



## *When the righteous is set apart*

*Parashat lech l'cha (3) – Go yourself out*

**Torah:** Berēshith 12:1 tot 17:27

**Haftarah:** Yeshayahu 40:27 tot 41:16

**Apostolic Writings:** Acts 7:1-8

Everyone is aware of the first and second world wars, either from history at school or other sources such as the internet. Students who study Scripture thoroughly will also know about the penultimate war of *Gog and Magog*, as taught in *Yehezqēl* 38 en 39, as well as the follow-up in Revelation 20, something we await with mixed feelings. This is all part of the return of our *Mashiach*, but it will not be a picnic in the park or a barbecue in your boma.

Last week we looked at the Noahide laws and we will encounter it again when we study the ten words *Mosheh* received from *YAH* at *Sinai* (cf. *Berēshith* 9:6; *Mattithyahu* 5:21). One of them coincide with the words of *YAH*:

*Shemoth* 20<sup>13</sup> “You do not murder.”

Scripture teaches us of many wars, in spite of this command, but we must realise that wars are events in which people die during skirmishes, something similar to murder, yet different. The root word of the prohibition we’ve just read to not murder, לֹא תִרְצַח, is רָצַח (*ra-Tzach*), murder, which is described as “the purposeful, premeditated killing (with evil intent) of another person”. No person has the right to wilfully take the life of another person, since only *YAH* may pass judgement. He also has the power to expropriate nations, even to wipe them out, for specific reasons. Many times *YAH* actually commanded the nation of *Yisra’el* to war against other nations (cf. *Shemu’el Aleph* 15:3; *Yehoshua* 4:13) et al). In a similar way *YAH* also orders the death penalty for certain offences (cf. *Shemoth* 21:12, 15; 22:19; *Vayiqra* 20:11). In this way we learn that *YAH* is not against killing, as such, but against murder. War is never pleasant, but many times it is necessary. In this world, filled with sin (cf. *Romans* 3:10-18), war is inevitable. Sometimes wars happen to prevent innocent people from suffering severe damage by evil perpetrators.

We will shortly learn about World War Zero – yes, you read that correctly. The very first world war was captained by the very first Hebrew – *Abram*. However, before getting there, we need to study some culture and history.

The life of *Abraham*, from being called from *Ur* as *Abram*, up until his death, consists of four periods, each of which is started with a heavenly revelation, important enough to be seen as a separate epoch:

- 🏆 the first period starts with his being called from *Ur* to *Kena'an* (*Berēshith* 12-14);
- 🏆 the second period is the promise for a direct descendant and includes the cutting of a covenant (*Berēshith* 15-16);
- 🏆 the third period is when the covenant comes into effect, including his name being changed and the external sign of circumcision (*Berēshith* 17-21);
- 🏆 the fourth period is where *Abraham* is tested and his lifestyle of confidence is found perfect (*Berēshith* 22:1-25:11), a subject we will study next week, if *YAH* allows.

Something else to notice is the continuous use of the tetragrammaton, **יהוה**, in the life of *Abraham*, while he uses the term *Elohim* only on rare occasions when **יהוה**, because of its meaning, would not be fitting. The name **יהוה** is the covenant name and also the reason for using it more often. We should realise that there is a distinguishing meaning between the two terms, especially when later trying to determine the relation between **אֱלֹהִים** (*Ēl sha-Dai*), the Almighty (*Elohim*) that is more than enough and **יהוה**, *Yahuah*, the proper name of our Creator. The former is not only His Name, but also a Characteristic, as we will see shortly.

Most people may be under the impression that *Abram*, his birth name, just indiscriminately and aimlessly left the city of *Haran* after being called by *YAH*. We tend to forget, though, the last part of the command he was given:

*Berēshith* 12 <sup>1</sup>And **יהוה** said to *Abram*, “Go yourself out of your land, from your relatives and from your father’s house, **to a land which I show you**. [emphasis added]

Lacking any equipment to guide his way or distance, but with a firm trust that *YAH* will guide him and his troupe, he started on the road in obedience. We show a map at addendum A with more information. We know very little about conditions of nations and people of the ANE<sup>1</sup>, but they may have had a better understanding of geography than we would grant them. At this stage, we can assume that he knew the direction to take, or that *YAH* had some method of guiding him.

