

# Genesis 17-19: The Promise of Isaac

## GENESIS 17:1-8 ABRAM'S NAME CHANGED TO ABRAHAM

**v1 Abram 99 years old:** Now 24 years since entering the land: **12:4**. All natural hope of ever being able to raise a promised seed by natural means had now been extinguished. **Rom 4:19** says they had 'dead' bodies and so their faith had to be extraordinarily patient. **Yahweh appeared to Abram:** Most likely an angel: **Ex 23:20-21**.

**Almighty God:** First time this Name is used, but the Name God particularly revealed Himself to Abraham: **28:3; 35:11; Ex 6:3**. Hebrew *El Shaddai*. **El** = power and strength. **Shaddai** = Nourisher or destroyer. This may seem unusual until we realise that the word has to do with a muscle (strength) or breast (nourishment). This title therefore graphically shows God as powerful in judgment and powerful in nourishment. It is expressive of the 2 aspects of God's character: **Rom 11:22** "Behold the goodness and severity of God". **Walk before me:** Expresses behaviour and way of life: **Mic 6:8**. **Be thou perfect:** Upright, sincere, tr. *integrity* in **Gen 20:5** and *upright* in **2 Sam 22:24**. **v2 I will make my covenant:** Heb. "establish my covenant". It had already been given, it was now to be **confirmed** through circumcision and the birth of Isaac. In **Gen 15:18** the Hebrew means *cut a covenant*. That had already been done. **Between me and thee:** Repeated in **17:4,7,10,11**. A close friendship: **Jas 2:23**. **Multiply thee exceedingly:** **Rev 7:9** "a great multitude".

**v3 Abram fell on his face:** A deep sense of unworthiness and humility. **God talked with him:** Heb. *Elohim*. Although used of a multitude, *Elohim* can refer to an individual angel as a representative of all. In **Gen 17** *Yahweh, El Shaddai* and *Elohim* are linked together.

**v4 Father of many nations:** Heb. word for *nations* is normally used for **Gentiles**. His seed will ultimately embrace Jew **and** Gentile. **Rom 4:16-17** applies this to believing Gentiles justified by faith: **Gal 3:29**. The promise also has a national application: **Isa 60:12; Zech 14:16**. All nations will call the seed of Abraham blessed: **Psa 72:17**.

**v5 Abraham:** A fifth consonant "h" was added to his name. It is the fifth letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Five is the number of grace in Scripture. **Rom 4:16** "that it may be by grace". The "h" is also the dominant letter in **Yahweh**. Abram means Lofty Father. Abraham means Father of a multitude. Abram is the father of Israel. Abraham is the father of Jew and Gentile made one in Israel.

**v6 Exceeding fruitful:** Expressive of spiritual qualities: **Isa 54:1,13; Heb 11:11-13; Gal 3:29**. God's children have the fruit of the Spirit: **Jn 15:2; Gal 5:22-23**.

## GENESIS 17

**AND** when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, *I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

**2** And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.

**3** And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

**4** As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

**5** Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

**6** And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make many nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

**7** And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

**8** And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

**9** ¶ And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant; therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

**v7 Kings shall come out of thee:** Under the new covenant, partially fulfilled in Christ: **Lk 1:32-33**. Finally fulfilled in the Saints: **Mt 19:28; Rev 5:9-10; 7:4; 20:4; Isa 32:1**. **Establish my covenant between me and thee:** In **17:2** the promise was to establish the covenant with Abraham. Now it is extended to include Abraham's "seed". See also **17:19,21**. **In their generations for an everlasting covenant:** The Abrahamic covenant was designed to continue through all generations and be a memorial of the Divine purpose through the ages: **Ex 3:15; 1 Chron 16:15; Psa 45:16-17; 72:17; 79:13; 102:12; 105:8-9; 135:13; 145:13; Lk 1:48**. **A God unto thee, and thy seed:** Heb. "to be for Elohim unto thee." Expressive of God's purpose with His covenant, to produce children who become *mighty ones*. The saints will become like angels: **Lk 20:35-36**. God's Name *Yahweh* is expressive of His purpose, a memorial for all generations: **Ex 3:15**.

**v8 A stranger:** Children of the promise live as strangers and pilgrims: **Heb 11:13**. Believers hold fast to the promise of a **future kingdom** rather than grasping the present. This changes our whole outlook on life and the decisions we make daily: **Heb 11:1-6**. Our citizenship is in heaven as we await Christ's return: **Phil 3:20**. **Land of Canaan an everlasting possession:** A real tangible hope of a Kingdom of God on earth: **Psa 37:3,9,11,22,29,34; Matt 5:5**, Christ will reign on David's throne ruling over the nation of Israel in the land: **Lk 1:31-33, 68-75**. This kingdom is eternal, forever: **2 Sam 7:13,16,17,24-26**. **I will be their God:** Heb. "I will be to them for Elohim". God here proclaims the principles of the Divine Name later revealed at the burning bush: **Ex 3:14-15; 6:3**.

## GENESIS 17:9-14 CIRCUMCISION THE COVENANT TOKEN

**v9 Thou shalt keep my covenant:** An outward sign of an attitude of mind. The rite however was not displayed to view, and so too the true keeping of the covenant in the heart is not apparent to external appearance. Circumcision of the heart is what is important to God: **Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:25-29; Col 3:11-12**.

