerequisite" for salvation. They did what so many have done with God's Word over the years, focusing on the "letter" of the Law and missing the "spirit" of the law. God is primarily concerned about what men are like on the inside not the outside. He has always desired internal (heart) change over external (works). A good outward act is validated before God only when it honestly represents what is on the inside. (Cp Jer 17:10, Rev 2:23). Right external behavior only pleases Him when it corresponds to right internal attitudes and motives (cp 1 Co 4:4,5).

Let's reiterate what the NT says about salvation, because there is often a question about how someone was saved in the Old Testament. Paul makes this very clear...

Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Gal 3:6-note)

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham**, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (Gal 3:8-note)

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his **seed**. He does not say, "And to **seeds**," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your **seed**," that is, Christ. (Gal 3:16-note)

**THEN:** There are only five words in the Hebrew original of Ge 15:6, but what a wealth of meaning they contain. The verse is quoted three times in the New Testament: Gal 3:6-note; Ro 4:3-note; and James 2:23-note. The three key words are believe, counted, and righteousness. Take time to read Ga 3, Ro 4, and Ja 2; and you will see how Abraham illustrates salvation by faith. It takes three NT chapters to unfold one verse!

**Warren Wiersbe** - Promises do us no good unless we believe them and act on them. Abraham had already trusted God's promise (Ge 12:1-3) and proved it by leaving home and going to Canaan (Heb. 11:8-note - see devotional "[A Leap of Faith](#)"). But Genesis 15:6 is the first reference in the Bible to Abraham's faith. It is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament; and for this reason, the New Testament writers use it to illustrate salvation by faith.

Abraham believed God, which is literally, "Abraham said, 'Amen, God!'" The Hebrew word translated "believed" means "to lean your whole weight upon." Abraham leaned wholly on the promise of God and the God of the promise. We are not saved by making promises to God but by believing the promises of God. In the Gospel of John, which was written to tell people how to be saved (Jn 20:31), the word "believe" is used nearly 100 times. Salvation is the gracious gift of God, and it is received by faith (Ep 2:8-9).

The answer to Abraham's fear was God's presence—I AM.

The answer to Abraham's concern about his heir was God's promise—I WILL.

**HE BELIEVED IN THE LORD:** AMAN: Hiphil (causative) perf = be firm or sure; lean on God; trust His word. At heart of meaning of root = idea of certainty. Faith is not a blind leap but is a confident commitment to One about Whom abundant evidence bears ample testimony. Abram was regenerated by faith in the "good news" God had given him (cp Ga 3:8-note). Faith is far more than mere hope that something unlikely may happen. It is a deep, internal certainty, rooted in our trust of what God has said.

**John Phillips** makes an good point - "We should note that Abram was counted righteous, not when he believed the promise that took him out of **Ur of the Chaldees**, but when he believed the promise regarding the Seed. For, in all ages, salvation ultimately comes to rest in the person of Christ. He is the Seed. It is not mere faith that saves-but faith in Christ." (BORROW [Exploring Genesis](#))

Here are parallel NT passages

Romans 4:3-note For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Romans 4:9 Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Romans 4:20-25 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. 22 Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED ([logizomai](#)) TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 23 Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned ([logizomai](#)) to him, 24 but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned ([logizomai](#)), as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

James 2:23-note and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED ([logizomai](#)) TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

Galatians 3:6-note Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED ([logizomai](#)) TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Hebrews 11:8-note By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Abraham had already trusted God's promise (Genesis 12:1-3) and proved it by leaving home and going to Canaan (Heb 11:8-note). But Ge 15:6 is the first reference in the Bible to Abraham's faith. It is the Jn 3:16 of the OT; and for this reason, the NT writers use it to

illustrate salvation by faith.

**Believed** (0539)(**aman**) is a verb which conveys the basic idea of providing stability and confidence. To be steady, firm and thus trustworthy. Aman speaks of certainty and thus can mean to confirm or to affirm. At the heart of the meaning of the root is the idea of certainty. And this is borne out by the nt definition of faith found in Heb 11:1. The basic root idea is firmness or certainty. The derivatives reflect the concept of certainty & dependability.

**AMAN** expresses the basic concept of support and used in sense of strong arms of parent supporting the helpless infant. The root meaning of the verb conveys the idea of "making firm" or "establishing" something. As is often the case, the verb here occurs with the preposition "in" indicating the person in whom someone locates his steadfastness. In context, the phrase means essentially that Abraham "made himself steadfast or secure in Yahveh." See derivative word **omnah** for literal picture of support [2 Ki 18:16] **DOORPOSTS** (KJV = **PILLARS** = **OMNAH** = active participle of **AMAN**) which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria. where it refers to pillars of support.

**Baker** - The primary meaning is that of providing stability and confidence, like a baby would find in the arms of a parent. It is used to signify support of a pillar (2 Kgs. 18:16); nurture and nourishment (Num. 11:12; Ruth 4:16; thus, a nurse, 2 Sam. 4:4); cradling in one's arms (Isa. 60:4); a house firmly founded (1 Sam. 2:35; 25:28); a secure nail that finds a solid place to grip (Isa. 22:23); a lasting permanence (Ps. 89:28[29]; with negative particle, Jer. 15:18). Metaphorically, the word conveys the notion of faithfulness and trustworthiness, such that one could fully depend on (Deut. 7:9; Job 12:20; Ps 19:7["The testimony of the LORD is sure"]; Isa. 55:3 ["the faithful mercies shown to David"]; Mic. 7:5KJV ["Trust ye not in a friend"]). Therefore, the word can also signify certitude or assurance (Deut. 28:66; Job 24:22; Hos. 5:9) and belief, in the sense of receiving something as true and sure (Gen. 15:6; Ex. 4:5; 2 Chr. 20:20; Ps. 78:22; Isa. 53:1; Jon. 3:5). (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT)

In the Hiphil (causative), it basically means "to cause to be certain, sure" or "to be certain about," "to be assured." In this sense the word in the Hiphil conjugation is the biblical word for "to believe" and shows that biblical faith is an assurance, a certainty, in contrast with modern concepts of faith as something possible, hopefully true, but not certain. SEE Ps 19:7 for detail.

**NET Note** - 'aman means "to confirm, to support" in the Qal verbal stem. Its derivative nouns refer to something or someone that/who provides support, such as a "pillar," "nurse," or "guardian, trustee." In the Niphal stem it comes to mean "to be faithful, to be reliable, to be dependable," or "to be firm, to be sure." In the Hiphil, the form used here, it takes on a declarative sense: "to consider something reliable [or "dependable"]." Abram regarded the God who made this promise as reliable and fully capable of making it a reality.

**Warren Wiersbe** - Abraham believed God, which is literally, "Abraham said, 'Amen, God!' " The Hebrew word translated "believed" means "to lean your whole weight upon." Abraham leaned wholly on the promise of God and the God of the promise. We are not saved by making promises to God but by believing the promises of God. In the Gospel of John, which was written to tell people how to be saved (John 20:31), the word "believe" is used nearly 100 times. Salvation is the gracious gift of God, and it is received by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). (Be Obedient, page 48)

**Kenneth Wuest** explains Abraham's faith - "It was the act of Abraham placing himself in such an attitude of trust in and acceptance of God's blessings that made it possible for God to bestow righteousness upon him. It is like the proffered hand of a drowning man that makes it possible for the life guard to save him. There is nothing meritorious in the act of a drowning man in stretching out his hand in order to be saved. It is the efficient medium through which he is saved. Thus, the act of faith on the sinner's part is not meritorious but only the efficient medium through which God is able save him. The "it" therefore refers to the outstretched hand of faith of a sinner reaching out for salvation that God grasps in His own to lift him out of the mire of sin and place him upon the Rock, Christ Jesus." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**Spurgeon** - Oh, what a blessing to learn the way of ample faith in God! This is the saving quality in many a life. Look through Paul's list of the heroes of faith; some of them are exceedingly imperfect characters' some we should hardly have thought of mentioning, but they had faith; and although men, in their faulty judgment, think faith to be an inferior virtue, and often scarcely look upon it as a virtue at all, yet, in the judgment of God, faith is the supremest virtue. "This," said Christ, "is the work of God," the greatest of all works, "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." To trust, to believe, this shall be counted to us for righteousness even as it was to Abraham.

## SALVATION ON "CREDIT"

**Kenneth Wuest** goes on to explain how Abraham could possess Christ's righteousness before Christ was made sin in His place - "God put to Abraham's account, placed on deposit for him, credited to him, righteousness. The actual payment had not been made, the actual bestowal of righteousness had not been consummated, and for the reason that our Lord had not yet paid the penalty of man's sin and had not yet been raised from the dead. Abraham possessed righteousness in the same manner as a person would possess a sum of money placed in his account in a bank. Since the resurrection, Old Testament saints share with New Testament believers the possession of Christ as the righteousness in which they stand, guiltless and righteous for time and for eternity." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

Not all faith is saving faith. Intellectual assent (which some equate with faith) is not saving faith. To paraphrase the respected linguist, W E Vine, faith involves

- (1) A firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth,
- (2) a personal surrender to the Truth and
- (3) a conduct inspired by & consistent with that surrender.

**Robert Haldane** comments on the quotation from Genesis 15:6 writing that there

... the promise to Abraham is recorded that his seed should be innumerable as the stars of heaven, being the renewal of the promise, (Ge 12:2 cp Genesis 22:17, 18), when he was called out of his own country. It thus comprehended the truth announced to him at different times, that all the nations of the world should be blessed in his seed, that is, in the Messiah, Galatians 3:16-note. That promise referred to the one made to our first parents after the fall (Genesis 3:15-note), in which was included the hope of redemption to be accomplished by the Deliverer of mankind, Who was to spring from him, as God declared to Abraham." (Haldane, R: An



Here are my related comments on how **Zecharias** and **Elizabeth** (John the Baptist's parents) could be characterized by Dr Luke as **righteous** (Luke 1:6-note) even though Christ had not yet been crucified:

From Adam to Christ, God saved those who put their faith in Him on the basis of whatever revelation He gave them. Abraham, for example, believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6). But how could God do this righteously? A sinless Substitute had not been slain. The blood of a perfect Sacrifice had not been shed. In a word, Christ had not died. The debt had not been paid. God's righteous claims had not been met. How then could God save believing sinners in the OT period (Zechariah and Elizabeth would still be considered in the "OT period")? The answer is that although Christ had not yet died, the omniscient God knew that He would die, and therefore He saved men on the basis of the still-future work of Christ. Even if OT saints didn't know about Calvary, God knew about it, and He put all the value of Christ's work to their account ([logizomai](#) = "reckoned" as in Gal 3:6-note) when they believed God. In a very real sense, OT believers were *saved on credit*. They were saved on the basis of a price of redemption which was yet to be paid in full at Calvary (cp Jn 19:30-note "It is finished" = "Paid it Full" = [tetelestai](#)). The OT saints looked forward to Calvary whereas we look back to it. So the OT period was a time of the [forbearance](#) of God. For at least 4000 years He held back His judgment on sin. Then in the fullness of time He sent His Son to be the Sin-bearer. When the Lord Jesus took our sins upon Himself, God unleashed the full fury of His righteous, holy wrath on the Son of His love. The whole OT is a testimony to the truth that God is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex 34:6-7).

**Herbert Lockyer** - To Old Testament saints the promised blessing of redemption was future—they obtained it, but not within the limits of this present life. They had it "on credit." (All the Promises of the Bible)

**MacArthur** - This means neither indifference nor remission. God's justice demands that every sin and sinner be punished. God would have been just, when Adam and Eve sinned, to destroy them, and with them, the entire human race. But in His goodness and forbearance (see 2:4), He withheld His judgment for a certain period of time (cf. Ps 78:38, 39; Ac 17:30, 31; 2Pe 3:9). (Study Bible)

**William MacDonald** - He is not speaking, as some wrongly think, of sins which an individual person has committed before his conversion. This might suggest that the work of Christ took care of sins before the new birth, but that a man is on his own after that. No, he is dealing with the seeming leniency of God in apparently overlooking the sins of those who were saved before the cross. It might seem that God excused those sins or pretended not to see them. Not so, says Paul. The Lord knew that Christ would make full expiation, and so He saved men on that basis. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

Here is a simple diagram that helps understand how one was saved by grace through faith in Christ in the Old Testament

See the full article from Gotquestions - [What is progressive revelation as it relates to salvation?](#)

**AND HE RECKONED IT:** Note that God initiated the message (the gospel Ga 3:8) and it is God who credits Abraham's "aman" (belief) as genuine, whereby God then imputes His own righteousness (i.e., Christ's righteousness even though Christ had not yet offered up His body as a satisfactory sacrifice for sin; cp 2 Co 5:21-note, 1Co 1:30) to Abraham. Salvation is of God, and yet the divine mystery is each man must chose for or against God and will be held accountable for that personal choice.

**Reckoned** ([02803](#))([chasab/hasab](#)) means to consider, to think, to calculate, to reckon oneself, to impute. Chasab conveys several meanings - devise, plan (Divine = Zech 7:10, Human = Ge 50:20); making a judgment (Divine = Isa 53:4, human = Job 33:10); "meditating" or running thoughts through one's mind (Mal 3:16); impute (2Sa 19:20, Ge 15:6 quoted in Ro 4:3-note, Ps 32:2-note quoted in Ro 4:8-note)

[Chasab/hasab](#) in Genesis 15:6 describes Abram's faith as "reckoned (chasab/hasab) to him as righteousness." In this crucial OT passage, the [Lxx](#) translates the Hebrew chasab/hasab with the Greek verb [logizomai](#) which means to take an accounting of something.

The Hebrew "chashab" is almost parallel to a bookkeeping transfer of an eligible item from one column to another. Ge 50:20 God meant (reckoned) it for good in order "to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." Chashab is the consideration of a great number of elements, which results in a conclusion based on a wide overview. In this verse, God added up everything that Abraham's belief meant to Him, and computing it all together, determined that it was equal to righteousness.

**Impute** means "to put to one's account." (see [English definitions](#))

See also [Imputation](#).

## MAN'S GREATEST NEED IS RIGHTEOUSNESS

**TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS:** right standing in the sight of God was imputed or placed on Abraham's spiritual account. At Calvary our sins were put on Jesus' account (cp "numbered [counted - Heb = manah = to count, reckon; Lxx = [logizomai](#)] with the transgressors" - Isa 53:12) and He as our perfect, sinless Substitute suffered the punishment that should have fallen on us (Isa 53:6). When Abraham trusted God's promise of a coming Seed, the Messiah (and however much of that truth that had been revealed to him), Christ's righteousness was placed "on credit" on Abraham's spiritual account (2 Cor 5:21-note) and he stood positionally (and perfectly) righteous and forgiven before the Holy God! Abraham proved his faith by his works when he offered Isaac on the altar (James 2:14–24-note). Abraham was not saved by obeying God, or even promising to obey God. However his obedience (cp Ge 22:1-2, 15-17, 18-see devotional "[A Test of Faith](#)") proved his faith. Sinners are not saved by faith plus works but by a faith that works! If it does not "work" then one has reason to question whether it is genuine faith!

In the Book of Jonah we read about another example of salvation -



Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them..... When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way (A clear OT example of true [repentance](#)), then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. (Jonah 3:5; 10)

Comment: When God saw the deeds of the Ninevites, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. True faith that saves our soul, is a faith that is manifest by a change in our lifestyle. Formerly, we were "Hell-bound" but after being justified by faith we are "Heaven-bound" and our lifestyle testifies to our new "direction."

We see another example of God crediting righteousness in the description of [Phinehas](#)

They (Israel) joined (Hebrew = to bind, fasten, yoke = pertaining to being in an association based on common beliefs or actions) themselves (NET translation = "they worshiped" - cp Nu 25:3,5) also to [Baal-peor](#) (= a local manifestation of the Canaanite deity Baal located at Peor. See Nu 25:1-3,5 31:16), And ate sacrifices offered to the dead (In other words, they practiced idolatry and a form of [necromancy](#)! cp Dt 26:14. Note some interpret "dead" as "lifeless gods" = Ps 106:28NIV). 29 Thus they provoked (Hebrew = They made angry) Him to anger with their deeds; And the plague broke out among them. 30 Then Phinehas stood up and interposed (see Nu 25:7-8); And so the plague was stayed. 31 And it was reckoned ([Chasab/hasab](#); Lxx = [logizomai](#)) to him for righteousness, To all generations forever (cp Nu 25:12-13 where God gave Phinehas His "covenant of peace").

Comment: When did God credit Phinehas with righteousness? When he stood up and interposed. At first glance you may be thinking "See, Phinehas was reckoned righteousness based on his good work!" That is not why God reckoned righteousness to the "spiritual account" of Phinehas. While the context does not mention the faith of Phinehas, there is no question whatsoever that he was declared righteous based on his faith not his works! Why do we say that? Because the rest of the Bible clearly teaches a man or woman will be justified before God ONLY on the basis of faith apart from works. So what is the role of Phinehas' "[good works](#)"? In Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul teaches that salvation is by grace through faith and then in Ephesians 2:10-note he teaches that those who have been saved have been "created in Christ Jesus for [good works](#), which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (See [Believers, God's Masterpiece, His Poema](#)) In Romans 1:5-note Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith" or as the NIV translates it "the obedience that comes from faith." In other words faith is the horse and obedience is the cart, not the converse! Faith that is genuine results in a new spiritual heart which evidences itself as "new" by seeking to please God the Father. Will our obedience be perfect? Not in this lifetime, but it is not so much about perfection but about direction. Is the general direction of toward godliness and holiness (again NOT perfection because we all blow it!). That is why Phinehas stood up against the rank idolatry and spiritual harlotry of Israel. His heart had been circumcised (see Excursus on [Circumcision](#))

Some have thought (either out of ignorance or being incorrectly taught) that in OT times people were saved by their good deeds rather than by faith, but this idea is mistaken (see Scofield below). Abram was not saved because of righteous living or obedience, but by believing in God which resulted in him being declared righteous. The only valid "work" is the "work" of faith (Jn 6:28, 29) but even this "work" is a gift of God's grace (2 Pe 1:1) so that a man is justified by faith apart from works (Ro 3:21, 22, 28).

C I Scofield in his general comments on the meaning of righteousness has a sentence which could easily be misinterpreted -

"In these words but one idea inheres: the righteous or just man is so called because he is right with God; and he is right with God *because* he has observed "all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly" (Luke 1:6-note) (Italics and bold added for emphasis)

Notice that Scofield said they were "right with God" and then says [because](#) which is usually a term of explanation meaning "on account of the fact that", which in context would suggest they were "right with God" because of their meritorious behavior. That is NOT what Scripture teaches and Luke has no "because" in the English or Greek. They were righteous because God declared them righteous by grace through faith.

