

Genesis 15:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Analysis

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am t... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Covenant Ceremony emerge from this passage?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

אַחֲרַי	דְּבַר	הָאֵלֵּהּ	הִנֵּה	דְּבַר	יְהוָה	אֵל	אַבְרָם
After	the word	H428	came	the word	of the LORD	H413	not Abram
H310	H1697		H1961	H1697	H3068		H87
בְּמַחְזֵה	לֵאמֹר	אֵל	תִּירָא	אַבְרָם	אֲנֹכִי	מִגִּדִּי	לִי
in a vision	saying	H408	Fear	not Abram	H595	I am thy shield	H0
H4236	H559		H3372	H87		H4043	
שְׂכָרְךָ	הַגָּדֹל	הַגָּדֹל	מְאֹד:				
reward	great		and thy exceeding				
H7939	H7235		H3966				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 41:10 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Psalms 119:114 (Word): Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

Psalms 84:11 (References Lord): For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Genesis 26:24 (References Lord): And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

Isaiah 41:14 (References Lord): Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Lamentations 3:24 (References Lord): The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

Psalms 5:12 (References Lord): For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

Luke 12:32 (Parallel theme): Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Psalms 18:2 (References Lord): The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Ruth 2:12 (References Lord): The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.