

Michael Rood Ministries Presents

Awakening in the Word

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THE OVERVIEW

Our portion this week marks another major turning point in the relationship between the Infinite and Sovereign Creator of the Universe and His creation. In Genesis chapters 12 and 13 we read of the Sovereign Creator's promises to Abram as well as the invitation to walk by faith. In this portion the Creator binds Himself by an oath to Abram and his promised descendants. The portion revolves around three very simple questions on the part of Abram: "Who will be my heir?" "How shall I know?" "What will be his inheritance?" The symbolic language of the portion leaves us with a number of interesting challenges. We are also introduced to the concepts of the "cutting" of a covenant, adoption and inheritance, the title "Adonai," and the gospel of the kingdom. At the very heart of this portion is a two-day-long vision and "cutting" of a covenant that will set the course for the descendants of Abram throughout the rest of the Torah, the Tanach, and the Brit Chadashah.

THE OUTLINE

Our portion may be broken down into three sections, each based on one of the three questions. The first section deals with the promise of an heir; the second deals with the making of the covenant; and the third reveals the content of the inheritance.

Section One: Who is to be heir?

- Genesis 15:1 The visionary encounter with YHWH and the Sovereign One's declaration
- Genesis 15:2-3 Abram's question about his heir
- Genesis 15:4-5 The Sovereign One's answer
- Genesis 15:6 A declaration of righteousness

Section Two: How will it be known?

- Genesis 15:7 The declaration of the Sovereign One
- Genesis 15:8 Abram's question about how he should know
- Genesis 15:9-17 The Sovereign One's answer

Section Three: What is the inheritance?

- Genesis 15:18-21 The revelation of the land given as an inheritance

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What did Abram fear?
2. What are the criteria for being Abram's heir?
3. What orientation is/are Abram's descendant(s) supposed to embody?
4. What is the significance of the title "Adonai"?
5. Did this covenant actually take place, or was it just a vision?
6. Who was counted righteous?
7. What is the meaning of the "cutting" of a covenant?

8. What is the significance of this covenant?
9. What is the smoking furnace and burning lamp?
10. How does this portion affect the gospel?

THE TEXT

Genesis 15:1-21 *After these things the word of YHWH came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. ²And Abram said, Adonai YHWH, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? ³And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴And, behold, the word of YHWH came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. ⁵And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be. ⁶And he believed in YHWH; and He counted it to him for righteousness. ⁷And He said unto him, I am YHWH that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. ⁸And he said, Adonai YHWH, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? ⁹And He said unto him, Take Me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. ¹⁰And he took unto Him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. ¹¹And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹²And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. ¹³And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

¹⁷*And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸In the same day YHWH made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy*

seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, ²⁰and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, ²¹and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

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Let us begin this week's study with a very brief review of the events in Abram's life thus far. We know from the genealogies of the sons of Noah that Abram was a descendant of Noah through the line of Shem; that he was one of the three sons of Terah, who lived in Ur of the Chaldees; and that one of his brothers died in Ur, leaving a son behind whom Abram took in. We also know that Abram took his stepsister Sarai as his wife.

Genesis 11:27-28 *Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. ²⁸And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.*

Genesis 11:29 *And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.*

We also know that Terah was moving his family from Ur to the land of Canaan when he died in Haran.

Genesis 11:31-32 *And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. ³²And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.*

It was in Haran that YHWH spoke to Abram and called him to leave his country, his kinfolk, and his father's house and go to a land that He was to show him. YHWH made several powerful and enticing promises to Abram to encourage him in this step of faith.

Genesis 12:1-3 *Now YHWH had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

As Abram, Sarai, and Abram's nephew Lot followed the Holy One, YHWH appeared to Abram and promised him the land of his sojourning.

Genesis 12:7 *And YHWH appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto YHWH, who appeared unto him.*

Abram was then forced by famine to leave the land of promise and journey down to Egypt, where Sarai was abducted and taken for a wife for Pharaoh. The Holy One intervened, and Sarai was returned along with a handsome gift from Pharaoh.

Genesis 12:20 *And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.*

Genesis 13:1-2 *And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. ²And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.*

After returning to the land of Canaan, Abram separated from his nephew Lot and once again heard the Holy One confirm the promise of abundant “seed” and a land for them to live in.

Genesis 13:14-16 *And YHWH said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*

After Lot separated from Abram, he settled in the area of Sodom. King Chedorlaomer waged war against Sodom and four other seditious kingdoms to squelch their rebellion. When Abram heard that Lot was taken prisoner by Chedorlaomer, he raised up a confederacy and rescued his kinsman.

Genesis 14:1-3 *And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; ²that these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar. ³All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.*

Genesis 14:11-12 *And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. ¹²And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.*

Genesis 14:14 *And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.*

On the way home from his victory Abram met Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of El Elyon, and Melchizedek blessed Abram.

