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David D. Pettus
Liberty University, dpettus@liberty.edu

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ABRAHAM'S ROYAL SEED IN GENESIS:

A Trajectory

By David Pettus

ETS 2007

San Diego, CA

The New Testament proclamation of Christ as 'King of Kings' or the promised royal descendant of David is a given. But as is well known, neither Matthew nor Luke begin the messianic ancestry of our Lord with King David which one might expect would be sufficient for proving Christ's royal pedigree but trace the ancestry of Jesus back to Abraham in the case of Matthew and Adam in the genealogy of Luke. The rationale for Luke's geneaological predilection in Luke 3 is beyond the scope of this paper but the Matthean ancestral tree ties together two of our Lords ancestors in the introductory first verse with, "This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Luke 1:1)[1] which may allude back to the Genesis genealogies in 2:4 (heavens and earth) and 5:1 (Adam). Thus, the 'converted tax collector' purposefully ties together Christ's royal descent from David with an earlier royal pedigree flowing from Abraham down the centuries and has been followed by a host of Christian interpreters[2]. Unlike the gospel writers, much of modern scholarship remains quite skeptical about any notions of royal expectation in Genesis or the rest of the Pentateuch; either rejecting them outright or labeling them as pro-Davidic polemic placed in the documents as prophecy after

[1]*Biblos geneseos* "Book of the generations" so rendered in the LXX only in Gen. 2:4 and 5:1 in the Pentateuch. (NET Bible).

[2] Cf. the Christological interpretations of Gen. 49:8-12 by the sampling of church fathers in Thomas C. Oden ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament II, Genesis 12-50*, 325-335. V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 465 fn. 15; not to exclude some early Jewish views (e.g. Targum Onkelos) which interpret the passage as messianic though of course not fulfilled in Christ.

the fact (*vaticinium ex eventu*) in the period of the monarchy or just prior to the return from Babylonian exile[3]. This study will briefly survey the three passages which specifically mention Abraham's royal seed and seek to discover any trajectory intended by the author/compiler in the canonical form of Genesis. The results will suggest that there is such a trajectory for the royal seed traceable through the renaming pattern in the divine speeches to Abram, Sarai, and Jacob. The trajectory essentially functions to both identify and narrow the royal seed (i.e. moving it from the general progeny to a specific progeny divinely selected to be the bearer of the promises). The trajectory also functions to elucidate the future function of Abraham's *seed royale*. In order to track the path of the royal progeny, one will find it useful to take the "Priestly" trail for the passages that speak of Abraham's royal seed have characteristics traditionally identified with the traits of the so-called P source in Genesis as follows[4]:

1. Divine Appearance (theophany)
2. Divine identification as *El Shaddai* (the God of the Patriarchs according to Ex. 6:2, 3)[5]

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[3] W.H. Rose, "Messiah," In *Dictionary of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2003), 565-68 summarizes the divide between those who trace the rise of messianic expectation to the 2nd temple period in the wake of disaffection with the Davidic progeny; those interpreters who find its origin in the later days of the united monarchy; and the scholars who detect the roots of messianic expectation in the Pentateuch beginning with Genesis. For a classical example see the *IB*'s treatment of the poetic blessing of Jacob as an originally independent tribal oracle added to the Priestly account by Rp to produce a prediction after the fact in *Interpreter's Bible*. Edited G.A. Buttrick et.al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1952), 818.

[4] Passages pertinent to the royal seed include: P Gen. 17; 27:46-28:5; P 35:9-13; P 48:3-7; P 49:8-12, 22-26 [Sellin-Fohrer, *IOT* (Nashville: Abingdon), 178-80].

[5] Based on the versions LXX *pantokrator* Vg *omnipotens*, *El Shaddai* is commonly translated 'God Almighty' though of uncertain derivation. (cf. the discussion in Wenham, *Genesis*, 20; et. al.). It is connected closely to blessing and the all sufficiency of God to accomplish his promises. On the name in Genesis, Merrill notes "it is in and by this name that the Lord will bless his people Israel in ages to come." [Eugene Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 84.

3. Renaming of the recipient of the divine promises (or cryptic naming in the case of Judah's progeny 49:10)
4. Reiteration of the covenant promises to Abraham (land, progeny, nations)
5. Promise of royal seed as a critical and climactic component of the divine promises

Though I do not accept the common critical exilic-postexilic period provenance and priestly authorship for these passages nor their more modern variations[6], I am suggesting that the "P" trail may give us clues as to how the author/compiler of Genesis would want us to understand these royal seed passages.