With this extended type of travel, many problems could arise, three of which are the main points to consider:

1. Pregnancy and eventual birth would be difficult with their constant moving;
2. wealth of the traveller decreases rapidly and is also subjected to criminal elements;
3. the traveller’s reputation is at risk, as he is constantly moving amongst foreigners and possibly hostile people.

There is no doubt that *Abram* trusted in the promise made to him by *YAH*. He arrived in *Kena'an* with a large entourage, which would eventually be to his benefit. According to some translations, *Abram* was 75 years old when he left *Haran* (Septuagint *et al*), while the Book of *Yashar* renders it as 50. The latter is probably incorrect, as we will later learn that *Abram* was 86 years old when *Yishma'el* was born and wouldn't have been in the land for a very long period of time. The Book of Jubilees teaches us that *Abram* actually returned to *Kena'an*:

*Jubilees* 13 <sup>26</sup>And Abram went and **returned to the land of Canaan**, according to the word of *YAHWEH*. And *Lot* the son of his brother *Haran* went with him, and Abram was seventy-five years old when he went forth from *Haran* to return to the land of Canaan. [emphasis added]

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1 Antique Near East

Since birth *Abram* was called and set apart, from what we can glean from the book of *Yashar* in ch. 8 onwards. In order to justify his calling, *Abram* would go through ten strenuous trials during his lifetime. The first occurred when he was called from his land of birth. This would mean leaving family and friends behind; he would have to exchange his traditions for that of a new land, where he would also take on a different culture. This reminds us of our own lifestyle, after finding the Way of Truth. Your circle of friends shrinks rapidly, probably changes completely, but some of those may consider you a lunatic. Your family rejects you, although not necessarily openly. However, they do gossip behind your back and like to make cutting remarks, but none of them have the *chutzpah* to confront you directly. They run away, or some chase you away, when a conversation even hints in the direction of matters of faith; some even use ear plugs.

*Abram* is the twentieth generation on earth and it seems that he would actually be fit for the task assigned to him. In obedience *Abram* passes his first test by emigrating; *YAH* appears to him in a vision with the promise that the entire land will be for him and his descendants. The word used here for descendant is זָרַע (*Za-ra*), which means to sow. The “great nation” seems to be emerging, as this *sidrah* started off. As soon as the handbrake of the caravan is pulled up, *Abram* builds an altar for thanksgiving. This is a wonderful attribute, since most people would first like to mark off their territory and start settling in.

He stops about 70 km north of *Yerushalayim*, near where the city of *Shekem* would later be built. The area is between mount *Gerizim* and mount *Ėybal* and later became famous for the nation of *Yisra’Ėl* as this was the first place that *YAH* appeared to *Abram*. Some translations refer in v. 6 to “plain of *Moreh*”, but this is incorrect, as the word אֵלֹן (*e-Lon*) refers to a terebinth tree, even an oak tree, and not a plain. We also see the word מוֹרֶה (*mô-Rêh*) which translates as (male) teacher, hence the reason why most scholars consider this as to have been a place of assembly for pagan rituals. It is therefore not impossible that *Abram* brought this offering also as a cleansing ritual, as he had enough knowledge about pagan rituals in the country he had just left behind.

It is also possibly the reason he moves on to *Luz*, which would later be known as *Bĕyth Ėl* (house of *Ėl*, cf. *Berĕshith* 28:19; 35:15), where he sets up camp between *Bĕyth Ėl* and *Ai* in the east. *Luz* (looz) translates as “to turn away or depart” and was also possibly a pagan place of worship. Once again *Abram* builds an altar, maybe for cleansing the area, but also to bring another offering of thanks to *YAH*. This is where he calls on the actual name of יהוה for the first time. Somehow it seems that he is still uncomfortable in settling fully and moves further south towards the *Negev*, literally the translation of ‘south’. The problem with this area, though, is that is utterly inhospitable and very dry with no food, so he decides to go to *Mitsrayim*. It is ironic that *Kena’an* would experience a famine, as it would again many years in the future, and that the only food to be found would be in *Mitsrayim*.

This sets the stage for *Abram*’s second trial. He decides to stay in the fertile Nile valley until the end of the famine in *Kena’an*. He is also aware that such a pretty woman, as *Sarai*, would draw attention of any red-blooded male and could become a victim of the strange men, for which he may have to pay with his life. They both agree that he will introduce her as his sister, for the sake of saving his own life. This used to be a regular custom in the ANE. The main question now arises: where is the trust with which he departed from *Ur*, then from *Ėharan* and even from *Kena’an*? Looking at it another way, their decision is not really a lie, since *Sarai* is his half-sister, but the question regarding trust remains.

