

Genesis 15:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Analysis

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be ab... 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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. How should this truth about Prophecy shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּצֵא אֱלֹהִים	אֶת־וְהָיָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	הִבֵּט	וַיֹּאמֶר	וַיֹּאמֶר
And he brought him forth	H853	abroad	and said	Look	H4994
H3318		H2351	H559	H5027	
הַשָּׁמַיִם	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה
now toward heaven	and tell	the stars	H518	if thou be able	and tell
H8064	H5608	H3556		H3201	H5608
וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה
H853	and said	H0	unto him So	H1961	shall thy seed
	H559		H3541		H2233

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

Romans 4:18 (Parallel theme): Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

Deuteronomy 1:10 (Parallel theme): The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Exodus 32:13 (Parallel theme): Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will

multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

Genesis 22:17 (Parallel theme): That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

Deuteronomy 10:22 (Parallel theme): Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Psalms 147:4 (Parallel theme): He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.

Jeremiah 33:22 (Parallel theme): As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

1 Chronicles 27:23 (Parallel theme): 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.

Genesis 12:2 (Parallel theme): 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: