

Liberty University
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

YHWH's Covenantal Dealings with Abraham: A Redemptive-Historical Perspective

A Dissertation Submitted to
The Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Bible Exposition

by

Nathan A. Hoefler

Lynchburg, Virginia

April 17, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by Nathan A. Hofer

All Rights Reserved.

APPROVAL SHEET

YHWH'S COVENANTAL DEALINGS WITH ABRAHAM: A REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE

Nathan A. Hoefler

Read and approved by:

Chairperson:

[Redacted Signature]

Dr. Timothy Rucker

Reader:

[Redacted Signature]

Dr. Nicholas Cole

Date: 5/7/2024

Contents

Abbreviations	xi
Abstract.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: THE CENTRAL ISSUE FOR COVENANT THEOLOGY	1
Introduction.....	1
Thesis	1
A Brief Sketch of Traditional Statements on the Nature of the Covenant.....	2
Relevance of Covenant Theology.....	8
Soteriology.....	8
Ecclesiology.....	11
Assumptions.....	15
The Inspiration of Scripture	15
Fundamental Interpretative Presuppositions.....	16
Progressive Revelation.....	17
Methodology.....	19
Arrangement of Dissertation.....	22
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF YHWH’S COVENANTAL DEALINGS WITH ABRAHAM	25
Introduction.....	25
A Historical Survey of Positions on the Abrahamic Covenant(s)	26
The Early Church.....	26

Irenaeus of Lyon	26
Augustine of Hippo.....	27
The Medieval Church	29
The Reformation	30
Martin Luther	30
Ulrich Zwingli.....	32
John Calvin	33
English Reformed Views after the Reformation.....	35
John Ball	35
Other Seventeenth-Century British Reformed Theologians.....	37
John Owen	38
Nehemiah Coxe.....	40
American Reformed Evangelical Tradition	41
Jonathan Edwards	42
Charles Hodge.....	43
Gerhardus Vos	43
John Murray	45
Modern Evangelical Theologians	46
John Sailhamer.....	47
T. Desmond Alexander	48
Paul R. Williamson.....	50

Critical Scholarship.....	51
Summary and Conclusion.....	52
CHAPTER 3: AN EXPOSITION OF YHWH’S COVENANTAL DEALINGS WITH	
ABRAHAM	54
Introduction.....	54
Abraham’s Origin (Genesis 11:10–32).....	55
Overview.....	55
Exegesis	56
Abraham’s Call (Genesis 12:1–9).....	59
Overview.....	59
Exegesis	60
Abraham’s Patience (Genesis 12:10–14:24).....	67
Overview.....	67
Exegesis of Genesis 12:10–20	68
Exegesis of Genesis 13	69
Exegesis of Genesis 14	72
Significance of Genesis 12:10–14:24	76
Abraham’s Faith (Genesis 15)	77
Exegesis	77
Significance of Genesis 15.....	85
Abraham’s Failure (Genesis 16).....	86

Overview.....	86
Exegesis	86
Abraham’s Promise (Genesis 17:1–18:21).....	88
Overview.....	88
Overview of Genesis 17.....	88
Exegesis of Genesis 18:1–21	89
Significance of Genesis 17:1–18:21	92
Abraham’s Intercession (Genesis 18:22–21:18).....	92
Exegesis of Genesis 18:22–19:38.....	92
Exegesis of Genesis 20:1–18	94
Abraham’s Tests (Genesis 21:1–25:11).....	96
Overview.....	96
Exegesis of Genesis 21:1–34	96
Exegesis of Genesis 22:1–19	100
Abraham’s Legacy (Genesis 22:20–25:34)	108
Overview.....	108
Significance.....	110
Conclusion	111
CHAPTER 4: AN EXPOSITION OF GENESIS 17.....	113
Introduction.....	113
Structure of Genesis 17.....	113

Exegesis of Genesis 17	115
Overview of Genesis 17:1–3.....	115
Exegesis of Genesis 17:1–3	115
Overview of Genesis 17:4–21.....	124
Exegesis of Genesis 17:4–21	124
Overview of Genesis 17:22–27.....	148
Exegesis of Genesis 17:22–27	148
Conclusion	154
CHAPTER 5: FRUITION OF THE THEOCRATIC PREDICTIONS	156
Introduction.....	156
Multiplication of Abraham’s Seed.....	158
Establishment of the Covenant	164
Conquest of the Land	179
Conclusion	183
CHAPTER 6: YHWH’S COVENANTAL DEALING WITH ABRAHAM IN BIBLICAL	
THEOLOGY	185
Introduction.....	185
Biblical Portrayals of Abraham	187
Moses’s Portrayal of Abraham	187
Post-Exilic Portrayals of Abraham	195
Israel’s Future and YHWH’s Covenantal Dealing with Abraham	199

Predictions of Covenant Infidelity and Restoration in Moses	202
Predictions of Covenant Infidelity and Restoration in the Former Prophets	204
Predictions of in the Latter Prophets.....	207
New Testament Use of YHWH’s Covenantal Dealings with Abraham	215
Genesis 15 and Salvation in Jesus Christ.....	215
New Testament and Circumcision	227
Conclusion	234
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	236
Introduction.....	236
Summary of Chapters 1 and 2.....	237
Support for the Thesis	238
Summary of Support for the Thesis in Chapters 3 and 4.....	238
Summary of Support for the Thesis in Chapters 5 and 6.....	239
Application	241
Ecclesiology	242
Baptism	243
Church Membership.....	245
Christian Living	249
Areas for Further Study	253
The Role of Genesis 17:6–8 in Redemptive History	254

Christological Fulfillment of Genesis 17:6–8.....	256
Conclusion	256
Bibliography	258

Abbreviations

BC	Belgic Confession
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BZAW</i>	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CCEL	Christian Classics Ethereal Library
<i>Civ.</i>	Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i>
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Against Heresies</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series</i>
LBCF	Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)
LXX	Septuagint
<i>MAJT</i>	<i>Mid-American Journal of Theology</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1995)
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>

NIV	New International Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentaries
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

Abstract

Evangelical Christianity is broadly divided into two ways of thinking about biblical covenants. In particular, the division is set in terms of the continuity of the old and new covenants. With this comes the distinction between old covenant theocratic Israel and the New Testament Church. Dispensationalists argue for discontinuity between the covenants and the separation of old covenant theocratic Israel and the New Testament Church. On the other hand, traditional Reformed covenant theology finds a significant amount of continuity between the covenants and less distinction between old covenant theocratic Israel and the New Testament Church. However, beliefs about covenant theology do not always fit nicely into either of these two categories; instead, they fall within a spectrum of positions within and between these categories. This dissertation will demonstrate that YHWH engaged in two distinct covenantal encounters with Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17. In Genesis 15 a covenant is established by YHWH with Abraham. However, in Genesis 17 a covenant is only promised to Abraham. This promised covenant is fulfilled as the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 26.

While significant disagreement exists among Evangelicals at this macro-level of the doctrine of covenant, more agreement can be found when examining individual covenants in scripture. Most evangelicals understand the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12–17) as a unified covenant. Even though YHWH is said to have made a covenant with Abraham in Gen 15:18 and again in Genesis 17, the consensus is that these two covenant interactions are two aspects of *the one* Abrahamic covenant (emphasis added). A few evangelical scholars have broken from this consensus. These scholars say that YHWH entered into a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 and gave him the promise of another covenant in Genesis 17. According to this view, that promised covenant was established in Genesis 22.

To demonstrate this dissertation's thesis, the dissertation will provide an overview of covenant theology, a detailed exegesis of Genesis narrative of YHWH covenantal dealings with Abraham (Genesis 11:10–25:34), and a biblical theology of YHWH's covenant dealings with Abraham. Before engaging directly with the primary texts of Genesis 15 and 17 (exegesis) and other relevant passages (biblical theology), the dissertation will provide background on the topic. In the introduction, a general overview of covenant theology, implications of covenant, and the theological presuppositions of the work will be provided before finally introducing the specifics of the thesis in relation to the broader topic of covenant theology.

In the second chapter, the dissertation will survey different positions proposed throughout the history of Christian interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant. Since covenant theology has become of greater importance since the Reformation, particularly in the Reformed tradition, the early and Medieval church will only be briefly surveyed. The position of two particular interpreters, Irenaeus and Augustine, on the Abrahamic covenant, will be provided. Medieval interpretation will receive only a brief commentary on its notion of covenant since no particular view of the Abrahamic covenant is put forward during this period.

Because the Reformation brought renewed attention to the notion of covenant, particularly in the Reformed tradition's defense of paedobaptism, a broad survey of theologians will be considered from this era, among these Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin. Covenant theology became codified in various post-Reformation confessions. These confessions remain foundational beliefs about covenant theology in many branches of modern-day Evangelicalism. This is particularly the case among Reformed and Presbyterian evangelicals and Particular Baptists. For this reason, the dissertation will provide a more extensive overview of the beliefs of important seventeenth-century British covenant theologians who influenced the doctrinal

formulations of those confessions with the most robust explanation of covenants—the Westminster Standards and the London Baptist Confession of 1689. This aspect of the dissertation will also provide background to the continuation of the survey of positions held by earlier American theologians (18th–20th centuries), the view of twenty-century critical scholars, and views held by modern theologians.

The central part of the dissertation will be the exegetical and biblical-theological examination of the issue. Through exegetical and biblical-theological work, the dissertation will affirm the thesis—YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham resulted in the establishment of a covenant in Genesis 15 and the promise of a later covenant (Genesis 17) that was the Mosaic covenant. Because YHWH’s covenantal dealings are grounded in his establishment of a relationship with Abraham in Genesis 12, the connection of the interactions between the two parties—YHWH and Abraham—will be presented first. A detailed exegesis of Genesis 17 will establish the plausibility of the thesis. The plausibility of the thesis will be made definitive by following up on the exegetical findings with a biblical theological explanation of the YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham.

The dissertation will conclude with a final chapter. The concluding chapter will review the topic by reminding the reader of the main issue and its relevance. Following this, an overview of the exegetical and biblical-theological findings that pertain to the thesis will be reviewed. The dissertation will finish with an explanation of how the truth of the thesis has application for contemporary evangelical Christianity.

CHAPTER 1: THE CENTRAL ISSUE FOR COVENANT THEOLOGY

Introduction

Nineteenth-century British Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, “The Doctrine of the Divine covenant lies at the root of all true theology. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the Doctrines of the scripture are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of Law and of grace.”¹ This statement opens a sermon based on Hebrews 8:10. In this sermon, Spurgeon explains the supremacy of the covenant of grace over the covenant of works. While this is undoubtedly true, rightly discerning between the two overarching covenants, grace and law/works, is only part of the issue of “The Doctrine of the Divine covenant.”

Thesis

An essential aspect for determining the degree of continuity between the old covenant and new covenant is the place of the Abrahamic covenant within covenant theology. This dissertation will focus on the relationship of the Abrahamic covenant(s) to the other biblical covenants. This dissertation will demonstrate that YHWH engages in two different covenantal dealings with Abraham—Genesis 15 and 17—and how the covenant to Abraham in Genesis 17 is fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant as established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26.

¹ Charles Spurgeon, “The Wondrous Covenant,” Sermon 3326 in *Spurgeon’s Sermons* vol 58, <https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons58/sermons58.xliv.html>.

A Brief Sketch of Traditional Statements on the Nature of the covenants

The Protestant Reformation seems to have divided as quickly as it arose. While the primary issue that divided the early Reformation was the Lord's Supper, covenant theology soon became a distinguishing mark of the Reformed branch.² Zwingli employed the notion of covenant in his polemic against the Anabaptists to argue for the validity of infant baptism. Covenant continuity—between the old and new covenants—was viewed as a valid reason for infant baptism.

More recently, evangelical Christianity has been divided between dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists. Dispensationalists argue for discontinuity between the old and new covenants, while non-dispensationalists argue for more continuity between the covenants. Dispensationalists find greater discontinuity in the distinction between ethnic Israel and the NT church than non-dispensationalists.³

For non-dispensationalists, continuity between the covenants is found in the fact that both covenants are administrations of the one covenant of grace given to the one people of God, the church. The difference between the old covenant and the new covenant is simply that under the old covenant, the church was comprised primarily of Jews—OT Israel—who looked forward to

² Luther's emphasis on the law/Gospel distinction caused him to separate the legal covenant (old covenant) from the gracious covenant (new covenant). Zwingli utilized covenant theology to stress the unity of the old and new covenants. Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 83. Luther criticized Zwingli's view in his 1535 Commentary on Galatians, "Therefore it is inevitable that the papists, the Zwinglians, the Anabaptists, and all those who either do not know the righteousness of Christ or who do not believe correctly about it should change Christ into Moses, and the law change the law into Christ." Quoted by Lillback, *Binding*, 78.

³ Robert Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 9. Saucy comments on recent changes, "the changes in dispensationalism have been largely in the direction of a greater continuity within God's program of historical salvation."

Messiah, while the new covenant church consists of both Jews and Gentiles who look back at the Messiah who has come.

The Westminster Confession of Faith summarizes the differences between the old and new covenant administration of the one covenant of grace in chapter 7, paragraphs 5 and 6,

This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel; under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.⁴

Under the gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.⁵

The idea that the relationship between the old and new covenants is either continuous or discontinuous is misleading.⁶ No theological system that deals with covenants argues for strict continuity or discontinuity. The question is of degree. Even when speaking about the degree of continuity or discontinuity, the category of continuity/discontinuity must be stated. Is the category the participants of the covenants? Is the category the promises/benefits of the covenants? Is the category the mediator of the covenants? Numerous other categories could be

⁴ Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 7.5.

⁵ WCF, 7.6.

⁶ Gentry and Wellum comment, "And both views (dispensational and covenant theology), despite their differences, acknowledge some idea of "progressive" revelation, redemptive epochs (or "dispensations"), inaugurated eschatology, the fulfillment of God's plan in Christ, and various changes or discontinuities in the administration of God's plan across redemptive history. They differ, however, over the specifics of God's plan, the kind of changes that result, and especially over the Israel-church relationship and the role of national Israel in the fulfillment and consummation of God's plan. Peter Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 65.

mentioned. For evangelical Christianity, the main issue with continuity/discontinuity between the covenants should center on the gospel, summarized in Matthew 1:21, "And she will give birth to a son, and you shall call him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."⁷

During the seventeenth century, the Reformed Protestant tradition began to come to a consensus in the understanding of the relationship between the old and new covenants.⁸ This was particularly true in the British tradition. The Westminster Standards—the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms—were published in the late 1640s. These confessional documents codified the formulation of covenant theology that came to be known as confessional Presbyterianism. The Savoy Declaration of 1658 defined non-Presbyterian paedobaptists' beliefs about the continuity of the old and new covenant for the Congregationalist tradition. English and Scottish settlers brought these two paedobaptist traditions to North America during the seventeenth century, particularly in New England.

The English Particular Baptists split from the English Reformed paedobaptists during this time.⁹ The Particular Baptists codified their understanding of covenant theology in the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1677/1689.¹⁰ For the most part, the London Baptist Confession of Faith agrees with the Westminster Confession of Faith.¹¹ The three areas in which the London

⁷ All translations of the Bible (Hebrew and Greek) are this dissertation's author unless noted.

⁸ According to Karlberg, the English federalists brought about a "federal interpretation of the twofold covenant, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace." Mark W. Karlberg, "Covenant Theology and the Westminster Tradition," in *Covenant Theology in Reformed Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 117–118.

⁹ This dissertation will use the term "Particular Baptist(s)," not "Reformed Baptist(s)" for this tradition.

¹⁰ The confession was formulated in 1677 and publicly published in 1689.

¹¹ The Particular Baptists consciously adopted the doctrines and structure of the Westminster Confession of Faith to show their agreement with British Orthodox Christianity as it was acknowledged to be expressed in the Westminster Standards.

Baptist Confession most diverges from the Westminster Confession are covenant theology, baptism, and ecclesiology. The reason for this divergence is the Baptist tradition's view that less continuity exists between the old and new covenants than acknowledged by their paedobaptist brethren. The covenant theology of the Particular Baptists is the foundation of their departure from the paedobaptist in the areas of Baptism and Ecclesiology.

A comparison of chapter 7 of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the London Baptist Confession of Faith demonstrates this. Chapter 7 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, titled "Of God's covenant with Man," contains six paragraphs and explicitly acknowledges the continuity between the old and new covenants (see above for quotation). The London Baptist Confession in chapter 7, titled "God's covenant," includes only three paragraphs and does not mention continuity between the old and new covenants. Paragraph 3 of the London Baptist Confession of Faith reads,

This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.

“This covenant” of the first sentence refers to the “covenant of grace” mentioned in paragraph 2.¹² It should be noted that the London Baptist Confession does not mention the idea of covenant "administration," nor does it mention the OT/old covenant. An important idea in paragraph 3 of the London Baptist Confession is that of the gradual revelation of the covenant of

¹² Paragraph 2 of the London Baptist Confession is almost identical to paragraph 3 of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

grace and the "full discovery" in the NT.¹³ This strongly suggests that the Particular Baptists believed the new covenant was the covenant of grace. This is the basis for the Particular Baptist notion of covenant discontinuity.

Why did the Particular Baptists find discontinuity where the Reformed paedobaptists found continuity? The two traditions departed from each other in their understanding of the Abrahamic covenant. Reformed paedobaptists took all of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham as part of the administration of the one covenant of grace. Particular Baptists discerned two different aspects to the Abrahamic covenant by distinguishing two different "seeds" of Abraham—a spiritual and a carnal. Many Particular Baptists employed the dual aspect of Abraham's seed to take the old covenant as something other than an administration of the one covenant of grace.

During the seventeenth-century formulation of British Reformed theology, a majority opinion arose concerning the number and nature of God's covenants with humanity. As seen in chapter 7 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, a two-covenant schema was the majority view of British Reformed paedobaptists. The two covenants were the "covenant of Works" and the "covenant of grace." God made the covenant of works with pre-fall Adam (and in him all of his posterity).¹⁴ God made the covenant of grace with humanity (particularly Christ and the elect)¹⁵

¹³ Seventeenth-century theologians did not always make clear distinctions in their use of testament and covenant. Here, New Testament should be understood as new covenant, as the context of paragraph 3 suggests. "It is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality," this covenant that was "completed in the New Testament."

¹⁴ WCF 7.2 reads, "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."

¹⁵ Westminster Larger Catechism Question and Answer 31 reads, "With whom was the covenant of grace made?" Answer: "The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed."

after Adam's Fall.¹⁶ This two-covenant schema became known as the “dichotomist” view.¹⁷ Since God could only make a covenant of works with humanity in its unfallen condition, every covenant since the fall must be a covenant of grace.¹⁸ Because of their dichotomist view, most Reformed paedobaptists take the Mosaic covenant as an administration of the covenant of grace.¹⁹

The Particular Baptists adopted a minority view from the Reformed paedobaptists. This minority position became known as the “trichotomist” view of covenant. John Cameron (1579-1625) was the first to offer this view and, at the time of the Westminster Assembly (the gathering of theologians who wrote the Westminster Standards), the well-known paedobaptist theologian Samuel Bolton held the same view.²⁰ This view includes a third covenant that is neither the covenant of works nor the covenant of grace. This third covenant is the Mosaic covenant.²¹ Since the Mosaic covenant does not deal with eternal life, it is categorized as a different covenant altogether.

¹⁶ WCF 7.3 reads, “Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the Covenant of Grace, whereby He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.”

¹⁷ Benedict Bird, “John Owen’s Taxonomy of the Covenants: Was He a Dichotomist or a Trichotomist?” *Foundations* 78 (May 2020): 56.

¹⁸ Or, as the Westminster Standards articulate this dichotomist scheme an “administration” of *the* covenant of grace. There are not many covenants of grace, only one. *All* post-fall covenants are administrations of the one covenant of grace.

¹⁹ It seems that a dichotomist view requires this. Many paedobaptists take the trichotomist view (explained below). See the next chapter for a survey of paedobaptists who hold the trichotomist view.

²⁰ See Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, London; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978. On page 99, Bolton mentions the two views and acknowledges that his (the trichotomist view) is the minority position.

²¹ Bird, “John Owen’s Taxonomy,” 56.

The central issue in the debate between Reformed paedobaptists and Particular Baptists about the measure of continuity and discontinuity between the old and new covenants is the nature and place of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. The dealings are expressed in the Abrahamic covenant(s).²² If these dealings are fundamentally part of the administration of the covenant of grace that God made with Christ and the elect, then the notion of continuity is correct. If these dealings are partly an aspect of YHWH's dealings with Abraham's carnal seed (ethnic Israel) and partly an aspect of his dealings with Abraham's spiritual seed (those elect to eternal life in Jesus Christ), then some greater measure of discontinuity is seems necessary.

Relevance of Covenant Theology

The debate about covenant theology is not theoretical. The implications of covenant theology are many. Three particularly relevant areas of implication for covenant theology are soteriology and the role of works, ecclesiology and church membership, and baptism.

Soteriology

The Westminster Standards and the London Baptist Confession of Faith agree on the means that God uses to bring salvation. That means it is the person and work of the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. The Westminster Confession of Faith 8.1, "Of Christ the Mediator," reads,

It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; the Head and Saviour of His Church; the Heir of all things; and Judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.²³

²² This dissertation will use this convention—Abrahamic covenant(s)—since a central aspect of the thesis has to do with whether or not YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham resulted in one covenant or two covenants.

²³ The London Baptist Confession of Faith 8.1, "Of Christ the Mediator," reads, "It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made

Both confessions concur that it is only by “the grace of faith” that individuals are saved.²⁴ The confessions substantially agree on the role of good works as explicated in Chapter 16, titled "Of Good Works," in both confessions. Paragraph 5 of the confessions summarizes the role of good works, "We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin or eternal life at the hand of God."

The confessional standards of both traditions uphold the Reformation doctrine of *sola fides*. However, many in the confessional Presbyterian tradition have formulated their soteriology in a manner that requires good works, or obedience, for salvation. It must be noted that many confessional Presbyterians strongly disagree with such a “re-formulation” of Reformed paedobaptist theology;²⁵ however, those holding to this doctrine claim to be following in the Reformed paedobaptist tradition of John Calvin.²⁶ In the case of these Presbyterians, the

between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king; head and saviour of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." The London Baptist Confession adds the phrase "according to the covenant made between them both" to acknowledge the Covenant of Redemption explicitly.

²⁴ WCF 14.1 and LBCF 14.1. Both confessions place justification and sanctification as the primary aspects of saving. Both confessions explain these aspects of salvation in chapters 11 and 13. The Continental Reformed Paedobaptist tradition agrees with both confessions. Article 22 of the Belgic Confession, "Our Justification Through Faith in Jesus Christ," reads, "We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him. For it must needs follow, either that all things which are requisite to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior."

²⁵ This branch of Reformed paedobaptist theology is known as *The Federal Vision*. Two books critiquing this position written by confessional Presbyterians are Guy Prentiss Waters, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology: A Comparative Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006) and Jeong Koo Jeon, *Calvin and the Federal Vision: Calvin's Covenant Theology in Light of Contemporary Discussion* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publishing, 2009).

²⁶ N. T. Wright's *New Perspective on Paul* has influenced many of these theologians. Wright says he "appeals to those 'influenced by worldview-oriented Dutch Calvinism and theocratic Puritanism.'" Guy Prentiss Waters, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology*, 68. According to Jeon, "They identify their new theology with Calvin and the Westminster Standards." Jeong Koo Jeon, *Calvin and the Federal Vision*, 9.

notion of covenantal continuity leads to covenantal nomism. Rather than either a dichotomist or trichotomist view of covenant, this position is mono-covenantal. Not only are the old and new covenants the same—the covenant of grace—but even the covenant made with Adam in the Garden was also a covenant of grace.

This propensity towards covenantal nomism is found in the writings of John Calvin. Commenting on Exodus 19:5 (“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine”), Calvin writes, “Whence it is evident, that whereas the condition of all is alike, some are not distinguished from others by nature, but by gratuitous adoption; but, in order that they should abide in the possession of so great a blessing, fidelity towards God is required on their part.”²⁷ Confessional Presbyterian critiques of this position note that it “deny(s) the antithesis between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, as well as the distinction between law and gospel.”²⁸ Even though others in the confessional Presbyterian tradition reject mono-covenantal theology, their view of covenantal continuity may lead to this position.

Ecclesiology

The chapters in the Westminster Confession and London Baptist Confession dealing with ecclesiology and church membership are the most divergent. Chapter 25, “Of the Church,” in the

²⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 318. The debate about Calvin's doctrine of Covenant, particularly his position on the existence of a pre-fall Covenant of Works, abounds. For a comprehensive view of Calvin's doctrine of Covenant, see pages 134–141 in Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001). Calvin should not be understood as expounding a semi-Pelagian view of humanity. Calvin acknowledges that the gift of covenant faithful comes from God; Calvin writes, “Since, in order to our fulfilling the divine precepts, the grace of the lawgiver is both necessary, and has been promised to us, this much at least is clear, that more is demanded of us than we are able to pay.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (London; Carlisle, PA: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 2.5.9.

²⁸ Jeon, *Calvin and the Federal Vision*, 9.

WCF is six paragraphs long and contains approximately 300 words.²⁹ The London Baptist Confession, chapter 26, “Of the Church,” includes 15 paragraphs and over 1,150 words.

The Westminster Confession includes two additional chapters on ecclesiology not adopted by the Baptists. Chapters 30, “Of Church Censures,” and 31, “Of Synods and Councils,” cover some of the material in LBCF 26. This includes the role of church officers and inter-church relations. The independence of each “particular church” is the hallmark of the Particular Baptists. Inter-congregational relationships, including those for settling “difficulties or differences, either in point of doctrine or administration,” are voluntary.³⁰ All ministers—pastors and elders—are members of their local congregation.

The Westminster Confession places authority over the local church in a regional (presbytery) or national church (general assembly); the WCF refers to these as “synods and councils.”³¹ Presbyterianism classifies ministers into two categories—teaching elder (preacher/pastor) and ruling elder. The teaching elder must be a member of the regional church, the presbytery. The ruling elder is a member of the local congregation.³²

According to the London Baptist Confession, church membership consists of believers alone. LBCF 26.2 reads, “All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.” Local or particular

²⁹ Word counts exclude cross-references and proof texts.

³⁰ LBCF 26.15.

³¹ WCF 31.3.

³² Orthodox Presbyterian Church, *Book of Church Order, Form of Government*, Chapters VI and X. <https://opc.org/BCO/FG.html>

congregations are to be made up only of those individuals with a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

According to WCF 25.2, the visible Church “which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel [not confined to one nation, as before under the law], consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.” In paragraph 3, the WCF notes that particular churches are members of the catholic (or universal) church. Membership in particular, or individual, churches is made up of both believers and their children.

The Particular Baptists viewed the Christian church as an institution that Jesus Christ established in his incarnate state. LBCF 26.5 reads, “Those thus called (out of the world unto himself), he commandeth to walk together in particular societies, or churches, for their mutual edification, and the due performance of that public worship, which he requireth of them in the world.” This paragraph reinforces the view that only those with a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ are rightful members of a local church.

In addition to believers, the Presbyterians included their children as proper members of local churches. B. B. Warfield succinctly explains the reason for their inclusion, “The argument in a nutshell is simply this: God established his Church in the days of Abraham and put children into it.”³³

Warfield's defense for including the infants of believers in the Christian church comes from his defense of paedobaptism. The Presbyterian view of the continuity of the old and new

³³ B. B. Warfield, “The Polemics of Infant Baptism,” in *Studies in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 408 quoted by Venema in *Christ and Covenant Theology: Essays on Election, Republication, and the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing), 282.

covenants forms the grounds for the continuity between the NT church and OT Israel.³⁴ The inclusion of infants in the NT is the continuation of the principle of including infants in old covenant Israel. Jeffery D. Niell writes, “The newness of the new covenant pertains to the external aspects, the outward administration, of the covenant of grace. The new covenant is not new in its nature or membership.”³⁵

Church membership correlates closely with those who are subjects of baptism.

Presbyterians baptize the infants of those professing faith in Jesus Christ, while Baptists do not.

The reason for infant baptism is covenantal. The Westminster Larger Catechism Question and Answer 166 reads,

Unto whom is baptism to be administered? *Answer:* Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him, but infants descended from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and to be baptized.

It should be noted that both the baptism of infants and their inclusion in the visible church are because of their membership "within the covenant." This covenant, called "the covenant," is the one covenant of grace. Because the old covenant was an administration of the covenant of grace and adult Israelites and their children were "within" the old covenant, believers and their children are considered "within" the covenant of grace under its new covenant administration.

Many paedobaptists explicitly acknowledge that the only justification for infant baptism is the old covenant institution of circumcision. Louis Berkhof concedes that the NT gives no

³⁴ James Bannerman carefully distinguishes between the two spheres of old covenant Israel. He argues that the continuity of Ancient Israel and the NT Church is only in "ecclesiastical government," not the political aspect of the ancient Israelite theocracy. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ* (New Zealand: Titus Books, 2013) 23.

³⁵ Jeffery D. Niell, "The Newness of the new covenant" in *Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 131.

command to baptize infants. His argument places a great weight upon the fact that "it need not surprise anyone that there is no direct mention of the baptism of infants, for in a missionary period like the apostolic age, the emphasis would naturally fall on the baptism of adults."

Berkhof also admits, "There is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptized."³⁶

Berkhof's position on paedobaptism follows the tradition of John Calvin. Calvin viewed the continuity between the old and new covenants as the basis for infant baptism, "He (the LORD) distinctly declares, that the circumcision of the infant will be instead of a seal of the promise of the covenant. But if the covenant remains firm and fixed, it is no less applicable to the children of Christians in the present day, than to the children of the Jews under the Old Testament."³⁷

Many more implications of covenant theology could be mentioned. However, covenant theology's effect on the practice of individual Christians and the Church is the most obvious in the areas of soteriology, ecclesiology, and baptism.

Assumptions

The Inspiration of Scripture

This dissertation will approach the Bible from an evangelical perspective. It affirms that the 66 books of the Protestant canon are God's inspired written revelation. This inspiration includes the very words of the original manuscripts and the autographs used to express the very thoughts of God himself. God has providentially preserved these autographs through the surviving

³⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 633–35.

³⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.15.5.

manuscripts.³⁸ The dissertation's approach to the Bible conforms to chapter 1 of both the Westminster Confession of Faith and the London Baptist Confession of Faith 1677/1689. The Protestant or evangelical tradition is expressed in the *Chicago Statement of Bible Inerrancy*,

(1.) That the scriptures of the old and New Testaments are the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore infallible, and of divine authority in all things pertaining to faith and practice, and consequently free from all error whether of doctrine, fact, or precept.

(2.) That they contain all the extant supernatural revelations of God designed to be a rule of faith and practice to his Church.

(3.) That they are sufficiently perspicuous to be understood by the people, in the use of ordinary means and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, in all things necessary to faith or practice, without the need of any infallible interpreter.³⁹

As such, this dissertation does not include higher criticism as a foundational component of biblical interpretation. The dissertation will utilize a modified view of canonical criticism, which accepts that the book's final form and canon is the authoritative scriptural text.⁴⁰ Form, reduction, and source criticism will only be utilized as they illuminate evangelical interpretative findings.

³⁸ "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article X," Ligonier Ministries, accessed May 27, 2003, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/chicago-statement>.

³⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos, 1997), 152.

⁴⁰ The dissertation considers the OT a post-exile *inspired* composition of older *inspired* texts edited to provide a "messianic hope" for God's people. John Sailhamer explains this view as it relates to the Pentateuch in *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 34ff. The OT is not a prescription for ancient Israelite religion; rather, it is a description of ancient Israel's religion in light of their covenant infidelity and expectation of God's work of redemption through his promised Messiah.

Fundamental Interpretative Presuppositions

This dissertation will prove the thesis by operating on three evangelical fundamental interpretative presuppositions.⁴¹ First, the biblical author's original intent is foundational for the interpretation of a text. The meaning of any biblical text is determined by the author of that text, not the reader.⁴² Neither is the meaning of a text found in its application to a specific system of theology. Theological systems must be derived from the text of scripture, not imposed on them.

Second, a difference must be made between the meaning and significance of a biblical text. The meaning and significance of a text are not to be equated. While the meaning of a text may be limited to an author's historical situation, the significance of a text often has universal and abiding relevance. Chou writes, “The former (the meaning) refers to the particular ideas of the original author in the text... The latter (significance) denotes the various valid repercussions, inferences, or implications stemming from the author’s meaning.”⁴³ How other biblical authors utilize a text may be different than to explain its meaning. Later authors may use earlier texts structurally, thematically, or theologically.⁴⁴

Third is the acknowledgment of biblical intertextuality. When biblical authors refer to, allude to, or echo another biblical text, that author can include the meaning/significance of other texts related to the text he uses. Rather than simply referring to one other text, an author may

⁴¹ Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 26–29.

⁴² Abner writes, “Authorial intent is a critical and defining presupposition for evangelical hermeneutics and the quest for authorial logic.” Chou, *The Hermeneutics*, 27.

⁴³ Chou, *The Hermeneutics*, 32.

⁴⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 703. These uses include, but are not limited to, analogy, topology, and illustration.

refer to "a network" of connected texts. These connected texts can provide hermeneutical insight into the author's use of a text. This presupposition, along with the other two, is an implication of the divine authorship of the Bible. The Bible was written by historical persons inspired by the Holy Spirit. This dual nature of biblical authorship requires readers and interpreters of the Bible to recognize both the historical-cultural situatedness of the human author and the transcendence of God—the ultimate author of scripture.

Progressive Revelation

In addition, this dissertation will approach the thesis from the Reformed theological perspective. Besides a high view of scripture, as explained above, the sovereignty of God and the central role of covenant are characteristics of this theological tradition. The centrality of the sovereignty of God and covenant means that scripture must be taken as progressive revelation. Geerhardus Vos notes that revelation is a divine activity.⁴⁵ The revelation of God in the Bible was given through events and persons in history, "it has not completed itself in one exhaustive act, but unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts."⁴⁶ God did not reveal himself, including his purposes for humanity, through his special revelation all at once. Instead, he revealed himself bit by bit as appropriate for his people in their historical-cultural situation—new revelation built on prior revelation.

The relationship between progressive revelation and covenant is noted by Vos, "We should, moreover, remember that from the very earliest times the covenant-idea stood not merely in service of revealed religion in general, but had also lent itself to the very particular use of

⁴⁵ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 6.

⁴⁶ Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 6.

marking the historic progress of the movement of redemption and special revelation."⁴⁷ Later revelation can help illuminate earlier revelation. An example of this organic revelation is in Exod 6:3, where YHWH says to Moses, "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name YHWH, I did not make myself known." The same God who appeared to the patriarchs was now revealing more about himself to Moses and the Israelites.

This further revelation coincided with the progress of YHWH's covenant relationship with ancient Israel. YHWH was the name of Israel's covenant God as he explains to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7. The progressive revelation of scripture finds its culmination in Jesus Christ. He is the covenant (Isa 42:6). Christ is the *telos* of scripture. The New Testament authors explicitly note the centrality of Jesus Christ to God's revelation (Luke 24:44; Rom 10:4; Gal 3:19). The Bible concludes with the prophecy of Christ's ultimate and final return. The audience of the Bible is left in anticipation of his second coming (Rev 22:20). The Reformed theological tradition stresses the importance of God's revelation in Jesus Christ as a central feature of biblical revelation.

The centrality of Jesus Christ in the Reformed theological tradition implies the Vosian notion that eschatology precedes soteriology. According to Vos's progressive understanding of biblical revelation, "the eschatological is an older strand in revelation than soteric."⁴⁸ The return of Christ and the consummation of this age is the goal of creation (Eph 1:10; Col 1:16). God's revelation was given so that he may be glorified in Jesus Christ as creator, savior, and lord of all things. This is the foundational principle of the Reformed theological tradition—the glory of

⁴⁷ Geerhardus Vos, "Hebrews, The Epistle of the Diatheke," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1980), 192.

⁴⁸ Geerhardus Vos, *Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 60.

God—as Calvin writes, "In this way, as is meet, *everything* we have is made subservient to the glory of God."⁴⁹

A final assumption of this dissertation is the rejection of higher criticism as the foundation for biblical interpretation. The dissertation's evangelical view of scripture means that all forms of higher criticism that reject this view of scripture are excluded as a valid method of interpretation. The dissertation will utilize a modified view of canonical criticism by acknowledging that the book's final form and canon is the authoritative scriptural text.⁵⁰

Methodology

The primary methods of this dissertation for proof of the thesis are exegetical and biblical-theological. The exegetical methodology of the dissertation begins by using a "literal-grammatical-historical" hermeneutic. This hermeneutic seeks to discern "authorial intent" based on the words of the biblical text in their historical/cultural context. Consideration of the historical background, original language grammar, lexicology, and context is required to achieve successful exegesis.

The biblical authorial intent is contained in the words, not the things these words might supposedly represent. While many biblical texts relate to events in history, without the interpretation of these events by the biblical authors, these events are simply brute facts. Biblical authors may interpret events by explicitly mentioning their significance. This is where the

⁴⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.13.15 (emphasis added).

⁵⁰ The dissertation considers the OT a post-exile *inspired* composition of older *inspired* texts edited to provide a "messianic hope" for God's people. John Sailhamer explains this view as it relates to the Pentateuch in *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 34ff. The OT is not a prescription for ancient Israelite religion; rather, it is a description of ancient Israel's religion in light of their covenant infidelity and expectation of God's work of redemption through his promised Messiah.

importance of grammar (including the various uses of grammar in different genres and discourse types) and lexicology comes in. The expression of the significance/interpretation of an event, person, or idea is in the plain meaning of his words.⁵¹

A biblical author can provide interpretation through a shared cognitive environment with his original audience. In this case, historical background and context is essential for understanding the author's meaning. Sometimes, the historical and/or cognitive distance between the original author and the final audience requires an editorial gloss. In these instances, the compositional nature of the OT is most apparent (Gen 13:7; Judg 1:23; Ruth 4:7; 1 Sam 9:9). In these cases, these biblical authors explicitly mention the significance of the texts.

The use of a “literal-grammatical-historical” hermeneutic does not exclude the insights of certain higher-critical methods. The unity of scripture under the one divine author means that the literary arrangement of a composition—and individual books or corpus of the books, such as the Twelve—provides insight into the meaning of individual biblical texts. God’s providential arrangement and preservation of the canon, particularly as found in the OT, supplies a basis for the use of canonical criticism within a grammatical-historical hermeneutic. The nature of inspiration does not exclude God's use of men in the wise arrangement of the canon. The same inspired men who served as redactors/editors of the original text provided that the final form that currently exists could have had the wisdom, either natural or supernatural, to arrange the canon in an exegetically beneficial manner for God’s people. This exegetical arrangement is found in the first-century Jewish canon.⁵²

⁵¹ This could also be applied to the interpretation of an idea, person, or any other thing an author writes about.

⁵² Spellman notes how “the New Testament writings (typically understood as ‘internal evidence’) are ‘external evidence’ for the shape and content of the canon of the Hebrew Bible. He notes this in the context of Jesus’s statement “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah” (Luke 11:51) as a temporal reference and a textual reference to the first and last books of the first-century Hebrew Bible. Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon—*

The arrangement of the canon brings a second note of the interpretive method of this dissertation. A greater historical context than the simply mundane is important for divine revelation. The redemptive-historical context of a passage and a biblical book is significant for its meaning. The redemptive-historical context of covenant and the covenantal nature of scripture requires acknowledgment of a passage's context in redemptive history. Both the redemptive-historical context of a biblical author and the redemptive-historical context of the event, person, or concept that he wrote about is required to understand the meaning. Genuine redemptive-historical revelation was given to Adam, Noah, and the Israelite patriarchs, even though none of these people are authors of canonical scripture. The canonical author of the biblical texts that record most of the activity of these people is Moses. In the case of Moses writing about these people, interpreters should not think that these characters were vehicles for Moses to express his own thoughts like Socrates was for Plato in his Socratic dialogues. Moses places historical characters in their redemptive-historical context to tell his original audience about their role in redemptive history. The people of Israel are redeemed from Egypt and wander the desert during their time in redemptive history because of the events of earlier redemptive history. Redemptive-historical context is a crucial component of biblical exegesis.

The second primary method of this dissertation for proof of the thesis is biblical-theological. Vos writes, "Biblical Theology is that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible."⁵³ Elsewhere he writes,

The specific character of Biblical Theology lies in this, that it discusses both the form and contents of revelation from the point of view of the revealing activity of God Himself. In other words, it deals with revelation in the active sense, as an act of God, and tries to

Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2020), 91.

⁵³ Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 6.

understand and trace and describe this act, so far as this is possible to man and does not elude our finite observation.⁵⁴

A key concept in the discipline of biblical theology is tracing God's self-revelation throughout the Bible. In the case of this dissertation, the primary self-revelation of God that will be traced is his covenantal dealings with his people. Unlike systematic theology, the acknowledgment of the progressive nature of revelation is essential in the task of biblical theology. This is particularly true of covenant theology. As God establishes the various covenants, there is progress in the readers' understanding of God's covenantal dealings with his people. While God's covenant dealing(s) with Abraham is the central topic of this dissertation, other revelations of God's covenant dealings with others illuminate his dealings with the patriarchs. A presentation of a biblical theology of covenants is the second of the two primary methods for proving the thesis.

Arrangement of Dissertation

To prove the thesis, the six following chapters will provide a historical survey of various views of theologians on the relationship between Genesis 15 and 17, exegetical and biblical-theological confirmation of the thesis, and a conclusion.

In the second chapter, the dissertation will survey different positions proposed throughout the history of Christian interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant(s). The majority of this chapter will focus on views since the Reformation. This chapter will demonstrate how covenant theology has been an essential element of Christian doctrine and how the place of the Abrahamic covenant(s) has been presented within this larger topic to emphasize the relevance of the thesis.

⁵⁴ Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology," in Gaffin, *Redemptive History*, 6.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 contain the main arguments for the thesis. These chapters present the exegetical and biblical-theological proofs of the thesis. Chapter 3, "Exposition of YHWH's covenantal Dealings with Abraham," provides the background for the following exegetical and biblical-theological study. This chapter provides a summary of the biblical record of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. In addition, this chapter provides the historical relationship of the biblical record of these covenantal dealings and the significance of the canonical location of these accounts.

Chapter 4, "An Exegetical Examination of Genesis 17," is a detailed exegetical study of the critical covenantal passage for the thesis, Genesis 17, in the Abraham narrative. This chapter examines the passage's genre and sub-genre and provides a detailed lexical analysis of important words.

Chapter 5, "The Fruition of the Theocratic Predictions," provides redemptive-historical and literary support for the thesis. This chapter demonstrates how the narrative of Exodus through Joshua follows the prophetic predictions found in Genesis 17:6–8.

Chapter 6, "Exposition of the Abrahamic Covenant(s) in Biblical Theology," analyzes the topic by tracing the idea of covenant throughout biblical revelation. Particular attention is given to the OT authors' understanding of the fulfillment of Genesis 17 in the establishment of the Israelite theocracy. This chapter includes the NT authors' use of the Abrahamic covenant(s) to confirm the dissertation's thesis.

The final chapter—7—contains applications for the confirmation of the thesis. This chapter will expand the discussion of the theological implications in the areas of soteriology, baptism, and church membership, as already introduced. The dissertation concludes with a

review of the thesis and arguments for the proof of the thesis, application, and areas for further study.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF YHWH'S COVENANTAL DEALINGS WITH ABRAHAM

“There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much intricacy and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ as stating the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ.”¹

Introduction

The centrality of covenant theology as an interpretative framework for understanding the Bible rose to popularity with the Reformation. Before the sixteenth century, theologians rarely utilized the notion of covenant in their theological formulations. No version of full-fledged covenant theology was developed before the mid-sixteenth-century Reformed theologians. However, throughout the history of the church, the concept of covenant was recognized as an important aspect of biblical revelation. Biblical authors frequently refer to the notion of covenant. Since the Reformation, particularly in the Reformed branch, the concept of covenant has become essential for understanding the Bible. In many cases, Reformers and their theological heirs place the idea of covenant as a central interpretive grid in keeping with their mantra of *sola scriptura*.

The following chapter presents a variety of positions held throughout the history of the Christian church. The first part is a historical survey of beliefs on the Abrahamic covenant(s) held by important theologians. The chapter concludes with a concise taxonomy of the various surveyed positions. Since covenant theology developed as a more significant aspect of Christian theology following the Protestant Reformation, the main emphasis of this chapter will be on the formulation of the Abrahamic covenant(s) in the Reformed tradition and successors to this tradition.

¹ Jonathan Edwards, “Inquiry Concerning Qualifications for Communion,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (London: Banner of Truth, 1995), 465.

A Historical Survey of Positions on the Abrahamic Covenant(s)

The Early Church

Because early Christians viewed their faith as a continuation of the OT religion, there was a strong emphasis on defending the new covenant in Christ from the previous covenants in the scriptures. A brief survey of the Church Fathers demonstrates the widespread usage of covenant, especially in apology and commentary. Justin Martyr used the covenant idea to argue against Trypho to defend Christianity.² Later, Irenaeus and Augustine made the most significant use of the Abrahamic covenant(s) in their discussions of the relationship between Genesis 15 and 17.³

Irenaeus of Lyon

Towards the end of the first century AD, Irenaeus of Lyon utilized the idea of covenant and redemptive history in his work *Against Heresies*, answering the Gnostic view that there were two different gods between the Old and New Testaments.

For the new covenant having been known and preached by the prophets, He who was to carry it out according to the good pleasure of the Father was also preached; having been revealed to men as God pleased; that they might always make progress through believing in Him, and by means of the [successive] covenants, should gradually attain to perfect salvation.⁴

According to Irenaeus, the same God works through successive covenants to bring salvation. The culmination of these covenants is the new covenant in Jesus's blood. God's

² Justin defends the new covenant as the final covenant in contrast to the temporary nature of the old covenant with its temporal ceremonies and sacrifices. Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 163. Justin viewed the old covenant as temporary, useful for restraining ancient Israel from idolatry and typologically prefiguring Christ. Salvation before the new covenant came through the old covenant. Timothy J. Horner, "Justin's Mission to the Jews," *Covenant Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (November 1998): 34.

³ See below for a discussion of Irenaeus of Lyon and Augustine.

⁴ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.9.3. Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers are drawn from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325*, 9 vols. (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885).

covenant dealings with Abraham include a single covenant meant to establish a nation—Israel. However, God’s interactions with Abraham included promises—fulfilled in the salvation found in Jesus Christ.⁵ The promises made to Abraham included the promise of a king in Genesis 17, which was fulfilled in the progress of covenants that included the Davidic and new covenants.⁶

Irenaeus, probably referencing Acts 7:8, viewed circumcision in Genesis 17 as “the covenant of circumcision.” This sign was given by God to “preserve outwardly by circumcision Abraham’s descendants, for he gave it as a sign, that they might not be like the Egyptians.”⁷ The essence of the Abrahamic covenant in Irenaeus’s thought was to give his descendants a land of inheritance, and circumcision served to set apart his descendants. He conscientiously distinguished between covenant and promise. YHWH’s dealing with Abraham included one covenant, which would be progressively built upon, and many promises that would be the foundation for later covenants.

Augustine of Hippo

In his book *The City of God*, Augustine understood YHWH’s covenantal relationship with Abraham as promissory of two future people groups. Beginning his in-depth discussion of YHWH and Abraham, Augustine commented on Genesis 12:2–3:

Now it is to be observed that two things are promised to Abraham, the one, that his seed should possess the land of Canaan, which is intimated when it is said, “Go into a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation;” but the other far more excellent, not about the carnal but the spiritual seed, through which he is the father, not of the one Israelite nation, but of all nations who follow

⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer*, 3.9.1.

⁶ Irenaeus, *Haer*, 3.6.2.

⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer*, 3.12.11.

the footprints of his faith, which was first promised in these words, “And in thee shall all tribes of the earth be blessed.”⁸

In YHWH’s promise to Abraham, Augustine notes the promise of two different “seed,” a carnal and spiritual. A few chapters later, commenting on Genesis 13:16–18, he writes, “It does not clearly appear whether in this promise that also is contained by which he is made the father of all nations. For the clause, ‘And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth,’ may seem to refer to this, being spoken by that figure the Greeks call hyperbole, which indeed is figurative, not literal.”⁹ Augustine clears up any possible confusion about the meaning of seed in the early chapters covering YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham in his discussions on Genesis 15 and 17.

Before the central chapters that cover YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham—Genesis 15 and 17—Augustine does not see a clear distinction between Abraham’s two seeds, except that two different seed(s) were promised him. However, in Genesis 15, Augustine interprets the sacrifice of the animals (Gen 15:9–10) as a symbol of “the kingdom of the Israelite nation.”¹⁰ Genesis 15 is the clarification of the two seeds promised in Genesis 12. While Genesis 12 highlights the promise of a spiritual seed, Genesis 15 expounds the carnal seed. Genesis 15 is part of the one covenant; it acts as an addendum to the Abrahamic covenant that is substantially contained in Genesis 12 and 17. The spiritual aspect of the Abrahamic covenant is highlighted in Genesis 12 and 17.¹¹

⁸ Aug. *Civ.* 16.16. Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers are drawn from Philip Schaff, ed. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 14 vols. (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1886).

⁹ Augustine, *Civ.* 16.21.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Civ.* 16.24.

¹¹ Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, JSOTSup 315 (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 65.

The “Sacrament of Circumcision” in Genesis 17 confirms the Abrahamic covenant.¹² This confirmation was given after YHWH’s affirmation of his promise of a son to Abraham. The fact that the promise of a son was already made means that circumcision and the encounter between YHWH and Abraham recorded in Genesis 17 simply confirmed the covenant established in Genesis 12. In its literary context, Genesis 17 is a reaffirmation of the covenant in light of Genesis 16. Augustine interpreted YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham found in Genesis 12–17 as one covenant elaborated and confirmed during their various interactions.

The Medieval Church

During the Medieval period, interaction with the idea of covenant shifted from theological to societal. The establishment of Christendom and the complete separation of the church from the synagogue meant that the concept of covenant was no longer needed for apologetic purposes. The use of covenant in the context of Christian doctrinal expression waned. The idea of covenant was used in the context of social and political development. The use of binding feudal covenants in Europe superseded biblical covenants in covenantal thought.¹³ “Community life was permeated with the idea of a common religious binding of each citizen to the city.”¹⁴ Little attention was paid to detailed exegetical work with respect to biblical covenants during this era.¹⁵ This was especially the case with the Abrahamic covenant(s). While the medieval development

¹² Augustine, *Civ.* 16.26.

¹³ Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin’s Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 30–35.

¹⁴ Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 29.

¹⁵ According to Schenk, a primary focus on the biblical covenants was the relationship of those outside the new covenant, particularly the relationship of religious Jews who were thought to be still under the old covenant to God’s salvation in Jesus Christ. Richard Schenk, “Views of the Two Covenants in Medieval Theology,” *Nova et Vetera* 4, no. 4 (2006), 895.

of political covenant significantly influenced the Reformers, little importance was given to YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham during this time in church history.

The Reformation

The return to the supreme authority of the Bible by the Protestant Reformers, both Lutheran and Reformed, meant that, once again, the need to interact with the place of covenant in the context of redemptive history became central. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin provided in-depth interpretations of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. Even Luther, with his emphasis on the distinction between law and gospel (as opposed to the Reformed emphasis on covenant), provided an extensive explanation of Genesis 15 and 17.

Martin Luther

In his lengthy treatment of the book of Genesis, Luther described the covenantal dealings of YHWH with Abraham as two separate covenants. Commenting on the institution of circumcision (Genesis 17), he wrote, "Abraham hears that both covenants are being confirmed: the material one involving the land of Canaan and the spiritual one involving the eternal blessing."¹⁶ The material covenant was established in Genesis 15 with the promise of the land of Canaan, and the spiritual covenant is the promise of many descendants. The material covenant had a limitation,

This limit was added, and the time was precisely defined, as it were. As long as the generations of the descendants of Abraham continue to exist, that is, as long as a state, a kingdom, a priesthood, and some definite form of a people remain, this covenant must remain unchangeable. Accordingly, the generation of Abraham comes to an end in Christ, who is the Head and Founder of a new generation. But just as the previous generation had circumcision added as a distinguishing sign, so the new generation of Christ has other distinguishing signs.¹⁷

¹⁶ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 15–20*, vol. 3 of *Luther's Works*, trans. George V. Shick (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 105.

¹⁷ Luther, *Genesis*, 105.

According to Luther, YHWH's interactions with Abraham are for the benefit of both his carnal family and all nations. This dual nature of YHWH's relationship with Abraham contrasts with later Reformed theologians, as shown below. It is noteworthy that Luther's view of circumcision restricts its institution to his natural descendants. Unlike the Reformed, the thing signified by circumcision does not continue under the new sign of baptism. Circumcision, and the things signified by it, is limited to ancient Israel.

Luther understands the covenant of circumcision to apply only to Abraham's natural seed. Circumcision was a sign to remind ancient Israelites of the covenant established in Genesis 15, which pledged the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. The spiritual covenant was found in YHWH's promise to Abraham of a multitude of descendants and his response of faith (Gen 15:5–6). In Genesis 15, Luther points out that these covenants were made only to Abraham personally. The spiritual promises of that covenant are again made personally to select individuals, including his son, Isaac (Gen 26:4) and Jacob (Gen 28:13). Circumcision as a sign of the material covenant is given to remind all his natural descendants of the material covenant. The covenant of Circumcision "pertain(s) especially to the descendants of Abraham."¹⁸

According to Luther, YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17 are a mixture of law and Gospel. YHWH combines both the material and spiritual covenants in both chapters. The main difference between the chapters is that in Genesis 15, YHWH deals exclusively with Abraham as an individual, while in Genesis 17, he deals with Abraham and his

¹⁸ Luther, *Genesis*, 107. Abraham's descendants in this covenant included all male members of an Israelite household, including non-Israelite servants (Gen 17:12).

descendants.¹⁹ Luther clearly saw two separate covenants in the Abraham narrative—one covenant of promise and one covenant of obligation or works.²⁰

Ulrich Zwingli

While covenant did not become an essential aspect of the Lutheran branch of the Reformation, the Reformed tradition, beginning with Ulrich Zwingli, developed a robust doctrine of covenant. Zwingli, the leader of the early Reformation in the Swiss Cantons, evoked the idea of covenant in his polemical work against the Anabaptists. In large measure, the Anabaptists were responsible for the formation of Reformed covenant theology.²¹ In his work, *Of Baptism*, Zwingli argued for covenant unity in his argument for paedobaptism.²² The argument is that in the Abrahamic and old covenant administration of the one covenant of grace, infants were subjects of circumcision; therefore, in the new covenant administration, that same covenant of grace, infants are rightful subjects of baptism.

Zwingli's arguments were further developed by his Reformed successors, including Bullinger, Bucer, and Calvin, which is the basis for his defense of paedobaptism amongst its major Reformed proponents. The most well-known and respected of these is John Calvin. Calvin's view is that YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham are essentially one. In fact, it

¹⁹ Williamson, *Abraham*, 66. Williamson notes that Luther believes three covenants were established in the Abraham narrative: the first with Abraham as an individual (Gen 15), the second with Isaac and all his descendants (Gen 17), and the third with Abraham and all his family (Gen 17). The third is the Covenant of Circumcision.

²⁰ Luther writes, commenting on the promise of Isaac in Gen 17:15–21, “But with regard to Isaac the matter is different. He is born as the result of the promise, and the promise is attached to him. When this difference is recognized, it will shed a bright light on this discussion about circumcision.” Luther, *Genesis*, 94.

²¹ Gottlob Schrenk writes, “It was the Anabaptists who first hurled covenant thought into the Reformed movement.” Gottlob Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im alteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Cocceus* (Gutersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1923), 37. Quoted in Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 81.

²² Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 95.

seems that Calvin believed all covenants were the same covenant of grace; he writes in his *Institutes*, “all whom, from the beginning of the world...were taken into covenant with him on the same conditions.”²³

John Calvin

Calvin’s commentary on Genesis confirms the unity of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham. Calvin argues that YHWH’s appearance to Abraham in Genesis 17 began as a reaffirmation of the previously established covenant and ended with its full ratification. A reaffirmation was necessary because Abraham was “falsely supposing that he had obtained his wish (in the birth of Ishmael recorded in Genesis 16), he is led away by the presence of his son according to the flesh, from the expectation of a spiritual seed.”²⁴ Calvin's comments on Genesis 17:2 indicate that he took the one Abrahamic covenant to be of two parts.

We have said that the covenant of God with Abram had two parts. The first was a declaration of gratuitous love; to which was annexed the promise of a happy life. But the other was an exhortation to the sincere endeavour to cultivate uprightness, since God had given, in a single word only, a slight taste of his grace; and then immediately had descended to the design of his calling; namely, that Abram should be upright. He now subjoins a more ample declaration of his grace, in order that Abram may endeavour more willingly to form his mind and his life, both to reverence towards God, and to the cultivation of uprightness; as if God had said, ‘See how kindly I indulge thee: for I do not require integrity from thee simply on account of my authority, which I might justly do; but whereas I owe thee nothing, I condescend graciously to engage in a mutual covenant.’ He does not, however, speak of this as of a new thing: but he recalls the memory of the covenant which he had before made, and now fully confirms and establishes its certainty.²⁵

²³ Calvin, *Institutes* 2.10.1. Translations of the *Institutes* are from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008). According to Lillback, Bullinger took the same view. “Bullinger argues that there is only one covenant throughout Scripture.” Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 116.

²⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. John King (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 442.

²⁵ Calvin, *Genesis*, 443.

Earlier, in his commentary on Genesis 15, Calvin had mentioned the first part of the Abrahamic covenant as the “declaration of gratuitous love.” In Genesis 17, he offered what he saw as the second part, namely the place of obedience in the covenant of grace. Under the covenant of grace in the Abrahamic covenant, obedience was required, but not as the work of an autonomous man. Instead, as Calvin explains, “let us remember, that the completion of the Divine mercy depends not on the works of believers, but that God himself fulfill the promise of salvation to those who by right conduct correspond to their calling because he recognizes the true badges of sons in those only who are directed to good by his Spirit.”²⁶

For Calvin, YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham establish one gracious covenant. This gracious covenant comprises two parts—divine promise and human obligation. YHWH's interactions with Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17 are two stages of one covenant.²⁷ The first, Genesis 15, announced YHWH's covenant with Abraham through promise; the second, Genesis 17, formally established the covenant. According to the Reformed tradition, this covenant with Abraham is an administration of the one covenant of grace found in all of God's post-Fall covenantal dealings with humanity.

English Reformed Views after the Reformation

Throughout the remainder of the sixteenth century, the view of YHWH's covenantal dealings broadly followed that of Calvin. Toward the end of that century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, this view continued to be the majority opinion among theologians. Among the English theologians who followed covenant theology, the Westminster Standards codified

²⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.17.6.

²⁷ Williamson, *Abraham*, 30.

their position, as discussed in the first chapter. Consideration of at least one of the Westminster participants is appropriate here.

John Ball

John Ball (1585–1640) was one of the most influential covenant theologians for the Westminster Divines.²⁸ His work, *A Treatise on the Covenant of Grace*, was highly influential on the British Reformed paedobaptist tradition.²⁹ Ball refers to the Abrahamic covenant as “the further manifestation of the covenant of grace.”³⁰ From this statement, Ball viewed YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham as unified in establishing one covenant. An important aspect of the Abrahamic covenant is that it clarifies the one covenant of grace established immediately after the Fall of Adam (Gen 3:15). The Abrahamic covenant “openly declares the nature of the covenant (of grace).”³¹

In Gen 17:7–8, YHWH “fully expressed both in respect of the Head and Purchaser or Undertaker, the confederates in this covenant, and subfederates, the good things promised, and conditions required therein.”³² YHWH’s covenant with Abraham is an administration of the covenant of grace made with Adam after the Fall, and the covenant interaction between YHWH and Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17 serves primarily to give signs confirming that one covenant

²⁸ “The Westminster Divines” is the name given to the theologians who participated in the Westminster Assembly (1643–47) at Westminster Abbey in London England which resulted in the publication of the Westminster Standards (Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism, and Shorter Catechism).

²⁹ Karlberg calls this work the “fullest treatment of English covenant theology” of the era. Mark W. Karlberg, “Reformed Interpretation of the Mosaic covenant,” in *Covenant Theology in Reformed Perspective: Collected Essays and Book Reviews in Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Theology*, ed. Mark W. Karlberg (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 36.

³⁰ John Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London, UK: Simeon Ash, 1645), 47.

³¹ Ball, *Treatise*, 47.

³² Ball, *Treatise*, 48.

of grace to Abraham. In Genesis 15, YHWH “confirmed by federal signs in the segments and fiery lamp.” And in Genesis 17, the YHWH confirms it by “sacramental signs, as by Circumcision.”³³

For Ball, the essence of the covenant is the same in both Genesis 15 and 17. Ball followed Calvin by understanding the obligations given in Genesis 17 as obligations under the covenant of grace. Nevertheless, he saw a second benefit in the covenant of circumcision, as the circumcised were partakers of the external administration of the covenant of grace. Under the old covenant, those externally in the covenant benefited from the “confirmed the promises of the earthly Canaan and some other outward things whereof they were partakers.”³⁴ While the true blessings, in Ball’s words, “the highest blessings,” were only obtained by faith, other temporal blessings could accrue to those who were only connected to the covenant externally, that is, naturally or carnally. Obedience to obligations meant that both temporal and spiritual benefits were offered to the patriarchs under the Abrahamic covenant.

Not only Promises of temporall good things, but of spirituall and eternall were made to the Patriarks in the covenant of grace and sought and obtained by them. They looked for a City whose builder and maker the Lord is. Remission of sinnes and life everlasting was preached in the covenant, sealed in the Sacrament, and typified by the Land of Canaan. To conceit the Fathers to be an assembly of brute beasts, which looked to be fed with earthly blessings alone, is highly to dishonour them, and lessen the grace and mercy of God towards them.³⁵

While temporal earthly blessings were part of the Abrahamic covenant, these were subservient, functioning primarily typologically, to spiritual blessings. The interaction of YHWH and Abraham established one covenant, the covenant of grace, with Abraham (Genesis 15) and

³³ Ball, *Treatise*, 90.

³⁴ Ball, *Treatise*, 91.

³⁵ Ball, *Treatise*, 91.

his posterity (Genesis 17). Ball differed in that he highlighted the temporal blessing that accompanied the spiritual promises to the patriarchs. Those who were only external participants in the covenant—those without faith—still benefited from the covenant.³⁶

Other Seventeenth-Century British Reformed Theologians

While the opinion that the one covenant of grace was administered under two different covenants was becoming the majority view of the Reformed tradition during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, a minority view was also taking shape. Ultimately, this divergence in covenant theology is visible in the dichotomist versus trichotomist view of covenants. While there is debate about the views of such important theologians as Calvin, Bullinger, and Bucer as to the number of fundamental covenants in each theologian's system, that is, whether God's covenantal dealings with humanity are under one gracious covenant or two—one covenant of works with Adam and a covenant of grace following his Fall—eventually, at least two covenants with humanity were acknowledged.