The beauty of *Sarai* does not go unnoticed, especially by Farao, and he orders that she be brought to the palace. For this good-looking lass, *Abram* receives sheep, cattle, donkeys, slaves and camels – plenty! It is almost as if *Abram* doesn’t pass his second trial, as if he seems to have lost his trust in *YAH*, or maybe he didn’t apply it correctly as he did with his move to *Kena’an*. Now his third trial awaits him, as his wife is in the palace and he must rely on the methods of *YAH* to protect her. Immediately the house of Farao gets

struck by plagues and fortunately the people of *Mitsrayim* are clever enough to realise that this is an exceptional occurrence. *YAH* will not allow unethical behaviour of any nature in the lives of married couples and even Farao knows that he has trespassed.

In this short lesson taught us of *Abram*'s fear and dishonesty, we get to a point where we may experience something similar in our own lives, to the extent that we are disobedient to *YAH*. However, we should never forget that He is faithful and righteous to keep to His promises, in order for us to act credibly. When we are tempted, we tend to ask: "How will I get out of these circumstances?" What we actually should be asking, is: "How can I benefit from these circumstances?" Always keep in mind the *YAH* actually helps us in building our trust (cf. *Ya'aqob* 1:1-12).

Another first we come across here, is the mention of camels in v. 16. Somebody once said that camels in the ANE was like having a Ferrari or Lamborghini today – it certainly was a sign of wealth. However, we can't trade wealth for trust in *YAH* and in this case it would have been more honourable for *Abram* to come clean with Farao right from the start. We are not told what plagues *YAH* sent to *Mitsrayim* at that stage, but the book of *Yashar* may seem to shed some light on the subject<sup>2</sup>:

- 🏆 *Yashar* 15 <sup>16</sup>And the woman was then brought to Pharaoh's house, and Abram grieved on account of his wife, and he prayed to the Lord to deliver her from the hands of Pharaoh.
- 🏆 <sup>19</sup>And the Lord hearkened to the voice of *Sarai*, and the Lord sent an angel to deliver *Sarai* from the power of Pharaoh.
- 🏆 <sup>23</sup>And the king approached to speak to *Sarai*, and he reached out his hand to touch her, when the angel smote him heavily, and he was terrified and he refrained from reaching to her.
- 🏆 <sup>24</sup>And when the king came near to *Sarai*, the angel smote him to the ground, and acted thus to him the whole night, and the king was terrified.

Some scholars are convinced that every person in *Mitsrayim* was struck with boils to prevent any physical contact. Whether or not this is true, *Abram* passes his third trial, but certainly not *cum laude*! Once again *YAH* has to intervene, as it happens so many times in our lives as well. Farao sends *Abram* away with his wife and all his possessions – a sure way to make a rich man more powerful. He is now on his way back to *Kena'an*, which reminds us of a similar event which would take place many years later:

*Mattithyahu* 2 <sup>13</sup>And when they had left, see, a messenger of יהוה appeared to *Yoseph* in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the Child and His mother, and flee to *Mitsrayim*, and remain there until I bring you word, for *Herodes* is about to seek the Child to destroy Him." <sup>14</sup>And rising up, he took the Child and His mother by night and departed for *Mitsrayim*, <sup>15</sup>and remained there until the death of *Herodes*, to fill what was spoken by יהוה through the prophet, saying, "Out of *Mitsrayim* I have called My Son." [emphasis original]

These emphasised words also remind us of the exodus out of *Mitsrayim*, when another leader, *Mosheh*, prophesied of another prophet like him, whom we should listen to (cf. *Debarim* 18:15). This, dear brother and sister, is how you and I are called out of our life of sin to a land with everything we would ever need. There are certain conditions, though...

*Abram* in essence reverses his route until he and his procession, including *Lot*, arrive to where they had previously been: between *Beyth El* and *Ai*. The altar is still there and once again *Abram* calls on *YAH*. Unfortunately a problem soon arises. Both *Abram* and *Lot* have plenty of livestock and the area they share is unable to provide for both of them. The herdsmen of *Abram* and *Lot* start arguing and also cause problems between them as heads of their respective households. The land lies open ahead of them,

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2 Please keep in mind that the book *Yashar* is part of the apocrypha and its authenticity may be questionable.

therefore *Abram* invites *Lot* to choose where he would want to settle. Whichever area *Lot* didn't want, would be where *Abram* will settle.

