

All the Nations Sharing in the Blessing

This weeks reading is from Parashat Lech Lecha (*Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-17:27*). This week the Lord God calls Abram to leave his land, leave his father’s house, and to leave his people (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר) (אֲרָצְךָ) and go to a new land. The Lord promises to bless Abram and make him into a great nation (וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ גְדוֹלָה) and that those who bless him the Lord will bless, and those who curse him the Lord will curse (וְאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אָאֵר). We also read when the Lord called Abraham He also said that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed (וְנִבְרַכְתוּ בְךָ כָּל מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה). It is interesting here in the Hebrew text, the word Ha’adamah (הָאָדָמָה, the ground) is used to indicate that all of the families of the Earth will be blessed, and not just those who are in the land of Israel. The Scriptures say “*all of the families of the ground*” taking from the meaning that God created man from the dust of the earth (וַיִּצְרָר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עֶפְרָר מִן-הָאָדָמָה) in *Bereshit / Genesis 2:7*. The Aramaic Targum (Onkelos) states, all the “*seed of the earth*” will be blessed (וְיִתְבָּרְכוּן בְּדִילָךְ כָּל זְרַעֲיִת אֲרַעָא). In the covenant that God is making with Abram, the Lord makes a promise not only to Abram but also to his descendants (*Israel*), and to all the world (*the non-Jewish peoples*). It is within these few verses, the Abrahamic Covenant (*Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-3*) that all other covenants find their basis. The Mosaic covenant in the Torah expands upon the covenant of the Promised Land (Israel) and establishes a dwelling place, the Tabernacle, where He (God) will make His name known. The Davidic covenant is related to the issue of prophet, priest, and king, and the New Covenant relates to the fulfillment of these promises God has made to all the families of the earth.

<b>שְׂדוּקָה יִתַּח / The Holy Scriptures</b>	
<b>סֵפֶר בְּרֵאשִׁית פָּרָשָׁה יב</b>	<b><i>Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-3</i></b>
<p>א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרַעָךְ: ב וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ גְדוֹלָה וְאֲבָרְכָה וְאֶגְדָּלְךָ וְשִׁמְךָ וְהָיָה בְּרַכָּה: ג וְאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אָאֵר וְנִבְרַכְתוּ בְךָ כָּל מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה:</p>	<p>12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; 12:2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’ (NASB)</p>

Reading the bible from the beginning, the Abrahamic covenant is first given here in this text. In the various reiterations of the covenant, the wording changes slightly, but the basic components of the blessing remain the same. It is significant that the blessing is “*in Abraham*” or “*in his seed*.” Note that in the reiteration of the Covenant to Isaac and Jacob (*Bereshit / Genesis 15, 17, 18:18, 26:3, and 28:14*) very similar language is given. The blessing is to come to all nations through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When considering these Scripture verses it is clear that the promises given to Abraham by the Lord will be fully realized when all the nations will also share in the blessings. In other words, the covenant cannot be completed in terms of the promises fulfilled until all the nations have been blessed through the seed of Abraham. It is important to note that the “*seed*” (זָרַע) is through whom the blessing would come and that seed has not yet come at this point in history in *Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-3*. Reading through all of the book of Genesis, this blessing was also not realized during the lives of the Patriarchs. In fact, this was not realized in all of the Tanach and as a result of this these verses come to be interpreted as a Messianic expectation since only the Messiah could accomplish this kind of blessing. Rashi says the following (ג) וּנְבָרְכֶיךָ בְךָ. יש אגדות רבות. וזהו פשוטו, אדם אומר לבנו תהא כאברהם, וכן כל ונברכו בך שבמקרא, וזה מוכיח, בך יברך ישראל, (ג): “*There are many Aggadot (interpretations), but this is the plain meaning, a man says to his son, may you be like Abraham, and similarly every occurrence of the words וּנְבָרְכֶיךָ in Scripture proves the interpretation of Bereshit / Genesis 49:20 by you will Israel bless, saying may God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh.*” Looking at the Aramaic Targums and Rashi, the rabbis do not conclude explicitly in their translations or in the commentary that these verses are Messianic. The interpretation of these verses as Messianic is within its relation to other passages in Genesis being viewed from a covenant perspective. The blessings are not only for Abraham and his offspring but the blessings will also pass through him to all the nations. In addition to this, the original promise given here in *Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-3* is for “*all the families of the earth*.” The use of the word Ha’adamah (הָאָדָמָה, Earth) here reminds us of the curse which God placed upon the ground in *Bereshit / Genesis 5:29*. This hints at how man was created from the ground and that at some future time the curse that God placed upon man (death) and the ground would be eliminated and somehow this is done so “*in Abraham*.” Something to note in *Bereshit / Genesis 11* we also read of Migdal Bavel (הַמִּגְדָּל בְּבֶל, the tower of Babel) and the scattering of the nations. This blessing might also suggest that some how the people who were scattered who become “*the nations*” would at some point be reunited and in some way the blessing would accomplish this reunification. As a result of these observations from the Scriptures, the work of the Messiah was believed to be the means by which this promise would be realized. *Acts 13:32-33* states 13:32 ‘*And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, 13:33 that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today have begotten You.’* (NASB) The Apostles refer to our text from Parashat Lech Lecha and from *Tehillim / Psalms 2:7* when referring to Yeshua the Messiah whom God raised from the dead. In Him this covenant is realized and the blessing of Abraham to the nations continues even today!