Royal Dealings

It is not surprising to find God's promise to Abraham of regal descendants when one realizes the number of royal interactions that occur between Abraham and his descendants in the patriarchal narratives. Abraham, the father of the faithful, has frequent concourse with kings.

He deals with Pharaoh when he passes off Sarai as his sister to protect his life and Pharaoh takes her into his harem (12:10-20). He bravely enters into warfare with the kings of the East and becomes a reluctant ally of the wicked kings of the plain when his nephew Lot is taken captive in a raid on Sodom (14:1-16). After a successful clandestine night sorty against the forces allied with Chedorlaomer, the victorious Abraham returns with Lot and the recaptured spoils whereupon the king of Sodom is forced to negotiate with him as an equal. Abraham pays homage to the king-priest of Jerusalem, Melchizedek, and receives this mysterious one's blessing (14:17-20). Later, in a story ripe with the feeling of *déjà vu*, the Philistine king Abimelech of Gerar has taken Sarai to wife and like Pharaoh earlier is unaware she is already wed to the great

[6] E.g. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975) et. al.

patriarch and not his sister (chapter 20). Finally, in the poignant story of the purchase of the field containing the cave of Machpelah as a final resting place for his beloved Sarah, the sons of Heth call him a *nāsîʿ ʾĕlohîm* or "prince of God" or "mighty prince" in essence bestowing on him a royal title. The LXX strengthens the title by translating "a king before God among us" (23:6, NET tn 14).[7] His royal prospects are also enhanced by the two given names of Sarai and Sarah, both variant appellations meaning "princess". Though Abraham is by no means viewed as an actual ruling monarch, he is portrayed by the narrator of Genesis as a man of regal bearing and import and one with whom even kings must reckon; whether a petty city ruler (Abimelech) or the reigning monarch of one of the greatest empires in the ancient Near East in the case of Pharaoh.

Such royal attention doesn't cease with the death of Abraham in the Genesis narrative, but carries down through his chosen seed. Isaac, apparently proving the dictum 'like father like son', attempts to pass off his lovely spouse Rebekkah as his sister ostensibly to save his own life, but has his deception discovered when king Abimelech spots Isaac and his erstwhile sibling in an amorous mood more fitting for a man and wife (26:8). Abimelech further recognizes Isaac's power when he orders him to sojourn elsewhere because the venerable patriarch has become mightier than the king himself (23:16 "for you have become mightier than us"); ultimately requesting a covenant peace treaty to allay his fear of the patriarch's growing power (26:28ff.) Even mistaken translations can get into the act of enhancing the patriarchal royal status with God involved in bestowing upon 'the trickster' Jacob the moniker Israel (from שׂרר 'may God rule') because Jacob as a 'prince' (שׂר) has successfully struggled with God for a blessing (32:29)[8].

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[7] *Basileus para theou su en umin* is the interpretive rendering.

[8] Cf. KJV, and The *Holy Scriptures: A Jewish Bible according to the Masoretic Text*, Hebrew and English (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1996) but as is widely proposed the word is a verb שׂרה

Joseph's providential rise to become second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt and the fact that Jacob at the end of the book of Genesis is portrayed by the narrator as pronouncing a blessing on Pharaoh, an act of a superior toward an inferior elsewhere (cf. Gen. 14) enhances the viewpoint of the high status of Israel's patriarchal ancestors in the presence of the royals in the lands of their sojourn. Whatever their outward appearance, these are no mere 'country bumpkins' or insignificant herders of flocks but men to whom even kings and rulers must reckon and even pay their respects.

GENESIS 17

Though a royal descent from Abraham can be insinuated from Yahweh's promise in Gen. 12:2 to make the patriarch into a 'great nation' after all a nation must have a ruler[9] and is further grounded in God's promise to make Abraham's seed a blessing to the families of the earth (Gen. 12:2, 3), the first explicit mention of a royal seed for Abraham is not found until Gen. 17. But, in this chapter we find the royal seed of Abraham referenced twice; first in v. 6 and again in v. 16 with reference to Abraham's wife Sarai. More importantly, we repeat and reiterate that the royal seed references **do not occur** until chapter 17, in the climactic chapter explicating the details of the tripartite divine covenant promises of land, descendants through whom Abraham will bless the nations, and covenant relationship with God already announced earlier in chapter 12 and sealed by divine oath in the covenant ceremony in chapter 15.[10] Thus, these additional details

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translated 'you have contended, or strived' which fits the context of the wrestling story (*BDB*, 975).