*Lot* sees the *Yardēn* valley, all the water and plenty of food for his livestock, which reminds him of what he had been told about *Ēden*. He chooses to go to that part and pitches his tents up to the city of *Seḏom*. Unfortunately for him, he didn't own a *TaNaKh*, or he would have known what we now know in retrospect:

*Berēshith* 13 <sup>13</sup>But the men of *Seḏom* were evil and sinned before יהוה, exceedingly so.

As with the building of the altar and his altruistic action regarding ownership of the land, we see the favourable characteristic of *Abram* by allowing *Lot* to have first choice. The part of the land that is left is once again promised to him, with the assurance of innumerable descendants. *Abram* is commanded to go through the land, almost like a scout, to experience exactly what is being given to him and his descendants. At last he gets back to *Hebron*, some 30 kilometers south of *Yerushalayim*, where he had previously built an altar at the oak tree; he builds another one, having now built three in total. This area is older than *Memphis* (*Noph*) and would eventually have many owners and as many names. The current owner is *Mamre*, a sheikh of the *Amorites*. The word *Hebron* translates as 'community' or 'partnership'.

As every town or city currently has a leader in the form of a mayor, the leader of every town or city in the ANE was known as a king, also known as a sovereign. Some of these men had very small, almost insignificant, areas over which they ruled, whereas others had vast, extended areas. The first king we get to meet is *Amraphel*, in the area of *Shin'ar*. He was either *Nimrod* with a change of name, or *Nimrod*'s successor. Together with three other kings in adjacent areas, they oppressed five other kings (v. 2) to keep the commercial route between *Mitsrayim* and the *Kasdim* open. The second king, *Aryok*, managed to get a part of *Shin'ar*, sharing some of it with *Amraphel*. *Tid'al* is the king of *Goyim*, also known as *Gelites*, probably a city where a mixed multitude resided, hence the name (cf. *Shemoth* 12:38). *Kedorla'omer* is the mightiest king of the four and probably a descendant of *Shēm*; he doesn't really need the support of the other three. However, the partnership is to the advantage of all four.

Five smaller cities, also having a king each, were situated towards the south-east of the land, at the southern point of the Salt Sea. These kings were insignificant, compared to the other four, ruling over small, trivial towns. In fact, the smallest town is *Tso'ar*, which translates as 'insignificant' and the king is obviously not important enough to have his name mentioned! These kings have been paying taxes to the four other kings for twelve years, but now, in the thirteenth year, they decide to rebel. The four mightier kings would also prove to be the fourth trial for *Abram*.



The rebellion of the five smaller kings bring about World War Zero. It takes place in the valley of *Siddim*, an area rich with asphalt, a type of resin used to reinforce buildings. Mining the asphalt caused many cavities in the ground. The five kings of *Seḏom*, *Amorah*, *Admah*, *Tseboyim* and *Bela* (*Tso'ar*) realise they are outnumbered and do not stand a chance of winning the battle, so they start running away. Many of their

soldiers fall into the cavities, while others flee to the mountains. In the meanwhile the other four kings ransack and pillage everything in *Seḏom* and *Amorah*. This is the exact place where *Lot* chose to reside and he is taken hostage with his family. We see a narration in the book of *Yashar* that he, being related to *Aḇram*, might have been taken hostage in order to claim a large ransom!

An absconder brings the news to *Aḇram* and this is where we find the first occurrence of the word 'Hebrew'. It is derived from two words:

1. עִבְרִי (*iv-Ri*), is deduced from the name *Ĕber*, descendant of *Noah* and predecessor of *Terah* (cf. 10:21-24);
2. עָבַר (*a-Var*), to cross the (*Yardēn*) river; also used when "crossing over" from paganism to the Way of *YAH*.

