

A REMINDER OF THE CONTEXT

In Genesis 14 there was a battle of four kings of Mesopotamia versus five kings of the Jordan valley. The Mesopotamian kings decimated the Jordanian kings, and in the process to Lot captive. Abram took 318 men and attacked two of the Mesopotamian kings, rescuing Lot and killing the King of Shinar. Upon this victory, a mysterious Melchizedek, King of Salem, appears in a mostly parenthetical statement. Our interpretation was that Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ, appearing to celebrate the death of the King of Shinar, who could very well be Nimrod himself. Upon the completion of this account, we are introduced to a “new and improved” phase in Abram’s walk with God.

AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE FROM GOD | GENESIS 15:1

The important events of chapter 15 are specifically said to take place **after these things** (v. 1). Such would be obvious without being explicitly stated. But since it is explicitly stated, we must assume that the Lord would like us to associate chapters 14 and 15 as logically connected rather than separate and unrelated events. Yet rarely do any Bible teachers connect them!

Could the lack of connection stem from an ignorance of the significance of the defeat of the King of Shinar? If we see Abram as the type of Christ and Amraphel (14:1) as the type of the Antichrist, then the defeat of Amraphel (likely Nimrod) is so astounding that *Christ Himself* shows up to honor the *type of Christ*, Abram.

And not only does God the Son show up, but God the Father does as well, in the first verse of chapter 1. Not only is this the first time we read the words **the word of the LORD** in Scripture (it will be used 258 times altogether), but this is the first time this word comes **in a vision**. Prior to this point God has spoken *audibly*. With this message God speaks both *audibly* and *visually*.

Not only does God give a “new and improved” communication, but He shows up with a two-fold blessing of unbelievable strength. First, God promises Abraham to be **thy shield**, and then promises to be **thy exceeding great reward**. Can it get any better?

Is it such a stretch to interpret this *improved communication* and *improved blessing* to **these things** spoken of in chapter 14?

A RELUCTANT MAN OF FAITH | GENESIS 15:1-3

Before we celebrate Abram’s faith prematurely, notice that God’s first word to Abram was **Fear not** (v. 1). We could certainly argue that this was a simply a “customary greeting” of God to man (we find the pattern many times), we could also argue that *every time God used this greeting, someone was afraid*. So was Abram (the great hero of faith) afraid? And if so, of what? I suspect he was afraid that there would be revenge for the events of chapter 14.

But after hearing the **fear not** command, as well as the two promises of God in verse 1, the *hero of faith* questions God’s plan and ability, and seems to do so with some degree of sharpness in his words. Abram seems to sharply ask God, **what will you give me?** Then he all but *puts God to the test*, saying, **I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus** (v. 2). There appears to be a cynicism both of God’s failure to give him children and of Eliezer himself.

And what is God’s reply? When we look closely in the text, we find that His reply was...*silence*. After verse 2, God doesn’t respond! Instead, Abram comes back for a “modified response.” Hebrew scholars insist that the simple word *amar* (to speak) is always given to introduce the *next speaker*. But in verses 2-3 (along with other examples), when it introduces the *same speaker*, it is an indication that there was a *pause* before picking up speech again. And it looks like Abram took the *silence of God* to have some introspection. He comes back in verse 3 with a *kinder, gentler* response, albeit with the same content.

The account of verses 1-3 seems to show us that the *hero of faith* is *growing in the journey of faith*. Not unlike you and me!

GOD'S REASSURANCE | GENESIS 15:4-5

In verse 4, **the word of the LORD came unto him** (Abram). Notice that the verb **came** is not actually in the text but inserted by translators to meet the rules of English grammar (which requires a verb). Strong arguments can be given that verse 4 is not so much a word to Abram as a word to the reader. As if the Torah says, “Hey, reader, do you remember that God had told Abram that **he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir** (v. 5)?” Whether a reminder to the reader or to Abram, God clearly *had said* that the heir would **come forth out of thine own bowels** (v. 5). For example, see Genesis 12:7 and 13:15.

In verse 5 the famous scene of Abram being called to look to the stars takes place. Abram is specifically instructed to **Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them** (v. 5). Clearly Abram would not be able to count them (the Hebrew word translated **tell** means to *make a mark as a tally*, and one Middle English definition of *tell* was “to enumerate”).

What happens next is “poetic justice.” Abram does not respond. The Hebrew *amar* (to speak) comes again...after the silence of Abram. God once again speaks, saying, **So shall thy seed be** (v.5). It is as if God waits for Abram to *count the stars*, but then breaks the silence with the great reiteration of the previous promise.

Abram, the great hero of faith, comes fearful, cynical, perhaps even angry. And God’s reply? *Remember what I’ve told you. It will happen!*