Research on: Abram call from God and Covenant with God

Gen. 12:1, 2, 4

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

“We have here the call whereby Abram was removed from, the land of his nativity into the land of promise. This call was designed both to try his faith and obedience, and also to set him and his family apart for God, in order that the universal prevalence of idolatry might be prevented, and a remnant reserved for God, among whom his true worship might be maintained, his oracles preserved, and his ordinances established till the coming of the Messiah. God seems also, by sending him into Canaan, a country given up to the most gross, cruel, and barbarous idolatry, even the sacrificing of their own children to their idols, to have intended that he, and the other patriarchs descended from him, should be witnesses for God to these nations before their destruction” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com))

The word ‘Abram’ in Hebrew is Abram which means “exalted father, high father, the founder and father of the Jewish nation; the son of Terah, born in Mesopotaia, which he left, as called of God, and sojourned in the land of Canaan with his flocks, in a kind of nomadic life. In the book of Genesis he is always called i.e ‘father of elevation;’ But in that passage (Gen 17:5) in which a numerous progeny is promised to spring from hims, he is called by a slight alteration of his name, ‘father of a multitude” (www.blueletterbible.org).

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

“God made choice of Abram, and singled him out from among his fellow-idolaters, that he might reserve a people for himself, among whom his true worship might be maintained till the coming of Christ. From henceforward Abram and his seed are almost the only subject of the history in the Bible” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

Blessing is berakah in Hebrew and means “a source of blessing; prosperity; praise of God; a gift; a present; a treaty of peace; a benediction; an invocation of good” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

“Get thee out of thy country—His being brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God had probably been a considerable time before. This call included two promises: the first, showing the land of his future posterity; and the second, that in his posterity all the earth was to be blessed (Ge 12:2). Abraham obeyed, and it is frequently mentioned in the New Testament as a striking instance of his faith (Heb 11:8).God calls Abram from his own country and kindred to Canaan, [Genesis 12:1](http://biblehub.com/genesis/12-1.htm). Promises to make of him a great and flourishing nation, and to bless in Christ his seed, [Genesis 12:2](http://biblehub.com/genesis/12-2.htm),3. Abram obeys, [Genesis 12:4-6](http://biblehub.com/context/genesis/12-4.htm). God appears to him, and promises to give Canaan to his seed; he builds an altar, [Genesis 12:7](http://biblehub.com/genesis/12-7.htm). He removes to Beth-el, and there builds an altar, [Genesis 12:8](http://biblehub.com/genesis/12-8.htm)” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

Gen. 17:1, 3-5, 7

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.

“*Ninety years old and nine*. Ishmael was now thirteen years old, and Abraham probably expected no other heir. But his faith was to be put to a further test.

*Almighty* is *Shadday* in Hebrew which means “almighty, most powerful, El Shaddai – the Almighty God” (Gesenius 7706). *Shad* means “breast” in Hebrew.  (the breasted one – which indicates the feminine aspect of God)

“Most English translations render *El Shaddai* as ‘God Almighty,’ probably because the translators of the Septuagint (LXX - the Greek translation of the Old Testament) thought *Shaddai* came from a root verb (shaddad) that means ‘to overpower’ or ‘to destroy.’

One Bible source cites that: “The Latin Vulgate likewise translated Shaddai as ‘Omnipotens’ (from which we get our English word omnipotent).  Jacob’s blessing given in Genesis 49:25 indicates that Shaddai might be related to the word for breasts (shadaim), indicating sufficiency and nourishment” (http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Names\_of\_G-d/el.html ).  Abraham understood God to mean Father-Mother, masculine and feminine.

“*Walk before me, and be thou perfect*, i.e. always conscious of My presence, and living a pious, whole-hearted, upright life These are the conditions required by God in connection with the covenant about to be made. God, on His part, promises to make Abraham the ancestor of many nations, and to give Canaan to his descendants” (Dummelow 26).

*Perfect* in Hebrew is *tamiym* which means “complete, whole, entire, sound, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity, what is complete or entirely in accord with truth and fact” (Gesenius 8549).

“Just as the covenant with Noah is confirmed by the rainbow, the covenant with Abram is attested by three new names. [El Shaddai, Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah] The first is that of God himself, who reveals his name as ‘El Shaddai’ (God Almighty). It is clear that it involved the communication to Abram of some special character in God; for a name to the ancient Hebrew was never merely a name; it was an essential element in the personality of him who bore it, and the communication of a particular name by God indicated that in a special way he was to be known to the man or men to whom the communication was made” (*Abingdon* 231).

 “*almighty God*. It is a name of God that seems to have come into use after the flood, being not found in the Scriptures previous to that destructive dispensation, but soon after it, in perhaps the oldest book in the world, that of Job, thirty-one times. . . . It was the name by which He made himself known to the patriarchs, designed to convey the sense of ‘all-sufficient’. . . Nothing was more appropriate or more needful to be kept before the mind of Abram than that the Divine Being, on whose word he relied, was able to do things which seemed above and contrary to nature” (Jamieson 1.151).

