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The Promises were Spoken to Abraham and to His Seed
3: 15-18

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed DIG: Why did Paul use Abraham in his argument for salvation equals faith-plus-nothing? What is the distinction here between seeds and Seed? What is the parallel Paul wants to make between the types of covenants people make, and the covenant-promise in 3:8 that ADONAI made to Abraham? Since the Torah was not to take the place of the promise, how do verses 19 and 23 explain what the Torah's purpose actually is (also see Romans 3:20)?

REFLECT: What is significant to you in Abraham's story? How would you use this passage with someone who thought that keeping the Ten Commandments is enough to save their soul? What experience helped you see your need to let the religious rules that you might have been trying to keep drive you to Yeshua to find mercy?

Paul now presents an argument to show that the covenant God made with Abraham was still in force, basing it upon the priority of the covenant and its irrevocable nature.

After describing how the blessings of **Abraham** had come through **Messiah** for **the Gentiles** by **faith (Galatians 3:14)**, **Paul** gave the **Galatian** believers a concrete example. While the previous verses have addressed **the Gentiles'** status in relation to the curse and the blessings, here **Paul** speaks to the legal form of the inheritance. **Four reasons are given for affirming the superiority of the covenant of promise.**

First, the covenant of promise was superior because it was confirmed as irrevocable and unchangeable. Brothers and sisters, let me make an analogy from everyday life: when someone swears an oath (Greek: *diatheke* in its verb form means *to place between the two*)**, no one else can set it aside or add to it (3:15 CJB). The oath** spoken of here refers to the act of one of two

individuals placing between them something to which he obligates himself. It is a commitment on the part of one to do so-and-so.[84]



When **God** made **the covenant** with **Abraham** (whose name was **Abram** at that time) **He** promised, **“I am your shield, your reward [will be] very great . . . this one [Eliezer] will not be your heir, but in fact, one who will come from your own body will be your heir.” And He took him outside and said, “Look up now, at the sky, and count the stars – if you are able to count them.” Then God said to him, “So shall your seed be.” Then Abraham believed in ADONAI and He credited it to him as righteousness. Then He said to him, “I am ADONAI who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans, in order to give you this land to inherit it” (Genesis 15:1, 4-7).**

When Abraham asked: **My Lord ADONAI, how will I know that I will inherit it (Genesis 15:8)? God** ratified **the covenant** with a ceremony common in the ancient Near East. On **Ha’Shem’s** instructions, **Abram** took **a young cow, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a pigeon,** then cut **them** in half and laid the two sides of each animal opposite one another, with a path in between. **As the sun was about to set, ADONAI** caused **a deep sleep**, as well as **terror of great darkness,** to **fall on Abraham (Genesis 15:12-17)**.

Ordinarily, both parties to a *diatheke* would walk between the slain animals, whose blood would symbolically ratify the agreement. But in this case, **God** alone walked through, indicating that **the covenant**, though invoking the **promises** to **Abraham** and **his descendants**, was made by **ADONAI Himself**. **The covenant** was unilateral and entirely unconditional, the only obligation being on **Ha’Shem Himself**.[85]

Therefore, **Paul** presented the argument that **the covenant YHVH** made with

Abraham was still in force, basing it upon the priority of **the covenant** and its irrevocable character. **He** asserts that it is common knowledge that when people make a contract, and that contract is once agreed upon, it cannot be changed or modified except by the mutual consent of both parties to the contract. Therefore, **Paul** applies that basic understanding to **God's Covenant** with **Abraham** (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Fp – The Abrahamic Covenant**). **It** had the priority because **it** was the original. It was given to **Abraham** and to **a** specific **seed**. **Isaac** was **the son of promise**, not Ishmael (see the commentary on **Genesis Fi – The Birth of Isaac**). Not through **the Torah**, but through **Yeshua Messiah**. **The Torah** could never annul **the Abrahamic Covenant**, which means that salvation equals **faith**-plus-nothing.[86]

Second, the covenant of promise was superior to the Torah because it was Messiah-centered. Paul begins to explain the **analogy** stated in the previous verse. **The promises** were made to **Abraham** and to **his seed, Messiah. Now, the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Seed.** Under the guidance of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**, who inspired the writing of both **Genesis** and **Galatians**, **Paul** exegesis the quoted **Genesis** passage. **He** declares that the term **seed** in **Genesis 22:18** is singular. **It doesn't say, "and to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "and to your Seed," who is the Messiah (3:16). The fact that the promises were made to Abraham and to all believers down through the ages who follow Abraham in his act of faith, indicates that the way of faith existed before the Torah was given, continued through the Dispensation of Torah, and is still in effect after the cross. So, the giving of the 613 commandments of Moses had no effect on the covenant at all.**[87]

