

The Abrahamic Covenant

The Foundation for the Renewed Covenant: The Covenants of Salvation

Ya'acov Natan Lawrence

Waters in the Wilderness, A Teaching Ministry of Hoshana Rabbah Messianic Discipleship Resources

Introduction

THE APOSTLE PAUL MAKES A VERY INTERESTING, and often overlooked statement in Ephesians 2:12. For context we will quote the surrounding verses:

Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth [citizenship] of Israel, and strangers from the *covenants of promise*, having no hope, and without Elohim in the world: but now in Messiah Yeshua ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Messiah. (emphasis added)

Paul, talking to the Believers in Ephesus, states that they had been (past tense) Gentiles (comprised of various ethnic or people groups) without Elohim and without hope, but now, through the work of Yeshua at the cross, provision had been made for these alienated people-groups to become citizens of the nation of Israel. Elsewhere Paul refers to these (former) Gentiles as now being Israelites and defines them as heirs to the promises YHVH made to Abraham and calls them “seed” or descendants of Abraham (Rom. 4:15; 9:8,11; Gal. 3:7,14,29).

Paul further says that these same people had been aliens from YHVH’s “covenants of promise” and relates this to the “Gentile” Believers at Ephesus. We know that the principles laid out in this teaching apply to all Believers down through the ages. So what *covenants of promise* were these Believers strangers to in times past prior to their conversion? Most Christian Believers have been taught that the “New Covenant” is the only covenant that pertains to them, yet Paul spoke of *covenants* (plural) of promise. To what was he referring? The two main covenants of the Hebrew Scriptures affecting the nation of Israel were the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant. Additionally, Jeremiah prophetically speaks of a (Re)new(ed) Covenant that YHVH would make with the two Houses of Israel (Jer. 31:31-33); that is, a refreshed version of a former (marital) covenantal agreement which Israel broke with YHVH (verse 32). These are the three principal covenants that Scripture reveals affect YHVH’s people. Clearly, Paul is referencing these three covenants in Ephesians 2:12 (see the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, by David Stern, p. 583).

Which of the three covenants forms the bedrock upon which the others are based, and upon which Elohim predicated his glorious plan of redemption for mankind? In Romans four, Paul references the Abrahamic Covenant in discussing the means by which one is saved. In his discussion of the Abrahamic Covenant, Paul gives us no indications that the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant are passé or invalid as pertaining to Believers in the Renewed Covenant. He clearly shows us that this covenant forms the basis for man’s redemption (salvation) and subsequent relationship with his Creator. With this thought in mind, let us proceed into a study of the Abrahamic Covenant and learn how it relates to the Renewed Covenant.

The Torah Covenant Is the First or Former Covenant; The Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants Are Subsections of the Torah Covenant

The Torah, the first five books of the Bible, is the chronicle of YHVH giving man instructions to follow and of his entering into covenantal relationships with men and men either keeping those agreements or breaking them.

The word *Torah* means *instructions, teaching or precepts*; specifically in biblical context: *the teachings or instructions of YHVH to lead men into a righteous relationship with him through covenantal agreement*. The Torah is a giant

b'rit or covenant. The Torah in a number of places even refers to itself by the Hebrew word *b'rit* or *covenant*. We see this in the following passages:

Exodus 34:27, And YHVH said unto Moses, Write you these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

Deuteronomy 29:1, These are the words of the covenant, which YHVH commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

The Torah is not unlike an instruction manual one might receive from the manufacturer of an automobile, computer or some such thing to help the new buyer to operate his new purchase in a manner that allows him to receive years of trouble-free service. The Torah is YHVH's instruction manual to help man to live in a manner that brings life and blessing; to help man to enter into loving relationship with his Creator and to have a trouble-free relationship with his fellow man.

Within the first five books of the Torah-covenant are several smaller covenantal subdivisions such as the Abrahamic and the Sinaitic or Mosaic Covenants. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* describes this as follows, "Deuteronomy 29:13-14 shows the Sinaitic Covenant was an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant.... The Sinai renewal merely stressed man's responsibility where the Abrahamic Covenant emphasized Elohim's promise.... The Priestly Covenant of Num 25:12-13, the Davidic Covenant of 2 Sam 7 and the [Re]New[ed] Covenant of Jer 31:31 are all administrative aspects of the same covenant, Elohim's Covenant of grace. This covenant reaches its climax at the Incarnation where [Messiah] representing his people fulfilled all the stipulations of the covenant and bore the curse they deserved for breaking it" (p. 129).

The Torah is a covenant with various "administrative aspects" or subdivisions. Each succeeding covenant builds upon the previous covenant without cancelling out the requirements or provisions of the previous covenant. Such is consistent with the character and nature of YHVH Elohim. He is not a man that he should lie (Num. 23:19). When he gives his word he keeps it, even up to 1000 generations (that is 40-50,000 years!) (Ps. 105:6-11). He declares that he *does not* change (Mal. 3:6) and that he is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). He is not a respecter of persons who makes a covenant with one people-group (e.g. the Jews) and another covenant with another people-group (e.g. the Gentiles) each with its own contradictory set of salvation requirements and standards of righteousness (Acts 10:34). In YHVH's spiritual economy, there is one law, one set of standards, one covenant for both the Israelite and the Gentile (Exod. 12:49; Num. 15:16; Eph. 2:11-16). Again, his laws and covenants are a reflection of his divine nature and character. He cannot oppose himself. He is not double-minded, like man. He is not the sort of (spiritual) well that spouts forth both salty and fresh water to which the Apostle James makes reference in his epistle. YHVH is perfect, righteous and immutable.

The Renewed Covenant Is a Spirit-Energized Version of the Torah Covenant

Did you ever wonder where the terms *New Testament* or *New Covenant* came from? Yes, you will find these phrases used in the Apostolic Scriptures (or "NT") portion of your English Bible in exactly nine places (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8,13; 9:15; 12:24), but does this translation do justice to the spiritual meaning of the concept?

