

## Genesis 15

1 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.  
I am your shield,  
your very great reward.”

2 But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” 5 He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

7 He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

8 But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

9 So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. 13 Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. 15 You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. 16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

### Notes

The opening words ‘after this’, after what? According to scholars 10 years have passed between chapter 12 and 15. Abram was already old as he was called by God, without an heir, but promised one and land to go with. 10 years had passed, he was now 85, no heir or land. Abram had fled to Egypt because of a famine, nearly lost his wife to Pharaoh, fought some Kings to rescue Lot his nephew, but nothing to show for it, no promised heir, no promised land, and 10 years older. Abram is obviously a bit miffed at the lack of progress in these promises, and God’s answer is: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward.’ God is telling Abram to switch his perspective from himself and his lack to Him who is able.

God shows Abram despite his doubts, that all he has to do is look up, and try and count the stars, for that will the number of offspring he will have.

Abram believed and it had credited him as righteousness, he attained right standing with God because he believed and trusted in His words, faith is key to salvation. And we are all spiritual offspring from Abram for we have trusted

the word of Jesus and devoted our lives to follow Him. We are part of the multitude of stars that Abram saw that night, shining out of the darkness giving light to this world.

God's response to Abram's complaint and proof was a request himself for Abram to bring some animals to sacrifice. In the ancient world this is known as a 'cutting covenant', God cuts a covenant with Abram that God would rather die than break his promise to Abram. This would involve the parties walking through the middle of the two halves to act out the agreement. However, it was only God represented by the smoking brazier and flaming torch that passes through. However, during this encounter with God, Abram encounter God's Holiness and insight into what was going to happen to his direct descendants.

Abram would have had to wait for another 400 years before the promise of land was fulfilled. So, are we willing to wait for His promises? God isn't a God of hurry. Hurry is an anathema to our spiritual walk, do not expect instant answers, but slow down, give space to hear, silence, sabbath, and simplify, listen, read and you may hear that still small voice, saying:

Do not be afraid, I am your shield, your great reward, prize, and incentive. Trust in Me.

### Questions

- 1) Have you ever experienced frustration with God, concerning unanswered prayers, or silence? What advice would you give to someone who is struggling with this experience?
- 2) Hebrew 12:1-2 speaks about the cloud of witnesses of faith, those who have gone before us add to these champions. Who has been the biggest light in your experience of faith, who would you want to be like when you grow up?
- 3) The ancient world had some strange rituals, and this 'cutting covenant' is no exception. What rituals do we perform now that people of the future could think are strange to them?
- 4) What are you waiting for? Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord to help reveal and give you some clarity or insight in to the things you have been praying about.