

THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL

GOD'S UNBREAKABLE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM: CHOSEN BY GOD

Genesis 1-2 Creation
Genesis 3 the fall and Promise of a Savior
Genesis 4 the murder of the godly line and the birth of Seth
Genesis 5 the Godly line and Enoch
Genesis 6-9 Noah picked and saved
Genesis 10 the line of Shem
Genesis 11 onward the family of Abraham!

Four thousand and one hundred years ago, God made a promise called a covenant with a man we know named Abraham. In Genesis 12:1–3 God declares that His primary focus will be on His promises to Abraham. Genesis is written in the first 11 chapters with all the world in focus, but starting in Genesis 12 God turns His attention toward one small nation, Israel, through whom He promised to progressively accomplish His redemptive plan. God planned for Israel's mission to be "a light to the Gentiles" (Is. 42:6). In Genesis 12 God promised three elements: a land, multiplied descendants (seed), and His Special Blessing.

God did not only speak this promise, it was dramatically displayed by a ceremony called "cutting a covenant". In the style we know was known to Abraham from his culture God took the slaying, dividing and laying out of sacrificial animals on the ground as a setting for His Promise made to Himself and for Abraham that could never be broken. We call this Promise the Abrahamic Covenant.

This 3-fold promise became, in turn, the basis of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:1–20). All the rest of Scripture bears out the fulfillment of these promises. That a specifically identifiable land (Genesis 15:18–21) was intimately linked with Abram's having many descendants in God's purpose and in the Abrahamic Covenant was clearly revealed and, in a formal ceremony (Genesis 15:9–21), would be placed irrevocably beyond dispute.

GOD CUTS A COVENANT WITH HIMSELF FOR ABRAHAM

In Genesis 15 we find one of the greatest events in the history of salvation, The Lord Himself commemorated it with a special sign. He ordered Abram to make a “cutting of the covenant” by sacrifices divided into two piles. Then, when the sun had set, God appeared in the night as “a smoking firepot with a blazing torch... and passed between the pieces” (v. 17) in the traditional figure-eight pattern of covenant, signifying that his promise was unconditional and that he (God) would be torn asunder like the pieces if he failed to keep his promise. To be sure, Abram’s unwavering faith displayed at this great moment (cf. Romans 4:10ff.) did suffer some future lapses, but his faith also grew to towering proportions through the hard times that were to come.¹

A COVENANT IS “CUT,” NOT MADE².

Though our biblical translations refer to people “making” a covenant, the Hebrews described the establishment of this type of relationship as “cutting” a covenant. The cutting, symbolized by the slaughter of animals (Exodus 24:5,8), indicated that each person in the covenant promised to give his or her own life to keep its terms. To break a covenant was to invite one’s own death as a penalty. There are no more serious relationships than those that are a commitment of life itself. Thus God’s use of covenants to describe His relationship with His people (Genesis 15; Hebrews 13:20-21) is striking for several reasons. It shows that God wanted to bond eternally with a people who persistently rejected Him. It shows that God was willing to prove His devotion to the relationship by offering His own life. Finally, and probably most stunning of all, it shows that God not only was willing to offer His own life to keep the covenant, but He also was willing to pay the price for any covenant failure on the part of the human beings with whom He was in relationship. This promise certainly exceeded the limits of human covenant-making practices.

So with an unbreakable promise God gave to Abraham a people, a blessing, and a land!

Listen to this incredible summary of all specifics God has revealed about His Chosen People of Destiny, the Jews.

1. **GOD PICKED HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE OF DESTINY AS THE JEWS, DESCENDENTS OF ABRAHAM, CALLED ISRAEL.** God picked one man in Ur of the Chaldees and asked him to walk hundreds of miles through the desert to a land filled with powerful kingdom states. And there in a series of revelations, the Almighty God of the Universe solemnly swore to this man a nation would descend from him that would be the Chosen People of Destiny (Genesis 15). Those People are the Jewish People, the Israelites, God’s People (Deuteronomy 7:6-7).
 - ✓ Genesis 12:1-3 When the nation was first founded, God promised through Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation . . . And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2,3).
 - ✓ Genesis 15 There is more³. This climactic word is the earliest missionary mandate. The promise of God to Abraham was specifically given *in order that* he and his seed might be,

¹Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Hebrews Vol 1&2—An Anchor for the Soul*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1998, c1993.

²Ray VanderrLaan, p. 105-106.

³Walt Kaiser, Jr.

through the gracious provisions of God, the avenue of carrying the same good news to every one of the 70 families on the earth listed in chapter 10.

2. **GOD PRESENTED A LAND TO HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE OF DESTINY THE JEWS WITH CLEARLY DEFINED BOUNDARIES** (Genesis 12:1; 13:15; 15:7, 18-21) to Abraham. He renewed that promise to Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5), to his grandson Jacob (Genesis 28:13), and to their descendants after them forever (Leviticus 25:46; Joshua 14:9; etc.).
 - ✓ *Genesis 12:1* The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to **the land I will show you.**
 - ✓ *Genesis 13:15* **All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.**
 - ✓ *Genesis 15:7* He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to **give you this land to take possession of it.**"
 - ✓ *Genesis 15:18-21* On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "**To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—** 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."
 - ✓ *Genesis 26:3-5* Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For **to you and your descendants I will give all these lands** and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky **and will give them all these lands,** and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws."
 - ✓ *Genesis 28:13* There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. **I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.**
 - ✓ *Leviticus 25:23* **The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.**
 - ✓ *Joshua 14:9* So on that day Moses swore to me, '**The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever,** because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.'

3. **GOD PROCEEDED TO BRING HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE OF DESTINY TO THE PROMISED LAND.** It is a historical fact that God brought these "chosen people" into the "Promised Land," an amazing story of miracles in itself.
 - ✓ *Exodus 6:7-8* I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 **And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.**"
 - ✓ *Deuteronomy 7:6-9* For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. 7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers **that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery,** from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.
 - ✓ *Deuteronomy 14:2* **for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.**

4. **GOD PRONOUNCED A CURSE UPON HIS UNFAITHFUL BUT CHOSEN PEOPLE OF DESTINY AS THEY WANDERED THE WORLD WITHOUT THEIR PROMISED**

LAND. God promised the children of Israel great blessing in the land of promise if they would remain faithful to Him. He also predicted great suffering, persecution and worldwide dispersion when they forsook Him. These prophecies came to pass. God warned that wherever they wandered the Jews would be "an astonishment, a proverb, a byword...a curse and a reproach" Some of these warnings were as follows:

- ✓ Deuteronomy 28:64,66 "**The LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other;** . . . And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life".
- ✓ Deut. 28:15, 37 "But it shall come to pass, **if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God,** to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: 37 **And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the Lord will drive you.**
- ✓ 1 Kings 9:7 **then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.**
- ✓ 2 Chronicles 7:20 then **I will uproot Israel from my land,** which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.

So far the story is hardly remarkable. Other peoples have believed that a certain geographic area was their "Promised Land" and after entering it have later been driven out by enemies. The next seven prophecies, however, and their fulfillment, are absolutely unique to the Jews. The occurrence of these events precisely as prophesied could not possibly have happened by chance.

God always keeps His promises!