

GENESIS 15

Yahweh's Seed-Land Covenant with Abram

The Seed Promise

1 After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision saying:

Do not fear, Abram. I am a shield (מָגֵן) to you. Your reward (שָׂכָר) will be very great.

2 Abram said:

Lord Yahweh (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה), what will you give me, for I continue to be childless (עָרִירִי), and the heir (בְּנוֹ-מִשְׁקָה) of my house (בַּיִת) is Eliezer of Damascus?¹

3 And Abram said:

Because you have given no seed (זָרַע) to me, one born in my house is my heir (יָרֵשׁ).

4 Then look (הִנֵּה), the word of Yahweh came to him saying:

This man will not be your heir (יָרֵשׁ). But one who will come forth from your own body (מִצֶּדָה), he will be your heir (יָרֵשׁ).

5 And he took him outside and said:

Now look toward the sky and count (סָפַר) the stars, if you are able to count (סָפַר) them.

And he said to him:

So will your seed (זָרַע) be.

6 Then he believed (אָמַן) in Yahweh, and he imputed (חָשַׁב)² it to him as righteousness (צְדָקָה).

The Land Promise

7 And he said to him:

I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit (יָרֵשׁ) it.

8 He said:

¹ Lot has forfeited any right to Abram's inheritance.

² "[T]o impute, reckon to" (*HALOT*, 360).

Lord Yahweh, how may I know (יִדַע) that I will inherit (יִרְשֶׁה) it?

9 So he said to him:

Bring me a three year old heifer, a three year old female goat, a three year old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

10 Then he brought all these to him, cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other. But he did not cut the birds. 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And look, a great, frightful darkness (אִימָה חֹשֶׁקָה גְדֹלָה) fell upon him. 13 And he said to Abram:

Know for certain that your seed (זָרַע) will be strangers (גֵּר) in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.³ 15 As for you, you will go to your fathers in peace (נְשֻׁלֹם). You will be buried at a good old age. 16 Then in the fourth generation⁴ they will return here, for the sin-guilt (עֲוֹן) of the Amorite (אֲמֹרִי) is not yet complete (שָׁלֵם).

17 It came about when the sun had set that it was very dark. And look, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. 18 On that day Yahweh cut a covenant (בְּרִית) with Abram saying:

To your seed (זָרַע) I have given this land (אֶרֶץ), from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, 20 the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girgashite, and the Jebusite (יְבוּסִי).

³ Ex 12:35-36 35 The sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. 36 And Yahweh had given the people grace in the sight of the Egyptians so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

⁴ Ex 12:40-41 40 The time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt.

Biblical Worldview

1. **Because God is our shield and our reward will be great, we need not fear.**
 - a. **Ge 15:1** 1 After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision saying: Do not fear, Abram. I am a shield (מִגֵּן) to you. Your reward (שָׂכָר) will be very great.
 - b. The Abrahamic Covenant. Yahweh continues to add details to his covenant promises to Abram.
 - (1) **Ge 12:2-3** 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
 - (2) **Ge 12:7** 7 Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, To your seed I will give this land.
 - (3) **Ge 13:14-17** 14 Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward, southward, eastward, and westward, 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed forever. 16 I will make your seed as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your seed also can be counted. 17 Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.
2. **God welcomes our questions, especially when they relate to his promises.**
 - a. **Ge 15:2-3** 2 Abram said: Lord Yahweh (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה), what will you give me, for I continue to be childless (עָרִירִי), and the heir (בְּנוֹ-מִשְׁקָה) of my house (בַּיִת) is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said: Because you have given no seed (זָרַע) to me, one born in my house is my heir (יָרֵשׁ).
 - b. Lot has forfeited any right to Abram's inheritance.
3. **God promised physical (and spiritual) seed to Abram. He is fulfilling that promise.**
 - a. **Ge 15:4** 4 Then look (הִנֵּה), the word of Yahweh came to him saying: This man will not be your heir (יָרֵשׁ). But one who will come forth from your own body (מִצֵּדָה), he will be your heir (יָרֵשׁ). 5 And he took him outside and said: Now look toward the sky and count (סָפַר) the stars, if you are able to count (סָפַר) them. And he said to him: So will your seed (זָרַע) be.
 - b. From God's viewpoint every believer in history is a son or daughter of Abraham.
4. **Abram was justified by grace alone through faith alone in God and his seed promise.**
 - a. **Ge 15:6** 6 Now he had believed (אָמַן) in Yahweh, and he had imputed (חָשַׁב) it to him as righteousness (צְדָקָה).
 - b. Abram's conversion occurred years earlier when he left Ur. The form of the Hebrew word for "believed" shows his faith did not begin here. The Abrahamic Covenant did not give Abram redemption. It was a covenant made with Abram who had already believed and to whom righteousness had already been imputed (A. P. Ross, *BKC*, 1:55).
 - c. Faith Alone.
 - (1) **Ro 4:3** 3 What does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

- (2) **Ga 3:6** 6 ...Just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness?
- (3) **Ja 2:23** 23 ... The Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness—and he was called a friend of God.
- d. Imputation.
- (1) חשב: “[T]o impute, reckon to” (*HALOT*, 360).
- 5. God promised the land of Canaan to Abram and his physical seed.**
- a. **Ge 15:7-8** 7 And he said to him: I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit (ירש) it. 8 He said: Lord Yahweh, how may I know (ידע) that I will inherit (ירש) it?
- b. **Ge 15:18-21** To your seed (זרע) I have given this land (אֶרֶץ), from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, 20 the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girgashite, and the Jebusite (יְבוּסִי).
- c. The Land of Israel.
- d. Israel’s Conquest of Canaan.
- 6. The five animals are needed as a sign of God’s covenant with Abram.**
- a. **Ge 15:9-11** 9 So he said to him: Bring me a three year old heifer, a three year old female goat, a three year old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. 10 Then he brought all these to him, cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other. But he did not cut the birds. 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.
- b. **Ge 15:17-18** 17 It came about when the sun had set that it was very dark. And look, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. 18 On that day Yahweh cut a covenant (בְּרִית) with Abram saying....
- c. The Abrahamic Covenant.
- (1) God, signified by an oven and a torch, cut his unconditional covenant with Abram.
- 7. Abram’s seed will be enslaved 400 years and then return to the land of Canaan.**
- a. **Ge 15:12-16** 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And look, a great, frightful darkness (אִימָה הַשְּׁמָה גְדֹלָה) fell upon him. 13 And he said to Abram: Know for certain that your seed (זרע) will be strangers (גֵּר) in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15 As for you, you will go to your fathers in peace (שָׁלוֹם). You will be buried at a good old age. 16 Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the sin-guilt (עוֹן) of the Amorite (אֲמֹרִי) is not yet complete (שָׁלֵם).
- b. The Exodus.
- (1) **Ex 12:40-41** 40 The time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt.
- c. The Plunder of the Egyptians.
- (1) **Ex 12:35-36** 35 The sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and

clothing. 36 And Yahweh had given the people grace in the sight of the Egyptians so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Notes