

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT
Genesis 15:5-18, Hebrews 6:13-17
By Raymond White

God made two promises to Abraham. Abraham believed the first; he was not so sure about the second.

***Genesis 15:5** [God] said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him [Abraham], So shall thy seed be. **:6** And [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

***Genesis 15:7** And [God] said unto [Abraham], I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. **:8** And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?*

Why Abraham would believe the first, “You’re going to have lots of kids,” and have doubts about the second, “I’ll give you this land,” is not so clear. But that’s the way it was with Abraham. In any case, God graciously accommodated Abraham’s doubt with a promise, a covenant. And interestingly, this covenant was not between God and Abraham, it was between God and God.

***Genesis 15:9** And [God] said unto [Abraham] Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. **:10** And [Abraham] took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece on against another: but the birds divided he not. **:12** And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram: and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. **:13** And [God] said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. **:16** But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again...**:17** And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. **:18** In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land...*

That’s it. That’s God’s covenant with Abraham, except that the covenant which was for Abraham was not *with* Abraham.

Back then, when two men made a covenant, they killed and cut in half an animal and walk together between the two halves. That bound the covenant, as in **Jeremiah 34:18**. Only in this case, what or who walked between the animal parts was a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, both symbols of God. So God made a covenant with God; Abraham was a witness. And the one covenant guaranteed two promises: seed and land, “Unto thy seed have I given this land.”

That the covenant was between God and God, secures the promises even more. God promising God is a better guarantee than God promising Abraham.

***Genesis 22:16** By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord.*

Hebrews 6:13 *For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.*

To get the sense of this, understand that there are two kinds of contracts. A bilateral contract between two people requires both to perform. But a unilateral contract, such as a will, requires only one person to perform. The beneficiary doesn't need to do anything to inherit.

The Abrahamic Covenant is unilateral. So suppose Israel breaks the covenant? Is the Covenant void? No. There are covenants in the Bible that are voidable. But this is a unilateral contract and is not voidable.

Hebrews 6:17 *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.*

The promise is immutable; that is, unchangeable and cannot be set aside. And God wanted the heirs to know that it was immutable and that's why God swear by himself. It does not depend on Israel's good behavior. Israel *will* inherit.

That does invite another question: Who is Israel? But that's a question for another time.