

**Sunday School Lesson**  
**Genesis 15:1-21**  
 by Lorin L. Cranford  
 All rights reserved ©

**God Spoke to Abraham**



A copy of this lesson is posted in Adobe pdf format at <http://cranfordville.com> under Bible Studies in the Bible Study Aids section

A note about the [blue, underlined](#) material: These are hyperlinks that allow you to click them on and bring up the specified scripture passage automatically while working inside the pdf file connected to the internet. Just use your web browser's back arrow or the taskbar to return to the lesson material.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Quick Links to the Study**

I. [Context](#)

- a. [Historical](#)
- b. [Literary](#)

II. [Message](#)

- a. [God's 1st word to Abraham, vv. 1-6](#)
- b. [God's 2nd word to Abraham, vv. 7-21](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

Covenants are interesting, as well as occasionally confusing. This is perhaps more true of the concept inside the Bible than in our legal system. For example, the English word "covenant" shows up 354 times in the [New Revised Standard Version](#), 295 times in the [New American Standard Bible](#), and 293 times in the [New Living Translation](#) -- the three English translations in our Bible study. This compares to 313 times in the [King James Version](#). Part of the reason for this variation in number is the difference in translation methodology employed by the different translations. Part of it has to do also with the unavoidable interpretative side of Bible translation, and the resulting different views about the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek terms for covenant, and whether or not the English word "covenant" is the most appropriate translation word in a given scripture text.

In everyday life, [Merriam-Webster](#) defines "covenant" as:

- 1 a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement : COMPACT
- 2 a - a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action
- b - the common-law action to recover damages for breach of such a contract

The foundational assumption underneath these definitions is the equal plane that each party on either side of the covenant stand. Legally binding covenants assume that both parties have negotiated out the terms of the agreement with each side having input into the terms. Give and take have taken part on both sides of the agreement in the process of coming to terms before entering into the contract.

In some instances, this idea stands behind the occurrence of the word "covenant" inside the Bible. This is when the agreement is between two groups of humans. But when the idea of covenant defines an agreement between God and an individual or group of individuals, an entirely different dynamic comes into play. Covenant with God means that God dictates the terms of the agreement. The human party can only accept or reject, but cannot negotiate terms.

Gerard Van Groningen ("Covenant," [Bakers Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)) provides a helpful introduction to the Biblical terms for covenant:



The term "covenant" is of Latin origin (*convenire*), meaning a coming together. It presupposes two or more parties who come together to make a contract, agreeing on promises, stipulations, privileges, and responsibilities. In religious and theological circles there has not been agreement on precisely what is to be understood by the biblical term. It is used variously in biblical contexts. In political situations, it can be translated treaty; in a social setting, it means a lifelong friendship agreement; or it can refer to a marriage.

The biblical words most often translated "covenant" are *berit* [בְּרִית] in the Old Testament (appearing about 280 times) and *diatheke* [διαθήκη] in the New Testament (at least 33 times). The origin of the Old Testament word has been debated; some have said it comes from a custom of eating together (Gen 26:30; 31:54); others have emphasized the idea of cutting an animal (an animal was cut in half [15:18]); still others have seen the ideas of perceiving or determining as root concepts. The preferred meaning of this Old Testament word is bond; a covenant refers to two or more parties bound together. This idea of bond will be explicated more fully.

The New Testament word for covenant has usually been translated as covenant, but testimony and testament have also been used. This Greek word basically means to order or dispose for oneself or another. The thought of the inequality of the parties is latent.

This study generally follows the Smyth-Helwys Formations Sunday School quarterly passage. This lesson introduces a series of four Bible studies under the general theme of "Promises: A Journey of Discovery," and this lesson is titled "Believing the Promise." In the interpretation of Genesis 15 down through the centuries, this scripture text has been uniformly understood to reflect the first time God set up a covenant agreement with Abraham. This covenant, along with his calling from God ([Gen. 12:1-3](#)), became the foundation of Abraham's move from the eastern fertile crescent town of Ur to the western fertile crescent region of what was to eventually become the Promised Land. This covenant would be periodically revisited in Abraham's life story in Genesis 12-25.



---

## I Context

Relevant background material from [previous studies in Genesis](#) will be incorporated into this part of the Bible study.

