

Genesis 17

Verse 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.**

Abram was 86 years old in the previous verse and now he is 99. He is really aging quickly. 😊

The word “God Almighty” is from the Hebrew El-Shaddai which means the Powerful God. Only an all-powerful God could make Abram (a 99 year old man) and Sarai (an 89 year old woman that had never been able to conceive) into a great nation.

When God told Abram to walk before Him and be blameless it had to jar his senses but that standard is the same for all of His children.

See Matthew 5:48

⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

No man even comes close to this standard, but we must all try.

Verses 2 - 5

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

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

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

**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.**

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

The first time that God made this promise to Abram he was 75 years old.
See Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram,
“Go from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;
² And I will make you into a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And *you shall* be a blessing;
³ And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”
⁴ So Abram went away as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him.
Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

As each year went by it took a greater faith to keep hold of this promise. But that is exactly what God is looking for in his children.

See Hebrews 11:1-2

Now faith is *the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen.* ² For by it the people of old gained approval.

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

Abram falling on his faith may have been prompted by one of the following:

1. This was his response to God appearing before him.
2. This may have been his reaction to God telling him to be blameless

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

God states His part of the covenant first (in verses 4 thru 8) and then in verse 9, God will state Abraham’s part in keeping the covenant when he says “now as for you”.

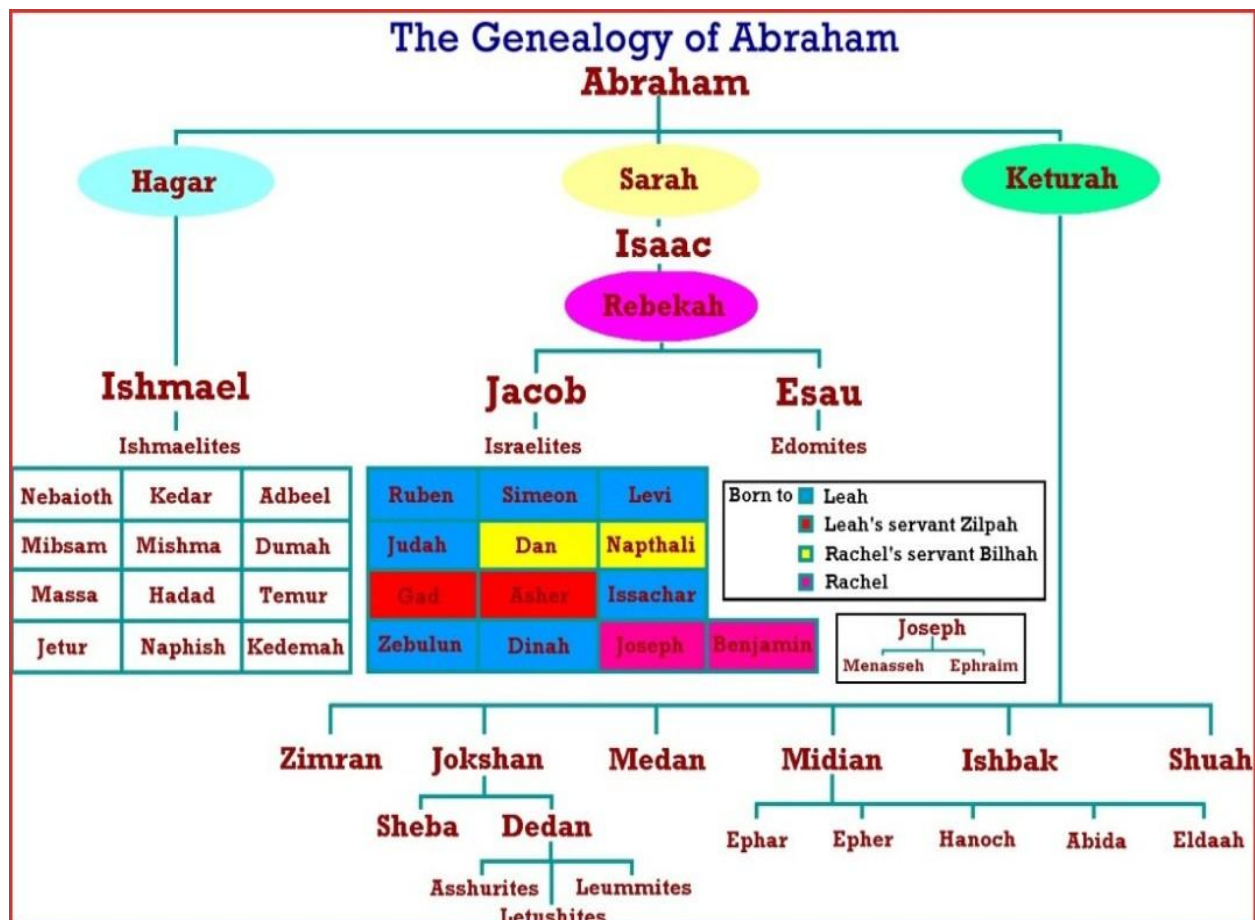
In chapter 12 God promised Abram that He would make him into a great nation but here God says he will be the father of a multitude of nations.