The agreement among theologians on the existence of an original covenant of works with Adam and the subsequent covenant of grace only settled some of the main issues of covenant theology. The trichotomist saw a different type of covenant in the Mosaic covenant. This covenant was neither a pure covenant of works nor a covenant of grace. The Mosaic covenant

³⁶ Ball expanded Calvin's doctrine of covenant to highlight the benefits for the non-elect under the various administrations of the covenant of grace. The non-elect who participate in the administration of the covenant of grace are better off than those who do not participate in its administration. The visible church is where the covenant of grace is administered under the new covenant. The Westminster Larger Catechism codified the external/internal participant distinction in question and answer 166, "Unto whom is baptism to be administered? Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him, but infants descended from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and to be baptized."

was a third type of covenant. One of the earliest proponents of this view was Scottish theologian John Cameron (1579–1625). Cameron held that the Mosaic covenant was a subservient covenant to the covenant of grace. Since YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham were foundational to the Mosaic covenant, trichotomists might have viewed those dealings differently than their dichotomist counterparts. Two significant mid-seventeenth-century British theologians, the Congregationalist John Owen and Particular Baptist Nehemiah Coxe, held the trichotomist view of covenants.

John Owen

John Owen was a chaplain in Oliver Cromwell’s army during the English Civil War and served as Vice-Chancellor of Oxford. He was influential in the formation of the Savoy Declaration (1658). Debate concerning his position, whether dichotomist or trichotomist, abounds in the Reformed tradition. Concerning the Mosaic covenant, Owen writes:

This covenant, thus made, with these ends and promises, did never save nor condemn any man eternally. All that lived under the administration of it did attain eternal life or perished forever, but not by virtue of this covenant as formally such. It did, indeed, revive the commanding power and sanction of the first covenant of works; and in that respect, as the apostle speaks, was the ‘ministry of condemnation’, ... And on the other hand, it directed also to the promise, which was the instrument of life and salvation to all that did believe. But as to what it had of its own, it was confined to things temporal. Believers were saved under it but not by virtue of it. Sinners perished eternally under it but by the curse of the original law of works.³⁷

³⁷ John Owen, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol. 6, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: J. Richie, 1814), 98. Due to the obscurity of some of their writings, many of the seminal writings of these two authors are collected in Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen, *Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005). Owen writes about the administration of the covenant of grace before Christ, “The new covenant... as it was administered from the foundation of the world in the way of a promise... was consistent with that covenant made with the people in Sinai.... There was no interruption of its administration made by the introduction of the law.” Owen, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 64.

Owen explicitly says that salvation by grace was not part of the terms of the Mosaic covenant. This is consistent with his view of the pedagogical use of the old covenant in its subservient role to the new covenant. However, Owen viewed YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham as the establishment of a single unified covenant. The covenant is made by YHWH with Abraham in Genesis 12 and renewed and nuanced in Genesis 15 and 17.³⁸ All of these covenant interactions are part of the one Abrahamic covenant that represented the covenant of grace.³⁹

The essence of YHWH's covenant with Abraham was to affirm the promise made to Adam in Gen 3:15. This was done by the further revelation of the promised seed given in the Abrahamic covenant.⁴⁰ Any works principle found in Genesis 17 is an aspect of the pedagogical second use of the law in the context of grace. The corporate aspect of the Abrahamic covenant found in Genesis 17—distinguishing Abraham's family through circumcision—is to mark a people, the Church, as those “who are the especial concern of God's covenant grace.”⁴¹ The relationship between Genesis 15 and 17 is one of subservience and clarification of the primary participants of the Abrahamic covenant.

Nehemiah Coxe

³⁸ Williamson, *Abraham*, 39.

³⁹ Benedict Bird, “John Owen’s Taxonomy of the Covenants: Was He a Dichotomist or a Trichotomist?” *Foundations* 78 (2020): 70.

⁴⁰ John Owen, *Biblical Theology: The History of Theology from Adam to Christ*, trans. Stephen Wescott (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 365–6.

⁴¹ Owen, *Biblical Theology*, 366.

Nehemiah Coxe is thought to be the chief editor of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith.⁴² He agreed with Owen's trichotomist view of covenant theology.⁴³ However, his view on YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham differs significantly. Coxe viewed Genesis 15 as a covenant of grace and Genesis 17 as a legal covenant.

Coxe took a position similar to Martin Luther. He divided the covenant interactions between YHWH and Abraham into spiritual and carnal. Abraham's response of faith (Gen 15:6) is to the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace comes to Abraham, in promissory form, in Genesis 15; it "was confirmed and ratified by a sure promise to Abraham."⁴⁴ The promise of Canaan, which would become part of the carnal covenant, was a reminder of the perpetual nature of the covenant of grace and a type of the eternal inheritance promised for all the faithful. It is significant that the covenant promising Canaan to Abraham (Gen 15:18) is formally stated after he was justified by faith.

YHWH established the carnal covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17. Circumcision was the seal of this carnal covenant. Coxe defends this assertion by pointing out that the abiding covenant sign of circumcision was only given to Abraham's descendants, who had the carnal promises of Canaan and adoption by YHWH.⁴⁵ How could the sign of the universal spiritual

⁴² James M. Renihan, "An Excellent and Judicious Divine: Nehemiah Coxe" in *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Academic Press, 2005), 15.

⁴³ Coxe adopted John Owen's position as expressed in his third volume on Hebrews as his own view. He viewed writing on the Mosaic covenant as unnecessary because of Owen's work. Owen and Coxe, *Covenant Theology*, 33.

⁴⁴ Coxe, *Covenant Theology*, 85.

⁴⁵ Coxe, *Covenant Theology*, 111.

covenant be limited? YHWH gave the sign of the covenant to those who had an interest in it—Abraham’s line that would eventually become the nation of ancient Israel.⁴⁶

Coxe placed significance on Abraham’s two roles in YHWH's covenantal dealings with him. First, Abraham stood as an individual under YHWH's gracious covenantal interactions with him. This is the context of Genesis 15. Abraham, as an individual, believed in YHWH, and that belief was reckoned to Abraham, as an individual, for righteousness (Gen 15:6). Second, under the carnal covenantal dealings with YHWH, Abraham acts as “the father of and a federal root to a nation.”⁴⁷ This distinction in the role of Abraham in the covenantal relationships established by YHWH in Genesis 15 and 17 was a key reason why Coxe understood these chapters as essentially the establishment of two different covenants.⁴⁸

American Reformed Evangelical Tradition

The American Reformed evangelical tradition continued in the seventeenth-century British tradition.

⁴⁶ Coxe writes about the circumcision of Ishmael and others in Genesis 17:23, “then they were not circumcised on account of their own covenant interest, but in obedience to the particular and positive command of God.” Coxe, *Covenant Theology*, 111.

⁴⁷ Coxe, *Covenant Theology*, 112.

⁴⁸ Most seventeenth-century Particular Baptists distinguished between Abraham’s two seeds, the spiritual and natural, as an important aspect of how they understood YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham. Many, including key figures Hercules Collins, John Spilsbury, and Benjamin Keach, recognized a “two-fold” or “two-part” covenant with Abraham. These theologians believed that the Abrahamic covenant was functionally two separate covenants, one with his carnal/natural seed and the other with his spiritual seed. See Jeffery Johnson, *The Kingdom of God: A Baptist Expression of Covenant Theology* (Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2016), 28.

Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards was one of the most influential early American theologians. Edwards gave close attention to the historical outworking of God's eternal purpose for salvation. In this context, covenant played a vital role in his thinking.

Edwards followed the Reformed consensus. He taught that the one covenant of grace was administered through the various biblical covenants. This covenant of grace was first revealed to Adam after the Fall and confirmed to Noah. Abraham was the third individual to receive confirmation of the one covenant of grace.

In Edwards's formulation, Abraham is unique as one individual who received confirmation of the promise of redemption four different times in his life (Gen 12:2; 13:14-17; 15:5-6; 22:16-18). YHWH's covenant dealings with Abraham are also significant in the history of redemption. They clarified and confirmed the scope and means of salvation by the sign of circumcision given to Abraham as an individual historical person. Edwards writes,

In this renewal of the covenant of grace with Abraham, several particulars concerning it were revealed more thoroughly than before; not only that Christ was to be of Abraham's seed, but also, the calling of the Gentiles, that all nations should be brought into the church, all the families of the earth made blessed. And then the great condition of the covenant of grace, which is faith, was now more fully made known.⁴⁹

While Genesis 17 did not add anything new to the substance of the covenant of grace, it did establish the “seal of the covenant of grace.”⁵⁰ The sign of circumcision was given to Abraham in Genesis 17 as a sign to Abraham of God's promise to make him the father of many nations and a seal of the righteousness of faith. Both were newly revealed aspects of the one

⁴⁹ Jonathan Edwards, “The History of Redemption,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (London; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2017), 546. Circumcision was, first and foremost, a sign to Abraham. Secondly, it was a sign for his posterity.

⁵⁰ Edwards, “History,” 546.

covenant of grace found in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. The institution of circumcision in Genesis 17 was confirmation of the one covenant of grace revealed in a special way to Abraham during multiple episodes of his life—including the events recorded in Genesis 15.

Charles Hodge

During the nineteenth century, Princeton Seminary became one of the most important institutions for training Presbyterian ministers in the United States. Charles Hodge was an instructor (1822–78) and principal (1851–78) of Princeton Seminary and wrote a popular three-volume systematic theology. Hodge held to the continuity of the covenant of grace between the old and new covenants. All post-Fall covenants are the one covenant of grace.⁵¹ YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham ushered in the “second dispensation” of the covenant of grace.⁵² The institution of circumcision, Genesis 17, was the seal of the covenant. This seal confirmed the promises made to Abraham as the seal of the righteousness by faith that Abraham exercised in Genesis 15. Since circumcision was established with Abraham's descendants, all of them were included in the old covenant dispensation of the covenant of grace.⁵³

Gerhardus Vos

Gerhardus Vos also taught at Princeton Seminary (1892-1932). Vos is best known for his *Biblical Theology*. Vos emphasized the progressive nature of special revelation recorded in the Bible. Much like Owen and Edwards, Vos focused on examining redemptive history—

⁵¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos, 1997), 368.

⁵² Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 374.

⁵³ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1882), 182.

particularly as that history is recorded in the Bible and consummated in the incarnation of the Son of God. In Vos's thought, covenant is closely connected to special revelation. YHWH's covenant dealings with Abraham are part of the larger scheme of redemptive revelation. God's revelation of salvation develops organically from one epoch to the next. YHWH's covenant with Abraham is an organic development of God's previous covenantal interactions with humanity. Vos writes, "So dispensation grew out of dispensation, and the newest is but the fully expanded flower of the oldest."⁵⁴ In this statement, Vos operated on the idea of covenant unity.

The revelatory nature of covenant for Vos is essential for understanding his view of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. YHWH first revealed the covenant of grace to Abraham in Genesis 15. Later, he revealed a "second promise" to Abraham that was accompanied by the institution of circumcision.⁵⁵ In Genesis 17, YHWH adds a promise and revelation to the Abrahamic covenant. The covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:10) is connected to the birth of Isaac and the promise to Abraham of numerous posterity. In addition, the Old Testament religion's ethical requirements were symbolized by circumcision.⁵⁶ However, the essence of Genesis 17 is the further redemptive revelation to Abraham related to the one covenant of grace and the singular Abrahamic covenant administration of the covenant.

⁵⁴ Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology," 11.

⁵⁵ Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 86.

⁵⁶ Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 84.

John Murray

John Murray, professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary (1930–66), followed in the Reformed paedobaptist tradition of one covenant of grace under different administrations.

Murray's position on YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham is summarized when he wrote,

That covenant theology not only recognized the organic unity and progressiveness of redemptive revelation but also the fact that redemptive revelation was covenant revelation and that the religion of piety which was the fruit and goal of this covenant revelation was covenant religion or piety. The necessity of this conclusion can readily be shown by the fact that the relation of grace and promise established by God with Abraham was a covenant relation.⁵⁷

While previous covenants were part of the one covenant of grace, the Abrahamic covenant is the first to clearly expound the promise of salvation that is in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Murray confessed that his formulation of covenant theology was an attempt at “recasting” it so that he “may be able to contribute a little towards a more biblically articulated and formulated construction of the covenant concept and of its application to our faith, love, and hope.”⁵⁸

The interaction between YHWH and Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 12–17, is in the context of one Abrahamic covenant. In Genesis 15, YHWH bestowed favor on Abraham according to sovereign grace.⁵⁹ According to Murray, however, that sovereign grace is only enjoyed in the context of covenant keeping. Genesis 17 adds the conditions for the enjoyment of the covenant. Murray writes about the conditions given to Abraham in Genesis

⁵⁷ John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace: A Biblico-Theological Study* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 1988), 2.

⁵⁸ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 3. Murray’s recasting of the Covenant Theology primarily consisted of the redefinition and reinterpretation of God’s relationship to Adam in the garden, as well popularizing the “misinterpretation” of the law thesis in Paul’s polemics against works’ righteousness in Romans 10 and Galatians 3—particularly Paul’s use of Lev 18:5. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 249-251.

⁵⁹ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 17–18.

17, “there must be a response on the part of the beneficiary and response on the highest level of religious devotion.”⁶⁰ For Murray, a divine covenant consists of divine monergism (sovereign grace) and fidelity. Fidelity, or law keeping, is a response to God. Law keeping is not the means by which an individual continues in YHWH’s covenant.⁶¹

Murray’s definition of covenant meant that Genesis 15 and 17 were essentially two sides of one Abrahamic covenant. Genesis 15 was the divine initiative of that covenant, and Genesis 17 was the stipulations for the full enjoyment of the covenant. Murray concluded, “The obedience of Abraham is represented as the condition upon which the fulfillment of the promise given to him was contingent and the obedience of Abraham's seed is represented as the means through which the promise given to Abraham would be accomplished.”⁶² YHWH dealt with Abraham in a single covenant by first revealing his sovereign grace, Genesis 15, and then the conditions of the “consummated fruition” of that covenant, Genesis 17.⁶³

Modern Evangelical Theologians

Many modern Evangelical scholars have departed from traditional Reformed covenant theology. Three notable examples are John Sailhamer, T. Desmond Alexander, and Paul R. Williamson. These theologians have rejected traditional views of covenant, such as dichotomous and

⁶⁰ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 17.

⁶¹ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 12. Murray sought to reformulate covenant theology by rejecting the traditional view that covenant entailed a mutual compact or agreement. His view was that faithfulness determined the amount of blessing bestowed, not whether a member was in or out of the covenant. All divine covenants, including the pre-Fall relationship between God and Adam, fell under this definition.

⁶² Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 18.

⁶³ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 19.

trichotomous formulations. In place of traditional understandings, these theologians have proposed nuanced views of covenant.

John Sailhamer

John Sailhamer was a notable evangelical Old Testament scholar. He taught at influential evangelical seminaries and published books on the Pentateuch, biblical theology, and Genesis. According to Sailhamer, YHWH made one unified covenant with Abraham. That covenant was given through two sub-covenants. In Genesis 15, the first sub-covenant was given. This covenant promises the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendant(s). The second covenant is found in Genesis 17. This covenant adds promises, an obligation, and an additional party to the original covenant established in Genesis 15. The additional promises made by YHWH to the original covenant are “abundant descendants (vv.4–6) and eternal faithfulness (vv.7–8).”⁶⁴ In the covenant added in Genesis 17, circumcision was instituted as an obligation for Abraham's descendants as “a sign of one’s belonging to the covenant.”⁶⁵ In the concluding verses of Genesis 17, Sailhamer notes how this covenant “brought (Isaac) to the level of a participant in the original covenant (Gen 17:19b).”⁶⁶

Sailhamer believed that YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham were essentially one Abrahamic covenant established through two separate covenantal interactions—Genesis 15 and 17.⁶⁷ The supplemental covenant of Genesis 17 was added to the original covenant of

⁶⁴ John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis: The Expositors Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 180.

⁶⁵ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 181.

⁶⁶ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 182.

⁶⁷ Sailhamer explains this in *The Pentateuch as Narrative* in the context of the Hagar incident in Genesis 16, “There may thus have been a need to reestablish the earlier covenant after that unsuccessful attempt to take the promise into their own hands.” However, he explicitly provides the two covenant explanation in his commentary on

Genesis 15. However, Genesis 17 was not simply an addition to the original covenant. It formally expanded the promises of the original covenant to his numerous descendants and specified Isaac as the immediate heir of the covenant. This important addition allowed the one Abrahamic covenant to be passed on to particular individuals. Genesis 17 specified that his heirs would run through Isaac as the promised seed, not through Ishmael or his other descendants (Gen 25:1–4).⁶⁸

T. Desmond Alexander

T. Desmond Alexander took a unique view of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham in his 1982 Ph.D. dissertation.⁶⁹ Alexander, a senior lecturer at Union Theological College in Belfast and a member of the Tyndale Fellowship, believes that YHWH established two covenants with Abraham. The first appears in Genesis 15 and was unconditional. The second is in Genesis 22 and required antecedent obedience to YHWH for its ratification.⁷⁰ The covenant established in Genesis 15 was an unconditional covenant to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham. In contrast, the second, established upon Abraham's obedience to YHWH's testing in his call to sacrifice Isaac, guaranteed the promise of Genesis 12:2. Alexander

Genesis and earlier on the same page in *The Pentateuch as Narrative*. See John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 156.

⁶⁸ Similarly, the Abrahamic promises passed from Isaac to Jacob, not Esau and all of Jacob's descendants (Gen 28:13).

⁶⁹ T. Desmond Alexander, "A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative in Genesis" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University of Belfast, 1982). Williamson writes that Alexander "offered a quite novel synchronic reading of the Abraham narrative." Williamson, *Abraham*, 69.

⁷⁰ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 173.

finds it significant that in the narrative account of the covenant made in Genesis 15, “there is no reference to blessing being mediated to others.”⁷¹

The covenant of Genesis 17 is where YHWH’s fulfillment of his other promises found in Genesis 12:1–3 is again mentioned. However, Alexander notes the difference between Genesis 15 and 17 is conditionality. The covenant of circumcision that is promised in Genesis 17 depends on Abraham’s obedience to YHWH for its ratification. The obedience that allowed YHWH to ratify the covenant of circumcision was demonstrated in Genesis 22:1–12. This required test of Abraham’s obedience explains the place of Genesis 22 in the Abraham narrative. Abraham’s obedience is the reason the covenant promised in Genesis 17 is ratified so that “in your (Abraham’s) seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 22:18). Alexander finds support for his thesis, the promise of a covenant and later ratification, in the story of Noah.⁷²

Alexander sees two covenants between YHWH and Abraham. An unconditional covenant was established in Genesis 15, and a second was established in Genesis 22 after Abraham met the requirements of Genesis 17. This second covenant was formally established by the divine oath of Genesis 22:16–18.⁷³ The second is also unconditional after it was established on the condition of Abraham’s obedience. The conditionality found in Genesis 17 pertains to Abraham and whether he would be found worthy of being the one through whose seed all the families of the earth would be blessed.

⁷¹ The blessing of Genesis 12:1–3 mentioned in the interactions recorded in Genesis 15 are descendants and possession of the land. Alexander, *From Paradise*, 177.

⁷² Genesis 6:18 is a promise of a future covenant, and Genesis 9:9 is the establishment of that covenant. Noah is just like Abraham in that his obedience, signified in building the Ark, made him worthy of establishing the covenant. Alexander’s exegesis of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Noah and subsequently with Abraham is affirmed in this thesis. See Chapter 4.

⁷³ T. Desmond Alexander, “Genesis 22 and the Covenant of Circumcision,” *JOT* 8 (1983): 20.

Paul R. Williamson

Paul R. Williamson takes a view similar to Alexander's. He identifies the covenant in Genesis 17 as a separate development in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.⁷⁴ Williamson takes Genesis 15 and the covenant established during the events recorded in that chapter as "relating specifically to the promise of nationhood (i.e. descendants and land)."⁷⁵ Genesis 17 deals with the "international" importance of Abraham.⁷⁶ The importance of the covenant mentioned in Genesis 17 is heightened in relation to Genesis 15 since it is called "everlasting" (Gen 17:7, 13, 19). The terms of the covenants also demonstrate that they are separate. Genesis 15 is unilateral, while Genesis 17 is bilateral.⁷⁷

Like Alexander, Williamson views the covenant of Genesis 17 as future and conditional. In Genesis 17:1–2, the condition for establishment is Abraham's obedience. This international dimension of the future covenant is found in the royal promise (17:6). Also, like Alexander, Williamson says that Abraham's obedience found in Genesis 22 is the reason the promised covenant of Genesis can be ratified by YHWH's oath in Genesis 22:18.⁷⁸ This second covenant is then extended through the Davidic and new covenants.⁷⁹

Williamson sees two covenants in YHWH's interactions with Abraham. The first covenant emphasized the national promise to Abraham— "I (YHWH) will make you a great

⁷⁴ Williamson, *Abraham*, 21.

⁷⁵ Williamson, *Abraham*, 24.

⁷⁶ Williamson, *Abraham*, 212.

⁷⁷ Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 87.

⁷⁸ Williamson, *Sealed*, 89.

⁷⁹ Williamson, *Sealed*, 121, 160.

nation” (Gen 12:2a). This covenant is established in Genesis 15 and contains land and physical descendants as its main promises. The second covenant, promised in Genesis 17 and ratified in Genesis 22, established the covenant by which the nations will be blessed through Abraham (Gen 12:3b). From this second covenant with Abraham springs God’s covenants that will bless all people—ultimately in the new covenant and Jesus Christ.

Critical Scholarship

Since the mid-eighteenth century, source-critical scholars have understood the covenants between YHWH and Abraham recorded in Genesis 15 and 17 as the same covenant recalled from different traditions. The generally accepted view is that Genesis 17 records the Priestly version while Genesis 15 records the Yahwistic and/or Elohist sources.⁸⁰

Tradition-critical scholars have agreed with the basic conclusion of source critics, holding that Genesis 15 preserves the older tradition, while Genesis 17 is a post-exilic account. In this case, Genesis 17 does not come from another ancient tradition; instead, it is an update of the older tradition in the context of exile.⁸¹ The different emphasis found in the two accounts reflects

⁸⁰ Williamson, *Abraham*, 48. Many recent critical scholars view much of the material in Genesis 15 as ancient patriarchal tradition combined with late theological reflection. For example, von Rad comments on Genesis 15:1–7, “Even though ancient narrative material forms the basis of this paragraph, it can no longer be considered as “saga” in view of its unusual theological reflectiveness. Its climax in v. 6 almost has the quality of a general theological tenet.” Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 185. Genesis 17 is viewed as a heavily theologized version of the same tradition coming from the Priestly source. Bediako and Baidoo summarize this view, “Source critics generally argue that the Abrahamic covenant as a later theological construct and that Gen 17 is a variant/reworking of Gen 15.” Daniel K. Bediako and Elijah Baidoo, “The Covenant of Abraham: Relationship between Genesis 15 and 17,” *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 2 (2012), 2. “Chapter 17 belongs to the Priestly document... In the first part (vs. 1–14) Abraham’s call is essentially parallel to the Yahwistic report (ch. 15:7 ff.) The Priestly document reduces Abraham’s call to the purely theological.” von Rad, *Genesis*, 197.

⁸¹ Williamson, *Abraham*, 53.

the diverse needs of their source traditions. Later traditions expanded and modified earlier ones. Genesis 17 is an expansion and modification of the earlier tradition recorded in Genesis 15.⁸²

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has provided a historical survey of various positions on YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 12–22, focusing on the relationship between Genesis 15 and 17. Two basic categories emerge. First is the view that the covenants are essentially one Abrahamic covenant. This contrasts with the view that YHWH made these passages represent two separate covenants with Abraham. Both of these categories can be further divided.

The view of a single Abrahamic covenant can be divided into three sub-categories. Critical scholarship holds that Genesis 15 and 17 record different textual/source versions of the same covenant. Evangelicals hold that either Genesis 17 is the confirmation of the initial institution of the covenant in Genesis 15 or Genesis 17 is an expansion and furtherance of the covenant in Genesis 15. Regardless, the majority view of theologians throughout the history of the Christian Church appears to be that there is one covenant between YHWH and Abraham.

The view that two covenants are present is a minority view among those outside the Reformed dichotomist covenant tradition, and it can be divided into two sub-categories. The first is those who distinguished between the establishment of a gracious covenant and a conditional legal covenant. Martin Luther and the Particular Baptist Nehemiah Coxe are included in this category. The second category is those who hold that both covenants established by YHWH with Abraham are gracious, however, the second—found in Genesis 17—was established on the

⁸² According to Williamson, most tradition-critical scholars take the origins of the covenant record in Genesis 17 as the post-exilic Priestly tradition. Williamson, *Abraham*, 53–58.

condition of Abraham's obedience. This covenant also included the promise of salvation for the world. Alexander and Williamson are in this category.

This dissertation takes the second minority view of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. The covenant interactions between YHWH and Abraham resulted in two separate covenants. However, it departs from both two sub-categories within this view. The thesis does this by combining the views. This combination of these views takes the conditionality of the view of Luther and Coxe and the futuristic focus of the view of Alexander and Williamson (moving the future timeframe from Genesis 22 to Exodus 19 and beyond) to propose that YHWH engages in two different covenantal dealings with Abraham—Genesis 15 and 17—and how the covenant to Abraham in Genesis 17 is fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant as established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26. To prove the thesis, the next chapter covers the biblical record of the life of Abraham recorded in Genesis 11–25 to provide background for the exegesis of Genesis 17 provided in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3: AN EXPOSITION OF YHWH'S COVENANTAL DEALINGS WITH ABRAHAM

“The covenant of all the fathers is so far from differing substantially from ours, that it is the very same. Only the administration varies.”¹

Introduction

A selected record of the life of Abraham becomes the primary focus of the book of Genesis following the opening chapters of the book—chapters 1–11. Whereas the opening chapters of Genesis—often labeled “primeval history”—deals with multiple individuals and nations, the remainder deals specifically with Abraham and his descendants. The selectivity of the author is purposeful.² Abraham is selected as the first prominent historical figure in the history of Israel because he is the father of the people of the ancient Israelite theocracy. The events recorded in Genesis 11–25 were chosen because they had relevance to Moses’ contemporary audience as descendants of Abraham and heirs of the covenant(s) and the promises made to him by their covenant God—YHWH. It was through the person of Abraham that YHWH established the foundations of what would become ancient Israel. YHWH’s promises to Abraham of land and descendants are the foundation of this theocracy.³

This chapter provides an overview of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham. An overview is required for two reasons. First, an overview is required to provide the redemptive-

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.17.6.

² The writer of this dissertation holds to original Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Moses originally wrote to ancient Israel during its wilderness wandering. The canonical version of the Pentateuch is selective portion of the original Mosaic material with minor editorial updating and commentary. This dissertation will use narrator/author to refer generically to the author(s) and Moses to refer to the original author as it was written for the original audience.

³ A means by which God rules over Israel (his law) is the third thing needed for a theocracy. This rule/law is provided by the Mosaic covenant (see chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation).

historical background for the exegesis of Genesis 17 in the following chapter of this dissertation. Second, an overview is required to explain the relationship of these episodes for YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. The relationship between YHWH and Abraham happened over time. Genesis 17 is only one incident in a line of interactions between the parties. Recognition of the temporal development of the relationship is essential for understanding the relationship. The events recorded in Moses's account of Abraham's life are closely tied to the development of YHWH's relationship with the patriarch. This chapter seeks to explain how the events of Abraham's life help explain YHWH's covenantal dealings with him.

While the purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview, two particular events in the life of Abraham will receive greater attention. Genesis 12:1–9, Genesis 15, and Genesis 17 are the central passages for understanding YHWH's covenantal relationship with Abraham. Because of the importance of these passages, Genesis 12:1–9 and Genesis 15 will receive more attention in this chapter than the rest of the Abraham narrative, while Genesis 17 will be the topic of the next chapter of this dissertation. This chapter follows a conceptual outline of Abraham's life, 1) Abraham's origin (Gen 11:10–32), 2) Abraham's call (Gen 12:1–9), 3) Abraham's patience (Genesis 12:10–14:24), 4) Abraham's faith (Genesis 15), 5) Abraham's failure (Genesis 16), 6) Abraham's promise (Genesis 17:1–18:21), 7) Abraham's intercession (Genesis 18:22–21:18), 8) Abraham's tests (Genesis 22:1–25:11), and 9) Abraham's legacy (Genesis 22:20–25:34).

Abraham's Origin (Gen 11:10–32)

Overview

Abraham's background is critical for understanding his interactions with YHWH and other figures in the narrative. Genesis 11:10–32 provides essential background details for the narration

of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham and his place as the father of ancient theocratic Israel.

Exegesis

The genealogy of Shem recorded in Genesis 11:10–32 connects Abraham to Noah through Shem, and Abraham's narrative is central to the book of Genesis. That storyline is the conflict between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed (Gen 3:15). Following the incident with his son, Ham, Noah cursed him and favored Shem (Gen 9:25–27).

Shem is connected with the nation of Israel in Genesis 9:26 when YHWH is called "the God of Shem." YHWH was known to ancient Israel as the name of their covenant God and the God of the patriarchs (Exod 3:15; 20:1–2). The genealogy of Shem connects him to Abraham both physically and covenantally. While God does not enter into a formal covenant with Shem through the name YHWH, he is still portrayed as having some sort of positive relationship with him.⁴ The genealogy of Shem concludes with Terah and his sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Immediately following the genealogy of Shem is the genealogy of Terah (תּוֹלְדוֹת תֵּרַח) in Genesis 11:27. The proximity of these genealogies may indicate that they were placed together to emphasize different things. The context of the genealogies supports this. The genealogy of Shem consists of the names and ages of fathers and their lifespan, the names of specific sons, and a mention of other offspring.⁵ The genealogy of Terah is much more detailed.

The additional details included in the genealogy of Terah provide essential background to Abraham's call found in Genesis 12 and the subsequent narrative of Abraham's life. The first

⁴ When God made a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen 6:18; 9:11) he did not refer to himself as YHWH. The narrator does not even refer to YHWH in these passages. YHWH is used only once in Genesis 9—verse 26—and only in the historical background material in Genesis 6—verses 3, 5, 6, and 7.

⁵ Genesis 11:26 is an exception. In this verse, three specific sons are named.

detail is the repetition of the names of three of Terah's sons.⁶ The reason for mentioning Haran is apparent—he is the father of two significant individuals in the following Abraham narrative.

Haran is introduced as “the father of Lot” (Gen 11:27). Haran is also the father of Nahor's wife. Nahor is the second son of Terah to be mentioned. Nahor will play a significant role later in the Abraham narrative (Genesis 24).

The next additional detail is geography. Ur of the Chaldeans is mentioned twice in verses 27–32. First, it is mentioned as the death and birthplace of Haran (v. 28).⁷ Second, Ur of the Chaldeans is mentioned as the starting point of Abraham's journey to Canaan (v. 31). Terah's genealogy also notes Abraham's and Nahor's marriage and the names of each of their wives (v. 29). An additional fact about Abraham's wife, Sarai, that she was barren and childless is also essential background for the following narrative.

Just before the genealogy of Terah concludes with his death (v. 32), the journey of Terah, Abraham, Sarai, and Lot towards Canaan is narrated until they settle in Haran. The essence of the genealogy of Terah is found in verses 27 and 32. “Terah bore Abram, Nahor, and Haran...And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.” The additional details are parenthetical to the genealogy of Terah; however, they are essential to the following Abraham narrative.⁸

⁶ Terah may have had more than just three sons. The genealogy of Shem that ends in verse 26 differs from the previous generations. Every other generation concluded with the statement, “and he bore sons and daughters” (וַיֵּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת). This statement is not found in verse 26, rather, “sons and daughters” is replaced with “Abram, Nahor, and Haran” (אַבְרָם נָחוֹר וְחָרָן). These three men play key roles in the narrative that follows; Abram is the main character, Nahor is the grandfather of the wife of Abraham's son (Gen 24:24), and Haran is the father of Lot.

⁷ Haran's birthplace is mentioned in the context of his death. The assumption is that all three of the sons of Terah were born and lived much of their life in Ur of the Chaldeans.

⁸ A case can be made that the historical narrative recorded in Gen 11:28–31 is continued in Gen 12:1 by the use of a *wayyiqtol* (וַיֵּאָמֶר).

From Genesis 11:10–32, the audience of Genesis is introduced to Abraham’s homeland, lineage, and immediate family. These things are particularly relevant to Abraham’s call in Genesis 12:1–9. In that calling, Abraham is commanded to leave his homeland and his relatives (v. 1) and receives a promise that he will be made a great nation (v. 2). Without the background of Abraham’s origins provided in Genesis 11:10–32, the demands of this command and promise would have been lessened.

Abraham is said to have initially come from Ur of the Chaldeans. The exact location of Ur of the Chaldeans is debated.⁹ Whatever the location of Ur of the Chaldeans, other biblical texts provide a proximate location and portray it as a place of idolatry (Acts 7:2; Josh 24:2).¹⁰ The origin information about the location of Abraham’s birth and the first 75 years of his life informs the audience of his religious background and the geographical difficulty of his call. Based on the background information provided by the narrator, it is likely that Abraham was not a faithful worshipper of YHWH when he was called, and his journey and isolation were difficult.¹¹

The connection made between Shem and Abraham could be easily forgotten. However, despite his homeland, Abraham is still part of YHWH’s chosen line.¹² Abraham’s actions/circumstances will not hinder YHWH from accomplishing his purpose.¹³ Besides

⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 363. In Genesis 24:10 the land of Abraham’s family is called *Aram-Naharaim* (אֲרָם נַהְרַיִם), which according to Hamilton is “central Mesopotamia, or the region near the Habor and Euphrates rivers.” Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 144.

¹⁰ Later in the narrative, the continued idolatry of Abraham’s relatives is evident (Gen 31:19–35; 35:2–4).

¹¹ Wenham comments on these background issues of Genesis 12:1, “The quick progression from ‘land’ to ‘father’s house’ draws attention to the costliness of obedience.” Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 329.

¹² The Bible’s overarching commentary on Genesis 12:1–9 makes this clear. See below.

¹³ This is a major theme in the Abraham narrative. See below.

Abraham's lineage, background for Abraham's wife is provided by the origin information found in Genesis 11:27–32.¹⁴ She came with Abram to Canaan and was barren and childless.¹⁵ These things are the background for later events in the narrative. For the context of Genesis 12:1–9, Sarai's infertility is significant for YHWH's promise to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless and make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (Gen 12:2). How can YHWH make Abraham a great nation and bless him when his wife cannot bare him children?

Abraham's Call (Gen 12:1–9)

Overview

Following the conclusion to the genealogy of Terah (Gen 11:32), the author continues the narrative that he began earlier. That narrative began between the beginning (Gen 11:27) and conclusion (Gen 11:32) of the genealogy of Terah. The call of YHWH to Abram is the topic of Genesis 12:1–9. This narrative is foundational for understanding the rest of the redemptive history recorded in the Bible.¹⁶ The composer structures his record of YHWH's covenantal

¹⁴ Hamilton comments that some of the names provided in the passage—Terah, Sarai, and Milcah—indicated that "it is probable that the theological milieu in which Abram lived for a good bit of his life was one in which the cult focused its adoration on moon worship... The possible connection of Terah (Heb. *terah*) with the word *yārēah*, "moon," and *yeraḥ*, "lunar month," if substantiated, would suggest that Abram's family and ancestors were worshipers of the moon. One suggestion is that Terah means "Têr is (the divine) brother (or protector, Heb. *'ah*)," *têr* being a dialectal variant of *šhr*, a South Arabic term for the moon. Sarai (Sarah) is the equivalent of *šarratu*, "queen," an Akkadian translation of a Sumerian name for Ningal, the female partner of the moon-god Sin. Milcah is the same name as the goddess Malkatu, the daughter of Sin. Laban (Heb. *lābān*) means "white," and *lebānā*, "the white one," is a poetic term for the full moon. In addition, both Ur and Haran were thriving centers of moon worship; thus it is probable that the theological milieu in which Abram lived for a good bit of his life was one in which the cult focused its adoration on moon worship." Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 363. The background information describing the origins of Abram suggests idolatrous pagan roots and the radical nature of his origin call from YHWH.

¹⁵ Later, in Gen 20:12, Sarah is said to be Abraham's blood relative, his half-sister.

¹⁶ This is demonstrated in Stephens's speech in Acts 7, where he begins his summary of Israel's relationship with God with Abraham's call (Acts 7:2).

dealings with Abraham around the promise found in Genesis 12:7, “And YHWH appeared to Abraham and said, ‘to your seed, I will give this land.’” Moses recollects this same promise in the last recorded speech of Abraham (Gen 24:7).¹⁷ This promise of land and seed drives the life of Abraham. While more than just the land is mentioned in Genesis 12:1–9, the emphasis of Genesis 12:1–9 is the promise of land.

Exegesis

Genesis 12 continues the narrative that began in Genesis 11 with the use of the *wayyiqtol* verb form. ¹⁸ The reason for the details provided in Genesis 11:27–32 becomes apparent in Genesis 12:1. Abram is commanded to go (לָךְ) from his homeland, relatives, and father’s house.¹⁹ These things from which YHWH commanded Abram to separate were introduced in the previous passage. In Genesis 12:1, God’s covenantal name יהוה is used by the author. The use of יהוה connects Abraham to Shem (Gen 9:26) and the Israelites (Exod 3:13–16). The God who called Abram from idolatry was also the God of the blessed Shem and the God who delivered Israel from the slavery of Egypt. YHWH is the one who chooses to enter into a relationship with his people. From Noah on, the Genesis narrative highlights how YHWH initiates relationships and blesses those who respond.²⁰

¹⁷ The identical phrase is used, לְיִצְחָק אָתָּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ.

¹⁸ Genesis 11:32 interrupts the narrative to conclude the תּוֹלְדֵי תֵרַח. Debate about the timing of Terah’s death abounds; however, the *wayyiqtol* (וַיִּהְיֶה) that begins Genesis 11:32 should not be taken as continuing the narrative. Rather, this verb is used in a formulaic way in the תּוֹלְדֵי תֵרַח. For similar uses of וַיִּהְיֶה, see Genesis 5:8 and 9:29. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 273. The Genesis 12:1–9 narrative does not necessarily follow Terah’s death chronologically. In the Book of Acts, Stephen does mention that Abram dwelt in the Promised Land after the death of Terah (Acts 7:4). For more on the chronology of Terah and Abraham, see Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 366–67.

¹⁹ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וּמִמְּוֹלַדְתָּהּ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיהָ

²⁰ Noah’s response of obedience to the call of God begins in Gen 6:14. He and his family are blessed with salvation because he responded in obedience to the command to “make an ark for yourself” (עָשָׂה לְךָ תֵּבָה).

The command found in verse 1 is two-fold. First, Abram was to go from, and then he was to go to. The exact location of Abram’s journey is left open in verse 1. The primary part of the action demanded by YHWH in verse 1 is departure. He departs from his past life for a new life in a new location. Before Abram knows the destination of his journey, the purpose for his departure is explained in verses 2 and 3a. The use of first-person *waw* cohortative verbs expresses the purpose. YHWH commands Abram to leave his homeland, relatives, and father’s house so he might make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, and bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him.²¹ YHWH’s plan for Abram required him to separate from his past.

Do the things mentioned in Genesis 12:2 constitute a promise or promises to Abram? The syntax of Genesis 12:1–3 indicates that the purpose of Abram’s separation from his past life is so that YHWH might do these things for him or to him. No oath or promise is found in these verses. The things YHWH spoke to Abram are fundamentally the purpose of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abram. These covenantal dealings required that Abram be separate. Verse 1 might be considered a call to Abram to sanctify himself so that he might devote himself to YHWH’s purposes.

Two other verbal clauses are found in these purpose clauses. The first occurs at the end of verse 2, “and you will be a blessing,” and the second is at the end of verse 3, “and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you.” The verb found in the MT of verse 2 is a *wav* plus imperative (וְהָיָה).²² The LXX has a future (καὶ ἔσται).²³ No evangelical English translation follows

²¹ וְאָנֹכִי לְגֹי גְדוֹל וְאֶבְרָכְךָ וְאֶמְדְּלֶהָ שְׁמִי וְהָיָה בְרָכָה: וְאֶבְרָכְךָ מִכָּל כִּי וּמִקְדָּלְךָ אָאָר.

²² Williamson, *Sealed*, 79.

²³ וְהָיָה is found in the Samaritan text (SP). A literal translation of the LXX would require its vorluge to read וְהָיָה.

the MT.²⁴ This lines up with what seems to be intended as a parallel construction in verse 3.

Verse 3 ends with the clause *וַיְבָרֶכְנוּ בְךָ כָּל מְשִׁפְחֵת הָאָדָמָה*. Moses uses a *weqatal* verb form to note a future action. The LXX also translates this cause with a future tense (καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς).

The use of *weqatal* verbs in the context of divine speech is predictive.²⁵ This predictive speech indicates the ultimate purpose for YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham. In order for Abram to be blessed (v. 2) and for all the families to be blessed in him (v. 3), he must first separate from his past so that YHWH might make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, and bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him. The subordinating use of *wav* indicates that by means of making Abram a great nation, blessing him, and making his name great, YHWH will make him a great blessing and bless all the families of the earth through him. When YHWH makes a prediction or a prophecy, it can be considered a promise, even without a formal oath.

The promises contained in Genesis 12:1–3 are blessings to Abram (v. 2b) and the blessing of all the families of the earth through him (v. 3b). However, these are not unconditional promises.²⁶ The fruition of these promises required Abram’s obedience to YHWH’s command to

²⁴ English Standard Version, New American Standard Bible (1995), New International Version (1984), New King James Version. Evangelical translations follow the LXX and the “general rule” expressed by Joüon, “To express purpose or consecution the cohortative is used for the 1st person, the imperative for the 2nd pers., and the jussive for the 3rd pers.” Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. T. Muraoka (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006), §116h.

²⁵ When divine speech is spoken through a prophet using the same syntax, a *weqatal* verb form can be labeled “prophetic speech.”

²⁶ See Richard L. Pratt Jr., “Historical Contingencies and Biblical Predictions,” in *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke*, ed. J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 183.

depart from his homeland, relatives, and father's house.²⁷ These are promises based on a condition.

The destination of Abram's journey is revealed in Genesis 12:5.²⁸ Sometime between his initial call (Gen 12:1) and his arrival in Canaan, Abram was shown the destination of his journey. The author writes that "they (Abram, Sarai, and Lot) went out to go to the land of Canaan" (Gen 12:5b). The original audience of Genesis knew that Canaan was the destination of Abram's journey after his departure. However, the destination is not mentioned up to this point in the narrative.²⁹

Verse 4 narrates Abram's obedience to YHWH's command. The narrator is emphatic that Abram's actions are in response to the command, "and Abram went according to the speech of YHWH to him."³⁰ The *wayyiqtol* verb form may indicate a temporal sequence in narrative discourse; however, following the imperative, it is better taken as a logical consequence. This is supported by the use of the preposition פ indicating correspondence.³¹ Verse 4 stresses that Abram went in response to the command.

²⁷ The Genesis narrative of Abraham portrays his departure as simple obedience. Elsewhere in the Bible, his response is described as a gracious act of YHWH. For example, Nehemiah is recorded as saying, "YHWH...chose Abram and brought him out (הוֹצֵאתוֹ)..." (Neh 9:7). The use of a *hiphal* verb emphasizes the action of YHWH rather than Abram in this event. See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

²⁸ The book of Hebrews indicates that Abram did not originally know the location of his journey (Heb 11:8).

²⁹ The location of the destination is not given in Genesis 12:1, maybe to echo the narrative found in Genesis 22. At the beginning of that narrative, the author portrays Abraham's obedience in a similar manner to when God said to him, "Offer him (Isaac) there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will tell you" (Gen 22:2b). In the Genesis 22 narrative, the audience is told that "God tested Abraham." In both Genesis 12 and 22, Abraham's ultimate destination is left to him to find out before he obeys. His journeys to these unknown locations are part of the narrator's affirmation of Abraham's obedience to his audience. These are two examples of how the author presents Abraham as the prototypical obedient Israel. For the original audience, Abram is an exemplar in his journey to the Promised Land.

³⁰ וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו יְהוָה.

³¹ Most English translations read, "So Abram went...."

The following clause tempers the emphasis on Abram’s obedience, “and Lot went with him.”³² This verse does not say, “And Abram took Lot.” The narrative is clear that Lot went. The author narrates the action of Lot. However, the narrative does highlight that he went with Abram by deviating from the typical word order in narrative discourse. Rather than *wayyiqtol*-subject word order, the author places between the verb and subject the suffixed preposition אִתּוֹ. Abram was the one commanded, but Lot also went. There is a possible subtle reference to the fact that Abram did not completely separate from his relatives. This inference is supported by the next verse, where Lot is specifically referred to as “the son of his (Abram’s) brother (בְּרֵן-אֲחִיו) whom he took with.”³³ Later in the narrative, in Genesis 13 and 19, the audience is shown why allowing or taking Lot with him was an unwise move by Abram.

The mention of Abram’s age at the time of his departure from Haran provides the background for the chronology of the rest of the record of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham. It is probably not coincidental that Sarai is mentioned as Abram’s wife immediately after his age since the age of the patriarch and matriarch will factor in the later narrative.³⁴

Commentators have debated the location where Abraham received his call. The location of Ur of the Chaldeans and whether it occurred in Ur or Haran is questioned.³⁵ Perhaps the mention of Abram’s departing from Haran in the narrative, rather than his homeland of Ur of the Chaldeans, is because Haran was where he acquired his wealth (v. 5). This wealth becomes an issue between him and Lot in Genesis 13. Genesis 12:4–5 provides the background information

³² וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לְוֶט.

³³ וַיִּקַּח אֲבָרָם אֶת־שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּרֵן־אֲחִיו.

³⁴ The fact that Sarai is not mentioned like Lot in verse 4 is another reason to view Lot’s initiative and presence with Abram on his journey from his homeland, relatives, and father’s house as significant.

³⁵ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 148.

for the next chapter. This background is provided in the midst of the narration of Abram’s obedience.

In verse 6, the author begins his focus on the land, continuing through Genesis 15.³⁶ In verses 6–9, Abram “tours” the Promised Land. Three significant things are recorded in these verses. First, in verse 7, YHWH explicitly promises to give the land to Abram’s seed.³⁷ The syntax of this clause stresses the recipients of the land. Abram will not possess the land; his seed will. While not the focus of this promise, the promise assumes that Abram will have a descendant. Earlier, the narrator had made an explicit statement about the barrenness of Sarai (Gen 11:30). The barrenness of Sarai and this promise becomes a point of tension in the following chapters.

Verse 7 is also the first explicit reference to an appearance of YHWH (וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה) to Abram. This phrase occurs again in Genesis 17:1 and 18:1. This way of describing YHWH’s interaction with Abraham is absent from Genesis 15, where “the word of YHWH came to Abraham in a vision” (Gen 15:1).³⁸ No details are provided in Genesis 12:7 about how YHWH appeared to Abram, nor in Genesis 17. However, in Genesis 18, the appearance of YHWH is described as in human form (Gen 18:1–2). These three theophanic encounters in Abraham’s life (Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1) occurred at times when a confirmation of the initial implicit promises of land and seed that were made when YHWH called Abram (Gen 12:1–2) was about to be given. These two things are implicit in the first conditional promise by YHWH to make Abram a great

³⁶ The following overview of the geography of the land and the later mention by YHWH of the land’s geography form an *inclusio* for Genesis 12–15. Even in Genesis 14, geography plays a central role in the narrative.

³⁷ לְיִרְעֶה אֶת־אֶרֶץ הַנְּזֻחַת.

³⁸ הִנֵּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם בְּמִצְרָה.

nation.³⁹ Land and seed are essential for the theocratic covenant promised in Genesis 17 and enacted in the Mosaic covenant.⁴⁰ The later Israelite theocracy is the fruition of the purpose of Abram’s journey to the Promised Land (Gen 12:2).

The second significant thing recorded in verses 6–9 is the geographic scope of Abram's journey through the Promised Land.⁴¹ Abram’s journey in Genesis 12:4–9 spans from the north of the Promised Land to the south. He entered the land in the north, coming from Haran. He “went through the land,”⁴² from the north until the middle, Shechem. From Shechem, he traversed the central part of the Promised Land, Bethel and Ai. Finally, Abram’s journey through the Promised Land brought him to the Negev, the southern region. His arrival in the Negev places him near Egypt, which explains why he takes refuge from a famine there in the next passage (Gen 12:11–20).

The third significant thing recorded in verses 6–9 is what Abram does during his journey through the Promised Land. During his journey, he responded to the promise in verse 7 by building altars to YHWH. The relationship between the clauses “and he (YHWH) said, ‘to your seed I will give this land’”⁴³ and “he built there an altar to YHWH”⁴⁴ is one of result.

³⁹ In the exegetical and biblical-theological portions of this dissertation, an intentional attempt is made to differentiate between nation and theocracy. A nation consists of two things: people/descendants and land. While a nation is required for a theocracy, a third thing—a divine covenant—is required to transform that nation into a theocracy. At this point in the narrative, the idea of a theocratic nation is explicit. The idea that Abram’s descendants will be a theocracy in the Promised Land is not explicit until Genesis 17 (see Chapter 4 of this dissertation).

⁴⁰ The word translated “nation” in Genesis 12:2 is גו'. This word is most commonly used for a geopolitical entity. “Abram’s descendants will be those who grow into the status of a nation.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 371.

⁴¹ “The key points in the journeys of Abraham, then, parallel those of Jacob, and both of these, in turn, parallels the key points in the conquest of the land of Canaan as recounted in the book of Joshua.” Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 148.

⁴² וַיַּעְבֹּר אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ

⁴³ וַיֹּאמֶר לְזָרְעוֹ אֲתוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

⁴⁴ וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה

YHWH's promise resulted in Abram's construction of an altar to YHWH. However, Abram did not build just one altar. He built at least one more altar during his journey through the Promised Land (v. 8). In verse 8, Abram performs another explicitly religious act, other than altar building, as he "called on the name of YHWH." His religious devotion that the author records in verses 7–9 demonstrates Abram's devotion to YHWH. Whatever allegiance he had to pagan deities in his homeland had been supplanted by his devotion to the one who called him and made promises to him. The purpose of these altars may have also demonstrated his confidence in YHWH's promise of the land while also marking for those already in the land his ultimate legal claim on that land.⁴⁵

Abraham's Patience (Genesis 12:10–14:24)

Overview

To describe the next narrative (Gen 12:10–20) as an element of Abraham's patience may seem a stretch. However, the author's literary arrangement of the next three episodes in Abram's life shows his intention to do so. Abram's journey to Egypt was not because of a lack of faith; rather, the journey was out of necessity.

⁴⁵ "Thus the brief itinerary of Abram described in vv 5–9 takes him from the northern to the southern border of the land. He not only sees what has been promised to him; he walks through it, and he lives and worships in it. Symbolically he has taken possession of it." Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 336. Travel itineraries such as the one found in Gen 12:5–9 were used in the ancient Near East to provide a "map" of a ruler's domain. William W. Hallo, "The Road to Emar," *JCS* 18 (1964): 62.

Exegesis of Gen 12:10–20

He begins Genesis 15 with the phrase “after these things...”⁴⁶ to mark the events recorded between Genesis 12:1–9 and chapter 15 as significant for the formal establishment of the covenant (Gen 15:18) that codified the promises of Abram’s calling.⁴⁷

The absence of YHWH at the beginning of the narrative of Abram’s sojourn (גִּוּר) in Egypt might be considered significant for the story.⁴⁸ However, the narrator does not criticize Abram’s action. His departure from the Promised Land is justified by the fact that a famine was in the land. This was no ordinary famine; it is said to be a “severe famine”⁴⁹ in verse 10.⁵⁰ Verse 10 mentions famine twice! Abram probably viewed this famine as an existential threat to the fulfillment of the promises.⁵¹ The journey of Abram to Egypt is described as a sojourn—a temporary stay. His stay in Egypt was meant for his survival—this episode does not show that he gave up on YHWH’s promises.⁵²

However, Abram is criticized in the narrative for his behavior towards his wife. This criticism is implicit in the rebuke by Pharaoh (Gen 12:18). His behavior is portrayed as

⁴⁶ אַתְּרוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה.

⁴⁷ The narrative structure of Genesis 12:10–14:24 is divided into three parts by the use of וַיְהִי in Genesis 12:10 and 14:1, and a change in location and the mention of Lot in Genesis 13:1. The introduction of background information in these verses also supports this division.

⁴⁸ YHWH is not introduced as a character until verse 17.

⁴⁹ כִּי־כָבֵד הָרָעָב.

⁵⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 343. Some commentators criticize Abram for his departure (Belcher, *Genesis*, 115), although the text does not.

⁵¹ The reason Abram went down (וַיֵּרָד) to Egypt is explained by the explanatory כִּי clause at the end of verse 10.

⁵² Many commentators and translations believe that Genesis 12:16 records Pharaoh’s compensation for his actions (“and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels” (NASB, NIV); however, this comment could also be a reminder that Abram had these things that he previously acquired in Haran (Gen 12:5). This comment also serves as a bridge to the next episode in Abram’s life (Genesis 13).

repugnant even by the pagan ruler of Egypt. Not only did this potentially endanger the seed promise, but it was evidence to the audience that even the Gentiles knew that adultery of this sort was wrong.⁵³

Abram's journey to Egypt turned negative because he feared the Egyptians (Gen 12:11–12). Rather than providing an opportunity to bless Abram and find a blessing through him (Gen 12:2), Abram forces YHWH to afflict the Egyptians (Gen 12:17).⁵⁴ YHWH's action to protect Abram and Sarai demonstrates that he would not let Abram's actions interfere with his plan.

The narrative continues in Genesis 13. While re-introducing Lot into the narrative, the author continues his focus on Abram.⁵⁵ Abram returns to the location he left before he went down to Egypt—the Negev. The narrative recounts Abram's journey back to one of the places where he initially responded to YHWH's promise (Gen 12:8). His movement reminded himself of the promises of YHWH at the altar he originally built between Bethel and Ai.⁵⁶

Exegesis of Genesis 13

This reminder of the promises of YHWH and his presence in the Promised Land prompted Abram to react to the conflict between his party and Lot's in a magnanimous way. Abram's assurance that "his seed" would receive the land from YHWH (Gen 12:7) allowed him to defer

⁵³ The Israelites, on the verge of the destruction of other pagan nations (Num 21:2), were not destroying innocent people (Gen 15:16). They were great sinners before YHWH and culpable for their sin (Rom 1:32).

⁵⁴ Rather than a parallel with the judgment upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus, this episode demonstrated that Abram behaved contrary to his calling. In the case of the Exodus, the Pharaoh and the Egyptians were rightly judged by YHWH.

⁵⁵ Even though "his wife and all that was his, and Lot" (וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לּוֹ וְלוֹט) are mentioned as going up with Abram, the singular verb (וַיַּעַל), the use of the pronoun הוּא, and the note about Abram's wealth (v. 2) make this emphasis on Abram clear.

⁵⁶ "The narrator is surely suggesting that Abram is trying to recapture his previous experience of God." Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 351.

the location of his area to Lot’s choice (Gen 13:9). This episode not only demonstrated Abram’s confidence but also provides the background for the following narrative (Genesis 14) and Genesis 18–19.⁵⁷ YHWH’s providential care for Abram is displayed when Lot “chose for himself all the Jordan (valley)”⁵⁸ in verse 11. In verse 12, the narrator notes explicitly that Abram settled in “the land of Canaan,” while Lot settled outside the Promised Land in/near Sodom.⁵⁹

Unlike the previous episode (Gen 12:10–20), the appearance of YHWH in the narrative does come in a moment of crisis for Abram. In verse 14, YHWH speaks to Abram in the context of his separation from Lot.⁶⁰ This speech comes in the context of a reaffirmation of the promises at a point of crisis in Abram’s life. The word from YHWH in verses 14–17 echoes his word to Abram in Genesis 12:7. However, a close reading of the text provides three details that differ.

The core promises of land and seed made to Abram are reiterated in verse 15. However, in verse 15, the land is emphasized.⁶¹ Unlike in Genesis 12:7, where the preposition ל is first in the clause (לְזַרְעָה) to focus on the recipients of the land,⁶² Genesis 13:15 fronts the direct object—

⁵⁷ Following Lot’s liberation in Gen 14:16, the narrative focuses on the central narratives of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham (Genesis 15–17) until Sodom and Lot reappear in the story in Genesis 18–19.

⁵⁸ וַיִּבְחַר-לוֹ לְאוֹת כָּל-כְּנָעַן הַיַּרְדֵּן.

⁵⁹ אַבְרָם וְשָׂרָה בְּאֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן וְלוֹט וְשָׂרָה בְּעַרְי הַכְּנָעִי וַיֵּאָהֵל עַד-סְדוֹם. Verse 12 is outside of the narrative proper since the author does not use a *wayyiqtol*. Verses 12–13 foreshadow Genesis 18–19.

⁶⁰ וַיְהִי הָאָמֶר אֲלֵ-אַבְרָם אַחֲרֵי הַפָּרֶדֶת לְאוֹת מֵעַמּוֹ.

⁶¹ The importance of the promise of the land is also emphasized by the ABBA chiasm. The A portions are imperatives for Abram to observe, while the B portions are the promises. Daniel I. Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God’s Grand Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 81. Abram is commanded to come to a greater realization about the land by obeying the imperatives. The B portions stress the promise of future descendants to Abram, while the command to observe (v. 14), and journey through (v. 17) the land indicate that Abram is “claiming it proleptically as God-promised territory.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 395.

⁶² “Indicates the goal of a process where something has been transferred to.” van der Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §39.11.1.b.

“all the land.”⁶³ An implicit seed promise is found in the word order in Genesis 12:7. In Genesis 13, the author focuses on the land promise. This is seen in the comment of verse 12 and the narration of verse 18. These verses also explain the addition to the promise, “To you I will give (all the land).”⁶⁴ Verse 12 narrates Abram’s settling in the land of Canaan, and verse 18 suggests that he settled in a somewhat permanent manner in Mamre.⁶⁵ The focus on the Promised Land and Abram’s possession of it in Gen 13:15 differs from Gen 12:7.

The implicit promise of seed found in Gen 12:7 is expanded in Gen 13:16, which seems to provide background for the narrative of Genesis 15, where YHWH formally covenants possession of the land by his seed to Abram. As will be seen later, Abram’s first question to YHWH is about a natural heir (Gen 15:2). Abram’s acceptance of the promise of land seems to have been solidified by Genesis 15. The events recorded in Genesis 13 and 14 demonstrate this.

The way in which the land is identified is different. A softened imperative proceeds the way that Abram is to identify the Promised Land. YHWH commands Abram to “lift up his eyes to see”⁶⁶ the land.⁶⁷ In Genesis 12:1–9, Abram knows the land because he traveled through it. In Genesis 13:14–17, he knows the land because he saw all of it at once.⁶⁸ In the conclusion of

⁶³ אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ.

⁶⁴ לָךְ אֶת-הַנֶּגֶב.

⁶⁵ וַיֵּאָהֶל אַבְרָם וַיָּבֵא וַיִּשָׁב בְּאֵלֶיךָ מִמְּכָה. Wenham comments, “The oaks of Mamre (cf. on 12:6), some twenty miles south of Bethlehem, became the chief center of Abram’s movements, near which he would purchase his only property, the burial cave of Machpelah.” Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 353. Stephen mentions the cave (used as a burial site/tomb) as the only location owned by the patriarchs (Acts 7:16).

⁶⁶ שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה.

⁶⁷ The use of the particle of entreaty, *נָא*, is unusual for an imperative given by YHWH. Hamilton notes that this only occurs four times. He writes, “In each of these four passages God asks somebody to do something that transcends human comprehension.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 394.

⁶⁸ This is reminiscent of Moses (Deut 32:49). Neither man takes possession of the land. Moses was prevented because of his disobedience (Deut 32:50–52). Abram does not take possession of the land because the time was not right (Gen 15:13–16).

YHWH's speech to Abram, he is commanded to travel through the land again⁶⁹ to examine it more closely.⁷⁰

The third notable difference is the mention of the perpetuity of the ownership of the land. The prepositional phrase עַד־עוֹלָם is used in verse 15 for the first time in Genesis. The noun עוֹלָם has a semantic range of meanings, including “forever,” “eternity,” or “long duration.” The significance of the word for the original audience would be that the promise of the land still applied to the ancient Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land.⁷¹

Abram's actions and response to the reiteration of the promises form an *inclusio* with Genesis 12:1–9. Abram traveled through the Promised Land and saw it, and he built another altar to commemorate his experience. His actions are reversed in Genesis 13. Abram saw the land, traveled through it, and then built an altar to YHWH.

Exegesis of Genesis 14

With Abram's confidence in the land promise, Genesis 14 introduces two characters whose association shapes later biblical revelation—the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, king of Salem. In addition, the audience is reminded again of Lot's association with Sodom (Gen 14:11–12) and Abram's location (v. 13).

The author begins a new narrative in Genesis 14:1 by using וַיְהִי. While in the literary arrangement of Genesis, chapter 14 follows the previous events, the exact chronology of the

⁶⁹ קוּם הַתְּהַלֵּךְ בְּאַרְצוֹ

⁷⁰ The command is for Abram to “explore” the land's “length and breadth” (לְאַרְכָּהּ וּלְרֵחְבֶּיהָ). In Genesis 12:1–9, Abram had journeyed from north to south (assuming he went directly from one location to the other).

⁷¹ See chapter 6 of this dissertation for the biblical-theological importance of עוֹלָם for YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.

events is not specified.⁷² Amid all the characters mentioned in Genesis 14, Abram’s role as savior is stressed.⁷³

Following a brief account of the battle (vv. 1–12), the narrative focuses on Abram. First, Abram is informed of the situation (v. 13). Second, Abram’s thoughts are exposed (v. 14).⁷⁴ The *wayyiqtol* form וַיִּשְׁמָע is properly taken as a logical, not temporal, sequence.⁷⁵ The narrator makes clear that the captive of his relative (לוֹט) is the primary motive for Abram’s actions, as he makes no mention of others. The narrative continues with Abram’s third action— “he mustered his trained men.”⁷⁶ Abram’s fourth action is his pursuit of the captives (vv. 14b–15). Finally, Abram brought back the captives and their goods (v. 16).⁷⁷

In the concluding verses of Genesis 14, the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, king of Salem, are set in contrast.⁷⁸ The narration of their reactions to the deeds of Abram demonstrates

⁷² The historicity of the events recorded in Genesis 14 is an important aspect for the narrator since he places the narrative within the reigns of specifically named rulers (v. 1), even though modern scholars debate the exact identification of these rulers. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 399.

⁷³ Abram is identified as the “hero” of the narrative. Commentators tend to emphasize the role of Abram and his servants, as does the text (Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 164). However, the text specifically mentions Abram’s allies (v. 13, 24). These allies surely had a part to play in Abram’s victory. The narrator’s interest is in Abram, not the exact details of the event.

⁷⁴ Verse 14 highlights that it was Abram’s concern for his relative (Lot), not Lot and his possessions that provoked his reactions (v. 12). The mess of the fugitive (v. 13) probably was that Lot and his possession were taken.

⁷⁵ וַיִּשְׁמָע could also be taken as a state of affairs or condition. Abram was told, and his condition was that of knowing (or having heard) that “his relative had been captured.” Functionally, וַיִּשְׁמָע serves to explain why Abram mustered his servant and pursued. Even though Abram’s actions temporally follow his “having heard,” the reason for his reaction is that his nephew had been taken. This is the sense given by most English translations that use “when” (“When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men.” NASB).

⁷⁶ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-הַחֲבָנִיּוֹת. Following SP and LXX (ἠρόθμησεν).

