

Genesis 15

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Overview

It is helpful to see this chapter as part of ch. 13. Abram meets three distinguished individuals:

- Bera, king of Sodom (who is so rude that his name is not mentioned in the latter part of the chapter)
- Melchizedek, king of Salem
- YHWH, king of heaven. Close links with the other two (Waltke):
 - “shield” *magen* v.1 is the same root as “delivered” 14:20.
 - In place of the covenant with the Amorite allies (14:13), God offers him a covenant (v.18).
 - The substance *rk* God promises him in v.14 replaces that which had refused from the hand of the king of Sodom (14:21).

The chiastic arrangement of the first two forces us to compare them directly with one another. The Lord stands apart from them.

As shown in the table, this chapter is an alternation, ABCA'B'C', with a turning point (what Waltke calls a “janus”) at v.6. The two halves illustrate the two ways that God reveals himself to his prophets, according to Num. 12:6—visions (1-5) and dreams (12-21). Each half has three parts.

1. The Lord introduces himself and declares his beneficence toward Abram.
2. Abram expresses doubts about this beneficence.
3. The Lord allays those doubts in statement and symbol.

At the center, Abram’s questions are replaced by trust. Thus the center responds to both of the question sections. Thus we will consider it after we have reviewed the promise sections on either side.

1-5, Promise of the Seed

1, The Lord's Introduction

Fear Not.—Of what was Abram afraid? Extensive discussion:

- That the kings of the North would come back and take vengeance on him?
- That his neighbors, newly impressed with his power, would be envious and range themselves against him?

Most likely, the fear in question is that which naturally accompanies any theophany. This is the accustomed way in which God greets those to whom he is pleased to reveal himself in an especially vivid way. This is most common with angelic appearances, but 26:24 and Rev 1:17 concern appearances of deity.

- Gen 26:24, The Lord to Isaac
- Dan 10:5-12, when the angel appears to Daniel
- Matt 28:1-5, the angel to the women at the tomb
- Luke 1:12-13, 29-30; 2:9-10, angels in the annunciation
- Rev 1:17, the Lord Jesus to John

We do not sufficiently appreciate the majesty of God. When he allows his glory to shine forth, even for a moment, the most holy of men must be terrified because of their sin. He and his ministers thus customarily greet those in their favor to whom they appear with these words, “Fear not.” What a blessing it is when God thus greets us, instead of the alternative, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:23; 25:41).

Note: How does God appear to Abram?

- 12:7; 17:1; 18:1 *nir’ah*
- 15:1, *maxazeh*

I am ...—The Lord declares that he is two things to Abram, corresponding to the encounters Abram has just had with the two kings of Canaan.

- “Thy Shield.” *Magen* recalls Melchizedek’s declaration, that God is the one who delivered *miggen* Abram’s enemies into his hand. The Lord reinforces Melchizedek’s attribution of the victory to him.
- “Thy exceeding great reward.” Abram is right to refuse reward from the king of Sodom, and trust in the Lord to reward him.

In both cases, God does not say, “I will give you a shield, I will give you a reward,” but “I am your shield and your reward.”

- The unbeliever cares only for the blessing, and neglects the blesser.
- The carnal believer cares for the blesser only as a means to the blessing.
- The mature believer realizes that the blesser is the greatest blessing of all.

The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom’s face.
I shall not gaze on glory, but on the King of Grace;
not on the gifts he giveth, but on his nail-pierced hands.
The Lamb is all the glory, in Immanuel’s land.

(Note: The LXX translation, “thy reward is exceeding great,” as a descriptive rather than an identifying clause, would require the inverse word order, per Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause*.)

2-3, Abram’s Question

Lord GOD.—The title with which Abram addresses God here and in v.8 is regularly used throughout the OT in supplication. It is not to be confused with the similar phrase written with “Lord” in caps.

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- LORD God (as often in the creation story, 2:4 and ff) is “YHWH Elohim.” Its purpose is to identify the God of creation (Elohim) as the one whose personal name is YHWH.
- Lord GOD (here and v.8) is “adonay YHWH.”
 - *Adon* is the common noun “lord, master.”
 - Ugaritic usage shows that the *ay* ending is an intensifier (cf. Eissfeldt in TDOT I.62-72). Thus it distinguishes the all-sovereign God from merely human masters.
 - Thus Abram is here reiterating the conviction he reached in 14:22, that YHWH, the personal god who revealed himself to him, is the all-sovereign Lord of the universe.
 - This expression is common later in the OT; we should translate “Sovereign Lord” or the like.
 - Note: see Eissfeldt for discussion of the relation of this to “my lord,” which would require, even with plural of majesty, a *patax* instead of the *qamets*.