When you think of new what comes to your mind? A brand new car? A new house? A new pair of shoes? You see, in English, we have one word for *new*, but in biblical Greek there are two words: *neos* and *kainos* and each has a different connotation. *Neos* more often than not carries the idea of *brand new* or *numerically new*, while *kainos* carries the idea of *renewed*, *refreshed*, *repaired* or *qualitatively new*.

Now when you see the term *New Covenant* or *New Testament* used in the Apostolic Scriptures, can you guess which Greek word is used eight-out-of-nine times for *new*? If you guessed *kainos* you were right. Only in Hebrews 12:24 is the term *neos* used; in all the other places, Scripture uses the term *kainos*. The terms *New Testament* or *new covenant* in your Bibles would be more accurately translated *Renewed Covenant* instead of *New* (as in *brand new*) *Covenant* or *Testament*. The usage of the word *renewed* over the use of the word *new* is exactly consistent with the usage of the word in Hebrews 8:8, "For finding fault with them, he says, Behold, the days come, says YHVH, when I will make a [re]new[ed] covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah ..." The author here is quoting from Jeremiah 31:31 in the Tanakh (OT) where it says, "Behold, the days come, says YHVH, that I will make a [re]new[ed] covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ..." The word for

new in this passage in Jeremiah is the Hebrew word, *chadash*, which means *to repair* or *renew*.

So what is the bottom line here? The terms *New Testament* and *New Covenant* are inaccurate translations from the Hebrew passage in Jeremiah and do not mean *new* as in *brand new*, but *new* as in *renewed*, *refreshed* or *repaired*. You see, the “New” Covenant is not a *brand new* covenant that YHVH is making with his people. He will *repair* or *renew* the former covenants (plural, see Eph. 2:12) that ancient Israel broke and that many are still breaking even today by not keeping his Torah-commandments. And what was wrong with the former covenants (the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants) you may ask that YHVH said he would have to renew his covenant with his people? Was it the terms of the covenant, which were YHVH’s Torah-commandments, that were evil and had to pass away or was it something else? Let’s let Scripture answer this question:

Jeremiah 31:31–33, Behold, the days come, saith YHVH, that I will make a **renewed covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; **which my covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them**, says YHVH: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says YHVH, **I will put my Torah in their inward parts**, and write it in their hearts; and will be their Elohim, and they shall be my people. (emphasis added)

Hebrews 8:7–11, For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. **For finding fault with them**, [YHVH found fault with the people, not with the Torah-law] he says, Behold, the days come, saith YHVH, when I will make a [renewed] covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says YHVH. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says YHVH; **I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them an Elohim, and they shall be to me a people:** And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know YHVH: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. (emphasis added)

This Renewed Covenant will still have the Torah-law as the terms of its agreement, and unlike the former covenant that YHVH made with his people at Mount Sinai, which they promptly broke, this time YHVH promised to pour out his Spirit onto his people. With Yeshua, the Messiah, the Living Torah-Word of Elohim living in the hearts of spiritually regenerated or born-again Believers, we now can serve and obey YHVH faithfully. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, YHVH’s people can be like a wife who remains faithful to her marriage vows, instead of the rebellious wife ancient Israel was when, although at Mount Sinai she had vowed to be faithful to YHVH’s Torah (Exod. 19:8; 24:3,7), she immediately violated the terms of her marriage covenant at the golden calf incident (Exod. 32).

So as we study the Abrahamic Covenant, and as we recall Ephesians 2:12 where Paul talks about the Gentiles coming into relationship with the Elohim of Israel, becoming part of Israel, and being brought in a relationship with Elohim through the *covenants* of Israel, let’s keep in mind what those *covenants* are. They are the Torah Covenant, which can be subdivided into the Abrahamic and Mosaic (Sinaitic) Covenant, along with the Renewed Covenant. The latter was prophesied about by Jeremiah the prophet, and came into reality during the time of Yeshua and the Apostles. It is the Renewed Covenant that is the spiritually renewed or refreshed Torah Covenant of old that becomes a reality in the lives of born-again, spiritually regenerated Believers through a saving relationship with Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel. Paul makes this abundantly clear, as we shall discover later, as he relates the Abrahamic Covenant subsection of the Torah Covenant to the salvation of the Believer in his epistle to the Romans chapters three and four. Paul then references the Mosaic Covenant aspect of the Torah Covenant to the life of the Believer when he clearly indicates that YHVH’s Torah-law is to be the standard of righteousness for the Saints (See Rom. 3:31; 7:12,14,22; 13:8–10; Act 24:14;25:8 compare with John 14:15 and Matt. 5:19).

With all this in mind, let us proceed with learning about the biblical concept of covenantal agreement, and how the Abrahamic Covenant forms the basis for the Renewed Covenant through which man obtains eternal life through faith in Yeshua.

YHVH Relates to Humans Through Covenantal Agreements

YHVH Elohim, the Creator of the universe, is a Being of law and order. He runs his entire universe through laws. There are laws of chemistry, biology, physics and mathematics, to name a few, that govern his physical creation. Scientists recognize this.

Likewise there are cause-and effect-laws that govern all areas of human relationships. If you treat others a certain way they will treat you in a similar manner. One reaps what one sows.

Similarly YHVH has put into motion spiritual laws that govern his spiritual creation even as the laws of science govern his physical creation. These spiritual laws are a reflection of his very nature and character. For example, YHVH is righteous, so he expects men to be righteous. He has given men laws (instructions or teachings) to help show men how to be righteous as he is righteous. He keeps his word and never lies. He expects the same of men. That is why there is a commandment that says, “You shall not lie.” There are nine more such basic commandments, which the Torah then expands into 613 commandments. The Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) lists 1050 such commandments (*Dake’s Annotated Study Bible*) that define for the Saints the walk of righteousness.