⁷⁷ The mention of “Lot and his possessions” (וְגַם אֶת-לֹוט אֶתְיוֹ וְרִכְשׁוֹ) are emphasized by the use of גַּם possibly to remind the audience of the previous episode.

⁷⁸ Wenham comments, “The grudging attitude of the king of Sodom toward his great benefactor Abram (v 21) stands in sharp contrast both to Melchizedek’s open acknowledgment of divine blessing on Abram (vv 18–20) and also to Abram’s generosity to those he has saved (vv 22–24).” Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 354.

this contrast. The action of the king of Sodom is stressed in verse 17—“(he) came out to meet Abram after the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him.”⁷⁹

The previous verse mentions that Abram “brought back,” thereby the assumption is that he had already returned from the battle. The *wayyiqtol* form וַיֵּצֵא does not continue the narrative. The clause “the king of Sodom went out to meet him” breaks the narrative; it does not simply continue it. The next prepositional phrase, “after his return...” supports this interpretation. The purpose, indicated by the use of לְ, is the focus of verse 17. Later in verse 21, the author narrates why he went out to meet Abram. Before this, Melchizedek, king of Salem, is introduced. Melchizedek is introduced in verse 18 with an adversative use of וְ.⁸⁰ Melchizedek’s appearance is in order to bless Abram (v. 19). He blessed Abram materially, with bread and wine, and verbally.

Grammatically, whether Melchizedek’s direct speech is a verbal blessing for Abram is unclear. The verb בָּרַךְ does not always connote a verbal action.⁸¹ The author may be simply narrating two chronologically sequential actions by Melchizedek— “he blessed him and then said...” The fact that Melchizedek’s direct speech does not mention a personal blessing upon Abram suggests that his blessing of Abram was in addition to his declaration of the blessedness

⁷⁹ וַיֵּצֵא מֶלֶךְ-סֹדֶם לִקְרַאתוֹ אַחֲרֵי שׁוּבוֹ מֵהַכּוֹת אֶת-כְּדֻרְלַעֲמֹר וְאֶת-הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ

⁸⁰ וְ could be used in this case as indicating a compound subject—both the king of Sodom and Melchizedek came out to meet Abram. The singular verb וַיֵּצֵא and the context suggest a contrast, not a compound subject. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 165.

⁸¹ Genesis 24:35 suggests that the “blessing” of YHWH on Isaac was material. Blessing by means of speech is often indicated by the use of the infinitive אָמַר of content; see Gen 1:22, Num 6:23.

of God Most High (vv. 19–20).⁸² Abram and his God are declared by Melchizedek to be blessed in the author’s recording of Melchizedek’s direct speech.⁸³

The epitaphs ascribed in the doxology of Melchizedek and Abram’s later response to the king of Sodom (vv. 22) indicate that “God Most High”⁸⁴ is YHWH.⁸⁵ Melchizedek serves as a fulfillment of Genesis 12:3—he blesses Abram and receives a blessing. Melchizedek is also portrayed as a prototypical Israelite priest.⁸⁶

In contrast, the king of Sodom does not bless Abram. The first words from his mouth are demands—“give the people to me.”⁸⁷ This demand closely follows the reaction of Abram to the doxology of Melchizedek. While he concedes that Abram can take the goods, the stress of the words of the king of Sodom is on his demand.

Abram’s response to the king of Sodom is in the context of remaining independent from political alliances during his sojourn in the Promised Land. He is quick to relinquish anything that is not his so that he would not be obligated to the king of Sodom (v. 23). The only things Abram demands were the provisions used in association with the battle (v. 24). The narrator is clear that Abram strongly desired to remain independent of the king of Sodom.⁸⁸ As seen below,

⁸² In this case, *וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ* functions as a summary of verse 18.

⁸³ Evangelical translations supply “be” (Blessed be Abram...And blessed be God Most High) in verses 19 and 20. However, both the MT and LXX simply use a participle (*וְיָרֵךְ* and *εὐλογημένος*) in predicate position. No volitional verbs are found in these verses.

⁸⁴ *וַיִּבְרַךְ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָם.*

⁸⁵ Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 410.

⁸⁶ Melchizedek serves as a prototypical Israelite priest by blessing YHWH, blessing the people, and receiving tithes.

⁸⁷ *תֵּן-לִי הַמֶּלֶךְ.*

⁸⁸ Abram had a mutual alliance with the local people. Genesis 14:13 mentions Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre as Abram’s allies. These allies were with Abram at the conclusion of the battle (v. 24). Abram’s reaction to Melchizedek is different because he does not represent political power like the king of Sodom. Rather he represents

Abraham's later intercession for Sodom (Genesis 18) did not come about because of an obligation to their king.

Significance of Abraham's Patience (Genesis 12:10–14:24)

The events recorded in the biblical record of Abram's life in Genesis 12:10–14:24 provide essential background for Genesis 15. Genesis 15 is the foundational chapter for the engagement of the authors of the New Testament with YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.⁸⁹ The opening verse of Genesis 15—“Now after these things”—demonstrates the importance of the account of Abraham's patience.

Abram is portrayed by the author in Genesis 12:10–14:24 as confident with the promises YHWH made to him at the time of his calling (Gen 12:1–9). His patience and contentment do not mean that Abram was perfect, as seen in the episode of Sarai and Pharaoh. However, even Abram's failure in that episode will not prevent YHWH from accomplishing his purpose for Abraham.

YHWH's purpose for Abraham is reiterated in the middle of this account of Abram's life. In Genesis 13:15–16, the YHWH's promises of land and seed are reconfirmed to Abram. In Genesis 14, YHWH's hand is upon Abram as he saves his relative and is blessed by Melchizedek.

God (v. 18) as “a priest of the Most High God” (וְהָיָא כֹהֵן לְאֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן). While Melchizedek is the king of Salem, the added epitaph emphasizes his religious role.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Abraham's Faith (Genesis 15)

Exegesis

Genesis 15 begins with an indefinite time marker “after these things.”⁹⁰ This phrase introduces a new passage while emphasizing its connection to the previous narrative(s). This is not the same for Chapter 14 since it begins with וַיְהִי marking it as a new episode in the Abraham narrative. An interpretive question about whether to take “these things” (Gen 15:1) as the events of chapter 14 or all of the previous narration of Abram's life from his call (Genesis 12:1–14:24) is answered by the content of the chapter. The primary topic of Genesis 15 is Abram's relationship to the land. While the lack of seed for Abram is his concern (v. 2), this concern concerns his lack of an heir (vv. 3–4). The discussion of a lack of an heir leads to the ultimate purpose of the encounter, the formal covenanting of the land of Canaan (v. 18). Abram's concern over his lack of an heir is quickly resolved by his faith in YHWH (v. 6) concerning the promise of a physical heir (as opposed to an adopted one) made in verse 4.⁹¹

The question (vv. 2–3) arises from the promise in Genesis 13:15, “All the land which you see, to you and your seed I will give it forever.” Abram's concern in Genesis 15 is for those who will inherit the Promised Land.⁹² The idea that Genesis 12:1–15:21 is one literary unit is supported by the narrator's use of *inclusio* about the possession of the land (Gen 12:1; 15:18–

⁹⁰ אַתָּר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה.

⁹¹ The New Testament's use of Genesis 15 will be discussed in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

⁹² The Hebrew word וַיְהִי appears for the first time in Genesis 15:4. It occurs four times in Genesis 15. “Abram's question focused not on YHWH's promise of descendants—the stars represented God's explanation of how that would be fulfilled (vv. 2–5)—but on the promise of the land.” Daniel Isaac Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 87.

21).⁹³ “These things” (Gen 15:1) are the events of Abram’s life recorded up to this point in the narrative.⁹⁴

The first prohibition given by YHWH to Abram begins the divine speech in verse 1. Abram is commanded, “Do not fear.”⁹⁵ Not only does this prohibition indicate to the audience the uniqueness of the following, but the encounter is also introduced as “the word of YHWH came to Abram in a vision.”⁹⁶ Two things are important in this clause. First, how “the word of YHWH came to Abram” was “in a vision.” Earlier in the narrative, no mention of how YHWH spoke to Abram is made. The Hebrew word *מַחְזֵה* translated “vision,” only occurs two other times (Num 24:4, 16) as a means by which YHWH reveals himself.⁹⁷ Numbers 24 is the passage where YHWH prevents Balaam from cursing the people of Israel. In Numbers 24:4 and 16, the vision that Balaam sees is “the vision of (from) the Almighty.”⁹⁸ In the Balaam narrative, YHWH is the Almighty.

In Genesis 15, Abram encounters “the Almighty.” Although this epithet for YHWH is not used in the chapter, it is YHWH revealing himself as the Almighty who encounters Abram. Confirmation of this interpretation is found in Genesis 17:1 and Exodus 6:3. God had not yet entered into a covenant with the people of Israel; therefore, he did not reveal himself to the patriarchs by his covenant name. As will be shown below, even though a covenant is made

⁹³ Genesis 13:15 is also in the center of the passage (Genesis 12:1–15:21), which stresses possession of the land.

⁹⁴ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 169.

⁹⁵ *אַל־תִּירָא אֲבָרָם*. Up to this point in the narrative, YHWH’s commands have been positive (Gen 12:1; 13:14, 17).

⁹⁶ *הִנֵּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אֲבָרָם בְּמַחְזֵה*.

⁹⁷ *מַחְזֵה* also occurs in Ezekiel 13:7 in the context of false visions. The usual word for prophetic vision is *חִזְיוֹן*.

⁹⁸ *מַחְזֵה שָׂדֵי*.

between Abram as an individual and YHWH in Genesis 15, Abram’s seed also has an interest in the covenant.⁹⁹

The second important thing about the clause “the word of YHWH came to Abram in a vision”¹⁰⁰ is its prophetic nature.¹⁰¹ The clause “the word of YHWH came…” occurs almost exclusively in a prophetic context.¹⁰² This introductory clause and the syntax of the discourse in the rest of the chapter indicate that the significance of the events recorded in the chapter is in the future—it is a prophetic text.¹⁰³

Following the prophetic introduction and the prohibition, the reason for the prohibition is given at the end of verse 1, “I (YHWH or the Almighty) am a shield for you, your reward is very great.”¹⁰⁴ In response to the prohibition, or probably more to the reason for the prohibition,

⁹⁹ The covenant is made with seedless Abram for the benefit of his future seed (Gen 15:18). Ancient Israel acknowledged this (Deut 7:8).

¹⁰⁰ הָיָה דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם בְּמִטָּה.

¹⁰¹ Sailhamer notes, “The central subject of the chapter deals with the announcement of events that lie far in the future (vv.13–16); thus, it is important to the author that Abram’s credentials as a prophet be clearly established and defended.” Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 168. The ultimate fulfillment of this covenant will be discussed in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

¹⁰² The majority of the occurrences of this clause are found in the prophetic corpus. The only place where this clause is not used for revelation to a prophet is 1 Kings 6:11, where Solomon is the recipient. However, Solomon plays a prophetic role in this context, like Abram in Genesis 15. Hamilton comments, “That God’s word was revealed most frequently to the prophets through a vision may suggest that in Gen. 15:1 Abram is represented as a prophet, a designation specifically attached to him in 20:7.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 418. “By using this formula, the narrator appears to cast Abram as the paradigmatic prophet receiving revelation from God.” Block, *Covenant*, 84.

¹⁰³ In chapter 6 of this dissertation, this will be brought out in the biblical-theological treatment of YHWH’s covenant dealings with Abraham, particularly in Paul’s use of Genesis 15 in Galatians 3.

¹⁰⁴ אֲנֹכִי מִגֵּן לְךָ שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד. The relationship between this clause and the prohibition is grammatically ambiguous. Most commentators interpret the clause as causal, “do not fear because I am your shield and very great reward.” Some commentators and translations take the final verbless clause as a declarative statement, “Your reward shall be very great” (NASB).

Abram questions YHWH. Abram seems to have in mind his previous encounter with YHWH (Gen 13:14–17) because he brings up the issue of his heir.¹⁰⁵

A question about the author's motivation for including the specific name of Abram's steward, Eliezer of Damascus, as his heir is answered by considering the development of YHWH's promises to Abram since his call. Abram had been called from his past to the Promised Land (Gen 12:1). The purpose of this was to make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, and bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him (Gen 12:2–3). The rest of the narrative focuses on the Promised Land and Abram's seed. This is demonstrated in the explicit mention of these things in Genesis 12:7; 13:14–17; 15:5, 7, and 18.¹⁰⁶

Doubt does not seem to motivate the narrator to mention Eliezer of Damascus.¹⁰⁷ Rather, verses 2–3 set up the contrast of verse 4. Abram's heir to the Promised Land will be his physical seed, not an adopted one. The clarification and reaffirmation of earlier statements of Genesis 12:7 and 13:14 motivate the mention of Eliezer of Damascus. YHWH's promise in verse 4 also provides background for the audience of the Sarai and Hagar episode later in the Abraham narrative.

The use of יָרַשׁ provides further confirmation that the promise of the land is the topic of Genesis 15. This word's range of meanings includes "possess" and "inherit." Both of these meanings are used by English translations in Genesis 15. In Genesis 15:4–5, the word is used

¹⁰⁵ The author had mentioned Abram's material wealth earlier in the narrative. In the context of Genesis 15, the focus is clearly on Abram's heir to the land.

¹⁰⁶ The other purposes for Abram's departure from his past and journey to the Promised Land are only implicit in the narrative; see above.

¹⁰⁷ Confidence in the promise motivated the events recorded in Genesis 13. It would be odd to portray Abram as doubtful following his successful endeavor recorded in Genesis 14.

substantively. The *qal* participle is used in verse 4, and the *qal* imperfect as an equative verb in verse 5.¹⁰⁸

In verse 7, the *qal* infinitive construct of יָרַשׁ is used. The ל plus the infinitive construct verb (לְרִשְׁתָּהּ) functions as a purpose clause. Based on the contexts of the use of the יָרַשׁ in Genesis 15, the translation of the word “heir” in verses 4–5 and “possess” in verse 7 is correct.¹⁰⁹ The nuance of יָרַשׁ is the idea of “possessing something as an inheritance.”¹¹⁰ The introduction of יָרַשׁ in Genesis 15 is an aspect of the development of the promise of Genesis 12:1 into a future-oriented inheritance and possession of the Promised Land by Abram’s seed (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18).

YHWH’s confirmation of his promise to Abram of a physical seed is strengthened in verse 5. This divine promise, “so will be your seed,” becomes a central promise in the rest of the Pentateuch (Gen 22:17; 26:4; Deut 1:10).¹¹¹ Contextually and theologically, verse 5 is parenthetical.¹¹² The number of Abram’s seed is a secondary issue in Genesis 15. Regardless of the number, the declaration that “Abram believed YHWH and it was reckoned to him for righteousness” is YHWH’s promise that Abram’s natural seed would be his heir.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ יָרַשׁ in verse 4 functions like a gerund. It could be translated as “He will inherit your things.”

¹⁰⁹ The direct objects attached to יָרַשׁ in verses 4–5 make it difficult to understand the word to mean “possession.”

¹¹⁰ A similar word, נָחַל, is used later in the Pentateuch. Its similar semantic domain is seen in the LXX’s translation of these words. Both words are frequently translated by κληρονομέω. However, נָחַל is found in the context of “taking possession of an inheritance” (Exod 23:30; Num 18:30; Josh 1:6).

¹¹¹ Moses confirms that this was a promise (Exod 32:13).

¹¹² The biblical-theological aspect of Gen 15:4–6 will be explained in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

¹¹³ Abram’s faith in YHWH’s promise of a seed, not that his seed would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens, is what was reckoned to him for righteousness. This is the apostle Paul’s interpretation of the text, particularly as expounded in Galatians 3 (see chapter 6 of this dissertation).

Verse 8 supports this interpretation. After YHWH reminds Abram of one of the purposes for his original call to Abram and the result of Abram’s journey from Ur of the Chaldeans (v. 7),¹¹⁴ in verse 8, Abram seeks a tangible sign beyond the verbal declaration that he will inherit the Promised Land. He does this by asking the question, “How will I know that I will possess it?”¹¹⁵ The use of *וְיָרַשׁ* conveys the notion that Abram would have the right to give the land as an inheritance as one who had a legal claim on the land.¹¹⁶ While the narrator does not portray Abram as having complete physical possession of the land, the idea of his legal title to the land is highlighted in this question.¹¹⁷ Abram’s desire for tangible confirmation of the promise found in verse 4 comes indirectly through the establishment of a formal covenant.¹¹⁸

The formal covenant established through the ceremony recorded in verses 9–17 indirectly assures Abram.¹¹⁹ The essence of the covenant is found in the second half of verse 18, “to your

¹¹⁴ Here is another confirmation of the implicit promises of land and seed made when YHWH told Abram about his purpose to make him a great nation (Gen 12:2). Verse 7 uses a *לְ* to indicate purpose (*לְהָרִיתָ*). While not explicit in Abram’s original call, verse 7 indicates that one of his purposes in calling him out from Ur of the Chaldeans and bringing Abram to the land was to give Canaan as a legal possession. The final clause of verse 7, *לְרִשְׁתָּהּ*, modifies *לְהָרִיתָ*, indicating the result of the purpose of giving the land to Abram. Abram legally possessed the land because YHWH gave him the land. Both verses 5 and 7 verbally affirm that Abram legally possessed the land.

¹¹⁵ *בְּמַה אֶדְעֶה כִּי אֵירָשׁוּנָהּ.*

¹¹⁶ Block comments on this question, “Apparently he (Abram) had begun to recognize the formal and legal character of this encounter with his divine Suzerain.” Block, *Covenant*, 87.

¹¹⁷ The only part of the Promised Land physically possessed by Abraham in his life was the cave he used as a burial tomb.

¹¹⁸ A covenant is simply a formal statement of obligations by one party to other parties. A covenant may be unilateral or multilateral; however, the formalization of obligations is essential to a covenant. Covenants are differentiated from promises by the formal ceremony commemorating the establishment of the covenant. In the Bible, the difference between a bare promise and a covenant is whether a covenant ceremony accompanies a promise in the narrative or whether an explicit mention of a covenant is found. In the case of Genesis 15, both a covenant ceremony is narrated (vv. 9–17), and an explicit statement is made (v. 18). The ceremony served as a tangible confirmation of the promise.

¹¹⁹ Understanding the details of the covenant ceremony and the debates about them is not necessary for the thesis. Only the facts that the ceremony established a covenant, the unilateral nature of the covenant, and the parties involved are significant for the defense of this dissertation’s thesis. However, the fact that YHWH alone passes through the animals reinforces the unilateral nature of the covenant. Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 296. “It is the superior party who places himself under sanctions.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 430.

seed I will give (נָתַתִּי) this land.”¹²⁰ This promise says nothing about Abram’s possession of the land. However, the seed to whom the land will be given is Abram’s seed (לְוַרְעָה). His possession is assumed in this promise—because it is his possession, it will be given to his seed.

Abram’s seed’s possession of the Promised Land following their time in Egypt (vv. 13–14) is contrasted with Abram’s possession of the land. For Abram’s seed, the land will no longer be theirs only by inheritance; rather, it will be theirs by occupation. Abram will never possess the land by occupation. Only long after his death will Abram’s seed occupy the land (v. 15). The contrast between how Abram and his seed possess the land is seen in the words used in verses 7–8 and 18. In verses 7–8, וַרְשָׁ is used. In verse 18, the clause “to your seed I will give this land.”¹²¹ Verses 7–8 emphasize Abram and his actions/status;¹²² Verse 18 emphasizes YHWH’s action.

Verse 18 stresses two significant things. First, the unilateral nature of the covenant is expressed in 18, “I (YHWH) will give this land.” No condition accompanies this promise. Abram is given no obligations in the covenant.¹²³ Second, because the covenant is unilateral, Abram’s seed is the direct object of the verb נָתַתִּי, while YHWH is the subject. Earlier, the subject of the verb וַרְשָׁ was Abram’s seed and Abram (Gen 15:4, 8).

¹²⁰ לְוַרְעָהּ נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת serves to introduce the manner, method, or means by which YHWH made the covenant. van der Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §20.3.v. Formally, the establishment of a covenant would require a ceremony and an oath. The words introduced by לְוַרְעָהּ is the oath that is confirmed by the ceremony, thereby completing the establishment of the covenant.

¹²¹ לְוַרְעָהּ נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת.

¹²² In verse 7, וַרְשָׁ is found in a purpose clause (the reason Abram left his past). In verse 8, Abram is the subject of וַרְשָׁ.

¹²³ Contrast this unconditional, unilateral covenant with the theocratic (Mosaic) covenant of Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 26. The establishment of the Mosaic covenant is accompanied by promise/obligation for both YHWH and ancient Israel. For example, in Exodus 19:5, YHWH sets covenant conditions, “And now if you indeed listen (obey) to my voice and are careful to keep my covenant (אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי), then you will be my possession for all the peoples of the earth are mine.” All see Deuteronomy 26:18–19. In the context of divine assurance through this covenant, נָתַתִּי could be interpreted as a preterite (“I have given”). The unilateral nature of the covenant and this statement provided assurance to Abram (and ancient Israel).

Abram's history and the unilateral nature of the covenant established in Genesis 15 could be considered an ancient Near Eastern land grant covenant. A superior made this type of covenant with an inferior as a reward for previous service.¹²⁴ Abram's prior service was his obedience to the command by YHWH to leave his homeland and go to the land (Gen 12:1). This obedience can be considered "service" to YHWH because it was part of the YHWH's greater purpose (Gen 12:2–3). Abram is a minister through whom YHWH will fulfill his purposes.

The parties to this covenant are noteworthy in the context of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. In verse 18, the narrator explicitly mentions that "on that day, YHWH made a covenant with Abram."¹²⁵ In contrast to the interaction between YHWH and Abraham in Genesis 17—where Abraham and his seed are parties of a covenant with YHWH (v. 7)—in Genesis 15, YHWH covenanted only with Abram as an individual.¹²⁶

Genesis 15 concludes with a reiteration of the scope of the Promised Land, "from the river of the Egyptians until the great river, the river Euphrates."¹²⁷ This is the third time in the Abraham narrative that the extent of the land is stressed. The Promised Land was defined earlier

¹²⁴ Weinfeld writes, "While the 'treaty' constitutes an obligation of the vassal to the master, the suzerain, the 'grant' constitutes an obligation of the master to his servant...the grant is a reward for loyalty and good deeds already performed, the treaty is an inducement for future loyalty." M. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 185. Daniel Block, *The Gods of the Nations: A Study in the Ancient Near Eastern National Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 94. "Abraham's vigorous response (Genesis 14) comported with a customary treaty requirement that the vassal take prompt military action to guard the interest of his suzerain, if threatened...Coming on the heels of this episode, the Lord's word to Abraham (Gen 15:1) has the character of a royal grant to an officer of the king for faithful service." Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 322. If the phrase in Genesis 15:1 is translated as a verbless clause, "your reward will be very great" (שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד), it could refer to Abram's reward for his previous service to YHWH in the context of the grant covenant recorded in Genesis 15.

¹²⁵ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אֲבְרָהָם בְּרִית.

¹²⁶ The canonical fulfillment of this covenant is the giving of the world to Abraham's eschatological seed—Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). The fulfillment of this covenant in the Pentateuch/old covenant is the occupation of the Promised Land by ancient Israel (Deut 1:8; Josh 21:43; 24:8).

¹²⁷ מִנְּהַר מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנְּהַר הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת.

by Abram's journeys and visual observation (Gen 12:6–9; 13:14–18). This time, the scope of the land is given by landmarks and rivers, which the audience would have easily identified. A list of the occupants of the Promised Land (vv. 19–20) would have also served a practical purpose for the original audience. It identified the people with whom ancient Israel would engage during their conquest of the land (Josh 24:11).¹²⁸

Significance of Genesis 15

The covenant recorded in Genesis 15 is the first covenant between YHWH and Abraham. This covenant formalized the promise/obligation by YHWH to give the land to Abram. God as God Almighty makes this covenant with Abram, not God as YHWH, the covenant God of ancient Israel. He did not use his covenant name because he had not yet entered into covenant with ancient Israel. While the parties to the covenant are YHWH and Abram, the chapter's prophetic nature highlights the covenant's future significance for both ancient Israel and the new covenant Church. The unilateral nature of the covenant guarantees that the promise will be fulfilled. However, in the Abraham narrative, the fact that he is still seedless at the time of this covenant is significant. For this reason, much of the rest of the Abraham narrative deals with Abraham's

¹²⁸ Reassurance of the defeat of these people by Moses's original audience rested in the fact that their land was promised to them by this unilateral covenant. Other statements surrounding the covenant provide continuity between Abram's interactions with YHWH and ancient Israel's. The extermination of the inhabitants of the Promised Land (Deut 7:1) is justified as a judgment on the iniquity of the Amorites (Gen 15:16). This would also explain the chronological marker (400 years) and allusion to the Exodus (vv. 13–14). For Moses's original audience, the fulfillment of the prophecy recorded in Genesis 15 was taking place. A connection is made between the Exodus and Genesis in the formula found in verse 7, "I am YHWH who brought you out (from)..." (אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ). The narrator anachronistically uses the name YHWH to identify Abraham's God with ancient Israel's covenant God (Exod 20:2). However, in Exodus 20:2, YHWH is "your God," the covenant God of ancient Israel. This clause established YHWH as the suzerain of both Abram and ancient Israel. The frequency of the use of *יְהוָה* in the speeches of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy suggests that Genesis 15 is an essential background for the conquest of the Promised Land by ancient Israel. Moses repeatedly commanded them to "take possession (*רָשׁוּ/רָשׁוּ*) of the land" (Deut 1:8, 21; 2:24, 31; 9:23).

childlessness and Sarah's barrenness. How will the seed come to whom the land will be given according to this covenant?

Abraham's Failure (Genesis 16)

Overview

With the promise of land formally covenanted to Abram, the second half of the promises (Gen 12:7) required to establish Abram as a nation (Gen 12:2) is the subject of Genesis 16. The use of the verb לָלֵךְ in verses 1 and 16 focuses the chapter on the fulfillment of a seed for Abram.¹²⁹ The chapter begins with the childless couple Abram and Sarai (v. 1) and concludes with a son for Abram (v. 16).¹³⁰ Abram's failure is his self-reliance. Therefore, he does not succeed in fathering the promised seed of Genesis 15:4.

Exegesis

Verse 1 provides the background for the chapter. This background provides continuity with chapter 15 and the earlier Abram narrative. Genesis 15:4 explicitly says that Abram's physical descendant will be his heir. The most natural conclusion to this statement is that Abram will have a son through his wife, Sarai. Genesis 16:1 reminds the audience that Sarai was barren (Gen

¹²⁹לָלֵךְ occurs five times here (16:1, 2, 11, 15, 16).

¹³⁰ The author is clear that that Abram and his seed. In verse 1, Sarai "had not borne a son to/for him (Abram)" (לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ), and in verse 16, "Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to/for Abram" (וְאַבְרָם בְּן־שְׁמֹנִים וָשֵׁשׁ שָׁנָה וְיִשְׁשָׁבֶן בְּלֶדְתָּהּ הָגָר אֶת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל לְאַבְרָם). Both verses use ל of possession or advantage to emphasize that bearing of a child (or lack of it in the case of Sarai) was for Abram as the one who possessed the promises of YHWH. The fact that Abram is the one who actually names Ishmael (v. 15) further confirms the centrality of the child's relationship to Abram. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 457. Chapter 16 concludes with a son for Abram from Hagar, not a son for Sarai. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 4.

11:30) and introduces the other woman in the narrative, the mother of Abram’s first son, Hagar.¹³¹

The reason for Sarai’s suggestion for the problem of Abram’s childlessness is not specified in the text. In chapter 15, there is no mention of Sarai. Perhaps Abram informed Sarai of the event recorded in Genesis 15. Perhaps Sarai has her own concerns about Abram’s heir.¹³² In either case, the narrative clearly shows that Sarai is the instigator of the plot to provide Abram a son through Hagar (v. 2–3).

Abram fathers a son through Hagar—Ishmael. Hagar’s encounter with the messenger of YHWH makes it clear that Ishmael is not the promised seed of Abram. Despite making a promise about Ishmael that could be mistaken to be in accord with the promises to Abram in verse 10 (Gen 13:16; 15:5), verse 12 makes this explicit, “And he will be a wild donkey of a man, and his hand will be against everyone, and the hand of all will be against him, and away from all his brothers he will dwell.” This statement about Ishmael’s future does not match the promises given to Abram and his seed. The future of Ishmael is far from being a blessing to all people, and his dwelling place will not be the Promised Land.

Chapter 16 follows organically from the previous episodes in Abram’s life. Following the formalization of the promise of land to Abram by means of covenant, the next issue to be settled for establishing Abram as a great nation (Gen 12:2) is descendants. The theme of descendants will be prominent in the rest of YHWH’s covenant dealings with Abraham. Chapter 16 highlights this theme and introduces an important antagonist—Ishmael—into the narrative.

¹³¹ Genesis 11:30 describes Sarai before Abram entered the Promised Land, “Sarai was barren; and there was no child to her.” In Genesis 16:3, Sarai is still childless even after at least ten years. The statement in Genesis 11:30, “Sarai was barren,” still applied.

¹³² Sarai’s legacy (as Abram’s wife) seems to be a concern as well, “Perhaps I (Sarai) will be built up through her (Hagar)” (אִילָנִי אֲבִנָה מִמְּנָהּ).

Chapter 16 concludes with another chronological marker, “Abram was eighty-six years old....” Apart from a historical statement, this marker provides the audience with a thirteen-year gap between the birth of Ishmael and the encounter between YHWH and Abram in Genesis 17. This encounter is the central episode in YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham and is the subject of Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Abraham’s Promise (Genesis 17:1–18:21)

Overview

Abraham’s future is the focus of Genesis 17:1–18:21. Although Abraham is ninety-nine years old (Gen 17:1), YHWH will still use him to accomplish his purpose.¹³³ This section reiterates the earlier promises and purpose of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham. YHWH’s purpose to make Abraham a great nation is central. This purpose is the focus of Genesis 17 and required YHWH’s promise of a natural seed. Abraham’s natural seed will become the great nation. Moreover, the promised seed will come from Sarah.

Overview of Genesis 17

The promise of the future theocracy and Abraham’s response to that promise is the essence of Genesis 17. The promise of the future theocracy consisting of descendants, covenant, and occupation of the Promised Land is found in the content of the predictive speech of YHWH in verses 6–8. The institution of the rite of circumcision is a sign of this future theocracy, and Abraham’s response is narrated in the second half of the chapter. Chapter 4 of this dissertation is an exposition of Genesis 17.

¹³³ Genesis 17 is an expansion of the purpose for which Abraham was called (Gen 12:2). That purpose was that “I (YHWH) will make you (Abram) a great nation.”

Exegesis of Genesis 18:1–21

The narrator shifts the literary focus from the future theocratic covenant to Abraham’s immediate household in the latter half of Genesis 17, verses 15–27. Beginning in Genesis 17:15, God promises Abraham a seed through Sarah. Following that promise, Abraham applies the sign of the theocratic covenant—circumcision—to his household, including Ishmael (vv. 23–27). This literary focus on the theme of Abraham’s household is continued in Genesis 18:1–21.

The use of the circumstantial clause, “by the oaks of Mamre” (בְּאֵלֵי מְמַרֶּה) serves to separate chapters 17 and 18. In addition, the mention of “the oaks of Mamre” reminds the audience of the location of Abraham’s settlement in the Promised Land (Gen 13:18; 23:17–19).¹³⁴ This was the only place in all of the Promised Land that Abraham possessed during his lifetime. Even though the main topic of Genesis 18:1–21 is the same as Genesis 17:15–22, the author narrates these episodes as two distinct encounters in the life of Abraham.¹³⁵

How YHWH appears to Abraham is debated. Three men are seen by Abraham (v. 2).¹³⁶ Somehow, the appearance of these three men and YHWH’s appearance are related.¹³⁷ In verses 3–8, Abraham shows hospitality to his guest. Following this display of hospitality, the men begin the conversation for which YHWH appeared. This conversation is a reiteration of YHWH’s

¹³⁴ Also, the mention of “the oaks of Mamre” reminds the audience of the divergence of Lot from Abraham (Gen 13:14–18) and Lot’s presence in Sodom.

¹³⁵ The clause “YHWH appeared” occurs at the beginning of both Genesis 17 and 18. The circumstantial clause distinguishes these appearances.

¹³⁶ In the continuation of the narrative (Gen 19:1), two of the men are referred to as “the messengers/angels” (הַמְלָאָכִים).

¹³⁷ The free interchange of singular and plural pronouns, references to both YHWH and the men speaking to Abraham, the use of “lord” (אֲדֹנָי) to refer to the men, and divine promises occurring in the conversation make it unclear whether the three represent YHWH, or one of the men is a theophany. Hamilton takes one of the men as a theophany (Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 8). Sailhamer understands the men as representing YHWH, who are identified with YHWH while remaining distinct from YHWH (Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 187).

promise to Abraham of a son from Sarah. The first time this promise was explicitly made was in the previous chapter—Genesis 17:19. On the previous occasion of this promise, Abraham was the sole audience. In Genesis 18, Sarah is intentionally made part of the audience.¹³⁸

Why did Sarah need to hear the promise? Although the narrative does not say, it is unlikely that Abraham had not informed her of the promise. Perhaps both Abraham and Sarah were still hindered from believing the promise because of their ages and Sarah’s bareness. The issue of age was brought up by Abraham in the first announcement of the promise (Gen 17:17) and is mentioned by Sarah on this occasion, the reiteration of the promise (Gen 18:12).

While doubt concerning the promise because of age is a passing issue in Genesis 17, the narrator lingers on this issue in Genesis 18. Verse 11 is a parenthetical comment about Abraham and Sarah’s age, followed by reported speech about the same issue by two different characters—Sarah and YHWH. These verses lead into the climax of the story in verse 14, “Is anything too difficult for YHWH?”¹³⁹ Following this rhetorical question, the couple is reassured again of the certainty of fulfillment, “at this time next year, Sarah will have a son,”¹⁴⁰ when the second aspect of YHWH’s promises to Abraham will begin to be fulfilled.¹⁴¹

Verse 16 begins the transition to the next episode (Genesis 18:22–19:38). However, the divine speech of verses 17–21 brings closure to the promise of a seed to Abraham through Sarah (Gen 17:17; 18:10). Before the conversation turns from the promise to the issue of Sodom and

¹³⁸ The conversation takes place near the tent so that Sarah might overhear it. The opening question of the conversation—“Where is your wife, Sarah?”—(אֵינָה שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ) is rhetorical since it is asked by YHWH. Perhaps the question was meant to ensure that Sarah was listening closely to the following conversation—to grab her attention.

¹³⁹ הֲיִפְלֵא מִיְהוָה דְבָר.

¹⁴⁰ כָּעֵת תֵּינָה וּלְשָׂרָה בֶן.

¹⁴¹ This was already stated in verse 10. Genesis 12:7, 13:15, 17:8; land and seed were the central promises of YHWH to Abraham.

Gomorrah, YHWH makes a key comment as to his relationship to Abraham. The question in verse 17, “Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am doing?” is followed by the reason for the question, “Since Abraham certainly will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed by him.”¹⁴² Verse 19 explicitly states the purpose of YHWH’s relationship with Abraham.¹⁴³

The purpose of YHWH’s relationship with Abraham is “So that he might command his sons and his household after him to keep the way of YHWH in order to do righteousness and justice so that YHWH might bring to Abraham what he spoke about him.”¹⁴⁴ Three things stand out in this verse; first, this is the first time in the Abraham narrative where “do(ing) righteousness and justice” occurs. Second, the idea of “keeping” (שמר), first introduced in Genesis 17:9–10, appears. That was in the context of “keeping” the future covenant.¹⁴⁵ And third, for the first time, YHWH uses the word “command” (צוה). These three concepts/words are rare in the patriarchal narratives. However, the use of these concepts/words in relationship to the Mosaic covenant is numerous.

¹⁴² (וְאֵבְרָהָם) וְ. וְאֵבְרָהָם הָיוּ יְהִי לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְעַצְמוֹם וְנִבְרָכוֹ בְּךָ לְכָל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ

¹⁴³ ידע in this context, following the establishment of a formal covenant (Genesis 15) is taken by some commentators as covenantal knowledge. Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 18.

אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אֶתְרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָדְךָ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן תִּבְרָא יְהוָה עַל־אֲבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּר עִלְיֹי

Earlier, in Genesis 12:2, the purpose for Abraham’s call is expressed by YHWH saying, “I will make you a great nation.” According to Moses, an essential mark of a great nation is knowledge of and obedience to YHWH’s commands (Deut 4:5–6). Wenham comments on Genesis 18:19, “If the ground of election was God’s promise (v 18), its fuller purpose is now stated for the first time: to create a God-fearing community (v 19).” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 50.

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Significance of Genesis 17:1–18:21

Following the central encounter in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham (Genesis 17), Genesis 18:1–21 demonstrates the veracity of YHWH's promise to Abraham of a seed. Previously, despite Sarah's bareness, YHWH had promised a seed for Abraham. Even though Sarah was past child-bearing age, YHWH provided a timeframe for fulfilling his promise. The appearance of seed for Abraham is more than just a near-term provision of an heir for Abraham. The appearance of seed for Abraham is part of YHWH's long-term purpose for Abraham. That purpose given in Genesis 12:2 and prophesied in Genesis 17 is a theocratic nation. Abraham's physical descendants are an essential part of YHWH's purpose for him. For YHWH to establish a theocratic covenant with Abraham's seed, he must first be given land and seed. Prior episodes in Abraham's life focused on the land, and the following episodes focused on the seed. However, before returning to his focus on Abraham's seed, the author presents Abraham's intercession.

Abraham's Intercession (Genesis 18:22–20:18)

Exegesis of Genesis 18:22–19:38

The narrator's focus briefly goes from Abraham's life to describe the condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. However, Abraham's actions at the beginning and end of this description inform the audience of his significance in the story. Connection to the earlier part of Genesis 18 (vv. 1–21) and the rest of the chapter is indicated by the use of *wayyiqtol* וַיִּקְרַח in verses 22 and the continuity of characters—the men, YHWH, and Abraham.

Chapter 18 concludes with the narrative of Abraham's intercession for Sodom. During this intercession, Abraham speaks boldly to YHWH by pleading for Sodom based on the righteous character of YHWH in verse 25, "May it be far from you to do this thing, to kill the

righteous with the wicked, that the righteous are like the wicked. Far be it from you. Will not the one who does justice act justly?”¹⁴⁶

While the particle of politeness, *נָּ* occurs four times in Abraham’s plea for Sodom (vv. 27, 30, 31, and 32), the boldness of Abraham is demonstrated by changing the terms six times. YHWH’s attentiveness to Abraham is seen by his waiting for Abraham to finish speaking before departing (v. 33). Genesis 18:22–32 is another instance of Abraham acting as a prophet by interceding with YHWH on behalf of others.¹⁴⁷

Genesis 19 records the confirmation of Sodom and Gomorrah’s wickedness. In Gen 18:20, YHWH gave a generic reference to their wickedness: "Their sin is much, exceedingly great."¹⁴⁸ The messengers’ encounter with the men of Sodom confirmed this generic statement by their attempt at a particular sin (v. 5).

A reminder of Abraham’s significance for the story is found in verse 29. Lot’s deliverance from Sodom is attributed to his relationship with Abraham. In verse 29, a parenthetical comment is made, “And God remembered Abraham, and he sent Lot from the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities where Lot dwelt.”¹⁴⁹

At first glance, this parenthetical comment seems to remind the audience of Abraham’s intercession (Gen 18:22–32). On closer examination, Lot does not seem to be spared because of

¹⁴⁶ חללה לך מעשותו כדבר הזה להמית צדיק עם רשע והנה כצדיק כרשע חללה לך השפט כל־הארץ לא יעשה משפט

¹⁴⁷ Intercession is a prophetic role (Gen 20:7; Exod 32:11; Jer 7:15–16).

¹⁴⁸ כִּי־רָבָה וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כָבְדָה מְאֹד

¹⁴⁹ וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהִפְכָּה בְּהִפְּךְ אֶת־הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־יָשָׁב בָּהֶן לֹט joins a background clause to the circumstantial clause, “And it happened when God destroyed the cities of the district.” The main action in verse 29 is the “sending” of Lot when God overthrew Sodom. The clause אֶת־אַבְרָהָם (‘‘God remembered Abraham’’) provides the background information, or reason, for him sending Lot from the midst of the destruction.

Abraham's intercession. That intercession was for the entire city; however, only Lot is spared.¹⁵⁰ Lot is spared because of his association with Abraham, not because of Abraham's intercession. In Genesis 12:4, the author writes, "Lot went with him (Abraham)...when he departed from Haran." Lot was delivered from the destruction of Sodom because he was one who was blessed because of Abraham (Gen 12:3). Abraham's intercession on behalf of Sodom was not so that YHWH could bless them because of Abraham; instead, that intercession was based on the just character of YHWH.¹⁵¹

Exegesis of Genesis 20:1–18

The use of the *wayyiqtol* verb form, וַיֵּשְׁבֶה, and the prepositional phrase "from there" (מִשָּׁם) connects the events recorded in Genesis 20 with the previous episode.¹⁵² The climax of this story is YHWH's protection of Abraham, Sarah, and their future seed (v. 7). As in the similar episode earlier, Genesis 12:10–20, this protection is required because of Abraham's conniving.¹⁵³ In addition, Abraham's role as one through whom blessing comes to the nations is highlighted in his intercession for Abimelech and his people (vv. 17–18).

¹⁵⁰ The author makes no mention of Lot's wife and daughters. Perhaps the reference to Lot includes/assumes his wife and daughters in a representative manner—as the head of his household. More likely, the reference is provided as context for the following passage, Genesis 19:30–38, where the origin of later ancient Israelite antagonists Moab and Ammon is narrated. Later in the Pentateuch, these people are referred to as the children/sons of Lot (Deut 2:9). The association of Moab and Ammon to Lot was significant to ancient Israel. The inclusion of their origins is part of the reason for including Genesis 19:30–38.

¹⁵¹ Contrary to most commentaries, Sodom would have been spared because of the inherent righteousness of some of their citizens based on God's justice, not because of Abraham. Abraham simply demonstrates God's just character to the audience through his dialogue with YHWH. The purpose for Lot's inclusion, his association with the blessing of Abraham and as the father of the Moabites and Ammonites, in the Abraham narrative ends in Genesis 19. He no longer appears as a character in the narrative. Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 49.

¹⁵² These sequential and geographic markers indicate that the narrator wanted his audience to understand this episode as separate from Genesis 12:10–20.

¹⁵³ Abraham and Sarah had a policy of portraying her as his sister in dangerous situations (Kidner, *Genesis*, 138).

The reason for including two similar episodes—Genesis 12:10–20 and 20:1–18—requires examination. The different focus is noticed when the details of each narrative are scrutinized. While both seem to be about a potential sexual encounter that jeopardizes the promise of seed for Abraham through his wife Sarah, Genesis 12:10–20 references the land that is absent in Genesis 20.

While both episodes begin with movement from one location to another and a sojourn in another, Genesis 12:10 explains the reason for Abram’s sojourn— a “serve famine in the (Promised) land.” More importantly, in Genesis 20, Abraham and Sarah do not leave the Promised Land—they settle in the Negev. They moved from one place in the Promised Land to another.¹⁵⁴

The transition to the next episode also shows the importance of the Promised Land in Genesis 12:10–20, which is absent in Genesis 20. The episode following Genesis 12:10–20 begins with a reference to the Promised Land, “And Abram went up to the Negev” (Gen 13:1). The episode following Genesis 20 begins, “Now YHWH visited Sarah like he said, and YHWH did to Sarah as he had spoken” (Gen 21:1).

The focus of these similar events is different. In the earlier episode, both the land and seed promise were in doubt. However, in the later episode, the land promise was codified by the formal covenant made by YHWH to Abraham in Genesis 15. By the time the encounter recorded in Genesis 20 occurred, Abraham had already received formal title to the Promised Land and occupied a small portion of the land.¹⁵⁵ He had established himself in the land; Abraham did not leave the Promised Land following the covenant of Genesis 15. The promise still to come to

¹⁵⁴ Gerar was near the southern border of Canaan (Gen 10:19).

¹⁵⁵ See earlier exegesis of Genesis 15.

fruition was the promise of a seed for Abraham from Sarah (Gen 17:16; 18:10). The realization of this promise, aided by YHWH's protection of Sarah and Abraham's role as prophet, are the important things for YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.¹⁵⁶

Abraham's Tests (Genesis 21:1–25:11)

Overview

The opening verses of Genesis 21 record the birth of Abraham's long-awaited seed according to the promise of YHWH, and the chapter concludes with another episode associated with the Promised Land. The intervening passage narrates the fate and the future of Abraham's son according to the flesh. These three sections of Genesis 21 combine into a unified literary unit that highlights YHWH's promises in Abraham's life.¹⁵⁷

Exegesis of Genesis 21:1–34

The first section, verses 1–8, records Isaac's birth and early life. The syntax of verse 1 indicates some sort of discontinuity from the previous narrative. In the previous verse (Gen 20:18), YHWH had closed the wombs of Abimelech's household; in verses 1–2, YHWH opened Sarah's womb. The fronting of the subject of the main verb **וַיִּקַּח** grammatically emphasizes YHWH; this emphasis stresses the discontinuity with the previous narrative and reminds the audience of the birth of Ishmael. Ishmael's birth was according to the flesh, whereas Isaac's is according to

¹⁵⁶ Wenham comments in verse 18, "By this concluding comment on the Sarah-Abimelech affair, the author alludes to the overriding concern of the Abraham cycle and raises the expectation that at last the promise of a son will be fulfilled." Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 75.

¹⁵⁷ The literary structure and context of Genesis 21 demonstrate that these three episodes are not meant to be understood as strictly chronological. The concluding episode stressing the land begins with **וַיְהִי בְעֵת הַהִיא** (Gen 21:22), introducing a new narrative. The transition (v. 9) between the birth of Isaac and driving out of Hagar and Ishmael is indicated by *wayyiqtol*, **וַיִּתְּרָא**, used to provide background information of an event that occurred following the events recorded in verse 8. The introduction of Hagar in verse 8 also indicates a new section of the narrative. Verse 8 records events that occurred years after the birth of Isaac—particularly his weaning.

YHWH's promise. The "visitation" of YHWH is "according to what he spoke."¹⁵⁸ The reference to "what he spoke" is his promise in Genesis 17:21. The background or summary statement "YHWH visited Sarah"¹⁵⁹ is explained in the remainder of verse 1 through verse 2. In these verses, the narrator ensures his audience that the birth of Isaac that follows is the fulfillment of YHWH's promise of a seed for Abraham from Sarah.

In verses 3–5, the relationship to the promise continues to receive emphasis through the actions of Abraham. Verse 3 echoes Gen 16:15. In both verses, Abraham names his son, whom his wife bore for him. Abraham names Isaac, and Isaac is referred to as Abraham's son, whom Sarah bore for him.¹⁶⁰ The narrator stresses that the son is for the benefit of Abraham.

Verse 4 continues the narrative of the events of Isaac's early life. Eight days after his birth, Abraham circumcised Isaac. This act done by Abraham is said to be "according to which God commanded him."¹⁶¹ The command to Abraham to circumcise his seed eight days after birth is given in Genesis 17:9–14. The phrase "according to which God/YHWH commanded" is rare. It most commonly occurs with reference to the commands that YHWH gave Moses as the mediator of the old covenant.¹⁶² Strong covenantal overtones are found in this phrase. The context in which the command to circumcise is the establishment of a covenant—the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:9–10; Acts 7:8).

¹⁵⁸ כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר.

¹⁵⁹ וַיִּהְיֶה פָקֵד אֶת־שָׂרָה.

¹⁶⁰ Twice a ל of advantage or possession is used with Abraham as its object in Genesis 21:3.

¹⁶¹ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים.

¹⁶² Noah also received direct commands from God, and his obedience is recorded with the phrase, "according to which God commanded him" (כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים, Gen 7:9, 16). The use of the generic title/name in אֱלֹהִים Noah's context distinguishes his obedience from that of Abraham and ancient Israel. Abraham and ancient Israel's obedience was done in submission to God, who had covenanted with them as a people. Therefore, God is referred to as YHWH.

The circumcision of Isaac is the first recorded circumcision done strictly according to the covenant command.¹⁶³ Later in the history of ancient Israel, this command continued under the Mosaic covenant (Exod 12:48; Lev 12:3).¹⁶⁴ Most of the other uses of the phrase “according to which God/YHWH commanded” with the direct object marker (כִּי) refer to commands given to Moses by YHWH as covenant mediator.¹⁶⁵ These commands are given to Moses, not as an individual, but rather for the nation (e.g., Num 27:11; Deut 5:32). The parenthetical comment, “according to which God/YHWH commanded,” in verse 4 marks the command for circumcision as abiding on ancient Israel. It was not a command for Abraham as an individual.¹⁶⁶

Verse 5 begins with a few parenthetical comments about the age of Abraham.¹⁶⁷ The comment in verse 5 reminds the audience of Genesis 12:4, “Abram was seventy-five years old when he went out from Haran.” Abraham had gone out of Haran to go to the Promised Land because he would be made “a great nation” by YHWH (Gen 12:2). The first requirement to be made a great nation, land, was given through the covenant of Genesis 15. Now, the second requirement, people, was beginning to come to fruition through the birth of Isaac. It took twenty-five years for Abraham to see both. Sarah gave Abraham a seed despite her bareness (Gen 11:30) and old age (Gen 18:11; 21:7).

¹⁶³ The circumcision of Abraham, Ishmael, and his household was not according to the covenantal command (Gen 17:23–17). No one is said to be eight days old, and this phrase, “according to the command...,” is not found.

¹⁶⁴ No record of any other covenant circumcision of an ancient Israelite is found in the Old Testament.

¹⁶⁵ כִּי אֶת־מִשְׁפַּח יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱת־מִשְׁפַּח occurs 41 times in the Hexateuch.

¹⁶⁶ Jesus makes the abiding nature of the command evident in John 7:22 by telling the Jewish leaders, “For this reason Moses gave you circumcision...” The following clause, “not that it is from Moses, but from the father,” clarifies how Moses gave ancient Israel the command for circumcision. It was by the inclusion of Genesis 17:9–14 in the Pentateuch.

¹⁶⁷ The narrative continues in verse 8.

The appearance of Isaac makes the presence of Abraham’s other son—Ishmael—superfluous. Ishmael’s actions are the cause of his dismissal. Ishmael’s persecution (Gal 4:29) or “mocking” (NASB, NIV) of Isaac forced Abraham to deal with the coexistence of his two sons. Sarah knows the promise of YHWH (Gen 21:10).¹⁶⁸ However, it is not until God confirms his promise in verse 12, “For through Isaac your seed will be named,”¹⁶⁹ that Abraham sends Ishmael and his mother away from his household (v. 14). Hagar is assured that Ishmael will also become a great nation (v. 18). This was already known by Abraham (Gen 17:20). Hagar and Ishmael’s association with Abraham leads to their “salvation” (Gen 21:19) and future prosperity (Gen 25:12–16). However, Ishmael is not included in God’s old covenant people. The finality of the separation of Ishmael from Abraham and YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham is stressed in Genesis 22:2, where God calls Isaac Abraham’s only son.¹⁷⁰

The final narrative of Genesis 22 involves diplomacy over the Promised Land. In the background of this episode is the sole heir of that land, Isaac. The transitional clause in verse 22, “And it happened at that time,”¹⁷¹ connects the two seemingly disconnected narratives. The phrase “at that time” sets the events recorded in verses 22–34 as nearly contemporary with the banishment of Ishmael and the formal establishment of Isaac as the sole and promised heir of the land. A connection between Isaac and this episode is made later in the patriarchal narrative; in

¹⁶⁸ Sarah embraces the promise of Genesis 15:4. In Genesis 21:9, the author reminds his audience that Ishmael was also Abraham’s son; he is referred to as “The son of Hagar the Egyptian, who she bore to Abraham” (אֶת־בְּנוֹ־הַגָּר הַמִּצְרַיִת אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם). Abraham’s natural affection for his son, Ishmael, required God to reaffirm the preeminence of Isaac.

¹⁶⁹ כִּי בִיצְחָק יִקְרָא לְהָ וְרַע.

¹⁷⁰ God commands Abraham in Genesis 22:2, “Take your only son, whom you love, Isaac” (קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ (אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אַהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק).

¹⁷¹ וַיְהִי בַעַת הַהוּא.

Genesis 26, a similar encounter between Isaac and Abimelech over wells when Isaac returns to the same location.¹⁷²

While the episode is portrayed as involving two human parties, both acknowledge God's work in Abraham's life. The reason for Abimelech's benevolence toward Abraham is God's blessing on Abraham (v. 1).¹⁷³ Abraham acknowledges God's role in his life, including the request by Abimelech for peaceful coexistence, in his response to the covenant (v. 33). The audience is reminded again that even though Abraham possesses the title to the Promise Land, he is still a sojourner in that land. Abraham's existence in the Promised Land with other nations requires him to exercise diplomacy with pagans (v. 32). For the original audience, this narrative illustrated the folly of disobeying YHWH's command to dispossess all the pagan nations in the Promised Land during the conquest (Deut 9:3). However, like the earlier narratives of Abraham's sojourn in the Promised Land, this one concludes with Abraham demonstrating his faith in the land promise—planting a tree and worshipping YHWH (v. 33).¹⁷⁴

Exegesis of Genesis 22:1–19

Following the fruition of the promise to Abraham of a seed, Moses recounts a test involving the promised seed. The literary connection to this episode and the previous is highlighted in verse 1,

¹⁷² Genesis 26 confirms that Gerar was located in the Promised Land. In verse 2, YHWH commands Isaac to remain in the Promised Land (in opposition to going to Egypt), and in verse 6, Isaac responds by living in Gerar. This episode in the life of Isaac is significant for the Mosaic understanding of YHWH's covenantal dealing with Abraham. The background provided by including the event recorded in Genesis 21:22–34 allows the audience to focus on the speech of YHWH in Genesis 26:3–5.

¹⁷³ Abimelech's acknowledgment of God's work for Abraham is perhaps a response to Abraham's successful intercession on behalf of the household of Abimelech (Gen 20:17). Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 88.

¹⁷⁴ Abraham claims the land by planting a tamarisk tree at Beersheba. Abraham makes the same claim on the land by building altars (Gen 12:8; 13:18).

“And it happened after these things that God tested Abraham.”¹⁷⁵ The context of Genesis 22 demonstrates that the reference to “after these things” indicates a literary sequence more than a temporal one.¹⁷⁶ The following event took place sometime after the events of the previous chapter. The exact amount of time is not explicitly stated in the narrative; however, Isaac is portrayed as significantly older.¹⁷⁷

Now that the promised seed—Isaac—has arrived, the test of Abraham seems to put that seed in jeopardy. The preeminence of Isaac as Abraham’s seed, established in the previous chapter, is the literary context for the narrative. The test is about Abraham’s faith in the promised seed. Abraham passed the test because he feared God (v. 12).

The opening verses of Genesis 22 echo the opening verses of Genesis 12. Both chapters open with the voice of the Deity and include the command for Abraham to “go.”¹⁷⁸ These passages also mark the first (Gen 12:1) and last (Gen 22:18) acts of divine speech to Abraham.¹⁷⁹ However, in Genesis 22:2, two other commands are given. The test that Abraham undergoes

¹⁷⁵ וַיְהִי אֶחָד הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַהֲצַלְתִּים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם. Contrary to Alexander, this opening statement of Genesis 22 makes the purpose of the event recorded by the narrator clear. The event is a test, not the establishment of another covenant.

¹⁷⁶ The narrative in Genesis 22 chronologically follows Genesis 21; however, the relationship between the events is emphasized. Wenham writes, “From a literary standpoint, it is thoroughly integrated with the preceding narratives about Abraham, which are clearly presupposed at every turn.” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 99.

¹⁷⁷ The events in Genesis 21:1–21 seem to occur when Isaac was a very young child—from birth to weaning. In Genesis 22:1–19, Isaac is able to carry wood (v. 6) and understands the elements of sacrifice (v. 7). Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 99.

¹⁷⁸ In Genesis 12, the Deity is referred to by his covenant name, YHWH, and in Genesis 22, he is called (the) God (הַאֱלֹהִים). The covenant name of God is not absent from Genesis 22 (vv. 11, 14, 15, 16). Source critics see this as evidence of the composition of the narrative from J and E material. However, Hamilton comments on the use of (the) God (הַאֱלֹהִים), “The text makes the point that what follows is a divine testing, not a demonic temptation.” Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 101.

¹⁷⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 102.

follows from these commands, “take your only son, the one you love, Isaac...and offer him there as a burnt offering.”¹⁸⁰

Verses 3–10 record Abraham’s faith-empowered obedience. Abraham’s obedience is exemplified in verse 3, “And Abraham arose early in the morning.”¹⁸¹ He diligently prepared and set out (v. 3) and persevered for three days because he reached his destination (v. 4). His faith is demonstrated in his directions to his servants in verse 5, “Wait here with the donkey while I and the lad go there and worship and return to you.”¹⁸² He believed that Isaac was the promised seed, so both he and his son would return.¹⁸³ Abraham’s response to Isaac’s question of the whereabouts of the sacrificial animal also expresses his confidence in YHWH’s promise (v. 8).¹⁸⁴

The author continues to portray Abraham’s unwavering faith in verses 9–10. In these verses, Abraham builds an altar, prepares it for sacrifice, and places his son on it. In the climactic verse, verse 10, Abraham “takes the knife to sacrificially slaughter his son.”¹⁸⁵ The narration of these actions by Abraham shows no hint of hesitation on Abraham’s part. He is portrayed simply as obeying God. Through his simple obedience, Abraham passed the test.

¹⁸⁰ קח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אַהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק...וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה. This is another of a few instances of the use of the particle of politeness, אָנָּה, in YHWH’s command (Gen 13:14). Hamilton comments on the five times אָנָּה is used in this unique way, “Each time God asks the individual to do something staggering, something that defies rational explanation or understanding.” Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 101.

¹⁸¹ וַיִּשְׁכֶם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֹקֶר.

¹⁸² שָׁבוּ־לָכֶם פֹּה עִם־הַמֹּר וְאָנֹכִי וְהַנֶּעַר גִּלְכָּה עַד־לָהּ וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִשְׁכַּח אֲלֵיכֶם.

¹⁸³ Abraham’s belief is founded on the Word of YHWH (Gen 17:15–16; 18:10).

¹⁸⁴ The author of Hebrews reflects on this incident in Hebrews 11:17–19, where he also stresses Abraham’s faith in God’s promise. “Abraham’s words should not be understood as merely an attempt to calm a nervous Isaac. Because they anticipate the outcome of the narrative, Abraham’s words are to be read as a confident expression of his trust in God.” Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 210.

¹⁸⁵ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמַּאֲכָלֶת לְשַׁחֵט אֶת־בְּנוֹ.

Abraham's obedience is rewarded by the order not to harm Isaac (v. 12), a substitute for Isaac (v. 13), and a confirmation and expanded explanation of the theocratic promise (vv. 16–17). The “salvation” of Isaac and a substitute sacrifice are syntactically connected by the use of the *wayyiqtol* וַיִּשֶׁׁן in verse 13.¹⁸⁶ The substitute ram is the fulfillment of Abraham's prediction (v. 8).¹⁸⁷

The intervening clause between the command to not harm Isaac and the provision of the substitute sacrifice is the reason these things happened. YHWH says through his messenger, “Because now I know that you fear God since you have not held back your only son from me.”¹⁸⁸

The survival of the promised seed and Abraham's faith are essential aspects of Genesis 22. However, the narrative does not end in verse 14. Instead, it ends the narrative with an account of the reaffirmation of Abraham's obedience and his reward for that obedience. This historically occurred when the messenger of YHWH called to Abraham a second time (v. 15).¹⁸⁹ This encounter between the messenger of YHWH and Abraham is the capstone of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.

The narrator recounts words of this episode beginning in verses 16–18, “And he (the messenger of YHWH) said, ‘I swear by myself, declares YHWH, that because you did this

¹⁸⁶ The *wayyiqtol* וַיִּשֶׁׁן indicates temporal sequence “Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked” (NASB, NLT).

¹⁸⁷ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַחַת בְּנוֹ. The ram's predicament is not happenstance. Abraham credits it to the providence (provision) of God (v. 14).

¹⁸⁸ כִּי עָתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יָרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶתְּהָ וְלֹא הִשָּׁקֵת אֶת־בְּנוֹ אֶת־יְחִידוֹ מִמֶּנִּי כִּי introduces the reason for the prohibition (“no harm to Isaac”). וַיִּדְעָ (v. 13) marks the background/explanation of the clause “I know you fear God.” The messenger of YHWH knows that Abraham fears God because of Abraham's obedience to the test. The messenger of YHWH and God himself are closely associated as the messenger of YHWH says, “You have not held back your son from me.” A similar association occurs in Genesis 19 (see above).

¹⁸⁹ Verse 15 begins a new episode in the life of Abraham.

thing—not held back your only son, that I will certainly bless you and I will certainly multiply your seed like the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore, and your seed will possess the gate of their enemies, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed in your seed because you obeyed my voice.”

Verse 16 records the announcement of an oath. The content of that oath appears in verses 17–18. The veracity of the oath is demonstrated in its verbal nuance and the inclusion of the divine oath formula. The verb *נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי* is used to indicate an act that is performed by speaking, “I (YHWH) swear by myself.”¹⁹⁰ The content of the oath is stated in the subordinate clause that begins in verses with the conjunction *כִּי*. The use of the adverbial prepositional phrase “by myself” (*כִּי*) with verb “I swear” (*נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי*) referring to YHWH only occurs four times in the Old Testament (Isa 45:23; Jer 22:5; 49:13). The second marker of veracity is the use of the oath formula “declares YHWH.”¹⁹¹ This is a common phrase in the prophetic corpus. However, it occurs only two other times (Jer 22:5; 49:13) with “I (YHWH) swear by myself.”¹⁹²

The two occurrences of this clause “I swear by myself, declares YHWH”¹⁹³ that introduce a prediction/prophecy regarding ancient Israel is theocratic in nature. Here, in Genesis 22:16, the following prophetic speech affirms the future establishment of the theocracy (v. 17b). In Jeremiah 22:5, the clause is followed by a prophecy of the fall of the theocracy. Both of these prophecies are conditional. The condition of the prophecy in Genesis 22:17–18 was already met, “Because you (Abraham) did this thing.”¹⁹⁴ In Jeremiah 22:5, the fulfillment of the condition is

¹⁹⁰ *כִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי*.

¹⁹¹ *נֹאמֵר-יְהוָה*.

¹⁹² *כִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי*.

¹⁹³ *כִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נֹאמֵר-יְהוָה*.

¹⁹⁴ *כִּי גַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה*.

still in the future: “If you do not obey these words, I swear by myself that this house (the royal palace in Jerusalem) will be a desolation.”¹⁹⁵

The divine oath in Genesis 22:16–18 highlights the meritorious nature of Abraham’s obedience.¹⁹⁶ The basis of the oath is mentioned before the actual content of the oath, and Abraham’s obedience is also reiterated as the final part of the oath. Whether the meritorious obedience of Abraham mentioned after the oath (v. 18) is the same as that mentioned in the beginning (v. 16) is unclear. It seems that verse 18 is a separate pronouncement from the formal blessing.

