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Abram Believed the LORD and He Credited It to Him as Righteousness 15: 1-6

Abram believed the LORD and He credited it to him as righteousness DIG: What does Abram fear the most (see **15:1-3** and **8)? What's wrong with wanting reassurance? In adopting a servant heir, is Abram faithless or faithful? What does ADONAI think (**see **15:4-7** and **9-21)? If the LORD said it once (12:2-3** and **7), even twice (13:14-17), why remind Abram again? How had God already been Abram's shield and great reward? How is faith/trust/belief related to righteousness (**see **Romans 4:18-22** and **Galatians 3:6-9)? Which comes first? Which comes from the LORD? Which is indispensable to a right relationship with Him?**

REFLECT: Where in your life do you need ADONAI to say: Do not be afraid. I am your shield, your very great reward? The LORD credited Abram as righteous. What affirming word might God use to describe or credit you today?

Abram was a hero, but **he** was also a human. Perhaps, after the great battle and victory of the four kings of the east and the marvelous experience with Melchizedek, **he** began to be depressed. The reality was that **he** still did not have a son to become **a great nation (12:2)** and **he** was still in the middle of a dangerous and wicked country. **Abram** became doubtful and **afraid** of what the future might hold for **him**. At that time **the** spoken **word of Adonai, YHWH came to Abram in a vision**. The Hebrew for **vision** is *machveh* and is found only three other times in the Hebrew Scriptures in reference to **a vision** from **the LORD**, here, **Numbers 24:4** and **16,** and **Ezeki'el 13:7.** In Hebrew this literally means *in the vision* and this is the first time it is mentioned in the Scriptures. It is a specific **vision**, not a dream, which will finalize **God's** covenant with **Abram**. **He** was awake and the **vision** would continue all day and into the night **(15:17)**.

Knowing **Abram's** greatest fears, **ADONAI** said to **him, "Do not be afraid, Abram."** This is the first mention of the phrase **do not be afraid** in the Scriptures.

He will say this again to **Isaac** in **26:23**, and **Jacob** in **46:3**. So, at some point all three patriarchs will receive the same message **The LORD** continued by giving **Abram** two reasons for not being fearful. First, **He** said: **I am your shield,** mentioned for the first time here, reminding **him** that **He** had protected **Abram** from the four eastern kings (In fact the verb **delivered** in **14:20** is a play on words since in Hebrew, it sounds very similar to the word **shield** here). The second reason was a **very great reward (15:1).**

Perhaps it would have sounded more pious to simply thank **the LORD** for this **vision**, with its assurances of safety and compensation. But **Abram** was a man on a mission. **He** could not forget, nor did **he** want to forget, the original promise that **he** would have **a son (12:2)**. But at **his** age, and with a barren wife, it seemed impossible.[259] **Abram** hints at the real problem when **he** said: **Adonai, God, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer**, which means *God helps or God comforts,* **of Damascus (15:2)?** This is the first time in the TaNaKh where **Adonai***,* and **God's** four-lettered name **YHWH** are combined together. It is used twice in this chapter, and in the *hamishshah humshe he-Torah*, or the five books of Moses, it is used only two other times **(Deuteronomy 3:24** and **9:26). Adonai** is translated a number of times by the word *owner or master.* By using this name, **Abram** was acknowledging that **Adonai** was also **his** *Master*. Certainly **Abram** understood what this relationship meant; perhaps better than we do today, for those were days of slavery. Lordship meant complete possession on the one hand, and complete submission on the other. As we have already seen, **Abram** himself sustained the relationship of master and lord over a very considerable number of people. Therefore, by addressing **YHWH** as **Adonai** he acknowledged **His** complete possession of and perfect right to all that **he** was and had.[260]

Nevertheless, **Abram** expressed **his** real fear when **he** said: **You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir (15:3).** What is implied here is that a **very great reward** that could not be transmitted to his family is of little value. The only person who could **inherit his estate** was **Eliezer of Damascus (Proverbs 17:2)**, who was **his** chief servant because **he** had no natural **son**. How many times have we felt the same way that **Abram** did? We get to the point of hopelessness and then **the LORD** blesses us in ways we could not imagine.