Throughout all of Scripture YHVH has chosen to relate to humans through a structure of law and order, since he is not an Elohim of disorder or confusion. His kingdom is just and orderly at all levels. This structural framework is known as *covenantal agreement*. Likewise, on the human plain all transactions people make between each other are based on contractual agreements, verbal or written: marriage vows, land and house purchase agreements, warranties, guaranties, sales agreements, service contracts, union contracts, employee and employer contracts, rental and lease agreements, etc.

It is no different with YHVH. In Scripture, we see him making covenantal agreements with humans. There is the Noatic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant, Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and the Renewed Covenant to name a few of the main agreements YHVH has formulated with humans over the millennia.

What is behind YHVH’s covenant-making method of operation?

It Is All About Reconciliation

Let us answer this question by asking another question. If you had to sum up the entire message of the Bible in one word what would it be? Probably words such as love, hope, salvation, eternal life or heaven are coming to your mind. But I challenge you to find a better word than the following: r-e-c-o-n-c-i-l-i-a-t-i-o-n —the reconciliation of YHVH’s people back into a covenantal love (marital) relational agreement (Hebrew: *ketubah*) with him.

The dictionary defines *reconciliation* as “to restore to friendship or harmony, to settle or resolve a quarrel, to make consistent or congruous.” When man chose to rebel against YHVH and to give in to sin at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden he chose the path of separation from his Heavenly Father. Sin causes man to be separated from a totally set-apart (holy/*kadosh*), righteous and sinless Creator. Since that time YHVH has been endeavoring to reconcile man to himself. He has laid out criteria for man to follow for this to occur—for man to once again have a friendly, loving and intimate relationship with his Heavenly Father as did Adam before he sinned.

Let’s further define the word *reconciliation* in biblical terms. The following is paraphrased from *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (p. 903): Biblically, it is the process by which Elohim and man are brought together again. Elohim and man were alienated from one another because of YHVH’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. Though YHVH loves the sinner (Rom. 5:8), it is impossible for him not to judge sin (Heb. 10:27). Therefore in biblical reconciliation, both parties are affected. Through the sacrifice of Messiah, man’s sin is atoned and YHVH’s wrath is appeased. Thus a relationship of hostility and alienation is changed into one of peace and fellowship. Man is reconciled to YHVH through the person and work of Yeshua the Messiah (2 Cor. 5:18). Paul regarded the Gospel as the “word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). And knowing the terror of YHVH’s judgment Paul pleaded, implored, and persuaded men: “Be reconciled to YHVH” (2 Cor. 5:20).

What Is a Biblical Covenant Anyway?

What do we mean by the term *covenant* in a biblical sense of the word? The Hebrew word for *covenant* is the word *b’rit* (*Strong’s* H1285) meaning *an agreement (which binds two parties together), league, alliance, pledge, constitution*. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* says of the word *b’rit*: “between nations: a treaty, alliance of friendship; between individuals: a pledge or agreement; with obligation between a monarch and subjects: a constitution; between Elohim and man: a covenant accompanied by signs, sacrifices, and a solemn oath that sealed the

relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking it” (vol. 1, p. 128). “Apart from blood ties the covenant was the way people of the ancient world formed wider relationships with each other” (*Ibid.* p. 129).

YHVH is not a dictator. He has never tried to cram his laws and covenants down man’s throat. He allows man the freedom to choose to enter into covenantal relationship with him or not; for man to be reconciled to him into a loving relationship or not. He asks men to choose whom they will follow:

Deuteronomy 30:19, I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

Joshua 24:15, And if it seem evil unto you to serve YHVH, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve YHVH.

It is up to man to choose whom he will serve, whose laws he will follow. And man will live with the consequences of his choice: life or death.

A Closer Look At The Abrahamic Covenant

Let us now take a closer look at the Abrahamic Covenant, which, as we have already noted, is a subdivision of the Torah Covenant itself and forms the basis for the Renewed Covenant revealed in the Apostolic Scriptures. What are the unique aspects and provisions of this covenant?

In the Abrahamic Covenant, YHVH made promises to Abraham and all that YHVH expected of Abraham was faith. How do we know this? First we see that YHVH called Abraham to leave the comfort and wealth of Babylon (Ur of the Chaldees) and by faith to go to Canaan (Gen. 12:1). There YHVH made many promises to Abraham about his progeny concerning their wealth, their numbers and their land inheritance. Abraham, though he personally never saw most of these promises fulfilled, nevertheless believed in YHVH and it was counted to him for righteousness’ sake (Gen. 15:6, Hebrews 11:6–19).

Next we see the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant in how YHVH executed it with Abraham. In all agreements, there are at least two parties who determine the conditions of the agreement and then sign papers or shake hands. Each does something or brings something to the table. It was no different when two ancient near-Eastern parties would make an agreement or covenant. They would go through an elaborate bloody ritual to underscore the seriousness of the blood oath into which they were about to enter. In his book, *The Miracle of the Scarlet Thread*, Richard Booker describes a nine-step process that was lengthy and involved, like a Hebraic wedding ceremony, where each party was required to perform a number of rituals. One of the steps involved “cutting the covenant.” Booker explains that in this step the parties would take an animal, cut it in half down the middle and split it in two. The two bloody halves would be separated and laid aside after which each party would walk through the two halves. This ceremony represents each party giving up his rights to his own life, dying to self and beginning a new walk with one’s new covenant partner unto death. Each half of the animal represents one of the covenanting parties. And by walking through the middle each party was saying, “Elohim do so to me and more if I ever try to break this covenant. Just split me right down the middle and feed me to the vultures because I tried to break the most sacred of all compacts” (pp. 28-29).