Genesis 14:18-20 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of El Elyon. ¹⁹And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰and blessed be El Elyon, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

Our portion begins immediately after these events. Once again YHWH appears to Abram in a vision and converses with him. The fact that this appearance took place in a vision raises the question of whether the events described in this portion truly occurred in tangible space and time or whether they were merely a figment of Abram’s imagination. Unfortunately, there is little evidence within the text to assure us of the answer to this puzzle one way or the other. What is clear is that YHWH communicates to His prophets through such visions. The Hebrew word translated as “vision” is the word *machazeh* (*mem, chet, zayin, hey*), a cognate of the root word *chazah* (*chet, zayin, hey*), which means to “gaze at,” “perceive,” “contemplate,” or “have a vision.” The word *machazeh* in this particular form appears only three more times in the Tanach.

Numbers 24:4 *He hath said, which heard the words of El, which saw the **vision** of Shaddai YHWH, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open.*

Numbers 24:16 *He hath said, which heard the words of El, and knew the knowledge of Elyon, which saw the **vision** of Shaddai YHWH, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open.*

Ezekiel 13:7 *Have ye not seen a vain **vision**, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, YHWH saith it; albeit I have not spoken?*

We should note in the above text that Balaam makes a point to draw a distinction between having a vision, which occurs when one is awake, and a dream, which occurs when one is asleep with his eyes closed. We may take note that the Holy One does speak to His servants through dreams.

Genesis 20:3 *But Elohim came to Abimelech in a **dream** by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.*

Genesis 31:10 *And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a **dream**, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.*

Genesis 31:24 *And Elohim came to Laban the Syrian in a **dream** by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.*

Genesis 37:5 *And Joseph dreamed a **dream**, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.*

Genesis 41:25 *And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The **dream** of Pharaoh is one: Elohim hath shewed Pharaoh what He is about to do.*

Night dreams seem to be the Creator's preferred means of communication with the Gentiles, while visions (as well as dreams) are directed to His prophets.

Numbers 12:6 *And He said, Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I YHWH will make Myself known unto him in a **vision**, and will speak unto him in a dream.*

1 Samuel 3:1 *And the child Samuel ministered unto YHWH before Eli. And the word of YHWH was precious in those days; there was no open **vision**.*

2 Samuel 7:17 *According to all these words, and according to all this **vision**, so did Nathan speak unto David.*

Psalms 89:19 *Then Thou spakest in **vision** to Thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no **vision**, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

Isaiah 1:1 *The **vision** of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

Obadiah 1:1 *The **vision** of Obadiah. Thus saith Adonai YHWH concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from YHWH, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.*

While the Creator communicates to people in both dreams and visions, a vision seems to hold greater credibility. Clearly a vision while one is awake with his eyes open is not the product of the sleep-released subconscious or the side effect of the anchovies and jalapeños on a late-night pizza. Whether the events of this portion took place in the tangible world of the senses or in the intangible spiritual realm makes no difference to their authenticity or their effect. Though unperceivable to the senses of man, the spiritual realm is nonetheless real; therefore, the events took place in reality, and they are credible and authentic.

We should remember that Adam and Chava chose to live by their senses instead of by the exclusive Word of YHWH through communion with the Spirit Creator.

Genesis 3:5 *For Elohim doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then **your eyes shall be opened**, and ye shall be as elohim knowing good and evil.*

Genesis 3:7 *And the **eyes of them both were opened**, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

Since that time the Sovereign One has chosen to communicate His truths to His people through sensual means such as the two stone tablets, the tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and the Word made flesh in Yeshua the Messiah. All of these very tangible things serve as object lessons and shadow pictures that communicate the Creator's will and truth to a fallen and sensual people. Visions and dreams likewise appeal to the sensual nature of fallen humanity. Therefore, we should not become lost in the debate over whether these events happened in tangible reality or in spiritual reality; rather, we should focus our attention upon what the Sovereign One is trying to communicate to us through this vision.

While YHWH has appeared to Abram in the past and spoken to him, this is the first time that we hear of Abram speaking back to YHWH. Clearly this indicates a noticeable change in the relationship between Abram and his Sovereign Creator. That the name YHWH is used exclusively in this portion indicates once more that the Creator desires to know and be known by His creation. In the use of this personal name, YHWH, we see the fact that the Creator is approaching Abram in His attribute of mercy. This should in no way imply, however, that Abram may assume an air of familiarity with the Sovereign One.