Third, the covenant of promise was superior to the Torah because of chronology. What I am saying is this: Torah, which came 430 years later after **God's** promise to **Abraham** was confirmed to Jacob (see the commentary on **Exodus Ca – At the End of the 430 Years, to the Very Day**)**,** was an addition and **does not cancel the covenant previously confirmed by God, so as to make the promise ineffective (3:17).** The word **confirmed** is a perfect passive participle, pointing to the lasting authority of **the covenant**. **The Torah**, our blueprint for living, did not cancel out justification by **faith**. During the entire Dispensation of **Torah** (see the commentary on **Exodus Da – The Dispensation of the Torah**), people were saved on the basis of **faith**. **For if the inheritance is based on the legal part of the Torah**, which is *the halakhah*, or the rules governing Jewish life (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ei – The Oral**

Law), **it is no longer based on a promise;** therefore, **it no longer comes from a promise (3:18a).** The Judaizers (see **Ag – Who Were the Judaizers?**) were not only attempting to retain the 613 commandments of Moshe for the Jews, but tried to impose them on the **Gentiles**, to whom **the Torah** was never given. That was what **Paul** was fighting against.

Therefore, **Paul's** argument is as follows. If a **covenant** once in force cannot be changed or rendered void by any later action, **God's covenant** with **Abraham** cannot be changed or rendered void by the addition of the 613 commandments of **the Torah**. If this principle holds good in a human covenant, how much more is it true when **ADONAI** makes **the covenant** as **He** did with **Abraham** in **Genesis 15**, since **the promises** of **God** are more reliable than any human could ever make.

Fourth, the covenant of promise is superior to the Torah because it is more complete. But, God gave [the covenant] to Abraham by means of a promise (3:18b CJB). The Greek word **gave** (*charizomai*) means *a gift given out of the spontaneous generosity of the givers heart, with no strings attached.* The Greek word for **grace** (*charis*) has the same root and the same meaning. As a result, the word **gave** here does not refer to an undertaking based upon a mutual agreement, but upon the free act of one who gives something, with no expectation to be reimbursed in any way. **God graced [the covenant] to Abraham by means of a promise.** This at once shows the difference between having to obey the 613 commandments of **Moshe** and **grace**. If salvation were by obedience to **God's statutes** (Hebrew: *hachukkim*, meaning *to write into law permanently*) and **ordinances** (Hebrew: *hammishpatim*, meaning *a judgment of the court* as seen in **Deuteronomy 4:1**), that would mean that it would be based upon a mutual agreement between **Ha'Shem** and the sinner whereby **God** would obligate **Himself** to give salvation to any sinner who would earn it by obedience to **His statutes** and **ordinances**. But the very genius of the word *charizomai* works against the teaching of the Judaizers, namely, that salvation is by deeds. There is a Greek word *huposchesis* which is used of an offer based upon the terms of a mutual agreement. But it is not used here.

Not only that, the verb gave is in the perfect tense here, which speaks of a past completed action having continuous results. The past act of **ADONAI** giving **the inheritance** on the basis of **a promise**, has present results to you and me. **God** gave the inheritance to **Abraham** by **promise** around 2,000 BC and that **promise** was still good after **the Torah** was given around 1,500 BC, and **the promise** was still good after the cross.[88]

By definition, an **inheritance** is not earned but simply received, and to work for that which is already guaranteed is foolish and unnecessary. Trying to earn **the inheritance** of **God's grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8)** in **His one-and-only Son (John 3:16)** is much worse than foolish. To add obedience to the 613 commandments of Moses to **faith** in **the promise** of **God** is to **nullify His grace** and to cause **Messiah** to have **died needlessly (2:21)!**[89]

*Dear Great Heavenly **Father**, How Awesome **You** are! Praise **You** that we can trust every one of **Your** promises, **For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ (Second Corinthians 1:20).**The promise of your always being with your children is so comforting**-Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.(Hebrews 13:5 NIV).***

*Praise you for **Your** promise of guiding **Your** children's lives even when things don't seem to be working out; for when I trust and follow **You**, I know that **You** are working all things for my good. **Now we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).** Thank **You** that the good that **You** promise to give us is not things, not even very good things such as: a job, a marriage partner, or a family; but the very best thing that we could ever hope for is being conformed to **You** – and that is exactly what **You** do to **Your** children! **For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (Romans 8:29)***

*And **You** are polishing my character so I may have the joy of shining bright for **You**. **You rejoice in this greatly, even though now for a little while, if necessary, You have been distressed by various trials. These trials are so that the true metal of your faith (far more valuable than gold which perishes though refined by fire) may come to light in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua. (First Peter 1:6-7).***

*When I look at trying life situations, I must remember to look at them through **Your** eyes, for **You** who know the future always guides what is the very best for me. **For I know the plans that I have in mind for you," declares ADONAI, "plans for shalom and not for calamity – to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11).***

*Praise **You** that nothing will ever be able to separate me from **Your** love! **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor***

things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

*I rejoice in loving **You**! In **Yeshua's** Holy name and thru **His** power of resurrection. Amen*