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.

God changed Abram's name to Abraham to reflect his new status as a father of many nations. His grandson, Jacob, will also be given a new name after he wins a wrestling match with God. *Isra-El*, means he who prevails with God

Abraham did become the father of many nations.

See Pic 1705



The exact number of nations that came from Abraham is hard to know with certainty but as we saw in the last chapter there were many nations just among the descendants of Ishmael (Currently there are 22 Arab Nations).

To this we can add Israel, the Edomites, and the Midianites. Jewish tradition says that Abraham was the father of 30 nations.

Verses 6 -10

⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 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. 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.” ⁹ God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 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.

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

All of this came true as the history of the Jewish nation unfolded.

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.

It takes two parties to make a covenant. In this case it was between God and Israel (Abraham and his descendants). So let's look at what was required of both parties.

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

This part was God's responsibility and he made two promises.

1. Israel would receive all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession.
2. He would be their God

God said the land of Canaan would be an everlasting possession. So why did Israel lose their land? We will discuss this in just a moment but before we do let's cover the condition that Abraham and his descendants were required to follow.

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

This part was the responsibility of Abraham & Israel (his descendants).

Every male was to be circumcised.

This command was followed closely with only a few exceptions that we know of.

1. Moses neglected this command for a period of time.

See Exodus 4:24-26

²⁴ But it came about at the overnight encampment on the way, that the Lord met Moses, and sought to put him to death. ²⁵ So Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and threw it at Moses’ feet; and she said, “You are indeed a groom of blood to me!” ²⁶ So He left him alone. At that time she said, “*You are a groom of blood*”—because of the circumcision.

2. And those born in the wilderness were not circumcised in a timely fashion.

See Joshua 5:3 - 5

³ So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. ⁴ This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. ⁵ For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised.

Now let’s get back to why Israel lost their land when God had told them it would be an everlasting possession.

As time passed God added some additional conditions that had to be met in order for Israel to remain in the land and for the Lord to be their God.

See Deuteronomy 29:1

These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.

1. God gave them (the descendants of Abraham) additional commands at Horeb in 1446 BC.
2. God did the same at Moab just before they entered Canaan. This was about 40 years later in 1406 BC.

These additional commands demanded faithfulness to God.

Someone may ask if it is fair to amend a covenant that had been made many years ago. The answer to that is no because God was not asking anything of Israel that was not expected of their forefather Abraham. He walked before God in faith and God tested him in a way that no one in Israel has ever been tested. He was asked to sacrifice his only son that he had waited for so many years.

Let's look at what God asked from Israel.

1. See Exodus 24:3

³ Then Moses came and reported to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!"

See Deut. 30:15-20

¹⁵ "See, I have placed before you today life and happiness, and death and adversity, ¹⁶ in that I am commanding you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, so that you may live and become numerous, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but allow yourself to be led astray and you worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today that you will certainly perish. You will not prolong *your* days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and take possession of it. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have placed before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ²⁰ by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding close to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, so that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Unfortunately, Israel as a nation was not faithful to God during most of their history. Their final act of rebellion came when Israel rejected the Messiah and their covenant with God was nullified. The land of Canaan no longer belonged to the Jews. And this has been verified by the many years of history since that time.

Verses 11-14

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. 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. 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. 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.”

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.

Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between a Jew and his God. This was one commandment that the Jews did not neglect thru the years. According to this an uncircumcised Jew should be cut off from his people. Did the Jews follow this part of the command? The answer to that question is not as clear as one might think. It probably varied depending on their location and what point in history they lived in.

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.”

If a Jew was not circumcised, then he was excluded from the covenant.

Rabbi Menachem, in his commentary on the Book of Moses says the following: Our Rabbis have said, No circumcised person will see hell.

The Jews regarded circumcision as in some way securing their salvation. They should have realized that a relationship with God involved more than that.

Verses 15 -16

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.* 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.”

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.

This marriage was a partnership even if it was a bit crowded. Sarah deserved a new name just as much as Abraham did and God showed her the respect that Abraham failed to show her when he accepted Hagar as a second wife.

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.”

This is the same promise that God had given him 13 years ago.

Since Isaac is the only child that Sara had, the nations and king’s referred to in this verse must have come thru Isaac and his descendants.

Verses 17- 21

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?*” ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!” 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. 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. ²¹ But I will establish My covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”

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?*” ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!”