[9]G. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), p. 22.

[10] This traditional view of the singularity of the covenant with Abraham is commonly maintained by evangelical scholars against a Yahwist version in (ch. 15) versus a different and later Priestly counterpart in (ch. 17). Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1994), p. 16-17; Bruce Waltke, *Genesis*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 48.

are not accidental or incidental but are intended to provide critical information and definition regarding the shape of the covenant promises given to Abraham. Whereas chapter 15 focused on God's promise of land, chapter 17 defines more clearly the divine promise of 'seed' (זרע) or 'descendants' given to the patriarch. It is within this promise of 'seed' that the references to royal descendants (kings) occur.

The importance of the royal seed in Genesis 17 is best elucidated by first noting it is part and parcel of the 'covenant' with Abraham. Nearly half the occurrences of the term *bĕrît* Genesis are found in this one chapter that provides more detail to the covenant promises of land, progeny, and relationship first given by God in chapter 12[11]. Second, the royal seed is directly tied to 'circumcision', the 'sign of the covenant' (the word 'covenant' occurs 6X in v. 9-14) enjoined upon Abraham, the males in his household, and all his descendants. It will be the circumcised patriarch who has obediently marked himself with the covenant sign that produces royals. Likewise, only his circumcised progeny can be in the royal line (17:14)[12] Third, the promised royal seed will come only through the *coitus* of the renamed, circumcised Abraham

[11] On the centrality of the word 'covenant' in Genesis 17 see W. Warning, "Terminological Patterns and Genesis 17," *HUCA*, 2006, 93-107. The covenant's perpetuity as a *berit olam* for the royal progeny is made clear in Gen. 49:10 by the open ended nature of the promise of regal descendants for Judah until the coming of 'the one to whom it belongs'.

[12] V. 14 explicitly excludes any uncircumcised descendant from the promises and thus from the promised line. To fail to take the sign was a serious matter. The offender was *krt* from the covenant. Though the meaning is disputed (Is it excommunication or death?), even the great deliverer and lawgiver Moses may have faced death at God's hands because of his failure to circumcise his son (Ex. 4:24-26).

with his renamed wife Sarah producing one named Isaac as the following partial structure indebted to McEvenue illustrates[13].

E Obeisance (3a)

F **Renaming** (Abram-Abraham), nations, **kings** (4-8)

G **Circumcision prescribed** (9-14)

F1 **Renaming** (Sarai-Sarah), nations, A SON, **kings** (15-16)

E1 Obeisance and incredulity (17, 18)

Whether one accepts McEvenue's structural analysis *in toto* or not, it demonstrates that the chapter centers on the command to circumcise and is bracketed by the renaming and royal seed texts involving both Abram and Sarai. Sarai's renaming[14] as Sarah (she's still a princess!) and the divine promise of nations, and kings, clearly parallels and corresponds to the promises God made to Abraham in (v. 6) and the reference to a son focuses the promised royal descent through Isaac who receives his name from God himself as we discover later in the chapter narrative (Gen. 17:19, 21). Setting aside source critical considerations for the moment, the fact that Isaac is not renamed or given the promise of royal progeny when Yahweh confirms him as the covenant successor in the later narrative (26:2-5) can be explained by the fact that God has

[13] Sean McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, An. Bib. 50 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 155, 158-59.

[14] On the significance of renaming, Speiser states, "Such a change is viewed as the external sign of an important turn in the life or function of the bearer. . . **The underlying concept was probably much the same as in a king's assumption of a special throne name**. The event marked a new era." emphasis mine. *Genesis*, AB, 127; "The new names assured the coming of the promise and the sign of the covenant reminded the participants that they were to live in compliance with the Lord's covenant." Alan Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 336.

already personally named him in chapter 17 and identified him as the chosen seed through whom He will continue his eternal covenant promises. Thus, no renaming is necessary[15].