We mentioned earlier that *Aḇram* arrived in *Kena'an* with his entire entourage. Amongst these people were 318 men who were well trained for combat. *Aḇram* now calls on these guys and pursue the four kings to the town of *Dan*, in the north. During the night the soldier of *Aḇram* split up, attack the four kings and their soldiers and pursue them as far as *Hobah*, north of *Dammeseq*. They rescue *Lot* and his family and recover all their belongings, taking them back to *Seḏom*. *Bera*, king of *Seḏom*, is delighted and meets with *Aḇram* in the valley of *Shawēh*, also known as the Sovereign's Valley, a large open plain near *Yerushalayim*. This place is noteworthy, since *Aḇshalom*, unruly son of *Dawid*, died here.

We have quite a few lessons to learn from this narrative. Firstly, we need to consult many mss. to realise the might of the combined armies that *Aḇram* was up against. According to the book of *Yashar* (cf. 16:2) the four mightier kings would have a total of about eight hundred thousand soldiers. Fighting against this formidable amount of people with only 318 people, irrespective of their training and skills, is nothing short of a death wish. Considering *Aḇram*'s attitude, we realise that his trust in *YAH* has been fully restored and that *YAH* provided this miracle for *Aḇram* to conquer the four kings.

The king of *Seḏom* is obviously a coward and when he tries to reason with *Aḇram*, we see two scenes happening before us:

1. The king of *Seḏom* represents *hasatan*, posing to be the messenger of light (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:14) and wants to claim his share of the loot – as always. *Malkitseḏeq*, in contrast, moves to the front of the stage, as the representative of our salvation, *Yeshua*. He meets *Aḇram* with wine and bread, two items that have nothing to do with the Catholic 'mass' or the Christian "last supper", but only has to do with strengthening the physical. *Aḇram* and his men are weary after the battle and bread is a relief for a tired body (*Shemu'el Aleph* 28:22), while wine makes glad the heart of man (cf. *Mizmor* 104:15). The name *Malkitseḏeq* consists of two words: מַלְכִּי (*mal-ki*), an inflexion of מֶלֶךְ (*Me-lech*), which translates as 'king' or 'sovereign', and צֶדֶק (*tze-deq*), an inflexion of צָדִיק (*tza-daḡ*), which translates as "morally correct", therefore righteous in judgement. *Malkitseḏeq* simply means "King of righteousness" (cf. Hebrews 7:1-2). The wine and bread are also present when a covenant is cut. Let your mind go back to the covenant at *Sinai* during *Shavu'ot*, as well as the renewal (no new covenant) that *Yeshua* made shortly before he was executed. *Malkitseḏeq* came to bless *Aḇram* not only with food for the body, but also to bring a spiritual blessing as the new owner of the land. As a gesture of thankfulness, *Aḇram* gives him a tenth (tithe) of all his possessions. Please see Hebrew 7 in this regard for more insight. We now realise that *Aḇram* was totally aware of the offering of first fruits, something that would be officially instituted by *YAH* through *Mosheh* as an everlasting commitment. After all of this, the king of *Seḏom* comes whining to *Aḇram* to let him have the captured people, while *Aḇram* may keep the loot for himself. Here we see another wonderful trait of *Aḇram*: he is not interested in material possessions, but will only stand on the promises of *YAH*, to such an

extent that he doesn't even desire a thread or a sandal strap. His defence is that this type of person will insinuate that *Abram* became rich by his good attitude. *Abram* has set his trust in *YAH* and this is not only something we read of in Scripture, but we should put it to the test ourselves:

*Mal'aki 3* <sup>10</sup>“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, and let there be food in My house. And please prove Me in this,” said *יהוה* of hosts, “whether I do not open for you the windows of the heavens, and shall pour out for you boundless blessing!

It is extremely important to read this verse in full, but also in the correct context. Most Christian preachers abuse this verse to fill their own coffers. However, *Mal'aki* is addressing the priests to ensure that food, not money, is brought to the temple for their sustenance. It should be distributed rightfully and correctly.

2. The second scene we encounter is once again *hasatan*, when he uses his worthless followers to deceive each and every individual who follows the Way of *YAH*. We can visualise this king of *Sedom* as the *olam hazeh* – the current, decrepit world we live in. This is where everything good is destroyed daily and stays in a permanent state of decadence. Please keep in mind the words of *Yeshua*:

*Mattithyahu 6* <sup>19</sup>“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>“For where your treasure is, there your heart shall be also.