Abraham's laugh seems to be one of unbelief. Consider the following:

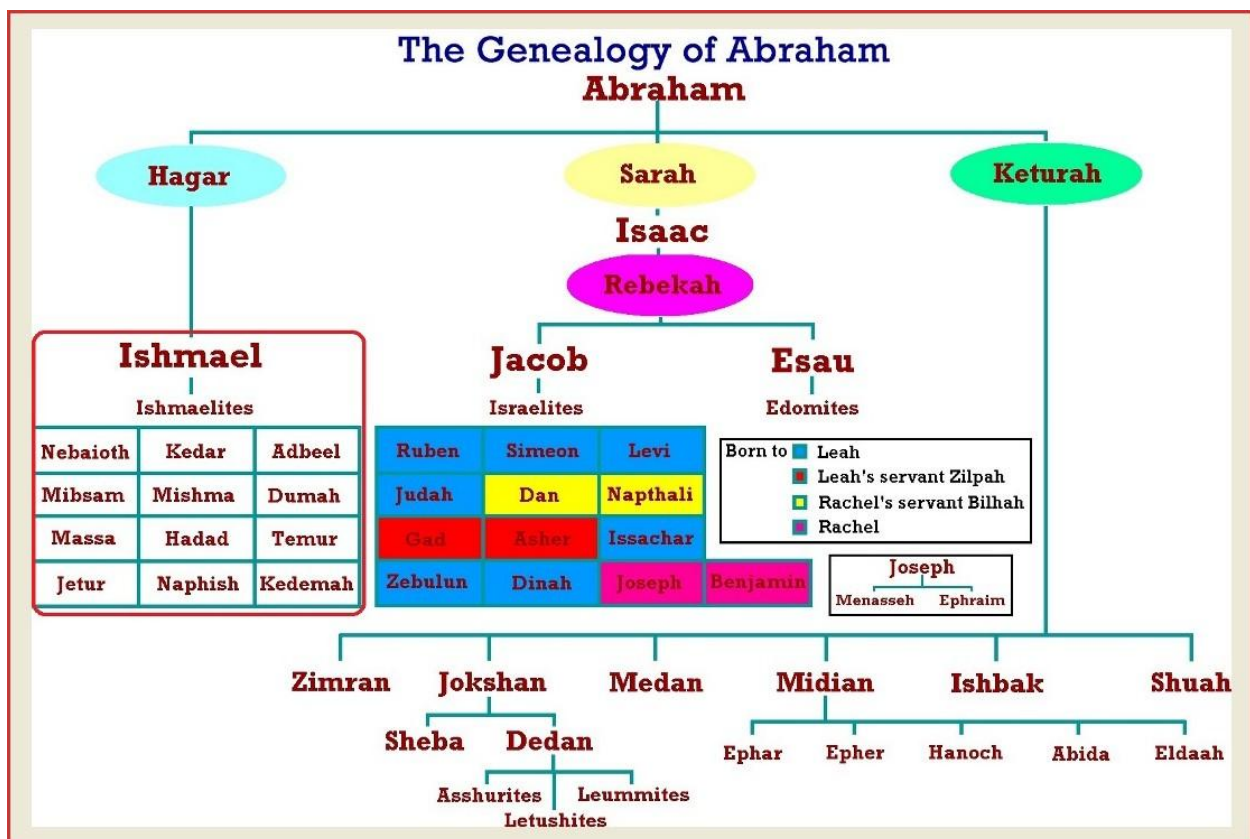
1. Shall a child be born to a 100 year old man?
2. Shall a woman 90 years old bear a child?
3. I'll settle for Ishmael being the heir.

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.**

God gave Abraham a mild rebuke for his unbelief.

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.**

See chart 1710



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

God had promised Abraham a son in Genesis 15 and it was this son that God would establish His covenant with. Abraham tried to “help” God in this matter (by taking Hagar as a second wife), but Abraham should have helped by trusting in God and patiently waiting for God to act.

But why did God wait until the birth of Isaac required a miracle? Isaac's miraculous birth was a sign to all believers that God is faithful in keeping His promises and He will do whatever it takes (even the impossible) in order to fulfill those promises. In addition, this tells every believer who struggles in their faith, as Abraham and Sarah did, that God will not give up on them.

Verses 22 - 27

²² When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. 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. ²⁴ Now Abraham was ninety-nine 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 in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁶ On this very same day Abraham was circumcised, as well as his son Ishmael. 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.

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

Abraham obeyed God immediately and completely. There were no shortcuts (no pun intended) or exemptions. He did all that God had commanded him to do.

²⁴ Now Abraham was ninety-nine 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 in the flesh of his foreskin.

Arabs, as descendants of Abraham, observe the rite of circumcision but their male children are circumcised when they are thirteen years old as Ishmael was here.