Did YHVH and Abraham go through such a solemn, bloody ritual? Yes. We read about it in Genesis 15:9-18, but with one very interesting change. Instead of both walking through the two animal halves, YHVH put Abraham into a deep sleep and YHVH walked through the middle for both of them. What is the point? Abraham could not enter into a covenantal agreement with YHVH Elohim and thereby be reconciled to YHVH through his own works or efforts. What this clearly shows us is that man can neither earn nor work out his salvation. Salvation occurs only when man totally surrenders to and rests completely in YHVH. Salvation is by grace through faith and not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant. YHVH did all the work for man. His love was unconditional. All man has to do was to believe or have faith in YHVH.

A Vision of the Renewed Covenant

In Genesis 15:17–18fp, we read,

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. In the same day YHVH made a covenant with Abram ...

What is the meaning of this? This is nothing other than YHVH giving Abraham a prophetic vision of Yeshua the Redeemer of Israel dying on the cross paying for the sins of Abraham’s descendants who would break that very covenant that YHVH made with Abraham on that day. Both Jewish and Christian biblical commentators recognize aspects of this truth.

Let’s first establish that YHVH passed through the pieces of sacrificed animal. Rashi, the medieval Jewish Torah scholar, recognizes that the Divine Presence was the one who passed through the pieces of animal while Abraham slept (Rashi’s commentary on Gen. 15:10). Furthermore, the *ArtScroll Tanach Series Bereishis/Genesis Commentary*, vol 1a, states, “The smoke [which rose up into the thick darkness (*Radak*)] was the ‘Cloud and thick darkness’ which appeared at the revelation of the Torah and the torch in its midst was ‘the fire’ which appeared at Sinai [see Exod. 19:18; Deut. 5:4]”.... [Elohim] caused His Presence, symbolized by the fire, to pass through and conclude the Covenant.... [T]he culmination of this vision was that the fire consumed the pieces, causing their smoke to ascend to heaven...” (p. 534–535). Christian commentators Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on this passage state, “In this symbol [i.e., the smoking pot and the fiery torch], Jehovah manifested Himself to Abram, just as He afterwards did to the people of Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire” (Hendrickson, p. 138). So both notable Jewish and Christian scholars relate the smoke and the fire Abraham saw pass between the pieces of meat to YHVH’s Presence in the cloud and pillar of fire that led Israel in the wilderness. We read in Exodus 13:21,

And YHVH went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.

Then in Exodus 14:19 it is written:

And the angel of Elohim, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.

Who is this “Angel” of Elohim (in other places: he is called “the Angel” of YHVH)? *Angel* is an unfortunate translation. The Hebrew word for *angel* is *malak* (מַלְאָךְ) and simply means *a heavenly* or *a human messenger*. Prophetically this word can refer to human messengers such as the one coming in the spirit of Elijah prior to Messiah’s coming, as well as to the Messiah himself (“Messenger/*Malak* of the covenant” in Malachi 3:1). In Genesis 32:22–30, Jacob wrestles with a man Scripture identifies as the *Malak* of YHVH (Hosea 12:3–5) and whom Jacob called Elohim (verse 30). This same Individual redeemed Jacob (Gen. 48:18) and is identified with the *Malak of Elohim ... the Elohim of Bethel* (31:11 and 13), and appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:2). Now this same Entity is leading Israel in the Wilderness. Again who is he? Stephen in Acts 7:37–39 identifies the Messiah (i.e. “that Prophet” Moses mentioned in Deut. 18:15) with the “Angel” or Heavenly Messenger which spoke to the Children of Israel from Mount Sinai and who gave them the “living oracles,” who the Israelites later rejected for pagan gods. Paul elsewhere said of that same Personage that the Israelites did “all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Messiah” (1 Cor. 10:4).

Of that pillar of fire that led them, we see that it gave them light, we know that *light*, in Scripture, is synonymous with YHVH’s Torah (e.g., Prov. 6:23). Additionally, we know that Yeshua the Messiah is the Light of the World—the Word of Elohim in living form (personified) (John 1:1–14).

So, the pre-incarnate Yeshua, in passing through the pieces of meat, ratified the Abrahamic Covenant. He accepted the offering as it went up to heaven in a cloud of smoke even as fire came forth from the same cloud in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the same pre-incarnate Yeshua accepted the first sacrifice on the Altar of Sacrifice (Lev. 9:24, see also Jud. 6:20–21; 13:19–20).

But there is more.

The rabbis recognize that the smoking furnace Abraham saw in vision is a picture of Gehinnom (the valley in Jerusalem where in ancient times the city’s garbage was burned making it a poetic and prophetic representation of Elohim’s fiery judgment upon the wicked) or four periods of future judgment that would come upon Israel as

a result of her apostasy (see Rashi's commentary on Gen. 15:17). This is the rabbinic interpretation of the smoking furnace. Let us now present to you a possible Messianic interpretation of this same smoking furnace.

Remember, in ancient times, when two parties would negotiate an agreement both parties would pass through the animal halves symbolizing the life and death consequences of violating the terms of the agreement. A death curse was literally placed upon the one who would break the covenant.

In the case of the Abrahamic Covenant, we see that Yeshua in his pre-incarnate state was the one who passed through the pieces of meat while Abraham slept. This signifies that Yeshua took upon himself the curse of death if either he or Abraham (or his descendants) in any way violated the terms and conditions of the Abrahamic Covenant. We know that Abraham's descendants did not remain faithful to the Abrahamic Covenant. YHVH used the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and the Romans to punish them, but this punishment did not redeem them from having violated their covenantal agreement. Yeshua took that full responsibility upon himself when he passed through the pieces of meat. He took upon himself the full and unconditional consequences of the sinful actions of Abraham's descendants. The fiery wrath of Elohim's judgment against sin (i.e., violation of Torah, see 1 John 3:4) came upon him and he was crucified by the Romans at Calvary. It is through the shed blood of Yeshua who paid for our sins that we enter into renewed covenant with the same Yeshua (as did Abraham) and become sons of Abraham, as well as adopted sons of Elohim resulting in eternal life. This is the message of the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. We believe that this is how Genesis 15 foretells the future apostasy of Israel, the rise of Messiah Yeshua, the Savior and Redeemer of Israel, and his death at the cross.