---

**Spurgeon** - It is a grand faith to trust in Jesus in the teeth of all your sins, and notwithstanding the accusations of conscience. To believe in him that justifies not merely the godly, but the ungodly (Romans 4:5), to believe not in the Saviour of saints, but in the Saviour of sinners, and to believe that 'if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous', this is precious and is counted unto us for righteousness. This justifying faith was faith which dealt with a wonderful promise, vast and sublime. I imagine the patriarch standing beneath the starry sky, looking up to those innumerable orbs. He cannot count them. To his outward eye, long accustomed in the land of the Chaldees to midnight observation, the stars appeared more numerous than they would to an ordinary observer. He looked and looked again with elevated gaze, and the voice said, 'So shall thy seed be.' Now he did not say, 'Lord, if I may be the father of a clan, the progenitor of a tribe, I shall be well content; but it is not credible that countless hosts can ever come of my barren body.' No, he believed the promise; he believed it just as it stood. I do not hear him saying, 'It is too good to be true.' No; God has said it—and nothing is too good for God to do. The greater the grace of the promise, the more likely it is to have come from him, for good and perfect gifts come from the Father of lights. Beloved, does your faith take the promise as it stands in its vastness, in its height, depth, length and breadth? Can you believe that you, a sinner, are nevertheless a child, a son, an heir, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ Jesus? ([Justification by faith—illustrated by Abram's righteousness](#))

---

## **Bad Faith, Good Faith - [Our Daily Bread](#)**

Read: Romans 4:18–25

[Abraham] did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God. Romans 4:20

"You gotta have faith," people say. But what does that mean? Is any faith good faith?

"Believe in yourself and all that you are," wrote one positive thinker a century ago. "Know that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle." As nice as that may sound, it falls to pieces when it crashes into reality. We need a faith in something bigger than ourselves.

Abraham's faith was in something far bigger than himself—the one and only God.

God promised Abram he would have a multitude of descendants (Gen. 15:4–5), so he faced a huge obstacle—he was old and childless. When he and Sarah got tired of waiting for God to make good on His promise, they tried to overcome that obstacle on their own. As a result, they fractured their family and created a lot of unnecessary dissension (see Gen. 16 and Ge 21:8–21).

Nothing Abraham did in his own strength worked. But ultimately he became known as a man of tremendous faith. Paul wrote of him, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be'" (Rom. 4:18). This faith, said Paul, "was credited to him as righteousness" (Ro 4:22 [Ed comment: quoting in part from Genesis 15:6]).

Abraham's faith was in something far bigger than himself—the one and only God. It's the object of our faith that makes all the difference.

Lord, I want a strong faith in You, not just faith in myself or my abilities or in others. I am nothing without You.

Our faith is good if it's in the right Person.

(Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

---

## The Waiting

Read: Genesis 15:1-6 | Bible in a Year: Genesis 13-15; Matthew 5:1-26

[Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. —Genesis 15:6

Any mother can tell you that waiting to give birth is an experience that builds patience. But pity the poor mother elephant. It takes about 22 months for an unborn elephant to mature to birth! The shark known as the spiny dogfish has a pregnancy duration of 22-24 months. And at elevations above 4,600 feet, the Alpine salamander endures a gestational period of up to 38 months!

Abraham could have identified with these examples from nature. In his old age, the Lord made a promise to him: "I will make you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). But as the years passed, Abraham questioned how the fulfillment of the promise was possible without even the basic building block of a son (Ge 15:2). So God assured him, "One who will come from your own body shall be your heir" (Ge 15:4).

Despite his advanced age, Abraham believed God and was called righteous (Genesis 15:6). Yet he waited 25 years from the time of the initial promise for Isaac to be born (Ge 17:1,17).

Waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled is part of trusting Him. No matter how long the delay, we must wait for Him. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23). By Marvin Williams (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Not so in haste, my heart!  
Have faith in God, and wait;  
Although He seems to linger long,  
He never comes too late.  
—Torrey

God always performs what He promises.

---

## Lightning And Thunder

Read: James 2:14-26 | I will show you my faith by my works. —James 2:18

When we see lightning flash across the sky, we expect the roar of thunder to follow. If there were no lightning, there would be no thunder because one causes the other.

It's like that with faith. Just as thunder always follows lightning, good works always follow true faith.

The relationship between faith and works is explained in the New Testament writings of Paul to the Ephesians, and in a brief letter from James. At first glance, these authors seem to contradict each other. Paul insisted, "By grace you have been saved through faith, . . . not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9). But James declared, "A man is justified [declared righteous] by works, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24).

In context though, James wasn't denying that we are saved by faith. He referred to Abraham, saying that he "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Jas. 2:23). This belief occurred years before Abraham gave evidence of his faith by preparing to offer his son as a sacrifice (Jas. 2:21). Nor was the apostle Paul denying the value of works, for right after stating that we are saved by faith alone he said that we are saved "for good works" (Eph. 2:10).

What about you? Has the "lightning" of personal faith in Christ been followed by the "thunder" of good works? By Haddon Robinson (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

## DIGGING DEEPER

Read Genesis 15:1-6 and Genesis 22:1-14.

Why did God give righteousness to Abraham?

How did Abraham prove his faith?

We are saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is never alone.

---

---

## TODAY IN THE WORD DEVOTIONAL

### Genesis 15

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. - Genesis 15:6

Comedian Steven Wright once said, "A clear conscience is usually the sign of bad memory." As we study the life and faith of Abram and the Patriarchs, we'll be reminded regularly that they were far from sinless. But thanks to justification by faith, their sins, and ours, could be forgotten and forgiven.

Actually, God promises so much to Abram in this passage—offspring as innumerable as the stars (Genesis 15:5), extensive land (Genesis 15:18), and victory over the inhabitants (Genesis 15:19-21)—that it's easy to forget the remainder of the prophecy—four centuries of enslavement and oppression were guaranteed to Abram's descendants (Genesis 15:13).

But the most notable thing given to Abram was the one thing that could not be taken away or enslaved: the credit of righteousness from God (Genesis 15:6). This is the first time that the word righteousness appears in the Bible, and it's interesting that it precedes any laws or commandments given to Abram. Abram believed, and in God's economy, that was a worthy exchange for righteousness. Notice that righteousness wasn't something Abram did—it was given to him.

God also reaffirms to Abram that his promised descendants would be from his body, not just his house. The affirmation comes after Abram expressed some doubt as to how the promise would be fulfilled. God's word alone was enough to convince him. But when it came to possessing the land, Abram wanted some additional sign that he would be able to acquire it (v. . So God confirmed it with a covenant that detailed the boundaries of the Promised Land and the people God promised to give over to Abram.

Some interpret "river of Egypt" to mean the Nile, but it more likely refers to a wadi or riverbed called the River of Egypt, nearly a hundred miles east of the Nile River delta. Eventually, Israel's southern border did reach the River of Egypt, but it has yet to approach the Euphrates River.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY The land that God promised to give Abram has yet to be fully claimed by his descendants and is still at the heart of much contention both between the peoples of that land and among the scholars who study it. But the righteousness that God credited for Abram's faith is indisputable and freely available to all. Christ's suffering on the cross paid our debt of sin in full, and His righteousness is ours to claim. You can believe in Him and accept His gift of righteousness.

---

**W H Griffith-Thomas** - IV. The Human Acceptance (Ge 15:6).—Now comes a wonderful change and a definite progress upwards in Abraham's spiritual experience. There was a prompt response to the Divine revelation. 'Abraham believed.' He had faith before, but now it was prominent and emphatic, a clearer, stronger, fuller trust in God. The original Hebrew for 'believed' comes from a root whence we derive our 'Amen,' and we might paraphrase it by saying that 'Abraham said Amen to the Lord.' 'Amen' in Scripture never means a petition ('May it be so'), but is always a strong assertion of faith ('It shall be so,' or 'It is so'). Faith is thus the only, as it is the adequate, response to God's revelation. The word of the Lord comes, and we believe. Faith takes God at His word.

Then came an equally prompt rejoinder from God in answer to His servant's trust. 'And He counted it to him.' That is, God accounted Abraham's faith as the channel for the reception of the gift of righteousness. Notice the Old Testament allusions to the doctrine of imputation, or reckoning (Lev. 7:18; 17:4; Num. 18:27; 2 Sam. 19:19; Psalm 32:2; 106:31. (See also Rom. 4. passim.)

The spiritual result is described in one significant word, 'righteousness.' This means the state or condition of being 'right' with God, and we have here the first reference to this great word 'righteousness' which is subsequently so characteristic of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament revelation. Abraham was originally destitute of righteousness, and is now reckoned as righteous through faith in God. God Himself is the Object of his faith, the Word of God is the ground of his faith, and righteousness is the result of his faith. It is to be noticed that the phrase 'counted it to him for righteousness' is not to be confused with 'counted it to him instead of righteousness.' It means counted or reckoned with a view to his receiving righteousness. In Rom. 4 the preposition ες (for, unto) with 'righteousness' cannot be equivalent to ὡς (as if) or ὑπὲρ (instead of). (See Haldane in loc.)

This passage is noteworthy for its first occurrences of remarkable and subsequently well-known words and phrases: (1) 'The word of the Lord came'; (2) 'Fear not'; (3) 'Believed'; (4) 'Counted'; (5) 'Righteousness.' It is hardly too much to say that all subsequent occurrences of these words and phrases find the key to their meaning here.

**1. The Possibility of spiritual despondency.**—This is a well-known fact in the life of the believer. It is often due to a threefold strain which is partly physical, partly emotional, and partly spiritual. Great experiences make their mark upon us, and 'by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright.' At any rate we do not.

**2. The Peril of spiritual disheartenment.**—We may explain, but we can hardly excuse, spiritual depression, and it is often used of Satan to lead us away from God into the paths of spiritual despair. And even though we never reach despair, our depression may easily bring discredit upon the name of God. Herein lies one of the most serious elements of the peril.

**3. The Protection against spiritual discouragement.**—This is found first in God's continuous revelation of Himself to our hearts, and then our continued response in whole-hearted trust and confidence maintained through prayer and fellowship with the Word of God. God's truth and our trust. His grace and our faith. These are correlative facts and will ever protect the soul.

**4. The Preciousness of spiritual discipline.**—God's delays to Abraham were not denials. They<sup>184</sup> were intended to bring him nearer to God and to lead him to depend more upon the Giver than on His gifts. Not what God gives so much as what He is, is the foundation and source of spiritual life, power and progress. ([Genesis 15:1-6 The Great Encouragement](#))

---

**Genesis 15:7 And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."**

■ brought (KJV): Ge 11:28-31 Ge 12:1 Ne 9:7 Ac 7:2-4

- to give (KJV): Ge 12:7 13:15-17 Ne 9:8 Ps 105:11,42,44 Ro 4:13
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:1-7](#) - S Lewis Johnson
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

## JEHOVAH AFFIRMS THE PROMISE OF THE LAND

**And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans** - In Ge 15:1-5 Jehovah's promise focused on eternal life and now he switches to the promise of eternal land (Ge 13:15 "forever"). Moses recorded God's call to Abram...

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; (Genesis 12:1)

**I am the Lord, who brought you out:** This is the self-authenticating declaration of the Lord. His grace enables a person to believe. (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary)

**Stephen** in a sermon that led to his martyrdom spoke of Jehovah's bringing Abram out of Ur..

And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.' "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. (Acts 7:2-4)

**To give you this land to possess it.**

Genesis 12:7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants **I will give this land.**" So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

Genesis 13:15-17 **for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.** 16 "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. 17 **"Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you"**

Nehemiah 9:8 "You found his (Abraham's) heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him **To give him the land** of the Canaanite, Of the Hittite and the Amorite, Of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite— To give it to his descendants. And You have fulfilled Your promise, For You are righteous.

[Warren Wiersbe](#) - For centuries, Israel was a nation without a land; and it seemed that the covenant promises would not be fulfilled. In 1932, famous British expositor G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "I am now quite convinced that the teaching of Scripture as a whole is that there is no future for Israel as an earthly people at all" (This Was His Faith, p. 290). Then came May 14, 1948, and the rebirth of national Israel! Just as God kept His promise to Abraham and sent the Messiah, so He will keep His promise and restore the land to His people.

[The Apologetics Study Bible](#) (no restrictions) - This verse does not necessarily conflict with the apparent sense of Terah rather than Abram leading his family from Ur to Haran, as suggested by Genesis 11:31. In a patriarchal culture, Abram was part of the extended household of his father.

**John Phillips** - In mechanics there is a law that relates to inertia, the property of all matter that makes bodies resist any change in their motion, resist any force that puts them in motion, or that speeds up or slows or stops them once they are in motion. Because of inertia, some outside force must always be applied to produce motion. That physical law can illustrate a spiritual law. Abram was in motion in **Ur of the Chaldees**, but he was in motion in the wrong direction. He was heading to a lost eternity. With every passing hour he gathered momentum. Then suddenly he was stopped, turned around, and set in motion toward Canaan and toward heaven. God says, "I am the LORD that brought thee out of **Ur of the Chaldees** to give thee this land." That was the working of His power. The building of Abram's family, then, was also to be the work of God. The same power that flung the stars into space and set them in motion (only now expressed in spiritual terms rather than physical) was at work to secure Abram not only a seed, but a Seed. (Borrow [Exploring Genesis](#))

**Steven Cole** - A man and his wife went to a marriage counselor. When the counselor asked what the problem was, the woman sobbed, "My husband never tells me that he loves me." When the counselor looked over at the husband, he snarled, "I told her that 20 years ago, and I haven't changed my mind."

**W H Griffith-Thomas** - In response to Abraham's faith (Ge 15:6) God entered into solemn covenant with him, assuring him of the certainty, while revealing still more of the meaning, of the Divine promises concerning him and his seed. In this section 'covenant' is the key-word.

**I. The Foundation of the Covenant** (Ge 15:7)—At the basis of the covenant was God's character and revelation to Abraham, and on this foundation everything else rested.

The covenant was introduced by the solemn announcement of the Divine Name, 'I am Jehovah.' This was the bed-rock of all; God's unchanging and unchangeable presence and character.

Then came the significant reminder of what God had already done for him. 'That brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees.' Abraham had already been redeemed, and this fact was the foundation of, and was intended to be a factor in, the rest of God's dealings with him.

Following this came the renewed declaration of the Divine purpose. 'To give thee this land to inherit it.' God again reminds and assures Abraham of His object in bringing him out of his own land. The purpose is once more stated clearly and plainly. ([Genesis 15:7-21 The Confirmation of Faith](#))

**Keith Krell - Fear Factor - Genesis 15:7-21**

**2. Rest in God's covenant (Ge 15:7-21). 35** (Note number 35 is a footnote as are other numbers below and [can be found on the original file used by](#)

[permission](#)).

In Ge 15:7-8, the pattern continues: God speaks to Abram and Abram asks God a question.<sup>36</sup> What a reminder that God always takes the initiative. Ge 15:7 tells Abram what God has done for him ("I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans," cf. Acts 7:2-5)<sup>37</sup> and what the purpose of his salvation is ("to give you this land to possess<sup>38</sup> it," cf. Ge 12:7). The purpose of salvation is inheritance. God brought us out in order to bring us in. We were brought out of idolatry and sin in order to be brought into our inheritance.<sup>39</sup> The Christian life begins when a person places faith in Jesus Christ. But the abundant life begins when the Christian begins to pursue Christ (John 10:10).

In Ge 15:8, Abram says, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?" Abram's response reveals that he had doubts about God's promise to give him the land. Even people of great faith experience their moments of doubt. Living the life of faith is not like starting at the bottom of an escalator that always and continually moves upward toward heaven. It's more like riding a roller coaster with its hills and valleys. In Ge 15:6, Abram was on the mountaintop—he believed; in Ge 15:8, he was down in the valley, doubting.<sup>40</sup> But again, please notice that Abram brought his fears directly to the Lord. God placed within Abram a desire to believe. He does the same within us today. Therefore, we must look to God and rest in Him.

Again, instead of rebuking Abram, the Lord gives him some directions. In Ge 15:9, the Lord said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." These are the same "clean" animals that are used later in the sacrificial system under the law of Moses. The use of five different kinds of sacrificial animals underlines the solemnity of the occasion.

Moses then tells us that Abram "brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.<sup>41</sup> The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses,<sup>42</sup> and Abram drove them away" (Ge 15:10-11).<sup>43</sup> In Abram's day, legal and binding agreements were not drafted by attorneys and then signed by the parties involved. Instead, legal agreements were formalized by means of a very graphic covenant ceremony: the dividing of an animal sealed the covenant. The animal was cut in half <sup>44</sup> and the two parties would pass between the halves while repeating the terms of the covenant. By doing so, the two parties were stating, "If I fail to fulfill my commitments to this covenant, may I suffer the same fate as this animal" (cf. Jer 34:18-20).

In Ge 15:12-21, we come to one of the most dramatic scenes in Abram's life. Yet, the Lord puts him down for a "deep sleep" so that he is depicted as a passive, non-participant.<sup>45</sup> During his nap, "terror and great dreadful darkness fell upon him" (Ge 15:12; cf. Job 33:14-18). These emotions are common when a man or woman is in the presence of God. Abram's experience reminds us that God is a fearful being. He is not to be taken lightly (see Isa 6:1-8).

In Ge 15:13-16, God makes a seven-fold prophecy concerning the nation of Israel.

1. You will be strangers in another country (Egypt). See Ps 105:11-15.
2. You will be slaves in Egypt.
3. You will be oppressed four hundred years. (The actual period of slavery was 430 years. In this passage it is rounded off to 400.) See Exod 12:40-42.
4. God will judge Egypt. See Acts 7:6-8.
5. Israel will come out with many possessions. See Exod 3:21-22 and Ex 12:35-36.
6. Abram will not live through this period of slavery. See Gen 25:7-8.
7. In the fourth generation (400 years), Israel will return to the land. See Deut 9:4-6.

All of these predictions were perfectly fulfilled to the very letter because God always performs what He promises. But the promises of God to Abram and his descendants were not without pain and struggle. Many of these promises were painful. Often, God takes us through very painful periods. Why? So that we will cling to Him and so that we will have a greater appreciation for the promise of heaven. Another aspect of struggle accompanied with these promises is the time required for their outworking. There is usually a delay in God's promises (Heb 11:13). God plans it this way for our spiritual well being. Somehow delays refine us and drive us to have further dealings with God and to seek personal contact with Him. If the promises of God flowed into our lives with ease and without seeking them, we would forget where they come from.<sup>46</sup> God wants us to wait on Him. He wants us to trust Him.

