

Genesis 17:1-27

Introduction

1. 13 years after Ishmael was born in chapter 16
2. The LORD appears. This is a theophany
3. Restates
 - a. Promise of Land
 - b. Promise of Descendants
4. In the past:
 - a. Abram presented Eliezar as a substitute
 - b. Sarai presented Hage as an alternative
5. This chapter:
 - a. Reinforces previous promises
 - b. Emphasizes the continuation of the promise for generations
 - c. Introduce3s the physical sign of this covenant.
6. Names changes and meanings of names:
 - a. Abram to Abraham
 - b. Sarai to Sarah
 - c. Isaac meaning “He laughs” as in Abraham laughed
 - d. Ishmael meaning “He hears” as in God heard Hagar in ch. 16 and God hears Abram’s plea for Ishmael in ch. 17
7. Ages in this chapter:
 - a. Abram is 99
 - b. Sarai is 89
 - c. Ishmael is 13

OUTLINE

- 17:1-8 – Promises of Covenant Announced
- 17:9-14 – Instructions concerning the sign of covenant
- 17:15-22 – Promises of Covenant Explained
- 17:23-27 – Abraham obeys that day

Five Speeches by YHWH who has appeared to Abram:

1. 17:1-3 – God is introduced; Two obligations; Two Promises
2. 17:3-8 – Four features of Covenant
3. 17:9-11 – Obligation of the Sign of the Covenant - Circumcision
4. 17:15-16 – Sarai becomes Sarah with numerous descendants, nations, kings, with own son
5. 17:19-21 – Details of Ishmael’s and Isaac’s future

Abraham has Two Responses

1. 17:17-18 – Awe, laughs, reasons, pleads for Ishmael
2. 17:23-27 Abraham’s immediate obedience

Sings/Symbols/Memorials of this Covenant

1. Abram’s name changed to Abraham
2. Circumcision – a memorial sign
3. Sarai’s name changed to Sarah

FIRST SPEECH

Genesis 17:1 – **When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,**

1. Abram’s been in the land 24 years
2. Abram is 99 and Ishmael is 13
3. This whole chapter occurs in one day

17:2-3 – **that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”**

3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,

1. Lord identifies self as EL SHADDAI, “God Almighty”
 - a. EL means “God”
 - b. SHADDAI “majesty”, “power”
 - c. In 15:1, 7 God called himself:
 - i. “shield” when YHWH says, “I am your shield”
 - ii. “reward” when YHWH says, “I am your reward”
2. Abraham is given two obligations (imperatives):
 - a. “Walk before me”
 - b. “Be Blameless”
 - c. The only command in this chapter is circumcision
3. Result of Abraham’s obedience is:
 - a. YHWH will confirm his covenant
 - b. YHWH will greatly increase Abraham’s number
4. Just like 12:1-3 –
 - a. Imperative was “GO”
 - b. Result was “Be a blessing”
5. This chapter exists as the result of Abram obeying Genesis 12:1-3

SECOND SPEECH

17:4-8 – **“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”**

1. Divine commitment:
 - a. “As for me” (17:4)
 - b. “my covenant” (17:4)(NEXT: 17:9-14 is Abraham’s obligation.)
2. Four Features of What “God will do”
 - a. God will make Abram “father of many nations” (“*ab hamon goyim*”)
 - b. “*ab*” = “father”

- c. “*hamon*” = “many”
- d. New name is one of the signs of God's Covenant → Abram is ABRAHAM
- 3. God promises many physical descendants
 - a. “*para*” means “fruitful”
 - i. Common reference to descendants
 - ii. Used in creation account (1:22, 28)
 - iii. Used with Noah (8:17; 9:1, 7)
 - b. “*me’od me’od*” means “exceedingly”
 - c. Includes “Nations” plural
 - d. Including “Kings” plural in these “nations”
 - e. Abraham is the ancestor of multiple royal households
 - i. Isaac’s through Jacob to Judah...and, Ephraim
 - ii. Ishmael’s in 17:16; 25:12-17)
 - iii. Edom’s (36:9-43)
- 4. God makes covenant with “generations” (*dorot*) and “everlasting” (*‘olam*)
 - a. Progresses – Abram → to son → to generations → to everlasting
 - b. Wording of Covenant is
 - i. Individual – “between me and you (singular)”
 - ii. Offspring generations – between me and...your seed after you”
- 5. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant.
Circumcision was not the essence of the covenant.
 - a. Everyone was circumcised that day which was recognition of this covenant.
 - i. Abraham was the ONLY one that day who was part of the covenant
 - b. Certain circumcised individuals would always be excluded from this covenant based on their:
 - i. Spiritual allegiance
 - ii. Faith
- 6. Physical circumcision was the visible sign and the reminder of the covenant for physical generations, BUT spiritual circumcision was always the test or requirement of those who would partake of the “everlasting” or eternal promise of the covenant.
- 7. God combines the descendants with the land
 - a. The land is identified as:
 - i. “your sojourning’s”
 - ii. “all Canaan”
 - iii. “everlasting possession”
 - b. Jacob receives the same worded promise in 28:3-4
 - c. Ishmael (21:10; Gal. 4:30) and Esau (25:33-34; 27:37; Hebrews 12:16) do NOT share in covenant
 - d. NT understood this covenant to extend to the spiritual possession of eternal life.