Paul: The Abrahamic Covenant Shows Us the Way of Salvation

In the Abrahamic Covenant, we see the pattern of how a Believer receives salvation from YHVH. Let's allow the Apostle Paul to walk us through the Abrahamic Covenant and explain the salvific aspects of it.

In Romans four, Paul correlates the faith Abraham had in YHVH with that which the Believer must have in Yeshua. Abraham had faith in YHVH, who was Yeshua in his preincarnate state (1 Cor. 10:4), even as one now, in order to be made righteous (i.e., obtain right-standing before YHVH) must have faith in the resurrected Yeshua. The Abrahamic Covenant shows us how to obtain initial righteousness or right-standing before YHVH. Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3, 22; Jas. 2:23).

Another way to say this, according to Paul, is, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom YHVH will not impute sin [i.e., YHVH grants them salvation]" (Rom. 4:7-8). Sin is the transgression of YHVH's Torah-law (1 John 3:4). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 7:23). Therefore, according to Paul, the Abrahamic Covenant shows us how to be saved from the wages of sin, which is death, and how to obtain right-standing before YHVH or enter into covenantal relationship with him.

Paul cites David as one who understood the salvific or redemptive implications of the Abrahamic Covenant (Rom. 4:6). As a result, Abraham has become the father of the faithful or "the father of us all" (Rom. 4:16).

Paul goes on to say in Romans 5 that being justified to Elohim (the Father) by Yeshua's (the Son's) blood, we are no longer Elohim's enemies (because of the sins we have committed against him, which have separated us from him), and we shall be saved from his eventual wrath or judgment against sin. As a result, Yeshua's death and subsequent resurrection brings us peace or reconciliation with Elohim, joy in this world and eternal life in the world to come (verses 1, 9-11).

This is the same teaching Paul brings to the Believers in Galatia where he reiterates what he said in Romans 4:3 (both the letters of Romans and Galatians were written about the same time: A.D. 55-56). In Galatians 3:6 (as we have already noted), Paul states that, "Abraham believed YHVH and it was counted to him for righteousness." In the next verse, Paul states that those who have faith as Abraham did are not only the children of Abraham, but that they are also the true children of YHVH (also Rom. 9:8,11).

Paul then goes on to state that this truth is the basis of the Gospel message; that is, salvation is by faith in YHVH. This message, the basic salvific or redemptive message of the Abrahamic Covenant, is the same Gospel message the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) teaches. Paul states that this same Gospel message was preached beforehand to Abraham that in him all nations (through Yeshua, Abraham's Seed) would be blessed (Gal. 3:8).

Have you ever thought of the Abrahamic Covenant in terms of the Gospel message before? Yet Paul relates the two together. Did you ever hear that message preached before in the past churches you attended? Yet there it is in black and white in the letter to the Galatians.

In Galatians 3:10-13, Paul states that one cannot be saved through a legalistic observance of YHVH's Torah-

commandments. The Mosaic Covenant IS NOT the covenant of salvation. It never was intended to be. It is the covenant that shows one *how to walk* in righteousness *after* one has already been saved.

To believe that one can be saved through the Mosaic Covenant is to twist the Word of Elohim to make it say something that it was never intended to say. This is what the Judaizers in Paul's day believed—that one is saved by one's works such as circumcision and keeping the Torah (Acts 15:1 and 5 compared to verse 11). This was a prevailing religious ideology among many of the Jews of the first-century. They thought they could be saved by keeping the laws of the Mosaic Covenant. This false concept is what the apostles were addressing at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 where we read that certain men of the sect of the Pharisees taught that except you be circumcised and keep the law of Moses you cannot be saved (Acts 15:1,5). The rich young ruler believed that keeping the terms of the Mosaic Covenant would lead to eternal life, as well (Matt. 19:16-22).

Paul opposed the view that salvation could come through the Mosaic Covenant as a result of one's own works because it was unscriptural and a false Gospel. In fact, in Galatians 1:6, he calls this view "another Gospel" and in the next verse addresses those (legalists or "Judaizers") who would "pervert the Gospel" (verse 8) and even doubly curses them (verses 8-9). Paul becomes so adamant against the false teaching that one can be saved by the works of the Torah-law as outlined in the Mosaic Covenant and the prevalent teaching of his day that circumcision was a prerequisite for salvation that he even stated that those who teach this should "go the whole way and castrate themselves" as David Stern translates Galatians 5:12 in his *Complete Jewish Bible*.

Paul is in no way denouncing the validity of Torah-law obedience, rather he vociferously upholds it on numerous occasions throughout his writings (See my teaching articles on our website entitled, *What Was Paul's View of Torah?* and *Paul: An Orthodox, Torah-Obedient, Messianic Jewish Rabbi*) showing that he lived and taught Torah-law obedience until his death.