The point is that though Abram is asking a question, he is not asking it captiously or critically. He is acknowledging the Lord’s absolute sovereignty over him, and is simply asking for a clarification of his own weak understanding. This issue of the motive behind a question is critical for the difference between faith and unbelief.

What wilt thou give me?—Abram’s question here, and the later one in v.8, show that faith is not blind to the apparent obstacles to God’s promises. However, it brings those concerns back to God, acknowledges his sovereignty, and leans on him. The form of address shows the reverence with which Abram brings this question. He is not challenging God’s statement, but seeking to understand it. In fact, the very question acknowledges God’s promises of a seed. The emphasis seems to be on “me.” There is no lasting benefit to Abram if God’s gifts devolve on Eliezer.

The Concern.—2b has several obscure Hebrew constructions, but v.3 seems to cover the same ground, and is probably an explanation of the previous verse. Note the parallel between them, which also helps to correct some misunderstandings of AV.

Verse 2	Verse 3	
I go childless,	to me thou hast given no seed:	
and the steward of my house	and, lo, ... is mine heir.	“Steward” is literally “son of possession,” which might also mean “possessor,” i.e., heir.
is this Eliezer of Damascus	one born in my house	“Born in my house” is literally “son of my house,” which may refer to someone brought up in the house, but not the same as 14:14, which is literally “born in my house.” Thus it does not contradict what is said of Eliezer.

With the help of the interpretation in v.3, Abram’s objection is clear. In spite of God’s promise of a seed of blessing (12:2, 7; 13:15, 16), he has no offspring, and will have to leave his considerable wealth to a senior servant. Whatever blessings God gives him will in fact be passed on to someone else.

4-5, Answer

God answers him in an alternation of statement and symbol.

4, Statement

The statement directly contradicts Abram's supposition. It will be Abram's physical offspring, not a servant, who will be his heir.

5a, Symbol

He shows Abram the starry sky. It is impossible for us who live in artificially illuminated cities to appreciate the multiplicity of the stars at night; only those who have camped far from civilization on a moonless night can appreciate the force of this image.

5b, Statement

The Lord explicitly compares Abram's progeny to the sky.

The point being made is the same as 13:16, "as the dust of the earth." 22:17 introduces a third, the sand on the seashore. All three emphasize an innumerable progeny.

As a nation, Israel could be numbered, and in fact was, at least three times: at the beginning (Num 1:2) and end (26:2) of the Exodus, and again under David (2 Sam 24:1). In fact, the tax to be collected on such an occasion was a source of revenue for the tabernacle (Exod 30:12). But this poll was always partial (for example, omitting some tribes, Num 1:49; 1 Chr 21:6; and those under 20; Num 1:3; 1 Chr 27:23,24), to avoid challenging this promise.

7-21, Promise of the Land

7, The Lord's Introduction

The first introduction (v.1) reached back to the interviews with Bera and Melchizedek in ch. 14. This one reaches further back, to the promises of ch. 12. If we keep in mind the continuity of this interview with those, we see a progression in meaning. V.1 argues that God's blessing to Abram is *better* than any that an earthly king can convey, while v.7 insists that it is *prior*. "Abram, you are already under my beneficent care, and nothing can remove you from it."

It reminds Abram of another aspect of the promise that must seem as remote as that of the seed: possession of the land. He is still a stranger and pilgrim, with no geopolitical standing, identifying himself as a Hebrew to maintain his distinction from the people of the land.

8, Abram's Question

Compare Mary's question in Luke 1:34. Again, we see that it is not incompatible with faith for the believer to bring his questions to the Lord—but again, in an attitude of reverence and submission reflected in the address, "Lord GOD."

9-21, Answer

This time the alternation begins with the symbol. The symbol here is usually seen as a covenant sacrifice, and it is that, but that is only half of the story. Moses takes us twice to the symbol, and each time follows it with a statement leading forth a different aspect of its meaning.

9-11, Symbol

The first use of the animals is not as a sacrifice, but as a prophetic picture of what Abram's descendants will experience.