There are two details that would indicate that Abram clearly understood this reality. The first sign of Abram understanding his relationship with the Creator is in the use of the title "Adonai YHWH."¹ This title is used only three other times in the Torah.² The Hebrew word *Adonai* comes from the root word *adon* (*aleph, dalet, nun*), which can mean "to rule," "sovereign," "controller," "master," "lord," or "sir." The Ancient Hebrew ideograph may help to explain this word conceptually. The *aleph* is a picture of an ox, which conveys the idea of strength; the *dalet* is a picture of a door; while the *nun* is a picture of a sperm or seed, which conveys the sense of life. Together, these three letters may be read as "strong, door, life." These three words may allude to the ritual described in the Torah of a slave who loves his master and desires to remain in his master's house even after his time of service is complete, whereupon he has his ear pierced at the doorpost.

Exodus 21:5-6 *And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: ⁶then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.*

We may understand the word *adon* as the title for a beloved master whom a servant desires to serve. This we may contrast with the word *ba'al*, which is also translated as "master" or "lord." The Hebrew word *ba'al* conveys not only the idea of master but also of owner and dominator. The word *ba'al* is often translated as "husband," "master," or "lord" (in the sense of ownership of land).

¹ Most standard English translations of the Bible hide the name of the Holy One by using the appellative "LORD." Thus, we commonly see the words "LORD God." When "LORD" is in all capital letters, it is covering or hiding the name YHWH. When "Lord" appears with only the letter "L" capitalized and the "ord" in lower case letters, it is generally covering the Hebrew word *Adonai*. When the word "lord" is in all lower case letters, it may be translating either *adon* or *ba'al*. The word "God" is generally used as the translation of the Hebrew word *Elohim*. In this case, however, the word "GOD" is spelled in all capital letters, indicating that it too is hiding the name YHWH. This change in practice is necessary to avoid the ridiculous and confusing appellative of Lord LORD. It would have been better had the Bible translators simply printed the correct names.

² Exodus 23:17, 34:23; Deuteronomy 3:24

Exodus 21:28-29 *If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the **owner** of the ox shall be quit. ²⁹But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his **owner**, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his **owner** also shall be put to death.*

Exodus 22:11-12 *Then shall an oath of YHWH be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the **owner** of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good. ¹²And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the **owner** thereof.*

Judges 9:2-3 *Speak, I pray you, in the ears of **all the lords of Shechem**, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. ³And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of **all the lords of Shechem** all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother.*

Genesis 20:3 *But Elohim came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a **man's (ba'al)** wife.*

Exodus 21:22 *If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's **husband (ba'al)** will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.*

By using the title *adon*, Abram is acknowledging his inferior status in relation to YHWH. By using the word *adon* instead of *ba'al*, Abram likewise emphasizes that his submission to YHWH as a sovereign is a voluntary one and not coerced. Abram serves his master out of love and reverence, not by forced subjection, which might be implied by the title *ba'al*.

The second evidence that Abram did not assume a familiar relationship with the Sovereign One is found in the greeting of YHWH.

Genesis 15:1 *After these things the word of YHWH came unto Abram in a vision, saying, **Fear not**, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

The greeting "Fear not" is a common introductory statement in divine encounters.

Genesis 21:17 *And Elohim heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of Elohim called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? **Fear not**; for Elohim hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.*

Genesis 26:24 *And YHWH appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the Elohim of Abraham thy father: **fear not**, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for My servant Abraham's sake.*

Joshua 8:1 *And YHWH said unto Joshua, **Fear not**, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.*

Judges 6:23 *And YHWH said unto him, Peace be unto thee; **fear not**: thou shalt not die.*

In most instances the reason for fear is made dramatically clear. In our portion, however, there is great ambiguity surrounding the reason for Abram's response. The text itself begs the question, "What did Abram fear?" Nehama Leibowitz, quoting the Midrash Rabba on Bereshit, writes:

What had Abram to fear? What protection did he need? Our Sages propounded three answers to this problem, in Bereshit Rabbah: R. Levi said: It was because Abram was apprehensive and said: Perhaps there was among the people I killed one righteous or God-fearing man. This may be compared to a man who was passing by a king's orchard. He saw a bundle of thorns and went down and took them. The king happened to be looking and saw him, whereupon he hid them behind him. The king said to him: why are you hiding them from me? I would have needed labourers, in any case, to clear them. Now that you have done so, come and take your due. In like manner, the Holy One blessed be He said to Abram: Those people you slew were like cut up thorns, as it is written: "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up, shall they be burned in fire" (Isaiah 33,12).

R. Levi gave another interpretation: It was because Abram was apprehensive and said: Perhaps the sons of those kings I slew will gather together an army and make war against me. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: "Fear not, I am thy shield." Just as a shield can withstand all the swords that strike it, so even if all the nations of the world gather together against you, I shall fight them.