So in Galatians, Paul is simply stating that one is not saved through the provisions of the Mosaic Covenant, but through those of the Abrahamic Covenant. What Paul is saying in Galatians 3:10-13 is that Yeshua's death on the cross paid the price that redeemed us for our violation or penalty of breaking YHVH's Torah commandments (For a more complete discussion of this subject see my teaching articles entitled: *What Does the Term "Under the Law" Mean?* and *What Does the Term "Works of the Law" Mean?*) so that the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant might come upon those who are the children of Abraham through faith in Yeshua (verse 14,16). These children are the true heirs of the promises YHVH made to Abraham (verses 14-18,29).*

The Dynamics of Salvation/Redemption

So YHVH called Abraham out of Babylon. Abraham, in faith, answered that call, left Babylon and went to Canaan. Abraham's faith was tested many other times as well with the greatest trial being that of having to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham had faith that YHVH would provide a lamb for a burnt offering (Gen. 22:8), and that if he was indeed required to sacrifice Isaac that YHVH could resurrect him from the dead (Heb. 11:19). Clearly, Abraham had faith in YHVH, in the Lamb of YHVH and in the resurrection of the dead. He had an understanding of YHVH's ability to grant eternal life to the righteous. The Abrahamic Covenant established an important precedent or condition upon which all other covenants are founded; namely, the "formula" (if you will) for receiving salvation from YHVH Elohim:

GRACE + FAITH = SALVATION that leads to or results in the fruits of OBEDIENCE and GOOD WORKS (i.e., Torah obedience) in a person's life

Salvation by faith through grace leading to good works has always been YHVH's pattern of saving his people. Salvation by grace through faith *is not* a "New Testament" invention as many Christian theologians and Bible teachers would have us to believe! We see this pattern in the following examples in the Torah:

- ☞ **Noah:** In Genesis 6:8, we see that Noah found grace in the eyes of YHVH, which led to his being a just and perfect man, which led to his having an intimate relationship or walk with YHVH (verse 9).
- ☞ **Abraham:** Was called of YHVH to leave Babylon (Gen. 12:1), he had faith in YHVH and it was accounted to him for righteousness' sake (Gen. 15:6), which resulted in his becoming a friend of Elohim (Jas. 2:23) and his obeying all of YHVH's Torah-law (Gen. 26:5).

*For a brilliant explanation of Paul's teachings in these passages, which we have been discussing above we, highly recommend The Jewish New Testament Commentary by David Stern (published by Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., Clarksville, MD, telephone: 410-764-6144, ISBN #965-359-008-1). This commentary has helped the author immensely in understanding the difficult writings of Paul from a pro-Torah, Hebrew roots of the Christian faith perspective.

- ☞ **The Children of Israel:** On the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant YHVH heard the cries of the Israelites and delivered them out of Egypt (Exod. 2:24; 6:8). YHVH told them to separate themselves from Egypt (even as he had told Abraham to leave Babylon) by putting the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their houses, eat fully of the lamb, and stay inside. This they did, by faith, and the death angel passed over them. They were saved by their faith in the blood of the Lamb. After this they left Egypt, passed through the Red Sea (a picture of immersion for the remission of sins, Rom. 6:3-6) whereupon YHVH led them to the foot Mt. Sinai where they received the Torah. Again, they were saved by grace, through faith after which they were given the Torah-law of Elohim which were their good works to now walk out once they were saved.
- ☞ Paul states this very “formula” in Ephesians 2:8-10, “**For by grace are you saved through faith;** and not of yourselves: it is a gift of Elohim, not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua **unto good works**, which Elohim hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (emphasis added). We see in these verses the following linear equation:

GRACE + FAITH = SALVATION resulting in GOOD WORKS

The Abrahamic Covenant forms the foundation for all future covenants including the Renewed Covenant (Rom. 4 and Gal. 3:14, 16) and without this foundation all subsequent covenants are meaningless and foundationless. The Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant was the next covenant to come along in the Torah. It is not in the scope of this present work to discuss this particular covenant in detail, but suffice it to say, the Mosaic Covenant did not determine *how to be saved*, but rather, once one is saved (under the Abrahamic Covenant) and once one is a part of the commonwealth of Israel *how is one to walk?* What are one’s responsibilities? How will one walk in right relationship with their Creator and “stay saved” (if you will)? How will one be a light to the world? The Mosaic Covenant defines these things. This covenant was Israel’s national constitution. It was their marriage agreement (*ketubah*), which defined how they, as the bride of YHVH, were to behave and how he, as their Groom, would love and care for them.

Not only did the Abrahamic Covenant form the basis for salvation under the Renewed Covenant (Jer. 31:31,33; Rom. 4; Heb. 8:6-10), but it established *who* would be saved and *Who* the Savior or Redeemer would be. The covenant promises YHVH made to Abraham were for Israel only and a Seed (Yeshua) would come from Abraham who would redeem his kinsman (Gal. 3:16,19,29). Throughout Scripture, YHVH makes covenants only with Israel and never with non-Israelites (e.g. Gentiles). This is a fundamental truth of Scripture. Yeshua states clearly that salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22). For one to be saved and be a partaker of the covenants of Israel (Eph. 2:12) one ceases being a Gentile (one who is without Elohim and without hope, Eph. 2:11-12), and becomes one new man in Messiah Yeshua (verses 13-16). At that time, one becomes grafted into the spiritual olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11) whereupon Abraham becomes one’s father by faith (Rom. 9:8-11).

The Blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant Are Unconditional; The Blessings of the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant Are Conditional

The words *ble*ss, *ble*ssing, *ble*ssings or *ble*ssed are to be found some 454 times in the Scriptures: 354 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and 100 times in the Apostolic Scriptures. YHVH blessing man as well as man blessing YHVH is a very prominent theme in Scripture.

The blessings spoken by YHVH to the patriarchs under the Abrahamic Covenant are unconditional; i.e., there is no mention of having to keep YHVH’s Torah in order to receive the blessing. The blessings were given solely based upon the faith of Abraham.

The blessings spoken by YHVH over the Israelites under the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant, on the other hand, are all conditional and are dependent upon the recipient’s obedience to YHVH’s Torah-commands: namely, if you obey the Torah-laws you will be blessed ... if you disobey them you will be cursed.