Take me.—Every time the Lord commands an animal sacrifice with *lqx* (Job 42:8; Exod 12:3,6; Lev 15:14,29), the pronoun refers to the offerer, presumably because it is the offeror who manipulates the animal. When someone says, "Take me" ("get me"), it is because the requestor wants to do something with it (cf. Rebecca's request for a kid in 27:9,13; Solomon's request for a sword in 1 Kings 3:24; see exegetical note.) In this case alone, the Lord says, "take for *me*," suggesting that he is the one who will manipulate them. It is entirely credible that it is the Lord who does the dividing in v.10, since it is for his use that Abram collects the animals. The resumption of "Abram" in v.11 might also suggest that the subject has changed in v.10. Abram stands by as the Lord divides the animals, and then seeks to drive away the birds of prey that come upon them.

The image must have been very striking for Abram. He brings the animals, sees them slaughtered, and then tries valiantly to protect them from the birds of prey. No wonder that when a deep sleep falls on him, it brings a "horror of great darkness." The entire symbol is very sobering.

12-16, Statement

As Abram falls asleep, he moves from vision to dream, per Num. 12:6. Now the Lord provides the interpretation of what he has just seen.

- The animals represent Israel (which is not surprising; they are all animals that are appropriate for sacrifice in the later Mosaic law, and the point of a sacrifice is that it represents the offeror.)
- Their division, and the attack of the birds of prey, symbolizes the affliction they must undergo. If indeed God is the one who splits the animals, it reflects his sovereignty in their sufferings in Egypt.
- Abram's deep sleep represents his coming death. He will be unable to protect them personally.
- But God will watch over them, bring them out with wealth, and bring them into the land.

The section contains two chronological notes.

- v.13 predicts 400 years of affliction in Egypt.
- V.16 describes the return "in the fourth generation," apparently reckoning 100 years to the generation. In Abram's case, this was exact (Isaac being born when he was 100).

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- There are also references to a 430 year period (Exod 12:40; Gal 3:17). Gal makes clear that this period measures the time between covenants; Hoehner shows that it fits between the last confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob (Gen 35:9-15) and the giving of the law. In Exod 12, it is the time of sojourning, not of oppression.

17, *Symbol*

Now the Lord uses the pieces of the animals to enact a covenant ceremony, according to ANE custom.

- Consider first the imagery of smoke and light. This is comparable to the pillar of cloud and of fire that led Israel through the wilderness (Exod 13:21,22), and the cloud and glory that filled the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34) and Temple (1 Kings 8:10,11). In each case, the light/fire/glory is the *shekinah*, the personal glory of God, and the cloud/smoke is a veil that surrounds it to protect sinful people from being consumed by it. (Note in Exod and Kings how people cannot enter the sanctuary when it is filled with God's glory.) Thus we should understand the "smoking furnace and burning lamp" as an emblem of the Lord himself.
- Now notice the motion of the Lord: he passes between the pieces of the animals. This is an ancient rite of covenant-making. To understand it, we need to keep in mind several things.
 - A standard part of a covenant, even in the Bible, is a set of curses invoked on those who do not keep it (cf. Deut. 28:15ff).
 - The Aramaic covenant text of Sefire, dating to before 740 BC, shows that these curses were sometimes acted out in the covenant ceremony. "Just as this wax is burned by fire, so may Mati'el be burned by fire. Just as this bow and these arrows are broken, so may Inurta and Hadad break the bow of Mati'el and the bow of his nobles. Just as a man of wax is blinded, so may Mati'el be blinded. Just as this calf is cut in two, so may Mati'el be cut in two, and may his nobles be cut in two."
 - We have an example of a covenant ceremony with divided animals in Jer 34:18-19 (context: vv. 8-22). Note that the participants walk between the pieces, to show their acquiescence in the curses symbolized by the slaughter of the animals.
 - The remarkable thing about the ceremony in Gen 15:17 is that only God walks between the pieces of the animals. He takes on himself full responsibility for the fulfillment of the promises. This covenant is unilateral; Abram is asleep through the entire ceremony. God unconditionally grants to him the benefits described in the following section. (This insight is extremely important eschatologically. It means that no failing of Abram's seed can deprive them of this promise, and thus forms the foundation for the future earthly reign of our Lord Jesus over the earth.)