The Rabbis gave an interpretation: It was because Abram was apprehensive and said: I went into the fiery furnace and was saved;³ I went to do battle with the kings and was saved. Perhaps I have already used up all my reward in this world, and there will be nothing left for me in the hereafter. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: "Fear not, I am thy shield."—All I did for you in this world, I did gratuitously for you; but your reward is stored up in the hereafter—"Thy reward is exceeding great." This idea is contained in the following verse (Psalm 31, 19): "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee."⁴

Here the sages suggest three possible reasons for Abram to be afraid. The first is fear of reprisal on the part of the families of the defeated kings. We should note that Jacob expressed a similar concern after Levi and Simeon slaughtered the men of Shechem.

Genesis 34:30 *And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.*

If this was the source of Abram's fear, then it should not surprise us that YHWH reveals Himself to Abram as his "shield."

Genesis 15:1 *After these things the word of YHWH came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

Here the Sovereign One consoles Abram and comforts him with the knowledge that he is protected from any such reprisal on the part of the nations around him.

³ This is an allusion to Torah lore, which teaches that Nimrod captured Abram and tried to kill him for teaching monotheism by throwing him into a fiery furnace.

⁴ *New Studies in Bereshit Genesis*, Nehama Leibowitz, LAMBDA Publishers Inc., Pp. 136-137

The second reason for Abram to fear is his concern that perhaps he might have killed a righteous person unjustly, thereby bringing judgment upon himself. We witness Abram's concern for the upright in his intercession for the righteous of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 18:23 *And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?*

Finally, the sages give a reason based on man's own understanding of divine justice.

Man's sense of justice demands a correlation between his deeds and the destiny meted out to him, between human works and his due. If man sees this equilibrium upset, he appeals to Divine justice to redress the wrong....Abram likewise regarded himself as dust and ashes. He was the real righteous man, placing no value on all his good deeds. He was afraid that the abundance of favours he had received at the hand of God had upset the balance between his deeds and the destiny meted out to him; that he had received not less than his due, but more, very much more. His deeds could never hope to catch up with the bounties showered on him from above...⁵

Here is the idea that our rewards and treasures in heaven are used as bargaining collateral in winning favors and miracles from the Holy One in times of trouble. We see hints of this thinking even in the teachings of the Brit Chadashah.

Matthew 19:21 *Yeshua said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

Luke 12:21 *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward Elohim.*

Luke 12:33 *Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.*

Matthew 5:11-12 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹²Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Matthew 6:1-2 *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. ²Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Matthew 10:41-42 *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴²And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

Possibly the clearest example of this thinking is found in the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

Luke 16:19-25 *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: ²⁰and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, ²¹and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell*

⁵ New Studies in Bereshit Genesis, Nehama Leibowitz, LAMBDA Publishers Inc., Pg. 139

from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;²³ and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. ²⁵But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

In this story the rich man had used up all of his heavenly treasures by selfishly indulging his appetites in this world, leaving nothing in the balance for the world to come. Abram may have likewise feared that all the wealth and blessings that he had already received had put him forever in a state of heavenly indebtedness that would prevent him from receiving any further help in times of need. This would be of special concern if Abram feared the reprisal of a retaliatory attack for his part in the rescue of Lot. Victor Hamilton presents possible variations in understanding the Hebrew word *magen*, translated in our text as "shield."

Some scholars have suggested slight emendations, however. For example, M. Kessler suggested emending the M.T. Magen to a participle Mogen (cf Miggen in 14:20), thus providing this translation: "I am about to deliver you a very great reward." This rendering would explain Abram's retort: "What will you give (titten) me?"

A second emendation calls for reading magen as "benefactor" or "suzerain." This suggestion has the advantage of making more sense of the following line: "your reward (sekareka MT) shall be exceedingly great," or "who will reward you (sokereka) greatly." It is a benefactor, rather than a shield, who provides a reward. Abram has already had one benefactor from whom his "reward" was substantial (Pharaoh ch. 12). He refused the donation of a second potential benefactor (king of Sodom, ch. 14). But this benefactor, he will pursue. One passage in the OT, Ps. 127:3, lists "the fruit of the womb" as a "reward" (sakar) for a man. This might suggest that the reward Yahweh has prepared for Abram is a son.⁶

If the word *magen* is to be understood as "benefactor" and not "shield," then we should understand that the Holy One is assuring Abram that all that which He has done for him is indeed out of the generosity of the His heart, not because of Abram's merited treasures in heaven.

I would suggest that the "fear" that Abram expressed may simply have been the typical "fear" and "reverence" shown by those who have experienced a close encounter with the presence of the Holy One.