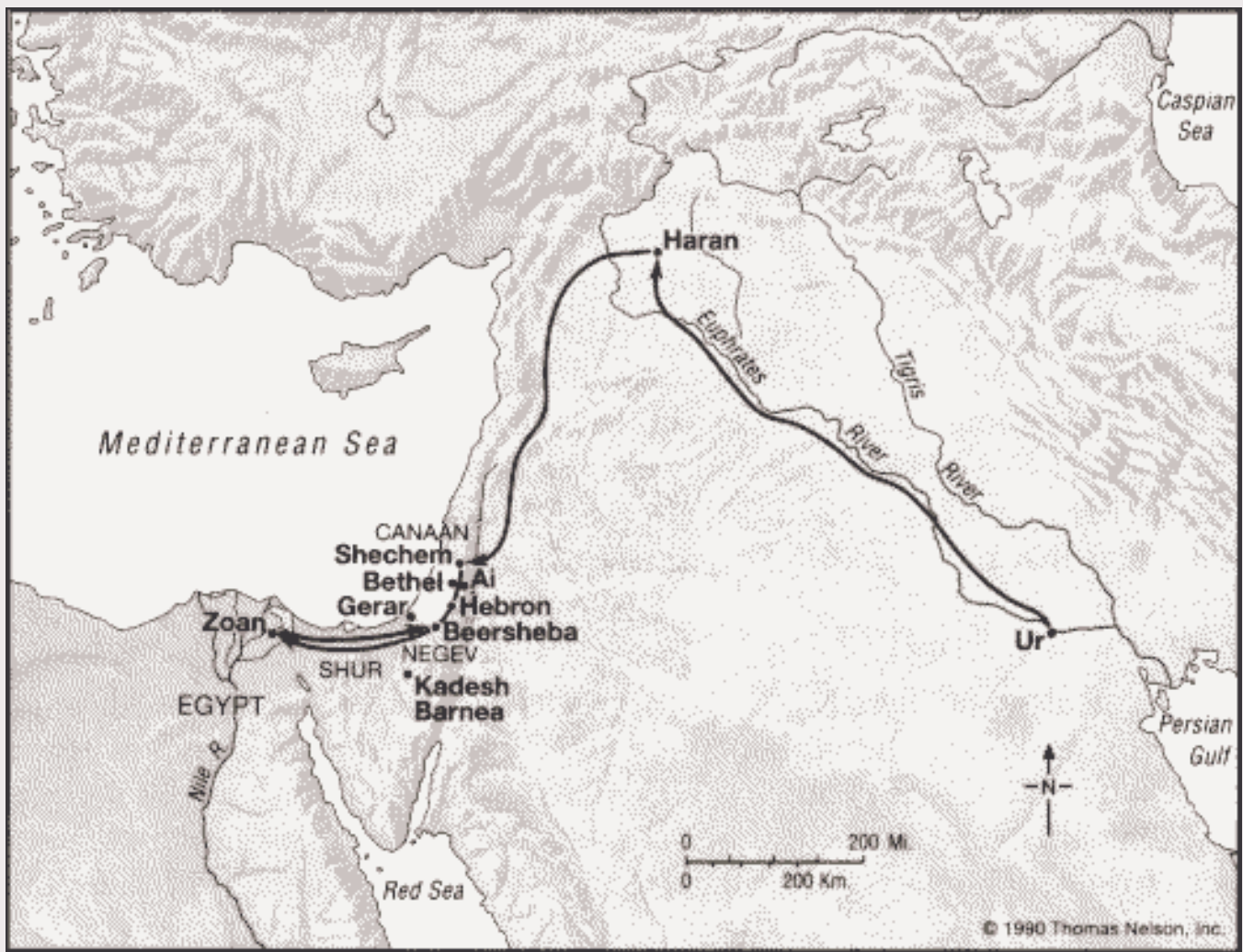
---

### a. Historical

**External History.** The compositional origin of the document called Genesis in the English Bible is like the other OT documents; its origin is clouded in mystery. This document is the first of five documents which together are called the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Frequently down through interpretative history they have simply been called the 'books of Moses.' This because Moses has been closely associated with these documents by virtue of his leadership of the Israelite people in their move from slaves

to nation. These documents have also been labeled the Law of Moses as well.

Although Moses certainly had a lot to do with the materials found in these documents, several indicators inside them suggest that at least in their present form they came into existence much later than the lifetime of Moses himself. References such as to the Canaanites being in the land 'at that time' (Gen. 12:6) suggesting that 'now' they were no longer in that land, as well as Moses' own death narrated in Deut. 34 which is obviously narrated from another



person's perspective rather than from Moses' -- all these and many more began suggesting to Bible students -- both Jewish and Christian -- as early as the middle ages that the compositional history is more complex than simply assigning it to Moses would allow.

Beginning in the late 1500s Christian scholars began probing the origins intensely in light of the emerging emphasis on study of history, especially ancient history, in western culture. This intense analysis led to the development of the viewpoint that the Pentateuch emerged in its present form in the period from the late exile to the postexilic era during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. Numerous sources of material were utilized in the composing of these five OT documents, leading to the most commonly adopted view of the J, E, D, P sources as being dominant. This, of course, doesn't deny that much of the source material goes back to Moses himself, but does demonstrate that the book we know as Genesis owes its present form to editors who lived and worked many centuries after the stories

themselves took place. Their intent was to carefully preserve the story of 'beginnings,' beginnings of both humanity in general and of the Israelite people in particular. For that we can give thanks to God who providentially guided this process through to its culmination in this first document of our Bible.

**Internal History.** The historical setting for 15:1-21 comes toward the beginning of the Abraham cycle of the patriarchal history in chapters 11-50, as is reflected in the pericope listing of the Abraham cycle in the [Literary Setting](#) below.

Time and place markers inside the pericope in 15:1-21 provide limited reference. This dialogue between Abraham and God took place "after these things" (Gen. 15:1). Clearly this places the event after Abraham's subduing of the four kings in the Valley of Siddim (14:13-24) when Abraham rescued Lot from captivity. Reference is made to God having earlier brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans (v. 7). This was on the eastern side of the Fertile Crescent, and Abraham had journeyed to the western side

of the Fertile Crescent, as is reflected on the map (cf. page 3). Sodom and Gomorrah, along with the Valley of Siddim, were located in the region of the Dead Sea. Earlier, [14:13](#), indication was given that Abraham was living “by the oaks of Mamre” during this time period. This place was significant to many events in Abraham’s life, as Wade Kotter (*Eerdman’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Logos Systems) summarizes:

A place that became the focus of Abraham’s wanderings during his sojourn in southern Canaan. Abraham built an altar there (Gen 13:18), and it became the site of numerous divine visitations. While Abraham was encamped at Mamre the Lord told him that Sarah would bear a son in her old age (Gen. 18:1–15), and there Abraham bargained with the Lord over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 16–33). Abraham later bought the nearby cave of Machpelah as a family burial place (Gen. 23:17–20; 25:9–10; 49:29–32; 50:13). The place shares its name with Mamre, an Amorite who is said to be one of Abraham’s allies against the coalition of eastern kings led by Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:24). Whether this character is merely a personification of the place and not a true person is a matter of continued controversy. Mamre has been traditionally identified with modern *Haram Râmet el-Khalîl* (1088.1602), ca. 3 km. (2 mi.) N of Hebron, although definitive archaeological support of this identification is lacking.



This would place Abraham’s living headquarters at Hebron on the east side of the Dead Sea, as the above map indicates. Mamre is located just north of Hebron.

The place designations in vv. 18-21 will be treated

## b. Literary

**Genre.** Some helpful background material on the literary patterns in Genesis comes from “Genesis” in the *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (iP-reach):

The first of the five books of Moses is named by the Jews after its first word, בראשית, “in the beginning”; by the ancient church after the inscription in the LXX translation, which reads: Ἀὕτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὅτε ἐγένετο under 1:1-2:3: γενέσις κόσμου, “genesis of the world,” or simply γενέσις, “genesis.” Like other books of the OT, Genesis was also divided from early times into “sections” (parashoth).

in the exegesis of those verses.