18-21, *Statement*

There follows the explicit statement of the promise to which God has thus obligated himself, in making this covenant with Abram (lit. "cutting" the covenant, probably referring to the ritual

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described in the previous verses). The covenant is a formalization of the promise of 12:7. The extent of “this land” is specified both geographically and ethnically.

- Geographically, it extends from the Nile to the Euphrates.
- Ethnically, it encompasses land currently held by the ten nations listed. Various other versions of this list reappear in subsequent promises: see Ishida for discussion. This list is organized geographically and chronologically.

Consider each of its members in turn.

- This list begins with the Kenites, Kenizzites, and Kadmonites. These peoples appear to dwell in the south of the land, thus would come first to Abram’s view, and they have apparently integrated with Israel, thus are not mentioned in the list of nations to be conquered.
 - The Kenites are the family of Jethro, father-in-law of Moses (Judg 1:16), and were friendly to Israel during their wanderings and after their settlement. They represent nations who made peace with Israel, and so did not have to be conquered.
 - The Kenizzites are otherwise known only as the ancestors of Caleb (Num 32:12); they may also have made peace with Israel.
 - The Kadmonites are otherwise unknown, but perhaps they, like the previous two, integrated peacefully into Israel.
- The Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim, and Amorites are mentioned in other geographical texts (Num 13:29; Jos 11:3) as dwelling in the hill country.

	Gn 15:19-21	Ex 3:8	Ex 23:23	Ex 33:2	Ex 34:11	Dt 7:1	Jos 3:10	Jos 24:11	1 Ki 9:20
Kenite	1								
Kenizzite	2								
Kadmonite	3								
Hittite	4	2	2	3	3	1	2	4	2
Perizzite	5	4	3	4	4	5	4	2	3
Rephaim	6								
Amorite	7	3	1	2	1	3	6	1	1
Canaanite	8	1	4	1	2	4	1	3	
Girgashite	9					2	5	5	
Jebusite	10	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	5
Hivite		5	5	5	5	6	3	6	4

- The Canaanites occupied the coastal regions and the Jordan valley.
- The Jebusites were the last subdued, under David, with the conquest of Jebus (Jerusalem).
- The Girgashites are mentioned only in these lists, and are otherwise unknown; probably added to round out the number (as here, to ten; or elsewhere, to seven).
- This list omits the Hivites, who are in all the later lists. This family was responsible for the rape of Dinah, Gen 34:2, and may have been singled out because of this. It was mainly a northern group (Josh 11:3), although the Gibeonites, 5 miles NW of Jerusalem, are associated with it (Josh 9:7; 11:19). The group is mentioned for the first time in Exodus

3:8; possibly it had migrated into this area following Abram’s time, and so is not mentioned here. Mendenhall, on phonetic grounds, identifies them with the Luwians from Cilicia.

6, Abram’s Faith and God’s Imputation

Consider first the verse in its context, then its quotations in the NT.

In Context

The Position of the Verse

Verse 6 stands between the two promises, that of the seed in 1-5 and that of the land in 7-21. In view of the strong structural parallels between the two, and the lack of a correspondent to v.6, we can understand its role in two ways.

1. It might come in chronological order. Abram believed the promise concerning the seed, God imputed that faith to him as righteousness, and on the basis of that righteousness then granted him the blessing of the promise of the land. So Waltke, following von Rad. Rom 4:18 associates the verse mainly with the promise concerning the seed, and one could argue that 4:17-25 focuses on the common element of “life from the dead” as the object of that faith.
2. Or it might highlight Abram’s faith in both promises, and punctuate the structural seam between the panels. Then it would not have to be in chronological order.
 - Paul’s emphasis in Rom 4 is still true: Abram *did* believe in the promise of life from death, in spite of his initial doubts (Gen 15:2). He also believed in the promise of the inheritance, in spite of his initial doubts (v.8), and perhaps this latter promise is part of the “heir of the world” status described in Rom 4:13.
 - More fundamentally, the focus of 15:6 is not on Abram’s faith in the promises, but on his faith in the Lord. He trusted in God rather than in circumstances or his own abilities.

Word by Word

Believed.— We need to distinguish *)mn* “believe” (LXX *pisteuw*) from *b+x* “trust” (LXX *elpizw*). AV:

	believe	trust
<i>)mn</i> (108)	44	5
<i>b+x</i> (120)	0	103

One clear datum is usage with *dbr* “word.”