Genesis 3:10 *And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*

Genesis 18:15 *Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was **afraid**. And He said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.*

Genesis 28:17 *And he was **afraid**, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of Elohim, and this is the gate of heaven.*

Genesis 42:18 *And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for **I fear** Elohim.*

⁶ The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, Victor P. Hamilton, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg. 419

Exodus 3:6 Moreover he said, I am the Elohim of thy father, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was **afraid** to look upon Elohim.

Exodus 20:18-19 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. ¹⁹And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not Elohim speak with us, lest we die.

Deuteronomy 5:5 (I stood between YHWH and you at that time, to shew you the word of YHWH: for ye were **afraid** by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;).

Deuteronomy 5:26 For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living Elohim speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?

Leviticus 9:24 And there came a fire out from before YHWH, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

Judges 13:20-22 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of YHWH ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground. ²¹But the angel of YHWH did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of YHWH. ²²And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen Elohim.

We may conclude, therefore, that Abram's fear was a holy reverence in the presence of the Holy One. That the Holy One would respond to this reverence with the comforting command "Fear not" is consistent with the attribute of mercy that He manifests in Abram's presence.

Given the nature of the promises already made to Abram and the concern expressed in this portion for the fulfillment of those promises, I would also suggest that Abram may have expressed the fear that he would not have an heir to inherit the promised blessings. If this is the case, then Abram's fears would be addressed by YHWH'S words and actions in response to him.

Genesis 15:2-4 And Abram said, Adonai YHWH, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? ³And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴And, behold, the word of YHWH came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

Here we must understand that it was Abram's confusion, concern, and inner fears that YHWH was seeking to put to rest in His command "Fear not." Given the juxtaposition of this story with the conflict and danger of the previous chapter, it is understandable that Abram would be concerned that his life was at risk and that there was no seed to inherit his blessings. We see a similar concern for the future continuance of the line later in the Torah when Sarah dies and Abraham had not yet secured a wife for Isaac.

Genesis 23:19-24:3 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. ²⁰And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth. ^{24:1}And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and YHWH had blessed Abraham in all things. ²And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: ³and I will make thee swear by YHWH, the Elohim of heaven, and the Elohim of the

earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.

We see in our portion that the Holy One sees the hearts of his servants and is prepared to meet their needs and bring them comfort and peace.

1 Chronicles 28:9 *And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the Elohim of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for YHWH searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever.*

Romans 8:27 *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of Elohim.*

1 Corinthians 2:10 *But Elohim hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of Elohim.*

Matthew 6:8 *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.*

Matthew 11:28-29 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

The Holy One speaks to Abram's concern by assuring him that his servant would not be his heir. According to the Nuzu tablets of Sumer, the standard practice of the Ancient Near East was that a childless family could adopt a servant born in its house as an heir. This servant would assume the responsibilities of a son to care for the parents in their old age and would inherit the estate upon the parents' death. If, however, a natural son should be born to the adoptive family, then the servant would be reduced to the role of a second born, and the natural son would become the heir.⁷ YHWH assures Abram that his heir would be a seed from his own body. YHWH then promises that not only an heir but a nation would come from his seed.

Genesis 15:4-5 *And, behold, the word of YHWH came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. ⁵And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

There is much being communicated to Abram in these words. First, we should note the contrast with the previous promise.

Genesis 13:14-16 *And YHWH said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*

Here we see the promise of both land and seed. We note, however, that the seed is likened to the dust of the earth. While clearly the plain meaning of the text is that Abram's seed will be numerous, even uncountable, we must also see some symbolic significance in this analogy. We cannot overlook the fact that the body or flesh of man came from the "dust of the earth."⁸ We may also see in this analogy an

⁷ The Bible and the Ancient Near East, Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, W.W. Norton & Company, Pg. 109

⁸ Genesis 2:7

allusion to the fact that the physical descendants of Abram will be oppressed and trodden underfoot – a reality that is alluded to again in our current portion.

Genesis 15:13-14 *And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*

For now, however, let us simply focus upon the contrast between the two descriptions of Abram's seed. In this first promise Abram's seed is described as "the dust of the earth." In our current portion Abram's seed is described as "the stars of heaven." Later in the Torah we see both parts of this dichotomy used in the same passage.

Genesis 22:16-18 *And said, By Myself have I sworn, saith YHWH, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: ¹⁷that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ¹⁸and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice.*

We may conclude from these analogies that Abram's seed will be seen as two distinct lines – a biological line and a spiritual line; therefore, we shall see that Abram will have more than one seed come from his body.

Genesis 16:3-4 *And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. ⁴And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.*

Genesis 25:1-4 *Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. ²And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. ³And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.*

Clearly Abram fathered many children, but only one will be the line of promise. We will address the reason why this is so in a later portion. For now, however, what we need to understand is the truth that merely being a biological descendant of Abram is not enough to inherit the blessings. Yeshua as well as the apostle Shaul clearly understood this truth.

