

God has been speaking to Abram since chapter 12, when Abram had his first encounter with Yahweh, the Creator of the universe. He has been progressively fine-tuning the relationship in each subsequent encounter. Today we come to a watershed point in Abram's relationship with Yahweh. Here we find one of the longest divine monologues in the Bible. His four speeches make up 2/3rds of the chapter. He reaffirms everything He promised earlier: the land, an innumerable progeny, and an everlasting Covenant. Now circumcision is added as a sign of the covenant for Abram and all his offspring. Abram's name (*exalted father*) is changed to Abraham (*father of a multitude of nations*), and Sarai's name (*Princess*) is changed to Sarah (*still princess*).

God promises Abram a land, descendants, and a covenantal relationship. Here we review the progression of the promises.

Gen 12:1-3 *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Gen 12:7 *Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.*

Gen 13:14-17 *The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."*

Gen 15:1-6 *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."*

But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."

And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Gen 15:18 *On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates..."*

Gen 17:1 *When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram...*

Abram's age is noted here, and again in v.24. The writer wants to be sure we know that he is an old man, (*as good as dead*), and that to have offspring will require divine intervention. Abraham has been waiting 13 years since Ishmael was born, and is not getting any younger.

: 1b- 2 The first divine speech.

and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."

The covenant that God has made with Abram includes the stipulation that Abram's walk should be blameless. Only then will the full extent of the promises be realized. Enoch (5:22-24) and Noah (6:9) are examples of God's expectations. Israel's life (through Abraham) is to be lived before God and every step taken is to be directed by God.

Yahweh reveals himself to Abram this time as El Shaddai, God Almighty. It's meaning includes the all sufficiency of God to do what he promises. This title is used only in Genesis (several times), Exodus 6:3, and Ezekiel 10:5.

Ex. 6:3 *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.*

Note three names of God found in this study. (A more complete list of names is attached to the end of today's notes.)

El Shaddai	God Almighty, God who is sufficient 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exod 6:3; Ezek 10:5 Who so constrains nature that it does His will.
El-Elyon	God Most High 14:19-20. Melchizedek
El-Roi	God Who Sees Me 16:13 Hagar

Gen. 17:3-8 The second divine speech.

Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

God changes Abram’s name to Abraham. Not only will Abraham have many descendants, but now God promises he will be the father of many nations. Other name changes that come to mind are: Jacob to Israel, Hoshea to Joshua, Simon to Peter, and Saul to Paul. We are told in song that we have “a new name written down in glory”.

The covenantal relationship is now extended to Abraham’s offspring as an everlasting covenant. The ultimate blessing of the covenant is: “*I will be their God.*”

The offspring will include kings, and particularly the Messiah, the King of Kings.

Also the land is to be an everlasting possession. For the first time God defines the land as Canaan. Ancient Egyptian records show that Canaan at the time included Lebanon and southern Syria, and therefore, extended to the Euphrates.

Since Islam teaches that the progeny of promise come through Ishmael rather than through Isaac, they lay claim to the same land that the Jews claim. Thus the Mid-east tensions.

Gen. 17:9-14 The third, and longest, speech.

And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant.

Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

Circumcision is established as the main sign of the Covenant.

Every male is to be circumcised. No exceptions are allowed. Even household slaves are included. Through circumcision the obligations of the covenant are continually and physically before the people. Circumcision was a ritual in some neighboring nations as a major rite of passage, usually at puberty. For the Jews, however, it was to be performed at 8 days old.

Although circumcision is carried out in the flesh, its purpose is to remind the people of their spiritual obligations to God. Therefore, Jeremiah speaks of circumcision of the ears and heart.

Jer. 6:10 *To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear?
Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen;
behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn;*

Jer. 9:23-26 *Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD." "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh — Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart."*

The Christians who practice infant baptism (paedobaptism) liken it to infant circumcision, as a sign and seal of the covenant. The infant is brought into the covenant family, the church.

Rom. 4:11 *He (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well.*

Col. 2:11-12 *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

1Cor. 7:14 *For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*

Acts 2:39 *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

Gen. 17:15-21 The fourth speech.

And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!"

God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year."

Sarah's name is changed. Abraham is promised a son by her. Inwardly Abraham laughs in incredulity and then invokes a blessing on Ishmael. But God, who knows our hearts, rebukes him and reaffirms the promise of a son by Sarah. In fact the son is named, Isaac (*he laughs*). It was probably Isaac-el meaning *God smiles or laughs. He looks with favor*.