The separation of verse 18 from the blessing mentioned in verse 17 is both grammatical and conceptual. Grammatically, the use of a conjunctive ׀ plus a perfect verb (וְהִתְבַּרְכְּוּ) is different from the verbal forms in verse 17. In verse 17, the conjunctive ׀ is prefixed to an infinitive absolute.¹⁹⁷ The subjects of the verbs are also different. In verse 17, YHWH is the subject. In verse 18, all the nations of the earth are the subjects.

The grammar of verses 17 and 18 supports the conceptual separation of the verses. Verse 17 is about what YHWH will do for Abraham and his seed. Verse 18 is what will be done to the nations of the earth because of his seed. The relationship between verses 17 and 18 is the same as the relationship between Genesis 12:2–3a and 3b. Verse 18 is a purpose/result of the blessings of verse 17. YHWH will certainly bless Abraham and certainly multiply his seed so that all the

¹⁹⁵ וְאִם לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי־לְחַרְבָּהּ יִהְיֶה הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה.

¹⁹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 111. Hamilton writes, “The novel element in this catena of promises is the emphasis on conditionality—that human behavior determines God’s response. These promises are uttered and shall be fulfilled because Abraham has done the appropriate thing...Every promise to Abraham up to this point has been essentially unconditional.” Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 116.

¹⁹⁷ בָּרַךְ אֲבִרְכָךָ וְהִתְבַּרְכְּוּ אֲרָבָהּ.

nations of the earth will be blessed through his seed.¹⁹⁸ Like Genesis 12:1–3, Abraham’s reward for his obedience is part of YHWH’s ultimate purpose to bless all the families of the earth (Gen 12:3).

A similar idea is seen in the discontinuity between the first part of verse 17 and the concluding clause of that verse. Both the verbal structure and the verb’s subject differ from the verse’s first clause. The first clause contains two imperfect verb forms with cognate infinitive absolute forms indicating the inevitability of future actions.¹⁹⁹ The subject of these imperfect verbs is the messenger of YHWH (v. 15). The last clause begins with *waw* conjunction plus an imperfect verb (וַיִּרְשׁ).²⁰⁰ The subject of the verb is not the messenger of YHWH. It is “your (Abraham’s) seed” (זַרְעֲךָ).²⁰¹ The use of the *waw* conjunction in the context of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham indicates the result.²⁰² As a result of YHWH blessing Abraham and multiplying his descendants like the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore, his seed will possess the gate of their enemies. This final clause, “your seed will possess the gate

¹⁹⁸ The verb is a *hitpael*. Commentators debate where to take this in a passive (“be blessed”) or reflexive sense (“bless themselves”). The *niphal* is used in Genesis 12:3. Genesis 22:18 seems to confirm Genesis 12:3. The *hitpael* is best understood as an iterative passive (“continually be blessed”). Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 270.

¹⁹⁹ בָּרַךְ אֲבִרְכָךָ וְהִרְבָּה אֲרַבָּה. Wenham comments on the use of the infinitive absolute that it “is used to reinforce the verb, so making the contents of this promise surpasses all others.” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 111.

²⁰⁰ The absence of the adverbial use of the cognate infinitive absolute in this clause is significant.

²⁰¹ 3ms. In the immediate context of Genesis 22:17, the singular noun subject (זַרְעֲךָ) of the verb is taken as a collective. The pronominal suffix of אֲיִבִּי is also 3ms. The reference to the multiplication of Abraham’s seed in the first part of the verse is the context to understand the singular noun and pronominal suffix as a collective plural. The isolation of this result clause from the preceding theocratic promise to Abraham lends itself to a Messianic interpretation of וַיִּרְשׁ זַרְעֲךָ אֶת שַׁעַר אֲיִבִּי, “He (the promised Messianic) seed will possess the gates of his enemies.” The arrival of the promised Messianic seed comes in the context of the multiplication of Abraham’s seed. He is a specific seed in Abraham’s collective seed (Matt 1:1; Gal 3:16). The theocracy’s ultimate purpose is to bring about the promised Messianic seed (Rom 9:1–5).

²⁰² This final clause in verse 17 (וַיִּרְשׁ זַרְעֲךָ אֶת שַׁעַר אֲיִבִּי) goes grammatically and conceptually with verse 18.

of their enemies,” foreshadows the theocracy. Abraham’s descendants will be a nation that will conquer other nations.²⁰³

The promise of the formal oath in verse 17 is based on Abraham’s obedience recorded in the previous episode (Gen 22:1–14). The words of the messenger of YHWH explain how the future blessings associated with this oath are because of the obedience of Abraham when YHWH tested him. The clause “you did not hold back your only son”²⁰⁴ is identical to the explanation of what Abraham did to cause the messenger of YHWH to know that he feared God (v. 12b). Abraham’s reward for passing the test is the future blessing and multiplication of his seed.²⁰⁵

However, the reason for the accomplishment of YHWH’s purpose for Abraham is the totality of his obedience. The concluding clause of verse 18, “because you obeyed my voice,”²⁰⁶ is not a restatement of what was said in the second part of verse 16. The beginning of verse 18, “And all the nations of the earth will be blessed in your seed,”²⁰⁷ recounts the first divine speech to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3). The first clause of Genesis 22:18 expands and clarifies the last clause of Genesis 12:3. All the nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham’s seed. This blessing will take place after Abraham is blessed with a multitude of descendants who inherit the gates of their/his enemies.²⁰⁸ All of the nations of the earth will be blessed through a seed of Abraham who will be associated with theocratic Israel.

²⁰³ The multiplication of descendants is portrayed as fulfilled by Moses at the founding of the theocracy (Deut 1:10).

²⁰⁴ לֹא הִשְׁכַּח אֶת־בְּנֵהוּ אֶת־יְהוָה.

²⁰⁵ The idea of multiple seed is implicit (Gen 12:7; 15:18) and explicit (Gen 13:16; 15:5) in earlier episodes of Abraham’s life. However, because of Abraham’s obedience, this promise was formally established by an oath. Contra Alexander, there is no indication that Genesis 22 records the establishment of a covenant.

²⁰⁶ עָקַב אֱשֶׁר שָׁמַעַתָּ בְּקוֹלִי.

²⁰⁷ וְהִתְבְּרָכְךָ בְּרִבְעוֹף לְכָל־גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ.

²⁰⁸ Both the verb (וְיִרְשׁ) and the pronominal suffix (אֵינֶיךָ) are third person singular in verse 17. The narrator continues to be ambiguous about the seed of Abraham in key passages. Elsewhere in the book of Genesis, third-

How “all the families of the earth” will be blessed by Abraham is through his seed. These verses form an *inclusio* around YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham by restating this foundational purpose for Abraham and as the first and last divine speech to the patriarch. For Abraham to successfully accomplish the purpose for which YHWH called him, the totality of his obedience was required. From his departure from Ur of the Chaldeans to his willingness to offer his only and beloved son on the altar, all of Abraham’s obedience was required for the future blessing of all the nations of the earth through his seed.

The dual nature of the promises to Abraham—land and seed—is reiterated in the concluding verse of this narrative (v. 19). Lest the audience forgets about the land, the author recounts Abraham’s presence in the Promised Land, “And Abraham dwelt in Beersheba.” Throughout the narration of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham (Genesis 12–22), the narrative exercises an intentionally balanced concern for both promises—land, and seed—given to Abraham.

Abraham’s Legacy (Genesis 22:20–25:34)

Overview

Following the last divine interaction between YHWH and Abraham, the author recounts a few critical events in Abraham’s life. These narratives remind the audience of the significance of the seed and transition to the story of Abraham’s promised immediate seed, Isaac. While focusing on the continuation of Abraham’s seed in the person of his son Isaac, the importance of the Promised Land continues in the background of this narrative. The two promises—land and seed—cannot be separated from the theocratic concerns of Moses and his original audience.

person plurals are used in conjunction with “seed” (Gen 15:13; 17:7; 26:4a). The apostle Paul found the use of the singular exegetically significant in Galatians. See chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Concern for the propagation of Abraham's seed is the reason for the concluding verses of Genesis 22. In these verses, the genealogy of Isaac's future wife is provided. This genealogy provides the background for Genesis 24. In Genesis 24, Abraham sends his servant back to his extended family to find a wife for Isaac, and he is united to Rebekah in marriage.

Before narrating the event surrounding the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 24:1–67), it recounts the death and burial of Sarah in Genesis 23. The significance of Sarah for YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham is demonstrated in Genesis 17:19, 18:10, and 21:2. Sarah is the mother of Abraham's promised seed and heir. Once again, in this narrative, the land promise comes to the forefront in Abraham's purchase of a burial cave. This cave (and its surrounding land), located in the Promised Land (Gen 23:19), is the only parcel of the land that Abraham commercially owned (Acts 7:16).

In Genesis 24, the promise of the land moves to the background to focus on the promise of the seed. The importance of the propagation of Abraham's seed is seen in the fact that Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. However, it is the promise of the possession of the Promised Land, confirmed by the covenant of Genesis 15, which is why Abraham and Isaac are to remain in the land. In Genesis 24:7, Abraham quotes the covenant promise, "To your seed I (YHWH) will give this land."²⁰⁹ The purpose of YHWH for Abraham and his seed was to establish a new nation in the Promised Land (Gen 12:2). If Isaac left the Promised Land to find a

²⁰⁹ לְיִצְחָק אֶתֵּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת. This clause is identical to the first statement of this promise in Genesis 12:7. The formalization of this promise by covenant in Genesis 15:18 is stated differently (see above for exegesis of Genesis 15:18). The reason for quoting Genesis 12:7 instead of Genesis 15:18 is that the context of Genesis 24 is the prohibition against taking Isaac back to Abraham's home country. Genesis 12:7 brings to mind the departure and forsaking of his homeland. Using Genesis 12:7 emphasizes the idea that neither Abraham nor his (future) seed is to return to his homeland.

wife, that purpose would be in jeopardy.²¹⁰ The piety demonstrated by Rebekah's interaction with Abraham's servant shows that she was a worthy wife for Abraham's seed.

The final chapter about the life of Abraham is Genesis 25. In this chapter, the author gives information about Abraham's life apart from the central concern about the promises tied in with the lives of Sarah and Isaac:²¹¹ his marriage to Keturah, the genealogy of his descendants from Keturah, the record of his death and burial, the genealogy of Abraham's son from Hagar, Ishmael, and the story of the birth of Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob. The final section of Genesis 25, verses 19–34, begins a new narrative of the life of Isaac as indicated by the *toledot* formula (וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק).

Significance

Genesis 22:20–25:34 provides a transition to the next patriarch—Isaac. Isaac is Abraham's heir as the promised seed. His marriage and occupation of the Promised Land are how the theocratic promise to Abraham given in Genesis 17 will continue. The events of Abraham's life recorded in Genesis 22:20–25:34 show him as blessed by YHWH and serve to narrate the conclusion of his role in redemptive history. As chapter 25 closes, Abraham has passed away, Ishmael and his descendants are portrayed as separate tribes, and Isaac's heir—Jacob—has appeared on the scene setting up the next stage of ancient Israelite history.

²¹⁰ Hamilton comments, "If Isaac is to inherit the land, he must not marry among those destined to disinherit the land. Nor must Isaac disinherit himself by repatriation to Mesopotamia." Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, 140.

²¹¹ The chronological relationship to the events recorded in Genesis 23–25 is debated. The literary arrangement of Abraham's life stresses YHWH's promises (land and seed). Genesis 25:1–18 is tangential to the main purpose of the narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 157–158.

Conclusion

Abraham's role as the father of ancient Israel is central to the historical narrative recorded in Genesis 12–25. The record of Abraham's first encounter with YHWH provides the focus of the rest of the narrative of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. This first encounter in Genesis 12:1–3 stresses Abraham's calling to be made a great nation by YHWH (Gen 12:2). The next interaction between YHWH and Abraham (Gen 12:7) reiterates YHWH's purpose for Abraham—YHWH will make Abraham a great nation by giving his seed the land of Canaan.

The two foundational things required to make Abraham a great nation—land and seed—become the focus of the rest of the narrative of the life of Abraham. While the earlier narrative highlights the land promise and the latter the promise of seed, the author structures his narrative in a way that never focuses exclusively on one of the promises in the complete absence of the other.

Leading up to the formalization of the land promise in the form of a covenant in Genesis 15, the primary literary focus of the narrative is upon the promise of land. Abraham's observation of the land and his location in the Promised Land are characteristics of the Genesis 12–15 narrative. After the covenant formally establishes the land promise in Genesis 15, the narrative shifts literary focus to the promise of seed for Abraham. The identification of the seed who is to be the immediate heir of the land (Gen 15:3–4) is the great concern of Genesis 16–25.

The centrality of the two promises is made clear by how the author records YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. The events of Abraham's life that the narrator selected to record and the literary arrangement of those events demonstrate that for the audience, the promises of land and seed to Abraham were the essential parts of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. The fact that his original audience was the legitimate seed and that they were on

the verge of entering the land promised to Abraham made the narrative record of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham a critical part of Moses's ministry to the wilderness generation of ancient Israelites who were soon to fulfill the purpose for which their father Abraham was called. The combination of foundational promises given to Abraham (land and seed) and the Mosaic covenant come together to officially constitute the ancient Israelite nation in the time of Moses. The promise of this formal constitution of ancient Israel as a nation is found in Genesis 17. The exegesis of which is the subject of the next chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: AN EXPOSITION OF GENESIS 17

“All theology is based on covenant.”¹

Introduction

Genesis 17 is the pivotal chapter in the narrative of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. The literary and historical placement of the encounter in the overall narrative of Abraham's life, the content, and its orientation toward the future give it a central place in the interactions within YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.

Structure of Genesis 17

Genesis 17 is structured around five divine acts of direct speech given to Abraham. These five acts of direct speech are indicated by the use of *אמר* with reference to the Deity (יְהוָה/אֱלֹהִים) as the subject in verses 1, 3, 9, 15, and 19.² Based on these five acts of divine direct speech, the chapter can be structured,

A Chronological background (v. 1a)

B God's appearance (v. 1b)

C First divine direct speech (vs. 1c–2)

D Second divine direct speech (vs. 4–8)

E Third divine direct speech (vs. 9–14)

D¹ Fourth divine direct speech (vs. 15–16)

C¹ Fifth divine direct speech (vs. 19–21)

¹ John Owen, *Biblical Theology*, 366.

² In verse 3, the finite verb *דבר* is the act of speaking; however, *לאמר* is used as a marker of direct speech.

B¹ God's disappearance (vs. 22–23)

A¹ Chronological background (vs. 24–26)

How the narrator concludes the chapter and the attention he gives to the third divine direct speech in verses 9–14 indicate that the institution of the rite of circumcision was the most significant event recorded in Genesis 17. The purpose of the chapter is to recount God's instruction to Abraham and Abraham's response.

The climax of the chapter is verses 22–23, which indicates the significance of circumcision. In verse 23, the author writes that Abraham's act of circumcising his household was “in accordance to what God spoke to him.”³ In the previous verse, verse 22, the author writes, “And God completed speaking to him and went up from Abraham.”⁴ By using דָּבַר rather than אָמַר, the author wants his audience to understand the significance of the encounter as a whole. The three uses of דָּבַר in the chapter, which form an *inclusio* (vs. 3, 22) and highlight Abraham's response to the entirety of what God spoke to him (v. 23), support this view. The author uses אָמַר to divide that large speech into smaller sections while communicating the importance of the entirety of the discourse recorded in verses 4–21 by using דָּבַר.⁵ If the use of דָּבַר determines the structure of Genesis 17, then the chapter breaks into three sections.

1. The background to the speech of God (vs. 1–3)

2. The speech of God (vs. 4–22)

3. The response to the speech of God (vs. 23–27)

³ כַּאֲשֶׁר דָּבַר אֱלֹהִים.

⁴ וַיִּבֶל לְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים מֵעַל אַבְרָהָם.

⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר is frequently used to indicate a change in speaker within a dialogue. In Gen 17:4–21, וַיֹּאמֶר is used twice (vs. 9, 15) before a change in the speaker (v. 17).

Either way the chapter is structured, the words of God are the author's central concern, specifically, the words of God that institute the rite of circumcision.⁶ This chapter of the dissertation will provide an exegesis of Genesis 17, primarily following the latter three-part structure.

Exegesis of Genesis 17

Overview of Genesis 17:1–3

The opening verses of Genesis 17 provide the background for the main speech of God in verses 4–21. The background provided includes a chronological marker and introductions to the main characters of the chapter; the introductions refer back to previous encounters between God and Abraham. Verses 1–3 show the organic relationship of Genesis 17 with YHWH's earlier covenantal dealings with Abraham.

Exegesis of Genesis 17:1–3

The beginning of Gen 17:1 and the end of verse 3 are composed of introductory discourse markers. Verse 1 begins with וַיְהִי to introduce a new narrative episode. Verse 3 ends with לְאָמֹר to indicate that what follows is direct speech. In between, the narrator utilizes *wayyiqtol* forms to narrate the sequence of events that lead up to the main speech of God recorded in verses 4–21.

The second half of verse 1 and all of verse 2 is direct speech by YHWH to Abraham. In addition to the use of וַיְהִי to separate the event recorded in Genesis 17 from the previous chapter, Abram's age is explicitly referenced, “Abram was ninety-nine years old.”⁷ This is the

⁶ Joachim J. Krause, “Circumcision and Covenant in Genesis 17,” *Biblica* 99, no. 2 (2018): 4. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 149.

⁷ אַבְרָם בְּרִית־תְּשׁוּעִים שְׁנָה וַתִּשַׁע שָׁנָיִם.

third time that Abraham's exact age is mentioned.⁸ The most obvious reason that Abraham's age is mentioned is to set the chronology of the relationship between the previous episode, the birth of Ishmael, and the events of Genesis 17. Thirteen years had passed since the birth of Ishmael to Abram from Sarai's servant Hagar. The narrator's record of the conversation between the messenger of YHWH and Hagar in Genesis 16:7–12 informs the audience that Ishmael was not the promised seed/heir of Gen 15:4. Whether Abram and Sarai were aware of this is not explicit in the text.⁹ The absence of any mention of what Abram did, especially with Ishmael, in the intervening thirteen years suggests that any event during these years was irrelevant to YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.

Another reason for the mention of Abram's age is to set the context of the event recorded in Genesis 17 with Abram's original call (Gen 12:1–3). His initial call occurred when he was 75 (Gen 12:4). YHWH's promise to Abram, shortly after his call, implicitly included descendants and land (Gen 12:7).¹⁰ The fact that the fulfillment of the promise of a seed/heir did not come to fruition until 25 years after Abram's original call would have been significant for the author's original audience, who would wait for 40 years to enter the Promised Land.¹¹

The narrative action proper of Genesis 17 begins in the second half of verse 1: “YHWH appeared to Abram and said to him. . . .”¹² The clause *וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוָה* is rare in the patriarchal narratives.

⁸ Genesis 12:4, 16:16.

⁹ Abraham's reaction to YHWH's announcement of the birth of a son for him through Sarah, recorded in Gen 17:15–18, suggests that Abraham thought Ishmael was the promised seed/heir.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for exegesis of Gen 12:1–9.

¹¹ The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham of a seed/heir is found in Gen 21:2. The birth of Isaac took place one year after the events in Genesis 17, making Abraham 100 years old—25 years after his original call. The only members of Moses's original audience to enter the Promised Land were Joshua, Caleb, and those who were under twenty years old (Num 32:11–12).

¹² *וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם וַיֵּאמֶר אֵלָיו*. Wayyiqtol verb forms (*וַיֵּאמֶר, וַיֵּאמֶר*) advance the narrative.

The Deity is said to appear to a patriarch only six times (Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1; 26:2, 24; 35:9). In five of these appearances, the covenant name of God—YHWH—is used.¹³ A comparison of these other passages where this clause is used shows that it is found in the context of the promise of a theocracy.¹⁴

The promise of the foundational aspects of a theocracy is found in Gen 12:7; “And YHWH appeared to Abram and said, ‘to your seed I will give this land.’”¹⁵ The third, and final appearance of YHWH (יְהוָה) to Abraham in Genesis 18 initiates the narrative of the explicit promise to Abraham of a seed/heir in the person of Isaac.¹⁶ As the patriarchal narrative continues with Isaac, YHWH appears to him to command that he remain in the Promised Land (Gen 26:2).

In Gen 26:3, the reason for YHWH's prohibition to Isaac to leave the Promised Land for Egypt is the promise of the possession of Canaan by his seed and the “establishment” of YHWH's oath to Abraham; “YHWH said to him... ‘Sojourn in this land...because to your seed I will give all these lands and establish the oath that I swore to your father Abraham.’”¹⁷ The final use of the clause occurring in Gen 26:24 is in the context of YHWH's referring back to his covenantal dealings with Abraham. The previous chapter of this dissertation demonstrated that the central issues in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham were the promise and covenanting of land and seed—the foundational requirements for a theocracy.

¹³ God is said to “appear” to Jacob in Gen 35:9.

¹⁴ Theocracy requires people and land—a geo-political entity.

¹⁵ וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם בַּיּוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר לְוָרְעָה אֲתָן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

¹⁶ The land aspect of a theocracy had already been formally covenanted in Genesis 15. By Genesis 18, the land aspect was already associated with the promise of a seed/heir in Gen 17:19.

¹⁷ יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר...גֵּוֶר בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת...בְּיַדְךָ וּלְוָרְעָה אֲתָן אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־הַשְּׂבִיעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ

The use of the covenantal name of God—YHWH—is significant for Genesis 17 because it connects this episode with the founding of the theocracy in Exodus. Early in the narrative of Exodus, the narrator mentions how God did not make himself known to the patriarchs as YHWH (Exod 6:3). He made himself known to Moses by the name YHWH because he was in the midst of taking the patriarchs' seed into the Promised Land to create a theocratic nation (Exod 6:4). The reason the author reserved the use of the phrase יהוה in the patriarchal narrative was to connect the use of the covenant name to the establishment of the theocracy.¹⁸

The remainder of verse 1 and verse 2 records YHWH's initial words to Abram. The first words of YHWH to Abram are his self-identification. The reason for including this statement of self-identification is to reinforce the connection between the Deity that spoke and covenanted with Abraham as an individual and the Deity that spoke and covenanted with ancient Israel as a nation. The narrator was justified in equating “God Almighty” with YHWH in his Genesis narration because YHWH revealed to him that the Deity interacted with the patriarchs. The use of the covenant name—YHWH—in the patriarchal narratives is not an anachronism; instead, the use of the covenant name makes explicit that the same Deity who interacted with the patriarchs is the same Deity who interacted with ancient Israel. It is not two different deities, God Almighty and YHWH, who are the divine characters in the narrative. The different designations for the Deity indicate a different era of redemptive history. The author, originally writing during a different redemptive era, Israel under the Mosaic covenant, utilized God's covenant name in the Genesis narrative to ensure his audience that, despite a change in designation, ancient Israel's God is Abraham's God.

¹⁸ According to Dumbrell, Genesis 17 is the beginning of ancient Israel's history. “In the chapter the formation of the twelve-tribe Israelite confederacy through Isaac and then Jacob is foreshadowed (v. 19). They are now the covenant people, and we are at the beginning of their history.” Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 97.

Establishing that Abraham’s God is the same God as ancient Israel’s God is beneficial for what follows in the initial words of YHWH to Abram: “Walk before me and be blameless so that I might establish my covenant between me and you, and multiply you exceedingly.”¹⁹ This statement contains two verb forms: imperatives and cohortatives. Two imperative clauses are connected by ׀, and two cohortative clauses are connected by ׀, connecting two independent subordinate clauses. The compound imperatival clause and two independent subordinate cohortative clauses are connected by ׀, forming one compound sentence. The use of cohortatives following imperatives indicates purpose.²⁰

The ambiguity of the two imperatives “walk before me” (הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי) and “be blameless” (הִנֵּה תָמִים) requires analysis. Grammatically, these are two separate commands. However, rhetorically, these commands form a sort of hendiadys.²¹ What is the one thing connoted by joining these two commands? The purpose clause that follows the imperatives provides insight into possible parallels elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Before determining the command connoted in the two imperatives, the syntactical relationship between the imperative clause (v. 1b) and the cohortatives clause(s) (v. 2) must be established. The use of ׀ at the beginning of verse 2 logically subordinates אֲתָנָהּ to the imperatives of verse 1.²² The logical subordination may be purpose or consecutive/temporal.²³

¹⁹ הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהִנֵּה תָמִים: וְאֲתָנָהּ בְרִיתִי בֵינִי וּבֵינְךָ וְאַרְבָּה אֹתָךְ בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד:

²⁰ The syntax of Gen 17:1b–2 parallels Gen 12:1–3 (see chapter 3 of this dissertation).

²¹ Strictly defined, these are two verbs, not substantives, so combining the two into one is not a hendiadys.

²² The same is true for the other cohortative (אַרְבָּה) in verse 2.

²³ Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 15.

The subordination of cohortatives to imperatives strongly suggests purpose.²⁴ The future orientation of the following prophetic discourse also supports the conclusion that the cohortatives function to express the purpose of Abram's obedience. Abram's obedience is required for something—a covenant—in the future.²⁵

The purpose of the command(s) of YHWH and the obedience of Abram to those command(s) is so that YHWH might establish his covenant with Abram. The purpose for Abram's obedience is covenantal. Abram's obedience will serve the purpose of YHWH in establishing his covenant with Abram. The obedience required by Abram for YHWH to establish his covenant can be classified as “faithfulness” to YHWH.

The faithfulness required by YHWH of Abram finds a parallel in Noah. Genesis 6–9 narrates YHWH's covenantal dealings with Noah.²⁶ The similarities between how YHWH dealt with Noah and Abraham are significant. Regarding YHWH's demands on Abram in Gen 17:1, where he says, “Walk before me and be blameless,” successful obedience to these commands is seen to be epitomized in Noah. The record of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Noah begins in Gen 6:8, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH.”²⁷ In the next verse, verse 9, the audience

²⁴ Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 462.

²⁵ Dumbrell argues that the verb נתן (*qal*) joined with the noun ברית means “setting the covenant in operation.” He believes that this statement is given to affirm the covenant already established in Gen 15:18. YHWH promises to “set in operation” the covenant established in Gen 15:18 in the future. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 92. Three times נתן is found with the direct object ברית (Gen 9:12; 17:2; Num 25:12. One of the other uses of נתן joined with ברית clearly does not convey this meaning (Num 25:12). The meaning in Num 25:12 is to establish a covenant. The verb נתן is substituted for other verbs associated with covenant-making (קום and כרת). כרת would be inappropriate to use in the context of Num 25:12. See the discussion on the use of כרת and קום in a covenantal context below. The use of נתן (*qal* ms participle) with the direct object ברית in Gen 9:12 could mean “setting the covenant in operation” since the covenant referred to in Gen 9:11–12 could be the covenant promised in Gen 6:18 (Williamson, *Sealed*, 59).

²⁶ Noah is introduced in the genealogy of Genesis 5; however, the narrative of the interaction between YHWH and Noah is found in Genesis 6–9.

²⁷ וַיִּבְרַח נֹחַ בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:

is told about Noah's character: “Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God.”²⁸ Three clauses are found in this statement. Two of these clauses use the proper name Noah as the subject, and the other does not use an explicit subject—the subject is implicit in the verb. The first clause is verbless, “Noah was a righteous man.” The quality of being a “righteous man” (צַדִּיק אִישׁ) is predicated to “Noah” (נֹחַ) without the use of a verb. “Righteous man” is the fundamental description of Noah. The following two clauses, “he was blameless in his generation” and “Noah walked with God,” are exegetical. By using verbs, the second and third clauses explain how Noah was a righteous man. These appositional/exegetical clauses use the same verbs as the imperatives given to Abram in Gen 17:1.

The character of Noah is emphasized at the beginning of the narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with him. The marked position of the prepositional phrase (אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים) of the last clause of verse 9 stresses Noah's faithfulness to God. The inclusion of Noah as the explicit subject of the verb הִתְהַלֵּךְ emphasizes that the “he” who was blameless in his generation was Noah, who was a righteous man and walked with God. The name Noah forms an *inclusio* in the description of Noah. His reward for that “faithfulness” to God would be a covenant with YHWH. Enoch had also received a reward for his “walking with God” (וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ תְּנֹכֵחַ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים) in Gen 5:24. The author connects the worthiness of a man with a friendly relationship with YHWH. This

²⁸ וַיֵּשׁ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ

worthiness is not merit.²⁹ However, YHWH's greater purposes require the use of a worthy man.³⁰ God promised Noah a covenant in Gen 6:18 and established that covenant with Noah in Gen 9:9 because Noah was a worthy man.

The same pattern in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Noah is found in Genesis 17.³¹ Abram must demonstrate himself worthy so that YHWH might establish his covenant with him. This requirement of obedience excludes the idea that the covenant of Genesis 17 is the same as the covenant of Genesis 15. Two things demonstrate that the two covenants are different. First, the covenant of Genesis 15 is said to be established, "On that day, YHWH made a covenant with Abram" (v. 18).³² Second, no conditions are attached to the covenant of Genesis 15. As will be seen below, the covenant that the narrator is concerned about in Genesis 17 is to be made in the future, and the making of that covenant is contingent on Abram's faithfulness to YHWH.³³

²⁹ The lack of human merit is summarized nicely in the British Reformed Confession of the seventeenth century, such as Chapter 7.1 of the London Baptist Confession of 1689, "The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant." God deals with humanity by voluntary condescension; merit has no place in God's covenantal interactions with humanity.

³⁰ In the ANE, covenants were often made with those who had shown allegiance to a superior (Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," 73-74). The worthiness of Noah and the command for Abraham to be worthy was about their action as faithful servants of God.

³¹ Abraham's worthiness—his obedience to the command(s) of Gen 17:1—is confirmed in Gen 26:4-5. See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

³² בְּיָוֶם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אֲבָרָם בְּרִית. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for exegesis of Genesis 15.

³³ The future establishment of the covenant of Genesis 17 is confirmed by the conditional statement of verses 1b-2. Abram must be blameless and walk before God establishes his covenant with Abram. "Whereas inaugurating the covenant was entirely the result of divine initiative, confirming it involves a human response, summed up in v 1 by 'walk in my presence and be blameless' and spelled out in the demand to circumcise every male." Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 20.

A second purpose for Abram's obedience is found in the second half of verse 2, "And (so that) I might multiply you exceedingly."³⁴ This clause is separate from the first clause of verse 2; however, it is also in a subordinate syntactical relationship with verse 1b. Abram's obedience will accomplish two things: first, the establishment of YHWH's covenant with Abram, and second, the multiplication of Abram.³⁵

Verse 3 narrates Abram's response to the initial words of YHWH and continues the episode. The use of *wayyiqtol* וַיִּפֹּל at the beginning of verse 3 marks narrative sequence. After YHWH spoke to Abram, "Abram fell upon his face."³⁶ Abram responded to the commands and purposes of YHWH with astonishment or reverence. The clause וַיִּפֹּל עַל-פָּנָיו seems to indicate astonishment. Later, during this same encounter, Abram falls upon his face and laughs (v. 17) over the fantastical prophecy that he will have a son from Sarah. Falling upon one's face in reverence is usually accompanied by the verb הוה.³⁷ This word is used in connection with falling upon one's face and paying reverence to both Deity and men. The context and the lack of a coordinating clause using הוה suggest that Abram's reaction is simple amazement.

Abram's response of amazement is another reason to view the covenant of Genesis 17 as distinct from the covenant of Genesis 15. Why would Abram be astounded if YHWH was simply reiterating the previous covenant? As will be shown in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, confidence in the covenant of Genesis 15 was a hallmark of Old Testament saints. The confidence in the

³⁴ וַאֲרַבְּהָ אֹתְךָ בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד:

³⁵ The use of ׀ to connect the cohortative clauses does not indicate a logical or sequential/temporal relationship between them. The ׀ plus the cohortative in both causes, at the beginning of verse 2 and connecting the cohortative clauses, indicates a subordinate relationship in the compound clause "Walk before me and be blameless" in verse 1b.

³⁶ וַיִּפֹּל אֲבְרָם עַל-פָּנָיו

³⁷ This verb always occurs in the hishtaphel stem.

possession of Canaan because it had been given to Abram and promised by covenant to his seed is why Jacob and Joseph insisted that their remains be buried in the Promised Land. Abram was amazed at the fact that YHWH would use him for another covenant in the future.

The narrative continues with another *wayyiqtol* (וַיְדַבֵּר), “And then God spoke to him....”³⁸

The first section of Genesis 17 concludes with the discourse marker לְאָמַר, which marks the following as the content of God's speech to Abram. This speech is recorded in verses 4–21.

Overview of Genesis 17:4–21

The dialogue recorded in verses 4–21 is crucial for understanding the relationship between Abraham and the old covenant. The central event recorded in these verses is the institution of the rite of circumcision. The context in which the rite of circumcision is instituted precedes the institution proper. What follows the institution is a prophecy about to whom circumcision would be first applied in its covenantal context. The entirety of this section is a record of the words of God, except for verses 17 and 18. In the midst of the continued speech by God, the narrator interjects by using וַיֹּאמֶר in verses 9 and 15.³⁹ The use of וַיֹּאמֶר in these verses divides the speech into three main sections.

Exegesis of Genesis 17:4–21

A verbless clause begins the section, “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you” (NASB).⁴⁰

This clause is difficult to interpret in isolation. However, the first three words and the order of

³⁸ וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים

³⁹ The use of the *wayyiqtol* וַיֹּאמֶר in verses 18 and 19 is typical of the use of the *wayyiqtol* in narrative—to indicate sequential/temporal action. The reason for the use of וַיֹּאמֶר in a continuous speech requires special consideration.

⁴⁰ אֲנִי הִנֵּה כְרִיתִי אִתְּךָ.

these words emphasize the speaker—YHWH. The first-person perspective is highlighted by the use of the first-person singular pronoun (אֲנִי) at the beginning of the clause, followed by the use of a particle of focus (הִנֵּנִי) that emphasizes the noun with a first-person singular suffix (בְּרִיתִי).⁴¹ The particle הִנֵּנִי is often used to point to the clause that follows; however, in this case, הִנֵּנִי is in the middle of a clause, makes the following noun the object of focus. The noun בְּרִיתִי is followed by the prepositional phrase “with you.”⁴² The use of the (nominative) pronoun, an (accusative) noun, and a (adverbial) prepositional phrase requires the elided verb to be transitive.⁴³

A valid translation of this clause is “My covenant I have made/cut with you.”⁴⁴ Following this declaration, a series of predictions/prophecies are given.⁴⁵ The *wegatal* verb forms indicate these predictions/prophecies. The first predictions that follow have been implicitly promised in the previous covenantal interactions between YHWH and Abraham. The two-fold promise of land and seed was repeatedly mentioned in Genesis 12–16 (Gen 12: 7; 13:15; 15:18). The statement “my covenant I have made/cut with you” is an affirmation by YHWH of the covenanting of the first of the two-fold promise—the land.⁴⁶ This covenant was formally

⁴¹ The first-person singular suffix does not seem to point to any particular covenant. The use of the first person singular suffix is not to definitize a covenant; instead, it stresses YHWH's initiative. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 195. YHWH refers to many covenants as “my covenant” (בְּרִיתִי). “My covenant” does not refer to a previous covenant. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 190.

⁴² אִתְּךָ.

⁴³ These three elements in the clause suggest that this is not an equative/existential clause (“I am my covenant with you”).

⁴⁴ The fronting of the direct object in English puts it in focus like the Hebrew particle הִנֵּנִי. The focus in the original might also be conveyed by using italics, “I have made/cut my covenant with you.” The Hebrew can highlight both the subject by including the pronoun אֲנִי and the object by the use of the particle הִנֵּנִי.

⁴⁵ The future tense aspect of the verbs in verses 2 (וְהָיָה) and 7 (וְהָיָה) with the direct object בְּרִיתִי demonstrate that a covenant is not being made in Genesis 17. Verse 10 is not the institution of a covenant; instead, it is the institution of the rite of circumcision, which is a sign of the future covenant. See below.

⁴⁶ The structures of the clause that Gen 17:4a refers to Gen 15:18 are similar. Besides the inclusion of the verb (פָּקַד) in Gen 15:18 and the particle (הִנֵּנִי) in Gen 17:4, both contain a subject (יְהוָה in Gen 15:18 and אֲנִי in Gen 17:4), a direct object (בְּרִיתִי in Gen 15:18 and בְּרִיתִי in Gen 17:4), and a prepositional phrase (אֶת־אֲבָרָם in Gen 15:18

established in Genesis 15:18. The following discourse of YHWH stresses the seed aspect of his two-fold promise to Abraham, which is a central aspect of the record of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.⁴⁷ The first half of verse 4 affirms the covenanting of the first foundational aspect of the theocracy—land. The background to the following dialogue is that YHWH has already formally covenanted the land to Abraham.

YHWH's speech through verse 8 consists of a temporal sequence.⁴⁸ The use of וַיֹּאמֶר in verse 9 indicates a break from verses 4–8 by introducing a new section of the narrative.⁴⁹ YHWH will do three distinct things sequentially to Abram in the future that are required for a theocracy. First, YHWH will cause Abram to be exceedingly fruitful and make nations and kings come from Abraham (vs. 4b–6). Second, YHWH will establish his covenant between him and Abraham, and between him and Abraham's seed (v. 7). And third, YHWH will give possession to Abraham and his seed of the Promised Land (v. 8). First person singular *weqatal* verb forms at the beginning of verses 6, 7, and 8 have YHWH as the subject of a future action.

In light of the establishment of the covenant that gave the Promise Land to Abram and his seed, the next logical thing required for a theocracy is people. The promise of descendants is the focus of verses 4b–6. The promise is explicit in verse 6, “I (YHWH) will make you exceedingly

and וַיֹּאמֶר in Gen 17:4). The subject, direct object, and the object of the preposition have the same reference in both clauses.

⁴⁷ See the previous chapter of this dissertation.

⁴⁸ van der Merwe, *Hebrew Grammar*, §21.3.ii.

⁴⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר is unnecessary in the narrative since it does not indicate sequential action. Verse 9 is a continuation of YHWH's speech with no intervening action.

fruitful, and I will set you as nations and kings will come from you.”⁵⁰ The preceding clauses provide the background for this future action of YHWH to make Abraham fruitful.⁵¹

Regardless of the exact relationship between verses 4b–6, the promise to Abraham of “nations” is prevalent.⁵² His name change from Abram to Abraham indicates a change in his relationship with YHWH based on YHWH’s further revelation about his role as the progenitor of descendants who will actively participate in redemptive history. Three times, the word *גוֹי* is used. Although this word is rarely used to refer to ancient Israel, the author’s original audience recognized it to refer to a geopolitical entity.⁵³ The inhabitants of Canaan, whose land ancient Israel was to inherit and whose rulers they were to destroy, are referred to as nations (Deut 7:1).

The word *גוֹי* is used in the narration of the original call of Abraham (Gen 12:2). The purpose of Abraham’s departure to the Promised Land was so that he might be made a great nation (*גוֹי גָדוֹל*). The author understood the accomplishment of this purpose of Abraham in the establishment of ancient Israel as a theocracy; YHWH is recorded as speaking to the people of Israel shortly after the Exodus, “And now if you are careful to listen to my voice and kept my

⁵⁰ וְהִפְרַתִּי אֶתְּךָ בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד וְנִתְּתִיךָ לְגוֹיִם וּמְלָכִים מִמֶּנֶּה יֵצְאוּ.

⁵¹ Many commentators believe that verses 4b and 5 are later additions to the account that provide an etiology and harmonization for the name Abraham. “Here P has certainly theologized a double tradition of the first patriarch’s name, for the name ‘Abraham’ is linguistically nothing else than a ‘lengthening’ of the simpler ‘Abram,’ which means ‘my father [the god] is exalted.’ Originally, only the Priestly tradition contained this change in the name. But in weaving together the sources, the redactor found it necessary to change every Jehovistic mention of ‘Abraham’ before ch. 17 into ‘Abram.’” von Rad, *Genesis*, 199. Hamilton comments, “One significance of the patriarch’s new name is that it universalizes Abraham’s experience with God. This point contrasts with the later emphasis in the chapter on circumcision, which particularizes Abraham’s relationship with God.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 464.

⁵² Hamilton takes the essential point of these verses in the context of the following discourse as highlighting that Abraham is God’s chosen. “Three times the pronominal suffix -kā (‘you’) is used in this verse (v. 6)—once in each of the three clauses—pointing all the more to Abraham—‘I will cause you . . . make of you nations . . . from you.’ He is indeed the one God has chosen.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 464.

⁵³ Desmond T. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 174. Ancient Israel is more frequently called “my (YHWH’s) people” (*עַמִּי*) and the “sons of Israel” (*בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*).

covenant, you will be to me a possession from all the people (for all the earth is mine) and you will be to me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation (יְקִי) (Exod 19:5–6a).⁵⁴

The question of whether verse 6 refers to the proliferation of descendants and nations/kings that come from the promised seed or the seed of Abraham more broadly is debated. If this prediction pertains to the promised lineage, Abraham's fruitfulness and the source of nations refer exclusively to Israel and Judah. The kings predicted to come from Abraham are the kings of Israel and Judah. Ancient Israel is said to have been fruitful,⁵⁵ and two nations, Israel and Judah, eventually came from the promised seed. However, the author includes details about other descendants of Abraham, suggesting verse 6 does not apply exclusively to ancient Israel. Genealogies of Abraham's descendants, other than the promised lineage that mentions the names of nations and rulers, are found in Genesis. Three notable examples are the list of the descendants of Keturah (Gen 25:2–4), the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen 25:12–18), and the genealogy of Esau (Gen 36:9–43). While the list of individuals in these passages about Abraham's descendants does more than illustrate the initial fulfillment of the prediction given in Gen 17:6, the extensive nature of these lists supports the idea that the author viewed these descendants of Abraham as relevant to YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham as a partial fulfillment of this prediction.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׂמְעוּעַ תְּשָׂמְעוּ בְקֹלִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֻגְלָה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים כִּי־לִי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מְמַלְכֵת פְּהַגִּים וְגֹי קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׂמְרַתֶּם.

⁵⁵ Exodus 1:7.

⁵⁶ The list of the descendants of Abraham through Keturah includes peoples/nations that later interacted with ancient Israel, making the inclusion of this passage etiological, and the genealogy of Ishmael and Esau provide narrative closure for these characters.

Later in the conversation and the remainder of the patriarchal narrative, YHWH will specifically apply this prediction to the promised lineage.⁵⁷ However, in the context of Genesis, this prediction is about Abraham's descendants in general, not the promised lineage exclusively. In the genealogy of Esau, the author narrates the fulfillment of this prediction as the first of the sequence of fulfillments, “And these were the kings that ruled in the land of Edom before a king ruled for the sons of Israel” (Gen 36:31).⁵⁸

The next sequential prediction is the establishment of a covenant, “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for a lasting covenant, to be to God and your seed after you” (Gen 17:7). The Pentateuchal narrative of ancient Israel illustrates how the fulfillment of this prediction temporally follows the fruitfulness of Abraham and the making of his descendants into nations with kings.⁵⁹ However, as the prediction of verse 6 is narrowed down and applied to the promised lineage, the aspect of the prediction, the proliferation of Abraham's seed, that applies to pre-theocratic Israel is explicitly mentioned in Exod 1:7, “And the sons of Israel were fruitful, and swarmed, and multiplied. And they became exceedingly numerous, and the land (of Egypt) was filled with them.”⁶⁰ The fulfillment of the prediction in Gen 17:6 is part of the background of the Exodus. The Exodus led to the covenant at Sinai—the Mosaic covenant.⁶¹

⁵⁷ In Gen 17:16, this prediction is applied to Sarah. Abraham's descendants through Sarah include Jacob and Esau. Later in the patriarchal narrative, this prediction is applied to Jacob (Gen 35:11).

⁵⁸ Also, Num 20:14 indicates that a king ruled Edom before Israel was established in the land as a theocracy.

⁵⁹ The next chapter of this dissertation explains the fulfillment of Gen 17:6–8.

⁶⁰ וַיִּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּרִי וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד וַתִּמְלֵא הָאֶרֶץ אֹתָם.

⁶¹ This covenant was reiterated/re-established at Mount Horeb (Deut 26:16–18; 29:10–14).

The prediction of a future covenant in Gen 17:7 guaranteed the third requirement for theocracy. The foundational requirements of the theocracy, land, and seed, occupy most of the YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. Without the prediction of a future covenant in Gen 17:7, the establishment of the Israelite theocracy would have been unexpected.⁶² The prediction of a future covenant explains how God would exercise his authority over the seed of Abraham in the Promised Land—through the terms of that covenant. The predicated covenant of Gen 17:7 would be the means by which God would turn an ethic-geopolitical people into a theocracy.

Genesis 17:7 can be divided into two parts. The first part is, “And I will establish my covenant between me and you, and between your seed after you for their generations for a lasting covenant.”⁶³ The second part is “To be God to you and your seed after you.”⁶⁴ The first part is the main clause, and the second is a subordinated adverbial clause indicating purpose.

The *weqatal* verb form וְהִקְמַתִּי at the beginning of the verse continues the predictive/prophetic discourse. The direct object of the verb is בְּרִיתִי. The same word is used as the direct object of the *qal* cohortative verb נָתַן in verse 2. In verse 7, the verb the *hiphil* perfect of קָוַם. These verb forms, along with the *qal* form of כָּרַת and the direct object בְּרִית, are used to communicate the “making” of a covenant.⁶⁵

⁶² Up to this point in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, the narrator has not mentioned YHWH's future rule over (or relationship with) Abraham's seed. The only thing mentioned about Abraham's seed is its place as future inhabitants of the land (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18). The purpose (Gen 17:7) and prediction (Gen 17:8) of a relationship between YHWH and Abraham's seed is first introduced in Genesis 17.

⁶³ וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ אֲחֵרֶיךָ לְדֹרֹתָם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם.

⁶⁴ לְהִזְוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אֲחֵרֶיךָ.

⁶⁵ Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 198. שָׁוַם is used twice (2 Sam 23:5; Jer 33:25). נָתַן is used three times (Gen 9:12; 17:2; Num 25:12).

Debate about the nuances of the use of these verbs is vigorous.⁶⁶ The most common verb used for making a covenant is כָּרַת. This word indicates the activity that makes a covenant. For example, the formal covenantal ceremony recorded in Genesis 15 is followed by the statement, “On that day YHWH made (כָּרַת) a covenant with Abram by saying, ‘to your seed, I will give this land...’”⁶⁷ Whether the act of making a covenant was the preceding ceremony or the speech of YHWH, an action brought about or made the covenant.

Two similar examples are in the Psalms. In Psalm 50:5, the psalmist records the words of YHWH, “Gather to me, my godly ones, those who have made (כָּרַתִּי) a covenant with me by sacrifice.”⁶⁸ The act of making a covenant, in this case by sacrifice, is denoted by the verb. The same can be said of Psalm 89:3, “(You [YHWH] have said,) ‘I have made (כָּרַתִּי) a covenant with my chosen; I have sworn to David my servant.’”⁶⁹ Here, the act of making a covenant is poetically paralleled to the act of swearing. These actions are synonymous.

כָּרַת denotes the action that establishes a covenant. This action might be a formal ceremony, speech, or an oath. The fact that this action establishes abiding obligations is a connotation of the word. The purpose of the action is to recognize that the parties have entered into a relationship with formal obligations. However, the act that established this relationship is denoted by כָּרַת.⁷⁰ קוּם used in the context of covenant, with the direct object בְּרִית, denotes the mere existence of a covenant.

⁶⁶ See Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 12–19, and Peter Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 243–52.

⁶⁷ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר לְזַרְעֲךָ נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת.

⁶⁸ אֶסְפּוּ־לִי חֲסִידֵי כְרַתִּי בְרִיתִי עַל־יְזוּבָה.

⁶⁹ כְּרַתִּי בְרִית לְדָוִד לְשׁוֹבְעֵתִי לְדָוִד עַבְדִּי.

⁷⁰ The etymology of כָּרַת, when used in conjunction with covenant, is hotly debated. However, most scholars associated the verb with the *action* of “cutting” a sacrificial animal during the ceremony that establishes a

Some commentators take the use of קָוַם in a covenantal context to mean “establish/continue an existing covenant.”⁷¹ These commentators conclude that the use of קָוַם in a covenantal context denotes the continuation of an existing covenant by assuming the previous establishment of the covenant that is continued.⁷² The use of קָוַם in a covenantal context is first

covenant (emphasis added). The fourth entry (4678) in BDB reads, “כִּי בָרִיתַי *cut, or make a covenant* (because of the cutting up and distribution of the flesh of the victim for eating in the sacrifice of the covenants, see בָּרִיתַי);” Holiday (3945, 5) reads, “make a covenant by cutting up a sacrificial animal, but both.: cut > resolve, settle, or: cut up animal in intervening space (between parties):” Gentry notes, “The expression *kārat bērit* refers to an event.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 248.

⁷¹ Dumbrell commenting on the use of קָוַם in the context of the Noahic covenant (Genesis 6–9), takes it to mean the continuation of the covenant God made with Adam; he writes, “In short, Genesis 9:1–8 makes clear that Noah and his family were to be God’s means of covenant continuity, enabling a new human beginning within the same promise structure and intention as Genesis 1:26–28 and Genesis 2:4–17.” Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 11. Williamson notes about the use of other verbs besides כָּרַת associated with the establishment/confirmation of a covenant, “A retrospective sense is difficult to maintain for the following texts: Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11; 17:2, 7, 9; Num 25:12; Deut 29:11 and 2 Chron 15:12.” Williamson, *Abraham*, 196.

⁷² קָוַם in a covenantal context (*hiphil* of קָוַם with “covenant” as its direct object) is used 12 times (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17; 17:7, 19, 21; Exod 6:4; Lev 26:9; Deut 8:18; Ezek 16:60, 62). Gentry notes, “The majority of the fourteen (Gentry includes 2 Kgs 23:3; Jer 34:18) instances of *hēqīm bērit* are found in the flood account and Genesis 17. If one does not explain this on the basis of different sources, what motivates the use of *hēqīm bērit*?” (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 252). Gentry explains the first uses of the clause in the Noahic narrative as evidence for an existing covenant. “Therefore, the construction *hēqīm bērit* in Genesis 6 and 9 indicates that God is not initiating a covenant with Noah but is rather affirming for Noah and his descendants a commitment initiated previously” (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 244). This statement seems like begging the question since no explicit narration of the establishment of a covenant nor an explicit statement of the existence of a covenant is found in Genesis 1–6. The episode that can be explicitly identified as a covenant-making ceremony is Genesis 9 (see chapter 3 of this dissertation for the definition of covenant), which suggests that *hēqīm bērit* is used for the initial establishment of a covenant. In Gen 9:12, נָתַן occurs in the same context as the *hiphal* קָוַם (v. 11). Gentry comments on the meaning of *nātan* (*bērit*) when it is associated with *bō’* (*bērit*) in Ezek 16:8 and 2 Chron 15:12, acknowledging that *bō’ bērit* (“enter a covenant”) is equivalent to *kārat bērit*, “This verb is simply a substitute verb higher in the hierarchical level, like ‘do,’ and is dependent on the context as to whether it may refer to initiating or upholding a covenant” (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 246, n18). Later, Gentry notes, “Apart from Genesis 17: 2, the expression *nātan bērit* is found elsewhere only in Genesis 9:12 and Numbers 25:12.... (in these cases) *nātan bērit* is an equivalent for *hēqīm bērit*” (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 398–399). His reasoning seems a bit circular, like in the case of Noah, no covenant with Aaron and his descendants pertaining to the priesthood is explicitly established prior to Num 25:12. (Gentry equates the priesthood given to Aaron and his descendants in Exodus 29 as the “covenant” that is affirmed.) The use of *nātan bērit* in Gen 17:2 assumes that it is synonymous with *hēqīm* used for the confirmation of a previously established covenant. Gentry assumes that Genesis 17 is the affirmation of the previously established covenant with Abraham is the covenant of Genesis 15 (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 416). This is the only use of the combination of *nātan bērit* with *hēqīm bērit* that could refer to an explicitly established covenant. However, the use of *hēqīm bērit* does not make this a possibility; the explicit establishment of a previous covenant in Genesis 15 (the existence of a covenant is explicit in the narration of the covenant ceremony [Gen 15:9–11] and the comment of the narrator [Gen 15:18]) make this a possibility.

found in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Noah (Genesis 6–9) and then in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham and his seed.

The similarity in the record of YHWH's covenantal dealings with these two men—Noah and Abraham—is revealing. In the case of narrator's use of קוים in a covenantal context, both narratives utilize the *weqatal* verb form וְהִקְמַתִּי. Both times וְהִקְמַתִּי is used in predictive/prophetic discourse. In the case of Noah, וְהִקְמַתִּי is used before the flood to predict the establishment of a covenant after the flood (Gen 6:18).⁷³ The same verb קוים in the *hiphil* participle form (מְקוֹיִם) is used at the moment in time the predicted covenant is being established (Gen 9:9). As the speech of God that occurs at the time of the establishment of the covenant continues, the narrator again uses the *weqatal* verb form וְהִקְמַתִּי (Gen 9:11). However, in verse 11, וְהִקְמַתִּי is not used in predictive discourse; it is used to give the reason for a result. The result is found in the second clause of verse 11. This clause is joined to the clause containing וְהִקְמַתִּי by a subordinating use of ו. The reason “no flesh will be again cut off by the water of the flood...”⁷⁴ is because God “has established his covenant” with Noah.⁷⁵

The record of God's establishing a covenant narrated by the use of קוים, rather than כָּרַת, illustrates how the *hiphil* of קוים is used in a covenantal context.⁷⁶ The author does not describe any particular action that institutes the covenant. No ceremony, sacrifice, or oath is mentioned. What is stressed in the narrative is the abiding obligation of the covenant. Perhaps this is the

⁷³ Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant*, 24.

⁷⁴ וְלֹא־יִכָּרַת כָּל־בְּשָׂר עוֹד מִמֵּי הַמַּבּוּל.

⁷⁵ וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם. In Gen 9:17, the establishment of the covenant with Noah (וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם) is interpreted by the LXX as “cutting/making” a covenant (διατίθημι). Elsewhere the LXX uses διατίθημι to translate כָּרַת (Gen 15:18; 21:27; Exod 24:8).

⁷⁶ Elmer A. Martens, “קוים” in *NIDOTTE* 3:900–1.

reason he does not use פָּרַח. It seems that קוּם supports the purpose of the narrator to stress the existence of a covenant rather than the action/event that brought that covenant into existence.⁷⁷

The use of וַהֲקִימֶנִּי in predictive discourse about a covenant is what is found in Gen 17:7. The purpose of Gen 17:7 is to prophesize the covenant that will provide the conditions (obligations, blessing, and curses) through which YHWH will rule the future theocracy. Genesis 17:7 highlights the continued relevance of the future covenant, not simply the act that establishes the covenant. The predicted covenant of Gen 17:7 is the Mosaic covenant.⁷⁸ The Mosaic covenant was established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26.⁷⁹ In neither of these chapters is the *hiphil* participle מִקִּים used like in the case of the establishment of the Noachic covenant.

In the exodus and wilderness wandering narrative(s), קוּם is not used in a covenantal context. The word used by the author for the establishment of the Mosaic covenant is פָּרַח. In both narrations, the original establishment of the covenant in Exodus and the covenant's re-establishment in Deuteronomy, the *qal* participle פָּרַח is used (Exod 34:10; Deut 29:13). In both narrations, the ceremony that formally established the covenant is central to the story.⁸⁰ The locations of the ceremony that inaugurated the covenant became significant for ancient Israel.

⁷⁷ The idea of Dumbrell that this episode records the continuation of the covenant made with Adam is excluded based on the participants and the terms of the covenant. The participants are God, Noah and all flesh (Gen 9:15a), and the obligation taken by YHWH is never again to destroy the participants through a flood (Gen 9:15b). The participants of the covenant made with Adam were Adam and God and the obligation was given to Adam only (Gen 2:16–17).

⁷⁸ See below.

⁷⁹ The covenant in Exodus is said to have been made/established in Exodus 34:27; however, the people consent to the covenant in Exodus 24:7 (reiterating what they had said in Exodus 19:8). Confirmation of consent by the people to the covenant is mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:10–13.

⁸⁰ Durham notes that the clause אָנֹכִי פֹרַח בְּרִית (Exod 34:10) is YHWH's announcement "that he is in the process of making a covenant...." John I. Durham, *Exodus* WBC (Grands Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 460.

The events that occurred at Mount Sinai/Horeb that are recorded in Exodus are part of the historical prologue of Deuteronomy (chapters 1–5), especially the activity of establishing the covenant (Deut 4:10–13; 5:2–4).⁸¹ The last writing prophet mentions the events at Horeb that established the Mosaic covenant, “Remember the instructions of Moses my servant, which rules and statutes I commanded him at Horeb for all of Israel” (Mal 3:22).⁸² Other recollections of the events that occurred on Mount Sinai/Horeb that established the Mosaic covenant are found in 1 Kgs 8:9; 19:8; 2 Chr 5:10; Ps 106:19; Neh 9:13; Acts 7:38; Gal 4:24.⁸³

The frequent use of כָּרַת to refer to the establishment of the Mosaic covenant was meant to remind ancient Israel of the extraordinary events associated with the establishment of the covenant. In addition, the use of כָּרַת reminds the audience of the time in redemptive history when the covenant was instituted. The making of the Mosaic covenant occurred at a particular point of redemptive history—at that moment, ancient Israel formally became YHWH's people. The obligations placed on, and consented by, the people transformed them from a people to whom such a covenant was promised to a people to whom such a covenant was established. The fact that ancient Israel had experienced an event in history that brought them into covenant with YHWH was the primary thing indicated by the use of כָּרַת.⁸⁴

⁸¹ In these verses, the act of speaking is mentioned as the activity that established the covenant. Deuteronomy 4:13, “He (YHWH) declared to you his covenant” (וַיִּגְדֹּל לְכֶם אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ), and Deuteronomy 5:4, “YHWH spoke face to face with you on the mountain, from the midst of the fire” (פָּנִים בְּפָנִים דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ).

⁸² זָכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מִשְׁנֵה עֲבָדֵי אֱשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּחֶרֶב עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקָּדִים וּמִשְׁפָּטֵיהֶם.

⁸³ The location of the re-establishment of the Mosaic covenant in Deuteronomy is not mentioned, or the event is conflated with the initial establishment of the covenant. The location seems to be near the Jordan River, opposite Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Deut 27:11–13).

⁸⁴ The use of כָּרַת to indicate a moment in time in redemptive history when God ushers in a new covenant through which he works redemption explains the use of the verb in the prophetic mentions of the new covenant (Isa 61:8; Jer 31:31). In Ezekiel 16:60–63 נִהְיִימוֹתִי is used in predictive discourse about a future covenant (v. 62). The abiding nature of this future covenant is stressed in this passage. The promise contained in the terms of the covenant is how God's covenant people will “know that I am God” (v. 62). This is evident in Isaiah's and Jeremiah's

The following phrase in Gen 17:7 indicates the parties of the future covenant: the covenant will be established “between me (YHWH) and you, that is, between your seed after you.”⁸⁵ An argument can be made that the parties to the covenant expressed in this phrase necessitate the covenant being established during Abraham's lifetime since he is one of the parties. If this was a covenant that was established during Abraham's lifetime, this event recorded in Genesis 17 must be the record of the establishment of the covenant. However, since the seed—a descendant of Abraham through Sarah—with whom the covenant is established was not present at the time of this interaction between YHWH and Abraham, a different explanation must be sought for mentioning Abraham and his seed as parties to the covenant.

The prepositional phrase that follows, “to their generations,”⁸⁶ clarifies that the actual parties to the future covenant are YHWH and Abraham's descendants. The fact that multiple “generations” are party to the covenant also supports the idea that the *hiphil* of קוּם highlights the abiding obligations of a covenant.⁸⁷ The future covenant will be established with people who are descendants of Abraham, not individuals. The future covenant is not established with individuals, unlike the covenant of Genesis 15 that was established between YHWH and Abram as an individual. The covenant will be established with the descendants of Abraham, who will

prophecies of the new covenant (Isa 54:13 [quoted John 6:45]; Jer 31:34). Verse 63 reinforces the notion that the abiding nature of the covenant, not its establishment by an activity in time.

⁸⁵ בִּינִי וּבִינְךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ אֶתְּהַדֵּד.

⁸⁶ לְדֹרֹתָם.

⁸⁷ In the Exodus and Wilderness Wandering narratives, the parties involved in the covenant are often referred to as “I” (YHWH) and “you” (either Moses or those ancient Israelites present). These were the parties present at the event that established the covenant (Exod 34:27; Deut 9:9). For example, in Exodus 34:27, The narrator writes, “And YHWH said to Moses, ‘Write for yourself these words, for according to these words I have made/cut a covenant with you and Israel’” (וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה לְכַתֹּב־לְפָנָיו אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כִּי־עַל־פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כָּתַבְתִּי אֶתְּךָ וְאֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל). (וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה לְכַתֹּב־לְפָנָיו אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כִּי־עַל־פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כָּתַבְתִּי אֶתְּךָ וְאֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל).

form the theocracy. The second use of ׀ in the clause *וּבְיַדְּךָ וּבְיַדְּ אֶתְנָתְךָ אֶתְהַרְיֶה* is epexegetical of *בְּיַדְּךָ*.⁸⁸

The prepositional phrase *לְדֹרֹתָם* also clarifies what is meant by “for an everlasting covenant” (ESV).⁸⁹ *עוֹלָם* (“eternal/everlasting”) has a broad semantic range.⁹⁰ The mention of the parties involved in this covenant limits the meaning of *עוֹלָם* in the context of Gen 17:7. The two parties involved in the covenant are YHWH and Abraham’s descendants. The duration of the future covenant is indicated in the prepositional phrase *לְדֹרֹתָם* by the use of *לְ* of extent of time. The future covenant will continue “to/throughout their generations.” The covenant will be an “enduring covenant” as long as the generations of Abraham’s descendants that make up the theocracy continue.⁹¹

Verse 7 ends with a subordinate clause of purpose, “To be God to you and your seed after you.”⁹² This clause begins with a *לְ* plus construct infinitive of *הָיָה* to indicate purpose. This purpose clause is adverbial, modifying the main verb of the sentence, *וַהֲקַמְתִּי*. The purpose of establishing a future covenant is for YHWH to be Israel's covenant God.⁹³

⁸⁸ If three entities were parties to the covenant, the prepositional phrase *בְּיַדְּ* would have been repeated.

⁸⁹ *לְבְרִית עוֹלָם*.

⁹⁰ Wenham writes, “(The word translated) ‘eternal’ may simply mean ‘without predetermined end.’” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 29.

⁹¹ A similar temporary notion is indicated by the use of *עוֹלָם* with the prepositional phrase *לְדֹרֹתָם* in the clause “everlasting statue” (*תְּקַת עוֹלָם*) in Exodus 12:14, 12; 24:21; 28:42; Leviticus 3:17; 7:36; Numbers 15:15; 18:23). These “everlasting” statues ended with the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the new covenant. The new covenant coincided with the end of the theocratic covenant.