John 8:39-40 *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Yeshua saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of Elohim: this did not Abraham.*

Romans 9:6 *Not as though the word of Elohim hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.*

The seed of Abram are, like Abram, to be oriented heavenward.

Genesis 15:5 *And He brought him forth abroad, and said, **Look now toward heaven,** and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

The spiritual seed of Abram are those who will indeed live in the upper realm and nature. The apostle Shaul teaches that it is those who have the faith of Abram who are indeed the children of Abram.

Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Galatians 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Therefore, merely sharing DNA with Abram does not make one an heir of the promises or covenants of Abram. In this portion, YHWH comforts Abram by promising not only that Abram would have seed, but also that his seed would be a spiritual people and a holy nation oriented toward heaven and not toward the flesh. We may recall the words of the proverb:

Proverbs 23:24-25 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. ²⁵Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.

So Abram was comforted by the promises of YHWH.

The pivotal verse in our portion is truly verse six. After the Holy One reassures and comforts Abram with His promises, we read:

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in YHWH; and He counted it to him for righteousness.

Because of the teachings found in the writings of Shaul, we have always read this passage with but one understanding. But is this the only understanding of the passage? Shaul writes:

Romans 4:2-5 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before Elohim. ³For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed Elohim, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ⁴Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Shaul clearly translates this passage in the following way.

Genesis 15:6 And Abram believed in YHWH; and YHWH counted it to Abram for righteousness.

I agree that this is indeed a very plausible understanding of the verse. Abram has clearly demonstrated his great faith in YHWH by leaving his home and following Him to a new land, in separating from Lot, in rescuing Lot, and now even afterwards in the affirmation of the previous promises. That Abram willfully served and followed YHWH and was recognized by the Holy One as having a righteous character is confirmed in a later passage in the Torah.

Genesis 18:17-19 And YHWH said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; ¹⁸seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of YHWH, to do justice and judgment; that YHWH may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.

The ambiguous nature of the pronouns in verse six makes it possible for us to understand this pivotal verse in another way. I would suggest to you that this statement may also be read as follows:

Genesis 15:6 And Abram believed in YHWH; and Abram counted it to YHWH for justice.

In this understanding, Abram is the subject of both parts of the verse, and YHWH is the object of both parts. This understanding would follow the normal rules of Hebrew grammar concerning the identification of the pronouns. The word "righteous" in this verse, used to translate the Hebrew word *tzedakah*, may

also rightly be translated as either “charity” or “justice.” The plain meaning of this text could simply be that Abram believed that YHWH’S promise of land and seed was both charitable and just.

Regardless of which way we read the passage, what becomes quite evident is that the Sovereign One then enters into a binding covenant with Abram. The ritual described in this passage is in the typical pattern of the Ancient Near Eastern “cutting” of a covenant. Many scholars have taught that this type of covenant implies a binding of the participants by a dramatized curse invoked upon themselves should they violate the terms of the covenant.

The most frequently cited text to support the thesis that the procedures taken by Abram function as a dramatized curse is a seventh-century B.C. treaty from Alalakh between Yarimlim and Abran. Abran has just given the city of Alalakh to Yarimlim, the vassal ruler, and to cement that transaction the text says: “Abran placed himself under oath in Yarimlim and had cut the neck of a sheep (saying): (Let me so die) if I take back that which I gave thee.”⁹

What we see in this text and others is the idea that the “cutting” of a covenant includes a self-induced curse for violating the terms of the covenant. We see this idea again in later Aramaic inscription.

In the Aramaic inscription Sefire I.A. lines 39-41 (c.a. 750 B.C.) involving a treaty between Bir Ga’Yah (or Barga’Yah) king of KTK and Mati’el (Matti’el) king of Arpad, part of the ceremony pointing to possible violation by Mati’el reads: “[Just as] this calf is cut in two, so may Mati’el be cut in two, and may his nobles be cut in two! [and just as] a [ha]r[lot] is stripped naked, so may the wives of Mati’el be stripped naked.”¹⁰

Another example is found in the seventh century B.C. curse in the vassal treaty of Esarhaddon.

Just as male and female kids and male and female lambs are slit open and their entrails fall down upon their feet, so may the entrails of your sons and daughters roll down over your feet.¹¹

We also see evidence of this type of covenant in the writings of the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 34:8-9 *This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from YHWH, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; ⁹that every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother.*

Jeremiah 34:18-19 *And I will give the men that have transgressed My covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, ¹⁹the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf.*

With the exception of the first example given above, it is generally the vassal and not the suzerain that binds himself by a curse. In the first example, and possibly in our Torah portion as well, it is the suzerain that passes through the pieces and binds himself with a curse. If we are to understand this “cutting” of the pieces to represent a dramatized curse, we must ask ourselves, “What curse could YHWH possibly invoke upon Himself?”