Fortunately, before this scrag can sow his seed of doubt, his danel, the fake and poisonous wheat, *Malkitsedeq* arrives with bread and wine. This non-Levitical priest of *Ėl-`Elyon* (Most High *Ėl*), the king of *Salem*, represents *olam haba*, the world to come, the time when true believers will be resurrected at the second coming of *Yeshua*. A note to keep in mind: most scholars agree that *Malkitsedeq* is none other than *Shēm*, son of *Noah* and forefather of the nation of *Yisra'el*. The other coincidence is that this place is where *Yochanan haMatbiel* normally baptised people, and could be the exact place where *Yeshua* was baptised.

Shortly afterwards *Abram* receives a vision from *YAH*, encouraging and invigorating him. The only serious problem he has at this stage is that he has no proper descendants of his own, but he receives a promise that a descendant would be forthcoming from his own body. We learn of one of the most precious promises:

*Berēshith 15* <sup>5</sup>And He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward the heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So are your seed.”

Take note of the present tense verb: “so are your seed”! Everything is already in place and only waiting for the designated time to manifest. What is chronicled directly after this, is something each of us must strive for:

*Berēshith 15* <sup>6</sup>And he believed in *יהוה*, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness.

When you and I, my dear brother and sister in *Yeshua*, get to this stage of our life, we will experience exactly the same as what happens to *Abram* shortly afterwards. That same night he is commanded to bring five animals: a heifer, female goat, ram, turtle-dove and a pigeon. The livestock all have to be three years old. Scripture doesn't expand on why these animals had to be brought – everything will be more clear shortly. Some scholars think that these refer to future kingdoms, but nowhere can this be proven. Normally livestock of a year old would be brought as offerings, but this was the cutting of a covenant, not an offering,

as these animals were actually already considered mature. The number three in Scripture indicates something to be set apart, and in this case the maturity of the animals surely confirm it.

A short detour: animals are cut in half and placed with the halves facing each other, but far apart enough to form a walkway in-between the halves. The two parties would stand each at one end and walk towards each other, crossing in the centre and going around the outside, forming a figure of eight. At every crossing point between the two parties, the following words are exchanged: "May you do this to me should I not uphold my end of the bargain." When reaching the end, each person turns around and again, at the crossing point, repeats the same phrase. This was quite normal in the ANE and something to which *Abram* was accustomed. It is also important to note that nothing is set alight – no burning takes place, as this is the making of a covenant and not an offering.

During the course of the next day *Abram* gets the animals together, cuts them up and lies each half adjacent to the other. The pigeon and dove are not cut, but kept intact. While waiting for the other party, scavenger birds descend on the carcasses, but are chased away by *Abram*. These birds represent *Abram*'s doubt, even patience which he may have to come to terms with, but because he chases them away, we see the symbolism of his banning evil and placing his trust in *YAH*. At sundown he gets tired and falls into a deep sleep, similar to what Scripture describes about *Adam* when *YAH* created *Hawwah* from his side. The original word used here is *תרדמה* (*tar-de-Mah*), a type of lethargy, as in a trance. This condition prohibited *Abram* from walking between the animals and after sundown it was *YAH* who walked between the carcasses as a smoking oven and a burning torch. In this way *YAH* cut an unilateral covenant with *Abram*, unconditional, a covenant of salvation. This covenant can never be deserved or broken.

This was one way that *YAH* wanted *Abram* to understand what the ages of the animals signified: for three generations his descendants would be oppressed as strangers outside of the promised land, but afterwards they will return in full force with all their possessions. The number of animals is five, the number that represents favour. By the favour of *YAH* He cuts this covenant with *Abram*, including all the privileges contained in it. The burning torch between the carcasses is similar to what *Mosheh* would later experience at the burning bush, as well as the column of fire at night that would go ahead of the people of *Yisra'el*; we also see the presence of *YAH* on the lid of atonement of the ark in the tabernacle.

In spite of promises received from *YAH*, man has the habit of dictating his wishes to *YAH*, sometimes even trying to help. *Abram* was no exception, even after all that had happened to him and all the promises he was given. We follow time and realise that ten years had lapsed since *Abram* was first promised a descendant, yet his wife was still barren and without child. This time not only the trust of *Abram* is put to the test, but also that of *Sarai*. When our trust starts to diminish, we also experience doubt, something which can exacerbate the situation. When *Abram* and his caravan left *Mitsrayim*, they received enough gifts to compensate for the injustice done to *Sarai*. Some sources mention that one of these 'gifts', was *Haḡar*, the daughter of Farao, given to *Sarai* as a maid servant. It is believed that Farao thought her better off with people that were in the midst of miracles, than with another household in his own country.