In Ge 15:17, "a smoking oven and a flaming torch"<sup>47</sup> passed between the pieces of animals. The smoking oven and flaming torch represent the presence of God. So the Lord Himself passed between these pieces of animals in making a covenant with Abraham (cf. Lev 26:12).<sup>48</sup> In doing so, He obligated Himself to fulfill this covenant (see Heb 6:13-14). God is not saying, "Now, Abram, if you will live up to certain conditions, then you will have a son, and I will give you the land." He is not saying, "Abram, as long as you obey A, B, C, and D, I'll keep My end of the bargain." God is saying to Abram, "I'm going to give you this land, and I am making an unconditional promise that you will receive it. It is not up to you, your effort, your battle strategy, your initiative, or your intelligence. You can get that land because I'm going to make it happen. I am making this agreement. I am passing through the pieces. I am making an agreement that you'll possess this land."<sup>49</sup>

This is the heart and character of God. He loves us unconditionally, no matter what we do, say, or think. God is patient and long-suffering (Ex 34:6). He is the ultimate Father and He often does His greatest work in and through us when we do nothing. This past week, I was overwhelmed by God's sovereign protection and provision. I often sense that I am simply a spectator in my Christian life. I look at how God has protected me from myself. I look at how He has changed my thought patterns. I experience blessings from Him that I don't deserve. All of this leads me to say, "It's not about me; it's all about You!" I can't take credit for anything in my life. It can only be attributed to the work of a sovereign and gracious God.

In Ge 15:18-21, God gives the geographical boundaries and the nations of the land that He will give to Abram. From the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (see Dt 11:24-25). The borders of this land, promised to Abram's descendants, appear to coincide with the border of the garden of Eden (Ge 2:10-14). The land consists of ten nations of "ites": Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites, and Jebusites. God will grant Abram's descendants victory over these peoples. He will show Himself strong...He will be a "shield" to them (cf. Ge 15:1). After all of these promises and confirmations, what more reassurance could be asked for?

For the past two years, our middle child, Justin, has been trying to learn to ride his bicycle without training wheels. While he has always excelled at riding his bike with training wheels, he had feared making the move to riding without training wheels. Lori and I spent a great deal of time trying to help him work



through this transition. The tactic I would always take is: “Justin, trust me, you can ride without training wheels. I believe in you. I know you can do this.” But nothing worked. Finally, Lori said, “Justin, if you ride your bicycle without training wheels, we will buy you that new Lego set that you want.” After Lori made that promise and sealed it with an oath, that very day, Justin stepped out in faith and rode his bicycle without training wheels. He trusted in a promise and rested in an oath. Now when Justin rides, he bears down and attacks the asphalt! It’s quite impressive. Watch for Justin to take the Tour de France in a few years!

Today, you and I must ask these two questions: Can we trust God? Can God be trusted? If we can answer both of these questions with a “yes,” then we must trust in God’s promises and rest in God’s covenant. ([Fear Factor - Genesis 15:1-21](#))

#### FOOTNOTES ON GENESIS 15:7-21

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 15:7-21 recounts God’s making of the covenant with Abraham. The emphasis in this section shifts to the “land” promised by the Lord to Abraham’s “seed.” He encourages Abraham with the fact that He had brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give him the land of Canaan as his inheritance (15:7).

<sup>36</sup> The following chart demonstrates the parallelism of Genesis 15:1-21.

First scene	Activity	Second scene
15:1	The Lord’s word to Abram	15:7
15:2-3	Abram’s questioning the Lord	15:8
15:4-5	The Lord’s assurance to Abram	15:9-21
	15:6: Abram’s faith in the Lord and consequent righteousness	

See Keith H. Essex, “The Abrahamic Covenant” *Masters Seminary Journal* 10:2 (Fall 1999):199.

<sup>37</sup> This statement is virtually identical to the opening statement of the Sinai covenant in Exod 20:2: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” The expression “Ur of the Chaldeans” refers back to Gen 11:28, 31 and grounds the present covenant in a past act of divine salvation from “Babylon,” just as Exod 20:2 grounds the Sinai covenant in an act of divine salvation from Egypt.

<sup>38</sup> The root *yaras* (“to possess”) connects the “land” with the “heir” (from *yaras*) in Gen 15:3-4. Thus, the inheritance to be given to Abraham’s “seed” refers primarily to the “land.”

<sup>39</sup> Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 59.

<sup>40</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 162.

<sup>41</sup> The Mosaic law instructed the priests not to “sever” birds (Lev 1:17).

<sup>42</sup> Constable suggests, “The birds of prey are unclean (Lev. 11:13-19; Deut. 14:12- 18) and represent foreign nations (Ezek. 17:3, 7; Zech. 5:9), most probably Egypt...Thus Abram driving off the birds of prey from the dismembered pieces portrays him defending his descendants from the attacks of foreign nations. Genesis itself tells of a number of attacks by foreigners against the children of Abraham (e.g. chs. 26, 34) and it already looks forward to the sojourn in Egypt (chs. 37-50 [cf. Exod. 1:11-12]). But in what sense can Abraham’s actions be said to protect his offspring? Genesis 22:16-18; 26:5 suggest it was Abraham’s faithful obedience to the covenant that guaranteed the blessing of his descendants...Exodus 2:24 and Deuteronomy 9:5 also ground the exodus in the divine promises made to the patriarchs. The bird scene therefore portrays the security of Israel as the consequence of Abraham’s piety.” Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 138.

<sup>43</sup> The text implies that Abraham knew of the ritual to take place because God does not explicitly state what he is to do with these animals. He only commands Abraham to “take” (Gen 15:9), but Abraham “took,” “cut in two,” and “laid” (15:10). Abraham seems to understand what the animals signify: the Lord’s assurance to Abraham would come through a binding “covenant” in which both He and Abraham would swear to fulfill certain obligations to each other, recognizing that death would be the certain consequence of their failure to accomplish their binding commitment faithfully.

<sup>44</sup> Eaton writes, “Covenant always has the shedding of blood as its starting point. This was the custom of the ancient world, but it also has importance in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It looked forward to Jesus. The death of Jesus on the cross for our sins is the starting point of any relationship with God. One cannot even begin to be in a relationship with God unless sin is atoned for in some way. So in the ancient world, the shedding of blood came in at any early stage in the procedure of any covenant.” Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 60.

<sup>45</sup> Hamilton concludes, “Nothing, however, in this chapter is imposed on Abram. He is free of any obligation. The only imposition or obligation that Yahweh lays upon anybody is upon himself, and that is the obligation to implement his promise of descendants, and especially of land, to Abram and to his descendants.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 438.

<sup>46</sup> Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 53.

<sup>47</sup> The smoking firepot reminds us of the pillar of cloud representing the presence of God (Exod 13:21-22), the smoke on Mount Sinai



(Exod 19:18), and the cloud of God's Shekinah glory (1 Kgs 8:10-12). The blazing torch reminds us of the pillar of fire representing the presence of God (Exod 13:21-22), of the burning bush displaying the presence of God before Moses (Exod 3:4), and of the fire from heaven, which sometimes consumed sacrifices, God was well pleased with (1 Kgs 18:38, 1 Chron 21:26, 2 Chron 7:1).

<sup>48</sup> Constable writes, "The Abrahamic Covenant is basic to the premillennial system of theology. This covenant has not yet been fulfilled as God promised it would be. Since God is faithful we believe He will fulfill these promises in the future. Consequently there must be a future for Israel as a nation (cf. Rom. 11). Amillennialists interpret this covenant in a less literal way. The crucial issue is interpretation. If God fulfilled the seed and blessings promises literally, should we not expect that He will also fulfill the land promises literally? The Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants are outgrowths of the Abrahamic Covenant. Each of these expands one major promise of the Abrahamic Covenant: the land, seed, and blessing promises respectively." Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 142.

<sup>49</sup> Dobson, *Abraham: The Lord Will Provide*, 79.

#### Genesis 15:8 He said, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?"

- Ge 24:2-4,13,14 Judges 6:17-24,36-40 1 Sa 14:9,10 2 Ki 20:8 Ps 86:17 Isa 7:11 Lu 1:18,34
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**AND HE SAID O LORD GOD HOW MAY I KNOW THAT I SHALL POSSESS IT:** This is not an question expressing doubt. To the contrary, he believed he would possess it but he could not understand how this would transpire. And so his request is motivated by faith (cf. Ahaz in Isa 7:10-14).

**MacArthur** agrees - A question not of veiled accusation at the delayed fulfillment but of genuine request for information and assurance. In response, God affirmed His covenant with Abram in a remarkable ceremony (vv. 9–21).

**Spurgeon** - What! Abraham, is not God's promise sufficient for thee? O father of the faithful, though thou dost believe, and art counted as righteous through believing, dost thou still ask, "Whereby shall I know?" Ah, beloved! faith is often marred by a measure of unbelief; or, if not quite unbelief, yet there is a desire to have some token, some sign, beyond the bare promise of God.

---

**W H Griffith-Thomas - II. The Desire for the Covenant (Ge 15:8).**—Abraham met this new assurance of God with an earnest desire for a proof.

He makes his appeal for knowledge. This was what he needed; knowledge, certitude.

He also sought from God some assurance. 'Whereby shall I know.' He desired some outward and visible guarantee and pledge.

And yet it must be observed that he did not require a sign in order to believe, but after and on account of believing. It was not faithlessness, but a desire for confirmation. He fully believed God's Word, and yet wondered how and when it would be fulfilled. Contrast Mary's attitude (Luke 1:34) with that of Zacharias (Luke 1:18), though her words were practically the same. Abraham's attitude might well be summed up and illustrated by the words, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief (Mark 9:24). ([Genesis 15:7-21 The Confirmation of Faith](#))

#### Genesis 15:9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

- Ge 22:13 Lev 1:3,10,14 3:1,6 9:2,4 12:8 14:22,30 Ps 50:5 Isa 15:5 Lu 2:24
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**SO HE SAID TO HIM** (Heb 6:17,18) Abram had only to prepare the sacrifice and bring it to God; the Lord would enact the sign (v17). This emphasizes the unilateral, unconditional nature of the covenant.

Hebrews 6:17-18 is a commentary on this passage -

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

Recall the preceding context in Hebrews -

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. **For when God made the promise to Abraham**, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU." And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. (Hebrews 6:11-16)

**John Phillips** has an interesting analysis of the significance of the events in the covenant ceremony - Calvary was now brought to bear upon Abram's life. The Lord had been speaking to Abram about a possession and a posterity, and Abram had believed to the saving of his soul. Now he must be shown that a valid faith must ultimately come to rest on the finished work of Christ at Calvary. First, Calvary was shadowed before Abram, he must come to apprehend the mystery of it (Ge 15:8-10). "Take an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon." Why that particular selection of creatures for sacrifice? It remains a mystery. In some deep, marvelous, complete, and

mysterious way they depict various aspects of Calvary. The full and exact significance of it all eludes us. Thus it was with Abram. The mystery of Calvary was brought home to his heart, the stark tragedy of the cross, the rending, the tearing, the blood, the pain, the woe. Abram saw it, saw the dark shadows of Golgotha falling across the ages and felt them chilling his soul. He could not understand Calvary in its heights and depths but, in some measure, he did apprehend the mystery of Christ's death. That was the basis of his faith. (BORROW [Exploring Genesis](#))

**Apologetics Study Bible:** Although the wording of Ge 15:8 could be taken to reflect unbelief on Abram's part (cp. Ex 7:17; Nu 16:28; Lk 1:18), verse 6 clarifies that is not the sense intended. The Lord's response, in which He sets up a ceremony to reaffirm the covenant He is granting (Gen 15:9-10, 17-18), shows that Abram was simply seeking a sign of the divine promise upon which to hang his continued confidence (cp. Isa 7:10-14). Abram's complaint shows he takes God seriously.

## THE THREE COVENANTS HOW THEY RELATE TO JESUS

- **ABRAHAMIC COVENANT = PROMISE of Jesus Christ**
- **OLD COVENANT = PICTURE of Jesus Christ**
- **NEW COVENANT = PERSON of Jesus Christ**

**W H Griffith-Thomas - III. The Preparation for the Covenant (Ge 15:9-10).**—The Divine instructions are now given. 'Take for Me an heifer,' etc. The heifer, goat, and ram were to be three years old, signifying maturity in the offering. These, with the dove and pigeon, were afterwards found associated with the Mosaic law (Exod. 29:15; Num. 15:27; 19:2; Deut. 21:3). Then Abraham proceeded to fulfil the requirements connected with the solemnities of a covenant. 'Took... divided.' See Leviticus 1:6. Having divided the animals, he places the corresponding pieces opposite to each other, and the one bird opposite to the other, leaving a passage between. This was the usual form of agreement and contract, the two parties walking in procession along the pathway just made, and thereby signifying their agreement (Jer. 34:18 f.). The idea underlying this was that of a covenant by means of sacrifice (Ps. 1:5). The blood-covenant was a well-known primitive method of ratifying solemn agreements. We are now able to notice how Abraham prepared to receive God's assurance and further revelation. ([Genesis 15:7-21 The Confirmation of Faith](#))

**Genesis 15:10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.**

- divided them (KJV): Jer 34:18,19 2Ti 2:15
- the birds (KJV): Lev 1:17
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**Cut them in two** - This would entail the death of the animals and was a symbol of what would happen if the covenanting parties broke their covenant.

**Henry Morris on he cut them in two** - God was to confirm the covenant ["covenant of blood"] to Abram in a most instructive manner. Though God's promise had been free and unconditional to Abram (premised only on his faith), it would be very costly to God, requiring the death of His incarnate Son. This was pictured by the death of one of each of the five kinds of clean animals acceptable for sacrificial purposes, with their remains divided into two rows. This was customary procedure at the time in establishing a solemn compact, with the contracting parties sealing it by passing between the two rows. Here, however, only God passed through, since it was a unilateral, unconditional commitment on His part.

**Genesis 15:11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.**

- fowls (KJV): Eze 17:3,7 Mt 13:4
- Abram (KJV): Ps 119:13
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**AND THE BIRDS OF PREY CAME DOWN UPON THE CARCASSES, AND ABRAM DROVE THEM AWAY.** Why this detail? For one thing it would authenticate that there was a dead animal present. Abram had come not to feed the vultures, but to see a great sign from the Lord. For the rest of the day he kept the vultures away from the animals while waiting for God's sign.

**John Phillips** offers this thought (I am not sure I 100% agree but it is interesting) on the great darkness and birds of prey - It was exactly just such a horror that enveloped Christ as He hung on the tree (cp Mt 27:45). Birds are frequently used in Scripture to symbolize the powers of the air, the evil spirits that prey upon men's souls. The carrion birds, the deep sleep, the darkness, the horror-those things all brought home to Abram the fearful cost of the covenant into which God was bringing him. In some small measure the horror of the cross was brought home to his heart. (BORROW [Exploring Genesis](#))

**Spurgeon** - Here is a lesson for us. Perhaps you have some of these unclean birds coming down upon your sacrifice just now. That raven that you did not lock up well at home, has come here after you. Eagles and vultures, and all kinds of kites in the form of carking cares, and sad memories, and fears, and doubts, come hovering over the sacred feast. Drive them away; God give you grace to drive them away by the power of his gracious Spirit!

**John Butler** has some interesting thoughts on this event - After preparing for the covenant ceremony, Abraham had a problem with birds wanting to devour the carcasses. Carcasses are an open invitation to many birds. As soon as they saw the carcasses prepared for the covenant ceremony, they would swoop

down and attempt to devour these carcasses. It would require much attentiveness by Abraham to drive off the birds in order to preserve the carcasses for the covenant ceremony. These birds represent those things in our lives which would devour what we have dedicated to God. We must ever be vigilant and protect our resources and energies from the devourers lest they be given to other interests than to God's business. As an example, you cannot expend your emotions and interests on sporting events on TV Sunday afternoon and have much emotion and interest left for the Sunday night church service. Neither can you spend your money lavishly on "things" for yourself and have much left to give to the work of the Lord. (Analytical Bible Expositor – Genesis)

---

**W H Griffith-Thomas - IV. The Readiness for the Covenant (Ge 15:11, 12).—**Faithfulness was the first and leading proof of Abraham's readiness. He had obeyed exactly according to the command of God, observing to the letter what God required. This is ever the true attitude for fuller teaching and deeper blessing. Watchfulness was another feature of his attitude at this time. While waiting God's time he kept guard over the carcasses, and kept away the birds of prey. We see how spiritual attitude underlies this act. Nor are we wrong in thinking that receptiveness characterised him. The supernatural slumber (cf. Gen. 2:21) prepared Abraham for the reception of God's revelation by detaching him from all things earthly which might divert his attention, and prevent the full teaching having its effect upon his life. The dread that fell upon him was doubtless due to the consciousness of a Divine presence overshadowing him. ([Genesis 15:7-21 The Confirmation of Faith](#))

---

#### **William Gurnall - Wandering thoughts removed from the sacrifice by warm affections**

If we would prevent wandering thoughts, we should seek warm affections. Flies will not so readily light on a boiling pot on the fire, as when it stands cold in the window, Nor will vain thoughts so easily light on thy sacrifice, when burning on the altar of a fervent heart, as when offered up with a cold, dull spirit. (.)

---

#### **William Gurnall - The sacrifice hindered by vain thoughts**

I have heard of some men who were called walking libraries, because they carried all that they read in their memories wherever they went. And have we not too many walking shops, barns, warehouses, etc., that is, persons who carry this lumber to bed and board, church and closet? How can such pray with a united heart, who have so many sharers in their thoughts? (W. Gurnall.)

---

#### **C H Spurgeon applies Ge 15:11 to our lives today - Abram and the ravenous birds**

### **I. MENTION SOME OF THOSE WELL-KNOWN INTRUDERS WHICH ARE PERPETUALLY MOLESTING OUR PEACE AND DISTURBING OUR SERVICE.**

1. Wicked thoughts—the sons of Satan.
2. Worldly thoughts, which spring from the force of habit.
3. Anxious thoughts, the fruits of our unbelief.
4. Annoying thoughts, the offspring of our vanity.
5. Ecclesiastical anxieties. Church business, or Church differences.

### **II. DISTRACTING CARES MUST BE CHASED AWAY.**

1. For your own sake. No human brain can bear the perpetual toil of business, except it knows how to pause and oil the machinery by turning the mind in some other direction.
2. You will find, if you are able to take a perfect rest, by driving away these evil thoughts when you are worshipping God, that you will do your work during the other days of the week far better. It was an old Popish folly to try and tell what kind of weather there would be by the weather on Sunday—"If it rain before mess; rain all the week more or less." Now, we do not believe that literally; but we do believe it in a spiritual sense. If you have a bad Sabbath day, you will have a bad week; but if you have a good day of rest, you will find it good with your souls the whole week long; not that you will be without trouble all the week, that would not be good for you, but you shall never be without grace during the week; nor if you have peace on the Sunday shall you be without peace on the Monday.
3. And then let me remind you, in the next place, that the character of this day demands that you should get rid of these thoughts. Now, it is inconsistent with such a day—the day of light—for us to be in darkness. It is inconsistent with the day of resurrection for us to be raking in this grave of the world. It is inconsistent with this day of descent of the Spirit for us to be thinking of carnal things, and forgetting the things which are above.
4. The indulging of vain or anxious thoughts, when we are engaged in the worship of God, must be striven against, because it must be grievous to the Holy Spirit. How can we expect that we shall have His presence and His assistance if we give Him not our hearts?
5. These thoughts and cares must be driven away, for if you do not strive against them they will increase and multiply. This is a growing habit. The force of habit is like the velocity of a falling stone, it increases in ever multiplying proportions. If I have indulged one unbelieving thought, there has always been another to follow it; if I have allowed some little disturbance in the congregation to cast me down, and distract my thoughts, there has been another, and another, and another, till I have been in the pitiable condition of a minister who has been half afraid of his congregation.