THIRD SPEECH

17:9-11 – **And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.**

1. Obligation to the covenant was circumcision
 - a. 17:9 – First, Abraham, “as for you (*atta* is singular)...you must keep”
 - b. 17:10 – Second, future generations, where the plural pronoun is used, “you are to keep” or, “you all are to keep”

17:12-14 – **He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”**

1. Male infant 8 days old
2. Forty days after child birth
 - a. Day 1-7 – Mother of new born unclean
 - b. Day 8 – boy circumcised
 - c. Day 8-40 – are thirty-three days of purification for the mother (Lev. 12:2-4)
3. All males in household included:
 - a. Abraham
 - b. Ishmael
 - c. Others born of Hebrew parents
 - d. Slaves based on them being subservient to Hebrews
 - e. Foreign descent living in Hebrew household since they are part of the household
4. Circumcision identified the covenant God had with Israel
5. Circumcised individuals (Hebrew, slave, foreign) could be expelled from the covenant community, AND it is possible for an individual (Hebrew, slave, foreign) to be circumcised and never be part of the spiritual, eternal covenant.

FOURTH SPEECH

17:15-16 – **And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”**

1. Sarai to become Sarah
 - a. “Sarai” means “princess”
 - b. Name is associated with princess
2. Sarah is promised:
 - a. To have a son
 - b. To have numerous offspring

- c. To produce nations
- d. To produce kings

17:17-18 – Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”
 18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!”

1. Abraham’s reaction:
 - a. Collapse in reverent fear
 - b. Laugh in amazement, inability to understand (not doubt of promise; not mockery)
 - i. “laughter is from **sahaq**
 - ii. Later Sarah laughs (18:12)
 - iii. Isaac is **yishaq** (21:6)
 - c. Reasons - age prevents pregnancy
 - d. Pleads for Ishmael
 - i. Another counter proposal
 - ii. Third offer after Eleazar, Hagar, now Ishmael.
 - iii. God will bless Ishamel, BUT Isaac is the covenant son.

FIFTH SPEECH

17:19-21 – God said, “**No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.** 20 **As for Ishmael, I have heard you;** behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 **But I will establish my covenant with Isaac,** whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.”

1. God explains pregnancy and Ishmael’s future
2. God begins with “**ABAL**”
 - a. “**ABAL**” can mean assertive, “**Yes, Indeed**”
 - b. “**ABAL**” can mean adversative, “**No, But**”
 - c. NIV translates “ABAL with a combination “**yes, but**”

853 [e] 'et-	7121 [e] we·qā·rā·tā	1121 [e] bēn,	3205 [e] yō·le·deṭ	802 [e] 'iš·tə·kā,	8283 [e] śā·rāh	61 [e] 'ā·bal	430 [e] 'ē·lō·hīm,	559 [e] way·yō·mer
את-	וַקְרָאתָ	בֶּן	לְךָ	יִלְדֶת	אִשְׁתְּךָ	שָׂרָה	אֱלֹהִים	וַיֹּאמֶר 19
-	and you shall call	a son	you	shall bear	your wife	Sarah	God	and said
DirObjM	Conj-w V-Qal-ConjPerf-2ms	N-ms	Prep 2ms	V-Qal-Prtcl-fs	N-fsc 2ms	N-proper-fs	N-mp	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms

310 [e] 'a·hā·rāw.	2233 [e] lō·zar·'ōw	5769 [e] 'ō·w·lām	1285 [e] lib·rīt	854 [e] 'it·tōw	1285 [e] bē·rī·tī	853 [e] 'et-	6965 [e] wa·hā·qī·mō·tī	3327 [e] yiš·hāq;	8034 [e] šə·mōw
אֲחֵרָיו	לְזֶרְעוֹ	עוֹלָם	לְבְרִית	אִתּוֹ	בְּרִיתִי	את-	וְהִקְמַתִּי	יִשְׁחָק	שְׁמוֹ
after him	for his descendants	everlasting	for a covenant	with him	My covenant	-	and I will establish	Isaac	his name
Prep 3ms	Prep-l N-msc 3ms	N-ms	Prep-l N-fsc	Prep 3ms	N-fsc 1cs	DirObjM	Conj-w V-Hifil-ConjPerf-1cs	N-proper-ms	N-msc 3ms

3. This means “No, to Ishamel being the Promised child in the Covenant, BUT, Ishmael will be blessed even outside the Covenant.”
4. “will bear you” (*yoledeṭ*) is imminent meaning “about to bear you”
 - a. This means a near reality
 - b. Ch. 18 indicates it was within one year

5. God names child "Isaac" meaning "He laughs" referring to "Abraham laughs" indicating Isaac himself will be the answer to Abraham laughing at how could this be.
6. Lord says, "I will establish my covenant with Isaac" (repeating language used with Abraham)
7. 17:20 – "I have heard you: picks up on ISHMAEL's name which means "God Hears"
 - a. God has heard (Ishmael) Abraham's plea for Ishmael
 - b. Ismael will be blessed, but will be outside the covenant
 - c. Ishmael will be:
 - i. Blessed (*berakti*)
 - ii. Fruitful (*para*)
 - iii. Greatly increase (*hirbeti bim'od Me'od*)
 1. 25:16 records the twelve rulers who come from Ishmael
 - a. "Rulers" is *NEST'IM* meaning "leader", "chief"
8. 17:21 – "But" is the adversive and contrast Ishmael being blessed, fruitful and greatly increase WITH Isaac being the heir of the Covenant
 - a. Isaac will be on the inside
 - b. Ishmael will be on the outside

CLOSING

17:22 – When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

1. "God went up" means this was a visible, audible theophany that Abraham participated in
2. 18:10, 14 – Promise of pregnancy confirmed
3. 21:1-2 – Isaac born within a year

17:23-27 – Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. 27 And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

1. "That very day" is when the circumcising began
2. Abraham obeyed and began the circumcising process
3. Abraham himself performed the procedure on his household
4. It appears Abraham circumcised himself first.
 - a. Then, Ishmael
 - b. Then all the other males in his household living under the blessing of the Covenant with Abraham
5. But, ONLY Abraham was actual (along with Sarah) where members of this covenant.