The culture of that time prescribed a period of ten years to decide whether a woman was barren or not. *Sarai* respected this and realised that she was barren. She ordered *Abram* to become intimate with *Haḡar* in order to raise descendants for him – and *Abram*'s fifth trial starts. The custom of the ANE prescribed that a child birthed on the lap of another woman, would become that woman's child. We see a repetition of what we discussed two weeks ago: the humble and obedient husband! As in the case with *Hawwah*, the words of *Sarai* were so compelling to *Abram* that he ate the apple. It is clear that he didn't take the words of *YAH* to heart, or conveniently forgot about them:

*Berēshith* 15 <sup>4</sup>And see, the word of יהוה came to him, saying, “This one is not your heir, but he who comes from your own body is your heir.”

*Abram* also forgot that he and *Sarai* were one flesh (cf. 2:24), and that another wife would not necessarily provide the solution. Just like *Adam*, he followed the advice of his wife. *Haḡar* became pregnant and treated *Sarai* despicably. Suddenly we see the same self-justification and excuses, as in *Ēden*. First *Sarai* accuses *Abram*, then she complains about her relationship with *Haḡar*. *Abram* shrugs it off, telling her that she should do whatever she seems best. In turn, she treats *Haḡar* so badly, that *Haḡar* decides to leave.

While in the wilderness, a messenger appears to her at a fountain on her way to *Shur*. The exact location is not certain, but it seems to be on the way back to *Mitsrayim* – she is heading home, after all these years! The messenger persuades her to return to *Abram* and *Sarai* and to be submissive to them. She is also informed that she will bear a son and should call him *Yishma'ēl*, as he will be the father of a great nation, although for ever in conflict with his brothers. The name *Yishma'ēl* means “*Ēl* has heard”, probably the answer to her supplication. In spite of *Abram*'s human shortcomings, he had probably conveyed something positive during *Haḡar*'s sojourning with them, as she has learnt to call on the Name of *YAH*. After the visitation of the messenger, she names the place אֵל רֹאִי (*Ēl-rô-i*), *Ēl* sees, as she had ‘seen’ Him (the messenger) and did not die.

When *Abram* is 86 years old, he became the father of *Yishma'ēl* by *Haḡar*, the maid servant of *Sarai*. Shortly afterwards we learn:

*Berēshith* 17 <sup>1</sup>And it came to be when *Abram* was ninety-nine years old, that יהוה appeared to *Abram* and said to him, “I am *Ēl Shaddai* – walk before Me and be perfect.

We come across yet another first: the title “*Ēl Shaddai*”, which translates at “the mighty *Ēl*(ohim) who is more than enough”. By this time *Yishma'ēl* is thirteen years old and we learn of another covenant and another sign. Once again this is also an everlasting covenant – something applicable to all descendants. Two aspects are of extreme importance. The first is striking when considering the sign of the covenant: it contains blood, something that cleanses spiritually. Every male person is to be circumcised on the flesh of his foreskin. In future all male boys are to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth, after which the penis is to be placed in the sand to assist in coagulation. This gesture also represents “descendants as many as the sand on the seashore”. Circumcision takes place on the eighth day as the new body can effectuate coagulation perfectly only at this time<sup>3</sup>. Every other male person, age aside, is to be circumcised immediately. Those who oppose circumcision, are to be cut off from the people. In a later study, we will also learn that anyone not circumcised, would not be allowed to partake in the festival of *Pesach*, the only festival where blood is involved.

The second point is something worth spending more time on, and this is the time period. *Yishma'ēl* is already thirteen years old, a number we need to consider. First mention of the number 13 was earlier when five kings engaged in battle with five kings. In Scripture we normally see the number 13 being connected to rebellion of some type. It is also strongly connected to the number eight, the day when a male child is circumcised; now we have to see how these connections pan out.