This underscores the fact that the Abrahamic Covenant is the covenant of salvation. As we have already seen, salvation is unconditional and based solely on the faith of the individual in YHVH and his promises, while the Mosaic Covenant is a conditional or rewards covenant based on obedience; i.e., now that Israel was redeemed (through the tenets of the Abrahamic Covenant) Israel’s walk of obedience (under the tenets of the Mosaic Covenant) would determine how blessed they would be in their walk; i.e., what their physical rewards would be. This is the same pattern—salvation through the Abrahamic Covenant that exists throughout all of Scripture even into the time of the Renewed Covenant (“New” Covenant). Yeshua, for example, never said that keeping the Torah-commandments would save a person, but that keeping Torah *only* determines one’s level of rewards in YHVH’s

kingdom (Matt. 5:19) (See my article on our website: *What Was Yeshua's View of the Torah-Law?—A Study of the Sermon On the Mount*).

Some may raise up the issue of Yeshua's encounter with the rich, young ruler in Matthew 18:16-22 where he asks Yeshua what he must do to inherit eternal life. Yeshua tells him that to inherit eternal life he must go and keep the Torah-commandments. Self-righteously, the young man asserts that this he has done from his youth to which Yeshua responds that he has not kept them all perfectly, for he is covetous (a violation of the tenth commandment). Yeshua tells the rich young to go and sell all that he has and to follow him; a prescription the young man is unable to follow.

Some have used this passage in the Gospels to prove that the Jews were saved by keeping the Torah-law under the Mosaic Covenant. Is this really what this passage is saying? Is not Yeshua, the master Torah-teacher and rabbi of all time, telling the rich, young ruler that, though you think you have salvation by keeping the Torah-commandments and the Mosaic Covenant, in reality you are unable to keep it perfectly proving you cannot receive eternal life through your works. You need to repent of covetousness and follow me. I am the way, the truth and the life and the way to the Father. I am the way of salvation. Have faith in me and I will transform your heart so that in my strength you will be able to keep the Torah-law, which is something in your own strength you cannot accomplish.

Is this not consistent with the message of the Apostle Paul in the passage of Romans we studied earlier? One is saved by faith and grace, which leads to the good works of Torah-obedience. When one understands that the One who made the covenant with Abraham as well as with the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai and who told the Israelites to trust in the blood of the lamb for salvation from the death angel on Passover night in Egypt was none other than the preincarnate Yeshua (1 Cor. 10:4 cp. Acts 7:38) then Yeshua's response to the rich, young ruler makes more sense. He is not telling him that the keeping of the Torah-law under the Mosaic Covenant will save him, but only faith in YHVH (Yeshua) through following him will indeed save him.

As proof of what I am saying about the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant let us review the promises YHVH made to the patriarchs in the book of Genesis pertaining to the Abrahamic Covenant. Can you find any place where YHVH stipulates that he will bless the patriarchs IF they will obey his Torah-commands?

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. (Gen. 12:2)

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 12:3)

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high Elohim, possessor of heaven and earth. (Gen. 14:19)

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. (Gen. 17:16)

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? (Gen. 18:18)

That 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. (Gen. 22:17)

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Gen. 22:18)

And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and YHVH had blessed Abraham in all things. (Gen. 24:1)

And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that Elohim blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi. (Gen. 25:11)

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father (Gen. 26:3)

And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 26:4)

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and YHVH blessed him. (Gen. 26:12)

And YHVH 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. (Gen. 26:24)

Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. (Gen. 27:29)

And Elohim Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people. (Gen. 28:3)

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which Elohim gave unto Abraham. (Gen. 28:4)

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 28:14)

For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and YHVH hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also? (Gen. 30:30)

Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because Elohim hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. (Gen. 33:11)

And Elohim appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. (Gen. 35:9)

And Jacob said unto Joseph, Elohim Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me. (Gen. 48:3)

And he blessed Joseph, and said, Elohim, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the Elohim which fed me all my life long unto this day. (Gen. 48:15)

The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. (Gen. 48:16)

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, Elohim make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. (Gen. 48:20)

Even by the Elohim of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb. (Gen. 49:25)

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. (Gen. 49:26)

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. (Gen. 49:28)

With these things in mind let us review the key provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant:

✎ YHVH will make of Abraham a great nation (Gen. 12:2).

- ☞ YHVH will bless Abraham (Gen. 12:2).
- ☞ YHVH will make Abraham's name great (Gen. 12:2).
- ☞ YHVH will make Abraham a blessing to others (Gen. 12:2; Gal. 3:14).
- ☞ YHVH will bless the ones who bless Abraham (Gen. 12:3).
- ☞ YHVH will curse those who curse Abraham (Gen. 12:3).
- ☞ YHVH will cause all families of the earth to be blessed through Abraham and his seed (the Messiah) (Gen. 12:2; Gal. 3:16).
- ☞ Abraham and his descendants to receive a land grant (Gen. 12:7; 15:7,18; 17:8).
- ☞ Abraham's seed to be multitudinous, as numerous as the stars (Gen. 15:5; 17:2,6).
- ☞ YHVH promises to be Abraham's shield and exceedingly great reward (Gen. 15:1).
- ☞ Nations will come from Abraham (Gen. 17:4,6).
- ☞ YHVH's covenant with Abraham will be an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7,8,19).
- ☞ YHVH promises to be their Elohim (Gen. 17:8).