### **III. I am now to show you HOW TO DO IT.**

1. And we begin by saying, first of all, set your heart upon it; for when the soul is set upon a thing, then it is likely to accomplish it. Go up to God's house, saying, "I must give up my soul to eternal matters today, and I will."
2. But when you have this done, remember next—let the preparation of your heart before coming to the sacrifice assist you when you shall be there. We are told men ought not to preach without preparation. Granted. But, we add, men ought not to hear without preparation.

3. But, this done, above all, cry to the Spirit of God for help to make your spirit rest.

4. Then, when you have thus done, and you come up to the house of God, still seek to continue in the same frame of mind, remembering in whose immediate presence you are. A Spartan youth was holding the censer at a sacrifice, when Alexander was offering a victim. It chanced that while he held the censer a hot coal fell upon his hand. The youth stood still, and never flinched, lest by any utterance or cry the sacrifice should be disturbed; for he said he was in the presence of Alexander, and he would not have the sacrifice interrupted for him; and he bore the pain of the burning coal. Let us remember that Spartan youth, adding to what he said, "We are in the presence of the Almighty God." Then, if there be something which annoys us, let us bear it unflinchingly, for we stand before Him for whom it is blessed to suffer, and who will surely reward them that seek Him in spirit and in truth.

5. Another means I will give you. Take care that your faith be in active exercise, or else you cannot chase away those thoughts. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Be still, and know that He is God.

6. Take care also that thou attend a ministry which draws thee from earth, for there are some dead ministries which make the Sabbath day more intolerable than any of the other days of the week. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

See full sermon

- [Genesis 15:11 Abram and the Ravenous Birds](#)

---

## C H Spurgeon - Driving away the vultures from the sacrifice

**I. First, with regard to THE GREAT SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** This has been, and always will be, the great object of attack by the enemies of God.

1. Note well that the sacrifice which Abram guarded was of Divine ordination. So with the sacrifice of Christ.

2. Next, we see a further reason for guarding the sacrifice in the fact that it is of most solemn import. A covenant. We cannot let the vultures tear this sacrifice, for it is to us the token of the covenant; and if there be no covenant of grace, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and we are still under the curse of the broken law. If ye are still out of covenant with God, what hope, what safety, what peace, what joy is there for you?

3. And, next, we must guard this sacrifice, because there God most fully displays His grace.

4. We will do this all the more because this is the chief point of attack. Every doctrine of revelation has been assailed, but the order of battle passed by the black prince at this hour runs as follows: "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the crucified King of Israel." If they carry the bastion of substitution, if they can throw down the great truth of atonement, then all the rest will go as a matter of course. The cross taken away, indeed, there is nothing left worth defending. Therefore let us gather up our strength, that we may vigorously chase the vultures from the altar of the living God.

5. "How are we to do it?" says one. Well, we can all of us help in this struggle.

(1) First, by a constant, immovable faith in Jesus Christ our crucified Saviour for ourselves.

(2) Let your own confidence be strong, and then very frequently make an open declaration of your faith in the atoning Sacrifice.

## II. But now let us apply this example of Abram to ourselves in the matter of THE GRATEFUL SACRIFICE OF OUR LIVES.

It is our reasonable service, that we present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God by our Lord Jesus Christ, and we must guard our consecration against the temptations which will assail it. I am addressing many of you who feel that you have entered into covenant with God by Jesus Christ. "What sort of vultures will there be?" says one. Well, there will come doubts as to eternal things. There will be questions about your own wisdom in giving yourself up to God. I hope you have been strangers to such birds of prey, but some of us have not been: doubts as to whether there be a God to serve; doubts as to whether there be a heaven, an eternal future, a blessed reward; doubts as to whether it is well to give up this world for the next, or not, Drive them away! They may come in other forms, such as dreams of ambition, the cares of life, temptations to sin, idleness, etc. In whatever guise they come, drive them away.

## III. GUARD ALL THE SACRIFICES OF YOUR DEVOTION.

When the fowls come down upon your sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and meditation, drive them away. A little boy, who was accustomed to spend a time every day in prayer, went up into a hayloft, and when he climbed into the hayloft, he always pulled the ladder up after him. Someone asked him why he did so. He answered, "As there is no door, I pull up the ladder." Oh, that we could always in some way cut the connection between our soul and the intruding things which lurk below! There is a story told of me and of some person, I never knew who it was, who desired to see me on a Saturday night, when I had shut myself up to make ready for the Sabbath. He was very great and important, and so the maid came to say that someone desired to see me. I bade her say that it was my rule to see no one at that time. Then he was more important and impressive still, and said, "Tell Mr. Spurgeon that a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see him immediately." The frightened servant brought the message; but the sender gained little by it, for my answer was, "Tell him I am busy with his Master, and cannot see servants now." Sometimes you must use strong measures. Did not our Lord tell His messengers, on one occasion, to salute no man by the way? Courtesy must give place to devotion. It is incumbent on you that you should be alone with your Lord, and if intruders force an entrance, they must be sent about their business.

See full sermon

- [Genesis 15:11 Driving Away the Vultures from the Sacrifice](#)

**Genesis 15:12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.**

- deep (KJV): Ge 2:21 1Sa 26:12 Job 4:13,14 33:15 Da 10:8,9 Ac 20:9
- horror (KJV): Ps 4:3-5 Ac 9:8,9
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

## ABRAM'S DEEP SLEEP

**Now when the sun was going down** - Butler comments "God did not immediately come and pass between the pieces of the carcasses. Abraham had to wait a while for God to come and pass through the carcasses. Waiting tests our dedication as much as anything. King Saul failed the waiting test miserably (1 Samuel 13:8-13). Abraham, however, waited till God came. He kept the birds away and stayed put till God verified the covenant. If you want blessing from God, you must wait on God's time. The Psalmist said, *"On thee do I wait all the day"* (Psalm 25:5); *"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord"* (Psalm 27:14); and *"Those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth"* (Psalm 37:9). If you want an inheritance of any kind, you must do some waiting. Abraham was practicing that waiting for his land inheritance in this waiting for God to come and pass between the pieces of the animals in this covenant ceremony which God had ordered." (Analytical Bible Expositor – Genesis)

**A a deep sleep fell upon Abram:** "deep sleep" (tardemah) is the same word Moses used to describe **Adam** when God took his rib to make his wife Eve (Ge 2:21). This verb also describes **Jonah's** sleep aboard ship as he was fleeing from God (Jonah 1:5).

**Deep sleep** ([08639](#))(tardemah from radam = to be in or fall into heavy sleep) means a deep sleep, sleepiness; lethargy. This feminine noun developed from the verbal root, radam, appears seven times in the OT. The initial occurrence is in Gen 2:21, "a deep sleep." It is used to describe the state in which Abram had his vision of God (Ge 15:12). In 1Sa 26:12, "a deep sleep" is sent upon Saul and his army when pursuing David. The same connotation of "insensitivity" to danger is presented in Isa 29:10 and Job 4:13; Job 33:15. All of these texts present "sleep" as the profundity of divine intervention. It is God who casts such sleep or sleeplessness upon his chosen servant. **Tardemah** occurs also in Pr 19:15 describing figuratively the effect of laziness or slothfulness (they don't even realize their state of "somnolence"!)

Genesis 2:21 So the LORD God caused a **deep sleep** to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

Genesis 15:12 Now when the sun was going down, a **deep sleep** fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

1 Samuel 26:12 So David took the spear and the jug of water from beside Saul's head, and they went away, but no one saw or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a **sound sleep** from the LORD had fallen on them.

Job 4:13 "Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When **deep sleep** falls on men,

Job 33:15 "In a dream, a vision of the night, When **sound sleep** falls on men, While they slumber in their beds,

Proverbs 19:15 Laziness casts into a **deep sleep**, And an idle man will suffer hunger.

Isaiah 29:10 For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of **deep sleep**, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers.

The Lxx word for **deep sleep** is **ekstasis** (English > "ecstasy")

1. universally, in Greek writing, any casting down of a thing from its proper place or state; displacement (Aristotle, Plutarch).
2. a throwing of the mind out of its normal state, alienation of mind, whether such as makes a lunatic (Deut. 28:28), or that of the man who by some sudden emotion is transported as it were out of himself, so that in this rapt condition, although he is awake, his mind is so drawn off from all surrounding objects and wholly fixed on things divine that he sees nothing but the forms and images lying within, and thinks that he perceives with his bodily eyes and ears realities shown him by God (Acts 10:10; Acts 11:5; Acts 22:17, cf. 2 Cor. 12:2f).
3. the state of one who, either owing to the importance or the novelty of an event, is thrown into a state of blended fear and wonder: Mark 16:8; 5:42 (Ezek. 26:16); Luke 5:26; Acts 3:10; trembling, Gen. 27:33; 1 Sam. 14:15 2 Chr. 14:14

Why this description of Abram asleep? he clearly did not participate in the cutting of the covenant ceremony & thus was totally dependent upon the promises of God.

**And behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him:**

**Nelson Study Bible on terror and great darkness :** "These two words give great emphasis to the meaning: "an overwhelmingly dark horror." This kind of reaction to the indescribable holiness of the Lord is natural—Abram was about to experience the presence of the Almighty. This was a moment of profound dread and holy awe. (**Ed:** See especially the reaction of Isaiah below)

Isaiah 6:3-5-note And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. . Then I said, **"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."** (John 12:41 These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. = Isaiah saw Jesus, here called Jehovah! See [Jehovah = Jesus](#))

Psalms 113:4-6 The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. 5 Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high, 6 Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth?

Isaiah 40:25 "To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal?" says the Holy One.

**Spurgeon** - He had asked for a manifestation, a sign, a token, and, lo, it comes in the "horror of great darkness." Do not be afraid, beloved, if your soul sometimes knows what horror is. Remember how the favored three, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "feared as they entered into the cloud;" yet it was there that they were to see their Master in his glory. Remember what the Lord said to Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem and his people, They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." That is the right spirit in which to receive prosperity, but as for adversity, rejoice in it, for God often sends the richest treasures to his children in wagons drawn by black horses. You may except that some great blessing is coming nigh to you when a "horror of great darkness" falls upon you.

---

### Oswald Chambers - Vision and darkness

An horror of great darkness fell upon him. Genesis 15:12.

Whenever God gives a vision to a saint, He puts him, as it were, in the shadow of His hand, and the saint's duty is to be still and listen. There is a darkness which comes from excess of light, and then is the time to listen. Genesis 16 is an illustration of listening to good advice when it is dark instead of waiting for God to send the light. When God gives a vision and darkness follows, wait. God will make you in accordance with the vision He has given if you will wait His time. Never try and help God fulfil His word. Abraham went through thirteen years of silence, but in those years all self-sufficiency was destroyed; there was no possibility left of relying on commonsense ways. Those years of silence were a time of discipline, not of displeasure. Never pump up joy and confidence, but stay upon God (cf. Isaiah 50:10, 11). Have I any confidence in the flesh? Or have I got beyond all confidence in myself and in men and women of God, in books and prayers and ecstasies; and is my confidence placed now in God Himself, not in His blessings? "I am the Almighty God"—El-Shaddai, the Father-Mother God. The one thing for which we are all being disciplined is to know that God is real. As soon as God becomes real, other people become shadows. Nothing that other saints do or say can ever perturb the one who is built on God.

**Genesis 15:13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years."**

- thy (KJV): Ge 17:8 Ex 1:1-2:25 5:1-23 22:21 23:9 Lev 19:34 De 10:19 Ps 105:11 Ps 105:12,23-25 Ac 7:6,7 Heb 11:8-13
- four (KJV): Ex 12:40,41 Ga 3:17
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

## THE VOICE OF GOD BREAKS THROUGH THE DARKNESS

**God said to Abram** (Heb 6:13): note Abram's state in Ge 15:12 so it seems he has now attained a wakeful state.

**Know for certain** - This answers to Abram's question in Ge 15:8 [note](#). It is fascinating that this same emphatic phrase (see note below) in one use promises sure judgment ("you will surely die" = Ge 2:17) and here in Ge 15:13 promises sure grace and mercy! In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy! (Hab 3:2-note) Hallelujah! Thank You Jesus for being our Atonement!

**Know for certain:** ("You can be sure" NCV, NLT) The Hebrew verb for know (yada) is repeated (yada, yada...). And so technically the Hebrew phrase "know for certain" is emphatic and also conveys the sense of an imperative or command. The Septuagint translates the yada yada with a similar repetition in the Greek - [ginosko, ginosko!](#)

Abram is to **be absolutely certain** of the truthfulness of the prophetic passage to follow. God knows and is in full control of the future. On this basis we, like Abram, need have no doubts when the Lord reveals His intentions to us. Abram knew on the basis of God's word alone. We know, not only because God is the One Who speaks to us, but because we can look back, as Abram could not, on fulfilled prophecy. The tragedy in many evangelical churches is that they tend to avoid the topic of eschatology, viewing it as too controversial or potentially divisive. This is a tragic error, because God has a plan for the ages and has revealed it step by step not to cause arguments but to undergird our faith in His Word, especially His Word concerning the future. The 400 years in Egypt, the slavery imposed on Abram's descendants, the punishment of Egypt, and the Exodus deliverance are history today. Everything happened just as God said it would. One of my favorite passages are the words uttered by a dying man who had experienced firsthand the faithfulness of God. Joshua knowing he would soon fall asleep in the Lord gave this stirring testimony to God's faithful Word of Truth...

"Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.** (Joshua 23:14)

**Comment:** And beloved, not one word of all the good words God has given us as His children will fail. All will be fulfilled. You can stake your life on it!!!

**That your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs** One other feature of the covenant is notable as well. God gave a sign of its veracity by making a prophecy, which, if fulfilled, would verify the covenant (Dt 18:21-22). Ge 15:13-16 were fulfilled literally, both in Abraham's death, and in the Egyptian sojourn and Exodus. Note that while the sojourn in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years (Ex 12:40), the oppression God prophesied was to endure for four hundred years, so we can be sure the Egyptian oppression started thirty years after Israel moved to Egypt. Note, too, that Lu 3:32,33 lists Nahshon as the fourth generation after Hezron (who went into Egypt [Ge 46:12]), and as Nahshon was the leader of Judah in the Exodus (Nu 2:3), the



prophecy of v.16 was also fulfilled literally. Is not the Bible amazing in its detailed perfection?

**Where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years** (quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:6): Numerous commentaries try to explain why "400", "430" & "450" -- but it is reasonable to consider "400" as an approximate figure (don't let that stop you from studying the specific Scriptures for you may arrive at a more specific answer)-- In Ex 12:40, 41 we read that the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, were sojourners for 430 years, to the very day. In Ga 3:17 Paul says that the period from the confirming of the Abrahamic Covenant until the giving of the Law was 430 years. Some have proposed Israel was in Egypt 430 years but the last 400 they were slaves.

The words of God in the covenant ceremony assured Abram that his descendants would definitely be in the land, although a detour into Egypt would delay fulfillment until long after his demise.

**Apologetics Study Bible:** Some scholars hold that Moses, or a later editor of Genesis, is here simply projecting a knowledge of later history into the narrative in the guise of advance prophecy. The logic is that it could not possibly have been known in Abram's time (2000 B.C.) that Israel would be in Egypt for "400 years" and that they would be "enslaved and oppressed" for most of that period. Such a perspective, however, is rooted in an antisupernatural bias and flies in the face of the bulk of predictive biblical prophecy that has been fulfilled in amazing detail.

**William MacDonald** comments that "The 400 years mentioned in [Ge 15:13, 14] and in [Acts 7:6] refer to the time of Israel's harsh affliction in Egypt. Jacob and his family were not in bondage when they first came to Egypt. On the contrary, they were treated quite royally. The 430 years in [Ex 12:40, 41] refer to the total time the people of Israel spent in Egypt—to the very day. This is an exact figure. The 430 years in [Ga 3:17] cover approximately the same period as [Ex 12:40, 41]. They are reckoned from the time that God confirmed the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob, just as Jacob was preparing to enter Egypt (Ge 46:14), and they extend to the giving of the Law, about three months after the Exodus."

**Zodhiates** - God gave Abraham a preview of events in his family's future up to the point of their possession of the land which He had promised. They would first be temporary residents in a strange land for 400 years and become slaves. Their bondage in Egypt was certainly a part of God's overall plan. Four hundred years is a round figure. There is no conflict with the 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40, 41. The four generations of their sojourn should be understood as four lifetimes. One hundred years would have been a conservative estimate for one lifetime in patriarchal times. (AMG's Complete Word Study Bible Notes)

**Henry Morris** - This may be intended as a round number, the more precise value being 430 years (Exodus 12:40). (Following note on Exodus 12:41). These 430 years of "sojourning" in Egypt (Exodus 12:40) seems to conflict with the statement by God to Abraham that his seed would be a stranger in a land that would "afflict them four hundred years" (Genesis 15:13) and the similar statement by Stephen (Acts 7:6). These amounts are not just round numbers. Note the stress on "the selfsame day." Varied interpretations have been offered for the discrepancy of the thirty years but the most appropriate seems the inference that the first thirty years in Egypt (seventeen years before Jacob died, thirteen years after his death) were years of favor under Pharaoh, but when the new king arose "which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8), then the Israelites were soon resented and persecuted, and eventually enslaved, remaining in disfavor for exactly 400 years.

**W A Criswell** - In this strategic revelation Abram learned of God's plan for the Egyptian bondage of "four hundred years" (an approximate figure -- cf. Ex. 12:40). This revelation is a thematic stitch sewing the Book of Genesis to the rest of the Pentateuch.

**Spurgeon** - It was to be a long while before the nation should enter upon its inheritance. Here is a promise that was to take four hundred years to ripen! Some of you cannot believe the promise if its fulfillment is delayed for four days; you can hardly keep on praying, if it takes four years; what would you think of a four hundred years promise? Yet it was to be so long in coming to maturity because it was so vast. If Abraham's seed was to be like the stars of heaven for multitude, there must be time for the increase to come.

---

### Rod Mattoon - A Glimpse at the Future

Abram falls into a deep sleep and God reveals to him a prophecy of future events for his descendants. Notice the seven points of the prophecy.