- “Believe” frequently governs *dbr* “word” as a proposition with truth value (1 Kings 10:7 is a good example; Psa 106:12, 24; Prov 14:15; also association of *)mn* with “witness,” as in Jer 42:5).

- “Trust” does so only when that word is objectified either as a tool for disputation (Ps 119:42) or as a charm to guard against attack (Jer 7:4,8).

In this case, it is God, not just a word, that Abram believes, though God’s word is before him: 15:1 is the first reference in the OT to the word of the Lord, just as v.6 is the first reference to belief and righteousness. One can either “trust in” or “believe” God—with subtly different meanings. “Believe” is accepting God’s word as true, treating him as a truthful communicator and accepting what he says. Abram’s subsequent actions show that he is far from trusting in the Lord, but he accepts the truth of what God says. Abram has made up his mind that the one who speaks to him is true. His promises are true; so are his criticisms. Note how this simple formulation implies both repentance of one’s own sin and acceptance of God’s provision. Abram’s mind is aligned with God’s. As in ch. 1, linguistic concepts are central in God’s nature and dealings with his creation.

- Creation results when God speaks a word, and space-time yield to its authority.
- Salvation results when God speaks a word, and humans bow to its truth.

Imputed.—What does “imputed” mean?

- Positive sense: Num 18:25-30, “counted as,” for the Levite’s tithe.
- Negative sense (Calvin): compare Lev 17:4; 2 Sam 19:19 for the imputation of guilt. One to whom iniquity is imputed is held to be guilty. In Abram’s case, one to whom righteousness is imputed is held to be righteous.
- Thus the verse says that because Abram believed God, God considered him righteous.

Righteousness.—The verb “to justify” is clearly (Deut 25:1) a judicial declaration (cf. Morris , APC, 254). “Justification” is securing a verdict of acquittal at God’s tribunal. Then “justice,” “righteousness” is that character of a person that inclines the tribunal to grant this acquittal. Clearly, we must understand Gen 15:6 in this context. Abram stands before God’s tribunal, and is declared righteous. Why? Because from start to finish, he accepts the truth of what the judge says.

- Certainly, one who does not accept the truth of a judge cannot hope to be acquitted.
- Some judges might still condemn those who acknowledge the truth of what the judge says, but it is a blessed characteristic of our divine judge that if we believe him, we have nothing to fear from him!

For.—A great deal hangs on this preposition. There are two dominant interpretations.

- The Jews of the NT period, and after them the Arminians, claimed that righteousness was imputed to Abram *propter fidem*, because of his faith, the faith itself being counted as being righteousness. They then conclude that faith is a meritorious work, and use the passage to argue that Abram was justified by works.
- The classic reformed position is that righteousness is imputed to Abram *per fidem*, through his faith, but that righteousness and faith are two different things. Robert Haldane on Romans, p. 163: “Nothing, then can be a greater corruption of the truth than to represent faith itself as accepted instead of righteousness, or to be the righteousness that saves the sinner.”

In this case, the reformers' position is good theology but bad philology. The NT makes it clear that God's own righteousness is imputed to us, but that teaching is not in Gen 15:6, as Calvin recognizes, "It is not less the part of stupor than of impudence, when this faith is said to have been imputed to him for righteousness, to mingle with it some other meaning, than that the faith of Abram was accepted in the place of righteousness with God." (This is thus only one of many cases where the reformed tradition goes far beyond Calvin.) The Hebrew text has no preposition, and asserts simply that God reckons Abram's faith as righteousness.

Does this mean that the Jews and Arminians are right, and Abram's faith is a meritorious work for which he gains acceptance with God? Hardly. If the verb were "trust," it might be meritorious, for "trust" implies that we act on the basis of our confidence in God. But the use of "believe" shows that he is simply acquiescing in what God has said.

It is the natural response to an utterance to take it at face value and believe it. Children automatically believe what they hear from their parents; only as they gain experience with sin in the world do they begin to question. We do not praise them for believing; we rather condemn them for doubting.

- It took the serpent's tempting to suggest to Adam and Eve that God's word was not to be taken at face value, and their sin in large measure consisted of doubting what God had said.
- So it is not unreasonable that Abram's accepting what God has said should be counted as righteousness.