The time markers inside the passage are limited. The first part of the narrative (vv. 1-11) describes God’s appearance, more precisely “the word of the Lord,” during a vision and is followed by the second part of the experience “as the sun was going down” (v. 12) and “when the sun had gone down and it was dark” (v. 17). Together these references suggest that the narrative covers an experience that lasted less than 24 hours. This episodic narrative then captures but one very brief moment in Abraham’s life, but it is a very significant moment that has powerful impact on the remainder of his life.

A theological summary, but not a historical summary, of the Abraham cycle is found in [Hebrew 11:8-12](#), reflecting a Christian interpretation of Abraham:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old and Sarah herself was barren because he considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

Such secondary depictions reflect the importance of moments of time that, when combined together, portray the life time of an individual who has made a huge difference.

All of this reflects the reality that short moments of time can make a big difference in the direction of one’s life.

As the MSS from the first or second centuries B.C. which have been discovered in the desert of Judah show, the parashoth arrangement of the Hebraic books of the OT was already customary at that time. However, this division does not coincide with the chapter numbering to which we are accustomed. The division of the books of the OT into chapters occurs rather for the first time in its Latin translation, in the Vulg., and passed from it into the Hebraic MSS during the fourteenth century A.D.

The more precise literary form of vv. 1-21 follows that of a dialogical narrative in which a

conversation(s) between God and Abraham takes place. Note the numerous instances of either “he said” (vv. 5, 7, 13) or “the word of the Lord came to Abraham” (vv. 1, 4). The conversation(s) are interspersed with instructions given to Abraham usually to do certain things. God brought Abraham outside his tent and showed him the stars (v. 5). God told Abraham to prepare a sacrifice of specified animals, which Abraham did (v. 9-10). Abraham had to ward off “birds of prey” which tried to eat the meat of the dead animals (v. 11). During the night while Abraham was sleeping “a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces” (v. 17) of the sacrificed animals.

**Literary Setting.** The arrangement of the book of Genesis is twofold. The first part, chaps. 1-11, constitute the primeval history. This is the prehistory that contains elements reaching all the way back to the beginnings of human kind. The second part, chaps 12-50, is the patriarchal history.

Chapters one through eleven are the primeval history detailing beginnings of creation and humanity. The scope of these chapters is universal, that is, the history of humanity in general, beginning with Adam and concluding with Noah. The patriarchal history outlines the beginnings of the Jewish people with



the stories of their founding ancestors, beginning with Abraham and ending with Joseph.

Within the patriarchal history section, the story of Abra-

ham (more precisely 11:27-25:18) looms largest since he is the founding father and the one who entered into covenant with God. This covenant would serve as foundation for all subsequent relationships of the Israelite people with Yahweh, and would be the basis of Paul’s declaration of a new covenant through Christ in Romans 4 and Galatians 3. Abraham’s son, Isaac, receives scant attention in chapters 25 and 26, before the attention focuses on Jacob, who is renamed Israel, exclusively beginning in chapter 27. Most scholars will call chapters 25 through 36 the Jacob story, with a brief insertion about Isaac in chapter 26. The Joseph story comprises chapters 37 through 50. Thus although there were several patriarchs, the dominate ones in the Genesis narrative are Abraham, Jacob and Joseph.

In general the Abraham narrative moves along these lines:

1. Genealogies to Abraham, 11:10-32
2. God’s call of Abraham, 12:1-9
3. Sarah in jeopardy, 12:10-13:1
4. Abraham and Lot, 13:2-18
5. An alliance of four eastern kings, 14:1-24
- 6. The covenant with Abraham and Sarah, 15:1-21**
7. The birth of Ishmael, 16:1-16
8. The everlasting covenant, 17:1-27
9. The Lord’s visit to Abraham and Sarah, 18:1-15
10. Abraham’s intercession of Sodom and Gomorrah, 18:16-33
11. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, 19:1-38
12. Abraham and Sarah in Gerar, 20:1-18
13. Isaac and Ishmael, 21:1-21
14. Abraham’s dispute with Abimelech, 21:22-34
15. The testing of Abraham, 22:1-19
16. The descendants of Abraham’s brother Nahor, 22:20-24
17. Abraham’s purchase of a family burial place, 23:1-20
18. Finding a wife for Isaac, 24:1-67
19. The death of Abraham, 25:1-18

This pericope, 15:1-21, reflects the initial establishment of the covenant between God and Abraham. References to this covenant would come subsequently, particularly in 17:1-27, as is reflected in the [concordance listing](#) of the word “covenant.”

## II. Message

Understanding the arrangement of the ideas in this passage becomes important to the interpretation of these verses. The ancient Hebrew mind typically arranged ideas in patterns very different from a modern western mind, even a so-called “post-modern” western mind. The challenge in exegesis is to comprehend that thought structure and then communicate it in ways that make sense to a western mind.

**Literary Structure.** Internally the thought flow in the passage revolves around two scenes. G.J. Wenham

(Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary, Logos Systems) provides a helpful analysis of these verses as to somewhat parallel scenes where the ideas run in parallel pattern to one another. The episode falls into two scenes which run in close parallel in his analysis:

Yahweh's word v 1  
Abram's word vv 2-3  
Yahweh's reaction v 4  
Public act v 5  
Yahweh's word v 5  
Abram's faith v 6

Promise of reward v 7  
Complaint about childlessness v 8  
Promise of heir v 9-15  
Taken into open vv 16-17  
Promise of many descendants vv 13-16  
Conclusion vv 18-21

Promise of land  
Guarantee requested  
Oath rite commanded  
Oath rite carried out  
Promise of land for descendants  
Yahweh's covenant

We will follow this understanding of structure in our exegesis of the passage.

