

I am the LORD, Who Brought You Out of Ur of the Chaldeans to Give You This Land

15: 7-21

DIG: What do the cut animals signify? The blazing torch? The fire passing between the cut pieces? In the dream (15:12-16) and after cutting the covenant (15:18-20)? What news is comforting? Discomforting? Why does the LORD initiate such legal contracts with His people? And why a land grant without any obedience required of Abram? Why the almost 700 year delay in its fulfillment (see 15:16 and Hebrews 11:13-16 and 20-22)?

REFLECT: ADONAI spoke to Abram. How is He speaking to you today? To encourage Abram, the LORD repeated His promises and even made them clearer. How does God encourage you in your walk of faith? How are you connected to Abram today? How did Abram's part in the LORD's covenant compare to your part in His covenant of salvation? Do you have an eye of faith?

Then God renewed His promise to also give Abram the Land. He said to him, "I am ADONAI," the promise keeper, "who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it?" But this time Abram requested a sign and said to his *Owner and Master, Adonai, God, how can I know that I will gain possession of it (15:7-8)?* Thus, ADONAI, by His grace, granted Abram's request. What would follow would be a most remarkable ritual of a *blood covenant*, an authenticating seal to God's promise.

So ADONAI said to Abram: Bring Me, for the *covenant* belonged to Him, a heifer, a female goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon (15:9).

Abram brought all these to Him, and obeying His instructions, he cut them in two, which required the shedding of blood, and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half (15:10). This was to be a *blood covenant*, which differed from other covenants. The nature of blood covenants is spelled out in Jeremiah 34:8-11 and 17-20. A *blood covenant* pledged the lives of the ones making the covenant to the covenant. The men who have violated My covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before Me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces (Jeremiah 34:18). Consequently, if one failed to keep the

terms of the *covenant*, his *blood* was to be shed like one of the animals. It would be like saying, "May I become like these slain animals if I break my part of the agreement." The animals were sacrificed as substitutes for the two making the *covenant*. Once the *covenant* was made and the two parties walked between the dead animals, the terms of the *covenant* could not be changed.

Another kind of *covenant* is called a *hand covenant*, which was merely the shaking of hands in agreement (**Ezra 10:19; Ezekiel 17:18**). Another *covenant* was the *shoe covenant*. Two parties exchanged sandals and the *covenant* was enforced until they were exchanged again (**Ruth 4:7-12**). Another kind of *covenant* was a *salt covenant*. In this *covenant*, one would take a pinch of salt from the salt pouch of the other and put it into his own salt pouch. Therefore, the original pinch of salt could never be retrieved (**Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19 and 2 Chronicles 13:5**).

An unusual *covenant* took place when **Abraham** sent his chief servant, Eliezer, back to Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son Isaac. The old patriarch wanted to make sure that Eliezer didn't choose a wife from among the cursed line of the Canaanites. She needed to come from the blessed line of Shem. So **Abraham** said to him: **Put your hand under my thigh (24:2b)**. This is a euphemism for the holding of the genitals, which are the source of life. It is a solemn sign that if the oath were not carried out, the children who would be born to **Abraham** would avenge the servant's unfaithfulness. This oath is also seen in **47:29**. But of these five types of covenants, the *blood covenant* was by far the most serious.

To his horror, unclean **birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away (15:11)**. This was obviously an evil omen that would be explained momentarily.

Then the actual *blood covenant* took place. An entire day had elapsed since **ADONAI had taken Abram outside to look at the stars (15:5)**. The entire vision will take place from night to day, and into a second night, **as the sun was setting. Abram fell into a deep sleep**. The Hebrew word is *tardeimah*, and is a supernatural *deep sleep* that also fell on Adam in preparation of the creation of Eve (**2:21**). It also fell upon Saul (**First Samuel 26:12**). This is a visionary *sleep* (also see **Job 4:13, 33:15 and Daniel 8:18, 10:9**).

Abram was fully conscious in the midst of this vision but a thick and dreadful darkness came over him (**15:12**). **ADONAI** then stated the **seven provisions of the Covenant**.

First, Abram's descendants were to be strangers in a country not their own.

Second, they will be enslaved and mistreated there.

Third, they were to be mistreated for four hundred years (15:13). The word mistreated (*anah*) is the same word used in Exodus 1:11-12 to describe Egypt's oppression of Israel. Egypt, like the birds of prey, opposed the covenant, but ultimately the covenant would be fulfilled.²⁶² Initially Abram did not know *where* they would be enslaved, but by the time we get to the book of Exodus, it becomes clear that their masters would live in Egypt. This verse foreshadows the book of Exodus and the outworking of the cursing aspect of ADONAI's covenant with Abram (12:3).

Fourth, God would punish the nation they served as slaves with ten plagues (Psalm 105:27-36).

Fifth, and after the plagues are completed (15:14), they would come out with great possessions (Exodus 3:21-22 and 12:35-36).

Sixth, Abram himself would die of old age in peace, and would not live long enough to see his people enslaved. God said to him, "You, however, will go to Sheol (in the center of the earth) with your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age" (15:15). This would come to pass. He would be buried in the Land (25:7-10) and he would live to a good old age of a hundred and seventy five years old.

Seventh, in the fourth generation Abram's descendants would return to Canaan. The Bible gives us two different time periods regarding Israel's stay in Egypt. First, in Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 we are told that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. Then, in Exodus 12:40-41 and Galatians 3:17 we are told that the Israelite people lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. The reason for the difference in years is that the enslavement began thirty years after the Israelites arrived in Egypt. Their mistreatment began with a new king, who did not know about Joseph (Exodus 1:8).

