

God of Our Fathers: Genesis

Lesson 9: God's Covenant with Abraham

Lesson Introduction

- Think about a time you had a contract with another person.
- What were the terms of the contract?
- What were the consequences of breaking the contract?

Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Discuss the significance of God's changing Abram's name
- Describe the terms of the covenant between God and Abraham
- Explain the importance of circumcision
- Express understanding of who God is

Background for the Scripture

In the ancient Near East during the time of Abraham, covenants were common among men and among nations. Three major promises are contained in the covenant God made with Abram: a land, a seed, and a blessing.

At Shechem, God promised to give 'land' to Abram (12:7). Even so, the land that was promised never belonged to Abram in his lifetime. When his wife died, Abram had to buy a portion of the land for a burial site (23:3). It is not until chapter 15 that a full description of the land was given: "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'" (Genesis 15:18).

The second promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was that of a great nation coming through Abram's seed, which was to be a major component of Abraham's blessing. Descendants formed the basis for the 'great name' that God would give to Abram (12:2). This promise demanded faith on the part of Abram, for it was obvious that he was already aged, and that his wife appeared to be incapable of having children (11:30).

The final promise was that of blessing—blessing for him, and blessing through him (12:2). Much of Abram's blessing, as we have already noted, was to come in the form of his offspring. But there was also the blessing that would come in the form of the Messiah, who would eventually bring salvation to God's people (John 8:56).

Genesis 17:1-22 (KJV)

17 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

² And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

³ And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

⁴ As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

⁵ Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

⁶ And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

⁸ And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

⁹ And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

¹⁰ This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

¹¹ And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

¹² And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

¹³ He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

¹⁴ And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

¹⁵ And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

¹⁶ And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

¹⁷ Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

¹⁸ And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

¹⁹ And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

²¹ But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

²² And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Examining the Scripture

1. What was the significance of God's changing Abram's name?
2. What were the terms of the covenant between God and Abraham?
3. What is the importance of circumcision?

Applying the Scripture

1. The covenant between Abraham and God is described in the following passages: Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17: 1-22, and 22:15-18. How do these accounts differ? How are they the same?
2. Using a Bible dictionary as a resource, describe the following covenants: The Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant. In what ways are these covenants the same? How are they different?
3. What blessings and curses, if any, are associated with the above covenant relationships?

Quest to Know God Activity

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?