The Conditional Promises of the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant

Now let us take a look at the promises YHVH made to the Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant. Notice the conditional nature of this covenant: YHVH tells the Israelites repeatedly that if they obey him he will bless them, but if they disobey him curses will come upon them. Take note of this in the passages cited below:

Know therefore that YHVH thy Elohim, he is Elohim, the faithful Elohim, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. (Deut. 7:9-10)

Beware that thou forget not YHVH thy Elohim, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day. Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget YHVH thy Elohim, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.... And it shall be, if thou do at all forget YHVH thy Elohim, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which YHVH destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of YHVH your Elohim. (Deut. 8:11-14, 19-20)

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of YHVH your Elohim, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of YHVH your Elohim, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. (Deut. 11:26-28)

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of YHVH thy Elohim, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that YHVH thy Elohim will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of YHVH thy Elohim ... But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of YHVH thy Elohim, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. (Deut. 28:1-2,15)

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither YHVH thy Elohim hath driven thee. (Deut. 30:1)

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love YHVH thy Elohim, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and YHVH thy Elohim shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. (Deut. 30:15-19)

(See also Deut. 4:1-40; 6:1-25; 8:1-20; 27:1-26; 28:1-68; 30:1-20.)

The Covenants of YHVH Are Perpetual and Everlasting

As we have already noted YHVH's Covenants are perpetual, eternal and everlasting. Let's review several of many Scriptures that could be cited which attest to this fact:

- ☞ The Abrahamic Covenant is an everlasting covenant to Abraham and to his seed after him. (Gen. 17:7)
- ☞ The land of Canaan is an everlasting possession to the descendants of Abraham. This is an everlasting covenant with Isaac and to his seed after him. (Gen. 17:8,19)
- ☞ Abrahamic Covenant was to last for one thousand generations; forever, it is an everlasting covenant. (Ps. 105:6-11)
- ☞ Torah was given to Israel forever. (Deut. 4:40; see also 5:29; 12:28; 19:9)

Each Covenant Had a Sign or Symbol

In ancient Near Eastern covenants, an appropriate sign accompanied the covenant to commemorate and remember it, and to remind the parties of the terms of the agreement even as a wedding ring is such a sign to married couples in our day.

- ☞ Noatic Covenant—the rainbow (Gen. 9:12-13)
- ☞ Abrahamic Covenant—circumcision (Gen 17:11)
- ☞ Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant—the Sabbath (Exod. 31:12-13)
- ☞ Davidic Covenant—the Temple and kingly line
- ☞ Renewed Covenant—the Blood of the Lamb

Circumcision Was the Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant

Let's note some reasons why YHVH chose circumcision to be the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. Remember, physical circumcision is not passé, but is still a requirement for those desiring to be priests in YHVH's spiritual temple (Ezek. 44:7,9). It is not a requirement of salvation (Acts 15), but doing so is an act of obedience that indicates one's identity with the Abrahamic Covenant of salvation and with the people of Israel. Additionally, the Torah makes it clear that circumcision is necessary for all men who desire to take Passover, and those who do not keep the Passover will be cut off from Israel (Exod. 12:47-48):

- ☞ It is a token or sign of spiritual things—a sign which always goes before us. (Gen. 17:11)
- ☞ It signifies purification of the heart from all unrighteousness by cutting away a piece of the flesh which would otherwise be a carrier of filth and disease.
- ☞ It is a holy seal of righteousness—the foreskin removed is round like a ring. A ring signifies a bond or union and is worn constantly even as the seal of circumcision is worn constantly.
- ☞ Circumcision occurs at eight days of age. Eight is the number meaning *new beginnings*. A new heart, a consecration of the person to YHVH; the commencement of a covenant. (Gen. 17:12)
- ☞ The rite of circumcision is painful and humiliating. So is repentance and self denial of which circumcision is a picture.

- ☞ From the penis flows the seed of life. Circumcision is a sign that the seed should and could be righteous and consecrated to YHVH.
- ☞ In Romans 4:11, Paul teaches us that circumcision is a sign, mark or token, and a seal (placed on someone) or an impression or stamp made by a signet ring signifying ownership. Circumcision spoke of Abraham's righteousness and the faith he had in YHVH and YHVH's "ownership" of Abraham.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant was to bring people (Israelites and non-Israelites) into a redemptive relationship with the Elohim (God) of Israel. Scripture identifies a person coming into such a relationship with Elohim as an Israelite and refers to them as the seed and children of Abraham (Rom. 4:16; 9:8-11; Gal. 3:7,9,14,28-29; Eph. 2:11-19).

It is through the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant in the Tanakh (OT) and the Renewed Covenant in the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) that one receives redemption or salvation from the penalty of sin, which is death, and that one is granted righteous standing before the righteous Elohim of Israel and given eternal life. This salvation is granted on the basis of the faith of the Believer in Elohim and the grace of YHVH (Rom. 4:3).

By contrast, salvation does not occur through the works of the Mosaic/Sinaitic Covenant whose purpose was *not* to show people the way of salvation, but rather, after having been saved through the Abrahamic Covenant how to "stay saved" (if you will) or to stay in right relationship with Elohim by walking in the paths of righteousness (i.e., the Torah), the result of which is physical and eternal rewards. The two covenants do not conflict with each other, but rather they form a complimentary or synergistic unit providing the framework to raise up faith-filled, faithful, and righteous children of YHVH. Together, the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants form what might be called *The Torah Covenant*. The Torah Covenant forms the basis for the Renewed Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-33) and realized during the time of the apostles and revealed in their writings. It is the combination of these covenants that Paul makes reference to in Ephesians 2:12 when he speaks of Gentiles being in the past aliens from citizenship in the nation of Israel and strangers from the covenants (plural) of promise, having no hope, and without Elohim in the world.

When one comes into a relationship with the Elohim of Israel through both the Abrahamic and Sinaitic (Mosaic) Covenants, two things happen. As already noted, the Apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that one becomes a child of Abraham and becomes an Israelite. But more importantly, at the same time, one becomes adopted into the spiritual family of YHVH Elohim (Rom. 8:15,23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5) resulting in eternal life.

