

Genesis 17 - Covenant Reaffirmed; Abraham/Sarah Names Changed; Token of the Covenant

II. Epilogue: Patriarchal history (Gen 11:10—50:26)

(1) Life of Abraham (Gen 11:10—25:11)

(B) Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1—25:11)

(a) Establishment of the covenant (Gen 12:1—17:27)

(v) Sign of the covenant (17:1-27)

(a) Abram's change of name and promises reconfirmed (17:1-8)

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(d) Performance of circumcision (17:23-27)

Genesis 17

(v) Sign of the covenant (17:1-27)

(a) Abram's change of name and promises reconfirmed (17:1-8)

1 Now 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 Now 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 When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and announced, "I am God Almighty. Live in constant awareness that I'm always with you, and be blameless.

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

- 13 years between Hagar/Ishmael (16:16) and 17:1; no record of God speaking or Abraham's spiritual growth

— 24 years since God's call of Abraham (12:1-3)

- The structure of 17:1-3 is similar to 12:1-3: two imperatives ("walk" and "be perfect") followed by two imperatives containing promises

— This is the fourth reaffirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant

- "...the LORD appeared to Abram" - this is God's fifth appearance to Abraham, 23 years since the previous appearance in Gen 15, when the covenant was signed

— The purpose of this particular appearance was to give Abram the token of the covenant

— All biblical covenants do not have tokens associated with them (i.e. Adamic; Edenic); the Noahic Covenant (rainbow), Abrahamic (circumcision), and Mosaic (Sabbath) do.

- As far as Abram knew at this point, Ishmael was the promised son

- "...I am God Almighty" - *El Shaddai*, the first usage of the name of God; used 48x in the OT, 31x in Book of Job, 9x in the Torah, 6x in Genesis (17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25)

— In Genesis, this Name for God always appears with the promise of prosperity, with one exception (43:14); the meaning emphasizes God's power

- God gives Abram two commands:

(1) "...Walk before Me" - denotes service or devotion of a faithful servant to his king (5:22,24; 6:9; 24:40; 48:15; Deut 10:8; 18:17; Judges 20:28; 1 Kings 1:2; 10:8; Her 52:12; Ezek 44:15)

(2) "...be blameless" - *tamim*, used of Noah in 6:9; will be used of Jacob in 25:27

- Also used of animal sacrifices, thus means to be unblemished (Ex 12:5; Lev 3:1,6; 4:3,23)

- *tamim* describes a physical condition or a lifestyle

2 **"I will make My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly."**

2 "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly."

2 "I'll establish my covenant between me and you, and I'll greatly increase your numbers."

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

- After giving Abram two commands (v1), God makes two promises:

(1) "...I will establish My covenant between Me and you" - this is a reaffirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant

- God said "I will" 7x in this chapter; "covenant" is used 13x in this chapter

(2) "...I will multiply you exceedingly" - God reaffirms His previous promise to Abram

3 Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

3 Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

3 Then Abram fell to the ground as God continued speaking to him.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

- This was an act of worship, but also shows that Abram knew Who he was talking to

- As Abram worshipped, God continued to speak...

4 **"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And **you will be the father of a multitude of nations.****

4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.

4 "Look, I've made a covenant with you. You will be the father of many nations.

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
- "...you will be the father of a multitude of nations" - this was a new promise; until now, Abram was promised to father only one nation; now he is going to father many nations
— This is fulfilled in two Jewish nations (Israel and Judah), and also many Arab countries and tribes

5 "No longer shall you be named Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you 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.

5 Your name is no longer to be Abram. Instead your name will be Abraham, since I'll make you the father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

- God changes Abram's name to Abraham to emphasize His new promise

- Abram = "exalted father"; Abraham = "father of a multitude"

- "...nations" - *goyim*, emphasizing Gentile nations coming from him, which is also a new promise

New Names

- Abram → Abraham (17:5)
- Sarai → Sarah (17:15)
- Jacob → Israel (32:28)
- Daniel → Belteshazzar (Dan 1:7)
- Simon → Peter
- Believers → Rev 2:17

What Did God Do?