 “Within the narrative, God identifies himself to Abram as ‘God Almighty’ (el sadday). In so doing, the author has removed all doubt regarding the faith of Abram at this stage in the narrative. He worships the covenantal God ‘the Lord’ (yhwh), but he knows him as ‘God Almighty’ (*EBC* 1.179).

“*And be perfect*. Upright, sincere in heart, speech and behavior” (Jamieson 1.151).

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

“Abram fell on his face. - This is the lowliest form of reverence, in which the worshipper leans on his knees and elbows, and his forehead approaches the ground. Prostration is still customary in the East. Abram has attained to loftier notions of God. "God talked with him." Yahweh, El Shaddai, is here called God. The Supreme appears as the Author of existence, the Irresistible and Everlasting, in this stage of the covenant relation” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

4 As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

“*Covenant*. A solemn promise made binding by an oath, which may be either a verbal formula or symbolic action. Such an action or formula is recognized by both parties as the formal act which binds the actor to fulfill his promise” (*IDB* 1.714-723).

*Covenant* is *briyth* in Hebrew which means “an alliance, treaty, league, agreement, pledge, a divine ordinance with signs or pledges” (Gesenius 1285).

“A multitude of nations and kings are to trace their descent from Abram. This is true in a literal sense. The [twelve tribes](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/17-4.htm) of Israel and many Arab tribes, the twelve princes of Ishmael, Keturah's descendants, and the dukes of Edom sprang from him. But it is to be more magnificently realized in a spiritual sense. "Nations" is a term usually applied, not to the chosen people, but to the other great branches of the human race. This points to the original promise, that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. "Abraham." The father of many nations is to be called by a new name, as he has come to have a new nature, and been elevated to a new dignity. The high father has become the father of the multitude of the faithful” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

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.

“The patriarch’s name in Babylonia had been *Abram*, meaning, perhaps, ‘exalted father.’ On entering into a new relationship with God by covenant, of which the sign was circumcision, the patriarch received a new name, ‘Abraham.’. . . In commemoration of this event Jewish children receive their name when admitted to the covenant by circumcision . . .” (Dummelow 26).

“A change of name is an advertisement of some new circumstance in the history, rank, or religion of the individual who bears it. . . . There was no way, according to prevailing notions, in which the Divine promise would be so well remembered, and the splendid prospects of the patriarch become more widely known than by giving him and his wife new names, significant of their high destiny. Instead of Abram = *Ab* or *Abba*, father, and *ram*, high, ‘a high father,’ he was to be called Abraham = *Ab-rab-hyamon*, father of a great multitude; and this has been verified, whether he is considered as the ancestor of the Jews, Arabs, or the Father of the Faithful” (Jamieson 1.151).

“To perpetuate the remembrance of the wonder, the promised seed was to bear the name of Isaac, or ‘laughter.’ Thus, as afterwards, at the outset of the calling of the Gentiles, the name of Saul was changed into Paul—probably after the first-fruits of his ministry, -- so here, at the outset of Israel’s calling, we have three new names, indicative of the power of God, which lay at the root of all, and of the simple faith which received the promise. The heir of the promises was indeed to be the child of Sarah; but over Ishmael also would the Lord watch, and ‘multiply him exceedingly,’ and ‘make him a great nation.’ Ever since those days has the sign of circumcision remained to bear testimony to the covenant with Abraham. On the eighth day, as the first full period of seven has elapsed, a new period is, as it were, to begin; and each Jewish child so circumcised is a living witness to the transaction between God and Abraham more than three thousand years ago” (Edersheim 66).

“Now the Israelites, it should be remembered, were not set apart from the rest of mankind to be the chosen people of God because they were of themselves superior to other mortals, but because of what they possessed of the truth about God and man. Abraham’s discernment that God is Spirit so transformed his nature that he was given a new name; and his spiritual experience marked the beginning of Israel as a nation and as the avenue through which the redemptive truth was to become known to mankind. The patriarch’s perception of spiritual reality set aside material law in the birth of his son Isaac; therefore it was said that his seed, or the offspring of his enlightened sense of being, were to be ‘called’ or made known through Isaac, and not through the sons born after the beliefs of material sense and its asserted law” (Greenwood 268).

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.

“*And I will establish my covenant —*Not to be altered or revoked; not with thee only, then it would die with thee; but with thy *seed after thee —*Especially thy spiritual seed. It is *everlasting*in the evangelical meaning of it, from *everlasting*in the counsels of it, and to *everlasting*in the consequences of it. This is a covenant of exceeding great and precious promises. Here are two which indeed are all-sufficient: one is, that God would be *a God to him and to his seed.*All the privileges of the covenant, all its joys and all its hopes, are summed up in this” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).