1. **Strangers** in a foreign land. Ge 15:13; 46:2-4
2. **Servants** in this land. Ge 15:13; Ex. 1:7-14
3. **Span** of affliction is 400 years. Ge 15:13, 16
4. The **Sentence** upon this nation... God would judge it. Ge 15:14; Ex. 7-12
5. The **Sparing** of Abram from judgment. Ge 15:15; 25:7, 8
6. The **Safari** from Egypt to Israel. Ge 15:14
7. The **Spoils** from Egypt brought out. Ge 15:14; Ex. 12:35, 36 (Ibid)

---

**W H Griffith-Thomas - V. The Message of the Covenant (Ge 15:13-16).**—A fourfold revelation now comes from God, and Abraham is told of remarkable experiences which should accrue to his seed. His seed is to endure great privation (Ge 15:13). Exile, bondage, and affliction are the three elements of this privation. He was to learn the meaning of heirship through suffering. (Cf. Rom. 8:17.)

**N.B.—The term of 400 years seems to be a round number for 430**(Exod. 12:40; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17). The 430 years may date from the birth of Isaac or from the death of Jacob, according to the computation chosen.

His seed is to witness the display of great power (Ge 15:14). The nation that would cause trouble to his seed would be punished, and his seed should come forth with abundant provision by God's help.

He himself is to experience great peace (Ge 15:15). This is the first hint that Abraham himself was not to realise personally the fulness of God's purpose. God leads us step by step without revealing everything at once; and as revelation after revelation came to Abraham the horizon of God's purpose extended wider and wider. Abraham is to die in peace and be buried in a good old age. He is to be gathered 'to his fathers'—which means, as they were not buried in Canaan, that he would be with them in Sheol.

And he is called to exercise great patience (Ge 15:16). Another hint of the wide sweep of the Divine purposes. Other factors were at work, and many conditions had to be fulfilled before God's purpose could be completely realised. ([Genesis 15:7-21 The Confirmation of Faith](#))

---

**Question: "Why did God send the Israelites to Egypt for 400 years (Genesis 15:13)?"**

Answer: In Genesis 15:13, the Lord tells Abraham, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years." God knows everything that will happen, and He revealed part of the future to Abraham. God's plan included sending the Jews to Egypt for four hundred years.

As for why, some information is provided in the context of this verse. Verses 14-16 read, "But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. . . . And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Two major predictions help explain this 400-year waiting period.

First, one result of the Israelites' leaving Egypt would be "great possessions." Of course, in order to leave Egypt, they had to be there. God promised that their exit would mean great abundance for Israel. This was fulfilled in Exodus 12. When the Israelites left Egypt following the tenth plague, they were told to ask the Egyptians for items of value for their journey. "The people of Israel . . . asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians" (verses 35-36).

Second, the Lord wanted to wait before giving the Promised Land to Israel because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." The Amorites worshiped other gods and participated in numerous other sins. God promised to remove them from the land where Israel would one day live. However, God had a certain time period in mind that included 400 years for Israel in Egypt. He is surely "slow to anger, and abounding in mercy" (Psalm 103:8). Once the Israelites did return to the land promised to them, the Amorites were destroyed as the Lord predicted (Numbers 21:31-32; Joshua 10:10; 11:8).

God certainly could have chosen a different way or a different time frame for placing the Israelites in their Promised Land, but He chose a particular way to bring glory to Himself. The 400-year sojourn in Egypt included many examples of God's wisdom and might. Joseph's preservation of the Israelites during a famine, Moses' rise to leadership, and God's great miracles such as the crossing of the Red Sea were all part of Israel's time in Egypt. ([Gotquestions](#) - recommended resource)

---

**Woodrow Kroll - Genesis 15:13-14 We Win - Life can be tough; it can also be scary. Maybe you wonder where you'll ever find the courage to face a fearful future. That's the question someone asked Billy Graham; he responded, "I've read the last chapter of Revelation, and we win."**

As God revealed to Abraham the fate of his descendants, it sounded less than exciting. For 400 years they would be the slaves of another nation. Have you ever wondered what kept them going when they were oppressed and mistreated by the Egyptians? Maybe it was God's promise, "I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions." In other words, in the end, "you win." Yes, along the way there would be hardships and affliction, but when Israel got to the bottom line, those who afflicted them would be judged and they would be rewarded. This was not a "maybe," but something God promised that Abraham could "know certainly." Your life, too, is bound to have its share of heartache and sadness. No one can pass through their years on earth without some mistreatment and unfairness. You may even echo the cry of the prophet Habakkuk: "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' And You will not save" (Hab 1:2-[note](#)). In the midst of the pain, however, you must always cling to the unchangeable truth that in the end we win. When you experience bone-crunching difficulties, meditate on verses such as 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18 ([note](#)) and Revelation 7:14, 15, 16, 17 (see notes [Revelation 7:14](#); [15](#); [16](#); [17](#)) and Rev 21:4 ([note](#)). Take comfort in the truth that, despite what you may be going through right now, in the end, you win. The present is bearable when we're confident that the future is glorious. ([Back to the Bible](#))

**Genesis 15:14 "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."**

- that (KJV): Ge 46:1-34 Ex 6:5,6 7:1-14:31 De 4:20 6:22 7:18,19 11:2-4 Jos 24:4-7,17 1Sa 12:8 Ne 9:9-11 Ps 51:4 78:43-51 105:27-37 Ps 135:9,14
- with (KJV): Ex 3:21,22 12:35,36 Ps 105:37
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve:** God fulfilled this prophecy in the ten plagues (Exodus 7:1-11:10).

**And afterward they will come out with many possessions**

Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said. 32 "Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also." 33 The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. 35 Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; 36 and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. (Ex 12:31-36):

**Morris** comments - This was the Lord's way of constraining the Egyptians to repay the Israelites for the slave labor from which they had benefited for so long. The word "lent" could better be rendered "gave" and, in the previous verse, "asked" could be "borrowed."

---

**Genesis 15:15 "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age."**

---

- And thou (KJV): Ge 25:8 Nu 20:24 27:13 Jud 2:10 Job 5:26 Ec 12:7 Ac 13:36
- in peace (KJV): 2Ch 34:28 Ps 37:37 Isa 57:1,2 Da 12:13 Mt 22:32 Heb 6:13-19 Heb 11:13-16
- buried (KJV): Ge 23:4,19 25:8,9 35:29 49:29,31 50:13 Ec 6:3 Jer 8:1,2
- good (KJV): Ge 25:7,8 1Ch 23:1 29:28 Job 5:26 42:17
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace** This is a euphemistic way of speaking about death, analogous to the NT description of a believer's death as "falling asleep" (in the arms of Jesus). So writers feel this word to Abram may include the promise of life after death as well (Ge 25:8, 35:29, 49:33).

Abram was a righteous man (Ge 15:6), as described by Isaiah...

The **righteous man** perishes, and no man takes it to heart; And devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from evil, **He enters into peace**; They rest in their beds, Each one who walked in his upright way. (Isaiah 57:1; 2)

The book of Daniel ends with a promise to Daniel which is similar to that given to Abram...

But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion (cp Abram's great reward - Ge 15:1-[note](#)) at the end of the age." (Daniel 12:13 )

**Peace** ([07965](#))/([shalom](#) from **salam/salem/shalam** = remain whole and enjoy fine health [1Ki 7:51, Neh 6:18]) signifies a sense of well-being and harmony both within and without, a wholeness, healthiness, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, fullness, absence of agitation or discord, a state of calm without anxiety or stress. The root meaning of **shalom** is to be whole or sound and this leads to translations that speak of completeness, wholeness, well-being, welfare and peace. **Shalom** also includes the idea of vigor and vitality in all dimensions of life. In short, **shalom** speaks of holistic ("holy") health for our souls and spirits.

**Boice** - Shalom is a large, embracing word for the good that comes to the one God favors.

**Guzik** - The Hebrew word is **shalom**, which is more than the cessation of hostility - it is God's word for wholeness and goodness and **total satisfaction in life. This is the abundant life Jesus promised!** (John 10:10)... shalom... is the gift of precious well-being... it is the establishment of a lasting, righteous, good. (Commentary on Nu 6:24-26) ([Commentary](#))

**Matthew Henry** - Whenever a godly man dies, he dies in peace. If the way be piety, the end is peace, Psal. 37:37. Outward peace, to the last, is promised to Abram, peace and truth is his days, whatever should come afterwards (2 Kings 20:19); peace with God, and everlasting peace, are sure to all the seed.

**You will be buried at a good old age** "Abraham's **"good old age"** was 175 yrs (Ge 25:7), which means he walked with God for a century (Ge 12:4). In spite of Abraham's occasional failures, he accomplished the will of God and brought blessing to the whole world. This promise from God must have given Abraham and Sarah great encouragement during times of difficulty, just as promises like Php 1:6 and Ep 2:10 encourage God's people today." (Wiersbe)

**Henry** on what constitutes **a good old age** - [1.] Old age is a blessing. It is promised in the fifth commandment; it is pleasing to nature; and it affords a great opportunity for usefulness. [2.] Especially, if it be a good old age. Theirs may be called a good old age, First, That are old and healthful, not loaded with such distempers as make them weary of life. Secondly, That are old and holy, old disciples (Acts 21:16), whose hoary head is found in the way of righteousness (Proverbs 16:31), old and useful, old and exemplary for godliness; theirs is indeed a good old age.

**Woodrow Kroll - Genesis 15:15-16 The Patience of God - For the most part, people are very impatient. The moment the stoplight turns green, the driver behind us invariably honks his horn. You can just see the frustration and impatience in the faces of those caught in a long line at the grocery store checkout stand. Fortunately, God demonstrates a great deal more restraint than we do.**

When God revealed to Abraham some things yet to come, He advised him that his descendants would not return to the land for four generations because "the iniquity of the Amorites" was not yet complete. Even though these people were pagans, God continued to demonstrate patience toward them. With Abraham dwelling in their midst (Ge. 13:7), there was always the possibility that individuals, if not the nation as a whole, might turn to the God of Abraham. While man might have brought swift judgment, God graciously gave these people over 400 more years to turn from their idolatry and embrace the living God. The apostle Peter spoke of this same graciousness. He reminded his readers, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pe 3:9-[note](#)). Satan loves to convince us that God's patience with us has come to an end. He tries to persuade us that we have sinned just one time too often and God has washed His hands of us. But we must reject this lie. While we must not abuse God's patience, He still stands ready to forgive and receive us back when we repent. Be confident that you can never deplete the patience of God, if your heart is pure and your repentance sincere. The perverseness of man cannot exhaust the patience of God. ([Back to the Bible](#))

**Genesis 15:16 "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."**

- in the (KJV): Ex 12:40
- Amorites (KJV): 1Ki 21:26 2Pe 3:8,9
- not (KJV): Da 8:23 Zec 5:5-11 Mt 23:32-35 1Th 2:16
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:16 Map of the Land Promised by God to Abraham \(The Royal Grant to Abraham\)](#)
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole

## ISRAEL RETURNS TO THE LAND WHEN AMORITE INIQUITY FULL

**Then in the fourth generation they will return here:** Fulfilled prophecy (Joshua 23:14).

We do well to remember that knowledge about the future gives assurance in the present. So let us study the prophecies of the past (study especially the Old Testament), that we might be all that much more assured of those yet to come!

**Henry Morris** comments " It is not absolutely certain whether the 430 year term mentioned in the Abrahamic covenant begins with the coming of Abraham into Canaan or the descent of the children of Israel into Egypt. The former seems indicated by Galatians 3:16,17 in which case the "sojourning" mentioned in Exodus 12:40 and the "affliction" of Genesis 15:13 would apply to their total experience in both Canaan and Egypt. If this is the case, then the actual sojourn in Egypt would be only 215 years (the time of Abram's entry into Canaan to the birth of Isaac was 25 years; Isaac was 60 years old at Jacob's birth; and Jacob was 130 years old when he and his children migrated to Egypt, a total of 215 years--see Genesis 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 47:9). The "fourth generation" consisted of men whose great-grandfathers had been among the seventy Israelites who entered Egypt. Even if the children of Israel actually stayed 400 years in Egypt, the life span in those days was still around 100 or more (Moses died at 120), so it would have easily been possible for people of the fourth generation still to be living at the time of the exodus. There is also the problem of whether 215 years could have been enough time for the Israelite population to grow from about seventy to about two million. Although this seems unlikely, it would have been possible if the average family size had been about eight children (remember that Jacob himself had twelve) and the average life span still about 100 years, with parents living to see their great-grandchildren grow to maturity. In contrast, consider the notes at Exodus 6:16 and 12:41."

Notice that comparing **fourth generation** with **400 years** in Ge 15:13 would make the average life span of a generation 100 years, Abraham's age when he had his first child Isaac (Ge 21:5). This length of time (100 years) as "defining" a generation is not at all unreasonable given the ages of other contemporaneous figures - Jacob 147 years old (Ge 47:28); Joseph lived to be 110 (Ge 50:22, 26); and Moses lived to be 120 (Dt 34:7).

**For** - Always pause to ponder this helpful [term of explanation](#). What is Moses explaining in this context?

## THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD WILL GIVE WAY TO THE JUSTICE OF GOD

**For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete:** These pagan inhabitants of Canaan must eventually be exterminated. But God often allows evil to run its course, sometimes to the seeming detriment of His people, before He judges it. He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish—even the depraved Amorites (2 Pe 3:9). He also allows evil to come to fruition so that the awful consequences of wickedness can be clear to all. Thus His wrath is demonstrated to be completely righteous (cp Ro 3:26). In a sense, the Lord was granting a stay of execution for the peoples of Canaan (Ge 12:5).

**Iniquity** (05771) ('**avon** from verb '**avah** = to bend, twist, distort) describes the iniquity, evil, punishment or guilt which is associated with a twisting of the standard or deviation from it. Since there is a deliberate twisting or perverting, '**avon** describes sin that is particularly evil. It may also describe the punishment or disaster that befalls those who practice wickedness. '**Avon** also describes a conscious twisting or distorting as implied by the fact that David says "I kept myself from my iniquity." (2Sa 22:24) Israel made a choice to return to the sins of her ancestors (Jer. 11:10; 13:22). The punishment that goes with this deliberate act as a consequence is indicated by the word also (Ge 4:13; Isa 53:11). This word for sin can also indicate the guilt that results from the act of sin as implied in Moses' prayer in Nu 14:19. In Pr 5:22 Solomon warns (and sadly failed to heed his own warning - see 1Ki 11:1-11) of the captivating power of '**avon** - "His own iniquities ('**avon**) will capture (Heb - **lakad** = catch in a net, trap or pit, figuratively of entrapment of men caught in snares laid by enemies as in Jer 5:26; 18:22; Ps 35:8; Lxx translates lakad with verb **agreuo** used in " hunting or fishing = to take, catch; figuratively of taking advantage of someone in an unguarded moment, seeking to catch them in a mistake, try to get them to make a wrong statement as in Mk 12:13) the wicked, and he will be held (Heb = **tamak** = basic idea = "grasping securely!") with the cords of his sin (**chattat/chattath**)."

**Avon** is the Hebrew word which most distinctly unites sins of all kinds with their penal consequences. Avon is not only the iniquity but can also indicate the guilt that results from the act.

**Avon** is translated in the Lxx with **hamartia** which literally conveys the idea of missing the mark as when hunting with a bow and arrow (in Homer some hundred times of a warrior hurling his spear but missing his foe). Later **hamartia** came to mean missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. **Hamartia** in the Bible signifies a departure from God's holy, perfect standard of what is right in word or deed (righteous). It pictures the idea of missing His appointed goal (His will) which results in a deviation from what is pleasing to Him. In short, sin is conceived as a missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is the Triune God Himself. As **Martin Luther** put it "*Sin is essentially a departure from God.*"

**Ryrie** adds that sin "*is not only a negative idea but includes the positive idea of hitting some wrong mark*"

**Matthew Henry** on the iniquity full...

- (1.) The measure of sin fills gradually. Those that continue impenitent in wicked ways are treasuring up unto themselves wrath.
- (2.) Some people's measure of sin fills slowly. The Sodomites, who were sinners before the Lord exceedingly, soon filled their measure; so did the Jews, who were, in profession, near to God. But the iniquity of the Amorites was long in the filling up.
- (3.) That this is the reason of the prosperity of wicked people; the measure of their sins is not yet full. The wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power, while God is laying up their iniquity for their children, Job 21:7, 19. See Matthew 23:32; Dt. 32:34.

**Albert Barnes** - For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. From this simple sentence we have much to learn.

**First.** The Lord foreknows the moral character of people.

**Second.** In his providence he administers the affairs of nations on the principle of moral rectitude.

**Third.** Nations are spared until their iniquity is full.

**Fourth.** They are then cut off in retributive justice.

**Fifth.** The Amorite was to be the chief nation extirpated for its iniquity on the return of the seed of Abram.

- Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament.

**Steven Cole on not yet complete** - That phrase tells us that God has a predetermined limit to which He allows nations to go in their sin before He steps in and judges them. It shows us the awesome sovereignty of God, who knows in advance when the sins of a nation will be ripe for judgment. It also shows us the great patience of the Lord, who "is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9-[note](#)).....While God's timetable is not always to our liking, it is always on schedule. While it seems that the wicked are prospering, God is keeping tally of their sins. When His time comes, judgment will fall. He is working all things in history after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11)! Even if we as His people suffer persecution or trials, we can trust His sovereign plan and be assured that God will fulfill His promises to His covenant people. Whatever view you take of biblical prophecy, the bottom line is the same: God's side is gonna win! We can trust Him and be assured that our salvation is secure because His Word reveals His great plan for the future! [Adoniram Judson](#), the great 19th century missionary to Burma, lost two wives and several children to death in that difficult land. He saw very little fruit from his labors, and had many discouragements and setbacks. Then a war between England and Burma broke out and Judson, being a foreigner, was imprisoned in squalid conditions. There, sick with fever, he received a letter from a friend who asked, "Judson, how's the outlook?" Judson penned his classic reply, "**The outlook is as bright as the promises of God!**"

**Complete (Whole, Full)** ([08003](#))([shalem](#)) is an adjective which describes something that is full, whole, made ready, perfected, complete. The Hebrew root **sh-l-m** implies completion, fulfillment, an entering into a state of wholeness and unity. **Shalem** describes iniquity which was not full or **complete** (Ge 15:16), stones which were **whole** (uncut) (Dt 27:6, Josh 8:31), stones that were whole or **finished** (for the Temple 1Ki 6:7), a weight that is **full** (Dt 25:15, Pr 11:1), wages that were **full** (abounding) (Ru 2:12), a **heart** that was **whole** (wholly devoted, complete, perfect - 1Ki 8:61, the antithesis = 1Ki 11:4), an army at **full** strength (Nah 1:12), a population, as **entire** or **whole** (taken captive) (Amos 1:6, 9), of hearts that were whole or undivided, wholly centered on the Lord (see below).