The Hebrew language is both phonetic and conceptual...meaning each letter has both a sound and a meaning.

Example:

- First letter of Hebrew alphabet is *Aleph* - means "first," "strength" or "leader"
- Second letter is *Bet* - means "house" or "family"
 - Example: *Beth Lehem* = "house of bread" or Beth-El = "House of God"
- Combine the two...*Aleph-Bet* = "leader of the house" or "father"

There's another Hebrew letter...*Heh* meaning "behold," "revealed" or "breeze," "wind," "Spirit"

- If you take a word and put a *Heh* (ha) in the middle of it, you're speaking to the essence of that word
 - Example, if you put a *heh* (ha) in between A B, you get *Ahab*...revealing the heart or essence of the Father, and also the Hebrew name for "Love"

When God changes the name of Abram and Sarai, He simply inserts a "heh" meaning He inserted the Spirit of God into them.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and **I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.**

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you.

6 I'm going to cause you to have many descendants, and I'll bring nations from you. Kings will come from you.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

- The affirmation of Abraham's fruitfulness will be twofold:

- (1) "...I will make nations of you" - this is a reaffirmation of the previous promise
- (2) "...kings will come from you" - another new provision, not mentioned earlier; the promise included both Jewish and Gentile kings

7 I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations as an **everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.**

7 I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

7 I'm establishing my covenant between me and you, and with your descendants who come after you, generation after generation, as an eternal covenant, to be your God and your descendants' God after you.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

- God established the covenant between Himself and Abraham, and only one specific seed (which was established in 12:1-3)

— While God will make many nations out of Abraham, the covenant is going to be sustained through only one nation

- "...everlasting covenant" - *olam*, does not necessarily contain the concept of eternity as it does in English, but means "up to the end of a period of time." In this case, for the duration of human history.

— This is reaffirmed 2x in this chapter (v13,19)

- The promise of the covenant is twofold:

(1) "...to be a God unto you" - to be Abraham's God, personally

(2) "...to your descendants after you" - to be the God of Abraham's seed

8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you **the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan**, as an **everlasting possession**; and I will be their God."

8 I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

8 I'll give to you and to your descendants the land to which you have traveled—all the land of Canaan—as an eternal possession. I will be their God."

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

- The Land is promised to Abraham individually; he is to possess the Land. The Land was also promised to Abraham's seed.

- "...the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan" - the very Land that Abraham was told to walk throughout in 13:17 is the Land he is destined to inherit

— The promise is the possession of all the Promised Land

— While Abraham's seed has possessed much more of the Promised Land than Abraham ever did, they have not as yet in Jewish history possessed all of the Promised Land.

— However, the promise here is clear: to have all the Land of Canaan, all the Promised Land

— This promise will be fulfilled in the future, in the Messianic Kingdom

- "...everlasting possession" - it will always be Jewish Land; "everlasting" (*olam*, Cf. v7) again means "up to the end of a period of time"; in this case, the duration of this planet

— Only when God does away with this planet will the Land no longer exist

— It is irrelevant whether the Jews are inside the Land or outside the Land, by divine grant of God, the Land belongs to the Jewish people

(b) Command to circumcise (17:9-14)

9 God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

9 God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

9 God continued to speak to Abraham, "You and your descendants who are born in the future are to keep my covenant—that is, you and your descendants, generation after generation.

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

- "...God said further to Abraham" - God introduced something Abraham must do as a proper response to God's seven "I wills"
- In light of God's seven "I wills" and all of God's promises, here is what Abraham should do in loving response
- This is not conditional: God does not say that if Abraham fails to do this, God will not fulfill what He said in v1-8. God will fulfill v1-8 regardless of Abraham's response. Nevertheless, in light of God's blessings for Abraham, He expects Abraham to fulfill certain conditions; but God's fulfillment of His promises remain unconditional.
- However, the principle is that unconditional promises set up the expectation of a response. God will do what He said He will do, no matter what; in response, Abraham should do something.
- It is the same principle as salvation: salvation is by grace through faith, not based on works. Once saved, believers retain salvation unconditionally; but in response to God's love for them, believers are expected to keep His commandments. However, whether believers keep them or do not keep them, their salvation is secure.
- The recipients of the token are Abraham and his covenant seed, "generation after generation"
- For as long as Jewish history continues into the future, as long as the covenant is in effect, this practice must be performed

10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every **male** among you shall be circumcised.