⁹² *וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים וְלִזְרַעְךָ אֶתְהַרְיֶה*. The use of *וְ* in the syntax of this clause is parallel to the second use of the *וְ* conjunctive use of earlier in the verse (*וּבְיַדְּךָ וּבְיַדְּ אֶתְנָתְךָ אֶתְהַרְיֶה*). Another parallel follows in verse 8 (*וְהָיָה לְךָ וְלִזְרַעְךָ אֶתְהַרְיֶה*).

⁹³ The covenant that codified this relationship was the Mosaic covenant. The purpose/result of the covenant made in Gen 15:18 and the covenant predicted in Gen 17:7 differ. See chapter 5 of this dissertation. Wenham comments, “This latter phrase (‘to be God to you and your descendants’), used twice here and not again till 28:21, expresses the heart of the covenant, that God has chosen Abraham and his descendants so that they are in a unique

After explaining the second sequentially temporal thing that he will do in the future for Abraham and his seed, verse 8 predicts the third sequentially temporal thing, “And I will give to and to your seed the land of your sojourning.”⁹⁴ Verse 8 begins with another *weqatal* verb form, וַנִּתְּתִי, continuing the predictive discourse. The direct object of וַנִּתְּתִי, “the land of your sojourning,” is modified by the adjectival clause “that is, all the land of Canaan.”⁹⁵

Verse 8 continues with an adverbial clause modifying וַנִּתְּתִי, “for an enduring possession.”⁹⁶ The הַ that begins this clause is a specification. This clause limits the verbal action. YHWH gave the land in a manner that it became ancient Israel's possession. This is the first use of the noun אֶרֶץ in the Abraham narrative. So far in the narrative, the land has been referred to as something simply (to be) “given.” Any specification on how the land was or will be given is absent.⁹⁷ The specification of how the land will be given to Abraham's descendants functions as the purpose for YHWH for providing the land. The land will be given “for an enduring possession.” The enduring nature of the possession of Canaan does not explicitly have the same limitation as the “enduring covenant” mentioned in verse 7.⁹⁸

relationship: he is their God, and they are his people (cf. Exod 4:16; 6:7; Lev 11:45; 26:12, 45).” Wenham, *Genesis 17–50*, 22.

⁹⁴ וַנִּתְּתִי לְךָ וּלְבָנֶיךָ אֶתְּתִי אֶתְּתִי מִן־הָאָרֶץ מִן־הָאָרֶץ.

⁹⁵ אֶתְּתִי כָּל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן.

⁹⁶ לְאֶחָזְזֶת עוֹלָם.

⁹⁷ See Gen 12:7; 13:15–17; 15:18 for the earlier passages where אֶרֶץ is the direct object of נתן without the use of any specification or limitation.

⁹⁸ The next chapter of this dissertation will discuss whether the audience is supposed to infer a temporal limitation for the possession of the land by Abraham's seed or whether a more profound significance to this prediction relates to Genesis 15.

The final clause of verse 8 reiterates the theocratic import of the three previous predictions, “And I will be God to them.”⁹⁹ This last phrase in English translations (“to them”) is emphatically placed in the Hebrew word order.¹⁰⁰ After YHWH has multiplied Abraham, made him a multitude of nations, made a covenant with his descendants, and given his descendants the land, he will be God to them. The purpose of all that YHWH will do for Abraham and his descendants is so that he might be *their* God.¹⁰¹

The *weqatal* verb form וְהָיִיתִי begins the final clause of verse 8. Between the opening *weqatal* verb and וְהָיִיתִי, there is no indication that predictive discourse has concluded. The most natural way to take וְהָיִיתִי is another sequential prediction. However, the context militates against this. Instead, the action of YHWH being/becoming God of Abraham's descendants is the purpose of the predicted covenant (v. 7). Establishing the covenant creates the official relationship between YHWH and Abraham's descendants.

Additionally, the nature of the action “be” is fundamentally different than the other predicted actions. The other actions in verses 6–8 are transitive and telic. The object of YHWH's multiplying is “you” (Abraham). YHWH makes a covenant, and he gives the land of Abraham sojourning. All of these actions also have an end. Neither of these verbal concepts apply to הָיָה. The final clause, וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים, serves to summarize the result/purpose of all of YHWH's predicted actions found in verses 6–8.¹⁰² In the three verses, 6–8, all three elements required for a

⁹⁹ וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים.

¹⁰⁰ “Apparently, the significant point to grasp in relation to these two verses (7 and 8) is that Abraham's covenant status is being transmitted to his זרע. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 171.

¹⁰¹ Emphasis added.

¹⁰² The reference to “them” (Abraham's descendants) reinforces the notion that all the predicted actions in verses 7–8 are directed toward Abraham's descendants, not both Abraham and his descendants. See discussion of

theocracy (people, covenant, and land) are mentioned. The future establishment of a theocracy is summarized by the phrase, “I will be God to them.”¹⁰³ YHWH himself will perform all of these actions.

The *wayyiqtol* וַיֹּאמֶר verb at the beginning of verse 9 begins the second section of direct discourse. The clause “And God spoke to Abraham” is not required since the narrator is still recounting the unbroken speech of God that began after the discourse marker לְאָמַר at the end of verse 3. The function of the clause is to emphasize the disjunctive nature of the obligation that follows. The requirements of Abraham are contrasted with the predicted actions of YHWH found in verses 6–8. The same God that will do the things for Abraham found in verses 6–8 places a requirement on Abraham and his descendants.

The Hebrew word order highlights the disjunction between what preceded this reported speech in the rest of verse 9, “And you yourself shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.”¹⁰⁴ This clause begins with a disjunctive use of ׀. The next word is the nominative use of the pronoun אַתָּה followed by the direct object אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. Finally, the verbal תִּשְׁמֹר, an expanded/compound subject, and adverbial clause complete verse 9.

The use of two explicit subjects, אַתָּה and the expanded/compound subject ׀ וְנִזְרַעְךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ, in the clause is usually with a singular verb. The fronting of the first אַתָּה and the disjunctive use of ׀ serves two purposes. First, this syntax contrasts the obligations/predictions of YHWH (verses 6–

above. Williamson notes that Gen 17:7–8 indicates “the transfer of covenant promises from one generation to the next.” Williamson, *Sealed*, 88.

¹⁰³ וְהָיִיתִי might be expressed to indicate logical sequence. “And thus, I will be God to them.”

¹⁰⁴ וְאַתָּה אֶת־בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֹר אַתָּה ׀ וְנִזְרַעְךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ לְדֹרֹתָם.

8) with the obligation of Abraham in the following verses.¹⁰⁵ Second, this syntax stresses the relevance of the following obligation for Abraham. Whereas the predictions in prior verses 6–8 apply to Abraham's descendants, the obligation imposed in verses 9–14 applies to Abraham himself.

The main verb reinforces the relevance of the obligation for Abraham. The main verb is the *yiqtol* second person singular verb form תִּשְׁמֹר. The *yiqtol* functions as a continuing directive or obligation. The second person singular subject of the verb is Abraham as the referent of אַתָּה. The subject is expanded by the compound phrase וְנִרְעַבְךָ אֶתְּהָ אֲחֵרֶיךָ that follows the verb. The compound phrase וְנִרְעַבְךָ אֶתְּהָ אֲחֵרֶיךָ is found in the location within the usual Hebrew word order where an expressed subject would typically occur. The purpose of the explicit compound subject וְנִרְעַבְךָ אֶתְּהָ אֲחֵרֶיךָ is to stress the continuing nature of the obligation on Abraham's seed; this also explains the inclusion of the adverbial prepositional phrase לְדֹרֹתָם.¹⁰⁶ While the obligation is formally given to Abraham, his descendants are also placed under the obligation.¹⁰⁷

The direct object of the obligation is expressed in verse 9 as “my covenant.”¹⁰⁸ What is meant by “my covenant” is clarified in verse 10 by a verbless clause that starts at the beginning of verse 10 and concludes at the end of verse 10, “This is my covenant...to circumcise every male belonging to you.”¹⁰⁹ This clause expands or defines the direct object of the previous clause.

¹⁰⁵ Many English translations supply this notion. “God said further to Abraham, ‘Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations’” (NASB).

¹⁰⁶ This prepositional phrase limits the meaning of “everlasting covenant” in verse 13. See chapter 6 of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁷ If the purpose were simply to obligate Abraham and his descendants, a third-person plural verb found in verse 10 would have sufficed.

¹⁰⁸ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי. The direct object is in a marked position in the clause for emphasis.

¹⁰⁹ נָאֵת בְּרִיתִי... הַמָּוֶל לָכֶם כָּל-זָכָר.

The use of the feminine demonstrative pronoun functions to point forward to the clause that defines “my covenant.” However, before completing the defining clause of “my covenant,” YHWH restates the obligation, “This is the covenant which you shall keep.”¹¹⁰ A third plural verb is used for the obligation, תִּשְׁמְרוּ, stressing the abiding nature of the obligation. This abiding nature of the obligation is confirmed in the fact that the parties to which the “keeping” of “my covenant” is associated are YHWH and Abraham and his descendants after him.¹¹¹

How verse 10 defines covenant is odd. An obligation, the essential aspect of this covenant, is stipulated.¹¹² The manner by which the covenant is kept is highlighted by the emphatic use of the infinitive construct (הַמְזִיל).¹¹³ In addition, verse 11 clarifies how “my covenant” should be understood in the context of verses 9–14. The action that defines what is meant by “my covenant” in verse 9 is said to be “For a sign of the covenant between me and between you”¹¹⁴ in verse 11. Before this declaration, verse 11 describes details of the circumcision of every male belonging to Abraham, “You shall circumcise the flesh of the foreskin.”¹¹⁵ The use of the *weqatal* וְהָיָה indicates the result of the action.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ נָאֵת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ.

¹¹¹ בִּינִי וּבִינֵיכֶם וּבִין וְרַעְיָה אַחֲרָיִךְ. The use of the second-person singular, not the second-person plural, suffix makes it clear that the second-person plural subject of the verb שָׁמַר is not Abraham and his contemporaries (his household). The obligation to “keep my covenant” is given to Abraham and his descendants who have yet to be born—those descending from Isaac.

¹¹² Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 190.

¹¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 17–50*, 15.

¹¹⁴ וְהָיָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבִינֵיכֶם. “The designation of circumcision itself as a covenant is a synecdoche for covenantal obligation.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 470.

¹¹⁵ וְנִמְלִטֶם אֶת בְּשָׂר עֶרְלֹתְכֶם.

¹¹⁶ The logical sequence of the *weqatal* verbs is directive followed by result. The first *weqatal* (וְנִמְלִטֶם) functions as a directive. Verse 11 may be a series of two directives. Either way, the second *weqatal* is sequentially dependent on the first. וְהָיָה indicates the state that sequentially follows the action.

Verses 12–13a provide added details about those who are to be considered “every male belonging to you” who must be circumcised. These are every male who is eight days old who is born as a freeman or slave or purchased as a servant.

Verse 13 reiterates that the result of the act of circumcising every male belonging to Abraham on the eighth day is the covenant, “And this will be my covenant.”¹¹⁷ Conceptually, this clause echoes the clause *וְהִנֵּה לְאֹת בְּרִית* in verse 11. The narrator does not use the noun *בְּרִית* in the typical way in verse 13. Instead, *בְּרִית* is used as synonymous with “sign of the covenant.” The adverbial prepositional phrase makes this clear, “my covenant in your flesh.”¹¹⁸ Strictly speaking, a covenant does not have a location since it is immaterial. A covenant has parties, terms, and obligations that are expressed by words. The location of an expression of these words can be on documents that have a location, but the covenant itself does not have a location.

However, to dismiss the obligation expressed in verses 9–13 as a covenant does not match the biblical record (Acts 7:8).¹¹⁹ In the simplest form, a covenant is made with Abraham and his descendants—YHWH obligates circumcision.¹²⁰ The result of circumcision was a visible

¹¹⁷ *וְהִנֵּה לְאֹת בְּרִיתִי*.

¹¹⁸ *בְּבֶשֶׂרְכֶם*.

¹¹⁹ Even though the “covenant of circumcision” is instituted in Genesis 17, most commentators do not take it as a separate covenant, a second covenant in addition to the covenant made in Gen 15:18. Rather, the covenant of circumcision is viewed as an addition or addendum to the one Abrahamic covenant made in Gen 15:18. Bruce, commenting on Acts 7:8, writes, “One sign was given to Abraham, the sign of circumcision, as the outward token of the covenant which God made with him.” F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 135. Stephen, in Acts 7:8, seems to be explicitly referencing the institution of the obligation of circumcision as a covenant.

¹²⁰ In its simplest expression, a covenant is the formal acceptance or imposition of obligations by one or both parties. The fact that Abraham was a participant in the covenant of circumcision is confirmed when he circumcised Isaac on the eighth day “like God commanded him” (*כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים*) as recorded in Gen 21:4. Wenham, *Genesis 17–50*, 24.

sign of the covenant that YHWH predicted as part of the future theocracy (Gen 17:7).¹²¹ The consequences expressed in verse 14 confirm the relationship.

The consequence for not receiving the sign of circumcision, an uncircumcised male, was excommunication. This excommunication was because “He has broken my covenant.”¹²² The terms of the covenant of circumcision were simple: inclusion in the people of YHWH for compliance and exclusion from the people of YHWH for non-compliance. Those of Abraham's pre-theocratic descendants who did not comply with the obligation of circumcision had no part in the predictions of Gen 17:6–8. Circumcision was the obligation of Abraham and his descendants in response to YHWH's predictions. This obligation was placed on Abraham and his descendants by YHWH. An obedient response to the requirement of circumcision demonstrated that Abraham and his descendants would be worthy of becoming the theocracy.¹²³ The only obligation of the covenant of circumcision produced a visible sign of that obligation. The covenant and the sign of the covenant were intimately related to ensure that no male ancient Israelite could avoid the knowledge that he was in covenant with YHWH.¹²⁴

¹²¹ See Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation for biblical-theological explanation. Hamilton notes, “It is appropriate then that an eternal law (the ‘everlasting/eternal’ covenant mentioned in verse 7) is accompanied by a sign that is permanent.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 469. Dumbrell says, “It (circumcision) functions as a sign of covenant separation.” Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 97. The rite of circumcision was instituted to separate those who have an interest in the covenant.

¹²² אֶת־בְּרִיתִי הִקַּר.

¹²³ “This is part of the answer to the question of how Abraham was supposed to ‘walk before me (YHWH) and be blameless’ (Gen 17:1b).” Wenham, *Genesis 17–50*, 24.

¹²⁴ In pre-Mosaic covenant times, that knowledge looked forward to the predictions of the theocracy in Gen 17:6–8; after the establishment of the Mosaic covenant, that knowledge looked back to the obligations of the theocratic covenant (Gal 5:3). “Circumcision is a mnemonic sign, reminding God’s people of who they are (as in Exod. 13:9, 16; 31:12–17; Num. 15:37–40; Deut. 6:8; 11:18; Josh. 4:6–7), from what they have been delivered, and by whom they have been delivered.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 470. Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant*, 99. See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Another appearance of the *wayyiqtol* וַיֹּאמֶר at the beginning of verse 15 provides the next division of the divine speech (vv. 15–21). The speech of YHWH continues to be directed to Abraham, “And God said to Abraham.”¹²⁵ After its initial use, וַיֹּאמֶר is used to mark sequential speech in the dialogue between YHWH and Abraham recorded in verses 15–21. This dialogue marks the first time an explicit promise is made by YHWH to Abraham of a son through Sarai. Previous implicit promises of seed to Abraham are found throughout YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:4). In the previous chapter, Genesis 16, Abram and Sarai took it upon themselves to produce an heir for Abram from Hagar in response to these promises. However, the intention was for YHWH to use Sarah to produce the seed promised to Abraham.

The promise to Abraham of a son through Sarai prompts her name change. Verses 15–16 echo verse 5. Sarai's name change accompanies predictions of what YHWH will do for her, “For Sarah is her name, and I will bless her, and I will even give you a son from her. In this way, I will bless her, and she will be nations, and kings of peoples will come from her.” Verse 16 begins with וַיְבָרֶכְתִּי אֶתְּהָא, commentators point out that the verb בָּרַךְ often connotes fertility. It seems that the original audience would not have understood this connotation.¹²⁶ The inclusion of the particle ׀ marks the following clause as unexpected. If בָּרַךְ were meant to indicate fertility, ׀ would be superfluous. Throughout the narrative, Sarah's infertility, due to bareness and age, has been noted by the author (Gen 11:30; 16:2). In the next verse, verse 17, the audience is reminded again of Sarah's age.

¹²⁵ The clause וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם is identical to first clause of verse 9.

¹²⁶ Fertility is not the only blessing in Genesis. Abraham was said to be blessed by YHWH with riches (Gen 24:35).

The next clause, “And I will even give you a son from her,”¹²⁷ is the topic of the rest of the dialogue between YHWH and Abraham. The syntax and word choice in this clause are significant. First, the marked positions of the prepositional phrases, מִיָּדָהּ, and לָךְ, place focus on the source and benefactor of the son. “From her” is marked to contrast Sarah as the source of Abraham's son against his other wives, Hagar (Gen 16:15) and Keturah (Gen 25:2). The prepositional phrase לָךְ (“for you”) makes it clear that this son will be provided as the heir for Abraham (Gen 15:4).

The second significant thing is the choice of בֶּן for the direct object. The promise of the inheritance of the land of Canaan is repeatedly stated as to Abraham's “seed” (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18). This promised son, who will be the heir of Abraham, is not referred to as Abraham's seed. Whether this is theologically significant or simply how the author referred to Abraham's male children (Gen 16:15; 25:9) will be considered in chapter 5 of this dissertation.¹²⁸

The rest of the dialogue between YHWH and Abraham, recorded in verses 15–21, concerns Abraham's doubt and YHWH's affirmation. Doubt and assurance about the promise of a son for Abraham from Sarah reemerge as a topic at the beginning of Genesis 18 (vv . 1–15). However, in the remainder of the conversation between YHWH and Abraham in Genesis 17, the central issue of the chapter comes to the forefront in verses 19–21, the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7.

The lineage that will enter into a covenant with YHWH in the future is Isaac's, “Sarah, your wife, will bear a son for you. You shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant

¹²⁷ וְגַם נָתַתִּי מִיָּדָהּ לָךְ בֶּן.

¹²⁸ An argument that “seed” (זָרַע) means extended generations beyond immediate sons does not explain the use of בֶּן since בֶּן is used to denote generations of descendants in the genealogies.

with him as an everlasting covenant, that is for his seed after him” (Gen 17:19). This prediction comes amid Abraham's continued doubt. This doubt is epitomized in Abraham's reply to the prediction that he will have a son through Sarah, “May Ishmael live before you” (Gen 17:18b).¹²⁹ What Abraham meant by “before you” (לפניך) is clarified by YHWH's response. His response twice mentions covenant. In v. 18, Abraham requests that Ishmael be his heir—this is the sense of “before you.”

The couple's lack of confidence in Sarah's ability to produce an heir for Abraham is a theme of Genesis 16–18. In the middle of YHWH's predictions of the future for Abraham's descendants, Abraham continues his doubt. However, in vv. 19 and 21, YHWH reassures Abraham that his descendants, through Isaac, not through Ishmael, will be his heirs. The clause “I will establish my covenant with him/Isaac” expresses this reassurance.¹³⁰

The clause in v. 19 is almost identical to the prediction in v. 7 except for the adverbial prepositional phrase. The difference in prepositional phrases indicates a different emphasis on the lineage of the descendants who will participate in the future covenant. In v. 7, it was Abraham's descendants. In v. 19, it is Isaac's descendants. Perhaps the ambiguity of the referent of Abraham's descendants confused Abraham. Why did Abraham think that Ishmael could be his heir? Abraham believed this because Sarah was barren and old, and Ishmael was his seed.

The change in emphasis from the prediction of the future covenant from Abraham's seed to Isaac's seed in verse 19 does not mean a different covenant is in view. Instead, the change provided clarification to Abraham that his descendants, through Isaac, are heirs of the

¹²⁹ יתגה וישמעאל לפניך.

¹³⁰ ואת־בריתי אקים את־יִצְחָק (v. 19). ונתקמלתי את־בריתי אִתְּךָ (v. 21).

prediction.¹³¹ The exclusion of Ishmael from the predictions is reinforced in the Hebrew word order of v. 21.¹³² After explaining the future blessings of Ishmael, these blessings are contrasted with the blessing of the covenantal inheritance that comes through Isaac, “But my covenant I will establish with Isaac” (v. 21).¹³³ The marked position of the direct object וְאֶת־בְּרִיתִי and the use of an adversative ׀ place in antithesis the futures of Ishmael (v. 20) and Isaac. Ishmael will be blessed, but Isaac will be Abraham's heir and the font of the lineage that will participate in the predictions of vv. 6–8.

Overview of Genesis 17:22–27

Genesis 17 concludes with the narration of Abraham's immediate response to the institution of the rite of circumcision.

Exegesis of Genesis 17:22–27

The third major section of Genesis 17 begins with a change in the characters involved in the narrative. The *wayyiqtol* verb forms וַיֵּצֵל and וַיִּבֶל in v. 22 indicates the continuation of the narrative, “And God finished speaking with him and went up from Abraham.”¹³⁴ Verse 23 introduces new characters, Ishmael and Abraham’s household, into the action, “And Abraham

¹³¹ The same modification of the participant(s) in the covenant that will be established with Isaac is found in the prediction about the covenant to be established with Abraham (v. 7). In both cases, the ultimate participants are the patriarch’s descendants. “Your (Abraham)/his (Isaac) descendants after them.” (לְזַרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו [v. 7], זֶרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיָהּ [v. 19]). In both cases, the covenant is referred to as an “enduring” covenant (לְבְרִית עוֹלָם) for the descendants.

¹³² Wenham, *Genesis 17–50*, 16.

¹³³ וְאֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֶקִּים אִתְּךָ.

¹³⁴ וַיִּבֶל לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ וַיֵּצֵל אֱלֹהִים מֵעַל אַבְרָהָם.

took Ishmael his son and all those who were in his house and those purchased with his silver, every male among the men of Abraham's household."¹³⁵

Verse 23 continues the narration by describing Abraham's immediate action, "And he circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that very day."¹³⁶ The final subordinate clause, "According to what God spoke to him,"¹³⁷ modifies the entire action of v. 23, not just the last/previous clause. Both the actions of circumcision by Abraham and whom he circumcised corresponded to "what God spoke to him." Those who were subject to circumcision were every male in Abraham's household (v. 12), and the anatomical location of circumcision was the flesh of the foreskin (v. 14). The repetition of these things in v. 23 stresses the precision of Abraham's obedient response to the institution of circumcision.

In addition, Abraham's obedience is highlighted in the author's use of his, Abraham's name, and the third person pronominal suffix.¹³⁸ Abraham's name is used twice in v. 23; first as the subject of וַיִּקַּח, and second, as the absolute noun in the construct chain בֵּית אַבְרָהָם. The inclusion of אַבְרָהָם as the explicit subject of וַיִּקַּח is significant because the context, following from v. 22, places Abraham as the sole character in the narrative and the use of the third person pronominal suffix three times to define the direct objects of the verb further, emphasizes that Abraham was the one performing the verbal action. The word that finishes the first clause of v. 23, אַבְרָהָם, is also emphatic. The audience is already aware that the males of Abraham's

¹³⁵ וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּנוֹ וְאֵת כָּל־יְלִידָיו בֵּיתוֹ וְאֵת כָּל־מִקְנֵת פְּסָפוֹ כָּל־זָכָר בְּאֵנְשֵׁי בֵּית

¹³⁶ וַיִּמָּל אֶת־בְּשָׂר עַרְלֹתָם בְּעֶצְמֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

¹³⁷ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים.

¹³⁸ The author narrates the immediate obedience emphatically to demonstrate that Abraham exemplified obedience as YHWH required in Gen 17:1. Abraham's loyalty and devotion to YHWH, as required for establishing the future covenant, is highlighted by the emphasis on his obedience.

household were the direct objects of the verb using the third person pronominal suffix. In the first clause of v. 23, the emphasis is that *Abraham* took all of *his* males.

The second clause of v. 23 shows no particular emphasis. The clause simply records the next action by Abraham in the narrative. The final adverbial clause explains the emphatic use of the name Abraham and the third-person pronominal suffix. The marked position of the direct object אֱתוֹ clarifies that the author wants his audience to know that the actions of Abraham recorded in v. 23 were Abraham's response to what God spoke to him.¹³⁹

In v. 23, Abraham responded, "According to what God spoke to him." What was spoken to Abraham is recorded in vv. 11–13. Later in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, the author narrates another response to the institution of the rite of circumcision. In Gen 21:4, following Isaac's birth, the authors write, "And Abraham circumcised Isaac his son (son of eight days) according to what God had commanded him."¹⁴⁰

The word order is identical in both clauses (preposition-relative particle-verb-direct object-subject), and the works are identical, except for the verb. A comparison of the last clause of these verses reveals two notable things. First, the direct object in both is in a marked position. The fact that the one who performed the act of circumcision, Abraham, is the direct object (as the antecedent of the pronominal suffix on the direct object maker) verb whose subject is God stresses the historical fact that YHWH gave the institution of the rite of circumcision to Abraham.

¹³⁹ By narrating the first act of circumcision, the author stresses the antiquity of the rite to his and future audiences. Circumcision was given to Abraham. Therefore, the circumcisions performed by Israel during their wanderings and subsequent history were not novel. John, in his gospel, points this out; quoting Jesus speaking to the Jewish religious leaders, John writes, "Therefore, Moses gave to you circumcision (not that is from Moses, rather, it was from the fathers) and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath" (John 7:22). See chapter 6 of this dissertation for more on the New Testament authors' understanding of circumcision.

¹⁴⁰ וַיִּמְלֵךְ אַבְרָהָם אֶת־בְּנֵי־בְנֵי־שָׂמְרָת יְמֵים פְּאֻשָׁר צָנָה אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים

The second notable thing is the verb used in each clause. In Gen 17:23, the verb is דָּבַר (“spoke”), and in Gen 21:4, the verb is צִוָּה (“commanded”). Stylistic variation might explain the differences. However, examining the previous clause, particularly the temporal modifiers, indicates that the different verbs are meant to convey different meanings. In Gen 17:23, the previous clause contains the temporal adverbial phrase “on that very day.”¹⁴¹ Emphasis is placed on the time at which Abraham circumcised his household. The typical way to express “that day” is הַיּוֹם הַהוּא.¹⁴² In Gen 17:23 the noun מִצֵּטֶם is used to modify הַיּוֹם הַהוּא. מִצֵּטֶם places emphasis “(on) that *very* day” (Gen 17:26; Deut 32:48). The emphasis added by the inclusion of מִצֵּטֶם stresses the fact that Abraham circumcised his household on the very day that the rite of circumcision was instituted.¹⁴³ The same day that YHWH spoke to him about the obligation of circumcision, Abraham circumcised his household.

In the case of Isaac, circumcision was done “according to what God had commanded him (Abraham).” The temporal marker in the case of Isaac is “(he was) a son of eight days.” Circumcision of those males in Abraham’s household eight days after birth is what YHWH commanded; Isaac’s circumcision was performed in obedience to the obligation of the covenant of circumcision. On the other hand, the circumcisions that occurred on the day that the rite was instituted happened according to what should be done (circumcision of the flesh of the foreskin)

¹⁴¹ בְּעֵצֶם הַיּוֹם הַהוּא.

¹⁴² The phrase would be translated in narrative discourse as “that day.” In other types of discourse, it would be translated differently. For example, in procedural discourse, it might be translated as “this day” (Ex 12:17). The use of the relative adjective/pronoun depends on the context. Whether it is functioning as far or near (demonstrative) is determined by context. In historical narrative, when it is used adverbially (prefix with הַ) with *wayyiqtol* verb form, it is used as a far demonstrative. Temporal adverbial use of this phrase in historical narrative discourse is rare (Gen 17:23, 26; Deut 32:48). Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*. 30.

¹⁴³ This is again emphasized by the use of the same word, מִצֵּטֶם, in v. 26. בְּעֵצֶם הַיּוֹם הַהוּא נִמְוֶל.

and to whom it should be done (all the males in Abraham's household).¹⁴⁴ However, this circumcision was not "according to what God had commanded him" since these circumcisions did not take place on the eighth day.¹⁴⁵ The use of different verbs and temporal modifiers informs the audience that even though the two episodes have superficial similarities, the act of circumcision, the reason for Abraham's action is different.

Using different verbs and temporal modifiers, the author indicates that the predictions accompanying the rite of circumcision are for his descendants through Isaac.¹⁴⁶ Abraham circumcised Isaac according to the obligation/command of the covenant; Abraham circumcised Ishmael according to that which was spoken to him. The author closes Genesis 17 by highlighting the time when this circumcision occurred in vv. 24–25. The inclusion of Abraham's age ("And Abraham was ninety-nine years old")¹⁴⁷ at the time of his circumcision is expected. Throughout the narrative of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, his age (or another chronology marker) is provided (Gen 12:4; 16:3, 16; 17:1, 17).

While, in the case of Ishmael, his age may function as a chronology marker for this event relative to Genesis 16 (the birth of Ishmael), this is unnecessary since the author already provides this by mentioning Abraham's age.¹⁴⁸ Instead, the mention of Ishmael's age in his circumcision

¹⁴⁴ Including both occasions of Abraham's obedience in the matter of circumcision, the author presents Abraham as an example to ancient Israel of both ethical and ritual obedience. The first occasion of obedience is ethical, and the second ritual. The sign of circumcision, according to Wenham, "reminds its possessor of his obligation to walk before God and be perfect." Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 31.

¹⁴⁵ Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 480. "This is a portrait of an obedient Abraham." Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 184.

¹⁴⁶ No mention of the circumcision of Isaac's children, Esau and Jacob, is found in the narrative. The next mention of circumcision is associated with Jacob's sons (Genesis 34).

¹⁴⁷ וְאַבְרָהָם בְּן־תְּשַׁעִים וְתֵשַׁע שָׁנָה.

¹⁴⁸ That thirteen years passed between the birth of Ishmael and the institution of the rite of circumcision is ascertained by comparing Gen 16:16 ("Abraham was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael for him") and Gen 17:24.

sets up the contrast between the next occasion of the act of circumcision (Isaac in Genesis 21). The issues discussed above about the comparison of Gen 17:23 and 21:4, along with the additional detail that the author refers to both Ishmael and Isaac as “his (Abraham's) son” (Gen 17:25; 21:4), indicates that the reason Ishmael's age is included is not for chronological reasons; rather, the author is reinforcing his exclusion as the heir to the predictions found in Gen 17:7–8.¹⁴⁹ The obligation to circumcise every male at the age of eight days is associated with the theocratic predictions earlier in Gen 17:7–8. Circumcision was to serve as a reminder or sign to Abraham’s future descendants of the theocratic predictions made by YHWH to Abraham of the covenant and possession of the Promised Land that would constitute them as the people of YHWH.¹⁵⁰ In Gen 17:16–20, the narrative had already made it explicit that Abraham's seed through Sarah would be his heir. However, lest Abraham's act of circumcising his household (including Ishmael) confuse the audience, the author demonstrates that this circumcision was not covenant circumcision. The narrative finishes with a second mention of the other males circumcised at that time to reiterate that Abraham performed the act of circumcision on all those whom he was told to circumcise.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ In v. 26, Ishmael is again referred to as “his (Abraham’s) son.” וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּנֵוֹ.

¹⁵⁰ After the establishment of the theocracy, circumcision continued to be a reminder of the covenant that officially made ancient Israel a theocratic nation. See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

¹⁵¹ The second mention of the parties that were circumcised stresses the action of circumcision by the use of the *niphal* verb מְגִיל. These final verses of Genesis 17, vv. 26–27, also make explicit the fact that Abraham himself was circumcised. In v. 23, Abraham is not a subject of the verb מְגִיל. Verses 26–27 are not just a summary of Abraham’s actions; instead, these verses reiterate Abraham's immediate response to what was spoken to him by YHWH.

Conclusion

The narrative of the events recorded in Genesis 17 is literarily and historically situated at a pivotal point in Abraham's life. The prospect of the fruition of YHWH's purpose for Abraham—to make him a great nation (Gen 12:2)—was uncertain. The uncertainty about the fulfillment of YHWH's purpose for Abraham focused on the issue of descendants. Chapter 17 explicitly reveals that YHWH would accomplish everything required for Abraham to accomplish his purpose given in YHWH's initial call (Gen 12:1–3). The purpose of Genesis 17 is to record the predictions of YHWH's work that will make Abraham a great nation.

Of the two foundational things required of a nation—land, and descendants—YHWH had already formally covenanted to Abraham the possession of the Promised Land by his descendants in Genesis 15. However, the issue of descendants for Abraham was still in question. The literary place of Genesis 17 (between the attempt to produce his heir apart from Sarah in Genesis 16 and Sarah's reaction to the promise of Isaac in Genesis 18) demonstrates the importance of descendants who would be the heir of Abraham and the abiding question about the provision of this heir. This background is essential for understanding the events narrated in Genesis 17.

Genesis 17 begins by highlighting the history of the interactions between YHWH and Abraham so that the audience is aware of this as the context of the encounter recorded in Genesis 17. YHWH had already promised to make Abraham a great nation and had demonstrated the veracity of this promise by giving Abraham legal title to the Land of Canaan. Abraham's doubt about YHWH's promise of descendants is put to rest by the prophetic prediction by YHWH that he would make Abraham "exceedingly fruitful." The two foundational aspects of nationhood are confirmed before the predictive prophecy of a divine covenant is made. The addition of the

prediction of a divine covenant confirmed that the “great nation” that Abraham’s descendants would become would be a theocracy under the rule of YHWH.

The institution of the rite of circumcision was added so that all of Abraham’s male descendants through the promised lineage would recognize this theocratic prediction that would make them the covenant people of YHWH. In Genesis 17, the three elements required to constitute a theocracy are explicitly mentioned together for the first time—descendants, a covenant between YHWH and Abraham’s descendants, and occupation of the Promised Land.¹⁵² Through the progressive accomplishment of these predictions, Ancient Israel became a theocracy. The historical achievement of these predictions, as narrated in the Pentateuch, is the topic of chapter 5 of this dissertation.

¹⁵² In Gen 15:18, the covenant is between YHWH and Abraham as an individual. See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 5: FRUITION OF THE THEOCRATIC PREDICTIONS

“God made a two-fold covenant with Abraham, and that circumcision appertained not to the covenant of grace, but to the legal covenant God made with Abraham’s natural seed.”¹

Introduction

The last two chapters of this dissertation have considered YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham exegetically. In Chapter 3, it was shown that a major theme of the Genesis record of Abraham’s life was the promise of YHWH that Abraham would be the father of a future nation (Gen 12:2). The focus of the narrator on this nationhood theme in Genesis 12–25 led him to arrange the narrative and choose material that would stress the foundational requirements of a nation—offspring and land.

Chapter 3 of this dissertation demonstrated how these two foundational requirements—offspring and land—are prominent themes in the Abraham narrative of Genesis. The literary arrangement and narration of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham are structured in a way that never allows one of these requirements to be removed from the audience's thoughts. Even though YHWH formally covenants the land requirement to Abraham in Gen 15:18, the author continues to remind his audience throughout the rest of his narration of the life of Abraham about the importance of the land. However, after the record of the covenant that formally gave Abraham the title to the Promised Land (Genesis 15), the narrator shifts his primary focus to the second requirement of a nation—offspring.

The events recorded in Genesis 17 are pivotal in YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham. Chapter 4 of this dissertation showed how a third predicted thing—a covenant—would

¹ Benjamin Keach, *The Ax Laid to The Root, or, One Blow at the Foundation of Infant Baptism, and Church Membership, Part 1* (London: B. Keach, 1693). Quoted in Jeffrey D. Johnson, *The Kingdom of God: A Baptist Expression of Covenant Theology* (Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2016), 210.

make the nation promised to Abraham a theocracy. In Genesis 17:6–8, the three requirements for the future Israelite theocracy—offspring, covenant, and land—are prophesied to Abraham. As chapter 4 of this dissertation argued, this passage (Gen 17:6–8) consists of prophetic predictions that were to be fulfilled in temporal sequence that would result in a full-fledged theocratic nation.

The first prediction was the multiplication of Abraham’s descendants (v. 6), the second was the establishment of a covenant (v. 7), and the third was the possession of the Promised Land by Abraham’s descendants. This chapter will demonstrate that the author of the Pentateuch narrated the fulfillment of these predictions in the same sequential order as prophesized in Gen 17:6–8. The three prophetic predictions found in Gen 17:6–8 combine to form a unified prophetic prediction of the ancient Israelite theocracy.²

The sequential order of the narrative of the fulfillment of these predictions accurately records the historical/temporal order of the fulfillment in the history of Abraham’s descendants through the chosen seed. The narrative record of the historical fulfillment of the predictions found in Gen 17:6–8, along with the exegesis of this passage provided in the previous chapter of this dissertation, support the thesis of this dissertation: YHWH engaged in two different covenantal dealings with Abraham—Genesis 15 and 17—and the covenant to Abraham in Genesis 17 is fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant as established in Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 26.³

This chapter consists of three main sections. The first section of this chapter traces the record of the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham in Gen 17:6, “I (YHWH) will make

² The purpose of the establishment of a theocracy from the descendants of Abraham is alluded to in Gen 18:19, “For I (YHWH) have known him (Abraham) so that he might command his sons and his household after him so that they might keep the way of YHWH by doing righteousness and justice...” The accomplishment of the establishment of the theocracy in the Promised Land through the exodus and conquest provided the situation in which the descendants of Abraham were to do righteousness and justice (Ps 105).

³ Consent to the covenant obligations is found in Deut 26:17–18.

you exceedingly fruitful, and I will set you as nations and kings will come from you.”⁴ The second section considers how the narrator presents the establishment of the Mosaic covenant as the fulfillment of the prophecy of a covenant made by YHWH in Gen 17:7.⁵ The third section looks at how the biblical authors, in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, show that ancient Israel’s conquest and settlement in the land of Canaan begins the fulfillment of Gen 17:8, “And I will give to and to your seed the land of your sojourning.”⁶ After the fulfillment of the three prophetic predictions of Gen 17:6–8, the descendants of Abraham are a theocratic geo-political nation, thus fulfilling one of the primary purposes for YHWH’s covenant dealings with Abraham (Gen 12:2a).

Multiplication of Abraham’s Seed

Aside from the overall narrative of the Pentateuch, which makes plain that an essential concern of the narrator was the fulfillment of the promises of Gen 17:6 in theocratic Israel, the Genesis narrative of Abraham’s life presents a partial fulfillment of the first predictive prophecy made by YHWH to Abraham through three lineages other than through Isaac and Jacob. In chapter 5 of this dissertation, it was noted that there is no reason to take the prediction found in Gen 17:6 to apply only to the promised lineage. The accounts found in Genesis 16 and Genesis 25:1–4, 12–26 provide reasons to understand the prediction made by YHWH to Abraham, “I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will set you as nations and kings will come from you,” to apply to all of his descendants.

⁴ והפירותי אתה במאד מאד ונמתיה לגוים ומלכים ממך יצאו.

⁵ The Mosaic covenant fulfilled the purpose of the prophesied covenant of Gen 17:7 (“to be God to you and your seed after you”).

⁶ ונמתיה לך ולנרציה אתה ארץ מגידה.

The first lineage that demonstrates partial fulfillment is Ishmael. Even though YHWH rejected Ishmael as Abraham's chosen heir, he was still favored by YHWH (Gen 17:20). An aspect of this blessing is the multiplication of his descendants, along with rulers and establishing his descendants as a great nation. The fact that Ishmael, as a descendant of Abraham, is included in the prediction of Gen 17:6 is reinforced by the author directly applying the same promises to Ishmael (Gen 16:10; 17:20; 21:13) and the inclusion of the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen 25:1–8) as a sign of the partial fulfillment the prediction.⁷

The second lineage that illustrates partial fulfillment is Abraham's descendants through Keturah. In Gen 25:2–4, the narrator records six children that Keturah bore for Abraham. At least one of the sons of Keturah, Midian, was known as a geopolitical entity to the original audience.

The final lineage outside of the promised seed that shows partial fulfillment is Esau's. Although later in Genesis, partial fulfillment is more explicitly stated in the genealogy of Esau (Gen 36:9–43), even in the transition of the Genesis narrative to the promised seed, Isaac, an indication of partial fulfillment is provided. In Gen 25:23, YHWH says to Isaac's wife, Rebekah, "Two nations (גוים) are in your womb."⁸ Those two nations are Edom and ancient Israel.

While the narrator does want his audience to know that the fulfillment of the prediction of Gen 17:6 is broader than just ancient Israel, his main focus is on the fulfillment of the prediction through ancient Israel. The overall narrative of the Pentateuch makes this clear. However, even in the predictive prophecy of Gen 17:6–8, an implicit concern of following the fulfillment of v. 6 in the promised lineage is seen. The connection of the fruition of the land promise given initially in Gen 15:18 and predicted as the last in the sequence of prophetic

⁷ The application of the promise to Abraham's descendants through Ishmael can be only partially fulfilled since the prediction involves nations and kings, that is, multiple geo-political entities.

⁸ שני גוים בבטןך.

predictions in Gen 17:6–8 with Abraham’s seed through Sarah (Gen 17:19; 21:10–12) provides the foundation for the extensive narration of pre-theocratic Israel in the rest of the Pentateuch.

Included in the narrative of the separation of Ishmael from Isaac in Genesis 21 is a subtle reference to the fact that all of the predictions of Gen 17:6–8 should be considered in the lineage of Isaac. In Gen 21:10, Sarah, the mother of Isaac, says to Abraham, “Cast out this servant woman (Hagar) and her son (Ishmael) because the son of the servant woman will not inherit with my son, with Isaac.”⁹ The verb translated “inherit” is יָרַשׁ. This is the word used in Gen 15:3, 4, 7, 8 in connection to the covenant established in Gen 15:18. The covenant made in Gen 15:18 gave the future possession of the Promised Land to Abraham’s future seed. Abraham’s heir inherited the right to possess the Promised Land. Sarah clarifies that Isaac is the lawful heir according to the promise, not Ishmael.

The possession of the Promised Land is reiterated in the predictive prophecy of Gen 17:8. The prediction about the possession of the land has the same indirect object as participants of the predicted covenant in v. 7—Abraham’s seed.¹⁰ The seed of Abraham, to whom the predictions of Gen 17:7–8 apply, must be the promised heir of Genesis 15. The same lineage that will possess the land is the lineage that will be given a covenant. The original and exclusive heir of Abraham is Isaac. The author who recorded YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham in no way suggests that these predictions have even a partial fulfillment in any other lineage than Isaac through his son Jacob/Israel.

⁹ גָּרַשׁ הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־בְּנֶהּ כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בְּיַד הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת עִם־בְּנֵי עַם־יִצְחָק.

¹⁰ In v. 8 ל is used as an indirect object marker (לְיִרְעָה); in v. 6 וְיִרְעָה is used as the object of adjectival preposition בֵּין which is part of a prepositional phrase that modifies בְּרִיתִי.

Since the fulfillment of the predictions in Gen 17:7–8 are narrated in the history of ancient Israel as recorded in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, a fulfillment of the prediction of Gen 17:6 as it pertains to the promised lineage should also be included. The theocratic implications for ancient Israel (Abraham’s seed through Isaac) of the prediction by YHWH to Abraham in Gen 17:6 are explicated following his test involving Isaac that is recorded in Genesis 22. Following Abraham’s success, YHWH announced to him, “I will certainly bless you and multiply your seed like the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore, and your seed will inherit the gate of his enemies.”¹¹ The first part of this promise directly echoes Gen 17:6. The second part contains theocratic undertones.

The theocratic undertones are found in the language of inheritance and victory over enemies. The verb translated “inherit” is יָרַשׁ.¹² This is the same verb used in the opening verses of Genesis 15. Most evangelical translations translate this word in Gen 22:17 as “possess.” However, this word is different from the word translated as “possession” in Gen 17:8; that word is the noun אֲחֻזָּה. In the narration of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham, the יָרַשׁ verb is used to indicate something that will be done for or by Abraham’s (promised) heir.¹³ The use of יָרַשׁ with the direct object “the gates of his enemies,” connotes the idea of conquest.¹⁴ In the ancient Near East, the conquest of one nation of another was frequently credited to the ruler of the victorious nation (Gen 26:34–35; 2 Kgs 13:25; 15:29).

¹¹ פִּי-בָרֶךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ וְהִרְבֵּה אֲרֻבָּה אֶת-זַרְעֶךָ כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֲוֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל-שְׁפֹת הַיָּם וַיְרַשׁ זַרְעֶךָ אֶת שְׂעֵר אִיבִיו:

¹² In Deut 2:12, the verb יָרַשׁ in the *Qal* is used in conjunction with the verb שָׂמַד in the *hiphal* to connote the defeat of the Horites at the hand of the sons of Esau.

¹³ Someone will be Abraham’s heir (Gen 15:3–4). Ishmael will not inherit with Isaac (Gen 21:10).

¹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 112.

Whether the singular verb, noun, or pronominal suffix in the clause וַיִּבְרַח אֶת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ (Gen 12:13) can be taken as a collective singular is apparent from other uses of the noun שָׂרָה.¹⁵ However, in the context of the promise of rulers (kings) in Gen 17:6, this likely points to a ruler who will lead ancient Israel to inherit through the conquest of their enemies. While at first glance, this prophetic prediction seems to be fulfilled in the lifetime of Moses (Deut 3:12) or Joshua, these leaders only initiated the fulfillment. King Solomon acquired the entirety of the Promised Land for Abraham’s seed (1 Kgs 4:21). David and Solomon were the kings who conquered Israel’s neighboring enemies and took possession of all the land of promise.¹⁶ Genesis 22:17 echoes the promise of a multiplicity of seed, nations, and rulers given in Gen 17:6, as these pertain to Abraham’s chosen heir.

The rest of the Genesis narrative of the patriarchs shows continuing concern for the fulfillment of the prediction found in Gen 17:6. The foundation of Isaac’s life in the Promised Land includes this prediction and part of the predictions of Gen 17:6–8. After he received the command to remain in the Promised Land at the beginning of Gen 26:3, Isaac is given the reason that he is to remain, “I (YHWH) will be with you and I will bless you, because to you and your seed I will give all of this land, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham, your father.”¹⁷ In v. 4, the reason for the command continues, “And I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens...”¹⁸ This is an obvious echo of the prediction made to Abraham in Gen 17:6. The fulfillment of this prediction did not come to fruition in Isaac since he had only two immediate descendants—Esau and Jacob.

¹⁵ See the previous chapter of this dissertation.

¹⁶ David’s conquest of his enemies is recorded in 1 Chronicles 18.

¹⁷ וַאֲהֵי עֵמֶה וְאַבְרָהָם בְּיַלְדוֹ וְלֹא יָלַד וְלֹא יָלְדָה אִתּוֹ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הָאֵל נִקְמַתִּי אֶת־הַשָּׂבְעָה אֲשֶׁר נָשָׁבַעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ.

¹⁸ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־יִצְחָק כְּכֹכְבֵי שָׁמַיִם.

The prediction as it pertains to the chosen heir was passed to Jacob. Jacob's encounter with YHWH recorded in Gen 28:10–17 includes the statement by YHWH, “And your descendants will be like the dust of the earth” (Gen 28:14a).¹⁹ The fulfillment of this prediction did not immediately come to fruition. However, the prediction did come to fruition through Jacob's descendants during their time in Egypt.

The narrator of the patriarchal history recorded in Genesis records the fruition of the prediction of a multiplicity of Abraham's seed through the chosen heir in his account of the life of Jacob's descendants after his family settles in Egypt in the form of predictions of what will happen to the people of Israel during their stay in Egypt (Gen 46:3; 48:4).

The backdrop of the fruition of Gen 17:6 during the sojourn of the people of Israel is the context of the narrative of pre-theocratic Israel in the book of Exodus. An explicit statement of the fulfillment of the prediction made to Abraham opens Exodus, “And the sons of Israel were fruitful and swarmed and multiplied exceedingly, and the land (of Egypt, particularly Goshen) was filled with them” (Exod 1:7).²⁰ This comment by the author of Exodus sets the stage for the temporal fulfillment of the next prophetic prediction given by YHWH to Abraham in Gen 17:7—the establishment of a covenant that would officially constitute them as the people of YHWH.

¹⁹ וְהָיָה וְרָצַד כְּעֹפֶר הָאָרֶץ.

²⁰ וַיִּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּרֹב וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם מְאֹד וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם.

Establishment of the Covenant

The narration of the fulfillment of the prophetic prediction made by YHWH to Abraham in Gen 17:6, “I will make you exceedingly fruitful,” noted in Exodus 1:7, is the background for the Exodus narrative. The second prophetic prediction made by YHWH to Abraham in Gen 17:7, “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for a lasting covenant, to be to God and your seed after you,”²¹ is initially fulfilled in the covenant initiated at Mount Sinai. Later, this covenant is re-established to the generation on the verge of entering the Promised Land. The original establishment of the predicted covenant, the Mosaic covenant, is recorded in Exodus 19. The re-establishment is narrated in the book of Deuteronomy; the official reception of the covenant by the sons of Israel is recorded in Deuteronomy 26.²² The events leading up to the initial establishment of the predicted covenant, the Mosaic covenant, at Mount Sinai is the main topic of the first part of the book of Exodus.

The book of Exodus begins with the introduction of the two central characters for the establishment of the covenant—Moses and YHWH. The background of Moses is set in chapter 2 of Exodus. After summarizing the first 80 years of Moses’s life and noting the suffering of the sons of Israel as the Egyptian’s slaves, Exod 2:24 reads, “And God heard their (the Israelites) groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”²³

The events that follow in the narration of the Exodus demonstrate that this covenant that God remembered was the covenant made in Gen 15:18, “On that day YHWH made a covenant with Abraham saying, ‘To your seed I will give this land from the river of Egypt to

²¹ וְנִתְּתִי לָךְ וְיִלְדוּ לְךָ אֲחֵרִים אִתּוֹ אֲרָצַן מִגֵּרִים אֵת כָּל־אֲרָצַן כְּנָעַן לְאַחֲזֹת עוֹלָם וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים.

²² John Scott Redd, “The Abrahamic covenant,” in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 134.

²³ וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אֲבֹתָהֶם אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב.

the great river (the Euphrates)...”²⁴ The promise of the occupation of the land formally covenanted to Abraham is a fitting reason for the historical events recorded in the book of Exodus. The literary arrangement of the book of Exodus provides in the first two chapters the significance of the two foundational requirements for a nation—seed and land—just as the narrator had done in his record of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham in the book of Genesis.

The identification of the covenant that God’s remembrance initiated the exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt as the covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 15 is affirmed by other information provided in Genesis 15. The most significant is Gen 15:13–14. These verses predict the enslavement of the sons of Israel in Egypt and the subsequent judgments upon the Egyptians, and the exodus of Israel from Egypt. The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in events narrated in the book of Exodus.

While the record of the establishment of the covenant that gave possession of the Promised Land to Abraham’s seed in Genesis 15 was to Abraham alone, the narrator of Genesis records the inheritance of this covenant to Abraham’s son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. For this reason, the author of Exodus can say that God made this covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 2:24). Isaac inherits the covenant in Gen 26:3, “Sojourn in this land, and I (YHWH) will be with you and bless you because to you and your seed I will give all these lands. And I will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.”²⁵

The covenant is passed on to Isaac’s son Jacob in Gen 28:13, where YHWH speaks to Jacob

²⁴ בָּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אֲבָרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר לְיִרְעָה נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנְּהַר הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת.

²⁵ גִּיּוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ וְאֲבָרְכְךָ כִּי־לֹךְ וְלִירְעָה אָתָּם אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־הַשְּׂבִיעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבֹתֶיךָ אֲבִיךָ.

in a dream, “I am YHWH the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land upon which you are lying on I will it to you and your seed.”²⁶

The argument was made in chapter 4 of this dissertation that Gen 17:6–8 is not an addition or addendum to the covenant made by YHWH to Abraham in Genesis 15. The only covenant made by YHWH during the lifetime of Abraham was the covenant of Genesis 15, which formally gave legal title to Abraham and guaranteed that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan. That the additional things predicted for Abraham and his seed mentioned in Gen 17:6–8 were not part of the covenant made with Abraham is demonstrated by the fact that the purpose of the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7, “To be God to you and your seed after you,”²⁷ is never associated with the covenant that is passed on from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob.²⁸

The next mention of this purpose of a covenant is Exod 6:7. If this was a part of the Abrahamic covenant, the author of Genesis neglected to remind his audience that it was through this covenant that YHWH became the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁹ This type of neglect would be unexpected since the author of Genesis carefully reiterates that Isaac and Jacob are heirs to Abraham of his purpose and his covenant. By not mentioning the (predicted) covenant whose purpose was to make Abraham’s seed YHWH’s people, the author indicates that this was not part of the covenant YHWH made with Abraham. The Chronicler mentions that one of the

²⁶ אָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיךָ וְנֹאֲלָמְךָ יִצְחָק הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמְרָה שְׂכֵם עָלֶיךָ לְךָ אֶתְמַנְנָה וְלִנְרָעָה. Also, Gen 35:12.

²⁷ לְהִזְוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים וְלִנְרָעָה אַתְּרִיעָה.

²⁸ McCominsky comments, “The promise that the Lord would be their God and they his people is not given great prominence in the Abrahamic covenant. It appears only in Genesis 17:7–8, but it takes on greater significance in the Mosaic covenants.” Thomas E. McComiskey, *Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019), 69.

²⁹ The author does quote YHWH as saying he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 26:4; 28:13). And elsewhere, YHWH is mentioned as the God of the patriarchs. However, Jacob declares that YHWH will be his God upon certain conditions (Gen 28:21). If YHWH was Jacob’s God by an addition to the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 17:7, the author would have no reason to include such a statement by the patriarch. Here, the Abrahamic covenant refers to the traditional view that both Genesis 15 and 17 are part of the Abrahamic covenant.

purposes of the Exodus was to fulfill this aspect of the predictive prophesy, “And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth that God went to ransom *for himself a people*, to make for himself a great and awesome name, and to drive out nations from before *your people* who your ransom from Egypt” (1 Chron 17:21).³⁰

As demonstrated in chapter 4 of this dissertation, the purpose that YHWH called Abraham out of his homeland to the Promised Land was that God would make him a great nation and a blessing (Gen 12:2). The two foundational things required for nationhood—descendants and land—are continually mentioned throughout the rest of the narration of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:16).

Because Isaac and Jacob are the heirs of Abraham’s purpose, the narrative involving their lives also mentions these foundational aspects of nationhood. For example, in the case of Isaac, the narrator notes the reason that Isaac must not return to Abraham’s homeland, “And Abraham said to me (Abraham’s servant), ‘watch yourself lest you return my son there. YHWH, the God of heaven, who took me from the house of my father and from my homeland and who said to me and swore to me by saying, ‘to you seed I will give this land’” (Gen 24:6–7a). Here, the narrator reminds his audience of the covenant that gave the Promised Land to Abraham. The same narrative implicitly mentions the second foundational requirement of nationhood, descendants, in Gen 24:60, as it is connected to Isaac and his future wife.

In the last narrative in which Isaac is the main human character, YHWH expands the declaration made to Abraham in Gen 12:2 as he applies it to Isaac. The expansion includes an explicit reference to the two foundational requirements of nationhood and a reiteration of Abraham’s predictions in Gen 17:6–8. This divine speech to Isaac is recorded in Gen 26:3–4. In

³⁰ *Italics* added. Also, Lev 22:32–33; Num 15:40–41.

these two verses, YHWH combines the essential aspects of his covenantal dealings with Abraham as the reason Isaac is commanded to remain in the Promised Land (v. 3a). The cohortative verb forms that follow the command indicate the purpose of the command. From Isaac's perspective, the purpose for him remaining in the land is so that YHWH would be will him (לְיָדְךָ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת (אֲהַיְךָ עִמָּךְ), bless him (אֲבָרְכֶךָ), and give his seed the land (לְיִרְעֶךָ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת). The final clause alludes to the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15. The syntax of the second part of the verse is different, indicating that it is not part of the reason Isaac is to remain in the land. The second half of v. 3 begins with a *weqatal* verb form, וְהִקְמַתִּי. While the use of ׁ in the first half of the verse probably indicates successive temporal actions that will result from Isaac's obedience, the change in verb form indicates that this action predicts a future event not necessarily related to Isaac's obedience.³¹

The same *weqatal* verb form, וְהִקְמַתִּי, is used in Gen 17:7 of the prophetic prediction by YHWH of the establishment of a future covenant. While the word covenant is not used in Gen 26:3b, the word “oath” (שְׁבֻעָה) can refer to a covenant. For example, the use of שְׁבֻעָה to refer to a covenant is found in Jer 11:4–5, “I (YHWH) commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them out from the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ‘listen to my voice, and you do all that I commanded you...so that I might confirm the oath (הַשְׁבֻּעָה) that I swore to your fathers to give them the land that flows with milk and honey....”³² The oath referred to by Jeremiah is the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15; the content of the oath is the same as the obligations of the covenant YHWH made with Abraham in Gen 15:18. The oath mentioned by YHWH to Isaac

³¹ The change to *weqatal* after three cohortatives indicates that YHWH (or the author) desired to separate this action from the others conceptually.

³² Jeremiah 11:5, לְמַעַן הִקְמִים אֶת־הַשְׁבֻּעָה אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְתַתּוֹתָם לְהֵם אֲרִץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ. Also see Deut 8:1 for the use of oath or swearing to connote the covenant of Genesis 15. The preposition ל plus the *qal* infinitive of נָתַן indicates the purpose of the act of swearing (לְתַתּוֹת). The purpose of the act of swearing is the same as the act of making a covenant in Gen 15:18.

in Gen 26:3b is the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7. The entirety of the second part of Genesis 26:3 restates the prediction YHWH gave Abraham in Gen 17:7–8. This restatement explicitly indicates that the predictions of Gen 17:7–8 continue their validity through Isaac.³³

While chapter 3 of this dissertation pointed out that the verb בָּרַךְ (bless) with YHWH as the subject and a human as the object does not necessarily mean “to provide descendants,” the context of Genesis 26:3 suggests that this is included in the connotation of בָּרַךְ. The immediate mention of seed (v. 3) and multiplication of seed (v. 4) support this interpretation.³⁴

In v. 4, the two foundational requirements are mentioned—seed and land—for the first time in the Isaac narrative. Interestingly, at the end of v. 4, the second purpose for Abraham’s original call—blessing to the nations—is mentioned for the fourth time (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18).³⁵ However, this purpose, to bless the world, for Abraham and his seed moves to the background in the narrative of the history of ancient Israel only to reappear with the Messianic promise.³⁶

The Isaac narrative is relatively brief in comparison to Jacob. Reminders of the foundational requirements of nationhood are more numerous in Jacob’s narrative. Isaac passes

³³ See chapter 4 of this dissertation for discussion on how the narrator of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham saw a fulfillment of Gen 17:6 through Abraham’s other descendants.

³⁴ In Gen 26:24, blessing and seed are connected again in divine speech to Isaac.

³⁵ This exact prediction (“in your seed shall the nations be blessed”) is found only in Gen 28:14 in the Jacob narrative. The universal blessing through Abraham’s seed takes a Messianic form in the rest of the Pentateuch (Gen 49:10; Num 24:9). Sailhamer notes how these later Messianic texts draw on Gen 12:3, “It seems clear that these learned quotations of the promise narratives within the Pentateuch’s poems are intentional. Their intent is to identify the ‘seed’ promised to Abraham (Gen 12) with the ‘scepter from the tribe of Judah’ (Gen 49) and Balaam’s victorious ‘king’ (Num 24). The ‘king’ in each of these poems is thus linked directly to the promise of the ‘seed’ of Abraham.” Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 476.

³⁶ Alexander insists that this third aspect of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham is covenanted in Genesis 22. Alexander’s thesis proposes that land, seed, and blessing are the three central issues in the life of Abraham. The land is covenanted in Genesis 15, seed in Genesis 17, and blessing in Genesis 22. Alexander, “Genesis 22,” 17. In the history of Israel, land and seed (descendants) are essential to the narrative. Blessing the nations through Abraham is a relatively minor issue that emerges only in prophetic passages.

the predictions concerning the foundational requirements early in the narrative as a blessing (Gen 28:3–4). In the first recorded encounter between YHWH and Jacob, the prediction of a multiplicity of seed is made to Jacob along with the assurance of his return to the Promised Land (Gen 28:14–15). In the early part of the Jacob narrative, the author focuses on the seed prediction. In the literary context, this focus is apt since the following narrative takes place outside of the Promised Land and narrates Jacob’s marriages and children.³⁷

The two foundational issues are reiterated at the key event in Jacob’s life: God’s renaming him Israel after their struggle (Gen 35:11–12).³⁸ Mention of the two foundational requirements—seed and land—for nationhood form an *inclusio* in the narrative of the life of Israel (Gen 28:14; 48:4). The narration of the lives of Isaac and Jacob demonstrates that the covenant of Exod 2:24 is the covenant established between YHWH and Abraham, and inherited by Isaac and Jacob—the covenant that formally gave the title of the Promised Land to Abraham and his seed (Gen 15:18).³⁹

The purpose of the exodus is to fulfill the prophetic predictions of Gen 17:7–8. The centrality of the land covenant of Genesis 15 as background for the event is reinforced in the record of Moses’s encounter with the burning bush (Exodus 3). This event serves as YHWH’s call of Moses as the man who will deliver the son of Israel from the Egyptians. In Exod 3:8, YHWH says to Moses, “I have come down to deliver them (the sons of Israel) from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up from that land to the good and spacious land, to the land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the

³⁷ The ultimate fulfillment of the multiplication of Abraham’s seed comes to fruition in his descendants through his grandson, Israel. The narrator’s emphasis on Jacob’s fruitfulness is appropriate in this context.

³⁸ In Gen 35:11, the prediction of Gen 17:6 is transformed into a command. Israel is commanded to “be fruitful and multiply.” This command is the background for what occurred in Egypt (Exod 1:7).

³⁹ Exodus 3:8; Deut 6:23.

Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.” This description of the occupants of the land matches that of the land covenanted to Abraham in Gen 15:18–21. This explicit statement by YHWH informs the audience that the exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt in Exod 12:37–41 is the first in a series of events that lead to the fulfillment of the prediction of Gen 12:8—the establishment of Israel in the Promised Land.

After Moses’s return to Egypt from self-banishment, YHWH reaffirms his call to Moses in Exodus 6 after the enslaved Israelites complain to Moses of the additional burdens placed on them by the Egyptians because of the actions of Moses (Exod 5:23). The reaffirmation of YHWH’s deliverance is found in Exod 6:1, “And YHWH spoke to Moses, ‘now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. By a strong hand he will send them out, and by a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.’” The following narrative records the ten plagues of YHWH upon Pharaoh, which caused Pharaoh to cast/drive out the sons of Israel.