## a. God's first word to Abraham, vv. 1-6

### LXX

Ἰμετὰ δὲ τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα ἐγενήθη ῥήμα κυρίου πρὸς Ἀβραμ ἐν ὄραματι λέγων μὴ φοβοῦ Ἀβραμ ἐγὼ ὑπερασπίζω σου ὁ μισθός σου πολὺς ἔσται σφόδρα ὁ λέγει δὲ Ἀβραμ δέσποτα τί μοι δώσεις ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπολύομαι ἄτεκνος ὁ δὲ υἱὸς Μασεκ τῆς οἰκογενεῶς μου οὗτος Δαμασκὸς Ἐλιεζερ καὶ εἶπεν Ἀβραμ ἐπειδὴ ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἔδωκας σπέρμα ὁ δὲ οἰκογενῆς μου κληρονομήσει με καὶ εὐθὺς φωνή κυρίου ἐγένετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγων οὐ κληρονομήσει σε οὗτος ἀλλ' ὃς ἐξελεύσεται ἐκ σοῦ οὗτος κληρονομήσει σε ἔξῃγαγεν δὲ αὐτὸν ἔξω καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἀνάβλεψον δὴ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἀρίθμησον τοὺς ἀστέρας εἰ δυνήσῃ ἔξαριθμῆσαι αὐτούς καὶ εἶπεν οὕτως ἔσται τὸ σπέρμα σου καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην

### NASB

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." 2 Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." 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." 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." 6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

### NRSV

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2 But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." 4 But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." 5 He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

### NLT

1 Afterward the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great." 2 But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since I don't have a son, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth." 3 You have given me no children, so one of my servants will have to be my heir." 4 Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own to inherit everything I am giving you." 5 Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that? too many to count!" 6 And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith.

### Notes:

The time frame for this event is set up with the phrase "after these things" (v. 1). Earlier we discussed the significance of this under [Internal History](#) (page 3). This event took place at Mamre near

Hebron after Abraham's encounter with both Melchizedek of Salem and the king of Sodom who met Abraham at the Valley of Shaveh after Abraham

had defeated the kings who had captured Lot ([14:17-24](#)). Once Abraham had returned home to Mamre, this vision came to him sometime afterwards.

In following Wenham's assessment of the internal structure of vv. 1-6, the pattern unfolds as follows:

**Promise of land = Yahweh's word (v. 1):** "the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.'" The image of God's word coming to someone is relatively common in the Bible ([over 100 occurrences in the NRSV](#)). The text is unclear whether Abraham received this vision during sleep or while he was awake. The reference in v. 12 does suggest that at that point at least God's speaking came to Abraham while he was in deep sleep.

The channel through which God spoke to Abraham was a vision. The discussion in the *IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Logos Systems) is helpful for understanding visions:

Visions were a means used by God to communicate to people. All of the other visions of this category in the Old Testament were given to prophets (the writing prophets as well as Balaam) and often resulted in prophetic oracles which were then delivered to the people. Visions may be experienced in dreams but are not the same as dreams. They may be either visual or auditory. They may involve natural or supernatural settings, and the individual having the vision may be either an observer or a participant. Visions are likewise part of the prophetic institution in other cultures in the ancient Near East.

What God said has greater importance than how God said it. Three things were spoken to Abraham: 1) don't be afraid; 2) I'm your shield; and 3) your reward will be very great.

Abraham is here addressed as Abram. This name is an early name ([51x in NRSV](#)), while Abraham is a later name ([264x in NRSV](#)). The covenant renewal in [Gen. 17:5](#) becomes the turning point in this naming: "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations."

**1) Don't be afraid.** The first admonition about not being afraid is quite common in the Bible; [some 75 instances](#) are found in the

NRSV translation. The source of Abraham's fear is not clear in the text, although commentators have speculated a variety of things ranging from a later attack of the defeated four kings (chap. 14) to despondency over being too generous in not keeping the spoils of victory (chap. 14). The frequent use of this admonition argues against tying it too closely to some particular circumstance in the preceding context. Life in that world had substantial worries of its own. God's speaking to Abraham in the visionary manner was not the usual daily experience for Abraham. The important implication of this admonition is that God's presence eliminates the need for apprehension or fear.

**2) I'm your shield.** Although this image of battlefield protection could suggest fear of renewed battle with the defeated kings, the picture of God as a shield again is widely used. David's depiction in [2 Sam. 22:2-3](#) is particularly meaningful here (cf. also v. 31):

2 He said: The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, 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.

To Abraham living in a violent world of frequent attack from enemies, God's word of protection came as an important promise.

**3) Your reward will be great.** Again, in spite of having given most of the captured booty back to the King of Sodom from whom it had been taken by the four kings (14:21-24), God promised prosperity to Abraham who already enjoyed substantial possessions. Earlier God had promised the entire country side to Abraham; see [13:14-17](#):

14 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16 I

will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. 17 Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."

**Guarantee requested =**

Abram's word (vv 2-3): "2 But Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' 3 And Abram said,



'You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.' "

Abraham's reaction to God's promise was to raise the issue of childlessness. Central to God's promise was having heirs to whom the land could be passed on to, and at that point Abraham had only the son of a slave to serve as an heir named Eliezer of Damascus. To Abraham this did not seem to be the fulfillment of God's promise that he had assumed to be a part of the divine promise.

He addressed God with proper respect as Sovereign Lord, a phrase in Hebrew found only in the Abraham cycle in 15:2, 8; 18:3, 27, 30-32; 19:18; 20:4. As Wenham notes (WBC) this direct address typically introduces an intercessory prayer.

The reference to Eliezer is almost impossible to sort out with certainty in the Hebrew text. The NLT translation provides one of the more common interpretive understandings: "Since I don't have a son, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth." This ancient cultural tradition is explained by the *IVP Bible Background Commentary*.

In those instances where the head of a household had no male heir, it was possible for a servant to be legally adopted as the heir, as particularly demonstrated in an Old Babylonian text from Larsa. This would most likely be a course of last resort, since it would mean transference of property to a person (and his line) who was (1) originally a servant or bondsman, and (2) not a blood relative. It signals the frustration of the childless Abram that he tells God that he has designated Eliezer of Damascus as his heir, though it is not clear whether he has actually adopted Eliezer or is simply referring to that as the only remaining course of action.

**Oath rite commanded =** Yahweh's reaction (v. 4): "But the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.' " God's reaction to Abraham was to reject Abraham's plan to name Eliezer as heir. Instead, the heir would be a birth son of Abraham himself. What Abraham couldn't see at that point, God could. And He knew that His promise would be fulfilled just as it had been made. To be sure the very next chapter, [chap. 16](#), describes

Abraham's lack of faith in allowing God to accomplish His promise. The sordid affair with Hagar and Ishmael would create a problem still plaguing our world today. The impact of our actions can be staggering, as was Abraham's.

**Oath rite carried out =** Public act (v 5a): "He brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.'" With a graphic visual aid, God took Abraham outside his tent to look up at the stars. With a challenge to do the impossible -- count all of them -- God assured Abraham that his birth descendants would be just as numerous. God demonstrated patience with Abraham in seeking to convince him that the divine promise would hold up as promised.