Abram has here been confronted with an apparition of God so powerful that he must be comforted, "Fear not." Before such an apparition, doubting Adam hid himself. By God's grace, Abram enters into conversation, and takes God at his word. Abram's righteousness does not begin with his belief; it begins with the unmerited favor by which God separated him from his pagan kinfolk and made promises to him that he offered to no one else. Abram's faith is thus his response to God's blessings that have already singled him out, not a distinctive response to God's general goodness to all men. The faith that is reckoned to him as righteousness is his simple acceptance of the unmerited bounty that God has sovereignly bestowed on him.

Other OT Passages

Ps 106:30,31 is the only other OT passage where something is imputed to someone as righteousness. Interestingly, in this case it is a deed that is so imputed, rather than faith. What does this do to Paul's argument in Rom 4?

- Calvin: yes, a deed can be righteousness, but one must keep all the law to be perfectly righteous (James 2:10). Compare Deut 6:25; Deut 24:13.
- We might focus on the underlying zeal that motivated Phineas' action. It was not the deed per se, but the attitude of heart that led him to it. This is the aspect to which God calls attention in Num 25:11, 13.
- Note two technical differences between the two texts.
 - 15:6 says literally, "He reckoned it to him righteousness," while Ps 106 inserts / "as." In the legal formula for imputing guilt, the object is direct, not indirect. The indirect form is only used in non-legal, more figurative contexts.

- The voice of the verb shifts from active with God as subject in Gen 15:6, to passive with subject unspecified in Ps 106:31. The difference appears to be comparable to that between Rom 4 and James 2:20-25, and suggested by James 2:18 and the first class conditional in Rom 4:2: Abraham was justified by works, but not before God. True inner faith is visible only to God, who reckons it as righteousness. In addition, it will invariably produce good works, which are visible to men, and give them the basis to consider someone righteous.

In the NT

This verse is a cornerstone of the doctrine of justification by faith apart from works, and is cited in this regard in three NT passages.

Gal. 3:6.—This is one of a catena of verses cited to demonstrate justification by faith apart from works.

James 2:23.—James recognizes that this verse is a cornerstone of justification by faith. He is concerned to remind his readers that true faith has good works as its outcome, and so sets this verse alongside the offering of Isaac as the two poles of Abraham’s justification, its ground and its demonstration.

Rom. 4:3.—Here is the fountainhead. Paul cites two OT characters to show that we are declared just by God on the basis of faith, and not of works.

- This passage shows that justification is by faith;
- David’s confession in Ps 32:1, following his sin with Bathsheba, shows that it is not of works. (Note that Paul does *not* derive the lack of works from Abram, but merely the sufficiency of faith.)

Paul notes (vv.9-12) that this statement precedes any reference to Abram’s circumcision, which doesn’t happen until ch. 17. In fact, we will see several instances of Abram’s sin after 15:6 before we’re done. Abram was righteous by imputation before he received circumcision, and while he still lived in the flesh; therefore it is inappropriate for the Judaizers to insist that gentiles must be circumcised in order to be righteous.

Exegetical note: *lqx* + *l* with sacrifices (vv.9-11)

Take me (v.9).—Imperatives of *lqx* with following *l*- govern either the first person (as here, “take for me”) or the second (“take for yourself”). Check three things:

- other instances of the first person: always describes bringing something for the speaker’s use.
 - 27:9,13; Jacob bringing a kid to his mother to prepare savory food for Isaac; he brings it to her and she then prepares it.
 - 34:4, Shechem asking Hamor to get Dinah for his wife
 - Judg 14:2,3, Samson’s demand for a wife.
 - 1 Kings 3:24, Solomon’s request for a sword to divide the baby
 - 1 Kings 17:10,11, Elijah’s request for water and bread from the widow