⁹ The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, Victor P. Hamilton, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg. 431

¹⁰ Ibid., Pg. 432

¹¹ Ibid.

We should note that in all of the examples given above from the various inscriptions, the curse is made very clear. In our text, however, there is no such stated invocation. Abram is simply commanded to slay the animals. Therefore, we must see this "cutting" of the covenant simply as a ritual of ratification and not necessarily implying a curse. Victor Hamilton presents several examples of ratification of treaties and covenants without any mention of a curse.

Another second-millennium B.C. analogy often placed alongside Genesis 15 is the treaty and covenant ritual from the Mari texts. One text reads: "I went to Aslakka and they brought me a young dog and a she-goat in order to conclude a covenant [lit. "kill a donkey foal"] between the Haneans and the land of Idamaras. But, in defense to my lord, I did not permit (the use of) the young dog and the she-goat, but (instead) had a donkey foal, the young of a she-ass, killed, and thus established a reconciliation between the Haneans and the land of Idararas."¹²

Only one second-millennium B.C. text refers to the custom of dividing a sacrificial animal in half and covenanting parties passing between the pieces: "If the troops have been beaten by the enemy they perform a ritual behind the river, as follows: They cut through a man, a goat, a puppy, and a little pig, they place half on this side and half on that side, and in front of them they make a gate of...wood and stretch a ...over it, and in front of the gate they light fires on this side and on that, and the troops walk right through and when they come to the river they sprinkle water over them."¹³

From these evidences we may assume that not all "cuttings" for covenants implied a curse. It is clear that the intention of the Sovereign One in our passage is to give assuring evidence to Abram that He is indeed bound by His Word to keep His promises. Due to the lack of specific curse language I feel it is more probable that YHWH is ratifying this covenant with Abram but is not invoking a curse upon Himself. As the Sovereign of the Universe, there is no possibility of the Holy One violating the terms of the covenant without violating His own nature.

Numbers 23:19 *Elohim is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?*

There are several details in the "cutting" of this covenant that we may draw some symbolic significance from. First, we should note that this vision takes place at night. The stars are out when the Holy One instructs Abram to look heavenward and count the stars. But after Abram fulfills the instructions concerning the cutting of the pieces, we are informed that the sun is going down.

Genesis 15:5 *And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

Genesis 15:12 *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.*

Many of the events described in this vision take place in darkness. We may understand this darkness as a time of oppression. This is clearly indicated in the text itself by the attack of the fowl and the revelation of the bondage of Abram's descendants in a land not their own. Some of the sages speak of the birds of prey as representing the enemy nations trying to prevent Israel from entering into or fulfilling her covenant with YHWH. I cannot help but to think of Israel passing through the "cutting" of the valley between Mount

¹² The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, Victor P. Hamilton, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg. 431

¹³ *Ibid.*, Pg. 432

Gerizim and Mount Ebal (the blessing and the cursing)¹⁴ while enemies try to prevent the people of Israel from entering into the land of promise and receiving their inheritance. That Abram drove the enemy away proclaims that the children of Israel entered the land by the merit of Abraham and not because of their own righteousness.

***Deuteronomy 4:37-38** And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt;³⁸ to drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.*

***Deuteronomy 9:5** Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations YHWH thy Elohim doth drive them out from before thee, and that He may perform the word which YHWH sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

***Deuteronomy 9:27** Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin.*

Clearly we see that it is the merit of the patriarchs that made it possible for the children of Israel to enter the promised land and fulfill their calling.

We should also take note that it was while Abram was in a deep sleep that horror and exceeding darkness overcame him. It was also while he was in a deep sleep that he received the revelation that his descendants would be sojourners and slaves in a foreign land. Here we may understand that this overwhelming darkness in the life of Israel is provoked by a sense of spiritual laxity and sleep. When Israel slumbers or becomes spiritually lax, darkness and oppression seem to overwhelm her. When Israel fails to keep the commandments and covenant of YHWH, her light is diminished. We may also note that it was when the sun went down and exceeding darkness prevailed that the presence of YHWH shone like a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. Here the imagery evokes scenes of the pillar of fire and smoke that led Israel out of bondage in Egypt and through the darkness of the wilderness. We may also see a connection with the smoke and fire of YHWH'S presence at Mount Sinai. Indeed, it is in the darkest hours that YHWH'S glory shines the brightest.

We should note here as well the parallel between Abram's life and that prophesied for his descendants.