GENESIS 35:9-13

That the promise of royal seed is no afterthought to be later forgotten by the writer/compiler of Genesis after Genesis 17 is evidenced by it's recurrence in Genesis 35 in God's covenant promise to Jacob upon his return to Bethel. Not only does it recur but its form/content is structured almost identical to chapter 17. This time it is *Elohim* and not *Yahweh* as in the prior speech to Abraham who appears and speaks to Jacob and identifies himself as *El Shaddai* commanding him to 'be fruitful and multiply," and prophesying that a nation and an assembly of nations would come from him and promising him that royal descendants would come from his loins. (Gen. 35:11). (וּמְלָכִים מֵחֲלָצֶיךָ יֵצֵאוּ) is almost exactly the phrase in 17:6 except for the addition of the dual 'loins' חֲלָצַיִם which has now become perhaps a euphemistic reference not just to the male sexual organ involved in the act of procreation but also to the covenant sign circumcision mandated earlier in chapter 17 on all those who would be the progenitors and progeny of the chosen seed, royal or otherwise. Some of the similarities in content recognizable in English translation are noted in the table below.

Ch. 17:	Ch. 35:9-13
Yahweh 'appeared' to Abram (v. 1a)	God 'appeared' to Jacob again (v. 9)
I am '*El Shaddai*' (v. 1b)	I am '*El Shaddai*' (v. 11)
Neither shall thy name anymore be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham (v. 5)	Thy name shall not be called anymore Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name (v. 10)
And I will make you exceedingly fruitful and I	be fruitful and multiply, a nation and a

[15] Nor does Yahweh announce his name as *El Shaddai* during the theophany. But Isaac is no stranger to the divine name for he invokes the name of *El Shaddai* in the narrative when he sends Jacob away to Paddan-aram to find a wife among the relatives of Rebekah (28:3).

will make you nations (v. 6a)	company of nations shall be of thee (v. 11a)
And kings shall come forth from you (v. 6b)	***And kings shall come out of thy loins*** (v. 11b)
And I will give to you and to your seed after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession (v. 8)	And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it and to thy seed after thee will I give the land (v. 12)
And God went up from Abraham (v. 22b)	And God went up from him (v. 13)

Whatever else these similarities entail about the prehistory of the text prior to its final form[16], they no doubt reveal that the promises of land, seed, and covenant relationship given to Abraham and passed on to Isaac (Gen. 26: 3-4, 24) now reside firmly with Jacob and his progeny. This is done by directing the reader's attention back to the text of Gen. 17 where the same promises were made earlier to Abraham.[17] This includes of course the promise of the royal seed. The author/compiler has clearly indicated that the royal promise is a critical component of this triumvirate such that the reader would now expect it will continue to be highlighted and focused upon and he does not disappoint us.

GENESIS 49:8-12

The last mention of Abraham's royal seed occurs in the context of the aged Patriarch, Jacob's dying blessings upon his two grandsons (through Joseph) and then sons (Gen. 48, 49)[18]. In addition to the common subject of 'blessing' found in both chapters, the canonical form of Genesis brackets the scene around Jacob's illness using the terms (מִטָּה) 'bed or couch' to

[16] For source critics, the similarities evidence the work of the Priestly writer in both sections. cf. E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* AB (Garden City, Doubleday, 1960), 20, 271.

[17] Von Rad, *Genesis*, Rev. ed. OTL (Philadelphia: SCM, 1972), 339.

[18] In the Joseph epic (Gen. 37-50), the chapters address the question of who will receive the firstborn's inheritance as an important subplot in the Joseph Epic (Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 175.

describe Jacob's failing health and activity upon it (48:3, 49:33).[19] Jacob begins by gathering up his strength on his *miṭṭâ* to receive his beloved Joseph in order to bless his grandsons and ends by assuming the position of death on the same. In setting the stage for these blessings on his posterity in (Genesis 48 and 49), the narrator explicitly connects the blessings Jacob is about to bestow with God's prior revelation to him at Luz (Bethel) and the divine promises of land and posterity given at that time (35:9-13). The use of the divine name *El Shaddai*, the use of the verb 'appeared' נראה (niphal), and the mention of Rachel's death and burial (48:7) which came after the Bethel theophany (35:19) confirm it. Also, the narrator back references the covenant text pertaining to Abraham in Gen. 17 as well by noting the divine promise 'to give the land to your seed after you' adding "for an everlasting possession" (לאחזת עולם) a phrase found back in 17:8 but lacking in chapter 35. Although at first glance, the *El Shaddai* marker appears missing in the poetic blessing text in chapter 49, but it too brackets the scenes as an abbreviated form of the venerable divine name that is invoked in Israel's extended blessing on Joseph (49:22-26 in v.25) whose presence also marks the beginning (48:1ff.) and closing (49:22-26) of the blessing scene(s).