As he was speaking, the word of ADONAI came to Abram, "This man," not even using **Eliezer's** name**, "will not be your heir."** The Hebrew literally reads,

not your heir this one. **“But a son coming from your own body will be your heir” (15:4).** Then **Elohim** gives **Abram** an illustration at during the night.

To make His promise even clearer, **the LORD** went far beyond **Abram’s** concern for a single **son** when He **took Abram outside his** tent at night, under the open sky **and said** to **him, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars, if indeed you can count them.”** Of course **Abram** could not **count** all **the stars** that **he** saw. **Then Adonai, YHVH said to him, “So shall your offspring be” (15:5).** Back in **13:16** the illustration was that **if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. He** also uses a third illustration of **the sand on the seashore (22:17).** All three illustrations point to the fact that **his offspring** could not **be counted**.

Then **Abram’s** heart responded and **he believed in, had trust in,** or **had faith in ADONAI.** This is the first mention of the word **believed** in the Scriptures. In the B’rit Chadashah this is the Greek word *pisteo,* and occurs ninety-nine times in the book of **John** alone. The particular form used here implies continuous action, meaning that **Abram’s** normal response to **God** was that **he believed Him**. But what did **he trust** in? Did **Abram have faith in** the coming of the Messiah? No. Did **he believe** that the **Messiah** would die for **his** sins? No. **Abram trusted in the LORD** and **His** promises**.** And in this context, what **Abram had faith** in was that **Adonai, YHWH** would **make him into a great nation**, make **his name great** and that **he** would **be a blessing. Elohim** would **bless those who blessed him**, and **curse** those who cursed **him**; and that **all the peoples of the earth would be blessed through him (12:2-3).** The Hebrew word for **believed** is the hypo-stem of the Hebrew word *aman,* which will be used two more times in **42:20** and

45:26. As we progress through the Scripture, the light of the gospel becomes clearer and clearer.

And as a result of **Abram's trust**, **ADONAI credited** *or imputed* (the Hebrew word *chashad*) **His belief to him as righteousness** (Hebrew: *tzedekah* in **15:6,** also read **Romans 4:1-25).** This is the first occurrence of **imputed** in the Bible. When **Yochanan** says **the Spirit gives life (John 6:63a)**, **he** means that all **the righteousness** of **Christ** is transferred into our spiritual account at the moment of **faith** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw – What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith)**. The theological name for this is **imputation**. The Bible teaches us that we have **all** inherited **Adam's sin** nature. **Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 5:12** and **3:23).** In the TaNaKh, there had to be a sacrifice for **sin** to be temporarily atoned for. Blood had to be shed, and a death had to occur; therefore, because of the death of **the Meshiach** on the cross we have the perfect, absolute, **righteousness** that **God the Father imputes** to us through **His Son**. Because of our **faith**, we have passed **ADONAI's** final exam of the universe with a hundred percent. When **Ha'Shem** sees us, **He** doesn't see our **sin**, **He** sees **the righteousness** of **His Son (Romans 1:17)**. We are in **the Holy One**, and **He** is in us. The only way we get to heaven is a result of **the** perfect **righteousness** of **Jesus Christ**.

So salvation, whether in the TaNaKh or in the B'rit Chadashah, was, and is, by **grace through faith**. **In fact the rabbis teach that Abram, having received God's assurance, believed that the prophecy would certainly be fulfilled, and that he need not fear that he might forfeit it through sin. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).** That doesn't change. But what does change is the content of that **trust**. In other words, what is it that one needs to **believe** to be saved? And that changes from dispensation to dispensation, depending on what **Elohim** has revealed up to that point.

This verse is one of the most important verses, in the entire Bible, for it tells for the first time how sinful man or woman may become right with **God**. In ourselves we are not right with **Him**. We are alienated from **Him** by our sinful natures and by deliberate sinful choices. We are under **ADONAI's** wrath, and apart from **Him** we are destined to perish miserably. If it is possible that we can become right with

God once again – as this verse says we can – thereby passing from sin to holiness and from wrath to blessing, this is clearly great news, and the verse that tells us how this can happen is of supreme importance.[261] The influence of this verse on the B'rit Chadashah cannot be overstated. It is quoted three times **(Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23)** and in each case it is emphasized that salvation comes by **faith**, and that **Abram** was a type of all who would **believe**.