**Promise of land for descendants =** Yahweh's word (v 5b): "Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" Once again, God assured Abraham of numerous descendants. Earlier in [13:16](#), they had been compared to the dust of the earth: "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted." The comparison to stars will surface again in 22:17 and 26:4. The point of both comparisons is to stress large quantity. The dramatic use of these comparisons was designed to reaffirm the trustworthiness of God's promise of a birth heir.

**Yahweh's covenant =** Abram's faith (v 6): "And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness." The star comparison convinced Abraham that the Lord was reliable and that what He promised He would do.

Early Christian use of this verse reflects different interpretive applications in Paul and James. [Rom. 4:1-5](#) reflects the basic Pauline use of this verse:

1 What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the scripture say? "*Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.*" 4 Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5 But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

Paul saw in this verse two key el-





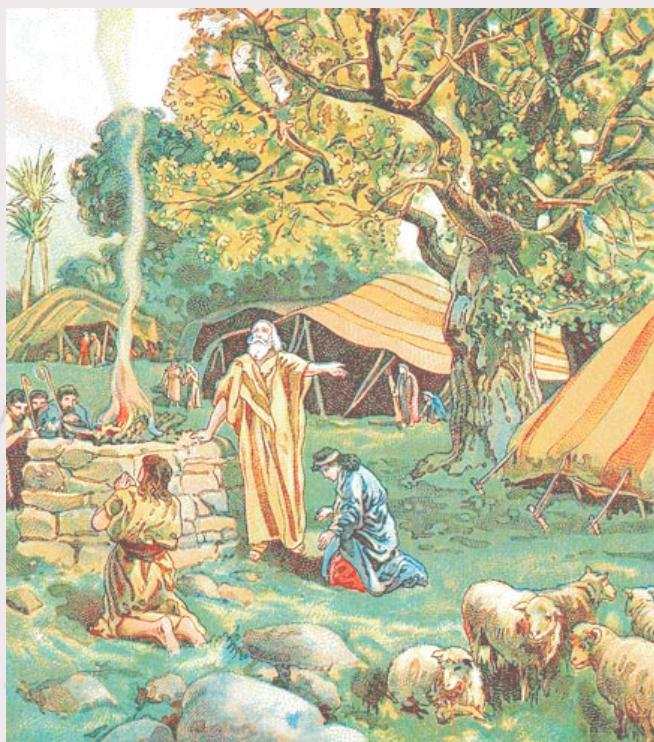
ements: Abraham's faith and God's justification (being counted as righteous). In these elements the apostle found the foundational elements of the gospel: *justification by faith apart from works of law* (cf. Rom. 4:5 and Gal. 2:16).

James also saw key gospel elements in this verse as [Jas. 2:20-24](#) reflects:

20 Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. 23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "*Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,*" and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

For James this verse provided the foundational core of a faith commitment early on in Abraham's life which was validated by the much later willingness to offer up his son of promise, Isaac, on Mt. Sinai. Faith then becomes a life changing commitment that produces a pattern of subsequent obedient service to God. Anything less than this is not genuine faith.

These two different applications of Gen. 15:6 by



Paul and James complement one another in underscoring the requirement of faith commitment as essential to the salvation experience (being made righteous with God) and faith as a life-changing commitment that flows naturally into a life long obedience to God. The gospel of Jesus Christ underscores both perspectives on faith. Abraham's experience in 15:6 becomes the ancient model defining authentic faith.

The connection of verses 1-6 to us today? Several links can be found. God stands as the

stabilizing presence of our lives as Christians. He protects us, He blesses us, He eliminates the need of fear and apprehension. Also, God's promises are reliable. In His own time and way His promises will be kept. On that we as His people can be absolutely certain. He calls us to unconditional faith commitment to Him. We must "turn loose" of everything in unquestioning confidence in His ability to lead and bless us. To be sure, the Abraham cycle will depict a man who had difficulty at times fully trusting God after this experience, but Abraham never walked away from a core trust and obedience in God. This is our challenge as well.

## b. God's second word to Abraham, vv. 7-21

### LXX

ἔειπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν ἐγὼ ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν σε ἐκ χώρας Χαλδαιῶν ὥστε δοῦναί σοι τὴν γῆν ταύτην κληρονομήσαι ἔειπεν δὲ δέσποτα κύριε κατὰ τί γινώσκειται ὅτι κληρονομήσω αὐτήν ἔειπεν δὲ αὐτῷ λαβέ μοι δάμαλιν τριετίζουσας καὶ αἶγα τριετίζουσας καὶ κριδὸν τριετίζοντα καὶ τρυγὸνα καὶ περιστερὰν ἔλαβεν δὲ αὐτῷ πάντα ταῦ

### NASB

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." 8 He said, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?" 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

### NRSV

7 Then he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." 8 But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" 9 He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove,

### NLT

7 Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land." 8 But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that you will give it to me?" 9 Then the LORD told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle-

τα καὶ διεΐλεν αὐτὰ μέσα καὶ ἔθηκεν αὐτὰ ἀντιπρόσωπα ἀλλήλοις τὰ δὲ ὄρνεα οὐ διεΐλεν <sup>11</sup>κατέβη δὲ ὄρνεα ἐπὶ τὰ σώματα τὰ διχοτομήματα αὐτῶν καὶ συνεκάθισεν αὐτοῖς Αβραμ

<sup>12</sup>περὶ δὲ ἡλίου δυσμὰς ἔκστασις ἐπέπεσεν τῷ Αβραμ καὶ ἰδοὺ φόβος σκοτεινὸς μέγας ἐπιπίπτει αὐτῷ <sup>13</sup>καὶ ἐρρέθη πρὸς Αβραμ γινώσκων γνώση ὅτι πάροικον ἔσται τὸ σπέρμα σου ἐν γῆ οὐκ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δουλώσουσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ κακώσουσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ ταπεινώσουσιν αὐτοὺς τετρακόσια ἔτη <sup>14</sup>τὸ δὲ ἔθνος ᾧ ἂν δουλεύσωσιν κρινῶ ἐγὼ μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἐξελεύσονται ὧδε μετὰ ἀποσκευῆς πολλῆς <sup>15</sup>σὺ δὲ ἀπελεύση πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας σου μετ' εἰρήνης ταφεῖς ἐν γῆρει καλῷ <sup>16</sup>τετάρτη δὲ γενεᾷ ἀποστραφήσονται ὧδε οὐπω γὰρ ἀναπεπλήρωται αἱ ἀμαρτίαι τῶν Αμορραίων ἕως τοῦ νῦν