**Zodhiates** - The Amorite nation was one of the seven nations of Canaan and was governed by many independent kings (Josh. 5:1; 9:10). Originally they inhabited a mountain district in the south (Num. 13:29), but later they acquired an extensive tract of land from Moab, east of Jordan (Num. 21:26). They had many strong cities (Num. 32:17, 33). They were profane, wicked, and idolatrous (Josh. 24:15). They interfered with Israel at times (Num. 21:24), again were peaceful, but were finally brought into bondage by Solomon (1 Kgs. 9:20, 21). (AMG's Complete Word Study Bible Notes)

God describes their iniquity in Lev 18:24 in a warning to Israel - '

Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.

Those who condemn Israel (and God) for the way the Canaanites were treated seem to forget that God gave them centuries to repent of their wickedness.

And the NT gives us the Father's heart toward the lost...

2 Peter 3:8; 9- [note](#) But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

---

### Rod Mattoon - What was the iniquity of the Amorites?

The destiny of a nation is the result of the character of that nation. When the cup of iniquity is full, the cup of judgment must be drunk for we must reap what we sow. If we sow the wind, we reap the whirlwind. On the other hand, blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. The Amorites or Canaanites were a wicked people. They worshiped Baal which means "master, owner, lord." His symbol was a bull and was represented by the sun. The worship of Baal involved:

- **Burning** incense. 2 Kings 23:5
- **Cutting** oneself with knives and **crying** out. 1 Kings 18:26, 28
- **Offering** children on the fire to be burned. Jeremiah 19:5
- **Dancing**—lewd dancing was done in front of the idol.

The fertility goddess [Asheroth](#) was also worshiped. She was also known by the name Astarte and was represented by the moon. Part of her worship was cult [prostitution](#) ([Wikipedia](#))(2 Kings 23:7 ). If the Amorites were not destroyed, God knew His people would be affected by these people and fall into the same sinful trap. If you are a Christian, how would you describe your life? Are you living a godly life for Christ or a worldly life like the Amorites? May God help us to be the right kind of ambassadors for Christ. (Mattoon's Treasures from Genesis)

---

**Amorite - Holman Bible Dictionary** - A people who occupied part of the Promised Land and often fought Israel. Their history goes back before 2000 B.C. They took control of the administration of Babylonia for approximately 400 years (2000-1595), their most influential king being Hammurabi (1792-1750). Their descent to Canaan may be traced back to 2100-1800 when their settlement in the hill country helped to set the stage for the revelation of God through Israel. Abraham assisted Mamre the Amorite in recovering his land from four powerful kings (Genesis 14:1 ), but later the Amorites were a formidable obstacle to the Israelites' conquest and settlement of Canaan. They preferred living in the hills and valleys that flank both sides of the Jordan River. Sihon and Og, two Amorite kings, resisted the Israelites' march to Canaan as they approached east of the Jordan (Numbers 21:21-35 ); but after the Israelite victory here, Gad, Reuben and half of Manasseh settled in the conquered area. These two early victories over the Amorites foreshadowed continued success against other Amorites to the west and were often remembered in both history (e.g., Deuteronomy 3:8 ; Joshua 12:2 ; Judges 11:19 ) and poetry (Numbers 21:27-30 ; Psalm 135:10-12 ; Psalm 136:17-22 ). West of the Jordan, the Amorites lived in the hills along with the Hivites, Hittites, and Jebusites (Numbers 13:29 ; Joshua 11:3 ); but specific identification of Amorite cities cannot be certain since the term "Amorite" is used often as a very general name



for all the inhabitants of Canaan, as is "Canaanite" (e.g. Genesis 15:16 ; Joshua 24:15 ;Judges 6:10 ; 1 Kings 21:26 ). Five city-states in south Canaan formed an alliance instigated by the king of Jerusalem (Jebus, Jebusites) and intimidated an ally of Joshua, i.e. Gibeon. These "Amorites," as they are called in the general sense, were defeated by Joshua's army and the Lord's "stones from heaven" (Joshua 10:1-27 ). Amorites also were among those in the north who unsuccessfully united to repel the Israelites (Joshua 11:1-15 ). Later, two other Amorite cities, Aijalon and Shaalbim, hindered the settlement of Dan near the Philistine border (Judges 1:34-36 ).

**Amorite culture laid at the root of Jerusalem's decadence, according to Ezekiel** (Ezekiel 16:3 ,Ezekiel 16:3,16:45 ); and Amorite idolatry tainted the religion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (1 Kings 21:26 = Ahab - " He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the sons of Israel." ; 2 Kings 21:11 = ""Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols;"). Despite the Amorite resistance and poor influence, they were subjugated as slaves (Judges 1:35 = Key phrase in Judges 1 is "they did not drive out"! **What "Amorite" or "Canaanite" are you unwilling to drive out in your own life! You think you can make it your slave, but in fact you will become it's slave!**; 1 Kings 9:20-21 ; 2 Chronicles 8:7-8 ). Their past hindrance is a subject of derision for the prophet Amos ([Amos 2:9-10](#) ). See also [Canaan, History and Religion of](#)

- American Tract Society [Amorites](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Amorites](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Amorites](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Amorite \(the\)](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Mount of the Amorites](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Amorite](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Amorites](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Amorites](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Amorites](#)
- Watson' [Amorites](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Amorites](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Amorites](#) [Mount of the Amorites](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Amorites](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Mountain of the Amorites](#) [Amorite](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Amorites](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Amorites](#)

**Genesis 15:17 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.**

- smoking (KJV): Ex 3:2,3 De 4:20 Jud 6:21 13:20 1Ch 21:26 Isa 62:1 Jer 11:4
- a burning lamp (KJV): Heb. a lamp of fire, 2Sa 22:9
- passed (KJV): Jer 34:18,19
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

## CUTTING COVENANT THE "WALK OF DEATH"

**It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold:** Notice the word "**behold**" ([hinneh](#)) which is an interjection used often to express strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context. **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**There appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces:** Notice these items appeared. Abram had no part in their procurement as with the animals. Surely this underscores that this covenant is based solely on God's grace (His provision, unmerited by Abram) and not based on anything Abram could do to ratify the covenant (because he was sound asleep!)

**SMOKE** see Ex 19:18 - Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.

The Believer's Study Bible.

**FIRE** see Ex 13:21 - The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. **Criswell** writes "The figure of the "smoking oven" was comparable to Yahweh's self-revelation later to Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire."

**Oven...torch** - One incinerates, the other gives light. Exactly what they symbolize is debatable. We all need to be wary of falling into the potentially dangerous hermeneutical trap of spiritualizing or allegorizing texts such as this and totally miss God's intended meaning.

**Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary** - Now in heavy darkness, he saw supernatural light. **a smoking oven and a burning torch:** These symbols represented the glory of the Lord to Abram. Smoke and fire, with clouds and darkness, often precede God's acts of judgment (Ex. 19:16-20; Ps. 97:2-6; Isa.

6:1-5; Joel 2:2, 3; Zep. 1:14-16). This oven and torch imagery may indicate the impending judgment on Canaan, the promise that God's word to Abram will be kept.

**Steven Cole** - Abram saw a smoking oven and a flaming torch pass between the animal pieces (Ge 15:17), which are symbols of God. They would have reminded Moses' readers of the pillar of cloud and fire which had accompanied them in the wilderness. A similar manifestation of God occurred when Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. There were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain (Ex 19:16). These two symbols, the fire and the cloud, as Alexander Maclaren observes, point to the double aspect of God's nature, that "He can never be completely known; He is never completely hid." But also, "It speaks of that twofold aspect of the divine nature, by which to hearts that love He is gladsome light, and to unloving ones He is threatening darkness. As to the Israelites the pillar was light, and to the Egyptians darkness and terror; so the same God is joy to some, and dread to others.".....Just as God gave Abram a graphic picture of His covenant and its ratification to assure him, He has given us a graphic picture of the New Covenant He has made with us through Christ. In the symbols of the Lord's Supper, we have a visual reminder that God has entered into a covenant with us and that He will keep His promises. He initiated it by sending His Son to die for us. He chose us when we were dead in our sins. He sealed the covenant with Christ's blood. All we can do is receive what He has done. Our assurance of salvation doesn't depend on our shaky performance, but rather on God's sure promise. If our salvation rests on our choice of God, then you can never be sure of it. But if it rests on God's sovereign choice of us and on the finished work of Christ, we can be assured that "He who began a good work in [us] will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). There is a story told of Martin Luther, that one day the devil approached him and tried to get him to doubt his salvation by presenting the reformer with a long list of sins of which he was guilty. When he had finished, Luther said to him, "Think a little harder; you must have forgotten some." The devil did this and came up with more to add to the list. At the conclusion of this, Luther simply said, "That's fine. Now write across that list in red ink, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.'" There was nothing the devil could say to that. Assurance depends on God's sure promise, not on our shaky performance."([Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance)

**R C Sproul** - God alone takes upon Himself the covenant curse if he does not keep his promises to Abraham. God swears this oath before changing Abram's name to Abraham and before instituting the sign of circumcision (chap. 17). The Lord is pledging to fulfill his promise no matter what His people do.

**John Weldon** - In other words, God takes the entirety of the responsibility for fulfilling the covenant promises to himself alone. Why? Because he knows that he alone will be able to keep the covenant; Israel will not. In sum, no more powerful illustration could be provided, that God's multiple promises to Abraham will be fulfilled – than God swearing by himself, and himself alone (Significantly, he also does this in the book of Hebrews regarding the eternal security of individual salvation, Hebrews 6:16-18.) It is if God were saying, "If I don't keep my promises to you Abraham, I will meet the same fate of those animals; I will be cursed and die," which, of course, is forever impossible. Thus, the sovereign faithfulness of God in keeping his promises is powerfully made to Abraham in a way that is otherwise not possible. All of God's covenant promises to Abraham will be fulfilled ([God's Heart for Israel](#)).

**There appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces:** According to the ancient Eastern manner of making a covenant, both the contracting parties passed through the divided pieces of the slain animals, thus symbolically attesting that they pledged their very lives to the fulfillment of the engagement they made (Jer 34:8, 18, 19). The symbol would be evident to all: "May I become like this if I do not keep my part of the deal." In this covenant Abraham did not pass through the pieces because it is an unconditional covenant made by God, ratified by God, never to be changed or altered.

God alone, whose presence was symbolized by the smoking furnace and lamp of fire, passed through the midst of the pieces of the slain animals, while Abram was simply a spectator (actually asleep) of this wonderful exhibition of God's free grace. This signified that it was an **unconditional covenant**, dependent for fulfillment on God alone. The fulfillment of the promise of God to Abram, the Abrahamic covenant, is as sure as is the ongoing life of the Lord!

- See related discussion of the so-called '[Walk of Death](#)' in the covenant ceremony.

We see a description of this ancient ceremony in Jeremiah where the men of Judah had taken the **'walk of death'** which speaks of the solemn and binding nature of covenant. Tragically, they broke the covenant and incurred the just penalty of death pronounced by Jehovah Himself..

"Although recently you had turned and done what is right in My sight, each man proclaiming release to his neighbor, and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. 16"Yet you turned and profaned My name, and each man took back his male servant and each man his female servant whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your male servants and female servants." 17 "Therefore thus says the LORD, '**You have not obeyed Me** in proclaiming release each man to his brother and each man to his neighbor. Behold, I am proclaiming a release to you,' declares the LORD, '**to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine** and I will make you a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 18 'I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, **when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts** (the [WALK OF DEATH](#))—19 the officials of Judah and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers and the priests and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf (Jeremiah 34:15-19)

**Comment:** Beloved, can I digress for just a moment? Our 21st century mindset has almost no concept of the solemnity associated with cutting a covenant in the ancient world (See [Solemn and Binding](#)). And this has had tragic consequences, specifically in marriages where one party chooses to break the covenant and walk away because of "irreconcilable differences." Now I am NOT advocating staying with someone who is placing your life in danger! But most divorces are not based on that degree of "difference!" O, would young couples come to know the faithfulness of their Covenant Keeping God Who has chosen to interact with us based primarily on this truth (see New Covenant and believers as Christ's Bride!) I would hazard a guess that if couples preparing for marriage truly understood the gravity of the covenant into which they entered, they would either not enter it or they would truly hold on "till death do us part!" The only way I would perform a marriage ceremony would be if the couple would walk through an animal that had been cut in two and made the promise so be done to me as to this animal if I ever break this covenant vow. Now I am not advocating capital punishment but I am advocating that the parties symbolically consider the serious, binding nature of their mutual vows. I think there would be far fewer divorces! I know for a fact that there is at least ONE LESS divorce in America because a couple grasped the truth of the marriage covenant -- this is my testimony to God's grace to resurrect

our marriage with a providentially timed study of God's covenants after we had been married about 15 years (we have now been married 48 years thanks to God's truth of Covenant). If you are interested in more discussion of this important topic see...

- [The Covenant of Marriage](#)

**Henry Morris** - Although this is the first time God's promises to Abram are actually called a covenant, its terms merely confirm and clarify the initial promise in Genesis 12:7. Its ultimate fulfillment is yet future, although it received a precursive and token fulfillment under Solomon (1 Kings 8:65) and possibly Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25).

**The IVP Bible Background Commentary** - Second-millennium Hittite texts use a similar procedure for purification, while some first-millennium Aramaic treaties use such a ritual for placing a curse on any violation of the treaty. Texts from Mari and Alalakh feature the killing of animals as part of the ceremony of making a treaty. Walking through this sacrificial pathway could be seen as a symbolic action enacting both the covenant's promise of land and a curse on the one who violates the promise.....The **firepot** is made of earthenware and could be of various sizes. It functioned as an oven principally for baking, including the baking of grain offerings (Leviticus 2:4). The **torch** could certainly be used to provide light, but it is also used in military contexts or to speak of God's judgment (Zech. 12:6). Mesopotamian rituals of this period usually featured a sacred torch and censer in the initiation of rites, particularly nocturnal rites of purification. Purification would be accomplished by the torch and censer being moved alongside of someone or something. While in Mesopotamia the torch and oven represented particular deities, here they represent Yahweh, perhaps as the purifier. This would be one of many instances where the Lord used familiar concepts and motifs to reveal himself.

**David Baron** explains: According to the ancient Eastern manner of making a covenant, both the contracting parties passed through the divided pieces of the slain animals, thus symbolically attesting that they pledged their very lives to the fulfillment of the engagement they made (see Jer. 34:18,19). Now in Genesis 15, God alone, whose presence was symbolized by the smoking furnace and lamp of fire, passed through the midst of the pieces of the slain animals, while Abram was simply a spectator of this wonderful exhibition of God's free grace (Quoted in Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Rod Mattoon** - The fire and lamp are manifestations of God. The smoking furnace could have been a type of the tribulation to come in Egypt and the burning lamp a type of God's presence with them (Deut. 4:20). In India, the burning lamp or fire is still used to confirm a covenant. Fire is considered to be a witness of their covenant and if they break it, fire will be their destruction. In the ancient world, an oven or smoking firepot and a torch were two elements connected with sacrificial ritual. Notice that it was God's presence that passed between the animals. This covenant was solely based upon God's promise to Abram. (Ibid)

---

**W H Griffith-Thomas** - **VI. The Making of the Covenant (Ge 15:17-21).**—After the revelation of God's will comes the Divine assurance in the form of a covenant. The symbolical action is noteworthy (Ge 15:17). A cylindrical fire-pot and a fiery torch combined to symbolise and express the Divine presence (Exod. 19), and in condescension to Abraham and his experience this symbol of the Divine presence passed along the pathway made between the birds and the animals, thus ratifying the covenant and giving God's servant a Divine guarantee. Then comes a special assurance (Ge 15:18-21). God now reveals to His servant the precise limits of the land promised to him. It seems pretty clear that the two rivers referred to must be the Nile and the Euphrates, thus giving those complete boundaries of the Holy Land which have never yet been fully realised. (Cf. 1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chron. 9:26.) God's promises still await their perfect fulfilment, for His covenant with Abraham is absolutely unconditional, and will be realised in His own time. The study of the Divine covenants of the Bible is full of the profoundest interest: (1) With Noah, (2) with Abraham, (3) with Moses and Israel, (4) the New Covenant. Each has its own characteristic features and elements; and only one, the Mosaic, is conditional, a covenant of works. The other three are covenants 'all of grace.' Consider now the meaning and message of this Covenant.

**1. The Divine Action.**—It is noteworthy that God only passed through the pieces, and not Abraham as well. This clearly shows that a Divine covenant is not a mutual agreement on equal terms between two parties, but a Divine promise assured and ratified by means of a visible pledge of its fulfilment. This at once takes the Divine covenant out of the category of all similar human agreements. It is divinely one-sided. God promises, God gives, God assures (Heb. 6:17).

**2. The Human Attitude.**—What, then, is man's part in this covenant? Simply that of a recipient. God gives; Abraham takes. 'What shall I render unto the Lord?... I will take' (Ps. 116:12, 13). The attitude of the believer in response to this covenant of grace is fourfold: (1) A feeling of deep gratitude, (2) a response of whole-hearted trust, (3) an expression of hearty thanksgiving, (4) a life of loyal obedience. ([Genesis 15:7-21 The Confirmation of Faith](#))

---

**F B Meyer - Genesis 15:17 (Our Daily Homily)**

**Behold, a Smoking Furnace and a Flaming Torch**

Fire is the chosen emblem of God; and as these fire-emblems passed slowly between the divided carcasses it was as though God accommodated Himself to the methods of human oath-taking, and solemnly bound Himself. But in all His dealings with us He is prepared to be both a furnace and a torch.

**God as a Furnace.** - Take up a piece of iron ore, and see how the metal is scattered amid commoner substances. How can it be disintegrated? The chisel cannot do it, but fire will. Plunge it now into the fire; let it fall in the heart of the glowing furnace, and presently the stream of liquid metal will issue forth, pure and beautiful. It is thus that God deals with human hearts; the blood makes propitiation, but the fire cleanses. The love of God, the purity of God, the spirituality of God brought home to us by the Holy Ghost, search and try us to the innermost fibre of our being, and burn out of us the evils which had long held empire.

Refining Fire, go through my heart,  
Illuminate my soul;  
Scatter thy life through every part,  
And sanctify the whole.

**God as a flaming Torch.** - The torch guides the footsteps through the dark; and God's Spirit waits to shed light on many dark and hidden things, and to guide us into all the truth. It is one thing to comprehend by the intellect; it is altogether another to apprehend by the heart. There is no such teacher as God;

and the mistake of our modern religious life is to receive so much from man, instead of waiting in rapt silence until God Himself communicates His truth to us. The conditions are purity of desire, cleanness of heart, and willingness to obey.