For twelve years five kings duly paid their taxes over to four other kings. In the thirteenth year they rebel, to such an extent that World War Zero takes place in the valley of *Siddim*. This word means no more than a flat and desolate area; these rebellious kings actually impoverish themselves, as we have seen. The numbers 8 and 13 have many things in common, something this study can't elaborate on, but it is brilliantly explained

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3 <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/31778/why-is-a-male-child-circumcised-on-the-8th-day>

in a book by E W Bullinger<sup>4</sup>. *Abram* had to wait 13 years after the birth of *Yishma'el* before *YAH* appeared to him at all, this time with the promise, once again, of his own descendants. We see 13 years pass from the humanly inspired heir to the heir given by *YAH*.

Two weeks ago we lifted the veil in *Ėden* to see what *Adam* and *Hawwah* were up to, something which should still be fresh in our mind. After falling into sin and *Qayin* murdering his brother, *Hebel*, *Hawwah* had to wait for 130 years before becoming pregnant again, this time with *Shěth*. The number 130 is the product of 10 and 13, a perfect number with the number of rebellion. Both *Hawwah* and *Adam* had to be cleansed from their transgression and *Adam* could not go into *Hawwah* before the time, therefore *Shěth* was only born 130 years later – ten rebellion periods later! In the case of *Abram*, we see a double portion of favour, as he only has to go through one period of rebellion. *Abram* became unclean by having intercourse with *Haġar*, both by his own doing, as well as being coerced by *Sarai*. This woman was from another nation and because of this, a wild man (16:12) is brought to life – some translation have it as a wild donkey of a man. However, the promise of the heir would still be fulfilled.

Apart from the sign of the circumcision which would be applicable to all the descendants, you and I included, *YAH* also changed, rather improved, the name of *Abram* (high/great father) to אַבְרָהָם (*av-ra-Ham*), *Abraham*, which means “father of a multitude”. The name of *Sarai* (dominating/bossy) is changed to שָׂרָה (*sa-Rah*), *Sarah*, which translates as “some who has triumphed” or “princess of the nations”. At last she has triumphed, as we will learn next week, by the favour of *YAH*, when she becomes pregnant according to the promise made many years ago. *Abraham* passes his sixth trial, when he has his entire male household circumcised, as prescribed.

In conclusion, the following thought: this covenant includes a condition, in that must be followed through (17:9). When circumcision is performed, blood flows, something that not only contains life, but also cleanses. Every circumcised male will therefore have his seed “go through blood” during intercourse. The seed is indeed cleansed to generate the perfect nation for *YAH*. We notice the word עֶרְלָה (*or-Lah*), which translates as foreskin. In a spiritual sense this is seen as a hindrance, something that needs to be removed to stand naked before *YAH* and mankind.

Lastly, for those who may have paid more attention, when changing their names to *Abraham* and *Sarah*, we see one letter added: the letter ה (*hey*), the breath of life, both taken from the true name of *YAH*, יְהוה. By means of this action our Creator not only gives everlasting promises to the first patriarch and matriarch, but also part of His Character, part of His Authority; they will multiply and rule over the earth, building a nation who will obey all the rules laid down for them – or will they? *Sha'ul* teaches us:

*Galatijim* 3 <sup>29</sup> And if you are of Messiah, then you are seed of *Abraham*, and heirs according to promise.

It is crucial that you claim this promise to be part of the commonwealth of *Yisra'el* and the Kingdom of *YAH*!

*Shabbat shalom!*

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Silwer Trumpet Ministry: [www.silvertrumpet.life](http://www.silvertrumpet.life)

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4 [Number in Scripture](#), E W Bullinger, ISBN 978-0-8254-2047-4, pp. 205-234

Silver Trumpet Radio links:

[https://a9.asurahosting.com/public/silver trumpet](https://a9.asurahosting.com/public/silver_trumpet)

Zeno: [www.zeno.fm/silver-trumpet](http://www.zeno.fm/silver-trumpet)

hearthis: <https://hearthis.at/silver-trumpet/>

6 Bul 5785 / 7 November 2024

### **Sources:**

We prefer to not use the word 'God', because of personal conviction. In most cases, unless quoted from another source, it will be replaced by 'Elohim' or inflections of the same word.

All citing of Scripture is taken from The Scriptures 2009, unless indicated differently.<sup>5</sup>

Messianic *Torah* with Commentary – Dr. Gary Gardner

John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

The Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas L. Constable

Ladder of Jacob

***The Word of YAH is free, therefore this study may be freely distributed, provided no changes are made in any way.***

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5 <https://isr-messianic.org/>

## Addendum A