10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

10 Here is my covenant that you are to observe, between me and you and your descendants: Every male among you is to be circumcised.

10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

- The covenantal sign is circumcision

- "...male" - this rules out female circumcision found in some cultures

11 And you shall be circumcised in the **flesh of your foreskin**, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

11 And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

11 You are all to be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and this is to be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

- The token of the covenant is focused on the reproductive organ, emphasizing the promise of a seed
- Circumcision did not begin with Abraham and this command from God; it was practiced by other societies before Abraham, such as the Egyptians (Jer 9:25-26)
- "...flesh of your foreskin" - the token was to take place on the reproductive organ, because Jewishness is to be transmitted through natural regeneration of the male line
- The act of circumcision requires the shedding of blood, a reminder that this is a blood covenant
- Circumcision, thus, becomes a sign of identity with God's inheritance through Abraham. It is a sign of his origins and of his commitment for the one who is circumcised.

12 And every male among you who is **eight days old** shall be circumcised throughout your generations, *including* a slave who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.

12 And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a *servant* who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.

12 Generation after generation, every male among you is to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, including the servant born in your house or the one purchased from a foreigner, who is not of your offspring.

12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

- "...eight days old" - Jewish circumcision was unique from other cultures who practiced because of the timing (Cf. Lev 12:3)
- The other unique aspect of circumcision was that it begins to identify a specific nation that will descend through Abraham. This ethnic group is referred to as Hebrews, Israel, Jews, etc.
- This token was to include: Abraham's seed, or anyone brought in from the outside who become part of a Jewish household

Circumcision

Vitamin K, a clotting element, is not formed until the 5th-7th day. Prothrombin is also necessary (3rd day: 30% of normal; 8th day: peaks at 110%, then levels off at 100% of normal). How did Moses know to circumcise on the 8th day? (Gen 17:1).

Circumcision was not new at this point in history, but the theocratic and religious significance applied to it was. Circumcision thus identified males as belonging to the physical and ethical lineage of Abraham (Acts 7:8; Rom 4:11). Without divine revelation, the practice would not have had distinctive significance. It remained a theocratic distinctive of Israel (v13).

There was a health benefit, but that was secondary. Disease could be kept in the folds of the foreskin, so removing it eliminated the danger.

The symbolism had to do with the need to cut away sin and be cleansed. It was the male organ which most clearly demonstrated the depth of depravity because it carried the seed that produced depraved sinners. Thus, circumcision symbolized the need for a profoundly deep cleansing to reverse the effects of depravity.

Circumcision of the Heart

Moses said that God would circumcise the hearts of His people so that they might be devoted to Him (Deut 30:6). Unbelief is described as having an uncircumcised heart (Jer 9:26; Ezek 44:7-9). Paul wrote that "circumcision of the heart" (i.e., being inwardly set apart "by the Spirit") evidences salvation and fellowship with God (Rom 2:28-29; Cf. Rom 4:11).

13 A slave who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall certainly be circumcised; so My covenant shall be in your flesh as an **everlasting covenant**.

13 A *servant* who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

13 The servant born in your house or the one purchased with money is to be circumcised. My covenant is to remain in your flesh as an eternal covenant.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

- Reaffirmation of who the token covers (Cf. v12)

- "...everlasting covenant" - as long as the Abrahamic Covenant remains in effect (Gal 3:19-4:7)

- While today there is no basis for circumcision under the Mosaic Law, there is a requirement for circumcision under the Abrahamic Covenant. It is still mandatory for Jews, which includes Jewish believers in Jesus.