Exodus 6:2–8 contains verses essential to understanding the theocratic nature of the Pentateuch. These verses connect God and the descendants of the patriarchs in a way that God and the patriarchs were not connected. In v. 2, YHWH reminds Moses of his name, “I am YHWH.” The name YHWH was disclosed to Moses in the burning bush episode (Exod 3:14–15). That episode records the YHWH’s charge to Moses to lead the sons of Israel to the Promised Land. This is a charge to Moses to begin the process by which the descendants of the patriarchs, who had multiplied according to the prediction of Gen 17:6, would become a nation by occupying the Promised Land as predicted in Gen 17:8. As God began to relate to Israel as a nation that would come about because of his purpose for Abraham he began to identify himself by the name YHWH—YHWH became the name of the God of the ancient Israelite nation. Because God did not relate to the patriarchs as their national deity

since they were not a nation, he did not make himself known by the name YHWH (Exod 6:3). The change in name from “God Almighty” (אֵל שַׁדַּי) to YHWH (יהוה) indicates a change in the relationship between God and his ancient people.⁴⁰

Verse 4 begins with וַגַּם. A coordinating conjunction connects the announcement of the YHWH in vv. 2–3 with the declaration of v. 4. The adverbial particle וַגַּם is used to indicate the continuation of the discourse with something that is assumed to be known by the audience. In this case, the author recorded YHWH saying something to Moses that YHWH assumed Moses was aware of—the history of the patriarchs. Moses knew that God had not revealed himself to the patriarchs as YHWH and that he had established a covenant with them (Exod 6:4), “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but my name YHWH I did not make known to them. Moreover, I established my covenant with them...” (Exod 6:4–5a).⁴¹ The covenant referred to in v. 5 is the covenant of Genesis 15:18. However, the prophetic predictions of Gen 17:6–8 also included a future covenant.

That future covenant is referred to in Exod 6:7, “And I (YHWH) will take you for myself, for a people. And I will be to you God. And you will know that I am YHWH, your God, the one who brought you from the burdens of Egypt.”⁴² The first half of this verse contains two *weqatal* verb forms, וְהָיִיתִי and וְלָקַחְתִּי. Like Gen 17:6–8, these *weqatal* verb forms occur in prophetic predictive discourse, indicating the actions will take place in the future. While no explicit

⁴⁰ A similar relationship change between God and the Patriarchs resulted in the name change of Abram to Abraham (Gen 17:5) and Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28).

⁴¹ וְאָרָא אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֶל “וַיִּצְחַק וַאֲלֵי־עַקֵּב בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי וַיִּשְׁמְרֵי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: וְגַם הִקַּמְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתָּם. This covenant refers to the covenant of Gen 15:18; note how the *hiphil* of קוּם (used in Exod 6:4) is synonymous with the *qal* of כָּרַת (used in Gen 15:18). Both are used to denote the making of a covenant. In the context of Exodus 6, the author uses the *hiphil* of קוּם to stress the ongoing or abiding nature of the covenant. In Genesis 15, the *qal* of כָּרַת is used to emphasize the activity or event (the historical moment in time) that initiated the covenant. See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁴² וְלָקַחְתִּי אִתְּכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִסְּבִלֹת מִצְרַיִם:

mention of a covenant appears in this verse, the future actions prophesied in the verse echo the prediction of Gen 17:7, 8b; Exod 6:7 reiterates the prophetic prediction of a theocratic covenant. In context, the “taking” by YHWH after the exodus is his act of establishing the Mosaic covenant.

Just as it was in the narratives of Isaac and Jacob, the author indicates by the use of a *weqatal* verb forms a yet-to-be-fulfilled prediction. By using this syntax, the author reminds his audience that Gen 17:7 had not been fulfilled in the history of the patriarchs or during the time of Israel’s stay in Egypt. The covenant, whose purpose was to make YHWH their God, was still in the future at the time of the exodus.

Further echoes of Gen 17:7–8 are found in Exod 6:8, “And I will bring you to the land which I lifted up my hand to give it to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you as an inherited possession, I am YHWH.”⁴³ The second half of v 8, “and I will give it to you as an inherited possession,” clearly refers to the prophetic prediction of Gen 17:8.⁴⁴ Exodus 6:8 continues the prophetic predictive discourse of v. 7. The two main verbs, וְהִבְאֵתִי and וְנָתַתִּי are *weqatal* indicating future actions in prophetic predictive discourse. With the prophetic prediction of Gen 17:6 fulfilled (the multiplication of Abraham’s seed), the prophetic discourse Exod 6:7–8 follows the same sequential order as that of Gen 17:7–8. The author of Genesis reiterates that the next prediction is to be fulfilled is the establishment of the covenant that formally constituted the sons of Israel into the people of YHWH. This covenant is the Mosaic covenant.

⁴³ וְהִבְאֵתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נְשָׂאתִי אֶת־יָדִי לָתֵת אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לְכֶם מִוְרֶשֶׁת אֶנִּי יְהוָה:

⁴⁴ In Gen 17:8, the author uses the noun אֶחְזָקָה (“possession”) to designate what the land will be for Abraham’s seed. In Exod 6:8, the noun is מִוְרֶשֶׁת (author’s translation “inherited possession,” evangelical translations simply use “possession”). The noun מִוְרֶשֶׁת is a cognate of the verb used in Genesis 15 (vv. 4, 7, 8). It seems that the author wanted his audience to understand that the land that would be given to ancient Israel was the same land covenanted to Abraham in Gen 15:18 and promised to his heir(s). Occupation, or possession, of the land, is secondary; the primary emphasis of the prophecy recorded in Exodus 6:8 is the fulfillment of Gen 15:13–18, which contains a prophecy of Israel’s slavery in Egypt, the ten plagues, and the exodus.

The establishment of the predicted covenant is recorded in Exodus 19. After arriving in the wilderness of Sinai (Exod 19:1), YHWH recounts the brief history between him and the sons of Israel (v. 4) and presents the terms by which they will be his people (v. 5), “Now if you listen to my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession from all people, for all the earth is mine.”⁴⁵

An important connection between vv. 4 and 5 is indicated by the use of ך and the adverb at the הַעַיְ beginning of v. 5. The use of ך alone would imply mere coordination. However, the note in v. 4 of the history between YHWH and the sons of Israel, along with the use of הַעַיְ, may indicate a contrastive use of ך. If this is the case, YHWH tells the people something like, “I brought you out of Egypt in the past unconditionally; however, now you have conditions to meet.”⁴⁶

The terms of the covenant are summarized in v. 5. First is the obligation of the sons of Israel. They must listen to YHWH’s voice and keep his covenant. The second is the reward for keeping the covenant; the sons of Israel will be YHWH’s treasured possession from all people. The conditional nature of the covenant is stressed by the use of ׀ combined with an infinitive absolute (שָׁמְרָוּ) to indicate the protasis of a conditional statement. The apodosis is introduction by the *weqatal* verb form וְהִישָׁרְתֶּם. The protasis of the condition contains two requirements, “listen

⁴⁵ וְעַתָּה אִם-שָׁמְרָוּעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְקוֹלִי וְשָׁמְרְתֶם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהִישָׁרְתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-לִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ.

⁴⁶ Alternatively, if the ך simply coordinates the verses, v. 4 could function as a historical prologue to the covenant offered in v. 5. However, the covenant is not formally made until Exodus 20, where the second verse is the historical prologue. While there is debate over the details of how ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties were structured, most scholars agree that an essential aspect was a historical description of the relationship between the suzerain and the vassal. Such historical prologue described the relationship between the parties before the covenant. The historical prologue often was meant to remind the vassal of the previous benevolence of the suzerain. George E. Mendenhall, *Ancient Israel’s Faith, and History: An Introduction to the Bible in Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 58.

to my voice” (תִּשְׁמְעוּ) and “keep my covenant” (וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם).⁴⁷ The reward for fulfilling the protasis is found in the second half of v. 5, “You will be my treasured possession of all people.”

Exodus 19:6 is not a continuation of the apodosis of the conditional statement made in v. 5. The conjunction that begins v. 6 is affixed to the second-person plural pronoun אַתֶּם. If v. 6 were the continuation of the apodosis, a *weqatal* verb form would be better suited. The use of וְאַתֶּם indicates a contrast between ancient Israel and the rest of the peoples of the earth mentioned at the end of v. 5. This contrast between ancient Israel and the rest of the peoples of the earth functions as an epexegetical statement further defining what is meant in v. 5, “You will be my treasured possession.” It means that ancient Israel will be YHWH’s treasured possession if they keep his covenant that, according to YHWH, “You will be to me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation.”⁴⁸

After a summary of the obligations of the covenant in v. 5, the people consent to the obligations in v. 8, “And all the people replied and said, ‘all that YHWH says we will do!’ And Moses returned the word of the people to YHWH.”⁴⁹ Verse 8 is the narration of the people’s response to Moses, presenting the summary obligations of the covenant (v. 7) and his mediation for the people before YHWH. With this consent to the summary obligations of the covenant, the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7 was established, which constituted ancient Israel as the people of God. At this point in ancient Israel’s history, YHWH became a God to them, and they became to him a people. This result is the purpose of the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7–8. The later

⁴⁷ The use of the *weqatal* verb form וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם following imperfect indicates a second directive, or volitional, condition of the protasis.

⁴⁸ וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ לִי מְמַלְכֵת כְּהֹנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ.

⁴⁹ וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל־הָעָם וַיִּחַדּוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע מִשְׁמַע אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָעָם אֶל־יְהוָה. The covenant was reaffirmed by Israel after its obligations are made explicit (Exod 24:3). This reaffirmation is followed by a formal covenant ceremony (Exod 24:8).

expansion of the summary obligations of the covenant in the rest of Exodus and the book of Leviticus became the terms, or the constitution, of the ancient Israelite theocracy.

The fact that the covenant made at Sinai was meant for the people as they occupied the Promised Land is demonstrated by the command given by YHWH to Moses following the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18–31:18). After Moses came down from receiving the law on Sinai and after he dealt with the people and the golden calf, “YHWH spoke to Moses, ‘Leave, go up from this place, you and the people that you brought up from Egypt to the land that I swore to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob, I will give it to your seed’” (Exod 33:1).⁵⁰ Israel was to journey immediately to the Promised Land and take possession of it. However, due to the unfaithfulness of Israel, their entrance and possession of the Promised Land was delayed 40 years so that the faithless generation would die in the wilderness (Num 32:11–12).

Following the death of the original wilderness wandering generation, YHWH re-established the covenant with their descendants.⁵¹ The re-establishment of the covenant is narrated in the book of Deuteronomy. Most of the book of Deuteronomy is a record of Moses’s speech(es) on the plains of Moab across the Jordan River from Jericho (Deut 1:1–5). The purpose of the address was for Moses “to explain this law” (Deut 1:5b).⁵² This second exposition and establishment of the covenant was needed because the new generation of ancient Israel was on the verge of entering the Promised Land. The opening verses of Deuteronomy 4 give the primary reason for Moses to expound the law. This one reason is that ancient Israel “may do it”

⁵⁰ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר עַל־הַמָּוֶה אֲתָהּ וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבֹתֶיךָ לֵאמֹר לְיִרְעָה אֲתִנְנֶנָּה: This historical moment is recalled in Deut 1:8.

⁵¹ Only those Israelites younger than twenty years old at the time of the unfaithfulness were allowed to enter the Promised Land (Num 32:11).

⁵² מִן־שָׁמַיִם בְּאָזְנוֹתַי הִנָּחֵתָ לָהֶם.

(vs. 1, 5b).⁵³ However, in both verses, there is a further qualification for the purpose clause. In verse 1, the main clause is connected to a subordinate clause by לְמַעַן to indicate the result of the main clause. The result of Israel doing the statutes and the judgments that Moses was teaching was so that they “might live and enter and possess the land as an inheritance.”⁵⁴ In v. 5b, the qualification is locative. Moses taught Israel the statutes and judgments “to do them in the midst of the land,” which they were entering to possess as an inheritance.⁵⁵

The reason for re-establishing the covenant was the historical situation of that generation. That generation was about to enter and possess the Promised Land. They were to be the first theocratic generation as the descendants of Abraham living in the Promised Land under the Mosaic covenant. That generation was to fulfill the purposes of YHWH for Abraham (Gen 12:2). The way that Israel became a “great nation” (גוֹי גָדוֹל) was the people’s constitution as a geopolitical entity under the obligations of YHWH’s law. According to Deuteronomy 4, YHWH’s presence and his law made Israel a great nation (vv. 6–8).

Following the historical prologue, the obligations, and the curses and blessings associated with the covenant, Deuteronomy 29 narrates the situation under which YHWH re-established the Mosaic covenant with the sons of Israel. Deuteronomy 29:11–12⁵⁶ is the essence of the narrative. Verse 11 provides the reason why the people were gathered, “in order for you to enter into the

⁵³ Both verses contain לַעֲשׂוֹת following a verb form of לָמַד in the *piel* (participle in verse 1 and perfect in verse 5). The לְ plus infinitive (לַעֲשׂוֹת) indicates the purpose/reason for the action of the main verb (לָמַד).

⁵⁴ לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶיךָ וְיָבִאתְךָ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ. The use of *weqatal* (וְיָבִאתְךָ וְיָרְשֶׁתָּהּ) indicates temporal sequence. James E. Robson, *Deuteronomy 1–11* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 130. Entrance and possession of the Promised Land was a result of obedience. Possession of the land implicitly depends on obedience.

⁵⁵ לַעֲשׂוֹת כִּן בְּקִרְבֵּי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם בָּאִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ. Also in Deut 4:14, which reiterates that the original establishment of the Mosaic covenant was also meant for the people in the Promised Land.

⁵⁶ English translations of Deut 29:12–13.

covenant of YHWH your God and his oath that YHWH your God is making with you today.”⁵⁷

Verse 12 provides the purpose for YHWH making his covenant and oath with the people, “to establish you this day for him as a people and he will be to you a God like he spoke to you and like he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”⁵⁸ The purpose of the covenant of Deuteronomy is the same as that of the covenant made at Mount Sinai. Both fulfill the purpose of the exodus (Exod 6:7) and fulfillment of the prophetic prediction of Gen 17:7–8. Both covenants constituted ancient Israel as the people of YHWH. The context of the establishment of the covenant in Deuteronomy explains why it is not a new covenant; instead, it is the re-establishment of the Mosaic covenant made initially at Sinai.

Interestingly, the re-establishment of the covenant is a more detailed fulfillment of the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7. That prediction, found in Gen 17:7, said that YHWH would make a covenant with Abraham’s seed throughout their generations. Deuteronomy 29:14–15 mentions the human party to the covenant, “And not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath; rather with those of us standing here today before YHWH your God and with those who are not here with us today.” The parties are YHWH and the seed of Abraham. Some of his seed were present, and others were yet to be born. By mentioning both those present and not present as party to the covenant, v. 15 indicates that the covenant would be with the people of Israel “throughout their generations,” according to the prediction of Genesis 17:7.

Like the initial establishment of the Mosaic covenant, its re-establishment was by the consent of the people of Israel. This consent is recorded in Deut 26:17. Moses says, “You have

⁵⁷ לעברך בבְּרִית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּבְאֵלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ פָּרַת עִמָּךְ הַיּוֹם: The covenant of YHWH and his oath (curse) is one thing. The use of the ך may indicate a hendiadys (“sworn covenant” ESV). The verb פָּרַת is associated with making a covenant. The use of this verb suggests that the author wants to indicate that a covenant was being made.

⁵⁸ לְמַעַן הִקְיִם אֶת־הַיּוֹם לְךָ לְעָם וְהוּא יְהוָה לְאֱלֹהֵי־כֹהֵן וְכַאֲשֶׁר דִּבְרַתְּ לְךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלְיַעֲקֹב:

declared this day YHWH to be God to you and to walk in his ways and to keep his statutes and his commandments and his judgments and to listen to his voice.”⁵⁹ The emphatic placement of the direct object (אֱת־יְהוָה) stresses the fact that the people declared YHWH to be their God. The people’s consent is emphatic in v. 17; they have agreed to the obligations of the covenant, to make YHWH their God and to keep his covenant. Verse 18 indicates the covenant’s reciprocal relationship: “And YHWH has declared today that you are to be a treasured people for him as he spoke and that you are to keep all his commandments.”⁶⁰

Deuteronomy 26:18 echoes Exod 19:5. Ancient Israel submits to the conditional aspects of the covenant. They declare that they will walk in the ways of YHWH, keep his statutes, commandments, and judgments, and listen to his voice. YHWH’s response reiterates the requirement to keep the covenant: “And YHWH has declared today that you are to be a treasured people for him as he spoke and *that you are to keep all his commandments.*”⁶¹

Conquest of the Promised Land

With the fulfillment of the prophetic predictions of Gen 17:6–7 in the multiplication of Abraham’s descendants during Israel’s period in Egypt and in the establishment of the Mosaic covenant, the initiation of the fulfillment of Gen 17:8, possession of the Promised Land, begins in the book of Joshua.

The connection with the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua is explicit in Deut 31:23, “And he (YHWH) commanded Joshua son of Nun saying, ‘be courageous and

⁵⁹ אֱת־יְהוָה הָאֱמָרָה הַיּוֹם לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים וְלָקַחְתָּ בְּדַרְכָּיו וְלִשְׁמֹר תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּמִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְלִשְׁמֹעַ בְּקוֹלִי: “The substance of vv. 17–19 assumes that such declarations have just been made, and the words of the address summarize the content of those declarations.” Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 325.

⁶⁰ צִוּוּ: כְּלִימ וְלִשְׁמֹר דְּבַר־לְךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר סִגְלָה לְעַם לֹא לְהַזִּית הַיּוֹם הָאֱמָרָה יְהוָה־תִּי.

⁶¹ Emphasis added. “The Israelites declare that the Lord is their God; their declaration commits them to a life totally dominated by God.” Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 325.

strong because you will bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you.”⁶² The mention of this charge to Joshua occurs multiple times in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 1:38; 3:28; 31:7). While the wording in each of these mentions varies, the essential purpose note in every mention of this charge for Joshua is for YHWH to give ancient Israel the Promised Land through his leadership in the conquest of Canaan.

The fulfillment of the prophetic prediction in the narrative of the events recorded in the book of Joshua is literarily foreshadowed in the last recorded words of YHWH to Moses in Deut 34:4. After ascending Mount Nebo, where he could see the Promised Land, YHWH said to Moses, “This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by saying, ‘To your seed I will give it.’”⁶³ In the context of this quote, the use of the verb נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי is probably not synonymous with “covenanted.”

If the oath referred to in this verse is not the covenant made in Gen 15:18, then, it is probably the prophetic prophecy made by YHWH to Abraham in Gen 17:8 and inherited by Isaac and Jacob. While the same verb is used in both Gen 15:18 and Gen 17:8, נָתַן, the form is different. In Genesis 15:18, the verb form is perfect (נָתַתִּי), and in Gen 17:8 the verb form is *weqatal* (וְנָתַתִּי). The verb form in Deut 34:4 is imperfect (אֶתְנַנֶּה). The tense of the use of the imperfect in Deut 34:4 matches the tense of the *weqatal* in Gen 17:8, not the tense of the perfect in Gen 15:18.⁶⁴ The fulfillment of the prophetic prediction of Gen 17:8, YHWH’s giving of the land to the seed of Abraham, is yet to be fulfilled at the time of the death of Moses; the beginning of the fulfillment will occur under Joshua.

⁶² וַיֹּצֵא אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּרִנּוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר תִּזְכּוּ וְאַמְצִי כִּי אֶתְּהָה תְּבִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָהֶם וְאָנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ.

⁶³ זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לֵיבְרָכָה וְלִיעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְזֶרְעִי אֶתְנַנֶּה.

⁶⁴ See chapter 3 of this dissertation for exegesis of the perfect in Gen 15:18 and chapter 4 of this dissertation for exegesis of the *weqatal* in Gen 17:8. Chapter 3 of this dissertation also discusses how the covenant of Genesis 15 is made with Abraham as an individual.

The book of Joshua begins with a command given by YHWH to Joshua, “Rise and cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel” (Josh 1:2).⁶⁵ The author of Joshua uses the same verb נתן. However, the verbal form is a participle. The use of the participle (נתן) highlights the fact that YHWH is in the process of giving the people the land. The rest of the book of Joshua narrates the initial partial conquest and division of Canaan during the life of Joshua.

As the book of Joshua closes, the author summarizes the result of the battles in Canaan and portioning of the land by Joshua. Joshua 21:43 reads, “And YHWH gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers, and they inherited it and dwelt in it.”⁶⁶ Joshua 1:2–6 and 21:43–45 form an *inclusio* for the main narrative of Joshua. Both mention that YHWH is the one “giving” the land, the oath to their fathers as the reason and Israel as the recipient of the land. In between these passages is the record of the events that brought to fruition the prophetic prediction of Gen 17:8. The literary arrangement of the book of Joshua and the use of this *inclusio* verify that the purpose of the book is to record YHWH’s giving of the land as predicted to the seed of Abraham.

The epilogue to the book of Joshua that records Joshua’s farewell address in Joshua 24 contains a reaffirmation of the theocratic covenant by ancient Israel. The historical prologue of this reaffirmation goes back to Abraham’s initial call into the service of YHWH. While the reason for mentioning Abraham’s location when he was initially called—beyond the River (Josh 24:2, Acts 7:2)—is primarily ethical, Israel’s occupation of the Promised Land is also significant.

⁶⁵ .ישראל לבני להם נתנו אנכי אשר אליהם נתן וכל העם אתה הנה את-הנהר עבר ליום

⁶⁶ .נתנו והנה לישראל את-כל-הארץ אשר נשבע לתת לאבותם ויירשיה ונשבו בה

The ethical importance of the change in the geography of Abraham’s seed and Abraham’s forefathers is seen by the mention that beyond the River, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor “served other gods” (Josh 24:2).⁶⁷ The significance of the contemporary geographic location of Abraham’s seed is that they have been given a land where they are to serve YHWH (Josh 24:13). Therefore, Joshua commands ancient Israel, “Now, fear YHWH and serve him completely and faithfully. And put aside the gods which your father served across the river and in Egypt and serve YHWH” (Josh 24:14).⁶⁸ “Now” serves disjunctively to make a temporal and geographic contrast. YHWH’s temporal fulfillment of the prophetic prediction of Gen 17:8 provides the opportunity for ancient Israel to exercise exclusive devotion to him in the land he gave them.

While the historical prologue to Joshua’s farewell speech mentions the fulfillment of Gen 17:7 and Gen 17:9 (Josh 24:3, 13), the ethical demands of the address are grounded in the predicted covenant (Mosaic covenant). The final recorded words of Joshua include a reminder to the people of their acceptance of the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, “You are witnesses against yourself that you have chosen for yourself YHWH to serve him” (Josh 24:22). This echoes, and reminded those present of the earlier acceptance of the people of the obligations of the Mosaic covenant (Exod 19:5; Deut 26:18).

Joshua’s farewell speech confirms that at the time of his death, all three of the prophetic predictions made by YHWH to Abraham in Gen 17:6–8 had been fulfilled, confirming the assessment of the narrator, “Not a thing from every good thing which YHWH spoke to the house of Israel failed, everything came to pass” (Josh 21:45).

⁶⁷ וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים.

⁶⁸ וַעֲלֵה יְרֵאוֹ אֶת־יְהוָה וַעֲבֹדוּ אֹתוֹ בְּתַמִּים וּבְאֵמֶת וְהִסִּירוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵים אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ וְאִבֹּתֵיכֶם בְּעֵבֶר הַנָּהָר וּבְמִצְרָיִם וַעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה.

Conclusion

The narrative of the patriarchs and their sons (particularly the descendants of Jacob) describes the fulfillment of the theocratic prophetic predictions made by YHWH to Abraham in Gen 17:6–8. The authors of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua recorded the history of God working to bring his purpose for Abraham to fruition, to make him a great nation. The great nation realized in the ancient Israelite community consisted of numerous descendants of Abraham, a covenant, and occupation of the Promised Land.

The book of Genesis records the beginning of the fulfillment of the prediction for the multiplication of Abraham's descendants (Gen 17:6) during their time in Egypt, summarized in Exodus 1:7. The receiving of the law on Mount Sinai recorded in the book of Exodus and the reiteration of that law on the plains of Moab found in the book of Deuteronomy, fulfilled the prophetic prediction of Gen 17:7, the establishment of a covenant that would make Abraham's descendants the people of YHWH. Finally, the historical events narrated in the book of Joshua brought to fruition the final theocratic prediction of Gen 17:8, the possession of the Promised Land.

The nature of the covenant predicted in Gen 17:7 is one of obligation and reward. Ancient Israel accepted the obligation to keep YHWH's covenant in exchange for the privilege of being considered YHWH's own possession (people) living in the land where he would dwell with him under his theocratic rule as defined by the terms of the Mosaic covenant. This covenant of obligation and reward is reaffirmed throughout the record of ancient Israel's history and the OT's Prophets and Writings. The NT documents also affirm that the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works wherein YHWH rewarded ancient Israel for their obedience to the obligations of the covenant and cursed them for disobedience. The teachings of the OT and NT on this and

the relationship of the Mosaic covenant to the new covenant are the topics of the next chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 6: YHWH'S COVENANTAL DEALINGS WITH ABRAHAM IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

“Students of historical theology, even those who entertain a radically different view of the history of divine revelation from that which governs the thought of classic Reformed theology, have recognized that covenant theology marked an epoch in the appreciation and understanding of the progressiveness of divine revelation.”¹

Introduction

The previous two chapters of this dissertation have provided two defenses of the thesis, YHWH engages in two different covenantal dealings with Abraham—Genesis 15 and 17—and how the covenant to Abraham in Genesis 17 is fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant as established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26. In chapter 4, an exegetical defense of the thesis was established from Genesis 17. And in chapter 5, a redemptive-historical defense from the early canonical history of ancient Israel was presented. The current chapter will consider broader biblical-theological evidence.²

The first section will examine how OT authors portrayed Abraham from their original audience’s redemptive-historical perspective. This section will demonstrate how the original historical context and the author’s place in redemptive history will be shown to demonstrate that YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham are narrated in a manner that supports an author’s primary purpose. The primary purpose of an author reflects his situation in redemptive history. In the OT record of ancient Israel, the two primary redemptive historical situations are under the full privileges and obligations of the Mosaic covenant. The second is under the promise of restoration. Moses, who wrote to prepare the people for life in the theocracy under the Mosaic

¹ John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace: A Biblico-Theological Study* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1988), 1.

² Broader than Genesis–Joshua.

law, portrays Abraham as a prototypical theocratic Israelite, while authors writing from a post-exilic perspective present him as a recipient of YHWH's unilateral benevolence.³

The second section will consider how YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham served to provide future hope for rebellious ancient Israel in the context of the ultimate destruction of the theocracy. Through biblical authors writing in the context of ancient Israel's pending destruction—the destruction of Jerusalem and exile from the land—YHWH encourages faithful Israelites based on the covenant made in Genesis 15 to the exclusion of the Mosaic covenant, as it was the fulfillment of the predicted covenant of Genesis 17:7. The use of the covenant made in Genesis 15 for the basis of the restoration of Israel is illustrated with examples from the Pentateuch, Former, and Latter Prophets.

The third section examines how the biblical authors use YHWH's covenantal dealings in relationship to the new covenant. The main concern of this section is to show how the New Testament bases the new covenant on the covenant made with Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 15. The centrality of the covenant made in Genesis 15 and the new covenant established in the person and work of Jesus Christ will be illustrated by looking at how the New Testament authors exclusively utilize the events of Genesis 15 to explain salvation in Jesus Christ associated with the new covenant.

In the fourth section, the New Testament authors' understanding of the role of circumcision in YHWH's covenantal dealings with ancient Israel will be explored. It will be shown that the New Testament equates the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham in Genesis 17 with the Mosaic covenant, further demonstrating that the covenant mentioned/predicted in Gen 17:7 is the Mosaic covenant.

³ See below.

Biblical Portrayals of Abraham

Biblical authors portray Abraham, particularly his actions, differently. An author's redemptive-historical situation is a main factor in how that author represents Abraham and his actions. For the ancient Israelite audience of the Bible, their history encompassed two redemptive-historical eras—under the Mosaic covenant and under the promise/establishment of the new covenant.

Moses's Portrayal of Abraham

Earlier in this dissertation, it was noted that the original audience for the record of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham found in the book of Genesis was ancient Israel, as they wandered in the wilderness after the exodus. These people were to become the Israelite theocracy in fulfillment of the prophetic predictions made to Abraham in Gen 17:6–8. An essential aspect of the theocracy was the covenant made by YHWH with them, the Mosaic covenant, initially established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26.

The central obligation of the Mosaic covenant was obedience to YHWH's law (Exod 19:5; Deut 26:18).⁴ This historical background of the narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham suggests that one of the rhetorical purposes for the inclusion of the events of Abraham's life was to portray him as an example to those ancient Israelites who were obligated to live in covenant obedience according to the terms of the Mosaic covenant.⁵ Because of this, Abraham is presented as a prototypical obedient Israelite from the beginning until the end of the narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with him. The portrayal of Abraham as a model

⁴ See chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

⁵ Block, *Covenant*, 128. Williamson commenting about the comment made about Abraham's life, Gen 26:5 summarizes "the essence of God's torah, as reflected in the Mosaic law throughout Scripture." Williamson, *Sealed*, 152n22.

Israelite by Moses to his original audience is found both in the events narrated and in his editorial comments.

The events Moses chose to narrate are significant in a manner that is greater than simply explaining the historical origins of ancient Israel. The way that he narrates those events that support the enterprise of the founding of the theocracy and the inclusion of events that seem superfluous to that founding demonstrate that the purpose of Moses' record of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham goes beyond an etiology for the theocracy. Many of the episodes included in the narrative do not seem to have the purpose of explaining the historical situation of the original audience. Even in the events that describe the historical foundations of the Israelite theocracy, the narrative presents Abraham as the ideal ancient Israelite.⁶

The very first action of Abraham narrated by Moses is his response to YHWH's initial call (Gen 12:1–3). Abraham's action recorded in v. 4 is his response to the imperative in v. 1, “And YHWH said to Abram, ‘Go from your land, relatives, and the house of your father to the land that I will show you.’” Verses 2 and 3 contain the reason(s) why Abraham was to go to the land.⁷ In response to the command, the narrative simply says, “So Abram went like YHWH had spoken to him” (Gen 12:4).⁸

Both the grammatical structure of the first clause of v. 4 and the narrator's comment highlight the obedience of Abram to the command of YHWH in his very first action.⁹ The

⁶ David Andrew Dean, “Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic covenant.” *JETS* 57, no. 2 (June 2014): 304.

⁷ See chapter 3 of this dissertation for exegesis of Gen 12:1–3.

⁸ וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה.

⁹ The use of the *wayyiqtol* (וַיֵּלֶךְ) indicates logical consequence. The logical consequence of the command and purposes provided by YHWH in vv. 1–3 was that Abram went. The editorial comment also indicates that the use

original audience of the narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham is introduced to Abraham as someone who was obedient to the commands of YHWH.

At the beginning of the narrative of the life of Abraham's son, Isaac, the reason for his inheritance of the land promise of Genesis 15 and Abraham's purpose (Gen 26:3–4) is qualified by the divine declaration, "Because Abraham listened to my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my instructions" (Gen 26:5).¹⁰ This statement coming at the conclusion of the narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham combined with Gen 12:1–4, the narrative of Abraham's initial call and obedient response form an *inclusio* by which the author indicates a central theme of his record of Abraham's life, his obedience to YHWH's commands.

In addition to the use of Gen 26:5 as the closing element of an *inclusio*, the four things mentioned, charge (משמרת), commandment (מצוה), statute (חקה), and instruction (תורה), are exclusively associated with the Mosaic law.¹¹ None of these nouns are used elsewhere in the patriarchal history. The next use of charge (משמרת) comes in Exod 12:6, of commandment (מצוה) in Exod 15:26, statute (חקה) in Exod 12:14, and instruction (תורה) in Exod 12:49. All these uses are associated with the requirements of what would become the Mosaic law. The author of Gen 26:5 couched Abraham's life of obedience in terms associated with the Mosaic covenant.¹² Even

of the *wayyiqtol* is not simply to narrate the next in a temporal sequence of events. The same verb is used for the action taken by Abraham (ויקח) as the command given by YHWH (קח).

¹⁰ עָקַב אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַע אֲבָרָהָם בְּקוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמֵרָתִי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרָתַי:

¹¹ Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 311.

¹² Richard P. Belcher, *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2020), 169.

though the Mosaic covenant had not been established in the time of Abraham, his obedience is anachronistically described with covenantal terminology.

The use of a strong *inclusio* in the narrative of the life of Abraham to stress his obedience to YHWH is reinforced by the accounts of two key events of his life, the covenant encounters of Genesis 15 and Genesis 17. Although the covenants associated with these two encounters differ, Abraham's obedience is essential for both encounters and covenants.

As stated earlier in this dissertation, the covenant of Genesis 15 is unilateral.¹³ While the covenant is unilateral, YHWH is the only party that assumes obligations, Abraham's obedience is the background for the covenant. The unilateral covenant of Genesis 15 resembles an ancient Near East royal grant covenant. In a royal grant covenant, the suzerain would unilaterally grant something to his loyal subject. This grant was based on previous service and provided the vassal enticement for continued loyalty. As far as Abraham's obedience to YHWH is concerned, the fact that he had obediently served YHWH is the background for the covenant of Genesis 15 and that covenant served to motivate Abraham to continued fidelity to YHWH.¹⁴

The background fidelity of Abraham to YHWH was demonstrated in his obedience to the two imperatives associated with his initial call. Abraham's most significant act of obedience was

¹³ See chapter 3 of this dissertation for exegesis of Genesis 15.

¹⁴ Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," in *Essential Paper on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspan (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 70. Reid writes, "If the Abrahamic covenant is viewed according to this system (ANE land grants), Abra(ha)m is given a land inheritance in Genesis 15 for his faithfulness, in part for not accepting wealth from the alliance of kings in Genesis 14. The covenant in Genesis 15 rewards Abra(ha)m with an unconditional reward for his past faithfulness. This is confirmed further with his obedience in relation to Genesis 22: 'because you have done this. . . .' (22:16). Similarly, the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7; Ps. 89) is an unconditional promise of a dynasty for his past faithfulness to the Lord. Unlike these covenants, the Mosaic or Sinai covenant is understood to be a conditional gift of the land that focuses on blessing for faithfulness and cursing for unfaithfulness." J. Nicholas Reid, "Ancient Near Eastern Backgrounds to Covenants," in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Water (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 461. The loyalty of Abraham as the background for the covenant established in Genesis 15 is explicitly mentioned in Neh 9:8.

his response to the first divine command to go from his homeland (Gen 12:1, 4). This obedience is indicated by the fact that he is in the land whose possession is formally covenanted to him (and his seed) in Genesis 15 as the covenant is made by YHWH and described with the words, “To your seed I have given this land” (Gen 15:18).

The second divine command given during his initial call was, “And be a blessing” (Gen 12:2b).¹⁵ Abraham’s obedience to this command is narrated in Genesis 13–14. In Genesis 13, Abraham blesses his nephew Lot by graciously conceding the choice of land to Lot. In Genesis 14, Abraham blesses those whose people and possessions had been taken by the five kings by returning the people and possessions at great risk to himself.¹⁶

The original audience of the narrative would have been unsurprised that Abraham was the recipient of such a royal grant covenant as his obedience is highlighted in his very first act following the establishment of his relationship with YHWH (Gen 12:4) and the narrative that preceded the establishment of the covenant in Genesis 15. In addition, the divine declaration of Gen 26:5 confirms that Abraham continued to faithfully serve YHWH after he was given a royal grant.¹⁷ The royal grant covenant that gave legal possession of the Promised Land to Abraham was inherited by Isaac because Abraham had remained loyal to YHWH.

¹⁵ See chapter 3 of this dissertation for the exegesis of Gen 12:1–3.

¹⁶ “Abraham’s vigorous response (Ge 14) comported with a customary treaty requirement that the vassal take prompt military action to guard the interest of his suzerain, if threatened...Coming on the heels of this episode, the Lord’s word to Abraham (Ge 15:1) has the character of a royal grant to an officer of the king for faithful service.” Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 322.

¹⁷ It must be noted that the covenant and purposes that Isaac inherited from Abraham in Gen 26:3–4 are expressed in language found in Genesis 15, not Genesis 17. No mention of kings or a covenant relationship between YHWH and Isaac’s seed are mentioned in Gen 26:3–4.

The covenantal encounter narrated in Genesis 17 begins with two divine imperatives, “Walk before me” and “Be blameless” (Gen 17:1b).¹⁸ Obedience is further stressed in the institution of the rite of circumcision, “And God said to Abraham, ‘You shall keep my covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations’” (Gen 17:9).¹⁹ Verse 10 specifies that “my covenant” is the rite of circumcision. The conclusion of the episode reiterates this, “And Abraham took... every male of the men of his household and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that very day as God had spoken to him” (Gen 17:23).²⁰ The final phrase of v. 23 (“like God had spoken to him”) is almost identical to the phrase found in Gen 12:4 which also notes Abraham’s obedient response.²¹ The beginning (v. 1), the middle (vv. 9–14), and the conclusion (v. 23) of Genesis 17 stress obedience to the commands of YHWH.²²

The use of this phrase (“like God had spoken to him”) twice in the narrative of YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham may be the reason that the author includes the comment by YHWH, “Because Abraham listened to my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my instructions,” in the divine speech recorded in Gen 26:3–5. A similar phrase is used to confirm the obedience of individuals to commands of YHWH in the rest of the

¹⁸ See chapter 4 of this dissertation for exegesis of Genesis 17.

¹⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם וְאַתָּה אֶת־בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֹר אֶתָּה וְזַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ לְדֹרֹתָם: The verb “you shall keep” (תִּשְׁמֹר) is imperfect functioning as a volitive. The volitive aspect of the commands found in vv. 10–14 is continued by the use of the perfect form of the verb.

²⁰ וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם ... כָּל־זָכָר בְּאֹנְשֵׁי בֵּית אַבְרָהָם וַיִּמַּל אֶת־בָּשָׂרוֹ עַל־לֶמְעַם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲתוֹ אֱלֹהִים:

²¹ The prepositions and the words used to designate the Deity are different.

²² Each of the three ways that the obedience of Abraham is stressed in Genesis 17 have echoes in the Mosaic law. Just as Abraham is required to be “blameless,” members of the Israelite theocracy are expected to “be blameless with YHWH your God” (תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ, Deut 18:13). Abraham’s application of the rite of circumcision continues in the Mosaic covenant. Just as Abraham did “like which God had spoken to him,” Israelites were to behave “like which YHWH your God commanded you” (כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ, Deut 5:12, 16; 20:17).

Pentateuch (Exod 1:7; Num 5:4; 17:11 [MT 17:26]; 27:23; Deut 1:21; 2:1).²³ The inclusion of the phrase “like God/YHWH had spoken to him” is an affirmation of loyal obedience to Israel’s God. This affirmation is made about Abraham so that he might be an example to members of the ancient Israelite theocracy.

The divine commands given to Abraham in Gen 17:1 did not require him to be sinless. Nor does the narrative of his life portray him as perfect. Instead, the imperatives of Gen 17:1 note that what was required of the theocracy was loyalty and devotion to YHWH.²⁴ The faults of Abraham are apparent for the audience to recognize. However, Abraham is never depicted as acting contrary to YHWH’s word to him.²⁵ Covenant infractions were expected under the Mosaic covenant. The entire Levitical system was provided to secure fellowship between the occasional offender whose life was devoted to YHWH. Only complete rejection of the obligations of the covenant would separate individuals or the nation from fellowship with YHWH.²⁶ Ancient Israelites would have recognized Abraham as someone who unintentionally sinned or committed

²³ The other use of this phrase in its variations is as confirmation of YHWH promise(s) or prediction(s).

²⁴ Williamson, *Sealed*, 87.

²⁵ Condemnation for not obeying YHWH’s word/voice in the record of both its early and late history. In Deut 1:21, the phrase “like YHWH the God of your fathers has spoken to” begins Moses’s retelling of the disobedience of the people to enter the Promised Land the first time. In this contrast, the people did not act like YHWH spoke to him. In the next verse, Deut 1:22, Moses recounts what the people ask to do instead of taking the land. Rather than immediately obeying, like in all the other instances of the use of the phrase, the people asked to do something other than exactly what YHWH said. In Dan 9:11, the exile is credited to the fact that “All Israel transgressed your (YHWH’s) law and turned aside so that they do not listen to your voice.” Daniel’s condemnation of ancient Israel is an exact contrast with another explicit mention of Abraham’s obedience, “And all the nations of the earth will be blessed in your seed because you listen/obeyed my (YHWH) voice” (Gen 22:18).

²⁶ It is not minor or occasional infractions that “break” the covenant. The verb [פָּרַר] in the *hiphil* with human(s) subject and the direct object בְּרִית (referring to the Mosaic covenant) occurs eight times (Gen 17:14; Lev 26:15, 44; Deut 31:16, 20; Jer 11:10; 31:32; Ezek 44:7). Except for Jer 31:32, the immediate context of all these explains that a gross and blatant rejection of the obligations of the covenant is the cause of the covenant being broken. In Jer 31:32, the audience’s knowledge of the history of ancient Israel’s gross and blatant rejection of the obligations of the covenant is assumed. In the Writings, the reason for the breaking of the Mosaic covenant is frequently attributed to “to acting unfaithfully” (לְעַל).

a minor transgression during a life characterized as devoted to YHWH. This was the very thing the Mosaic covenant required of them.

The requirement of the obedience demonstrated by Abraham as stressed through editorial comments that affirm Abraham's obedience (Gen 12:4; 17:23) and the inclusion of the reason clause in Gen 26:5 is echoed in ancient Israel's acceptance of the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, "And answered all the people together and said, 'Like all that YHWH has spoken we will do!'" (Exod 19:8a).²⁷ In the words of the ancient Israelites the same phrase that is found in the editorial comments affirming Abraham's obedience occur, "like YHWH had spoken."²⁸

The presentation of Abraham by Moses for his original audience commended him as a prototype for them to imitate. The narrative structure, editorial comments, and the selection of material to narrate provide implicit and explicit connections to the Mosaic requirement of loyal devotional obedience to YHWH as stipulated in the covenant obligations that constituted the people as a theocracy under the Mosaic covenant.²⁹

It should be noted that four of the five explicit comments about the obedience of Abraham in the narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham occur after the commands and predictions found in Gen 17:1–8. The events recorded in Genesis 17 changed the focus of redemptive history from Abraham to the future Israelite theocracy. The only explicit mention of Abraham's obedience before Gen 17:1–8 is found in Gen 12:4.

²⁷ וַיַּעֲנוּ כָּל־הָעָם יַחְדָּו וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה.

²⁸ אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה. A preposition and pronominal prepositional object/suffix are not found in Exod 19:8. However, in the context, "like YHWH has spoken" includes the idea "spoken to them" (v. 5). Also, Exod 24:3, 7.

²⁹ An essential aspect of Abraham's life, according to the NT, is conspicuously absent from Moses's commendation of him to his original audience, who are under the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, his faith that was reckoned to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6). The NT, particular Paul, utilized Abraham in the exact opposite way as Moses by stressing his imputed righteousness and his life of faith. See below for a NT biblical theology of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.

Post-Exilic Portrayals of Abraham

Post-exilic reflections on the life of Abraham stress the early events in his life and take a different approach to Gen 12:4.³⁰ This is to be expected with the failure of the Mosaic covenant and the promise of a unilateral covenant through which YHWH would restore his people. Post-exilic authors focus on what YHWH did for Abraham while de-emphasizing his obedience.

The biblical post-exilic explanations of Abraham's obedience to his initial call (Gen 12:1–4) are prime examples. In three different post-exilic passages that mention Abraham's initial call, the authors take a different perspective on Abraham's response highlighting God's initiative to the neglect of Abraham's obedience.

The first biblical post-exilic mention of Abraham's initial call is in Neh 9:7–8. Verse 7 reads, “You are him, YHWH God, who chose Abram and brought him from Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham.”³¹ This commentary on the events of Gen 12:1–4 lacks any mention of YHWH's command (Gen 12:1) and Abraham's obedient response (Gen 12:4). Instead, the event is portrayed as a unilateral act of YHWH by the use of the *hiphil* verb form הוֹצִאתוֹ with a third singular pronominal suffix of which YHWH is the subject. This is in contrast to how Moses describes the event in Gen 12:1–4, in which the action is ascribed to Abraham, “And Abram went out as YHWH had spoken to him” (Gen 12:4a).

At the beginning of Neh 9:8, the author writes, “And you (YHWH) found his heart faithful before you, and you made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite...to give

³⁰ “There are thus only echoes of the direct Abrahamic arrangement from within the historical period (cf. Ps. 47:9; Isa. 29:22; Mic. 7:20). With the decline in nationalism that the post-exilic period brought, there is a marked revival of interest in the Abrahamic covenant.” Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 102.

³¹ אֶתְּהִיָּהוּיָא הַיְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בְּסֵרֶת בְּאַבְרָם הוֹצִאתוֹ מֵאִוּר כַּשְׂדִּים וְשִׁמְתָהּ שְׁמוֹ אַבְרָהָם:

it to his seed.”³² While the case could be made that Abraham’s faithful heart could be his obedience to YHWH’s command (see above), the fact that the author does not mention Abraham’s obedience strongly suggests that clause “you found his heart faithful” refers to Gen 15:6 where the same verb, נִאֶמַר, is used. Abraham’s belief in YHWH’s promise of a seed that would be his heir (Gen 15:4) is the context for the event that the author of Nehemiah highlights.³³ While in the case of Moses, the possession of the Promised Land by Abraham’s seed was because he obeyed (Gen 26:3–5), in Nehemiah, possession of the Promised Land was because Abraham believed.³⁴

It is significant that the only encounter in YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham that the author of Nehemiah mentions is Genesis 15. He does not mention anything about the covenants in Genesis 17, whether the (promised) covenant in v. 7 or the covenant of circumcision (vv. 9–14). If the encounter recorded in Genesis 17 added to the covenant established in Genesis 15, it seems likely that the author would mention this. Instead, like every author in the Bible, he does not conflate the encounters between YHWH and Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17 into one and the same covenant.

The same portrayal of Abraham as the gracious recipient of YHWH’s favor is found in Stephen’s speech recorded in Acts 7. In a context similar to Nehemiah, an oral narrative history of Israel, Stephen says in Acts 7:4, “Then after going out of the land of the Chaldeans, he settled in Haran. And after the death of his father, God moved him into this land in which you now

³² וּמִצָּאָתָה אֶת־לִבְךָ נִאֶמַר לְפָנָי וְכָרִית עָמֹד הַבְּרִיּוֹת לְמַת אֶת־אָרְצִי הַכְּנַעֲנִי... לְתַת לְיֹרְעָו.

³³ Although Canaanites are mentioned as inhabitants of the land promised to Abram before Gen 15:18–22 (Gen 12:5–6; 13:7, 12), the declaration that explicitly mentions the establishment of a covenant giving Abraham and his seed legal title to the land of the Canaanites follows the comment about Abram’s faith (Gen 15:6), formal covenant ceremony (Gen 15:9–17).

³⁴ The object of Abraham’s faith in Gen 15:6 will be discussed below.

dwell.”³⁵ Once again, Abraham’s movement into the Promised Land is credited to God and not the patriarch. The Greek word translated “moved” (μετοικίζω) is used twice in the LXX translation of Jeremiah (Jer 20:4; 22:12) to translate the *hiphil* form of מָנַחַ. This verb is used to describe the action by the Assyrians and Babylonians that resulted in the move of the people to the lands where they were exiled (2 Kgs 18:11; 24:15). This is the use in the LXX of Jer 20:4 and 22:12, and later in Acts 7:43. In Acts 7:4, the verb metaphorically connotes a physical action by God to bring Abraham into the Promised Land, not the result of Abraham’s obedience.

As Stephen moves on from recounting the events recorded in Gen 12:1–4, the next episode in the life of Abraham he mentions is the covenant established in Genesis 15. Once again, this is similar to Nehemiah. However, unlike Nehemiah, Stephen does not mention the faith of Abraham. The reason for this is that Stephen's purpose was not to remind his audience of the faith of Abraham and the unilateral promises of God, as was the case of Nehemiah. Instead, Stephen aimed to convict his audience of their sin and continued rebellion against God’s commands.³⁶

Unlike Nehemiah, Stephen does mention the encounter between YHWH and Abraham recorded in Genesis 17. In Acts 7:8, he mentions temporally sequential events that followed the establishment of the covenant in Genesis 15, “And he (God) gave to him (Abraham) the covenant of circumcision, and so he begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day, and

³⁵ τότε ἐξελθὼν ἐκ γῆς Χαλδαίων κατόκησεν ἐν Χαρράν. κάκειθεν μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ μετόκισεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταύτην εἰς ἣν ὑμεῖς νῦν κατοικεῖτε.

³⁶ The command that Stephen was convicting the Jewish rulers of violating was to listen to the prophet like Moses, who was promised in Deut 18:15 (Acts 7:37). Stephen was comparing the disobedience (to Moses) of Israel in the wilderness and the disobedience (to the Prophets) of the theocracy and his contemporary’s disobedience to Jesus. Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan*, NSBT 27 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 166.

Isaac Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs.”³⁷ The mention of the covenant of circumcision as distinct from the covenant of Genesis 15 follows the pattern of the biblical authors to separate the covenantal interactions of Genesis 15 and Genesis 17.³⁸

The last biblical post-exilic mention of Abraham’s initial call is in Heb 11:8, “Because of faith, when he was called, Abraham obeyed so that he went out to the place which he was about to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going.”³⁹ In this verse, the author explicitly credits faith as the reason for Abraham’s obedience.⁴⁰ The only covenantal encounter mentioned by the author of Hebrews is Genesis 15. The land covenanted to Abraham in Genesis is mentioned in vv. 8 and 9. In v. 8, it is called “an inheritance” (κληρονομία), echoing the use of עֲרֵץ in Gen 15:3, 4, 7, 8.⁴¹ The use of the phrase “the land of promise” (γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας) recalls Gen 26:3; 28:13; 35:12; 50:24 which refers to the land given by an oath to the patriarchs. All the references to YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham refer to the

³⁷ καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ διαθήκην περιτομῆς· καὶ οὕτως ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰσαὰκ καὶ περιέτεμεν αὐτὸν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ὀγδόῃ, καὶ Ἰσαὰκ τὸν Ἰακώβ, καὶ Ἰακώβ τοὺς δώδεκα πατριάρχας.

³⁸ In chapter 4 of this dissertation, it was argued that the Hebrew noun עֲרֵץ used in Gen 17:9–10 is synonymous with the phrase עֲרֵץ הַבְרִית (“sign of the covenant) used in Gen 17:11 (Gen 17:13). It is possible that Stephen use of the word covenant and the brief narration of the obedience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the obligations of circumcision is so that he might set up a contrast between the patriarchs’ obedience with his contemporary’s disobedience.

³⁹ Πίστει καλούμενος Ἀβραάμ ὑπήκουσεν ἐξελεῖν εἰς τόπον ὃν ἤμελλεν λαμβάνειν εἰς κληρονομίαν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν μὴ ἐπιστάμενος ποῦ ἔρχεται.

⁴⁰ Πίστει is dative of cause. Most English translations suggest dative of means “By faith” (ESV, NASB, NIV). Since faith is an immaterial/abstract entity, it is better to take πίστει as causal rather than means. “This use of the dative (cause) is similar to but not the same as the dative of means. (At times, however, it is impossible to distinguish the two.)” Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 168. In the context of the argument in the book of Hebrews, the explicit mention of “by faith” supports the fact that Abraham was the prototypical believer.

⁴¹ See below.

covenant established in Genesis 15. No explicit mention is made of the encounter recorded in Genesis 17.⁴²

The portrayal of Abraham in the biblical post-exilic material is of a recipient of God's gracious actions, while Moses presents him as an obedient Israelite. While these authors depict the same historical figure, Abraham is presented from a different perspective. The reason for the differing perspectives between Moses and the post-exilic authors is the latter's acknowledgment that the future of God's people lies in God's unilateral compassion.⁴³ Abraham is the ultimate example of a recipient of YHWH's unilateral kindness. The emphasis on YHWH's unilateral kindness to Abraham was required because of the failure of ancient Israel to keep the obligations of the bilateral Mosaic covenant. The only hope of restoration was through YHWH's gracious actions, just as he had done for Abraham.

Israel's Future and YHWH's Covenantal Dealings with Abraham

The failure of the ancient Israelite theocracy to keep the Mosaic covenant and remain a distinct geo-political entity brought a new era of expectation. With the imminent collapse of the theocracy predicted by the Prophets, the promised future restoration of Israel was founded on the covenant YHWH made with Abraham in Genesis 15. The covenant predicted in Gen 17:7, the Mosaic covenant, failed because of the disloyalty of the people. Restoration could not be based on the bilateral covenant predicted in Gen 17:7 and established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26. Only the unilateral covenant of Genesis 15 could be the basis for the gracious work of YHWH in gathering his scattered people.

⁴² Hebrews 11:11 may allude to Genesis 17. However, the topic of this verse is Sarah's faith, not Abraham.

⁴³ Outside the Pentateuch, Abraham is mentioned by name only 23 times in the Old Testament. None of these emphasize/mention Abraham's obedience. See below for important passages in the Old Testament referring to Abraham.

Even before the failure of ancient Israel to keep the Mosaic covenant that brought the various pronouncements of the Prophets of a restored people under a new covenant, the Pentateuch and the historical books predicted the demise of the theocracy and the reconstitution of the people of God. Like the later prophetic oracles, these predictions were based on the covenant YHWH made with Abraham in Genesis 15.⁴⁴

Ancient Israel's early history is marked with unfaithfulness toward YHWH. Almost simultaneously with the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, the people rebelled. The golden calf incident took place while Moses was receiving the law by which Israel was required to show their loyalty to YHWH as they had consented in Exod 19:8. The exact chronology of these events is not provided by the author; however, the literary arrangement and the reaction of YHWH narrated in Exodus 32 suggests that the incident foreshadowed the ultimate total apostasy that brought an end to the ancient Israelite theocracy.

The historical setting for the golden calf incident recorded in Exodus 32 is when Moses was on Sinai receiving the law (Exod 32:1). The immediate literary context is the narration of reason for the Sabbath commandment (Exod 31:12–17). The historical and literary contexts stress the ultimate issue of all of Israel's failures: infidelity to the commands of their covenant God.

The historical context highlights the issue of infidelity by noting that the event took place while Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days (Exod 24:18). The very thing that Moses was receiving, the covenant obligations, was what Israel was violating by creating and worshipping a

⁴⁴ Isaac and Jacob inherited the covenant made by YHWH with Abraham in Genesis 15. See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

golden calf.⁴⁵ The narrator explicitly states why YHWH takes issue with the golden calf incident was that the people “turned quickly from the way that I have *commanded* them” (Exod 32:8).⁴⁶ The fact that this violation of what YHWH commanded the people takes place while YHWH is propagating to Moses more covenant obligations foreshadowed ancient Israel’s ultimate rejection of YHWH. The people violated a core covenant obligation, one enumerated in the Ten Commandments; how can they expect to keep tertiary obligations?

The literary context, especially the previously narrated episode, also highlights the central issue surrounding theocratic Israel’s downfall, infidelity to their covenant God. Exodus 31:12–17 explains the meaning or purpose of the Sabbath commandment. YHWH explains to Moses the reason that ancient Israel was to keep the Sabbath in v. 13, “Surely you shall keep my sabbaths because it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations so that you will know that I am YHWH who sanctifies you.”⁴⁷ The Sabbath was a sign of YHWH’s relationship with ancient Israel. It reminded the people of their covenant relationship with YHWH. The narration of the golden calf incident, an event that violated that covenant relationship, immediately follows an explanation of the Sabbath commandment, a commandment meant to remind Israelites of their unique relationship with YHWH.

The author includes an important statement in Exod 31:18, a note about the completion of the propagation of the covenant obligations from YHWH to Moses. This note about the codification of the covenant obligations is essential for understanding the history of ancient

⁴⁵ Most of the instructions/commands given during the forty days pertained to the tabernacle. The tabernacle was where the special presence of YHWH would dwell with ancient Israel. In the tabernacle, there was to be no physical representation of YHWH (idol/statue). Aaron's idolatry was antithetical to YHWH's instruction about how he would commune with his people in the tabernacle.

⁴⁶ קָרוּ מִהֵרָ מִן־הַדֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתֶם.

⁴⁷ אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבָּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אֹת הוּא בִּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם.

Israel. It is in the context of these covenant obligations, the law of Moses, that ancient Israel was considered faithful or rebellious to their covenant God. The author's highlighting of these obligations in an account of one of ancient Israel's earliest episodes of covenant fidelity sets a reminder for similar acts in the future.⁴⁸

Prediction of Covenant Infidelity and Restoration in Moses

A significant prediction of covenant infidelity and restoration is found in the context of Moses's giving and explaining the law. Unsurprisingly, this prophetic prediction occurs in the context of an exposition of the curses associated with covenant infidelity. It is as if, as Moses was explaining the curses to the people, he realized their propensity to rebellion and followed his reasoning to the inevitable failure of their descendants and the gracious provision that YHWH would provide to accomplish his purposes through their restoration.

Leviticus 26 contains an extensive exposition of the blessings and curses of the covenant. These blessings and curses are set in the context of two conditional statements (vv. 3, 14). The reception of covenant blessings is conditional on obedience to YHWH's commands (v. 3). However, violation of the covenant is the condition for covenantal curses (v. 14).

While the first part of the chapter (vv. 1–13) ends with the apodosis of the conditional statement for obedience to the covenant obligations and a declaration of YHWH's suzerain status over Israel (vv. 12–13), the second part of the chapter (vv. 14–46) seems to end with a prediction (vv. 40–45) before a summary comment (v. 46).

Throughout Leviticus 26, the conditional statement formula utilizes $\text{if} \dots \text{then}$ in the protasis and *weqatal* verb forms in the apodosis. This method of conditionality is mirrored in the LXX by the

⁴⁸ Joshua 23:16; Judg 6:8–10; 2 Kgs 21:8; 17:35–38; 22:17; Neh 1:8–9.

use of *ἐάν* in the protasis and a subjunctive(s) in the apodosis. While evangelical translations take v. 40 as the protasis of a conditional statement (“If they confess their sin...,” NASB), the MT reads *וְהִתְוַדּוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנֵיהֶם*. In the MT, v. 40 does not begin like all of the other conditional statements in Leviticus 26 with *אִם*. While the use of a *weqatal* to indicate the protasis of a conditional statement is attested (Gen 44:22), the LXX does not use *ἐάν* like in every other conditional statement in Leviticus 26.⁴⁹

The LXX translates the clause *וְהִתְוַדּוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנֵיהֶם* as a future action or prediction, “and they will confess their sins” (*καὶ ἐξαγορεύσουσιν τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν*). The LXX recognizes a switch from conditional statements to predictive discourse.⁵⁰ Following the future action by the remnant of confession of their iniquity is restoration (vv. 44–45). This future restoration of people will occur when YHWH remembers his covenant (v. 42). That covenant that he remembers is his covenant with Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham.⁵¹ In chapter 5 of this dissertation, this covenant with Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham was shown to be the covenant made in Genesis 15. The land was the essence of this covenant, which YHWH reminds the audience with the expegetical statement, “That is, I will remember the land” (Lev 26:42).⁵²

The importance of the covenant that granted the land to the patriarchs was foundational for YHWH's purpose in calling Abraham. Possession of the land was also part of the reason for the exodus from Egypt (Exod 6:8). The failure of theocratic Israel to maintain possession of the

⁴⁹ Including Gen 44:22. Another, less grammatically unambiguous, prediction of Israel’s covenant breaking is in Deut 31:16–20.

⁵⁰ The LXX may be continuing the apodosis of the conditional statement about obedience. Either way, whether vv. 40–45 is a continuation of the apodosis or a prediction, following the violation of the covenant obligations and the curses, confession and restoration will occur.

⁵¹ Kline, *Prologue*, 323.

⁵² *וְהָאֵרֶץ אֶזְכָּר*.

land did not end YHWH's purposes for Abraham. Possession of the land was still essential for YHWH's ultimate purpose for Abraham. Israel's failure to keep the obligations of the Mosaic covenant that would have kept them as YHWH's people, thereby fulfilling YHWH's purpose for Abraham, is the ultimate reason for the restoration. The fulfillment of YHWH's purpose for Abraham was the reason for the exodus, hence YHWH's statement in Lev 26:45. The theocracy, because of the violations of the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, did not provide complete fulfillment of the covenant of Genesis 15. God's people still have a land to possess in fulfillment of Gen 15:18. Therefore, the covenant made in Genesis 15 is the basis for the restoration of God's people.

Predictions of Covenant Infidelity and Restoration in the Former Prophets

Numerous predictions of covenant infidelity and restoration are found in the Former Prophets. While all the books of the Former Prophets record the theocracy's continued infidelity to the covenant, the ultimate curse of the covenant, exile from the land, did not occur until the time of Zedekiah (*circa.* 586 BC), narrated in the last book of the Former Prophets (2 Kings).

The historical books record over six hundred years of covenant unfaithfulness, beginning the generation after Joshua's (Judg 1:1–10). During the time of the theocracy, YHWH sent prophets to warn and admonish the people to covenant faithfulness. While these warnings and admonishments were in line with the patient character of YHWH (Exod 34:6–7), both the authors of the Former and Latter Prophets explicitly give the ultimate reason for YHWH's longsuffering toward his ancient theocratic people. This ultimate reason that YHWH was slow to execute his final covenant wrath (exile from the Promised Land) was the covenant he made with Abraham in Genesis 15.

The earliest prophetic rebuke of the people is found in Judges 2. In verse 1, YHWH's faithfulness to his covenant he made with the patriarchs is reiterated by the messenger of YHWH, "I (YHWH) brought you up from Egypt and into the land that I swore to your fathers. I will not break my covenant with you forever."⁵³ The messenger refers to this covenant as one that has to do with the land and an oath YHWH made to their fathers. Both the covenant made with Abraham and the Mosaic covenant had to do with the land and was made with the fathers of theocratic Israel. To which one of these covenants does the messenger of YHWH refer?

The Mosaic covenant was made with all subsequent Israelite generations (Deut 29:14–15). The essence of the Mosaic covenant was ancient Israel's status as YHWH's people (Exod 19:5; Deut 26:18). The mention of the parties and the obligation of the covenant mentioned in Judg 2:1 does not match that of the Mosaic covenant, nor the terms given in Gen 17:6–8, particularly the prediction that YHWH will be God to Abraham's seed (Gen 17:7).⁵⁴

The covenant that the messenger of YHWH references in Judg 2:1 is the covenant of Genesis 15. The covenant made in Genesis 15 by YHWH to Abraham and inherited by Isaac and Jacob is frequently called an oath that granted inheritance of the land (Exod 13:5, 11; Deut 1:8; 6:8). The clause "swore to your father(s)" is used exclusively to refer to the oath associated with this covenant.⁵⁵

This covenant that gave the land to Abraham and his seed, the land of Canaan, is the covenant that YHWH will never break. Since this covenant was unilateral, even the theocracy's

⁵³ אֶעֱלֶה אִתְּכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם וְאָבִיָּא אִתְּכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם וְאָמַר לֹא־אֶפְרָר בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם לְעוֹלָם.