<sup>17</sup>ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐγένετο ὁ ἥλιος πρὸς δυσμαῖς φλῶξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἰδοὺ κλίβανος καπνιζόμενος καὶ λαμπάδες πυρὸς αἱ διήλθον ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν διχοτομημάτων τούτων <sup>18</sup>ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ διέθετο κύριος τῷ Αβραμ διαθήκην λέγων τῷ σπέρματί σου δώσω τὴν γῆν ταύτην ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου ποταμοῦ Εὐφράτου <sup>19</sup>τοῦς Καιναίους καὶ τοὺς Κενεζαίους καὶ τοὺς Κεδμωναίους <sup>20</sup>καὶ τοὺς Χετταίους καὶ τοὺς Φερεζαίους καὶ τοὺς Ραφαῖν <sup>21</sup>καὶ τοὺς

a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 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. 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. 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. 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 shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. 16 Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

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. 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: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite

and a young pigeon." 10 He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. 13 Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; 14 but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. 16 And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the

dove, and a young pigeon." 10 Abram took all these and killed them. He cut each one down the middle and laid the halves side by side. He did not, however, divide the birds in half. 11 Some vultures came down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

12 That evening, as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. He saw a terrifying vision of darkness and horror. 13 Then the LORD told Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will be oppressed as slaves for four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. 15 (But you will die in peace, at a ripe old age.) 16 After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, when the sin of the Amorites has run its course."

17 As the sun went down and it became dark, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. 18 So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt F51 to the great Euphrates River ? 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites,

Αμορραίους καὶ τοὺς  
Χανααναίους καὶ τοὺς  
Ευαίους καὶ τοὺς  
Γεργεσαίους καὶ τοὺς  
Ιεβουσαίους

and the Rephaim 21 and  
the Amorite and the  
Canaanite and the  
Girgashite and the  
Jebusite."

Hittites, the Perizzites,  
the Rephaim, 21 the  
Amorites, the Canaan-  
ites, the Girgashites, and  
the Jebusites."

Rephaites, 21 Amorites,  
Canaanites, Girgashites,  
and Jebusites."

### Notes:

This second section follows the internal structural pattern as the first section, vv. 1-6. Our study of these verses will emphasize those points where the idea in the prior parallel section (vv. 1-6) is extended beyond what was stated in the previous verses.

**Promise of land** = Promise of reward (v 7) [// **Yahweh's word v 1**]: "Then he said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.'" In the first section, God admonished Abraham with affirmations about who God is: "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." In verse 7, the promised reward is the land. And God reminds Abraham who has brought him from Ur to this land. Also expressed is the divine purpose in uprooting Abraham from his native home: to give him this land that God had promised.

**Guarantee requested** = Complaint about childlessness (v 8) [// **Abram's word vv 2-3**]: "But he said, 'O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?'" Just as Abraham had complained about lack of an heir (v. 2), now he raises questions about how to possess the promised land. Although the English translation of verse 8 could be taken to refer to Abraham's lack of military capability to conquer the land, the context makes it clear that the point of his question is the same as in verse two: he cannot possess the land because he has no heirs. He wants a "sign" that God's promise to grant him the land is viable.

**Oath rite commanded** = Promise of heir (vv 9-15) [// **Yahweh's reaction v 4**]:

9 He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over



against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. 13 Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; 14 but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

Whereas in v. 4, God took Abraham outside his tent and showed him the stars with the promise that his heirs would be as numerous as the stars, here the divine command is to set up an offering. What Abraham does can't be considered offering a sacrifice, since the animals were not placed on an altar. Instead, the animals, which cover the range of sacrificial animals in the OT Law, are cut in half -- all but the birds. The two halves are laid over against each other in two rows. Abraham has to fight off vultures before the sun sets.

**Promise of land for descendants** = Promise of many descendants (vv 13-16) [// **Yahweh's word v 5**]. Verses 13-16 most likely represent an expansion added later to complete the implications of this ritual. If one moves directly from verse 12 to verse 17 the narrative flows naturally.

**Oath rite carried out** = Taken into open (vv 16-17) [// **Public act v 5**]. During the evening both a fire pot and a flaming torch pass between the two halves of the slaughtered animals, symbolizing God's presence and ratification of the covenant.

The significance of this ritual is identified in verse 18: "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram..." Evidently the backdrop for this action is an "archaic ritual of making a covenant by cutting animals in two (Jer.

34.17) and passing between the two parts" (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd rev ed., p. 19). The precise meaning and symbolism of all these actions is widely debated. G. J. Wenham (*WBC*) provides both a helpful summary and an interesting interpretation:

The interpretation of this mysterious rite is much discussed; see Hasel (*JSOT* 19 [1981] 61–78) for a comprehensive survey. Most modern commentators take their cue from v 18, "The LORD made [literally, cut] a covenant with Abram," and from Jer 34:18, which speaks of the people passing between a dismembered calf. This act is then interpreted as an enacted curse. "May God make me like this animal, if I do not fulfill the demands of the covenant." A curse like this is actually attested in one of the eighth-century treaties (*ANESTP*, 532). In Genesis, of course, it is God himself who walks between the pieces, and it is suggested that here God is invoking the curse on himself, if he fails to fulfill the promise.

While this interpretation could explain the phrase "to cut a covenant," it leaves many features of this rite unexplained. It does not explain the choice of these particular animals. Why are only sacrificial types selected? Why must they be three years old? Why are the birds not cut up? Why does Abram drive off the birds of prey? Finally it must be asked whether a divine self-imprecation is really likely. Is it compatible with OT theology for God to say "May I die, if I do not keep my word"? Divine oaths generally take the form, "As I live, says the LORD" (cf. Num 14:21).