---

## Promises Still Kept

Read: Genesis 15:5-21 | Bible in a Year: 2 Kings 7-9; John 1:1-28

When the sun went down . . . there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. —Genesis 15:17

In the ancient Near East a treaty between a superior (a lord or king) and an inferior (his subjects) was called a suzerain treaty. The ratification ceremony required animals to be sacrificed and cut in half. The animal parts were then arranged in two rows on the ground, forming an aisle between them. As the suzerain walked between the halves, he was publicly declaring he would keep the covenant and would become like the slain animals if he failed to keep his word.

When Abram asked God how he could be sure His promises would come to pass, God used the culturally significant symbolism of the suzerain treaty to affirm His promises (Gen. 15). When the burning torch passed through the pieces of the sacrifice, Abram understood that God was declaring it was His job to keep the covenant.

God's covenant with Abram and His assurance of its completion extends to followers of Christ. That is why Paul repeatedly refers to believers as sons of Abraham in his New Testament writings (Rom. 4:11-18; Gal. 3:29). Once we accept Jesus Christ as Savior, God becomes the keeper in our covenant of faith (see John 10:28-29).

Because God is the keeper of our salvation, with renewed confidence in Him we trust Him with our lives.

He will never fail us, He will not forsake;  
His eternal covenant He will never break.  
Onward then, and fear not, children of the day;  
For His Word shall never, never pass away. —Havergal

Our salvation is secure because God does the holding.

By Randy Kilgore

**Genesis 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:**

- made (KJV): Ge 9:8-17 17:1-27 24:7 2Sa 23:5 Isa 55:3 Jer 31:31-34 32:40 Jer 33:20-26 Ga 3:15-17 Heb 13:20
- Unto thy (KJV): Ge 12:7 13:15 17:8 26:4 28:4,13,14 35:12 50:24 Ex 3:8 6:4 23:23 Ex 23:27-31 34:11 Nu 34:3 De 1:7,8 7:1 11:24 34:4 Jos 1:3,4 Jos 12:1-20 19:1-38 1Ki 4:21 2Ch 9:26 Ne 9:8 Ps 105:11
- from (KJV): Nu 34:5 Jos 15:4 Isa 27:12
- Euphrates (KJV): Ge 2:14 2Sa 8:3 1Ch 5:9
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [What was a blood covenant \(Genesis 15:9-21\)?](#)
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson
- [Arnold Fruchtenbaum - How to Destroy the Jews](#)

Septuagint - en te hemera ekeine (that) dietheto (diatithemi: est a covenant: 3SAMI - note Middle Voice ~ God initiated & participates in the covenant) kurios to Abram diatheken legon (PAPMSN) to spermati sou doso (1SFAI) ten gen tauten apo tou potamou Aiguptou eos tou potamou tou megalou potamou Euphratou

LXE In that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, To thy seed I will give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates.

## KARATH BERIYTH: JEHOVAH CUT A COVENANT WITH ABRAM

**On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram:** What day? Clearly in context the same day that Abram believed in the Lord (Ge 15:6) and God imputed righteousness to him. On this great day God cut the covenant. Do you remember that great day in your life when God "cut covenant" with you and you were born again and entered the New Covenant in Jesus' blood? Have you been born again? Jesus reiterated ""Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)

God made a covenant with Abraham promising him primarily two things: a **seed** and a **land**. The Abrahamic Covenant was also ratified with **Isaac**, **Jacob** (name changed to Israel), and his sons who comprised the nation of Israel.

**Made a covenant with Abram** - Recall that in the ancient world covenant was the most solemn and binding relationship into which two parties could enter.

**Make** (cut) ([03772](#)) ([karath](#)) literally means to cut, to cut off or to sever an object from its source or cut into parts and implies a violent action. **Karath** is used with [beriyth](#) meaning to "**cut a covenant**" or establish a covenant between two parties, either between God and men (Abrahamic Covenant = Ge 15:18, Mosaic Covenant = Ex 24:8, Dt 5:2-3, 9:9; see [Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#) and [Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)) or between men (Ge 21:27, 32, 26:28, 31:44, 2Sa

3:12-13, 21, 5:3; 1Sa 18:3, 20:15-16,22:8, 23:18 between Jonathan and David [[See discussion of their Covenant - Exchanging of Robes](#); cutting covenant was prohibited = Ex 23:32, Dt 7:2, Jdg 2:2, a dictum which Joshua disobeyed - Josh 9:6-7,11). In the context of cutting covenant karath is translated in the Lxx with [diatithemi \(see detailed discussion\)](#) which is used in the sense of making "a last will or testament" (Heb 9:16<sup>note</sup>).

**Covenant** (01285) ([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) means covenant, treaty, compact, agreement between two parties (first use in God's covenant with Noah - Ge 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). As discussed more below **beriyth** describes a compact made by passing between pieces of flesh. Covenant is a solemn, binding arrangement between two parties and entails a variety of responsibilities, benefits and penalties depending on the specific covenant which is being studied. OT covenants were made between God and man (eg, God with Noah - Ge 6:18, with Abram - Ge 15:18) or between men (Abraham and Abimelech - Ge 21:27, Isaac and Abimelech - Ge 26:28, Jacob and Laban - Ge 31:44) (**For summary of covenants see [Covenant in the Bible](#)**).

All uses of covenant (beriyth) in Genesis - Genesis 6:18; 9:9, 11-13, 15-17; 14:13; 15:18; 17:2, 4, 7, 9-11, 13, 14, 19, 21; 21:27, 32; 26:28; 31:44;

**Covenant** can be summarized as follows...

- (1) Between two parties (sometimes equal, other times superior to inferior) -- (a) **nations** -- (peace) treaty, alliance of friendship
- (b) **individuals** -- a pledge or agreement with mutual obligations to each other (c) **monarch and subjects** (2Sa 3:21, 5:3, 1Chr 11:3) -- a constitution (d) **God and man** -- Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New Covenants. **TWOT** adds that...

Apart from blood ties the covenant was the way people of the ancient world formed wider relationships with each other. The accounts of the relationship between David and Jonathan are the only unequivocal mention of a compact between two individuals in the Old Testament (1Sa 18:3; 20:8; 23:18). It is spoken of as "a covenant of the Lord" because the Lord witnessed the transaction and protected the legal order.

- (2) Accompanied by (a) **signs** (also witnesses, memorials, shared meals) (b) **sacrifices**, (c) **solemn, binding oaths** -- sealing the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking the covenant (d) Sometimes with written document on which the words of the covenant, its terms in the form of promises and stipulations were spelled out, witnessed to, signed and sealed. **Behm** (TDNT) notes that in ancient times "There is no firmer guarantee of legal security peace or personal loyalty than the covenant (e.g., Amos 1:9)."

- (3) Is depicted in the idiomatic phrase "**make (cut) a covenant**" in which there is was a blood sacrifice as part of the covenant ritual.

Almost 100 years ago, **Andrew Murray** motivated by a waning understanding regarding the truth and power inherent in the Biblical truth of **covenant** wrote that...

One of the words of Scripture, which is almost going out of fashion, is the word **Covenant**. There was a time when it was the keynote of the theology and the Christian life of strong and holy men. We know how deep in Scotland it entered into the national life and thought. It made mighty men, to whom God, and His promise and power were wonderfully real. It will be found still to bring strength and purpose to those who will take the trouble to bring all their life (**Ed**: and their marriages) under control of the inspiring assurance that they are living in **covenant** with a God who has sworn faithfully to fulfill in them every promise He has given. ([Two Covenants - Index - Andrew Murray](#))

The majority of the the OT uses of **beriyth** are translated as **covenant** (275/285 uses) and the majority of these are translated into Greek using the word [diatheke \[word study\]](#), which was a common technical word used in the Greco-Roman law to describe the settlement of an inheritance (i.e., a "last will and testament") and used in the NT to describe the "*self-commitment, promises, and conditions by which [God] entered into relationship with man*" (Friberg).

**Vine** says this about the use of [diatheke](#) used in the Greek Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word **Beriyth** "The wholly gracious and effective character of God's "covenant" is confirmed in the Septuagint by the choice of diatheke to translate **berit/beriyth**. A diatheke is a will that distributes one's property after death according to the owner's wishes. It is completely unilateral.

**ISBE** says that "In essence a **covenant** is an agreement, but an agreement of a solemn and binding force. The early Semitic idea of a covenant was doubtless that which prevailed among the Arabs. This was primarily blood-brotherhood, in which two men became brothers by drinking each other's blood. (**Ed**: Now that sounds serious to me!) (**Ed**: [See illustration in pagan culture](#)).

**Andrew Murray** said that men made covenants because they understood their value - "As an end of enmity or uncertainty, as a statement of services and benefits to be rendered, as a security for their certain performance, as a bond of amity and goodwill, as a ground for perfect confidence and friendship, a covenant has often been of unspeakable value....the Covenant was, above all, to give man a hold upon God, as the Covenant-keeping God, to link man to God Himself in expectation and hope, to bring him to make God Himself alone the portion and the strength of his soul.... "The blood is one of the strangest, the deepest, the mightiest, and the most heavenly of the thoughts of God. It lies at the very root of both Covenants, but especially of the New Covenant." (The Two Covenants)

**O Palmer Robertson** wrote that "When God enters into a covenantal relationship with men, He sovereignly institutes a life-and-death bond. A covenant is a bond in blood, or a bond of life and death, sovereignly administered."

## **THE COVENANT PROMISE OF THE LAND IS NOT "I WILL GIVE" BUT "I HAVE GIVEN!"**

**Saying, "To your descendants I have given this land-** What land? The "promised land" the boundaries of which are given below.

**Mattoon** - In Genesis 13:15, God said, "I will give the land" and now in verse eighteen God says, "I have given" for the sacrifice and covenant has now been made. As Christians, we HAVE eternal life because of the price that Jesus paid on the cross for our sins.

**Warren Wiersbe** - At the beginning of Abraham's pilgrimage, God said to him, "**I will show thee**" the land (Ge 12:1). Later He said, "**I will give it unto thee**" (Ge 13:15-17). But now His word is, "**To your descendants I have given this land**" (Ge 15:18). God's covenant made it a settled matter: The land belongs



to Abraham's descendants through Isaac. (Be Obedient Genesis 12-25).

**Steven Cole** on God's promise of land to Abraham and his descendants - It makes the most sense to me to take these promises in their normal sense. God promised a piece of land to Abram's descendants, and I think He is going to keep His word. It's easier for me to believe that, living since 1948, when the Jews were given part of the land again after 1,900 years, than for those who lived before then. But it's refreshing to read F. B. Meyer (born in 1847), who wrote, "Somehow the descendants of Abraham shall yet inherit their own land, secured to them by the covenant of God. Those rivers shall yet form their boundary lines: for 'the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it'" (Abraham [Christian Literature Crusade], p. 72). It's exciting to live in a day when we can see the first glimmer of the fulfillment of God's promise made to Abram 4,000 years ago. Verse 18 makes it clear that it's a done deal: God affirms, "I have given this land" to your descendants. ([Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance)

**From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates** The river of Egypt may be the Nile, or it may be what is called today the [Wadi el' Arish](#), a smaller watercourse at the natural boundary of Egypt and the land of Israel.

Here is one map showing the possible extent of the promised land - see red lines representing the Nile and Euphrates rivers although as noted **the western border may not be as far as the Nile** but only to [Wadi el' Arish](#). (cp Numbers 34:5) "The reference to the Euphrates River is not to the entire length of that great river, just its northwestern arm in Syria where it is closest to Israel. Whether or not Israel has ever controlled the full extent of these boundaries is a matter of debate (See Constable's note below)." (Apologetics Study Bible)

Promised Land - Click to enlarge  
(But probably not to Nile on the East)

Solomon's Kingdom ca 971-931 BC  
[ESV Global Study Bible](#)

**Tom Constable** - Israel has not yet occupied the land promised in [Ge 15:18-21]. Solomon had dominion over it (1 Ki 4:21, 24), as over vassal states, but his people did not occupy it. The covenant will be fulfilled when Christ returns to reign. Nothing can stop its fulfillment. What God has promised is as sure as if it had already occurred! The Abrahamic Covenant is basic to the premillennial system of theology. This covenant has not yet been fulfilled as God promised it would be. Since God is faithful we believe He will fulfill these promises in the future. Consequently there must be a future for Israel as a nation. Amillennialists interpret this covenant in a less literal way. The crucial issue is interpretation. If God fulfilled the seed and blessings promises literally, should we not expect that He will also fulfill the land promises literally?

**Warren Wiersbe** - Solomon exercised dominion over a vast area (1 Kings 4:21; Ps. 72:8), **but Israel did not possess all that land**. The kings merely acknowledged Solomon's sovereignty and paid tribute to him. When Jesus Christ reigns from the throne of David (Matt. 19:28; Luke 1:32), the land of Israel will reach the full dimensions promised by God. God's covenant with Abraham stands no matter what Israel believes. The covenant is unconditional; its fulfillment does not depend on man's faith or faithfulness. In like manner, the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ is dependable whether people accept it or not. Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ enter into that covenant and receive eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9; 9:12), an eternal inheritance (9:15), and eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10). When Abraham was concerned about himself, God assured him by saying, "I AM!" When he was concerned about his heir, he heard God say, "I will!" His concern about the land was met by God's, "I have given!" In Jesus Christ, God gives those same assurances to His people today. Abraham believed God. Do you believe? (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Obedient Genesis 12-25).

**C I Scofield** (this is a note he wrote BEFORE Israel was regathered as a nation in 1947): The gift of the land is modified by prophecies of three dispossessions and restorations (Ge 15:13-14,16; Dt 28:62-65; 30:1-3; Jer 25:11-12). Two dispossessions and restorations have been accomplished. Israel is now in the third dispersion, from which she will be restored at the return of the Lord as King (David himself will also be resurrected and rule over Israel as king) under the Davidic Covenant (see 2 Sa 7:16; cp Dt 30:3; Jer 23:5-8; Ezek 37:21-25 (Ezek 37:24: My servant David will be king over them) Lu 1:30-33; Acts 15:14-17).

**Ryrie** on Ge 15:18-21 The boundaries of the Promised Land are now given for the first time. This promise has not yet been fulfilled but will be when Christ returns. See notes on 17:8; Josh. 21:43-45; and 1 Kings 4:21. the river of Egypt. I.e., the Nile. Some understand this to refer to the Wadi el-Arish (E of the Nile), which is also called "the river of Egypt." However, the word for river used here means "a large river." A different word meaning "a stream" is used for a wadi, which does not always have water in it.

COVENANT -- SUMMARY OF FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS									
COVENANT IN SCRIPTURE Hebrew: Beriyth/ Berit Greek: Diatheke	WHO IS INITIATOR	WHO ARE PARTIES INVOLVED	WHAT REASON FOR COVENANT	IS THERE SACRIFICE	ARE OFFSPRING AFFECTED?	IS THERE PROMISE OR OATH?	IS THERE A SIGN OR WITNESS?	WHAT IS LENGTH OF COVENANT?	IS THERE A MEAL, AN ALTAR A NAME CHANGE?

<p><b>Noahic</b></p> <p><b>GOD &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 6:18 (1st mention of covenant)</p> <p>Ge 9:11</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God</b></p> <p><b>"I Myself"</b></p> <p>Ge 9:9</p> <p><b>Unconditional covenant</b> = declares God's purpose will be fulfilled regardless of man's response. This does not mean man makes no response but man's response doesn't leave fulfillment of covenant in doubt. Noah obeyed - he built ark in faith (<b>Lesson</b> - True faith obeys!) Heb 11:7-note</p> <p><b>Even an unconditional Covenant entails responsibility!</b></p>	<p><b>God &amp; Noah</b></p> <p>Noah means rest, relief, quiet</p> <p>Ge 5:29 "rest from our work"</p> <p><i>"There it is: God obligating Himself to preserve man in the midst of judgment. Without anything on Noah's part without any commitment, pledge, or guarantee - God obligated Himself -- Do you catch the faint but sweet scent of grace wafting in the wind?"</i> (Arthur)</p>	<p><b>Context: Divine Judgment</b></p> <p>Read Ge 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5</p> <p>Wickedness of man was great warranting</p> <p>Ge 6:11, 12, 13</p> <p>--<b>Corrupt</b> = 3x</p> <p>--<b>Filled with violence</b> = 2x</p> <p>God sorry He made man...</p> <p>He was <b>grieved</b></p> <p>"It broke His heart" (NLT)</p> <p><b>Preserve life</b></p> <p><b>Why?</b> To fulfill His <b>promise</b> in Ge 3:15 to bring forth Messiah who would bruise the head of Satan (cp Ro 16:20-note)</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>'every clean animal...'</p> <p>(<b>blood</b>)</p> <p>Ge 8:20</p> <p>(<b>Costly-sacrificial</b>)</p> <p>= 1/7 of his clean animals - Ge 7:2)</p> <p><b>Why?</b></p> <p>This was an <b>act of worship &amp; gratitude</b> in response to God's covenant faithfulness in sparing Noah and his family.</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p><b>Sons...wife... son's wives</b></p> <p>Ge 6:18</p> <p><b>descendants</b></p> <p>Ge 9:9</p> <p><b>every living creature</b></p> <p>Ge 9:12</p> <p><b>the earth</b></p> <p>Ge 9:13</p>	<p><b>To keep alive</b></p> <p>Ge 6:19</p> <p>This is the reason for this covenant - if all died God could not keep Ge 3:15</p> <p><b>I will never again destroy every living thing x3</b></p> <p>Ge 8:21, 9:11, 15</p> <p><b>Will not curse ground again</b></p> <p>Ge 8:21</p> <p><b>Seasons, day/night shall not cease</b></p> <p>Ge 8:22</p> <p><b>No Global Flood</b></p> <p>Ge 9:11</p>	<p><b>RAINBOW</b></p> <p>'My <b>bow</b> in the cloud'</p> <p>Ge 9:13</p> <p>The <b>Rainbow</b> "is the sign of the covenant"</p> <p>Ge 9:12</p> <p>Hebrew for "bow" also describes the weapon of war ("bow and arrow")!</p>	<p><b>EVERLASTING</b></p> <p>"I will look upon it to <b>remember</b> the everlasting covenant"</p> <p>Ge 9:16</p> <p>(cf "all successive generations" Ge 9:12)</p> <p><b>Application:</b> God will not forget any of His covenants.</p> <p>When man looked at the <b>bow</b> he remembers the covenant - be mindful that God is also looking at the <b>bow</b> and as He looks He too remembers!</p> <p>Could that be why we see a rainbow in Rev 4:3-note?</p>	<p>"Noah built an <b>altar</b> to Jehovah"</p> <p>Ge 8:20 (See <b>Altar</b>)</p> <p>(Hebrew word for <b>altar</b> means "place of sacrifice" - <b>NB:</b> Use of this word implies blood)</p> <p><b>Application:</b> Speaks of (1) Expresses gratitude for salvation (2) Sacrificial - offered 1/7th of clean animals (cp Ge 7:2) (3) Emphasis on <b>blood</b> as way to approach God (cp Ge 3:21, 4:4) (4) Consecration to God (surrender) (cp NT parallel in Ro 12:1-note)</p>
---	---	--	---	---	---	---	---	---	--