⁵⁴ While both Judg 2:1 and Gen 17:7–8 contain the words עוֹלָם and בְּרִיתִי, the covenant mentioned in Gen 17:7–8 is not explicitly said to be a covenant that YHWH would not break. For a discussion on the use of עוֹלָם in Gen 17:7–8 see chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁵⁵ In Gen 26:3 the prepositional phrase is לְאַבְרָהָם לֹא־אֶפְרָר since it is spoken to Isaac. This phrase is synonymous with the covenant of Genesis 15.

infidelity to the Mosaic covenant could not nullify YHWH's obligation to give the land to Abraham's seed. Ultimately, the patience that YHWH showed to theocratic Israel was because of his covenant with Abraham.

As the theocracy continued towards utter apostasy from the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, the authors of the historical books narrate the role that YHWH's covenant with Abraham played in their continued presence in the land as his theocratic people. Two particular passages explicitly equate YHWH's reluctance to execute the ultimate covenant curse of exile to his covenant with Abraham.⁵⁶ In 2 Kgs 13:23, a delay in the exile of the northern kingdom for their idolatrous infidelity to the Mosaic covenant is explained by the author, "But YHWH was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turn toward them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so he did not want to destroy them or cast them from his presence until now."

A second clear reference to YHWH's covenant with Abraham as the reason for YHWH's patience with the theocracy is in 2 Kgs 21:8, "I (YHWH) will never again cause the feet of Israel to wander from the that I gave to their fathers if they keep to do all which I have commanded them all the instruction that Moses my servant commanded them."⁵⁷ According to this declaration of YHWH, while the occupation of the land is conditional upon the obedience of the nation to the Mosaic covenant (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:33; 7:12, 1 Kgs 9:6–7; 2 Kgs 18:12–13), ownership of the land is unconditional. This unconditional ownership based on the covenant made in Genesis 15, where YHWH gave legal title to the land to their fathers, is the reason for

⁵⁶ The words of the first prophetic contention with ancient Israel in Judg 2:1–3 suggest the importance of YHWH's covenant with Abraham in the way that ancient theocratic Israel's history played out. His patience with Israel throughout its history should be understood in the context of his unilateral covenant with Abraham.

⁵⁷ וְלֹא אֲסִירָהּ לְהַגִּיד רִגְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִדֶּהֱאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם בְּרַם אִם־יִשְׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִים וּלְכַל־הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתִי אֹתָם עֲבָדֵי מִנְשָׂה.

ultimate restoration through a new covenant. If YHWH's patience and ultimate restoration were based on the terms given in Gen 17:6–8 as an addition to the covenant made in Genesis 15, then it would be expected that those terms would be invoked.⁵⁸

Predictions of Restoration in the Latter Prophets

While the theocracy continued to have the potential to fulfill YHWH's purposes for Abraham (to make him a great nation and bless all the nations of the earth [Gen 12:2]) by means of the Mosaic covenant, he continued to send prophets to rebuke and admonish the people. However, when it became apparent that they would not fulfill their covenant obligations, the prophets predicted a future covenant, a new covenant, through which YHWH's purposes for Abraham would be fulfilled. These prophecies were based on YHWH's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15.

Unsurprisingly, the historical context of the prophetic books results in numerous predictions of the restoration of God's people. These predictions never invoke the terms of Gen 17:6–8 or the obligations of the fulfillment of this passage, the Mosaic covenant, as the reason for the restoration. Instead, the restoration is required because of ancient Israel's infidelity to the obligations of the Mosaic covenant.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The only time(s) when the land is referred to as something given by YHWH to the people of Israel is related to the conquest under the leadership of Moses and Joshua (Deut 2:12; Josh 1:15; 24:13, Judg 6:9; 11:21). As chapter 5 of this dissertation demonstrated, references to YHWH giving the land to the people is part of the record of the fulfillment of the predictive prophecies of Gen 17:6–8. An argument could be made that reference to "your fathers" in the Former and Latter Prophets is simply to earlier generations of Israelites (1 Sam 12:6–8; 2 Kgs 17:13; Jer 2:5; 44:10; Ezek 20:36; Zech 1:4; Mal 3:7). However, the way in which the Pentateuch refers to the land as given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the fathers of ancient Israel) suggests that when "fathers" is used in the context of the grant/giving of the land it refers to the patriarchs. Even if "fathers" does refer to earlier generations of Israelites, the gift of the land to them is based on the covenant made in Gen 15:18. The reason that any ancient Israelite lived in the Promise Land was because it had been promised by YHWH to Abraham and his seed in the covenant made in Genesis 15. Promises of restoration are never made because YHWH is their God; they are always made so that he might be their God. See below.

Some of the clearest prophetic predictions of restoration are found in Jeremiah’s book of consolation (Jeremiah 30–33).⁶⁰ The most obvious prediction is in Jeremiah 31, where the only explicit use of the term “new covenant” in the Old Testament occurs. Jeremiah 31:31 reads, “Behold, days are coming,” declares YHWH, “And I will make with the house of Israel and the house of Judah a new covenant.”⁶¹ This predicted new covenant is contrasted with the old covenant, “Not like the covenant I made with their fathers when I took them by their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which they violated my covenant...”⁶² (Jer 31:32). How this future new covenant will contrast the Mosaic covenant is declared in verses 33–34. Of significance for the thesis of this dissertation is that this future covenant will result in the reality that “I (YHWH) will be their God, and they will be my people” (v. 33b).⁶³

The clauses found in this aspect of the new covenant are not foreign to the Mosaic covenant. Part of the result of this future covenant is found in the predictions of Gen 17:7–8 (“I will be their God”). This clause, וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים, is identical. The second clause is found in Lev 26:12 (וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים). However, the clause in Lev 26:12 is the apodosis on a conditional statement which begins in Lev 26:3. The protasis of Lev 26:3 is the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, “If you walk in my statutes and keep my commandments and do them.”⁶⁴ Theocratic Israel’s status as YHWH’s people was conditional on their keeping the statutes and commandments of the Mosaic covenant.

⁶⁰ The prophecies of restoration are still in the future for both the author and the audience.

⁶¹ הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים וְנֹאֲמֵי יְהוָה וְכָרַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת-בְּרִית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה.

⁶² לֹא כְבָרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת-אֲבוֹתָם בְּיוֹם הַחֲזוֹקִי בְנִדְמָם לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר-רָטַמָּה הִפְרוּ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי.

⁶³ וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים.

⁶⁴ אִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם.

In the new covenant, there will be no conditions for the people to meet in order to be YHWH's people. Even though Israel's status as YHWH's people was conditional upon their fidelity to the Mosaic covenant, they are often declared by YHWH to be his people (2 Sam 5:2; 1 Kgs 6:13; 2 Kgs 20:5; Hos 4:6). YHWH's compassion on ancient Israel for the sake of the patriarchs conferred on the nation status of YHWH's people before the Mosaic covenant was established (Exod 3:7). The Mosaic covenant was the means by which this freely conveyed status of YHWH's people would be maintained. The need for a new covenant that results in the people again being considered as YHWH's people assumes that the prediction of Gen 17:7–8, that YHWH would be God to Abraham and his seed was conditional upon the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7.

While YHWH formally became Israel's God through the exodus and establishment of the Mosaic covenant (Exod 6:7; 20:2; Deut 29:10–15), following the complete apostasy of ancient Israel from the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, he declares that he had rejected them (Jer 6:30; 7:29; Ps 60:1). The context of these declarations is the final elimination of theocratic Israel through the exile. The exile was confirmation that the Mosaic covenant failed as means of continuing the relationship between YHWH and his people.

The imminent exile of Judah and the end of the theocracy is the historical context of Jeremiah's consolation. Unsurprisingly, the declaration of the result of the future new covenant, "I (YHWH) will be their God, and they will be my people," is significant. If YHWH continued to be their God during the exile until the restoration in the same way that he had been since the exile, the mention of this aspect of the new covenant would be superfluous.⁶⁵ Instead, this

⁶⁵ If Gen 17:6–8 was an addition to the unilateral covenant between YHWH and Abraham in Genesis 15, YHWH would not need to establish a new covenant that provided this status.

declaration of the result of the new covenant is one of the ways in which it is different from the Mosaic covenant; through the new covenant, God graciously conveys this status, while in the Mosaic, the status was maintained by obedience.⁶⁶

What is the reason for a new covenant between YHWH and his people? Jeremiah 31:32 gives the reason, the fact that theocratic Israel *broke* the Mosaic covenant. The word translated “broke” is the *hiphil* verb form of פָּרַר. Many words are associated with infidelity or transgression of the covenant.⁶⁷ However, the *hiphil* form of פָּרַר is used only five times in relation to the covenant during Moses’s propagation of the law (Lev 26:15, 44; Num 15:31; Deut 31:16, 20). The context of the use of the *hiphil* form of פָּרַר makes it clear that this action is the result of the utter rejection of YHWH. The use of the word in Deut 31:16–20 is illustrative. In these verses, “to break” the covenant is to practice harlotry (v. 16), turn to other gods (v. 18), and serve other gods (v. 20). In other words, to break the covenant is to become dedicated to other deities and

⁶⁶ The obligations of the new covenant are expressed in Jer 31:32. The obligations are unilateral. YHWH will give his law, write it on their heart, and be to them God. The actions related to the covenant are all first-person singular, with YHWH as the subject (אֶכְתַּבְנָהּ, נִתְּתִי). The final clause, “and they will be my people” (וְהָיָה יְהוָה לִי לְעָם), subscribes no obligations; it is simply a declaration of the people status. Meritorious obligations seem to be excluded in the last part of verse Jer 31:34, אֲזַכְּרֵם-עוֹד, לֹא אֶזְכְּרֵם וְלֹא אֶזְכְּרֵם לֵאמֹר (‘‘when I forgive their iniquity and their sins I remember no longer’’). Any obedience associated with the future restoration will happen because of YHWH’s unilateral work of redemption. The clause כִּי יִדְעוּ אֹתִי לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד-גְּדוּלָּתָם (‘‘because they will all know me from the least to the greatest’’) provides the reason they will not need to teach each other to know YHWH (v. 34a). The use of ׀ as a subordinating conjunction at the beginning of verse 34 introduces the verse as a result cause. The covenant promised through Jeremiah includes the notion that those participants in the covenant will genuinely be God’s people since a result of God’s unilateral work, putting his law within them and writing it on their heart, is that all will know him (more precisely, no one will need to teach each other to know YHWH). In this way, knowledge of God is also unilaterally granted by God in the promised covenant. The terms of the Mosaic covenant did not include any means to forgive sins (Heb 10:1–4). The relationship between the old and new covenant in God’s redemptive plan will be examined below.

⁶⁷ The two most common are עָבַר (Josh 23:16; Hos 6:7), and הָלַךְ (Ps 89:34; Dan 11:32).

thereby, become entirely unfaithful to YHWH.⁶⁸ Those who break the covenant have declared allegiance to other gods.⁶⁹

Theocratic Israel utterly rejected their vassal status under YHWH, thereby breaking the Mosaic covenant. They were no longer reckoned as “YHWH’s people” (Hos 1:9–10) and exiled from the Promised Land. The predictions of Gen 17:7–8 that came to fruition through the exodus and conquest were ended. As Jeremiah’s consolation continues, he reiterates the failure that led to the people’s predicament (Jer 32:21–24, 33) before again announcing the promise of restoration (Jer 32:33–40). In the final announcement, Jeremiah 33, the prophet provides the reason for future restoration. In Jer 33:7, a comparison is made between restoration and the initial condition of the theocracy, “I (YHWH) will return the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel and build them like in the beginning.”⁷⁰ After describing the praise and joy that will occur because of YHWH’s act of restoration (vs. 9–11a), the era of this joy is reiterated in words that echo verses 7, “When I (YHWH) return the captivity of the land like in the beginning” (Jer 33:11b).⁷¹

In verses 7 and 11b, three things are described as captive (שְׁבוּת):⁷² Judah, Israel, and the land. In the case of Judah and Israel, their captivities refer to their physical exile from the land.

⁶⁸ Violating the first obligation of the covenant (Exod 20:3, Deut 5:7). In Deut 31:20, exercising the type of loyalty to other deities that breaks the covenant is that which “spurns” or “shows contempt for” (נָאֵץ) YHWH.

⁶⁹ The use of the *hiphil* form of פָּרַר in 1 Kgs 15:19 illustrates this principle in the context of a military-political covenant.

⁷⁰ וְהִשְׁבַּתְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּת יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־שְׁבוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵתִים כְּבָרְאשֻׁנָה.

⁷¹ כִּי־אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת־הָאָרֶץ כְּבָרְאשֻׁנָה.

⁷² The meaning of the noun שְׁבוּת is debated. The noun occurs as the direct object of the *qal* or *hiphil* of שׁוּב eleven times in Jeremiah (29:14; 30:3, 13; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7 [2x], 11, 26; 48:47:49:6, 39). According to Holiday, “the most satisfactory treatment (of the phrase) is that of Ernst Dietrich.” William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah, Chapters 26–25* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 142. Dietrich translated the phrase “render a restoration.” Ernst Dietrich, “שוב שְׁבוּת,” *BZAW* 40 (1925): 233–44. John M. Bracke gave the phrase the sense of *restitutio ad integrum* (“to restore the situation which prevailed earlier”). John M. Bracke, “שוב שְׁבוּת revisted,” *CTA* 97 (1985): 233–244. The

Both kingdoms are described as “taken into captivity” (Deut 28:41; 2 Kgs 15:29; 24:15). Both Judah and Israel will be away from the land before the restoration. However, in what way can it be said that the land was captive? While no biblical text explicitly mentions how the land was captive, its captivity should be considered the possession and occupation of the land by foreigners. The common prepositional phrase “like in the beginning” (בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה) suggests this view, reminding the audience of the occupation of the Promised Land by those who practiced abominable acts (Lev 18:30; Deut 12:31) prior to the Israelite conquest.

The return of the captivity of Judah, Israel, and the land like it was in the beginning is meant to remind the reader of the beginning of the theocracy. The theocracy included three things: people, covenant, and occupation of the Promised Land. However, Jer 33:7 and 11b stress the occupation of the land. In context, וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי (‘‘I will return’’) connotes movement from the place of captivity for Judah and Israel to the Promised Land. The clause, ‘‘When I return the captivity of the land’’ (v. 11b), is metaphorical since the land cannot move.⁷³

From the perspective of exile from the land and the land as occupied by people other than the descendants of Abraham, the use of the phrase ‘‘like in the beginning’’ twice reminds the audience of the earliest days of the theocracy. Following the conquest of the land under the leadership of Joshua, as recorded in the book of Joshua, the author comments, ‘‘So YHWH gave

LXX translates the phrase in Jer 33:7 (40:7 LXX) and 11b (40:11 LXX) ἐπιστρέψω τὴν ἀποικίαν. The Greek noun ἀποικία is used elsewhere in the LXX to render גִּלְתָּה, including all four times it is translated in Jeremiah (Jer 28:6; 29:1, 4, 31 [גִּלְתָּה is found in Jer 29:20 which is not in the LXX]). The reason for ancient Israel’s status as ‘‘exiles’’ was the deportation. While the generic use of the phrase with the sense of *restitutio ad integrum* seems to fit the sense of the use of the phrase throughout the OT, the specifics of Jeremiah’s context allows for the use/meaning of the phrase below.

⁷³ A better translation might be ‘‘When I overturn the captivity of the land.’’ Goldingay translates, ‘‘Because I will bring about the restoration of the country as at the first.’’ John Goldingay, *The Book of Jeremiah* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 693.

to Israel all the land which he swore to their fathers, and they possessed it as an inheritance and dwelt in it” (Josh 21:43).⁷⁴

While the oath referred to in this statement could have been the prediction found in Gen 17:8 since this prediction that YHWH would give the land to Abraham and his seed is alluded to frequently in the exodus and conquest narratives (Exod 6:4; Lev 14:34; Deut 2:29; 11:17; Josh 1:15). However, as demonstrated above, the phrase, “which he swore to their fathers,” is always associated with the land grant covenant made by YHWH to Abraham in Genesis 15. Jeremiah’s prophetic prediction of restoration found in Jeremiah 33 is clearly based on the covenant established in Genesis 15. The restoration of Judah, Israel, and the land “like in the beginning” invokes the idea of Israel’s initial occupation of the land as a fulfillment of YHWH’s unilateral covenant made with Abraham.

Ezekiel also proclaims that the reason for restoration is the covenant of Genesis 15. At the end of Ezekiel 37, the prophet explains the meaning of the symbolic act of joining two sticks, the reunion of Judah and Israel through their restoration of the land under a single Davidic king. In verse 21, the lord YHWH, through Ezekiel, says that he will gather them from around and bring them “back to their land.”⁷⁵ In verse 25, the prophet continues to speak YHWH’s words, “And they will live on the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, on which your fathers lived, and they will live upon it and their sons and sons of their sons forever.”⁷⁶ Verse 25 clarifies the way in which the land can be considered “their land.”

⁷⁴ וַיָּתֵן יְהוָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לַאֲבוֹתָם וַיְרִשׁוּהָ וַיָּשְׁבוּ בָּהּ.

⁷⁵ וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֹתָם מִסְּבִיב וְהִבֵּאתִי אוֹתָם אֶל-אֶדְמָתָם.

⁷⁶ וַיָּשְׁבוּ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי לְיַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר יָשְׁבוּ-בָּהּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וַיָּשְׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ הִמָּה וּבְגֵיתָם וּבְגֵי בְנֵיהֶם עַד-עוֹלָם.

YHWH does not base the claim of ownership of the land on the theocracy, whether through the initial or later conquests and occupations. The claim of ownership goes back to the patriarchs, specifically Jacob. YHWH uses the original name of the patriarch, possibly to avoid confusion with the theocracy. If the name “Israel” had been used, it would be ambiguous if the individual or the nation was the recipient of the gift of the land; the use of the name Isaac gave to his son clarifies that the individual is the one to whom the land was legally given.

In every case but one, when the grant of the land is mentioned in association with the patriarchs the names Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are used (Gen 26:3; 28:4; 35:12; 50:24; Exod 6:8; 33:1; 32:11; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 30:20; 34:4; Ezek 33:24). The one exception to this is Exod 32:13 where the MT reads לַאֲשֶׁרֶן. However, variants in SMP (לְאִשְׁרָן) and LXX (Ἰακωβ) suggest that this might not be an exception.

Chapter 3 of this dissertation explained how the covenant made by YHWH with Abraham granted Abraham legal title to the Promised Land. This legal title was passed to his heir, Isaac, who passed it to his heir, Jacob. Jacob's title to the land did not depend on anything he did. While, as shown above, the theocracy's occupation of the land was conditional, their restoration to the land is based on the unconditional covenant made in Genesis 15, which Jacob inherited.

While the restoration of the people to the land is not always equated with the covenant made in Genesis 15 between YHWH and Abraham, whenever YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham are mentioned, the only encounter is the covenant of Genesis 15. No prediction in the entire Old Testament of the restoration of Israel utilizes the encounter recorded in Genesis 17, particularly verses 6–8, nor the Mosaic covenant as the grounds for God's gracious unilateral act of restoration.

New Testament Use of YHWH's Covenantal Dealings with Abraham

The New Testament records the partial fulfillment of the restoration of the people of God. In this context, the New Testament authors affirm the Old Testament's testimony of the centrality of the covenant made by YHWH with Abraham in Genesis 15 as the foundation of God's unilateral provision of salvation in Jesus Christ through the new covenant.

The New Testament authors demonstrate the significance of the covenant of Genesis 15 in two important ways. First, whenever New Testament authors mention God's gracious provision of salvation through Jesus Christ in connection with YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, they never mention Gen 17:6–8. None of the things mentioned in Genesis 17 as prescribed, predicted, or otherwise conveyed to Abraham's descendants are mentioned in association with the new covenant in Jesus Christ. Second, most of the New Testament's mentions of circumcision associate the rite with Moses and Abraham's physical descendants.

Genesis 15 and Salvation in Jesus Christ

At the beginning of the initiation of the new covenant era in Luke's record of the birth of Jesus Christ, the author of the Gospel includes in the words of Mary, the mother of Jesus, her reflection on the significance of her son, "He (the Lord) has helped Israel his servant; he has remembered his mercy, just as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever" (Luke 1:54–55).⁷⁷ These words of Mary echo the restoration theme of the Old Testament by invoking YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham and his immediate descendants, Isaac and Jacob. Like the Old Testament authors, Mary's words place the restoration promised by God on the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; no mention is made of the covenant made with ancient Israel.

⁷⁷ ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους, καθὼς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, τῷ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

The mercy that the Lord remembered was his promise to restore the captives because of his covenant with Abraham.⁷⁸

Later in the same chapter, Luke 1:67–79, is a record of the prophecy of Zechariah. Zechariah’s prophetic words also point to YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham as the reason for the salvation that would come through Jesus. In verses 72–73a, Zechariah says that the Lord God of Israel has visited and redeemed his people “in order to accomplish the mercy associated with our fathers, that is, to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to Abraham our father.”⁷⁹ The oath referred to in Luke 1:73 is the covenant that YHWH made in Genesis 15. Almost identical language is used in Gen 26:3 in the LXX, where obedience to YHWH’s command to Isaac to remain in the Promised Land is followed with the clause “And I will establish my oath which I swore to Abraham your father.”⁸⁰ The covenant that the Lord God of Israel remembered was his covenant with Abraham made in Genesis 15.⁸¹ Once again, no mention is found of a covenant made with ancient Israel; only the covenant made with Abraham as an individual is invoked.

While other passages in the Gospels demonstrate the importance of Abraham in the mind of first-century Jews for their relationship with God, only Luke 1 explicitly associates Jesus and

⁷⁸ Mary’s words echo the promises of Jer 33:7.

⁷⁹ ποιῆσαι ἔλεος μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν καὶ μνησθῆναι διαθήκης ἀγίας αὐτοῦ, ὄρκον ὃν ὤμοσεν πρὸς Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν.

⁸⁰ καὶ στήσω τὸν ὄρκον μου ὃν ὤμοσα Ἀβραάμ τῷ πατρί σου. See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

⁸¹ Luke 1:73b–75, “In order to give us to serve him fearlessly in holiness and righteousness through all our days after delivering from the hand of the enemy” (τοῦ δοῦναι ἡμῖν ἀφόβως ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν ῥυσθέντας λατρεῦειν αὐτῷ ἐν ὁσιότητι καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ πάσαις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν), reminds the audience of the purpose of the Promised Land covenanted in Genesis 15. The purpose of the exodus and conquest was to deliver ancient Israel and bring them to a place, the Promised Land, where they could serve YHWH (Exod 8:1; Josh 24:13–14). Stephen, in Acts 7:6–8, mentions that this was a purpose of the land, “And they will go out and serve me in this place” (ἐξελεύσονται καὶ λατρεύουσίν μοι ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ [Acts 7:7b]).

the establishment of the new covenant with the covenant made between YHWH and Abraham. However, no passage associates Jesus and the establishment of the new covenant with the Mosaic covenant or YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham that are recorded in Genesis 17.

Paul similarly equates the establishment of the new covenant with the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15. In two passages—Romans 4 and Galatians 3—Paul makes explicit connections. One of these passages, Romans 4, is Paul's only direct positive reference to Genesis 17. Nowhere else does the apostle refer to Genesis 17 in his discussions of the new covenant; even in Romans 4, he does not utilize Genesis 17 as the basis for the new covenant.

The connection between Genesis 15 and the new covenant is most clearly expressed in Paul's use of Gen 15:6. Paul cites Gen 15:6 in Rom 4:3 and Gal 3:6. He alludes to it in Rom 4:9 and 4:22.⁸² In these verses, Paul utilizes Gen 15:6 to remind his audience of the central aspect of the new covenant, "I (YHWH) will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer 31:34b). This benefit of the new covenant is for those who trust in Jesus Christ. The reception of this benefit by faith occasions the apostle's use of Abraham as an example.

In Romans 4, Paul's use of Gen 15:6 follows his exposition of the universality of sin (Romans 1:18–3:20) and his announcement of the fulfillment of the prophecies about the provision of God's justifying righteousness for both Jew and Gentile (Rom 3:21–31).⁸³ The essential aspect of Paul's announcement is that justification is by faith in Jesus (Rom 3:25). The use of Gen 15:6 supports the fact that new covenant justification comes by the same means by

⁸² Paul's citations are not exact uses of the LXX. Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 230.

⁸³ δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (Rom 3:21, 22) is genitive of source/origin, "The righteousness that comes from God." Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 69.

which Abraham was justified—or how righteousness was reckoned to him (ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην)—by faith. In the case of the central aspect of justification in the new covenant, Paul references YHWH’s covenantal encounter with Abraham as recorded in Genesis 15 (also Rom 4:9; 22). No mention is made of any covenant made with Abraham and his seed or that YHWH became, or would become, God to Abraham and his descendants. He does not mention the promise that Abraham’s descendants would be given the Promised Land. These three things that were predicted in Gen 17:7–8 are absent from Paul’s discussion of the relationship between YHWH and Abraham.⁸⁴

The covenant that Paul does mention in support of his argument is Genesis 15. In Rom 4:13, Paul writes, “For the promise to Abraham and then to his seed, that he would be the heir of the world, was not through the law, rather it was through the righteousness of faith.”⁸⁵ In this verse, Paul alludes to the covenantal encounter of Genesis 15 by using the word “heir.” The cognate Greek verb κληρονομέω of the noun κληρονόμος is used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew verb שָׂרָה in Genesis 15. This verb occurs four times in Genesis 15 (vs. 3, 4, 7, 8). The verb and cognate noun are absent in Genesis 17. Paul’s use of the noun κληρονόμος seems to be rendering the substantive use of the participle form of שָׂרָה (שָׂרָה־י) in Gen 15:3. As will be demonstrated more fully below from Galatians 3, Paul directly connects the promise made in Genesis 15 with the new covenant.

⁸⁴ This is a place where Paul’s argument may have been enhanced by including a reference to Gen 17:7–8 if this encounter was foundational for new Covenant salvation. The absence of any mention of Gen 17:7–8 in the context of Paul’s exposition of new covenant salvation, here and elsewhere (see below), suggests that Gen 17:7–8 was not foundational to new covenant salvation.

⁸⁵ Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου ἢ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἢ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ, τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, ἀλλὰ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως.

According to Paul in Romans 4, the establishment of the new covenant is the fulfillment of the promise made by YHWH to Abraham in Genesis 15. The seed who is heir to the land promised in Genesis 15 is those who are of the faith of Abraham (Rom 4:16). The evidence that the ultimate fulfillment of Genesis 15 was not limited to his physical descendants is that his faith was reckoned before he received the rite of circumcision (Rom 4:10–11). Paul distinguishes circumcision from the covenant of Genesis 15. Circumcision was given to Abraham as an individual as the “seal of that righteousness he had because of his faith while he was uncircumcised” (Rom 4:11).⁸⁶

In chapter 4 of this dissertation, the argument was made that Abraham’s activity of circumcision, recorded in Gen 17:23–27, was different from that of Isaac, recorded in Gen 21:4. Romans 4:11–12 supports this argument. In verse 11, Paul writes of Abraham, “And he received the sign of circumcision as the seal of that righteousness he had because of his faith while he was uncircumcised.” It seems that Paul stresses Abraham’s individual circumcision in this verse rather than the command to circumcise his descendants. In addition, Paul does not seem to be referring to the act of circumcision. The action of circumcision is always denoted with the verb περιτέμνω. The LXX translation of the record of Abraham’s circumcision uses this word (Gen 17:24). Luke uses the word to record Stephen’s account of Abraham’s circumcision of Isaac (Acts 7:8; Gen 21:4).

The grammar and syntax of Rom 4:11 support the fact that Paul is not expounding the activity or the meaning of the rite of circumcision. Paul writes that he received the “*sign* of circumcision,” not circumcision itself. The predicate double accusative indicates that what Abraham received was “the seal of the righteousness he had while uncircumcised.” This is what

⁸⁶ σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐν τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ.

is predicated of the “sign of circumcision.”⁸⁷ In the case of Abraham, the visible reminder of the act of circumcision was not a sign of the future covenant between YHWH and Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9–11). Rather, for Abraham, his circumcision served to seal the faith unto righteousness that he exercised earlier, as recorded in Gen 15:6.⁸⁸ The unilateral covenant made in Genesis 15 was YHWH’s response to that event. For Abraham, his circumcision served to seal the promise covenanted in Genesis 15.

In light of the New Testament authors’ other mentions of the place of circumcision in the history of redemption, which will be discussed below, Paul’s exposition of the result of the act of circumcision, the abiding sign, seems contradictory. However, it must be noted that Paul is not discussing the rite of circumcision but Abraham’s circumcision. The result of Abraham’s circumcision was different from that of his descendants.

While both the circumcision of Abraham and the circumcision of his descendants in accordance with the rite instituted in Genesis 17 are said to be for “a sign of the covenant between me (YHWH) and you (Abraham and his descendants)”⁸⁹ (Gen 17:11), the covenants of which circumcision was a sign are different. As will be demonstrated below, circumcision for

⁸⁷ The idiomatic translation of Rom 4:11 in this dissertation, “seal of that righteousness he had because of his faith while he was uncircumcised,” is provided to emphasize Abraham’s unique place to this passage. Paul uses articles in this verse anaphorically and to indicate possession. The phrase τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως is adjectival modifying σφραγίδα (anarthrous). The first article (τῆς δικαιοσύνης) is anaphoric; its antecedent is in verse 9 (Paul’s quotation of Gen 15:6). “That righteousness” is the righteousness reckoned to Abraham. The second article is possessive, “his faith,” and the genitive is causal. This phrase again refers to Paul’s quotation of Gen 15:6 in verse 9. Abraham’s faith was reckoned to him, and because of this faith, he received the sign of circumcision. The last articles are in the phrase τῆς ἐν τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ. The first article, τῆς, indicates that the prepositional phrase is adjectival modifying πίστεως. The second article, τῇ, is possessive. Abraham’s faith was exercised during the time that he was uncircumcised. The gnomic notion of the righteousness that is because of faith is expressed with the use of articles in the prepositional phrase in verse 13, διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως. Henry Alford, *Alford’s Greek New Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary, Vol II* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976), 349.

⁸⁸ Kruse, *Romans*, 209.

⁸⁹ לְאֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵינְכֶם.

Abraham's descendants was a sign of the covenant predicted in Gen 17:7, the Mosaic covenant. However, Paul makes it clear in Rom 4:11 that the sign resulting from circumcision for Abraham was of the covenant made in Genesis 15.⁹⁰ Paul does this because he acknowledges that two different covenants are part of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham—a unilateral covenant established in Genesis 15 (whose parties were YHWH and Abraham) and the promise of a bilateral covenant in Gen 17:7 (whose parties were YHWH and Abraham's descendants).⁹¹ The condition of the unilateral covenant was faith, and the condition of the bilateral covenant was obedience to the Mosaic law.⁹²

Paul's careful exposition of Gen 17:11, where he distinguishes between two covenants in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, is the reason he mentions the difference between inheritance through the law and through the righteousness of faith (Rom 4:13). Circumcision is a sign of both covenants in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, but eschatological inheritance is only through the righteousness of faith.

While it is clear that Paul separates the rite of circumcision from the new covenant in Rom 4:9–11, he quotes Gen 17:5b in Rom 4:17a, “Just as it is written, ‘I have set you as the father of many nations.’”⁹³ This is the only positive quotation of Genesis 17 in an exposition of the new covenant in the Bible. While this comes in the context of Paul's discussion of the

⁹⁰ Contra Krause, who comments, “As has often been noted, Paul appears to avoid calling circumcision a sign of the covenant because his Jewish contemporaries regarded it as a sign of the Mosaic covenant, something that distinguished Israel from the nations (cf. Judg 14: 3; 1 Sam 14: 6).” Kruse, *Romans*, 209. Rather than an expectation to how NT authors treat “circumcision,” Paul carefully exposit *Abraham's* circumcision. See below for a discussion on how NT authors regard circumcision.

⁹¹ See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁹² Paul's exposition of circumcision in Romans 2 and Galatians 5 demonstrates that it was a sign of the Mosaic covenant. See below.

⁹³ καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν τέθεικά σε.

righteousness that is by faith under the new covenant, this quotation is not part of Paul's defense or argument for the new covenant from YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham. Instead, Paul utilizes this verse to confirm the fatherhood of Abraham of those who believe and thereby have an interest in the benefits of the new covenant.

Abraham's fatherhood over many nations who would participate in God's gracious covenant that he made with Abraham in Genesis 15 is suggested in Gen 15:5, where YHWH said to Abram, "Look to the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be."⁹⁴ These words of YHWH were spoken immediately before the author of Genesis comments on Abram's response to YHWH's discussion with him, recorded in Gen 15:1–5. As explained elsewhere in this dissertation, Gen 15:5 should not be considered the promise to which Abram responds with faith (Gen 15:6).⁹⁵

In the context of the book of Genesis, Gen 15:5 seems to refer to Abraham's physical descendants (Deut 1:10). However, in Paul's context, he wants to teach the Roman believers that Abraham is the father of more than just the ancient Israelite people. Paul utilizes Gen 17:4 to support the inclusion of those who believe in the inheritance promised to Abraham in Genesis 15. Paul accomplishes this by the adverbial use of the conjunction καθὼς to introduce the quotation to his argument based on Gen 15:6. In this case, Paul does not use Gen 17:4 in its immediate historical context (background for the prediction of Gen 17:6–8). Instead, he uses it to explicitly connect all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, as heirs of the promise of the covenant in Genesis 15 without the ambiguity of using Gen 15:5.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ הַבְּטֹחָה הַשְּׁמַיְמָה וְסָפַר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם-תּוּכַל לְסָפֵר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה וַרְעֵךְ.

⁹⁵ See chapter 3 of this dissertation and discussion on Galatians 3 below in this chapter.

⁹⁶ Alexander sees Genesis 17 as the covenant that brings to fruition the third promise to Abraham found in Gen 12:2–3, Abraham's blessing the nations of the earth (the other two blessings are implied in the promise that Abraham will be a great nation, descendants and land. Alexander sees Genesis 15 as the covenant that brings these

Paul's other direct quotation of Gen 15:6 is in Gal 3:6. The context is similar to Romans 4—an explanation of the righteousness of faith for everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ. Galatians 3 begins with a contrast of works and faith with respect to the reception of the Holy Spirit (vs. 2–5). Abraham's justification by faith is evidence that the Spirit who works the righteousness of faith comes to those who believe (v. 6). While the righteousness of faith is the main concern of Gal 3:6–29, that righteousness is for those who are considered the “seed” of Abraham by faith in Christ (v. 29).

Like in Romans 4, Paul's use of Gen 15:6 is part of his argument for the primacy of the righteousness that is by faith. Verse 6 begins with an adverbial use of the conjunction καθὼς. This provides a comparison of Abraham's experience with the Galatian believers. Just as the believers in Galatia were supplied with the Spirit by faith, Abraham was supplied with the Spirit (and the righteousness that accompanies the Spirit) when he heard and believed (vs. 5–6). The possession of the Spirit that comes with faith unites believers to Christ, thereby making them sons of Abraham (v. 7).

Paul's use of Gen 12:3 in Gal 3:8 is notable. The words spoken to Abraham, “In you all the nations will be blessed,” are equated with justification by faith. This was the “good news” spoken beforehand to Abraham. While these words spoken to Abraham were not the specific

two promises to Abraham). For Alexander, Gen 17:4 is the key verse that links Genesis 17 to the promise of Gen 12:3b. His view is that Genesis 17 promises a covenant to Abraham on the condition of his loyalty and obedience to YHWH. Through this covenant, YHWH will bless all the families of the earth. Abraham's obedience was required for YHWH to establish the covenant in Genesis 17 is recorded in Genesis 22. Alexander, *From Paradise*, 173–186. The absence of any mention of Genesis 22 in explicit connection to the new covenant in the New Testament suggests that it is not a foundational text for the new covenant (the ultimate means by which YHWH blesses all the peoples of the earth through Abraham's seed, Jesus). The inclusion of Abraham's trial in Moses's record of his life is likely another illustration of his obedience and loyalty to YHWH as a prototypical Israelite. NT uses of Genesis 22 (Heb 11:17–19; Jam 2:21) function as examples of Abraham's faith (in the case of James, a work that confirmed his saving faith). The actions of Abraham in Genesis 22 are used by Moses and the authors of the NT in the same way they use his obedience to YHWH's initial call (see above).

“gospel” of Jesus’s salvific life, death, resurrection, and ascension, they did proclaim that a universal blessing would be given to all people. That universal blessing is “that God justifies the nations by faith” (Gal 3:8a).⁹⁷ This is the same blessing that Abraham himself received in Gen 15:6.

The fact that the imputation of righteousness that justifies is by faith in Jesus Christ brings to question the faith of Abraham that was reckoned to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:6, as quoted by Paul in Rom 4:11 and Gal 3:6, says, “And he (Abram) believed YHWH/God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.”⁹⁸ The MT’s use of the preposition ב is ambiguous.⁹⁹ The LXX and the NT use the articular dative noun ($\tau\tilde{\omega}$ θεῶ). The use of the dative suggests that God should be considered the indirect object of the verb ($\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\nu$). Abraham did not “believe in” God.¹⁰⁰ Instead, he “believed” God. In Gen 15:6, God is not the object of Abraham's justifying faith (although he certainly had faith in God). Rather, Abraham believed what God promised him. If Paul wanted to indicate that Abraham’s faith was in God, he would have been clearer by using a prepositional phrase. In the NT, a preposition is always used with $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\acute{\omega}$ to indicate saving faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁰¹

The faith that was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness was not mere faith in God. The faith that was reckoned was faith in the promise of God. That promise was the promise of an heir

⁹⁷ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός. In context, τὰ ἔθνη should be understood as “all people,” not Gentile in contrast to Israelites. There was no Israelite nation/people when YHWH declared this to Abraham.

⁹⁸ :הַדְרָא לִי בְּבִשְׁתֵּי יְמֵי הַיּוֹם בְּיַחַד אֲבְרָם. καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραμ τῷ θεῶ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην (LXX).

⁹⁹ “It is a preposition that is not very specialized semantically.” Van der Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew*, §36.6.

¹⁰⁰ Kruse, *Romans*, 205.

¹⁰¹ John 6:29; Acts 16:31; Gal 2:16; 1 John 3:23.

(Gen 15:4)—a single heir.¹⁰² Abraham’s justifying faith is in the promise of his future heir or seed. That future heir/seed is Jesus Christ. The object of Abraham’s saving faith is the same as all who have been or will be justified: Jesus Christ. Paul makes this clear in Gal 3:16 by interpreting the noun עֲרֵךְ/σπέρμα as a singular rather than a collective.

The question of which biblical texts Paul alludes to in Gal 3:16 and his exegesis is debated.¹⁰³ The phrase “and to your seed” is found in nine OT passages (Gen 13:15, 17:18; 24:7; 26:3; 28:4; 13; 35:12; 48:4; Num 18:19).¹⁰⁴ Two things in Gal 3:16 narrow the possibilities. First is the reference to “the promises.”¹⁰⁵ Second is the fact that Paul is writing about an individual.

The reference to plural “promises” could mean that multiple promises were made to Abraham and his seed. However, the reference to “promises” may mean one promise made multiple times. In the context of Gal 3:16, the promise(s) have to do with “the inheritance” (vs. 18; 29).¹⁰⁶ The inheritance is shorthand for the inheritance of the land promised to Abraham in

¹⁰² Genesis 15:5 is a parenthetical comment. The issue that concerned Abram in the beginning of Genesis 15 is his heir. The issue that sparked the conversion was that his servant (Eliezer) was his heir (Gen 15:3). In Gen 15:4, there is the promise that *one* from his own body would be his heir, not his *one* servant. “Who comes from you inward parts, he will be your heir” אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמְעֵיךָ הוּא יִירָשְׁךָ. The use of singular verbs (יֵצֵא, יִירָשְׁךָ) and a singular pronoun (הוּא) indicate that a particular individual is mind.

¹⁰³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 228.

¹⁰⁴ καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου.

¹⁰⁵ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce comments, “In the Genesis narrative the patriarchal promises relate in part to the land (Gn. 12:7; 13:15, 17; 26:4; 28:13) and in part to other aspects of the heritage (especially the universal blessing). But where the promises are given to Abraham’s offspring (τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ, as Paul says here), and not to others in or with Abraham’s offspring, the reference is to the land (‘To your offspring I will give this land’, Gn. 12:7; cf. 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; 24:7, etc.). The reference to the land, however, plays no part in the argument of Galatians; in Rom. 4:13 it appears as ‘the promise to Abraham and his offspring, that he should inherit the world’ (τὸ κληρονόμιον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου)—a promise fulfilled (like the twin-promise that in Abraham and his offspring all nations would be blessed) in the worldwide expansion of the gospel through the Gentile mission... For Paul’s present argument the promise to Abraham’s offspring, as to Abraham himself, is the promise that in the one, as in the other, all the nations will be blessed.” F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 171–172. While the word “land” is not used in Galatians 3, inheritance clearly refers to the land.

Genesis 15. Therefore, the reference to the “promises” is the multiple times YHWH made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their “seed” would receive the land.

All eight of the uses of the phrase *καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου* come in the context of YHWH stating or reiterating the promise of the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, one use of the phrase excludes an individual referent for the noun *רַב־יָרְדְּנָא/σπέρμα*. In Gen 17:8, YHWH says to Abraham, “And I will give to you and your seed after you the land which you are living as a sojourner, the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession and will be God to *them*.”¹⁰⁷ In both the MT and the LXX, Gen 17:8 contains a third-person plural pronoun whose antecedent is *רַב־יָרְדְּנָא/σπέρμα*. Genesis 17:8 envisions the possession of the land of Canaan by the collective descendants of Abraham, not an individual seed. As argued in chapters 4–5 of this dissertation, this mention of Abraham’s “descendants” refers to the theocracy.

Paul’s close reading of Genesis’s use of *רַב־יָרְדְּנָא/σπέρμα* allows him to distinguish between the encounters of Genesis 15 and Genesis 17. After the uses of the phrase *καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου*, where the noun is singular, in Gen 13:15, the first “promise” to Abraham, it occurs in the passages that refer to the generational passing of the promise of the land covenanted in Genesis 15. These are the repetition of that first promise made to Abraham. Paul’s mention of “promises” is the multiple times YHWH made the same promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

With Paul’s distinction between the encounters of YHWH and Abraham in Genesis 15 and Genesis 17 based on the referent of *רַב־יָרְדְּנָא/σπέρμα*, Gal 3:15–17 reinforces the fact that the obligations “added” in Genesis 17 are not part of the covenant made in Genesis 15.¹⁰⁸ The

¹⁰⁷ וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ וּלְיִרְעֶךָ אֶת-אֶרֶץ אֲחֵרֶיךָ אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִגְרִיךָ אֶת-כָּל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאֻחֻזַּת עוֹלָם וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים: *καὶ δώσω σοι καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου μετὰ σὲ τὴν γῆν ἣν παροικεῖς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν Χανααν εἰς κατάσχεσιν αἰώνιον καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς θεός.*

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for these obligations.

primary obligation added to Abraham's relationship with YHWH in Genesis 17 is circumcision, which Paul, later in Galatians (and elsewhere in his letters), along with other NT authors, equate with the Mosaic law. Since the covenant had been established in Gen 15:18, the additional obligation (on behalf of both YHWH and Abraham) of Genesis 17 could not be part of that covenant made according to the argument of verse 15.

As is the case with OT authors' predictions of the restoration of the people through God's gracious unilateral work, the NT never uses the encounter between YHWH and Abraham recorded in Genesis 17, particularly Gen 17:7–8, to support salvation that is in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Rather, whenever NT authors mention YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, they always refer to the covenant of Genesis 15.

New Testament and Circumcision

The importance of circumcision under the old covenant for first-century Jews is obvious from the NT writings. Circumcision is referenced more times in the NT than in the OT. A renewed zeal for the law of Moses among the post-exilic Jews explains this phenomenon.¹⁰⁹ The consensus of the inspired authors of the NT affirms the relationship between the rite of circumcision and the Mosaic covenant.

The first mentions of circumcision in the NT are the historical records of the circumcision of John the Baptist (Luke 1:59) and Jesus (Luke 2:21).¹¹⁰ Luke simply records the earliest life of

¹⁰⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 268.

¹¹⁰ The most frequent use of "circumcision/circumcised" is to refer to Jews (Acts 11:2; Rom 15:8; Gal 2:7, Eph 2:11; Phi 3:3; Titus 1:10).

these two first-century Jewish men and the obedience of their families to the rite instituted by God.¹¹¹

Two important passages in the NT historical books for understanding circumcision are John 7 and Acts 15. In both passages, circumcision is closely associated with the Mosaic law.

In John 7, Jesus and the Jews discuss his teaching and miracles and their persecution of him. In verse 19, Jesus confronts the Jews over their hypocrisy about the Mosaic law, “Has not Moses given the law to you, and no one of you does the law? Why do you seek to kill me?” After a back-and-forth in verses 20–21, Jesus again notes their hypocrisy in verses 22–23, “For Moses has given you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, rather it is from the fathers) and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses is not broken, are you angry at me because I made an entire man healthy on the Sabbath?”¹¹²

In John 7:22, Jesus explicitly connects the rite of circumcision to Moses in his role as covenant lawgiver. While the author of John fully acknowledges that circumcision was given to the patriarchs, Jesus’s argument rests on the fact that the rite of circumcision was part of the obligations of the Mosaic covenant.¹¹³ The conclusion of Jesus’s argument, “Do not judge

¹¹¹ The same can be said of Stephen’s narration of the circumcision of Isaac and Jacob (Acts 7:8).

¹¹² διὰ τοῦτο Μωϋσῆς δέδωκεν ὑμῖν τὴν περιτομὴν — οὐχ ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Μωϋσέως ἐστὶν ἀλλ’ ἐκ τῶν πατέρων — καὶ ἐν σαββάτῳ περιτέμνετε ἄνθρωπον. εἰ περιτομὴν λαμβάνει ἄνθρωπος ἐν σαββάτῳ ἵνα μὴ λυθῇ ὁ νόμος Μωϋσέως, ἐμοὶ χολᾶτε ὅτι ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ὑγιῆ ἐποίησα ἐν σαββάτῳ;

¹¹³ The statement “not that it is from Moses, rather it is from the fathers” seems to be an editorial comment, rather than part of the historical discourse of Jesus. The way Jesus use circumcision in his argument support this.

according to appearance, rather judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24), requires that circumcision and the Sabbath command be equal.¹¹⁴

The discussion of the Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15 connects circumcision to the Mosaic covenant. The issue that the council was called to address was the teaching that “except you (believers) are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1b).¹¹⁵ While circumcision is not said to be part of the Mosaic law, later in the discussion, verse 10, circumcision is part of the “yoke” which neither the elders and apostles nor their (Jewish) forefathers were able to bear. In the history of ancient Israel, the thing that they were unable to bear were the obligations of the Mosaic covenant. Elsewhere, the verbal cognate of the noun “custom” (ἔθος), ἐθίζω, is used to describe the act of fulfilling the law of Moses (Luke 2:27). The issue of the need for Gentile Christians to keep the law of Moses, the obligations of the Mosaic covenant, is the main thing address by the Jerusalem council.¹¹⁶ The participants of the Jerusalem council viewed circumcision as a token sign of the obligation to keep the Mosaic covenant.¹¹⁷

In chapter 2 of Romans, Paul uses the noun περιτομή six times in verses 25–29. The context for the use of περιτομή is the claim of Paul's hypothetical Jewish conversation partner

¹¹⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 445. The only way to accomplish this is to equate both with the Mosaic covenant. The explicit statement credited to Jesus and the use of the rite of circumcision in his argument indicates that Jesus equated the rite with the Mosaic covenant.

¹¹⁵ Ἐὰν μὴ περιτμηθῆτε τῷ ἔθει τῷ Μωϋσέως, οὐ δύνασθε σωθῆναι.

¹¹⁶ Thompson, *Risen Lord*, 187.

¹¹⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 289. The connection of circumcision to the law of Moses is more explicit in Acts 21:21, “And they have been told about you (Paul), that you teach the Jews among the Gentiles apostasy from Moses by telling them no to circumcise their children and not to walk according to our customs” (κατηχήθησαν δὲ περὶ σοῦ ὅτι ἀποστασίαν διδάσκεις ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως τοὺς κατὰ τὰ ἔθνη πάντας Ἰουδαίους λέγων μὴ περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς τὰ τέκνα μηδὲ τοῖς ἔθεσιν περιπατεῖν.). The present active participle λέγων functions to indicate the means by which Paul was teaching apostasy (ἀποστασίαν διδάσκεις) from Moses. Telling Jews not to circumcise their children was teaching apostasy from Moses.

that the Jews possess the written law and, therefore, keep the law better than Gentiles. In verse 25, Paul connects circumcision to Jewish identity by using the conjunction γὰρ to introduce a statement, verse 25, that strengthens his declaration in verse 24, “Just as it is written, ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’” The reason that “the name of God is blasphemed” is the violation of the law by the Jews (vs. 22–23).

The heinous violation of the law by the Jews compared to Gentiles is the fact that Jews “rely upon” and are “instructed from” the law (vs. 17–18). Circumcision is the marker that identifies this group of people. This is indicated in verse 27; the uncircumcised are compared to the circumcised who “transgress the law while having the letter and circumcision.”¹¹⁸

In verse 26, Paul explains the obligation placed on the circumcised through a reversal, “Therefore, if an uncircumcised person keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision?”¹¹⁹ Paul basically says, “If an uncircumcised person keeps the law just as a circumcised person is required, will not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision?” If an uncircumcised person does the same thing that circumcision obligates a Jew, does his uncircumcision make a difference?

That Paul is referring to the obligation to “keep” the law in some meritorious sense, like under the old covenant law, is indicated by his use of the verb φυλάσσω. The LXX uses this verb to translate כִּי־שָׁמַר in connection with “keeping” the Mosaic covenant (Exod 19:5; Deut 26:18) and the covenant’s statutes, judgments, commands, and instructions (Gen 26:5; Lev 25:18; Deut 11:1). This is how the NT authors use φυλάσσω as well; when referring to the obligatory keeping

¹¹⁸ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου. The phrase διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς is attendant circumstance. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 139.

¹¹⁹ ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσει, οὐχ ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομὴν λογισθήσεται;

of the specific moral laws under the old covenant φυλάσσω is typically used (Matt 19:20; Acts 7:53; Rom 2:26; Gal 6:13).¹²⁰ When the NT refers to the non-meritorious keeping of the moral law (evangelical obedience) under the new covenant, its authors use the verb τηρέω (1 Tim 6:14; 1 John 2:3; 3:22; 24; 5:3 Rev 12:17; 14:12).

The use of φυλάσσω in Gal 6:13 is toward the conclusion of Paul's second major contrast of the circumcision and redemption in Jesus Christ by faith. In Galatians 5, Paul begins to expose the contrast between the freedom of those in the new covenant versus the lack of freedom for those under the old covenant. This freedom is freedom from the "yoke of slavery" (v. 1b). Paul's statement in the beginning of verse 1, "Christ liberated you to freedom,"¹²¹ directly follows his contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant (Gal 4:21–30) and the declaration that Galatian believers are in the new covenant, not the old (v. 31).

The work of Christ received by faith is the means by which the Galatian believers were participants in the new covenant. Paul's exhortation in the second half of Gal 5:1 required Paul to explain the meaning of the old covenant sign, circumcision. The context of Gal 5:2–4 is the antithesis between freedom because of Christ (v. 1a) and the subjection of the yoke of slavery (v.

¹²⁰ Possible exceptions to this are Matt 23:3 and 1 Tim 5:21. In Matt 23:3, Jesus commands his audience (the crowd and his disciples) "to do and keep" (τηρεῖτε) whatever the Pharisees tell them (ὅσα ἐὰν εἴπωσιν ὑμῖν ποιήσατε καὶ τηρεῖτε). The things that Jesus commands them to keep is generic (πάντα ... ὅσα ἐὰν εἴπωσιν ὑμῖν), "all things, whatever they tell you). Jesus does not command them only to keep the old covenant moral law (if the Pharisees tell them), rather, they are to keep everything they are told by the Pharisees. This includes much more than just the old covenant moral code. In 1 Tim 5:21, Paul commands Timothy "to keep these things" (ταῦτα φυλάξῃς). "These things" were the instructions given earlier in the letter. Specifically, these instructions were about how local churches are to function (1 Tim 3:14–15). While the use of the moral law is included in "these things" (1 Tim 1:8–11), the command is not to keep the moral law. Rather, Timothy is commanded to do the things associated with Paul's directions about how local churches should function. An alternative way to understand Paul's use of φυλάσσω in 1 Timothy (5:21, 6:20) is to take the word to mean "guard" or "protect." This is clearly the use in 1 Tim 6:20 (τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον) since the direct object of the imperative is a thing (singular) that does not refer to commands. In this case, Paul commands Timothy to protect/guard (for future generations) the instructions on how a local church is to function.

¹²¹ Τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν.

1b). Paul’s command to “stand” (στήκετε) in the freedom of Christ is based on what it means to be subjected to the yoke of slavery (ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε).

Galatians 5:2 explains what the yoke of slavery is and how it is antithetical to freedom in Christ, “Behold, I Paul say to you that if you submit to circumcision Christ will profit you nothing.”¹²² The way in which Christ will profit nothing is understood from the context. The antithetical statements in verse 1 and verses 3–4 explain the meaning of verse 2. The synthesis of these two statements demonstrates that Paul is contrasting the obligation to keep the law under the new and old covenant. However, this contrast is not absolute; it is a contrast with regard to justification (v. 4).¹²³

In Gal 5:3, Paul continues his argument against submitting to circumcision by explaining the reason Christ will profit them nothing if they submit to circumcision, “And I testify again to every man who submits to circumcision that *he is obligated to do the entire law.*”¹²⁴ The phrase “those trying to be justified by the law” in verse 4 modifies the addressees of verse 3. Paul, in Gal 5:1–4, makes a redemptive-historical argument against circumcision based on the purpose/meaning of circumcision during the old covenant era of redemptive history.

Three observations from verse 3 are important for understanding Paul’s view of circumcision in the history of redemption. First, those who submitted to circumcision came under an obligation to keep the whole (Mosaic) law.¹²⁵ Second, Paul considered circumcision

¹²² Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει.

¹²³ Freedom in Christ from the obligation to keep the law for justification does not mean that believers can live lawlessly (Gal 5:13–26).

¹²⁴ μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι. Emphasis added.

¹²⁵ Bruce, *Galatians*, 229. Kline understood that the original institution of circumcision (Gen 17:9–14) “was a response to the Lord’s comprehensive demand for covenantal devotion and service (Gen 17:1b, 2a).” Kline, *Prologue*, 315. It seems circumcision continued to function this way after the establishment of the Mosaic covenant.

part of the law. Paul’s use of the adjective ὅλος suggests that the command of circumcision is part of the whole law. Third, Paul alludes to the verse he cites in Rom 10:5 and Gal 3:12 to contrast salvation by old covenant law keeping and salvation by faith, Lev 18:5, by using the phrase τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι.¹²⁶ By quoting Lev 18:5, Paul also alludes to Ezek 20:11–13 and Neh 9:29.¹²⁷

Nehemiah’s use of Lev 18:5 occurs in the context of the failure of theocratic Israel to keep (or “to do”) the covenant law, and the return of ancient Israelites to the Promised Land after complete exile. Ezekiel’s uses of Lev 18:5 come from YHWH in the context of imminent final punishment for ancient Israel’s covenant transgression.¹²⁸ Rhetorically, Paul’s allusion to the use of Lev 18:5 in Ezek 20:11–13 and Neh 9:29 serves to remind his audience of the futility of attempting to be justified by the law by reminding his audience of the result of ancient Israel’s attempt to keep the law as obligated by the Mosaic covenant. By mentioning the requirement for the righteousness that comes from that law from a text that is quoted in two passages that

While the purpose of circumcision as the sign of the “comprehensive demand for covenantal devotion and service” continued under the Mosaic covenant, the expression of comprehensive covenantal devotion was expanded to require the keeping the entire Mosaic law.

¹²⁶ As discussed above, the more common verb associated with performing the law is φυλάσσω. The use of ποιῆσαι in the context of law keeping/performance limits Paul’s conceptual reference. Rather than just the general idea that keeping the law was required in the old covenant, Paul’s use of ποιέω brings to mind the most explicit mention of obligation and reward (Lev 18:5). καὶ φυλάξεσθε πάντα τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου καὶ ποιήσετε αὐτὰ ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν (Lev 18:5 LXX). The referent of ἃ is πάντα τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου. These are synonymous with “law” (Deut 4:8). Paul’s use of ποιῆσαι and πάλιν may refer his audience back to Gal 3:10–12. Galatians 3:10–12 was the first time Paul told his audience that those under the law desiring to be justified by the law must keep the law completely. Paul supports this by quoting Deut 27:26 and Lev 18:5. “A better interpretation links 5:3 to 3:10. The word ‘again’ (πάλιν) here does not clearly refer to 5:2, for the content of the two verses is different.” Schreiner, *Galatians*, 314.

¹²⁷ Leviticus 18:5 is quoted again in Ezek 20:21.

¹²⁸ The use of Lev 18:5 in Neh 9:29 is in a Levitical prayer of confession (Neh 9:5). This speech confesses that failure to listen to the law and transgression of the law was the reason for their exile. Similar condemnation is made by YHWH in Ezekiel’s use of Lev 18:5. YHWH says that the house of Israel “did not walk in my statutes and rejected my ordinances” (וְלֹא-חָלְקוּ אֶת-מִצְוֹתַי וְלֹא-לָקְחוּ אֶת-חֻקֵּי יְהוָה) right before referring to Lev 18:5 for a second time (Ezek 20:13). Ezekiel’s use of חֻקֵּי יְהוָה and מִצְוֹתַי is a reference to the old covenant obligations given by Moses.

illustrate the failure to fulfill the requirement, Paul reinforces the main point of verses 3–4, the need for justification in Christ alone.¹²⁹

The other mentions of (un)circumcision in the NT either refer to the mark as indicating Jewish identity (Acts 10:45; 11:2; Rom 3:1, 30; Rom 15:8; Gal 2:7–9, 12; Eph 2:11; Phi 3:3; Col 3:11; 4:11; Titus 1:10), recount a historical event (Acts 16:3; Gal 2:3, Phi 3:5), are meant to be taken metaphorically/spiritually (Col 2:11), or are generic references without immediate contextual mention of its significance in redemptive history (1 Cor 7:18–19; Gal 6:15).

Conclusion

The importance of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham is found throughout the biblical record of the history of redemption. As an individual, Abraham and his encounters with YHWH are used by the biblical authors in a manner consistent with the author's purpose and the redemptive-historical import of the event.

During the time of the establishment of the theocracy under the legal obligations of the Mosaic covenant, Moses portrayed Abraham as the prototypical covenant-faithful Israelite. Abraham's obedience to YHWH's commands is stressed in the Mosaic narration of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham.

The inevitable failure of Israel to keep its covenant obligations, along with YHWH's purpose for Abraham, required a unilateral act of YHWH to restore his people. The biblical authors who wrote from this redemptive-historical situation recognized and highlighted YHWH's unilateral works in the life of Abraham. While Moses and the later authors all looked

¹²⁹ Paul's use of Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10 already makes his point that full obedience to the covenant law is required for those under the old covenant. The use of Deut 27:26 (Gal 3:10) sets up the use of Deut 21:23 (Gal 3:13). The inclusion of Lev 18:5 and Hab 2:4 seems to place added stress on the main point introduced in the beginning of Galatians 3. Paul's other use of Lev 18:5, in Rom 10:5, is not used in conjunction with Hab 2:4 to make his point.

at the same historical events, their redemptive-historical expectations required emphasis on different aspects of the same events.

The need for a unilateral act of restoration by YHWH becomes more pronounced later in the biblical record of the theocracy. Whenever YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham are mentioned as an aspect of the restoration of God's people the only covenant encounter referenced is the covenant established in Genesis 15. The absence of any reference to Genesis 17 as grounds for the restoration is consistent in both the pre-exilic passages that predict the apostasy and the eventual restoration, and the post-exilic passages that anticipate the restoration.

With the NT authors' reliance on the OT, the connection of the covenant of Genesis 15 and the exclusion of any positive mention of Genesis 17 with the new covenant salvation in Jesus Christ is unsurprising. While the authors of the NT do not use Genesis 17 to explain salvation, the encounter is not absent in their writing. The use of Genesis 17 in the NT is to link its central event, the institution of circumcision, to the legal obligations of the Mosaic covenant. By equating the rite of circumcision with the Mosaic law and closely connecting Genesis 15 to new covenant salvation, the authors of the NT make an important distinction between these covenantal encounters in the life of Abraham.

The distinction made by the biblical authors in the covenantal encounters between YHWH and Abraham supports the thesis that YHWH engaged in two different covenantal dealings with Abraham—Genesis 15 and 17. The manner in which each of these covenantal encounters is utilized supports the thesis that the covenant spoken of in Genesis 17 is fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant as established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

“Among all the parts of God’s heavenly truth, there is none I know of, more worthy of our diligent inquisition and affectionate acceptation than that which concerns the covenant passed betwixt God and us.”¹

Introduction

Chapters 3–6 of this dissertation have sought to prove the thesis that YHWH engaged in two different covenantal dealings with Abraham—Genesis 15 and 17. The covenantal dealing in Genesis 17 is the promise of a future covenant that was fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant as established in Exodus 19 and re-established in Deuteronomy 26. The significance of this thesis is that it provides a better foundation to acknowledge lesser continuity between the old and new covenants. The notion of covenant dichotomy in YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham has implications for contemporary ecclesiology, Christian living, and areas for further study.

This chapter begins with a summary of chapters 1 and 2. The next section provides an overview of the support presented in this dissertation for the thesis, which will be in the form of chapter summaries for chapters 3 through 6. The next section of this chapter contains a few significant applications in the areas of ecclesiology and Christian living for the thesis. This section discusses how this thesis applies to the key issues of disagreement between covenantal positions mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation. The final section presents two areas for further study related to the thesis.

¹ Peter Bulkeley, *The Covenant of Grace Opened* (1646).

Summary of Chapters 1 and 2

Following the thesis statement, chapter 1 of this dissertation introduced the topic of covenant theology and the assumptions and methodology for this dissertation. It briefly introduced the traditional views of covenant and noted two important issues pertaining to covenant theology: soteriology and ecclesiology. The views of covenant theology focused on the evangelical Reformed tradition, emphasizing one of the main issues in the tradition, the idea of continuity between the old and new covenants as it applies to disagreements between the majority Reformed position and the Particular Baptists.

The implications for the different positions held by the Reformed and Particular Baptists concerning the amount of continuity between the old and new covenants were explained in the areas of soteriology and ecclesiology. In the area of soteriology, covenant theology informs the place of works in salvation, particularly the place of the OT law in redemptive history and in the Christian life. Within ecclesiology, the most visible significance of covenant theology relates to baptism and church membership. A reexamination of the amount of continuity between the old and new covenant brings into question the basis for infant baptism and the inclusion of those without a profession of faith as church members.

In addition, chapter 1 presented the dissertation's assumptions and methodology. The assumptions were broadly evangelical and Reformed, including the idea of scripture's divine inspiration, the difference between a text's meaning and its relevance, the use of biblical intertextuality, and the notion of progressive revelation. The methodology was explained as exegetical and biblical-theological.