ADONAI is a promise keeper. When we look at Exodus 6:16-26 we find that it was exactly in the fourth generation that the children of Isra'el left Egypt and returned to Canaan. *The first generation* was Levi, the son of Jacob, who entered Egypt at the time his father and brothers did (Exodus 6:16). *The second generation* was Kohath (Exodus 6:16), who was a son of Levi. *The third generation* was Amran, son of Kohath (Exodus 6:18). And *the fourth generation* brings us to Moses and Aaron, who were the sons of Amram (Exodus 6:20), and these were the ones who led Isra'el out of Egypt!²⁶³ Each generation was one hundred years.

The reason that **the LORD** delayed **four hundred years** to have the **Israelites** inherit the **Land**, was to permit the **sin of the Amorites** (**Leviticus 18:24-30, 20:22-27** and **Deuteronomy 18:9-14**) to be full before He would judge them (**15:16**). **Elohim does not punish a nation until its measure of sin is full**. The **Amorites represents all the Canaanite peoples, and is mentioned because it was the most powerful of all**. **ADONAI** would tolerate their sins until **Isra'el**, under **Joshua**, conquered Palestine. Then the fulfillment of the promises to **Abram** would involve a judgment on the **Canaanites** that would be an eye for an eye (**Leviticus 24:20**). **Abram's** seed would get the **Land** - but not one hour before absolute justice required it. **God** had much to do before fulfilling **His** promise - including disciplining **His** nation to be fit for receiving the promise. **Abram's** seeing this in advance was horrible - like watching **birds of prey** (see **15:11**).²⁶⁴

After **ADONAI** stated the **seven provisions** the **glory of the LORD**, or the **Shechinah glory** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Ju - The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You**) would seal the *covenant*. **When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, Abram saw the Shechinah glory**, or the visible manifestation of **God's** presence. The **Shechinah** appeared as a light, as a fire, as a cloud, or some combination of these three things. Like several other places in the Bible, when humans saw supernatural manifestations of **God's** presence, they use words and references that they are familiar with to try to describe what they are seeing. **Ezekiel** had difficulty describing the **four living creatures** (**Ezekiel 1:4-28**), and **John** had trouble describing someone like a **Son of Man** (**Revelation 1:12-18**). And here, when **Abram** sees the **Shechinah glory** for the first time, the only words that he knows to describe what he sees is a **smoking firepot with a blazing torch**. But in fact, it is the **Shechinah glory** that **passed between the pieces** of slaughtered animals (**15:17**).

There were two things that were not normal about this *blood covenant*. First, it was normally done with one animal and here it was done with five animals. Secondly, normally both parties making the *blood covenant* walked between the pieces of the divided animal, making the terms of the *covenant* binding on both parties. But here, **ADONAI** and **Abram** did not walk between the pieces of the five animals; only the **Shechinah** glory would pass between the pieces. *This showed that the blood covenant was unconditional. God would fulfill the promises of the covenant and it was dependent on Him and not Abram. Abram* has no part in making the covenant, so nothing **Abram** would do could cause it to be canceled. You and I contributed nothing to our salvation: **Yeshua** did it all. All we must do, all we can do, is put our faith, trust and belief in **Christ**. **He** is the one who will save us.²⁶⁵

Then the *blood covenant* was sealed. **On that day the LORD** came down and **made, literally cut, a covenant with Abram** (**15:18a**). So what was promised verbally in **Chapters 12** and **13**, is now visibly sealed. Whatever may be added cannot change the original terms of

the *covenant*. Additions can be made and will be made, but none of these additions change the original terms.²⁶⁶ **This is the third confirmation of God's Covenant with Abraham (12:1-3, 13:14-17, here, 17:1-8 and 22:15-18).**

In this chapter there are two major elements of **God's Covenant with Abram**. The first is the fact that **a son** would be born to **Abram** as seen in **verse 4**, and the second, seen here, concerns the **Land**. **The LORD** described in detail the geographical boundaries of **Israel's land**. He said: **To your descendants I give this Land, from the most eastern branch of the river of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish, not the Nile River) to the great river, the Euphrates (15:18b)**. **Isra'el** has never possessed this land in its entirety, but **she** will when the **Messiah** returns to set up **His Kingdom** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fj - My Chosen People Will Inherit My Mountains**).²⁶⁷

The rabbis teach that the promise, to your descendants I give this Land, was made several times to Abram and each was necessary. When he entered the Land God told him: To your offspring I will give this Land (12:7), which denoted only as far as he had gone, in other words, to Shechem. When his merits in the Land had increased, God went further and said: All the Land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever (13:15). This was both more comprehensive and also had the addition of: and to your offspring forever. Here in 15:18-21 God defined the boundaries and the nations that would be dispossessed, and further made a covenant that He would not lose it through sin. Finally, when the promise is repeated when Abraham is circumcised, God will add that it would be an everlasting possession (17:8), which meant that even if his offspring should be exiled, they would return.

These Canaanite tribes, the **Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites** were dispossessed later by **Joshua (15:19-21)**. This is the most complete list of the people of **Canaan** in the Bible.

What distinguished **Abram** was his eye of **faith**. He could see beyond the here-and-now to what lay ahead in life with **Elohim** after his body died.²⁶⁸ **By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:8-10)**. We would do well to develop our own eye of **faith**.