<p><b>Abrahamic</b></p> <p>(see below for the repeating of this covenant to Isaac &amp; Jacob)</p> <p><b>GOD &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 15:18</p> <p>Ge 17:2,4</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God</b></p> <p>Ge 17:7, 15:18</p> <p>God Alone (symbolized by "a smoking oven &amp; a flaming torch" Ge 15:17)</p> <p>passed through the pieces of flesh Abram was in a <b>deep sleep</b> (LXX = ekstasis = trance)</p> <p>Ge 15:12</p>	<p><b>God &amp; Abraham</b></p>	<p>In you (Abram) all the families of the earth shall be blessed = prophecy of the <b>Messiah</b></p> <p>Ge 12:1, 2, 3</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>Abram cut animals in two, each half laid opposite other (<b>blood</b>)</p> <p>Ge 15:10</p> <p>Compare</p> <p>Je 34:18, 19, 20</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>I will give the land to your descendants forever.</p> <p>Ge 13:15</p> <p>Jehovah cut covenant "to your seed I <b>have given</b> this land" (note past tense - God promised it - it is as good as done!)</p> <p>Ge 15:18</p>	<p><b>The Lord God's promises to Abraham:</b></p> <p>Descendant or "The Seed" (Masc. Sing. ~ Messiah)</p> <p>Ge 22:17,18 (cf Ga 3:16, Ac 3:25)</p> <p><b>Descendants as numerous as stars</b></p> <p>Ge 15:5</p> <p><b>Land</b></p> <p>Ge 13:15, 15:7, 18</p> <p><b>Be their God</b></p> <p>Ge 17:8</p>	<p><b>Circumcision</b> (or see here)</p> <p>"And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the <b>sign</b> of the covenant between Me and you.</p> <p>Ge 17:11</p> <p>Isaac, <b>Abraham's</b> seed, is prophesied &amp; granted the covenant promises.</p> <p>Ge 17:19, 20, 21</p>	<p><b>EVERLASTING</b></p> <p>Ge 17:7,8</p> <p>-----</p> <p>El Shaddai promises "I will establish My covenant between Me &amp; you &amp; your descendants (seed) after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant."</p> <p>Isaac, <b>Abraham's</b> seed, is prophesied &amp; granted the covenant promises.</p> <p>Ge 17:19, 20, 21</p>	<p><b>NAME CHANGE</b></p> <p>1) <b>Abram</b> ("exalted father") to <b>Abraham</b> ("father of a multitude")</p> <p>2) <b>Sarai</b> (meaning ? some say "contentious", others "princess") to <b>Sarah</b> ("princess")</p> <p>Ge 17:5,15</p>
<p><b>MAN &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 21:27,32</p>	<p><b>Abimelech</b></p> <p>This man was a <b>Philistine</b> ruler over a pagan people, and yet <b>he was the initiator</b> of the covenant</p> <p>Implication? Pagans understood the solemn and binding nature of covenant</p>	<p><b>Abraham &amp; Abimelech</b></p>	<p><b>FEAR</b></p> <p>God was with Abe</p> <p>Ge 21:22</p> <p>Water Rights</p> <p>Ge 21:25</p>	<p>Not Stated but see</p> <p>Ge 21:27</p> <p>"the two of them <b>made (Karath - cut) a covenant</b>".</p> <p>The fact that <b>Abraham</b> had given him sheep and oxen in the same verse strongly suggests they walked between the flesh of these slain animals as they "cut covenant" (<b>blood</b>)</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>"Swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my <b>offspring</b>, or with my <b>posterity</b>..."</p> <p>Ge 21:23</p>	<p><b>Abraham</b></p> <p>would not deal falsely with Abimelech (read <b>Genesis 20</b> for why he may have prescribed this condition) but in <b>kindness</b> (a covenant word)</p> <p>Ge 21:23</p> <p>The two of them <b>took an oath</b></p> <p>Ge 21:31,32</p>	<p><b>Abraham</b></p> <p>gave Abimelech <b>seven ewe lambs</b></p> <p>Ge 21:28, 29, 30</p> <p>Abraham planted a <b>Tamarisk</b></p> <p>Ge 21:33</p> <p>(See ill. in pagan culture)</p>	<p><b>EVERLASTING</b></p> <p>Ge 21:23</p> <p><b>Abraham</b></p> <p>"called on the name of the LORD, the <b>Everlasting</b> God" (El Olam)</p> <p>Everlasting is implied in Ge 21:23</p>	<p><b>Beersheba</b></p> <p>("well of seven fold oath" or "well of the oath")</p> <p>Ge 21:31</p>

<p><b>MAN &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 26:28</p>	<p><b>Abimelech</b> This is probably the same one who cut covenant with <b>Abraham</b> (<b>Ahuzzath</b> &amp; <b>Phicol</b>) Ge 26:26</p>	<p><b>Isaac &amp; Abimelech</b> (et. al.)</p>	<p><b>FEAR:</b> Abimelech saw that the Lord was with Isaac Ge 26:28  ‘Do us no harm’ Ge 26:29 In essence a "peace treaty"</p>	<p>The phrase "let us make (cut) a covenant" (suggests <b>blood</b>) Ge 26:28</p>	<p><b>Not Stated:</b> Note that if this Abimelech is the same king the covenant he cut with Isaac's father <b>Abraham</b> should have been sufficient to ensure peace, pointing that men's covenants are not as trustworthy as God's covenants to men!</p>	<p>(Abimelech) said, 'Let there now be an <b>oath</b> between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, Ge 26:28  <b>They exchanged oaths</b> Ge 26:31 (See ill. in <a href="#">pagan culture</a>)</p>	--	--	<p><b>Isaac</b> 'made them a feast' Ge 26:30</p>
<p><b>Abrahamic</b></p> <p><b>GOD &gt; ISAAC</b></p> <p>Ge 26:24,25</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God</b> Reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant to Abraham's <b>Seed</b></p>	<p><b>God &amp; Isaac</b> Ge 26:24,25</p>	<p><b>Preservation of the seed</b> I am with you, I will bless you &amp; multiply your seed Ge 26:24</p>	<p>Not clear Hebrew for <b>Altar</b> = "place of sacrifice" (suggests <b>blood</b>)</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p>	<p>Jehovah promises Isaac "I will establish the <b>oath</b> which I <b>swore</b> to your father <b>Abraham</b> Ge 26:3</p>	--	<p>"multiply your descendants" in Ge 26:24 implies <b>Everlasting</b></p>	<p>Isaac built an <b>altar</b> at <b>Beersheba</b> Ge 26:25</p>
<p><b>Abrahamic</b></p> <p><b>GOD &gt; JACOB</b></p> <p>Ge 28:13-15</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God</b> Reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant</p>	<p><b>God &amp; Jacob</b></p>	<p>Reaffirms God's Covenant with <b>Abraham</b> To do what God had He had promised Ge 28:15</p>	--	<p><b>YES</b> Ge 28:13, 14, 15</p>	<p>Ge 28:15 See also Abrahamic Covenant</p>	<p><b>Pillar</b> Jacob set it up as a <b>pillar</b>, and poured oil on its top Ge 28:18</p>	<p><b>Everlasting</b></p>	<p><b>Name change</b> Luz called <b>Bethel</b> (House of God) Ge 28:19</p>
<p><b>MAN &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 31:44-55</p>	<p><b>Laban</b> "So now come let us make a covenant you &amp; I &amp; let it be a <b>witness</b> between you &amp; me" Ge 31:44</p>	<p><b>Jacob &amp; Laban</b></p>	<p><b>FEAR</b> (distrust)  I will not pass by this heap to you for <b>harm</b>... you will not pass by this heap &amp; this pillar to me for <b>harm</b>. Ge 31:52</p>	<p><b>YES</b> "Then Jacob offered a <b>sacrifice</b> (<b>blood</b>) on the mountain &amp; called his kinsmen to the meal &amp; they ate the meal &amp; spent the night on the mountain" Ge 31:54</p>	<p><b>YES</b> "If you mistreat my daughters or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us see God is <b>witness</b> between you &amp; me." Ge 31:50</p>	<p><b>Not to mistreat</b> daughters or take other wives <b>Ge 31:50</b>  Jacob <b>swore</b> b y the fear (God) of his father Isaac. Ge 31:53</p>	<p><b>Four Witnesses!</b> <b>Covenant</b> a <b>witness</b> Ge 31:44  <b>God</b> is <b>witness</b> Ge 31:50  <b>Heap-witness</b>  <b>Pillar-witness</b> Ge 31:51, 52</p>	--	<p>1 ) <b>Jegar-sahadutha</b> (heap of <b>witness</b>)  2) Jacob called it <b>Galeed</b> (heap of <b>witness</b>)  3) <b>Mizpah</b> = Watch tower Ge 31:47, 48, 49  <b>Meal</b> Ge 31:54</p>

<b>Mosaic</b>  <b>GOD &gt; MAN</b> Ex 24:1-8 Ex 34:27,28  <b>Conditional</b>	<b>God</b> Ex 34:27	<b>God, Moses &amp; Israel</b> Ex 34:27  <b>Conditional</b> = fulfillment depends on recipients obeying	--	<b>YES</b> 1/2 of <b>blood</b> on <b>altar</b> ; 1/2 <b>blood</b> in basins sprinkled on people (swore to obey) Ex 24:6, 7, 8  <b>"the blood of the covenant"</b>	--	<b>Israel Made a Promise:</b> "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." Ex 24:3,7	Twelve <b>pillars</b> at the foot of Mt Sinai Ex 24:4  One of the purposes of <b>"pillars"</b> is to help remember the covenant conditions	--	<b>Altar</b> at foot of Mt Sinai Ex 24:4  <b>Meal</b> Ex 24:11  Shared a common meal
<b>New Covenant</b>  <b>GOD &gt; MAN</b> Mt 26:26-28 Lk 22:20 ("New covenant")  <b>Unconditional</b>	Jesus instituted with His disciples at time of the <b>Passover Meal</b> the night before He was crucified (Mt 26:19-28)	<b>God/Man</b> Isa 42:6 Messiah = <b>Covenant Messenger</b> of covenant to His Temple = 1st advent  Mal 3:1  "refiner's fire" = 2nd advent  Mal 3:2	For the <b>forgiveness</b> of sins Mt 26:28	<b>YES</b> 'My body' 'My <b>blood of the covenant</b> ' Mt 26:28	<b>YES</b>	<b>THE NEW COVENANT</b> (prophesied - promised) Jer 31:31, 32, 33, 34  <b>THE NEW COVENANT</b> (promise fulfilled) Lk 22:20	"This is My body which is given for you; do this in <b>remembrance</b> (memorial) of Me." Lk 22:19  Reminds us of costliness of Covenant	<b>Eternal Covenant</b> He 13:20-note	<b>NEW COVENANT MEAL</b> Mt 26:26, 27, 28 1Co 11:23, 24, 25, 26  Shared a common meal

#### Resources Related to Covenant:

- [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#)
- [Covenant: Why Study It?](#)
- [Covenant: Introduction](#)
- [Lesson 1 Covenant: Summary Table](#)
- [Lesson 2 Covenant: The Exchange of Robes](#)
- [Lesson 3 Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts](#)
- [Lesson 4 Covenant: Solemn and Binding](#)
- [Lesson 5 Covenant: A Walk Into Death](#)
- [Lesson 6 Covenant: The Oneness of Covenant](#)
- [Covenant: Oneness Notes](#)
- [Lesson 7 Covenant: Withholding Nothing from God](#)
- [Lesson 8 Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#)
- [Lesson 9 Covenant: New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)
- [Lesson 10 Covenant: Why the New is Better](#)
- [Lesson 11 Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)
- [New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)
- [Name change](#)
- [Covenant Meal](#)
- [Friend a covenant word \(notes\)](#)
- [Covenant memorial](#)
- [Phylacteries in OT](#)
- [Commingleing of blood \(notes\)](#)
- [Common life of covenant](#)
- [Striking of hands](#)

#### Genesis 15:19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite

- Kenites (KJV): Nu 24:21,22
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson



## MENTIONED

**Gilbrant** suggests that "Ten nations are listed (cf. Gen. 10:15-18), for ten is the number of completeness and indicates the whole land would be given to Abram's descendants. (Complete Biblical Library Commentary)

**Spurgeon** - He mentions the adversaries to show how great would be the victories of the race that should come and dispossess them. Let us always look upon the list of our difficulties as only a catalogue of our triumphs. The greater our troubles, the louder our song at the last.

**The "testimony" of archaeology** - "Over a century ago there was no historical or archaeological evidence for the existence of several of the peoples listed among these 10 nations ("Kenites... Jebusites"). As a result, certain scholars doubted the veracity of this verse. A century ago, however, important archaeological findings have greatly strengthened the likelihood that all 10 did, in fact, exist when Abram and Moses lived." (Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe) In truth, God's Word authenticates archaeology not vice versa!

### Genesis 15:20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim

- Rephaims (KJV): Ge 14:5 Isa 17:5
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**The Hittites** - See [interesting discussion](#) on how the skeptic who once felt this was not a true people group were proven wrong. Archaeology does not prove God's Word is true. God's Word is true and it sometimes takes a while for human excavations to catch up with the truth!

### Rod Mattoon - The People of the Promised Land

The following is a list and description of the people of the Promised Land.

#### Kenites

1. They were a Midianite tribe. Numbers 10:29
2. Moses was son-in-law of Reuel. Ex. 2:18
3. They accompanied Judah into their inheritance. Judges 1:16
4. They were spared by Saul in the Amalekite war. 1 Sam. 15:6
5. The Rechabites had Kenite background. 1 Chronicles 2:55
6. They lived in rugged, rocky country.
7. They were subjects of Balaam's prophecy. Numbers 24:20-22

#### Kenizzites

1. They were an Edomite family, descending from Eliphaz, Esau's oldest son. Gen. 36:11, 15, 42; 1 Chronicles 1:36, 53
2. Caleb was of Kenizzite descent. Numbers 32:12
3. They settled near Mount Seir.
4. Othniel was a Kennizite. He was the first judge of Israel after the conquest.

#### Hittites

1. They were called the children of Heth. Gen. 23:3
2. They dwelled in the Hebron area.
3. Abram purchased a field from them for burial purposes.
4. Esau married two Hittite women. Gen. 27:46
5. One of David's mighty men was Uriah the Hittite. He was the husband of Bathsheba. 2 Sam. 23:39
6. Ahimelech was one and a companion of David. 1 Sam. 26:6
7. They were the original inhabitants of Palestine. Ezekiel 16:3, 45 Their destruction was commanded. Deut. 7:1, 2, 24
8. Hittite women were in Solomon's harem. 1 Kings 11:1
9. They were a sturdy race of men, usually beardless and wearing pointed hats and loose tunics. Their shoes were tilted up at the tips.

#### Perrizites

1. They were hill dwellers and lived with the Jebusites and the Canaanites near Bethel and Shechem. Josh. 11:3; Gen. 13:7; 34:30
2. They were allowed to intermarry with Israel, seducing them into idolatry.
3. Jacob was afraid of them. Gen. 34:30
4. They were to be utterly destroyed. Deut. 20:17

#### Rephaims

1. The Moabites called them Emmim and in Ammon they were called Zamzumim. Deut. 2:11, 20, 21
2. They were compared to the giant Anakims (Deut. 2:21). The Greek Septuagint name given to them is **gigas** which means "giant".

## Amorites

1. A tribe that dwelt around the west shore of the Dead Sea and back on the mountains. Gen. 14:7
2. They were the most powerful tribe of the hill country. Abram made an alliance with the Amorites of Hebron. Together they routed the kings who attacked the Dead Sea plain.
3. The men of Ai were called Amorites. Joshua 7:7
4. Jerusalem and Hebron were Amorite principalities. Joshua 10
5. They were known in Babylon as the Amurru and were known to eat raw meat and have no house in their lifetime. If they died they were left unburied.
6. They established their first dynasty in Babylon in which Hammurabi was the most famous king (1792-1750 B.C.)

## Jebusites

1. They lived around the hills of Jerusalem. Joshua 15:8
2. They descended from the third son of Canaan. 1 Chron. 1:14
3. Jebus was a name given to Jerusalem.
4. Joshua killed a Jebusite king. Joshua 10:23-25
5. They were assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. Joshua 18:28
6. They became slaves. 1 Kings 9:20, 21

## Canaanites

1. They descended from Ham. Gen. 10:5, 6
2. They are under a curse. Gen. 9:25, 26
3. They were idolatrous. Deut. 29:17
4. They were to be destroyed. Ex. 23:23
5. No intermarriage with them was commanded. Deut. 7:3  
Mattoon's Treasures from Genesis.

## Genesis 15:21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

- [Amorites](#) (KJV): Ge 10:15-19 Ex 23:23-28 33:2 34:11 De 7:1
- Girgashites (KJV): Mt 8:28
- **See Multiple Resources on Genesis 15** - Commentaries, Sermons, Devotionals
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - Assurance - Steven Cole
- [Genesis 15:7-21](#) - S Lewis Johnson

**Gilbrant** - This promise (of land) was nearly fulfilled in Solomon's time (1 Ki. 8:65), but will have its complete fulfillment in the [Millennium](#). The promise for the Messiah, however, is that He will rule from sea to sea and from the River (the Euphrates) to the ends of the earth (Zech. 9:10; Ps. 72:8). There will be no limits to His rule. (Ibid)

Zechariah 9:10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Psalms 72:8 May he also rule from sea to sea And from the River to the ends of the earth.

**The IVP Bible Background Commentary** - This is the longest (including ten groups) of seventeen such lists of Canaan's pre-Israelite peoples (see Deut. 7:1; Joshua 3:10; 1 Kings 9:20). Each of these lists, which usually comprise six or seven names, ends with the Jebusites (perhaps tied to David's conquest of Jerusalem), but the list in Genesis 15 is the only one to exclude the Hivites. For the Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, Canaanites and Jebusites, see the comments on \*Exodus 3:7-10 and \*Numbers 13. The Kenites are often associated with the Midianites and appear as a seminomadic people from the Sinai and Negev region. The name suggests that they were metalworkers, tinkers or smiths. The Kenizzites, Kadmonites and Girgashites are little known, though the latter is also attested in the Ugaritic texts. The Rephaim are considered to be Anakites in Deut. 2:11, who in turn appear as giants in Numbers 13:33. Aside from these associations, nothing is known of this ethnic group.