Chapter 2 provides a survey of various views of the relationship between Genesis 15 and 17. This chapter demonstrated that various positions on the relationship between Genesis 15 and

17 have been proposed throughout church history. While the majority view has been that Genesis 15 and 17 are two parts of the one Abrahamic covenant, some important figures in church history, including Augustine and Martin Luther, have viewed these as substantially two different covenants.

Support for the Thesis

Summary of Support for the Thesis in Chapters 3–4

In chapter 3, the foundation exegetical work for support of the thesis was presented. Utilizing evangelical presuppositions, this chapter provided an exegesis of all of Genesis 11:10–25:11 except Genesis 17. The purpose of this chapter was two-fold. First, the exegesis in this chapter tried to demonstrate the significance of YHWH's purpose(s) for his initial call to Abraham in Gen 12:1–3. The exegesis of the Genesis narrative of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham found that the author(s) highlighted the two foundational things required for YHWH to fulfill his purpose for Abraham to make him a great nation—land and descendants.² The second purpose of the exegetical work contained in chapter 3 was to provide a background for the exegesis of Genesis 17 found in chapter 4 and the biblical-theological proofs for the thesis contained in chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 4 contains a detailed exegesis of Genesis 17. Particular attention was given to Gen 17:6–8. The exegesis of Gen 17:6–8 directly supported the thesis. The exegesis of Gen 17:6–8 demonstrated that the syntax of the passage does not indicate that a covenant was established in these verses; rather, the syntax indicates that a prophetic prediction is made by

² Throughout this dissertation, an intentional attempt is made to differentiate between nation and theocracy. A nation consists of two things—people/descendants and land. While a nation is required for a theocracy, a third thing – a divine covenant – was required to transform that nation into a theocracy.

YHWH to Abraham of the establishment of a future covenant. The addition of a third foundation for the ancient Israelite theocracy was introduced in Genesis 17, a covenant.³ Chapter 4 also sought to demonstrate the extraordinary nature of Abraham's act of circumcision, narrated in Gen 17:23–27, in relation to the ongoing rite of circumcision associated with the promised covenant. The exegetical work presented in these chapters (three and four) provided the substantial proof for the thesis.

Summary of Support for the Thesis in Chapters 5–6

Following the exegetical proof for the thesis, this dissertation presented biblical-theological support in chapters 5 and 6. This biblical-theological support was presented in three ways. First, the historical fruition of the predictions made by YHWH in Gen 17:6–8 was demonstrated from the Hexateuchal (Genesis – Joshua) narrative of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, exodus, Sinai encounter, and conquest of the Promised Land. Second, a study of the Abrahamic covenant(s) in the OT demonstrated that the OT writers distinguish between the encounters of Genesis 15 and 17. Third, an examination of the authors of the NT shows that they also distinguish between the covenant made by YHWH with Abraham in Genesis 15 and the encounter in Genesis 17.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation provided support for the exegesis of Gen 17:6–8. It supported the exegesis of Gen 17:6–8 as temporally sequential future acts by showing how the narrator(s) and commentator(s) of the canonical history of early ancient Israel described its history in accordance with the exegetical work found in chapter 4 of this dissertation. The promised “fruitfulness” of Abraham and the nations and kings that would come from him are

³ In Gen 17:9–14, YHWH institutes the rite of circumcision for Abraham and his descendants. Circumcision is called both a covenant (Gen 17:10; Acts 7:8) and a sign of the covenant. This dissertation argued that circumcision was a sign of the covenant promised to Abraham (and his seed) in Gen 17:7. See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

narrated later in Genesis. The fulfillment of the promise of fruitfulness is narrated in the history of the Israelite patriarchs and summarized in Exod 1:7. Abraham's fruitfulness is reiterated with the addition of the fulfillment of nations and kings proceeding from him in the record of the histories of Ishmael (Genesis 25), Esau (Genesis 36), and the descendants of Abraham through Keturah (Genesis 25). The fulfillment of Gen 17:7 is narrated in the establishment of the Mosaic covenant (Exod 19:5–6). The author of Joshua narrates the fulfillment of Gen 17:8 (Josh 1:2; 21:43).

The final presentation of proofs for the thesis is in chapter 6. This chapter highlighted some biblical-theological issues associated with YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham from both Testaments. Two main issues were demonstrated. First, both OT and NT authors distinguish between the two covenantal encounters of YHWH and Abraham. Biblical authors distinguish between two encounters by referring to Genesis 15 as the encounter that gave possession/title of the Promised Land to Abraham and Genesis 17 as the encounter that established the rite of circumcision. No author explicitly connects the title to the Promised Land with the rite of circumcision. Second, no author in the old or NT explicitly utilizes the covenantal encounter recorded in Genesis 17 as a basis for God's unilateral mercy of restoration promised in the OT or salvation in Jesus Christ in the NT.⁴ Both Testaments associate the institution of the rite of circumcision with the bilateral obligations of the old covenant (i.e., the law), not the unconditional covenant of Genesis 15.

⁴ A possible exception is Rom 4:17, see chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Application

The application of the idea of less continuity between the old and new covenants has been one of the main issues that have divided Reformed paedobaptists (the Reformed) from Reformed credobaptists (Particular Baptists) since the seventeenth century. While the Reformed held greater continuity between the covenants, many Particular Baptists in the seventeenth century held the position of lesser continuity between the old and new covenants. However, the majority opinion of the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists was that YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham resulted in one Abrahamic covenant. Well-known seventeenth-century English Particular Baptist Hercules Collins wrote, "We must know the covenant made with Abraham had two parts."⁵ Seventeenth-century Particular Baptist pastor-theologian Benjamin Keach says, "God made a two-fold covenant with Abraham, and that circumcision appertained not to the covenant of grace, but to the legal covenant God made with Abraham's natural seed."⁶

The Reformed justly criticized the notion that the same covenant can be both gracious and legal.⁷ The continuity of the old covenant with the new covenant must mean that the old covenant is the covenant of grace since the new covenant is part of the covenant of grace.⁸ Only

⁵ Hercules Collins, "An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the law and Gospel," in *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family*, ed. James Renihan (Owensboro, KY: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004), 257.

⁶ Benjamin Keach, "The Ax Laid to The Root, or, One Blow at the Foundation of Infant Baptism, and Church Membership, Part 1" (London: B. Keach, 1693).

⁷ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 632.

⁸ The Westminster Confession of Faith explains the difference between the old and new covenants under the idea of strong continuity between the covenants in 7.3 and 7.5. "Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the Covenant of Grace, whereby He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe" (WCF 7.3). "This covenant (the covenant of grace) was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel; under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the

through the covenant of grace has anyone ever been saved, whether before or after the incarnation. In addition to seeing continuity between the old and new covenants, the Reformed see continuity between the one Abrahamic covenant and the old covenant.⁹ The affirmation of the thesis of this dissertation provides a substantial reason to separate the covenant of grace from the old covenant. The Abrahamic covenant must no longer be considered to consist of two parts: one for the natural seed and one for the spiritual seed of Abraham. Rather, YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham should be considered the foundation of two separate covenants, the covenant made with Abraham in Gen 15:18 that came to ultimate fulfillment in the new covenant and the old covenant in promissory form in Gen 17:7–8. The separation between these two covenants found in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham better supports Baptists' distinctives in the areas of ecclesiology and Christian living.

Ecclesiology

The Reformed base their view of ecclesiology on the idea that strong continuity exists between the old and new covenants. Since both covenants are administrations of the one covenant of grace, the old covenant provides commands and principles for new covenant ecclesiology. Two of the most significant disagreements between the Reformed and Particular Baptists in the area of ecclesiology are baptism and church membership. While most Particular Baptists ground their view of these two issues on the explicit commands of the new covenant, the Reformed do not

Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament" (WCF 7.5).

⁹ Belcher, *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God*, 138.

need to find explicit new covenant commands for their positions.¹⁰ The Reformed position of baptism and church membership is grounded in their view that the old covenant is an administration of the one covenant of grace. Acceptance of the thesis of this dissertation would require a paedobaptist to change positions on baptism and church membership or formulate different rationale for their positions. The holding of Baptist distinctives follows acceptance of the thesis.

An implication for the proof of this dissertation is that the old covenant was not an administration of the covenant of grace. Because of this, the Reformed position that old covenant commands and principles can be the grounds for any new covenant ecclesiastical practices is unwarranted. The application of this implication is significant in the area of ecclesiology in the practice of baptism and church membership.

Baptism

The Reformed practice of infant baptism is exclusively based on the continuity between the old and new covenants. In his discussion of paedobaptism, Reformed Systematic Theologian Louis Berkhof writes, “It may be said at the outset that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize children, and that there is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptized. But this does not necessarily make infant baptism un-Biblical.”¹¹

¹⁰ Malone argues, “The only form of baptism which fits the regulative principle is that which was ‘instituted’ and ‘prescribed in the Holy Scripture;’ that is, the baptism of disciplines alone, not of infants by additional and supposed good and necessary inference or consequences.” Fred A. Malone, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone: A Covenantal Argument for Credobaptism Versus Paedobaptism* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2007), xxxiii. In this comment, Malone argues for the application of the “Regulative Principle” to baptism. The Regulative Principle says that public worship should include only these elements explicitly prescribed or clearly exemplified in the NT. D.A. Carson, “Worship Under the Word” in *Worship by the Book*, ed. by Mark Ashton, R. Kent Hughes, and Timothy J. Keller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 54. Reformed author Hughes Oliphant old argues “that the so-called ‘regulative Principle’ is not Reformed in origin but rather Anabaptist.” Hughes Oliphant old, *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 185.

¹¹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 632.

The first “scriptural ground” for paedobaptism for Berkhof is that “The covenant made with Abraham was primarily a *spiritual* covenant, though it also had a national aspect, and of this spiritual covenant circumcision was a sign and seal.”¹² Clearly, Berkhof takes the covenant encounters of Genesis 15 and 17 as aspects of the one Abrahamic covenant. The rite of circumcision, which the Reformed equate with paedobaptism, was instituted in Genesis 17. If Genesis 17 is not part of the “spiritual covenant” made with Abraham, then circumcision is not part of the covenant of grace and cannot be used to defend the practice of paedobaptism in the new covenant church. In his argument against Baptists, Berkhof writes,

It is an unwarranted procedure of the Baptists to split this covenant up into two of three different covenants. The Bible refers to the covenant with Abraham several times, but always in the singular. Ex. 2:24; Lev. 26:42. 2 Kings 13:23; 1 Chron. 16:16; Ps. 105:9. There is not a single exception to this rule. The spiritual nature of this covenant is proved by the manner in which its promises are interpreted in the New Testament, Rom. 4:16–18; 2 Cor. 6:16–18; Gal. 3:8, 9, 14, 16; Heb. 8:10; 11:9, 10, 13.¹³

The traditional Particular Baptists’ argument for a singular Abrahamic covenant with two sides is susceptible to this critique. If both Genesis 15 and Genesis 17 are part of the one Abrahamic covenant, and this one Abrahamic covenant is purely gracious, then Particular Baptists can only argue for credobaptism based on the regulative principle. However, while Berkhof’s proof texts do demonstrate that God made a single covenant with Abraham, they do not prove that Genesis 17 is part of that covenant. This dissertation provided explanations for most of Berkhof’s proof texts in support of the thesis.¹⁴

¹² Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 632. Emphasis original.

¹³ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 633.

¹⁴ The manner in which OT authors refer to the Abrahamic covenant (as explicated in this dissertation) applies to 1 Chron 16:16 and Ps 105:9. Hebrews 8:10 and 2 Cor 6:16–18 do not explicitly deal with YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham; therefore, they were not included in the dissertation. The reference in 2 Cor 6:16–18 and Heb 8:10, “And I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” is associated with the Mosaic covenant. The similar phraseology/promise in Gen 17:7–8 can be explained by the position presented earlier in this dissertation that Gen 17:7–8 is a prediction of the Mosaic covenant.

The Particular Baptists' view of baptism is based on an application of the regulative principle, which is valid despite their imprecise understanding of the Abrahamic covenant. The view that YHWH's covenant dealings with Abraham are dichotomous is correct. The error is to place this dichotomy in the Abrahamic covenant itself. Rather, by distinguishing between two separate covenants in YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham, Particular Baptists are better able to understand why the only explicit command for baptism is to baptize disciples alone. Baptism belongs to the covenant of grace under the new covenant. Baptism is not a continuation of circumcision because circumcision was an ordinance of the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7–8, the Mosaic covenant. Under the old covenant, circumcision was not part of the administration of the covenant of grace; therefore, circumcision does not provide any “scriptural” support for paedobaptism.

Church Membership

The issue of who is a rightful member of a local church is closely connected to the issue of the relationship between circumcision and baptism. Reformed theologian B. B. Warfield writes about the inclusion of the unbelieving children of Christians in the church, “The argument in a nutshell is simply this: God established his Church in the days of Abraham and put children into it.”¹⁵ The time that children were put into the Church is the occasion of the institution of the right of circumcision recorded in Genesis 17.

The lack of distinction between the covenant of grace and the two administrations of that covenant, the old and new covenants, allows the Reformed to intentionally include unbelievers (the unbelieving children of believers) in the new covenant church. In the Reformed tradition,

¹⁵ Warfield, “The Polemics of Infant Baptism,” 282.

Church membership and new covenant membership are not equivalent. The view of the majority of the modern Reformed hold the view that “Distinctions between the covenant in its historical administration and the covenant as a saving communion of life, between the ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ church, between ‘external’ membership in the covenant and ‘internal’ or saving membership.”¹⁶ All those who are members of the new covenant, both internal (genuine believers) and external (the unbelieving children of genuine believers) are lawful members of a church. The church is the institution through which the benefits and curse of the covenant are administered.

The Reformed notion of the membership and the function of the visible church is expressed in WCF 25.1, “The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel [not confined to one nation, as before under the law], consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.” For the Reformed, covenant participation comes by participating in the visible church, while membership in the invisible church is restricted to God’s elect.¹⁷

The reason that the visible church is viewed as the institution through which the covenant is administered is the Reformed notion of the continuity of the covenants. Under the Mosaic covenant, ancient Israel partook of the benefit and the curse of that covenant. The benefit received upon Israel’s corporate fidelity to the covenant’s obligations was communion with God (Deut 28:1). The curse, received as the penalty for infidelity to the covenant’s obligations, was exile/excommunication from God (Deut 29:25–28). Only those who were included within the

¹⁶ Venema, *Christ and Covenant Theology*, 292.

¹⁷ WCF 25.1.

nation of Israel (the old covenant “church”) received anything, either blessing or curse, from the Mosaic covenant. The purpose of circumcision in the Mosaic covenant was to place the circumcised male under the obligations of the covenant. The fidelity or infidelity of those circumcised males determined whether the nation would continue in the blessing of the covenant or receive the covenant curse.¹⁸

Because the Reformed view paedobaptism as continuous with circumcision, paedobaptism places the infant under the “obligations” of the new covenant. However, throughout the history of the Reformed tradition, the understanding of the specifics of the obligations of the new covenant has varied.¹⁹ In the twentieth century, John Murray proposed a novel interpretation of covenant fidelity/obligation. Correctly understanding that the fruition of the old covenant's greatest purpose—“to be God to you” (Lev 26:12)—depended on the fidelity of those who had been brought into a covenant relationship with YHWH by grace (Exod 20:1), Murray taught that this fidelity was “the reciprocal response of faith and obedience that arises from the nature of the relationship which the covenant contemplates (mutual fellowship with God).”²⁰ The application of Murray’s view of the old covenant in the context of it being an administration of the covenant of grace is that under the new covenant, the relationship established by baptism ceases without the continued faith and obedience of the one baptized.

¹⁸ See chapter 6 of this dissertation for the NT authors’ view of circumcision.

¹⁹ Greaves argues that the role of the moral law under the new covenant is a major issue. He writes, “At one end of the continuum are those whose ideas were rather more akin to those in the Zwingli-Bullinger-Tyndale tradition than to those of Calvin, William Perkins and William Ames, particularly with regard to the necessity of the fulfillment of the covenant conditions on man's part and the ensuing ethical responsibility (particularly as set forth in the moral law) which participation in the covenant meant. Representatives of this group, which we shall refer to as the ‘moderate Calvinists,’ are Richard Baxter, John Ball, Thomas Blake, Stephen Gere, Anthony Burgess, and Samuel Rutherford.” 152. Richard L. Greaves, “John Bunyan and Covenant Thought in the Seventeenth Century,” *Church History* 36, no. 2 (June 1967): 152.

²⁰ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 18.

Murray's application of his covenant theology to the new covenant follows from his view that fellowship between YHWH and ancient Israel ceased when the people no longer responded to his fellowship with faith and obedience. If both the old and new covenants are the covenant of grace, what happened to ancient Israel can also happen to the NT church. Under the Reformed view of church membership, members are those who have been baptized and come under the obligation to believe the gospel and obey God's commands.²¹

The Particular Baptists' view of church membership is different. The LBCF makes no distinction between the visible and invisible church.²² The chapter of the LBCF that expounds the Particular Baptists' view of church membership (26.2) reads,

All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.

Particular Baptists hold that the only lawful members of a church are those with a creditable profession of faith in Jesus Christ. While Particular Baptists do acknowledge the fact that not all those who are members of a church will be genuine believers, they differ from the Reformed in that they do not intentionally accept unbelievers as members of their churches. Particular Baptists seek to include only believers in the members of churches because the church is the gathering of those who have become partakers of the benefits of the new covenant by God's sovereign grace, not those under the obligations of the new covenant administration of the one covenant of grace.

²¹ This view sees continuity between both the subjects of circumcision/baptism and the result/purpose of circumcision/baptism. The subjects of both include infants of covenant members and the purpose is to place the subject under covenant obligations.

²² LBCF 26.1.

The reason that Particular Baptists view church membership differently is their view of the Abrahamic covenant. Particular Baptists associate church membership with those who are the spiritual children of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ. In the traditional view, Particular Baptists see believers as participating in the spiritual side of the dichotomous Abrahamic covenant. An application for the thesis of this dissertation is that because the new covenant is founded on the unilateral covenant made by YHWH to Abraham in Genesis 15, membership in the new covenant church is restricted to those who have become partakers of God's unilateral work of regeneration resulting in faith. Particular Baptists no longer need to divide the Abrahamic covenant into a legal/carnal side and a gracious/spiritual side to continue to hold the view that church membership is only for those with a creditable profession of faith. The legal/carnal side of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham is confined to the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7–8, the Mosaic covenant. God's unilateral covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15) is the foundation of the unilateral new covenant. The only way to know if someone is a recipient of God's grace is by a creditable profession of faith, as summarized in LBCF 26.2. The new covenant church is not a community of individuals who are under the obligations of the new covenant.²³ The new covenant church is a gathering of those who have received God's grace in Jesus Christ, those who are partakers of all the benefits of the new covenant.

Christian Living

The separation of YHWH's covenantal dealings with Abraham into two distinct covenants means that the purpose(s) and terms of each covenant must also be distinguished. The

²³ While the new covenant church is a community of individuals, these individuals are not a community because they are under the obligations of the new covenant. The thing that makes individual members of the community is not their mutual obligation to keep the new covenant.

Abrahamic covenant, established in Genesis 15, is unilateral; no obligations were required of Abraham to partake in the benefits of this covenant. On the other hand, the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7–8 was bilateral. When this covenant was officially established in Exodus 19, obligations were imposed on the ancient Israelite nation. The people’s fidelity to these obligations determined their enjoyment of the benefits of the covenant. The obligation(s) imposed on the Israelite theocracy was the Mosaic law.

The place of the old covenant law in the life of Christians is an important issue. Discerning the purpose of the covenant predicted to Abraham in Gen 17:7–8 in redemptive history can provide more clarity about the use of the moral aspects of the Mosaic law under the new covenant. Traditionally, the Reformed have viewed the ethical requirements of the Mosaic law for believers in Jesus Christ under the third use of the law. Berkhof defines the third use of the law, “a rule of life for believers, reminding them of their duties and leading them in the way of life and salvation.”²⁴ Berkhof later writes, “They (the Reformed) stand strong in the conviction that believers *are still under the law* as a rule of life and of gratitude.”²⁵ Berkhof’s statement “are still under the law” follows from the Reformed idea that the old covenant and new covenant are the one covenant of grace. If members of the old covenant were under the law, then members of the new covenant are also under the law. Keeping the law is somehow required to partake of the benefits of the new covenant.

²⁴ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 615.

²⁵ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 615. Emphasis added.

John Calvin writes about the requirement of obedience to the Mosaic law in his commentary on Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12; citing the promise of obedience to the law, he writes,²⁶

Hence the Apostle shows, that the celebrated promise, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them," (Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:10), will, if we stop at it, be of no avail, and will profit us not a whit more than if it were not given, being inaccessible even to the holiest servants of God, who are all far from fulfilling the law, being encompassed with many infirmities. But when the gospel promises are substituted, promises which announce the free pardon of sins, the result is not only that our persons are accepted of God, but his favor also is shown to our works, and that not only in respect that the Lord is pleased with them, but also because he visits them with the blessings which were due by agreement to the observance of his law. I admit, therefore, that the works of the faithful are rewarded with the promises which God gave in his law to the cultivators of righteousness and holiness; but in this reward we should always attend to the cause which procures favor to works. This cause, then, appears to be threefold. First, God turning his eye away from the works of his servants which merit reproach more than praise, embraces them in Christ, and by the intervention of faith alone reconciles them to himself without the aid of works. Secondly the works not being estimated by their own worth, he, by his fatherly kindness and indulgence, honors so far as to give them some degree of value. Thirdly, he extends his pardon to them, not imputing the imperfection by which they are all polluted, and would deserve to be regarded as vices rather than virtues.²⁷

Calvin suggests that some of the blessings of the new covenant are received by obedience to the law; note that according to Calvin, "the blessings which were due by agreement to the observance of his law." However, these benefits are not the result of bare obedience to the law. Rather, these benefits are given only to believers who obey. Calvin's doctrine of the "promises of the law and gospel reconciled" (chapter 17 of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*) follows from his understanding of the continuity between the old and new covenants. Benefits under the

²⁶ John Murray views Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10 in a similar fashion, "Hence the words 'which if a man do, he shall live in them' (vs. 5) refers not to the life accruing from doing in a legalistic framework but to the blessing attendant upon obedience in a redemptive and covenant relationship to God." John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), WORDsearch e-book, 249–250.

²⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.17.3.

old covenant were received because of obedience; therefore, benefits under the new covenant also require obedience. While this obedience is not mere obedience (separated from faith), it is still obedience to the moral law.

The proof of the thesis of the dissertation allows for a clearer understanding of the Mosaic law in redemptive history. Since the new covenant is continuous with the covenant made by Abraham in Genesis 15, not the covenant predicted to Abraham in Gen 17:7–8, the use of the ethical requirements of the old covenant law under the new covenant should be primarily considered under the so-called second use of the law. The second use of the law as defined by Berkhof is the way “that the law awakens the consciousness of the need of redemption.”²⁸ The need to be awakened of the need of redemption is not something only for unbelievers. Believers are in need of constant reminders that they continue to require faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, the very thing the second use of the law can supply. The application for the proof of the thesis is a renewed emphasis on the second use of the law for believers in Jesus Christ.

The place of the conditions of the old covenant, obedience to the Mosaic law, in the Reformed system of covenant continuity is a major reason for the variety of positions in the Reformed tradition of the role of the law for those who partake in the covenant of grace.²⁹ A clear distinction between the gracious unilateral covenant made by YHWH in Genesis 15 and the prediction of a future covenant in Gen 17:7–8 helps to place the Mosaic law in a subservient role to the covenant of grace.

²⁸ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 615.

²⁹ See chapter 2 of this dissertation for a survey of the Reformed tradition. Also see Greaves, “John Bunyan and Covenant Thought in the Seventeenth Century,” *Church History* 36 (June 1967) and Benton C. Ferry, “Works in the Mosaic Covenant: A Reformed Taxonomy” in *The Law is not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 76–108.

Since the old covenant is distinct from the new covenant, not simply a different administration of the one covenant of grace, obedience to the law should be viewed as having a different use for those who are participants in the new covenant. This also means the rejection of covenant nomism and theonomy. For those who are partakers of the benefits of the new covenant, the law plays no role in receiving those benefits. The only requirement for receiving the benefits of the new covenant is possession of God's gift of faith. Salvation is a unilateral gift of God from beginning to end.³⁰ Any type of obedience to the law is a benefit of the new covenant, not a requirement to fully partake of the benefits of the new covenant.³¹

Areas for Further Study

Because the entirety of the OT for the Christian faith is a testimony to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44–46; John 5:39), and the historical context and fulfillment of the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7–8 pertains to ancient Israel as a historical geopolitical theocracy, the place of this prediction as it involves Jesus Christ requires further study. This further study would go beyond a simple explanation of how the theocratic nation that was established, when the prediction of Gen 17:7–8 was fulfilled in Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 26, formally constituted the people through whom God would continue to reveal himself through special revelation (Rom 3:2). In addition, this further study would go beyond demonstrating how salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22) as they played a role in producing the promised seed of the woman (Gen 3:15, Matt 1:1). A Christological study of Gen 17:7–8 would go beyond the passage's place in redemptive history.

³⁰ Rom 1:16, Gal 3:2–3.

³¹ The NT does not endorse lawlessness. Many old covenant moral laws are reiterated in the NT along with imperatives to obey these laws. However, obedience to the reiteration of the old covenant moral law in the NT is by no means a requirement to receive the benefits of the new covenant, unlike the old covenant.

God's choice to use Abraham's physical descendants to bring about blessing to the world through the Mosaic covenant is a historical fact made plain in the prophecies of the OT (Gen 49:10, Isa 49:6), which the NT confirms happened through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Two particular areas for further study concern the place of Genesis 17 in the history of redemption. The first would be to investigate the function of Gen 17:6–8 in redemptive history in the narrative of the promise of a messiah under the OT and the record of the messiah's arrival in the NT. The second is to examine the Christological fulfillment of Gen 17:6–8.

These two areas of further study would benefit the understanding of the Christian church's understanding of covenant theology by emphasizing the role of both early redemptive revelation and canonical scripture in accomplishing God's ultimate purpose of revelation and canon, redemption through Jesus Christ. This type of investigation provides opportunity to better understand the unity of redemptive history, revelation, and canon found in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Role of Genesis 17:6–8 in Redemptive History

The proof of this thesis requires that the traditional/majority view of Gen 17:6–8 be jettisoned.³² While Genesis 17 should not be considered part of the one Abrahamic covenant, it is significant for the Abrahamic covenant established in Genesis 15. Genesis 17:6–8 connects the Mosaic covenant closely to the Abrahamic covenant without uniting them. A common opinion among theologians who hold to a trichotomous view of covenant theology is that the Mosaic covenant is some sort of republication of the covenant of works. In the context of the use of the Mosaic

³² Above, it was argued that the proof of this thesis better supports the Particular Baptists' understanding of the new covenant. Even though Particular Baptists have held to the traditional view, functionally they have formulated their new covenant practice in a way consistent with the thesis of this dissertation.

covenant as subservient to the covenant of grace, further study on the chronology/temporality of the Mosaic covenant, as predicted in Gen 17:7–8, would be beneficial.

In chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, the use of קוּם and כָּרַת in the context of covenant was discussed. A redemptive historical examination of Gen 17:7–8 based on the conclusions of this dissertation could examine in more detail the use of קוּם in the context of establishing a covenant; investigating how a covenant, which the biblical author uses קוּם to express its establishment, functions in redemptive history to bring to fruition Jesus Christ and the establishment of the new covenant. This further study would consider if the proposal of this dissertation about the use of קוּם is consistent with a redemptive-historical view of revelation.³³

Christological Fulfillment of Genesis 17:6–8

Further study on the typological fulfillment of Gen 17:6–8 in Israel’s Egyptian captivity, Sinai covenant, and conquest of the Promised Land³⁴ as finding eschatological fulfillment in the salvation of God’s elect in Jesus Christ is warranted. The similarity in language and concepts between the historical fulfillment of the predictions and the NT’s authors’ description of believers and salvation is noteworthy. Examining the four things in the historical fulfillment of Gen 17:6–8, the following are examples of the similarities. Part of the historical fulfillment of Gen 17:6 was the increase of Abraham’s physical descendants during their Egyptian captivity (Exod 1:7). Those who are partakers of salvation in Jesus Christ are described as “a great crowd, which no was able to number” (Rev 7:9).³⁵ The result of the predicted covenant of Gen 17:7–8

³³ See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

³⁴ See chapter 5 of this dissertation for discussion of the historical fulfillment of the predictions found in Gen 17:6–8.

³⁵ ὄχλος πολύς, ὃν ἀριθμησαὶ αὐτὸν οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο.

was that YHWH would be God to Abraham and his descendants. The Mosaic covenant established at Mount Sinai brought this to realization. This language is used twice in the NT to speak about believers under the new covenant (2 Cor 6:16, Rev 21:3). The historical possession of the Promised Land by ancient Israel is spoken of as the possession of a land of abundance (Deut 27:3; Neh 9:25), and the place where God dwells with his people in a special manner (Num 35:34). A similar imagery is found in Revelation 21–22. Further study on how Gen 17:6–8 is Christologically fulfilled through participation in the new covenant could demonstrate how this text directly testifies to Christ by tracing and examining these similarities.

Conclusion

The idea of covenant is important for correctly understanding God’s redemption in Christ Jesus. Throughout the history of the church, how YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham have been interpreted have been important for understanding the biblical covenants. While this dissertation does not bring with it a new soteriology, it does better ground many of the doctrines and practices held by Particular Baptists while providing those in the orthodox Reformed tradition a contrary perspective to their own to consider for the refinement or abandonment of their position. God has chosen to deal with humanity by means of covenants; therefore, understanding those covenants is essential. As demonstrated in this dissertation, the Abrahamic covenant is central to salvation that comes through the new covenant in Jesus Christ. If covenants, in general, are significant for understanding how God deals with humanity, how much more does the quote of nineteenth-century Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon that opened this dissertation about “the Divine covenant” apply to the correct understanding of the covenants established and promised during YHWH’s covenantal dealings with Abraham? “The Doctrine of the Divine covenant lies at the root of all true theology. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes

which men make concerning the Doctrines of the scripture are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and of grace.”³⁶

³⁶ Charles Spurgeon, “The Wondrous Covenant,” Sermon 3326 in *Spurgeon’s Sermons* Vol 58, <https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons58/sermons58.xliv.html>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abernethy, Andrew T. *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom: A Thematic Theological Approach*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 40. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016.
- Alexander, T Desmond. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- _____. "Genesis 22 and the covenant of Circumcision." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 8, no. 25 (February 1983): 17–22.
- Alford, Henry. *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Guardian Press, 1976.
- Alster, Baruch. "Narrative Surprise in Biblical Parallels." *Biblical Interpretation* 14, no. 5 (2006): 456–85.
- Assis, Elie. "The Position and Function of Jos 22 in the Book of Joshua." *ZAW* 116, no. 4 (2004): 528–41.
- Avioz, Michael. "Josiah's Death in the Book of Kings: A New Solution to an old Theological Conundrum." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 83, no. 4 (December 2007): 359–66.
- Baker, J. Wayne. "Heinrich Bullinger, the Covenant, and the Reformed Tradition in Retrospect." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29:2 (Summer 1998): 359–376.
- Ball, John. *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*. London, UK: Simeon Ash, 1645.
- Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 1: Prolegomena*. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Beale, G. K. *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Beale, G. K, and D. A Carson. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Beckwith, Roger T. "The Unity and Diversity of God's Covenants." *Tyndale Bulletin* 38 (1987): 93–118.
- Bediako, Daniel Kwame, and Elijah Baidoo. "The Covenant of Abraham: Relationship between Genesis 15 and 17." *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 2 (2012): 1–12.

- Beeke, Joel R, and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology: Study Guide*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016.
- Belcher, Richard P. *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology*. Fearn, UK: Mentor, 2020.
- Ben-Dov, Jonathan. "Writing as Oracle and as Law: New Contexts for the Book-Find of King Josiah." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 223–39.
- Ben-Tor, Amnon, and Maria Teresa Rubiato. "Excavating Hazor, Part Two: Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25, no. 3 (1999): 22, 24–29, 31–36, 38–39.
- Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Berman, Joshua. "CTH 133 and the Hittite Provenance of Deuteronomy 13." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 25–44.
- Bierma, Lyle D. "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?" *WTJ* 45 (1983): 304–321.
- _____. "The Role of Covenant Theology in Early Reformed Orthodoxy." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 453–462.
- Bird, Benedict. "The Covenant of Redemption According to John Owen and Patrick Gillespie." *Foundations* 70 (May 2016): 5–30.
- Block, Daniel I. "What Do These Stones Mean? The Riddle of Deuteronomy 27." *JETS* 56, no. 1 (2013): 17–41.
- Block, Daniel Isaac. *The Gospel According to Moses*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019.
- _____. *The Triumph of Grace: Literary and Theological Studies in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic Themes*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.
- Block, Daniel Isaac, and Alan R. Millard. *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology*. 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013.
- Bolton, Samuel. *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*. Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978.
- Booth, Abraham. *An Essay on the Kingdom of Christ*. London: Public Domain, 1811.
- Bozeman, Theodore Dwight. "Federal Theology and the 'National Covenant': An Elizabethan Presbyterian Case Study." *Church History* 61, no. 4 (December 1992): 394–407.

- Boston, Thomas. *A View of the Covenant of Grace*. Choteau, MT: Old Paths Gospel Press, 2010.
- Brimson, John. "The Origins of Israel in Canaan: An Examination of Recent Theories." *Themelios* 15.1 (October 1989): 4–15.
- Brown, Michael G. "Christ and the Condition: Samuel Petto (c. 1624–1711) on the Mosaic Covenant." *MAJT* 20 (2009): 131–157.
- Browning, Daniel C, Jr. "'The Hill Country Is Not Enough for Us': Recent Archaeology and The Book of Joshua." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 41, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 25–43.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Book of the Acts*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988.
- _____. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984.
- _____. *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982.
- Bruno, Chris, Jared Compton, and Kevin M McFadden. *Biblical Theology According to the Apostles: How the Earliest Christians Told the Story of Israel*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020.
- Brueggemann, Walter. "The God of Joshua...Give or Take the Land: A Journal of Bible and Theology." *Interpretation* 66, no. 2 (May 2012): 164–175.
- Burton, Ernest DeWitt. *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1900.
- _____. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*. New York, NY: C Scribner's Sons, 1920.
- Caneday, Ardel. "Redeemed from the Curse of the law: The Use of Deuteronomy 21:22–23 in Galatians 3:13." *Trinity Journal* 10 (1989): 185–209.
- Calvin, Jean. *Calvin's Commentaries*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009.
- _____. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009.
- Camp, Ashby L. "Reexamining the Rule of Concord in Acts 2:38." *Restoration Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1997): 37–42.

- Campbell, Constantine R. *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Campbell, K. M. "covenant or Testament? Heb. 9: 16, 17 Reconsidered." *The Evangelical Quarterly* (July 1972):107–11.
- Carson, D.A. "Worship Under the Word." In *Worship by the Book*, edited. by Mark Ashton, R. Kent Hughes, and Timothy J. Keller, 11–63. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- Carson, D. A., and Douglas J. Moo. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.
- Chalmers, Aaron. "The Importance of the Noahic Covenant to Biblical Theology." *Tyndale Bulletin* 60, no. 2 (2009): 207–18.
- Chen, Carol Man Fen. "A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Interpretation of Covenants: Unconditionality and Conditionality in Relation to Justification and Sanctification." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019.
- Cherry, C. Conrad. "The Puritan Notion of the Covenant in Jonathan Edwards' Doctrine of Faith." *Church History* 34, no. 3 (September 1965): 328–341.
- Chisholm, Robert B., Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- _____. *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006.
- Chou, Abner. *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018.
- Christensen, Duane. *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*. Word Biblical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.
- _____. *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*. Word Biblical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.
- Clark, R. Scott. *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant: The Double Benefit of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008.
- Colautti, Federico Moises. "Rom 3:21 and the Deuteronomistic Theology of the ברית (Berith)." *Estudios Biblicos* 70 (2012): 497–519.
- Cole, R. A. *Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary*. 2nd ed. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Vol. 9. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008.
- Collins, Hercules. *Believers Baptism from Heaven*. London, UK: J. Hancock, 1691.

- Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. NICOT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976.
- _____. *Jeremiah 1–25*. Vol. 26. Word Biblical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.
- Cranfield, C. E. B. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Volume 1*. London, UK: T & T Clark, 2011.
- Crook, Zeba. “The Divine Benefactions of Paul the Client.” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* (2001–2005): 9–26.
- Crouse, Robert C. “Two Kingdoms and Two Cities: Mapping Theological Traditions of Church, Culture, and Civil Order.” PhD diss., Wheaton College, 2016.
- Crowe, Brandon D. *The Message of the General Epistles in the History of Redemption: Wisdom from James, Peter, John, and Jude*. 1st ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015.
- Currid, John D. *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Dabney, Robert L. *Systematic Theology*. Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985.
- Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, and William Arndt. *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Davis, John P. “Who Are the Heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29, no. 2 (April 2005): 149–63.
- Dean, David Andrew. “Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant.” *JETS* 57, no. 2 (June 2014): 281–308.
- Dempster, Stephen G. *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 15. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- Denault, Pascal, Mac Wigfield, and Elizabeth Wigfield. *The Distinctiveness of Baptist covenant theology: A Comparison between Seventeenth–Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism*. Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013.
- Denlinger, Aaron Clay. “Robert Rollock on Covenant and Sacrament: Two Texts.” *Reformation Renaissance Review* 15, no. 2 (July 2013): 199–211.

- Derouchie, Jason, S. "Father of a Multitude of Nations: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective." In *Progressive covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, edited by Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, 7–38. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.
- _____. "The Blessing–Commission, The Promised Offspring, And the Toledot Structure of Genesis." *JETS* 56, no. 2 (2013): 219–247.
- DeSilva, David Arthur. *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014.
- Dillard, Raymond B., and Tremper Longman. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
- Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Dumbrell, W. J. *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology*. Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2013.
- Dumbrell, William J. "Creation, Covenant and Work." *Crux* 24, no. 3 (September 1988): 14–24.
- _____. "Genesis 2:1–3: Biblical Theology of Creation Covenant." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25, no. 4 (2001): 219–230.
- Dunham, Kyle C. "Yahweh War and Herem: The Role of Covenant, Land, and Purity in the Conquest of Canaan." *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 21 (2016): 7–30.
- Dunn, James D. G. *The New Perspective on Paul*. Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Elbert, Paul. "Acts 2:38 in Light of the Syntax of Imperative–Future Passive and Imperative–Present Participle Combinations." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75 (2013): 94–107.
- Ellis, Earle. "Perspectives on Biblical Interpretation: A Review Article." *JETS* 45, no. 3 (September 2002): 473–95.
- Emerson, Everett H. "Calvin and Covenant Theology." *Church History* 25, no. 2 (June 1956): 136–144.
- Essex, Keith. "The Abrahamic Covenant." *MSJ* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 191–212.
- Estelle, Bryan D., J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen, eds. *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009.
- Feldman, Louis H. "Josephus' Portrait of Manasseh." *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 9 (October 1991): 3–20.

- Ferry, Brenton C. "Works in the Moasic Covenant: A Reformed Taxonomy," in *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic covenant*, edited by Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen, 76–108. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009.
- Fesko, J.V. "Calvin and Witsius on the Mosaic Covenant," in *The law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, edited by Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen, 25–43. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009.
- Fisher, Edward. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. London: Franklin Classics Publishing, 2018.
- Fullilove, William B. "1–2 Kings." In *A Biblical–Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*, edited by Miles V. Van Pelt, 223–246. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- Gane, Roy. *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Gentry, Peter John, and Stephen J. Wellum. *God's Kingdom Through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm, E. Kautzsch, and A. E. Cowley. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1910.
- Gibson, David. "'Fathers of Faith, My Fathers Now!': On Abraham, Covenant, and the Theology of Paedobaptism." *Themelios* 40, no. 1 (2015): 14-34.
- Golding, Peter. *Covenant Theology: The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition*. Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2004.
- Goldingay, John. *The Book of Jeremiah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021.
- _____. *The Theology of Jeremiah: The Book, the Man, the Message*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021.
- Goswell, Gregory. "The Macro–Structural Role of the Former Prophets and The Historical Books in Old Testament Canons." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63, no. 3 (2020): 455–471.
- _____. "Two Testaments in Parallel: The Influence of The Old Testament on The Structuring of The New Testament Canon." *JETS* 56, no. 3 (September 2013): 459–74.
- _____. "The Two Testaments as covenant Documents." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62, no. 4 (December 2019): 677–92.

- Gray, Richard, A. "A Comparison Between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant." *WTJ* 4, no. 1 (November 1941): 1–30.
- Greaves, Richard L. "John Bunyan and Covenant thought in the Seventh Century." *Church History* 36, no. 2 (June 1967): 151–169.
- Greener, Aaron. "Archaeology and Religion in Later Bronze Age Canaan." *Religions* (2019): 1–17.
- Gribben, Crawford. "Defining the Puritans? The Baptism Debate in Cromwellian Ireland, 1654–56." *Church History* 73, no. 1 (March 2004): 63–89.
- Grisanti, M. A. "Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the OT Canon: The Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of scripture." *JETS* 44, no.4: 577–91.
- Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- Gromacki, Gary. "The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant." *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 77–119.
- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981.
- Hagen, Kenneth. "From Testament to Covenant in the Early Sixteenth Century." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 3, no. 1 (April 1972): 1–24.
- Haldane, J. A. *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians*. Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2002.
- Hallo, William W. "The Road to Emar," *JCS* 18 (1964): 57–88.
- Halpern, Baruch. "Why Manasseh Is Blamed for the Babylonian Exile: The Evolution of a Biblical Tradition." *Vetus Testamentum* 48, no. 4 (October 1998): 473–514.
- Hamilton, James M. *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1 – 17*. NICOT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006.
- _____. *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18 – 50*. NICOT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Harris, Dana M. *Hebrews*. Edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2019.
- Harris, Murray J. *Colossians and Philemon*. EGGNT. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013.

- _____. *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Harris, R Laird. "Chronicles and the Canon in New Testament Times." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33, no. 1 (March 1990): 75–84.
- Harvey, John D. *Romans*. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017.
- Hasegawa, Shuichi. "Josiah's Death: Its Reception History as Reflected in the Books of Kings and Chronicles." *ZAW* 129, no. 4 (2017): 522–35.
- Hays, J Daniel. "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him? Narrative Subtlety in 1 Kings 1–11." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28, no. 2 (December 2003): 149–74.
- Hendriksen, William. *Galatians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1968.
- Hess, Richard S. *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Hewitt, J. T. "Ancient Messiah Discourse and Paul's Expression ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα in Galatians 3.19." *New Testament Studies*, 65, no. 3: 398–411.
- Hillers, Delbert R. *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea*. 5. Seminars in the History of Ideas. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1977.
- Hodge, Charles, *Systematic Theology*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner and Co., 1871.
- _____. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. New York, NY: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1893.
- Hoff, Nathan N. "One Gospel: Paul's use of the Abraham Story in Romans 4:1–25." PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2018.
- Holladay, William Lee, and Ludwig Köhler. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based Upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971.
- Holladay, William Lee, and Paul D. Hanson. *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52*. Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989.
- Hoppe, Leslie J. "The Strategy of the Deuteronomistic History: A Proposal." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (January 2017): 1–19.

- Horner, Timothy J. "Justin's Mission to the Jews." *The Covenant Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (November 1998): 33–44.
- Horton, Michael. *Introducing Covenant Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009.
- Hulbert, W G. "Good King and Bad King: Traditions about Manasseh in the Bible and Late Second Temple Judaism." *Stone–Campbell Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 71–81.
- Hutchinson, Edward. *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism*. London, UK: Francis Smith, 1676.
- Hutzli, Jü. "The Literary Relationship between I–II Samuel and I–II Kings. Considerations Concerning the Formation of the Two Books." *ZAW* 122, no. 4 (2010): 505–19.
- Janzen, David. "The Sins of Josiah and Hezekiah: A Synchronic Reading of the Final Chapters of Kings." *JSOT* no. 3 (March 2013): 349–70.
- Jeffers, Neil G.T. "'And Their Children After Them': A Response to Reformed Baptist Readings of Jeremiah's New Covenant Promises." *Ecclesia Reformanda* 9, no.2 (2009): 125–152.
- Jeon, Jeong Koo. *Calvin and the Federal Vision: Calvin's Covenant Theology in Light of Contemporary Discussion*. Eugene, OR: Resource, 2009.
- _____. "The Abrahamic Covenant and the Kingdom of God." *The Confessional Presbyterian* 7 (2011): 123–142.
- Jewett, Paul King. *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978.
- Johnson, Elliott. "Does Hebrews Have a Covenant Theology?" *MSJ* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 31–54.
- Johnson, Jeffrey D. *The Fatal Flaw of the Theology Behind Infant Baptism & covenantal Dichotomism : Continuity and Discontinuity of the Divine Covenants*. Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2010.
- Kaiser, Walter C. *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age Through the Jewish Wars*. Nashville, TN: B&H, 1998.
- _____. "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34," *JETS* 15, no. 1: 11–23.
- Karlberg, Mark W. *Covenant Theology in Reformed Perspective: Collected Essays and Book Reviews in Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000.

- _____. "Legitimate Discontinuities Between the Testaments." *JETS* 28, no. 1 (March, 1986): 9–20.
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975.
- Keown, Gerald, Pamela Scalize, and Thomas Smothers. *Jeremiah 1–25*. Vol. 26. WBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.
- Kim, Illnam. "The Question of Conditional Features in the Abrahamic Covenant." PhD. diss., Mid–America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011.
- Kittel, G. and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–76.
- Kline, Meredith G. *Genesis: A New Commentary*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016.
- _____. "Gospel Until the law: Rom 5:13–14 and the Old Covenant." *JETS* 34, no. 4 (December 1991): 433–446.
- _____. *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006.
- _____. "The Intrusion and the Decalogue." *WTJ* 16, no. 1 (November 1953): 1–22.
- _____. *The Structure of Biblical Authority*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997.
- Kline, Meredith M. "Meredith G. Kline on Covenant, Community, and Canon." *Unio Cum Christo* (April 2016): 12–25.
- Krause, Joachim J. "Circumcision and Covenant in Genesis 17." *Biblica* 99, no. 2 (2018): 151–165.
- Lalleman–de Winkel, H. *Jeremiah and Lamentations*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013.
- Lane Daniel C. "Some Difficulties in Covenant Theology's View of Baptism as a 'Seal.'" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (April–June 2008): 164–89.
- Langston, Scott M. "Reading the Book of Joshua." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 41, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 7–24.
- Leder, Arie C. *Waiting for the Land: The Story Line of the Pentateuch*. Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R, 2010.
- Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, Editors. *A Greek–English*

- Lexicon*. 9th ed. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1996.
- Levinson, Bernard M. and Jeffrey Stackert. "Between the Covenant Code and Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty." *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 3: 123–140.
- Lillback, Peter A. *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*. Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- _____. "The Continuing Conundrum: Calvin and the Conditionality of the Covenant." *CTJ* 29 (1994): 42–74.
- Linebaugh, Jonathan A. "The Christo-Centrism of Faith in Christ: Martin Luther's Reading of Galatians 2:16, 19–20." *New Testament Studies* 59: 535–44.
- Longacre, Robert E., and Andrew C. Bowling. *Understanding Biblical Hebrew Verb Forms: Distribution and Function across Genres*. Dallas: SIL International, 2015.
- Longenecker, Richard N. *Galatians*. WBC. Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 2017.
- Louw, J. P., and Eugene A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989.
- Lundbom, Jack R. *Jeremiah: Prophet like Moses*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015.
- _____. *Jeremiah: Prophet like Moses*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015.
- _____. "Rhetorical Structure in Jeremiah 1." *ZAW* 103, no. 2 (1991): 193–210.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works. 3: Lectures on Genesis: Chap. 15–20*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1961.
- Macedo, Breno. "Covenant theology in the Thought of John Calvin: From the Covenant of Works to the Abrahamic Covenant." *Fides Reformation* 20, no. 1 (2015), 89–105.
- _____. "Covenant Theology in the Thought of John Calvin: From the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant." *Fides Reformation* 21, no. 1 (2016), 121–148.
- _____. "Covenant theology in the Thought of John Calvin: From the Covenant of Works to the Abrahamic Covenant." *Fides Reformation* 20, no. 1 (2015): 89–105.
- MacNamara, Martin. *Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament*. Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1983.
- Maier, Christl M. "Jeremiah as YHWH's Stronghold." *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 4 (2014): 640–53.

- Malone, Fred A. *The Baptism of Disciples Alone: A Covenantal Argument for Credobaptism Versus Paedobaptism*. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2003.
- Markl, Dominik. “No Future without Moses: The Disastrous End of 2 Kings 22–25 and the Chance of the Moab covenant (Deuteronomy 29–30).” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 4 (2014): 711–28.
- Martin, Oren R. *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God’s Redemptive Plan*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 34. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- _____. “The Land Promise Biblical and Theologically Understood.” In *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, edited by Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, 255–274. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.
- Martin, T. W. “The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9–14) and the Situational Antitheses in Galatians 3:28.” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 122, no. 1: 111–125.
- Mayo, Jim. “Covenant in Ezekiel.” *Restoration Quarterly* 16, no. 1: 23–31.
- McCarthy, Dennis J. *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions*. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1972.
- McComiskey, Thomas E. *Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019.
- McConville, J. G. “1 Kings VIII 46–53 and the Deuteronomic Hope.” *Vetus Testamentum* 42, no. 1 (January 1992): 67–79.
- McGiffert, Michael. “Covenant, Crown, and Commons in Elizabethan Puritanism.” *Journal of British Studies* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 32–52.
- _____. “From Moses to Adam: The Making of the Covenant of Works.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 131–155.
- _____. “Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Divinity in Elizabethan Puritanism.” *The Harvard Theological Review* 75, no. 4 (October 1982): 463–502.
- McGraw, Ryan M. “The Threats of the Gospel: John Owen on What the Law/Gospel Distinction is Not.” *CTJ* 51 (2016): 79–111.
- McIntyre, Luther B. Jr. “Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (January–March 1996): 53–62.
- McKenzie, Steven L. *Introduction to the Historical Books: Strategies for Reading*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.

- McNamara, Martin. *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.
- _____. *Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament*. Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1983.
- Mendenhall, George E. "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17, no. 3 (September 1954): 49–76.
- _____. "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 25, no. 3 (September 1962): 65–87.
- Mendenhall, George E., and Gary A. Herion. *Ancient Israel's Faith and History: An Introduction to the Bible in Context*. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Merkle, Benjamin L. *Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.
- Merrill, Eugene H. "The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles." In *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, edited by Eugene Merrill and Mark Rooker. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011.
- _____. "The Books of 1 and 2 Kings." In *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, edited by Eugene Merrill and Mark Rooker. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The Gospel of John*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Mitchell, Christine. "The Ironic Death of Josiah in 2 Chronicles." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (July 2006): 421–35.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Morris, Leon. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986.
- Mounce, Robert H. *Romans*. The American Commentary Series. Nashville, TN.: B&H, 1995.
- Muller, Richard A. "The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus A Brackel." *CTJ* 29 (1994): 75–101.
- Murray, John. *Collected Writings of John Murray. Vol. 2*. Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977.
- _____. *The Covenant of Grace: A Biblico–Theological Study*. London, UK: Tyndale Press, 1953.

- _____. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Vol 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.
- _____. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Vol 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Na'aman, Nadav. "The 'Discovered Book' and the Legitimation of Josiah's Reform." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 47–62.
- Nicholson, Ernest W. *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Nicole, Roger. "Covenant, Universal Call and Definite Atonement." *JETS* 38, no. 3 (September 1995): 403–12.
- Niehaus, Jeffrey Jay. *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2008.
- _____. "An Argument Against Theologically Constructed Covenants." *JETS* 50, no. 2 (June 2007): 259–73,
- Niehaus, Jeffrey Jay. *Biblical Theology: Volume 2, The Special Grace Covenant (Old Testament)*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014.
- _____. "Covenant: An Idea in The Mind Of God." *JETS* 52, no. 2 (June 2009): 225–46.
- _____. "Covenant and Narrative, God and Time." *JETS* 53, no. 3 (September 2010): 535–59.
- Noll, K L. "Deuteronomistic History or Deuteronomic Debate?: (A Thought Experiment)." *JSOT* 31, no. 3 (March 2007): 311–45.
- Ohm, Andrew Taehang. "Manasseh and the Punishment Narrative." *Tyndale Bulletin* 61, no. 2 (2010): 237–54.
- Olanrewaju, Joseph and Robert Osei-Bonsu. "Infant Baptism: Evaluation of Calvin's Argument." *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 2 (2012): 13–30.
- old, Hughes Oliphant. *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Ortlund, Dane C. "Is Jeremiah 33:14–26 a 'Centre' to the Bible? A Test Case in Inter-Canonical Hermeneutics." *The Evangelical Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (April 2012): 119–38.
- Ortlund, Gavin. "Why Not Grandchildren? An Argument against Reformed Paedobaptism." *Themelios* 45, no. 2 (2020): 333–46.

Owen, John. "An Exposition of Hebrews 8:6–13." in *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ*, ed. Ronald D. Miller, Loc. 2413–5202, Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005.

_____. *Biblical Theology: The History of Theology from Adam to Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009.

_____. *Justification by Faith*. Louisville, KY: GLH Publishing, 2019.

_____. *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William Henry Gould. Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965.

Pao, David W. *Colossians & Philemon*. ZECNT. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Parker, Brent Evan. "The Israel–Christ–Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017.

Patient, Thomas. *The Doctrine of Baptism and the Distinction of the Covenants*. London, UK: Henry Hills, 1654.

Perkins, Harrison. "Reconsidering the Development of the Covenant of Works: A Study in Doctrinal Trajectory." *CTJ* (2018): 289–316.

Petto, Samuel. *Great Mystery of the Covenant of Grace: The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant... Stated and Explained*. Port St. Lucie, FL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2020.

Pikor, Wojciech. "A Prophet as a Witness to His Call: A Narrative Key to Reading of Prophetic Call Narratives." *Scripta Theologica* 52, no. 1 (April 2020); 73–95.

Porter, Stanley E. *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought, and Letters*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016.

_____. *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015.

Poythress, Vern S. *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1995.

Pratt, Richard L. Jr. "1–2 Chronicles." In *A Biblical–Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*, edited by Miles V. Van Pelt, 525–542. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Rata, Cristian G. "The Canaanite Landscape during the Late Bronze Age." *Canon & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2012): 39–68.

- Renihan, Samuel D. *The Mystery of Christ: His Covenant and His Kingdom*. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2019.
- _____. *From Shadow to Substance: The Federal Theology of the English Particular Baptists (1642–1704)*. Oxford, UK: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2018.
- Rehman, Sebastian. “Is the Narrative of Redemptive History Trichotomous or Dichotomous? A Problem for Federal Theology.” *Dutch Review of Church History* 80, no. 3 (October–December 2010): 297–308.
- Ridderbos, Herman N. *The Coming of the Kingdom*. Translated by H. de Jongste. Edited by Raymond O. Zorn. St. Catharines, ON: Paideia Press, 1978.
- _____. *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. Translated by John Richard de Witt. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975.
- _____. *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology*. Jordan Stanton, ON: Paideia Press, 1982 edition.
- Robertson, O. Palmer. “Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text.” *WTJ* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 259–90.
- _____. *The Christ of the Covenants*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1985.
- Robson, James E. *Deuteronomy 1–11. A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016.
- Rogers, Cleon L., Cleon L. Rogers, and Fritz Rienecker. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- Rolston, Holmes. “Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin Versus The Westminster Confession.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1970): 129–156.
- Rom–Shiloni, Dalit. “On the day I took them out of the land of Egypt’: A Non–Deuteronomic Phrase within Jeremiah’s Concept of Covenant.” *Vetus Testamentum*, 65, no. 4 (2015): 621–647.
- Ross, Allen P. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996.
- Rooker, Mark F. “The Book of Jeremiah.” In *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, edited by Eugene Merrill and Mark Rooker. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011.
- Runge, Steven E. *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010.

- Sanders, E. P. "Covenantal Nomism Revisited" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (2009): 23–55.
- Sailhamer, John H. *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.
- Sailhamer, John. *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Salter, Martin. "The Abrahamic Covenant in Reformed Baptist Perspective." *Themelios* 40, no.1 (2015): 35–49.
- Saucy, Robert L. *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993.
- Schaff, Phillip. *History of the Christian Church, Volume IV: Medieval Christianity, A.D. 590–1073*. Grand Rapids, MI: CCEL, 2009.
- Scheffler, Eben. "Jericho: From Archaeology Challenging the Canon to Searching for the Meaning(s) of Myth(s)." *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 1–10.
- Schniedewind, William M. "History and Interpretation: The Religion of Ahab and Manasseh in the Book of Kings." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (October 1993): 649–61.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *Galatians*. ZECNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- _____. *Romans*. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.
- Schrock, David. "What Designates a Valid Type? A Christotelic, Covenant Proposal." *Southeastern Theological Review* 5, no. 1 (2014): 3–26.
- Sergi, Omer. "The Formation of Israelite Identity in the Central Canaanite Highlands in the Iron Age I—IIA." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 82.21 (2019): 42–51.
- Seufert, Michael J. "A Walk They Remembered: Covenant Relationship as Journey in the Deuteronomistic History." *Biblical Interpretation* 25, no. 2 (2017): 149–71.
- Shearer, Graham. "Covenant, Creation and Children: A Response to David Gibson's Critique of Credobaptism." *Themelios* 42, no. 3 (2017): 465–76.
- Silva, Moisés. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- _____. *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.

- Smith, Gary. *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014.
- Smith, Gary V. *Prophets as Preachers: An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998.
- Smith, Mark S. "A New Proposal for the Crux of Isa 42:6." *JBL* 100, no. 2 (June 1981): 241–243.
- Spellman, Ched. *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2020.
- Spicq, Ceslas. *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. 3 vols. Translated and edited by James D. Ernest. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Strawbridge, Gregg, ed. *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003.
- Steffaniak, Jordan L. "Reforming Credobaptism: A Westminster Alternative for Reformed Baptist Identity." *JBTS* 4, no. 2 (2019): 280–300.
- Swanson, Dennis M. "Expansion of Jerusalem in Jer 31:38–40: Never, Already or Not Yet?" *MSJ* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 17–34.
- Taylor, John E P. "Paul: A New Moses for a New Covenant Obedience." *Churchman* 132, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 51–69.
- _____. "Moses and Old Covenant Obedience." *Churchman* 131, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 343–59.
- Taylor, Larry M. "Theological Themes in the Book of Joshua." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 41, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 70–85.
- Terblanche, Marius D. "The Future in the Land belongs to us: Conflicting Perceptions on the Land in Jeremiah 32:1–44 (LXX 39:1–44)." *Old Testament Essays* 33, no. 1 (2020): 107–124.
- Thielman, Frank. *Romans*. ZECNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.
- Thayer, Joseph H. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York, NY: American Book Co., 1889.
- Thompson, Alan J. *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*. NSBT 27. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011.
- Thompson, Thomas L. "Jerusalem as the City of God's Kingdom: Common Tropes in the Bible and the Ancient Near East." *Islamic Studies* 40, no. 3–4 (2001): 631–47.

- Timmer, Daniel C. "Joshua." In *Biblical–Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*. Edited by Miles V. Van Pelt, 159–76. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- Tolmie, F. D. "Tendencies in the Interpretation of Galatians 3:28 Since 1990." *Acta Theologica* 34: 105–129.
- Trueman, Carl. "From Calvin to Gillespie on Covenant: Mythological Excess or an Exercise in Doctrinal Development?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 4 (October 2019): 378–397.
- Ulrich, Dean R. "Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Tension Regarding a Changed Heart in Deuteronomy." *JETS* 64, no. 3 (September 2021): 453–69.
- van de Beek, Abraham. "Moses, Elijah, and Jesus: Reflections on the Basic Structures of the Bible." *In Die Skriflig* 46, no. 1 (2012): 1–7.
- Van der Merwe, Christo H. J., J. A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- van der Veen, Peter, Christoffer Thesis, and Manfred Gorg. "Israel in Canaan (Long) Before Pharaoh Merenptah? A Fresh Look at Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief 21687." *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 2, no. 4 (November 2010): 15–25.
- Vallance, Edward. "'An Holy and Sacramentall Paction': Federal Theology and the Solemn League and covenant in England." *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 465 (February 2001): 50–75.
- Vander Hart, Mark D. "Creation and Covenant: A Survey of the Dominion Mandate in the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants." *MAJT* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 3–18.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J., Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. London, UK: SPCK, 2005.
- VanGemeren, Willem. *A Guide to Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: The Introductory Articles from the New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999.
- _____. *Interpreting the Prophetic Word: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Vasholz, Robert I. "The Character of Israel's Future in Light of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants." *Trinity Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 39–59.
- Venema, Cornelis P. *Christ + Covenant Theology: Essays on Election, Republication, and the Covenants*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017.

- _____. “The Mosaic covenant: A ‘Republican’ of the Covenant of Works? A Review Article: The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant.” *MAJT* (2010): 35–101.
- Visser, Derk. “The covenant in Zacharias Ursinus.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 4 (Winter, 1987): 531–544.
- von Rad, Gerhard. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.
- Von Rohr, John. “Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism.” *Church History* 34, no. 2 (June 1965): 195–203.
- Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology: old and New Testaments*. Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975.
- _____. *The Covenant of Grace*. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant, 2014.
- _____. “The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline,” In *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, edited by Richard B. Gaffin Jr., 3–24. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001.
- Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and Charles Yu. *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. 1st ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael Patrick O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Walvoord, John F. “The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 102, no. 405 (January 1945): 27–36.
- Ware, James P. “Law, Christ, and Covenant: Paul’s Theology of the Law in Romans 3:19–20.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (October 2011): 515–540.
- Warfield, B. B. *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981.
- Waters, Guy Prentiss, ed. *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.
- _____. *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology: A Comparative Analysis*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006.

- Webb, Barry G. *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2008.
- Weeks, Noel. "Admonition and Error in Hebrews." *WTJ* 39, no. 1 (Jan 2003): 72–80.
- Weinfeld, M. "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90, no. 2 (April–June 1970): 184–203.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East." In *Essential Paper on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Frederick E. Greenspan, 69–102. New York: New York University Press, 1991.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1–15*. WBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- _____. *Genesis 16–50*. WBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- Westbrook, Raymond. "Patronage in the Ancient Near East." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 2 (2005): 210–233.
- Williamson Paul R. *Abraham Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- _____. *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*. NSBT 23. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Wiseman, D. J. *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Witherington, Ben. *Isaiah Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017.
- Yadin, Yigael. "Military and Archeological Aspects of the Conquest of Canaan in the Book of Joshua." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 2004): 7–15.
- Yates, Gary. "Jeremiah's Message of Judgment and Hope for God's Unfaithful 'Wife'." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (2010): 144–65.
- _____. "Narrative Parallelism and the 'Jehoiakim Frame': A Reading Strategy for Jeremiah 26–45." *JETS* 48 (2005): 263–81.
- Yee, Peter. "Jeremiah." In *A Biblical–Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*, edited by Miles V. Van Pelt, 277–304. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- Yinger, Kent L. "The Continuing Quest for Jewish Legalism." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19, no. 3 (2009): 375–91.

Zaret, David. "Calvin, Covenant Theology, and the Weber Thesis." *The British Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 3 (Sept 1992): 369–391.