Ishmael is to be blessed, but he is excluded from the everlasting covenant. That is reserved for the son of promise, Isaac. (Gal 4:21-31).

Gen. 17:22-27 *When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him.*

Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised.

And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

We note God's abrupt departure. Abraham immediately begins the process of circumcision. Twice it says: *That very day*.

This is one of the turning points of history, like Noah's entry into the ark, and Israel's exodus from Egypt. The Jewish nation is born, and will never leave the world scene. The nation will have as their God, the Creator of heaven and earth and redeemer of mankind, who will intervene on its behalf through all history. (See Exod 6:7; Deut 29:12; Jer 24:7; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 34:24; Zech 8:8).

Israel can break the Covenant, but it is not terminated. Rather, the covenant sanctions come into play.

Lev. 26:40-45 *“But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.*

But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes.

Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.”

Is. 24:4-6 *The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and withers; the highest people of the earth languish. The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.*

Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.

Rom. 2:25-29 *For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*

A new relationship between God and all mankind is established through the Christ. This is the New Covenant that Paul expounds in Romans 2-4. The Abrahamic covenant is extended to the Gentiles.

Seventeen hundred years after the Apostle Paul, Frederick the Great asked his physician for a proof of the existence of God. “Your majesty, the Jews,” he replied. Two hundred years later, after the holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel, readers of Genesis 17 even more skeptical than Frederick might be forced to agree.

The Names of God by Lambert Dolphin

EL: God ("mighty, strong, prominent") used 250 times in the OT See Gen. 7:1, 28:3, 35:11; Nu. 23:22; Josh. 3:10; 2 Sam. 22:31, 32; Neh. 1:5, 9:32; Isa. 9:6; Ezek. 10:5. El is linguistically equivalent to the Moslem "Allah," but the attributes of Allah in Islam are entirely different from those of the God of the Hebrews. ELAH is Aramaic, "god." Elah appears in the Hebrew Bible in Jer. 10:11 (which is in Aramaic, and is plural, "gods"). In Daniel (the Aramaic sections) Elah is used both of pagan gods, and of the true God, also plural. Elah is equivalent to the Hebrew Eloah which some think is dual; Elohim is three or more. The gods of the nations are called "elohim." The origin of Eloah is obscure. Elohim is the more common plural form of El. Eloah is used 41 times in Job between 3:4 and 40:2, but fewer than 15 times elsewhere in the OT.

ELOHIM: God (a plural noun, more than two, used with singular verbs); Elohim occurs 2,570 times in the OT, 32 times in Gen. 1. God as Creator, Preserver, Transcendent, Mighty and Strong. Eccl., Dan. Jonah use Elohim almost exclusively. See Gen. 17:7, 6:18, 9:15, 50:24; I Kings 8:23; Jer. 31:33; Isa. 40:1.

EL SHADDAI: God Almighty or "God All Sufficient." 48 times in the OT, 31 times in Job. First used in Gen. 17:1, 2. (Gen. 31:29, 49:24, 25; Prov. 3:27; Micah 2:1; Isa. 60:15, 16, 66:10-13; Ruth 1:20, 21) In Rev. 16:7, "Lord God the Almighty." The Septuagint uses Greek "ikanos" meaning "all-sufficient" or "self-sufficient." The idols of the heathen are called "sheddin."

ADONAI: Lord in our English Bibles (Capitol letter 'L', lower case, 'ord') (Adonai is plural, the sing. is "adon"). "Master" or "Lord" 300 times in the OT always plural when referring to God, when sing. the reference is to a human lord. Used 215 times to refer to men. First use of Adonai, Gen. 15:2. (Ex. 4:10; Judges 6:15; 2 Sam. 7:18-20; Ps. 8, 114:7, 135:5, 141:8, 109:21-28). Heavy use in Isaiah (Adonai Jehovah). 200 times by Ezekiel. Ten times in Dan. 9.

JEHOVAH: LORD in our English Bibles (all capitals). **Yahweh, YHWH** is the covenant name of God. Occurs 6823 times in the OT First use Gen. 2:4 (Jehovah Elohim). From the verb "to be", havah, similar to *chavah* (to live), "The Self-Existent One," "I AM WHO I AM" or 'I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE' as revealed to Moses at the burning bush, Ex.3. The name of God, too sacred to be uttered, abbreviated (. . . .) or written "YHWH" without vowel points. The tetragrammaton. Josh., Judges, Sam., and Kings use Jehovah almost exclusively. The love of God is conditioned upon His moral and spiritual attributes. (Dan. 9:14; Ps. 11:7; Lev. 19:2; Hab. 1:12). Note Deut. 6:4, 5 known to Jews as the Sh'ma uses both Jehovah and Elohim to indicate one God with a plurality of persons.