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- 2 Kings 2:20, Elisha's request for a cruse of salt
- 2 Kings 3:15, Elisha's request for a minstrel
- other instances of sacrifice: all second person! Because the person doing the taking is also doing the offering.
 - Exod 12:21 (Moses speaking), a lamb for the sacrifice
 - Exod 30:23,34 (Lord speaking), the spices for the anointing oil and the incense
 - Lev 9:2,3 (Moses), sacrifices at the consecration of the tabernacle
 - 1 Sam 2:16 (worshippers), *sensu malu* of sons of Eli taking the sacrifice for their own use
 - Job 42:8 (Lord), Job's friends
- Non-imperative discussions of sacrifice
 - Exod 12:3 (Lord speaking, 3rd person): Passover lamb
 - Lev 15:14,29 (Lord speaking, 3rd person): offering for an issue (third person)
 - Exod 25:2 (Lord, 2nd person): Israel to bring materials to construct the tabernacle.
- How about the indicative with third person in v.10? Must it refer to Abram, or could it refer to the Lord?
 - 21:21, Hagar took a wife for Ishmael
 - Exod 2:3, Moses' mother took an ark for him

Exegetical Note: Duration of the Exodus

See Hoehner, Bib Sac, Oct. 1969 (in my binder on Chronology of the OT)

Data

Exod 12:40, Israel's sojourning at the time of the exodus was 430 years.

Gal 3:17, 430 years from the Abrahamic covenant to Sinai

Acts 7:6, Israel would be "entreat[ed] evil" for 400 years

Exod 6:16-20: Levi (137 years) → Kohath (133) → Amram (137) → Aaron and Moses

Gen 15:16, return in the fourth generation

Hoehner also cites a 450 year exodus from Acts 13:19-20, but MT reads this as applying to the residence in the land, not the exodus.

Solutions

Calvin, Jewish commentators, others: 400 ≈ 430, and both refer to the time from the covenant of Gen 15 to the giving of the law.

Cassuto: 430 = 6*60 + 70 (symbolically, a long time); the ages in Exod 6 add to 490, and back off for time before exodus. (Uncontrollable.)

Keil, Archer, others: 400 \approx 430, and both refer to the captivity.

- Keil usefully notes regarding the four-generation genealogy in Exod 6 that two Amrams are probably involved, with some generations between them.
- Archer and Hoehner cite numerous other genealogies with more generations between Jacob and Moses.

Hoehner:

- 400 = captivity; “four generations” = 4 x 100, the age at which Abraham begat Isaac
- 30 reaches back to last confirmation of the covenant to Jacob in Gen 35

Exegetical Note: Promises of Innumerable Offspring

See separate chart “InnumerableOffspring.” Neither the reference to innumerable offspring nor the star analogy can be restricted to the church; both are applied to Israel later in the OT.

Problem: How then could Moses (twice, at the Exodus and just before the conquest) and later David number the people? Moses himself (Dt 1:9, 10) and David’s son Solomon (1 Kings 3:8) both describe the people as innumerable, yet in the epoch of both these people, the nation is numbered.

David’s census is accompanied by some interesting notes:

- 1 Chr 21:6, “But Levi and Benjamin counted he [Joab] not among them: for the king’s word was abominable to Joab.”
- 1 Chr 27:23,24, “But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David.”

So perhaps the omission of the children is meant to avoid challenging the Lord’s promise. One may number a subset of the people (the military ones, for example), though only with appropriate tax, but one may not number the entire nation.

Yet Rev 7:9 shows that the language is also appropriately used of the church.

The following table shows the distribution of the metaphors and vocabulary across different categories. The bolded cells show that both stars and innumerability are attributed to physical Israel.

Genesis 15

	Metaphors				Numeration verbs (& related nouns)			
	Dust	Stars	Sand	Grass-hoppers	MNH	SPR	MDD	PQD
God's Promises to Abra(ha)m	13:16	15:5; 22:17	22:17		13:16	15:5		
God's Promises to others	Jacob, 28:14	Jacob, 32:12 David and Levi, Jer 33:22	The nation, Isa 48:19 David & Levi, Jer 33:22			Ishmael, 16:10 Jacob, 32:12 David and Levi, Jer 33:22	David & Levi, Jer 33:22	
Men's Description of Israel	Balaam, Num 23:10	Moses, Dt 1:10			Balaam, Num 23:10 Solomon, 1 Kings 3:8	Balaam, Num 23:10 Solomon, 1 Kings 3:8		
God's Description of Israel (cf. Heb 11:12)			1 Kings 4:20					
God's Description of Others				Amalek, Midian, & eastern nations, Judg 6:5		Amalek, Midian, & eastern nations, Judg 6:5		
Moses' Censuses						Num 1:2		Num 1:3,19; 26:7
David's Census					2 Sam 24:1	2 Sam 24:2,9		2 Sam 24:2,4,9,10