- Abram was a sojourner in a land not his own
- Abram was driven to Egypt by a famine
- Abram suffered (Sarai's) captivity in Egypt
- Abram was driven out by Pharaoh
- Abram came out with great wealth

We see the same message prophesied over the descendants of Abram

- They shall sojourn in a land not their own
- They will suffer captivity and servitude
- They will come out of the land of captivity
- They will come out with great wealth

All that is missing from this revelation is the specific name of the land of their captivity. Given the similarities between Abram's experience and the revelation, it is not hard to imagine that Abram understood that it was indeed Egypt that his children would descend to. By revealing this information to Abram in advance, Abram would be able to encourage his descendants to maintain their faith even in

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 11:29, 27:13ff

times of great darkness. We must also note that the revelation includes the promise of deliverance, blessing, abundance, and a land of their own.

There is some controversy over the accounting of the 400 years that is mentioned in this revelation. E.W. Bullinger counts the 400 years from the birth of Isaac. Bullinger reconciles the conflict between the 430 years mentioned in Acts 7:6 by stating simply that it includes the time between the making of the covenant with Abram and the birth of Isaac.¹⁵ Others teach that there would be 400 years of alien status, which would include the 210 years of a literal exile in Egypt and also the 22 years that Jacob spent with Laban in Haran. The servitude mentioned in this prophecy took place during the final 116 years of the 210 years spent in Egypt. It was the last 86 years of this 116 years that the oppression was harshest.¹⁶

Others simply see the number 400 as being symbolic. We may remember that the number 10 is the number of completion. The number 40 is the number of probation and testing. We may recall the 40 days and nights of the flood, the 40 days Moses was on Mount Sinai, the 40 years that Israel was tested in the wilderness, and even the 40 days that Yeshua was tested in the wilderness. Thus, we may see in the number 400 (40X10=400) an allusion to complete testing, purging, tempering through testing, and trial.

Some confusion is also caused by the reference to the fourth generation. Since generations are not generally understood to be 100 years, this reference seems to contradict the statement concerning the 400 years. But the reference to the fourth generation does not necessarily apply to the children of Israel.

***Genesis 15:15-16** And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶But in the **fourth generation** they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

Note that there is a break in the prophecy concerning the descendants of Abram. Suddenly YHWH talks about what will happen to Abram and about the Amorites. The reference then of the fourth generation could be speaking about the fourth generation after Abram's death, or alternatively, it could also be speaking of the Amorites, prophesying that in four generations the iniquity of the Amorites would be full and that the prophecy would go into effect. Since we are not told the measuring rod used to judge the Amorites, we can only speculate on when the threshold was reached. We may, however, compare this with other statements concerning the fourth generation and judgments.

***Exodus 20:5** Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I YHWH thy Elohim am a jealous Elohim, visiting the **iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and **fourth generation** of them that hate Me.*

***Exodus 34:7** Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the **iniquity** of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the **fourth generation**.*

***Numbers 14:18** YHWH is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the **iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and **fourth generation**.*

***Deuteronomy 5:9** Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I YHWH thy Elohim am a jealous Elohim, visiting the **iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and **fourth generation** of them that hate Me.*

¹⁵ The Companion Bible, E.W. Bullinger, Kregel Publishing, Pp. 51-53

¹⁶ The Schottenstein Edition Interlinear Chumash Volume 1: Bereishis/Genesis, Artscroll/Mesorah, Pg. 76

It would seem from these passages that the pattern of sin will either be broken or reach its fullness by the third and fourth generations; therefore, we may see the reference to the fourth generation as a plausible reference to the Amorites instead of the Israelites.

Clearly we should understand in all of this that the promise underlying the Covenant of the Pieces is concerning a seed and a land. In this, the messianic hope that we have seen thus far in the Torah begins to grow into something more. Adam and Chava's messianic hope was that each succeeding child would be the possible messiah who would crush the head of the serpent and reverse the effects of their fall. Now we see the messianic hope changing; it is not only about a promised seed but a promised land as well. Here we see the birthing of the idea of a messianic kingdom. While the descendants of Adam and Chava hoped for comfort, rest, and restoration, the descendants of Abram will hold to the hope of being a nation with a land of their own.

At this point in the narrative it has not yet been made clear that the calling upon this people, the descendants of Abram, and this promised land are a part of the fulfillment of the original messianic promise of restoration. We will elaborate further on this concept in later Torah teachings. For now, however, let us simply recognize that the promise given to Abram involves the promise of seed and land. We should be clear to note that there is no concept of "salvation," "heaven," "hell," or "judgment" in this covenant. This later "gospel of salvation" is a concept foreign to the Torah. Instead, the good news being proclaimed in this vision is the "gospel of the kingdom." This is the gospel of the Torah and the gospel of Yeshua, as is quite evident from the numerous references to the kingdom or reign of YHWH in his teachings.

***Matthew 4:23** And Yeshua went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the **gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

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(Matthew 10:8)

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“Freely ye have received, freely give”

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