- The NT does not rule out circumcision for Jews; only circumcision for Gentiles is ruled out under the Mosaic Law (although circumcision for health reasons is a separate issue)

14 But *as for* an uncircumcised male, one who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be **cut off** from his people; he has broken My covenant."

14 But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

14 Any uncircumcised male who does not have the foreskin of his flesh circumcised on the eighth day after his birth is to be eliminated from his people because he has broken my covenant."

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

- The judgment for disobedience...

- "...cut off" - signifies divine punishment of a premature death, either by human or divine means

- The word play in Hebrew goes something like this: "If the foreskin is not cut off, he shall be cut off."

- An example of this is in the case of Moses (Ex 4:24-26), where God struck him with some type of deadly illness or plague and he was about to die because of his failure to circumcise his second son. Only when his wife intervened and had the second son circumcised was the life of Moses spared.

(c) Sarai's change of name and promise of Isaac (17:15-22)

15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her *by* the name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name.

15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name.

15 God told Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are not to call her Sarai any longer, because her name is to be Sarah.

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

- "...Sarah" - "princess"; it was a rewording of the name from an older to a newer form. She is the only woman in Scripture to have her name changed.

- Since Sarai ("my princess") would be the ancestress of the promised nations and kings, God changed her name to Sarah, removing the limiting personal pronoun "my" and calling her "princess"

- It is the feminine form of *sar*, "prince"; and was fitting for one whose seed would produce kings

16 I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

16 I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

16 I will bless her. Furthermore, I will give you a son from her. I will bless her, so that nations, kings, and people will come from her."

16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

- For the first time, it was stated clearly that Sarah was to be the mother of the covenant son

— Up until now, Abram clearly assumed that Ishmael was the promised covenant son. Now, God clarifies the promise further, stating that Sarah would be the "mother of nations"

— Three nations did spring from her: Judah, Israel, and Edom

— Essentially, what was promised to Abraham in v6 is now also promised to Sarah

17 Then Abraham fell on his face and **laughed**, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man a hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, give birth to a *child*?"

17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a *child*?"

17 Abraham fell to the ground, laughed, and told himself, "Can a child be born to a 100-year-old man? Can a 90-year-old Sarah give birth?"

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

- "...laughed" - *yitzchak*, means "to laugh"; it is the root verb from which Isaac is derived (ROFL)

— Sarah also laughs in 18:12

— Hearing this, Abraham laughed because it seemed incredible that a barren 90-year-old woman could give birth to a son. He laughed in disbelief.

- Note that Abraham is already calling Sarah by her new name

- "...an hundred years old" - v1 states Abraham was 99 years old; stating 100 years old here shows that fulfillment would be close to a year away, since Sarah was not yet pregnant

18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"

18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"

18 So Abraham responded to God, "If only Ishmael would live in constant awareness that you're always with him!"

18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

- Abraham's plea for a living son (Ishmael) to be the designated beneficiary of God's promises betrayed just how impossible it was for he and Sarah to have children (Cf. Rom 4:17)

— Up to now, Abraham believed Ishmael was the promised seed

— Ishmael was 13 years old at this time

19 But God said, “**No**, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall name him **Isaac**; and I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant **for his descendants after him**.”

19 But God said, “No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

19 But God replied, “No, but your wife Sarah will give birth to your son, and you are to name him Isaac. I’ll confirm my covenant with him as an eternal covenant for his descendants.

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

- “...No” - God first deals with Abraham’s “wish” in v18 for Ishmael to be the covenant son, with a simple answer of “No”

— God then reaffirms that Sarah will bear the covenant son, even at her old age

— God even gives Abraham a promise that He will personally confirm His covenant with Abraham with his son Isaac, not through Ishmael

- “...Isaac” - “he laughs”; an appropriate name considering v17

- “...for his seed after him” - a promise that Isaac himself will have posterity and continue on the covenant line

20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation.

20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

20 And as for Ishmael, I’ve heard you. I’ll bless him, and he’ll have many descendants. I will multiply him greatly, he’ll father twelve tribal leaders, and I’ll cause his descendants to become a great nation.