Ch. 17 Abraham	Ch. 35:9-13 Jacob	Ch. 48:3, 4 Jacob
El Shaddai, God Almighty (v. 1b)	*El Shaddai*, God Almighty (11)	*El Shaddai*, God Almighty
appeared to Abram (v. 1a)	appeared (9)	appeared unto me at Luz (3a)
	And blessed (*brk*) him (9)	and blessed (*brk*) me (3b)
And I will make you	be fruitful and multiply, a	I will make you fruitful and

[19]Ken Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 866.

exceedingly fruitful and I will make you nations (v. 6a)	nation and a company of nations shall be of you (v. 11a)	multiply you and I will make you an assembly of peoples (4 a)
And kings will come from you (6 b)	And kings will come out of your loins (v. 11)	
And I will give to you and to your seed after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession (v. 8)	And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, to you will I give it and to your seed after you will I give the land (v. 12)	And will give this land to your seed (*zrʿ*) for an everlasting possession (4 b)

Though Jacob's reminiscence (ch. 48) does not include specific mention of the royal progeny, it may be assumed or simply reflect the brevity of the summary or alternatively it's irrelevance for Jacob's immediate task at hand; namely blessing Joseph's sons.

As Sailhamer has noted, this Jacobean blessing occupies one of three key structural seams in the composition of the final form of the Pentateuch (Gen. 49:1; Numbers 24:14; and Deut. 31:29) each dealing with the deliverance of God's people by a king and set in the context of the eschatological future activity of God by the phrase *bĕʾaḥărît hayyāmîm* (in the latter days).[20] In light of the common theme of blessing and the bracketing mentioned earlier, we would add that this eschatological context also embraces chapter 48. Thus, Jacob's intentional

[20] A phrase taking a variety of forms used in the prophets for the time of Israel's restoration after judgment when the promised Davidic seed will reign in peace and justice in a world where Edenic conditions will once again exist (e.g. Amos 9:13ff; Joel 3[4]:1ff.)

blessing on the younger Ephraim bears fruit in the later history of Israel where Ephraim becomes the equivalent of all the ten northern tribes in the divided kingdom (e.g. Hos. 11:11).

After blessing his favored grandsons in chapter 48 with the blessing of the 'firstborn', Israel pronounces his blessings on his own sons in the poetic blessing found in chapter 49. The three older sons are quickly dispatched as rightful heirs for their crimes against Jacob (49:3-7).[21] They receive an anti-blessing and the patriarch comes close to placing a curse (אָרוּר) on Simeon and Levi but restrains and places his curse upon their anger while predicting that they will be scattered in Israel (v. 7). One has only to think of the later scattering of the tribe of Levi in their allotted cities dispersed among the various tribes to see how some would prefer to read this as a text written after the fact.

In stark contrast, Jacob pours out his favor on his fourth son Judah designating him as the channel for Abraham's royal seed. So far this merely accords with what the author/compiler has done in the two earlier royal seed texts; namely taking care to identify the chosen bearer of the royal seed. Now however, the promise of royal seed is showered by new details albeit cryptic ones concerning Judah's royal progeny and their future activity. Judah becomes the collective embodiment of this future royal seed and the recipient of the prophetic blessings. In a delightful word play on his name, Judah (whose name means 'praise') will receive his brothers 'praise' (49:8). He will be victorious in warfare against his enemies. His brothers will do him obeisance just as he (and his brethren) did before Joseph (37:10). His ferocity in war is compared to the lion that takes his prey and lies down afterwards. He will rule as a warrior king over his brethren

[21] Reuben is disavowed for sleeping with his father's concubine an act of royal usurpation (cf. the act in the rebellion of David's son Absalom 1 Sam. 16:20-23); Simeon and Levi for their unrestrained vengeance in carrying out the slaughter of the Hivites of Shechem after the rape of their sister Dinah by Hamor (Gen. 34).