The use of sacrificial terminology in v 9 suggests that the rite should be interpreted using the categories underlying other OT rituals. It then becomes clear that the sacrificial animals must represent Israel or its priestly leaders (M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* [London: Routledge, 1966]; cf. Jacob). The birds of prey represent unclean nations, Gentiles, possibly Egypt (so Cazelles). Thus Abram's actions in driving away the birds represent his defending his descendants against foreign attackers. This may look back to his defeat of the kings in chap. 14, but more probably it looks forward to their deliverance from Egypt. The rest of the Pentateuch insists that it is the promise to Abram that is the ground for the exodus (Exod 2:24; Deut 9:5). This scene portrays a time-lapse between Abram's falling asleep (v 12; cf. v 15) and God's walking between the pieces (v 17). If the pieces represent Israel, this action would appear to portray God as walking with his people. Whether the reference is to the pillar of fire accompanying them through the wilderness or the theophany of Sinai, or whether it portrays the fulfillment of the covenant promise "I will walk among you and be your God" (Lev 26:12; cf. Deut 23:15 [14]) is difficult to decide: indeed the possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

One thing is clear. The connecting link between the

covenant of God with Abraham and the later exodus of the children of Israel is unquestionably made. The added material in vv. 13-16 form a prophecy of the exodus to happen some 400 years later. Abraham will live to a ripe old age and die in peace. His descendants will return from Egyptian bondage to complete the divine judgment on the Amorites whose sinfulness by that point will demand the wrath of God.

**Yahweh's covenant = Conclusion (vv 18-21) [// Abram's faith v 6].** The essence of the covenant is set forth in verses 18b: "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ..." The land promised to Abraham lies between these two major rivers. The western side of this is not clear, in comparison to other references to the promised land, as Wenham (*WBC*) describes:

"From the river of Egypt to the great river." According to Weinfeld (*JAOS*, 90 [1970] 200): "Delineation of borders ... constitute an important part of the documents of grant." The more usual term for the southern border of the promised land is the brook (נהל) of Egypt, which is to be identified with Wadi el Arish in northeastern Sinai (Num 34:5). It is not clear whether "river of Egypt" is an alternative name for Wadi el Arish (so Simons, *GTOT*, 27) or means the eastern branch of the Nile delta (so Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 59). Assuming there is no corruption of the text and that usage is consistent, the latter would be more probable. In that case, there is an element of hyperbole here, for the land of promise is identified with Canaan, whose boundaries are more restricted (see Num 34:2–12). Only in Solomon's day did Israel's boundaries approach the limits specified here (1 Kgs 5:1 [4:21]), but it seems unlikely that they extended as far west as the Nile even then (A. Malamat, *JNES* 22 [1963] 1–17).

The designation of the river boundaries is then followed by a listing of ten nations similar to others, as is described in the NOAB (p. 32):

The list of ten nations here resembles similar such lists of Canaanite peoples in the Tetrateuch (e.g., Ex 3.8,17; 13.5) and Deuteronomistic history (e.g., 7.1; 20.17; Josh 3.10). This list, however, is significantly longer than others. Though it is missing the "Hivites" (see 10.16-18a n.), who occur on most other lists, this list is unique in including the *Kenites*, *Kenizzites*, *Kadmonites*, and *Rephaim*.

The linking of God's covenant of the promised land to the exodus of the Israelites establishes a promise / fulfillment structure to this divine agreement. It would take God some four centuries to keep this promise fully. But that He would do for His people Israel. And that He still does for His people in Christ. Of that we can be fully confident.

**LXX**

Ἰμετὰ δὲ τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα ἐγενήθη ῥήμα κυρίου πρὸς Ἀβραμ ἐν ὄραματι λέγων μὴ φοβοῦ Ἀβραμ ἐγὼ ὑπερασπίζω σου ὁ μισθός σου πολὺς ἔσται σφόδρα ἔλεγει δὲ Ἀβραμ δέσποτα τί μοι δώσεις ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπολύομαι ἄτεκνος ὁ δὲ υἱὸς Μασεκ τῆς οἰκογενεῶς μου οὗτος Δαμασκὸς Ἐλιεζερ <sup>3</sup>καὶ εἶπεν Ἀβραμ ἐπειδὴ ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἔδωκας σπέρμα ὁ δὲ οἰκογενῆς μου κληρονομήσει με <sup>4</sup>καὶ εὐθύς φωνή κυρίου ἐγένετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγων οὐ κληρονομήσει σε οὗτος ἀλλ' ὃς ἐξελεύσεται ἐκ σοῦ οὗτος κληρονομήσει σε <sup>5</sup>ἔξήγαγεν δὲ αὐτὸν ἔξω καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἀνάβλεψον δὴ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἀρίθμησον τοὺς ἀστέρας εἰ δυνήσῃ ἔξαριθμησαὶ αὐτούς καὶ εἶπεν οὕτως ἔσται τὸ σπέρμα σου <sup>6</sup>καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην

<sup>7</sup>εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν ἐγὼ ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν σε ἐκ χώρας Χαλδαίων ὥστε δοῦναί σοι τὴν γῆν ταύτην κληρονομήσαι <sup>8</sup>εἶπεν δὲ δέσποτα κύριε κατὰ τί γνῶσομαι ὅτι κληρονομήσω αὐτήν <sup>9</sup>εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ λαβέ μοι δάμαλιν τριετίζουσας καὶ αἶγα τριετίζουσας καὶ κριδὸν τριετίζοντα καὶ τρυγὸνα καὶ περιστερὰν <sup>10</sup>ἔλαβεν δὲ αὐτῷ πάντα ταῦτα καὶ διεῖλεν αὐτὰ μέσα καὶ ἔθηκεν αὐτὰ ἀντιπρόσωπα ἀλλήλοις τὰ δὲ ὄρνεα οὐ διεῖλεν <sup>11</sup>κατέβη δὲ ὄρνεα ἐπὶ τὰ σώματα τὰ διχοτομήματα αὐτῶν καὶ συνεκάθισεν αὐτοῖς Ἀβραμ

**NASB**

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." 2 Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." 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." 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." 6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

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." 8 He said, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?" 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." 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. 11 The

**NRSV**

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2 But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." 4 But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." 5 He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

7 Then he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." 8 But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" 9 He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when birds of prey

**NLT**

1 Afterward the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great." 2 But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since I don't have a son, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. 3 You have given me no children, so one of my servants will have to be my heir." 4 Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own to inherit everything I am giving you." 5 Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that? too many to count!" 6 And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith.