**v10 Between me and you:** Continually repeated. **Circumcised:** **Acts 7:8**. This law took precedence over the Sabbath law: **Jn 7:22**. The Sabbath pointed forward to the millennium, but circumcision to beyond the millennium. It symbolised rejection of the flesh and of fleshly descent. It also involves pain. It shows that fleshly descent in no way qualifies us for covenant privileges. Humility is fundamental.

**v11 Token of the covenant:** A symbol of allegiance to God: **Deut 10:16-17; 30:6; Ez 44:7-9; Rom 2:29; 4:11**. Today this is seen in baptism into Christ: **Phil 3:3; Col 2:11-12; Eph 4:22; Jn 6:63**.

## GENESIS 17:15-16 SARAI'S NAME CHANGED TO SARAH

**v15 Sarah:** Sarah means *princess*. Sarai means *my princess*. No longer is she Abraham's princess only, but one for all nations. The fifth letter "h" is also added to her name. Abraham now understands that his wife was equally involved in this promise together with him!

**v16 Give thee a son also of her:** Roth. "I will give from her to thee a son". It almost sounds like a virgin birth, (because **it is in type**). A miracle! **I will bless her:** **Psa 127:3; Heb 11:11**. **A mother of nations:** cp. the promise in **17:4-5**. **Kings:** See notes on **17:7**.

## GENESIS 17:17-22 ABRAHAM IS PROMISED A SON ISAAC

**v17 Abraham fell upon his face:** As in **17:3**. He now recognises the folly of their plan with Hagar and he is now humbled and overjoyed. **Laughed:** Not doubt but of absolute joy. He believed God: **Jn 8:56; Rom 4:18-22**. **v18 O that Ishmael might live before thee:** He does not want Ishmael to be rejected but to be included.



**v19 Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son:** God immediately directs his mind back to Sarah. God never recognises Hagar as Abraham's wife. **Isaac:** means *laughter*. **Everlasting covenant:** A type of Christ through whom the covenant is confirmed: **Lk 1:68-71**. **v20 Multiply him exceedingly:** Arab descendants of Ishmael, who will be in an honoured, yet secondary position in the Kingdom: **Isa 60:6-7**. **v21 My covenant will I establish with Isaac:** **Gal 4:31**. The word "covenant" in relation to **this couple** is found 14x in the record, firstly **Gen 15:18** where it is cut, then 13x in **Gen 17 (7+7)!** **Both** are involved: **1 Pet 3:6-7** "heirs together of the grace of life"

## GENESIS 17:23-27 ABRAHAM CIRCUMCISES HIS HOUSEHOLD

Abraham's obedience to God is immediate and total: **John 14:23**.

## GENESIS 18:1-8 ABRAHAM ENTERTAINS THREE ANGELS

**Heb 13:2** "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." ESV. Here is an old man 99 years old running to meet and welcome strangers! He **ran (v2), hasted (v6) stood (v8)**. Those 3 words are used in **Lk 19:4,6,8** where Zaccheus shows hospitality to Jesus. Jesus responds: "this day is salvation come...forasmuch as he is also a son of Abraham".

One qualification of an ecclesial elder is being a *lover of hospitality*: **1 Tim 3:2**. This literally means "to love strangers". He doesn't just spend time with friends. He invites others in. He thinks outwardly, particularly for the lonely: **Tit 1:8; Rom 12:13; Gal 6:2; 1 Pet 4:8-9**.

## GENESIS 18:9-15 SARAH'S INITIAL UNBELIEF

**Heb 11:11** "through faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, because she judged him faithful who had promised." The emphasis is *herself* because here was the problem. At first she laughed. But her faith developed. Laughter changed from incredulity to joy as she realised God could perform the humanly impossible.

**v10 Sarah thy wife shall have a son:** Cited in **Rom 9:7-8** in context of believers being children of Abraham **by faith**. **v12 My Lord:** Cited in **1 Pet 3:3-6** as an example of a faithful sister's meek and quiet spirit.

**v14 Is anything too hard for Yahweh?** Consider Moses: **Num 11:23**; Jonathan: **1 Sam 14:6**; and Mary: **Lk 1:37**. With God all things are possible: **Mt 19:26**, cp. **Eph 3:20**. **v17-19 KEY VERSES:** See notes in *Background and Overview*. He taught his children about Yahweh!

## GENESIS 18:16 - 19:29 THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

Typical of the latter days: **Lk 17:28-33**. Sodom was a place of "pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness": **Ezek 16:49**. Sodom is also a type of false Christianity: **Jude 7; 2 Pet 2:1-8; Rev 11:8**. See notes in the *Background and Overview*. Read this chapter as if you were reading of God's impending judgments on today's world.

Colour code: Blue (God and Jesus Christ); Red (sin/devil/judgment of wicked); Green (Kingdom); Orange (important words & phrases); Purple (return of Jews to the land); Yellow (practical exhortation). Prepared for Study Week 2014 - Abraham, Searching for a City. Acknowledgements: Expositor notes by HP Mansfield, Hebrews SW2004 notes by M Bonner, Testimony articles on Sarah by R Madden and talks by J Martin and R Lewis. For a pdf file: Email [acdangerfield@webshield.net.au](mailto:acdangerfield@webshield.net.au) or download from [www.studyweek.net](http://www.studyweek.net)