20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

- Ishmael was not forgotten, however; he would receive promises, but he will not receive the Abrahamic Covenant

- Ishmael would be blessed because of his connection to Abraham; that blessing would be in the form of many descendants. Even the number of Ishmael's sons—12—was predicted.
- These 12 sons would head up 12 Arab tribes, corresponding to the 12 Jewish tribes
- Their names are reviewed in 25:13-18

21 But I will **establish** My covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at **this season next year.**"

21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."

21 Now as to Isaac, I'll confirm my covenant with him, to whom Sarah will give birth as your son at this time next year."

21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

- Confirms the timing of Isaac's birth

- "...establish" - normally the Hebrew would read, "to cut a covenant"; but here it states that He is going to "establish" a covenant, which involves the maintaining of an existing covenant

- God did not make a new covenant with Isaac; He passed on the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant to Isaac

- "...this season next year" - this means that Sarah would become pregnant in three months, which would be enough time for Abraham to heal from his own circumcision

- During the three months between circumcision and conception, the story of Sodom & Gomorrah took place (Gen 18-19); the story of Abimelech (Gen 20) took place during these three months or during the early stages of Sarah's pregnancy.

22 When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

22 When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

22 With that, God finished talking to Abraham, and ascended, leaving him.

22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

- The end of the "theophany" that began in v1

(d) Performance of circumcision (17:23-27)

23 Then Abraham took his son Ishmael, and all *the slaves* who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on **this very same day**, as God had said to him.

23 Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all *the servants* who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's

household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him.

23 Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the servants born in his house or purchased with his money—every male among the men of his household—and circumcised them that very day, just as God had spoken to him.

23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

- "...this very same day" - no delayed obedience here; everyone was circumcised immediately upon the Angel of the Lord's ascension

— Abraham was motivated to keep the commandments of God

24 Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

24 Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

24 Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised,

24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

25 And his son Ishmael was thirteen 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.

25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised.

25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

26 On this very same day Abraham was circumcised, as well as his son Ishmael.

26 In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

26 Both Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on that very day.

26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

27 And all the men of his household, those who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

27 All the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

27 Every man born in his household—as well as those who had been purchased with money from a foreigner—was circumcised with him.

27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

To conclude this section with the NT quotations and applications, five points can be made:

(1) In the NT there are four individuals who were circumcised in keeping with both the Abrahamic Covenant and, in some cases, the Mosaic Law: John the Baptist (Luke 1:59-60); Jesus (Luke 2:21); Paul (Phil 3:5); and Timothy (Acts 16:1-3).

(2) The NT teaches that physical circumcision is of no spiritual value; it does not guarantee the salvation of anyone, and the act itself does not carry any particular spiritual value (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6).

(3) The emphasis in the NT is on the need for spiritual circumcision, meaning the circumcision of the heart, which is described as being a circumcision not made with hands, as is the physical circumcision (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:12-15; Col 2:11-13).

(4) Rom 4:9-12 teaches that the value of circumcision for Abraham was that it was a sign or seal of the righteousness of God, which God had already imputed to him. He was not made righteous by circumcision, nor did he gain righteousness by circumcision. It was a sign of his righteousness already declared two chapters earlier, in 15:6.

(5) The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) clearly decided that circumcision was not mandatory for Gentile believers. It did not say that it was not mandatory for Jewish believers.

To put this all together as far as circumcision today is concerned: Because the Mosaic Law has been rendered inoperative with the Messiah's death, there is no basis for circumcising Jews or Gentiles under the Mosaic Covenant. However, the point of the Abrahamic Covenant is that it is a continuous covenant throughout the rest of human history. As long as human history continues on this planet, Jews are required to circumcise their sons on the eighth day; Jewish believers in the Messiah are not exempt from this particular ruling. That helps to explain Paul's actions between Acts 15 and 16. In Acts 15, he argued against the circumcision of Titus, who was a Gentile. In Acts 16, he had Timothy circumcised. What was the difference? Timothy had Jewish origins and Titus did not, which put Timothy under the Abrahamic Covenant. Timothy was, therefore, circumcised.