7 Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land." 8 But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that you will give it to me?" 9 Then the LORD told 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 Abram took all these and killed them.

<sup>12</sup>περὶ δὲ ἡλίου δυσμὰς ἔκστασις ἐπέπεσεν τῷ Ἀβραμ καὶ ἰδοὺ φόβος σκοτεινὸς μέγας ἐπιπίπτει αὐτῷ <sup>13</sup>καὶ ἐρρέθη πρὸς Ἀβραμ γινώσκων γινώσῃ ὅτι πάροικον ἔσται τὸ σπέρμα σου ἐν γῆ οὐκ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δουλώσουσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ κακώσουσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ ταπεινώσουσιν αὐτοὺς τετρακόσια ἔτη <sup>14</sup>τὸ δὲ ἔθνος ᾧ ἂν δουλεύωσιν κρινῶ ἐγὼ μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἐξελεύσονται ὧδε μετὰ ἀποσκευῆς πολλῆς <sup>15</sup>σὺ δὲ ἀπελεύσῃ πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας σου μετ' εἰρήνης ταφεῖς ἐν γῆρῃ καλῷ <sup>16</sup>τετάρτη δὲ γενεᾷ ἀποστραφήσονται ὧδε οὐπω γὰρ ἀναπεπλήρωνται αἱ ἀμαρτίαι τῶν Ἀμορραίων ἕως τοῦ νῦν

<sup>17</sup>ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐγένετο ὁ ἥλιος πρὸς δυσμὰς φλόξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἰδοὺ κλίβανος καπνιζόμενος καὶ λαμπάδες πυρός αἱ διήλθον ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν διχοτομημάτων τούτων <sup>18</sup>ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ διέθετο κύριος τῷ Ἀβραμ διαθήκην λέγων τῷ σπέρματί σου δώσω τὴν γῆν ταύτην ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου ποταμοῦ Εὐφράτου <sup>19</sup>τοὺς Καιναίους καὶ τοὺς Κενεζαίους καὶ τοὺς Κεδμωναίους <sup>20</sup>καὶ τοὺς Χετταίους καὶ τοὺς Φερεζαίους καὶ τοὺς Ραφαῖν <sup>21</sup>καὶ τοὺς Ἀμορραίους καὶ τοὺς Χανααναίους καὶ τοὺς Ευαίους καὶ τοὺς Γεργεσαίους καὶ τοὺς Ἰεβουσαίους

birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. 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. 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 shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. 16 Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

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. 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: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. 13 Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; 14 but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. 16 And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

He cut each one down the middle and laid the halves side by side. He did not, however, divide the birds in half. 11 Some vultures came down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

12 That evening, as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. He saw a terrifying vision of darkness and horror. 13 Then the LORD told Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will be oppressed as slaves for four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. 15 (But you will die in peace, at a ripe old age.) 16 After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, when the sin of the Amorites has run its course."

17 As the sun went down and it became dark, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. 18 So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt F51 to the great Euphrates River ? 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

Genesis 15:1-21

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָם בְּמַחְזָה לֵאמֹר אֶל־תִּירָא אֲבָרָם אֲנִכִּי מִגֵּן לֶךְ שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה מַה־תִּתֶּן־לִי וְאַנְכִי הוֹלֵךְ עִרְרִי וּבֶן־מִשְׁק בֵּיתִי הוּא דֹמֶשֶׁק אֶלְעִזָּר וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם הֵן לִי לֹא נִתְּתָה זָרַע וְהִנֵּה בֶן־בֵּיתִי יוֹרֵשׁ אֹתִי

וְהִנֵּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר לֹא יִירָשְׁךָ זֶה כִּי־אִם אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמְעֶיךָ הוּא יִירָשְׁךָ

וַיֵּצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הִבְטַנְנָא הַשְּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אַתָּם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זִרְעֶךָ וְהָאֱמֹן בֵּיהוּהָ וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים לַחַת לֶךְ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אִירְשֶׁנָּה

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו קְחָה לִּי עֵגְלָה מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְעֵז מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְאַיִל מְשֻׁלָּשׁ וְחֹר וְגֹזֵל

וַיִּקְחֵהוּ לָוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה וַיִּבְתֵּר אֹתָם בַּתְּוֶדֶד וַיִּתֵּן אִישׁ־בִּתְרוֹ לְקָרְאֵת רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַצֶּפֶר לֹא בָתָר

וַיִּרְדּוּ הָעַיִט עַל־הַפְּגָרִים וַיֵּשֶׁב אֹתָם אַבְרָם

וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְבוֹא וְתַרְדֵּמָה נִפְלְאָה עַל־אַבְרָם וְהִנֵּה אֵימָה חֲשֹׁכָה גְדֹלָה נִפְלְאָה עָלָיו

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יָדַע תְּדַע כִּי־גֵר אֶהְיֶה בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעַבְדוּם וְעֵנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה

וְגַם אֶת־הַנְּגוּי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ הֵן אֲנִכִּי וְאַחֲרַיִכֶן יֵצְאוּ בְּרַכָּשׁ גָּדוֹל

וְאַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶל־אֲבֹתֶיךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם תִּקְבָּר בְּשֵׂיבָה טוֹבָה

וְדוֹר רְבִיעִי יָשׁוּבוּ הֵנָּה כִּי לֹא־שָׁלֵם עֵינֶן הָאִמְרֵי עַד־הֵנָּה

וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בָּאָה וְעֵלְטָה הָיָה וְהִנֵּה תַנּוּר עֹשֵׂן וְלֶפֶיד אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עֹבֵר בֵּין הַגְּזָרִים הָאֵלֶּה

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא פָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר לְזִרְעֶךָ

נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִנְהַר מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנָּהָר הַגָּדֹל  
נְהַר־פָּרָת׃

19 אֶת־הַקְּנִי וְאֶת־הַקְּנִי וְאֶת־הַקְּדֹמֹנִי׃

20 וְאֶת־הַחֲתִי וְאֶת־הַפְּרוֹי וְאֶת־הַרְפְּאִים׃

21 וְאֶת־הָאֹמֶרִי וְאֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת־הַגְּרִשִׁי וְאֶת־הַיְבוּסִי׃ ס