JEHOVAH-JIREH: "The Lord will Provide." Gen. 22:14. From "jireh" ("to see" or "to provide," or to "foresee" as a prophet.) God always provides, adequate when the times come.

JEHOVAH-ROPHE: "The Lord Who Heals" Ex. 15:22-26. From "rophe" ("to heal"); implies spiritual, emotional as well as physical healing. (Jer. 30:17, 3:22; Isa. 61:1) God heals body, soul and spirit; all levels of man's being.

JEHOVAH-NISSI: "The Lord Our Banner." Ex. 17:15. God on the battlefield, from word which means "to glisten," "to lift up," See Psalm 4:6.

JEHOVAH-M'KADDESH: "The Lord Who Sanctifies" Lev. 20:8. "To make whole, set apart for holiness."

JEHOVAH-SHALOM: "The Lord Our Peace" Judges 6:24. "Shalom" translated "peace" 170 times means "whole," "finished," "fulfilled," "perfected." Related to "well," "welfare." Deut. 27:6; Dan. 5:26; I Kings 9:25 8:61; Gen. 15:16; Ex. 21:34, 22:5, 6; Lev. 7:11-21. Shalom means that kind of peace that results from being a whole person in right relationship to God and to one's fellow man

JEHOVAH ELOHIM: "LORD God" Gen. 2:4; Judges 5:3; Isa. 17:6; Zeph. 2:9; Psa. 59:5, etc.

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU "The Lord Our Righteousness" Jer. 23:5, 6, 33:16. From "tsidek" (straight, stiff, balanced - as on scales - full weight, justice, right, righteous, declared innocent.) God our Righteousness.

JEHOVAH-ROHI: "The Lord Our Shepherd" Psa. 23, from "ro'eh" (to pasture).

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH: "The Lord is There" (Ezek. 48:35).

JEHOVAH-SABAOTH: "The Lord of Hosts" The commander of the angelic host and the armies of God. Isa. 1:24; Psa. 46:7, 11; 2 Kings 3:9-12; Jer. 11:20 (NT: Rom. 9:29; James 5:4, Rev. 19: 11-16).

EL ELYON: 'Most High' (from "to go up") Deut. 26:19, 32:8; Psa. 18:13; Gen. 14:18; Nu. 24:16; Psa. 78:35, 7:17, 18:13, 97:9, 56:2, 78:56, 18:13; Dan. 7:25, 27; Isa. 14:14.

ABHIR: 'Mighty One', ("to be strong") Gen. 49:24; Deut. 10:17; Psa. 132:2, 5; Isa. 1:24, 49:26, 60:1.

BRANCH: (tsemach), The Branch: Zech. 3:8, 6:12; Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5, 33:15.

KADOSH: "Holy One" Psa. 71:22; Isa. 40:25, 43:3, 48:17. Isaiah uses the expression "the Holy One of Israel" 29 times.

EL ROI: "God of Seeing" Hagar in Gen. 16:13. The God Who opens our eyes.

KANNA: "Jealous" (zealous). Ex. 20:5, 34:14; Deut. 5:9; Isa. 9:7; Zech. 1:14, 8:2.

PALET: "Deliverer" Psa. 18:2.

YESHA: (Y'shua) "Savior" Isa. 43:3. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua." The latter is a contraction of Je-Hoshua. ("Christ", the anointed one is equivalent to the Hebrew Maschiah, or Messiah).

GAOL: "Redeemer" (to buy back by paying a price). Job 19:25; For example, the antitype corresponding to Boaz the Kinsman-Redeemer in the Book of Ruth.

MAGEN: "Shield" Psa. 3:3, 18:30.

EL-OLAM: "Everlasting God" (God of everlasting time) Gen. 21:33; Psa. 90:1-3, 93:2; Isa. 26:4.

EL-BERITH: "God of the Covenant" Used of Baal in Judges 9:46. Probably used originally to refer to the God of Israel.

EL-GIBHOR: Mighty God, God the Warrior (Isaiah 9:6)