holding the 'scepter' and the 'ruler's staff' (v. 10 NIV). He will be blessed by superabundance in flocks and herds (vss. 11, 12). All these aspects of the blessing seem fairly straightforward, but the interpretation of the text as a whole hinges on the meaning of the word 'Shiloh' in v. 10b and how it relates to the rest of the Judah passage. Out of the main options, the revocalized form *sheloh* based in part, on its uncontracted usage in Ezek. 21:27 [32] and translated 'to whom it belongs' (NIV) may be best.[22] Since Ezekiel appears to use the Shiloh text as part of a judgment oracle directed against Zedekiah to declare the Lord's intention not to put a ruler on David's throne 'until he comes to whom it belongs', the *sheloh* reading is buttressed. With this reading, the text now declares a royal dynasty for Judah which will continue until "he comes to whom it belongs" (NIV). The question is to whom *what* belongs? The answer in v. 10 is "the obedience of the nations is his." (NIV). The astonishing claim of the text is that a scion from Judah's seed is coming who will rule over both his own nation Israel and the peoples of the world who will come to him in submissive obedience! And until he comes, any royals and their successors will continue through Judah by divine right. In the future, when the sons of Jacob become a great nation as the Abrahamic covenant promised the kingdom rule will be Judah's in perpetuity. This prophetic blessing becomes grist for the mill of later texts relating the Abrahamic covenant to the Mosaic and God's promises to David, but we have been concerned with the meaning in the patriarchal setting of Genesis alone[23]. If we take seriously, the historical

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[22] Transliterated in many versions as a proper name following common Hebrew grammatical word order (verb + subject), Shiloh becomes an enigmatic title for messiah meaning peace from (שׁלה). The term has also been interpreted with the place name Shiloh, where the ruler comes, as 'prince' based on Akkadian usage and 'tribute is brought to him' among other things. Cf. Walter Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, p. 51; Sailhamer, Genesis in *Expositors Bible Commentary,* 276, 279.

[23] One thinks of the Balaamic oracle (Numbers 24:1519) or the second psalm where the Davidic-king-messiah is promised the rule of all nations (Ps. 2:8, 9); cf. von Rad's recognition that Israel

nature of the reference in the canonical form of Ex. 6:3 that Yahweh appeared unto the patriarchs as *El Shaddai*, then these three royal texts are not late exilic/postexilic creations, but early patriarchal texts taken up by the lawgiver Moses to ground the founding of the Great Redemption of the nation in these earlier promises of God to the patriarchs. Thus, the expectation of a royal lineage dates back to the earliest strata in the patriarchal histories.

CONCLUSION

With such astonishing promises concerning Abraham's royal seed, why wasn't the text taken up by interpreters more often and in clearer fashion?[24] One answer lies on the Divine side as simply a function of God's inspiration in progressive revelation. In assessing the prophetic import of the royal seed passages in the book of Genesis, evangelicals who take seriously their antiquity and historicity would still do well to remember that these divine promises in their original context were given to the Patriarchs in oral form centuries before the founding of Israel as a nation and a full millennium (1,000 years) prior to the coming of the first Israelite king. This does not include the additional thousand years until the coming of Jesus. This should give us pause concerning the nature of such promises and how they must have been understood when originally uttered let alone by later communities of faith. In our zeal to defend their integrity and predictive nature, we may miss their impact on those who first experienced them and to whom they were first directed; in the case of these three texts, the patriarchs and early Israel.

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associated paradisiacal fertility with the enthronement of a king (Is. 11:1-9, Ezek. 34:23-31), *Genesis*, 425.

[24] Wenham states that the Pentateuch anticipated Israel's king but he was rarely mentioned outside of our Genesis texts only in Numbers 24:17; Deut. 17:14-20 and 28:36) *Genesis*, 22.

On the other hand, our more critical colleagues by adhering to a consensus that denies the historicity of the Patriarchs and their collective story may find themselves ignoring evidence that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, indeed the God of Israel, and the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who has steadily been at work in space-time to fulfill his great covenant promises even to the days of old, to ancient times; the days when he appeared as *El Shaddai*.

The book of Genesis virtually begins with a cryptic divine promise of a mysterious 'seed of the woman', who will come some day and restore the ruin wrought by the disobedience of the human 'seed' (3:15). In one sense, the book ends as it began with another cryptic divine promise that this 'seed' of the woman will be of royal blood, a regal warrior arising out of the tribe of Judah who at the end of days will reign over his people Israel and rule the nations (49:10). The apostle John had no doubts about the identity of Abraham's mysterious royal seed. "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David . . ." is the slain Lamb who has redeemed us by His blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation; to whom one day every created thing will bow in submission and worship (Rev. 5:5-14, ASV). Truly in him, the promises of Abraham have been fulfilled and all the nations of the earth have been blessed (Rev. 5:13).