

Genesis 17:1-8

וַיְהִי אֲבָרָם בְּזֶתְשָׁעִים שָׁנָה וַתֵּשַׁע שָׁנִים וַיְרֵא יְהוָה אֶל־אֲבָרָם
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי־אֵל שְׁדֵי הַתְּהַלְלָה לְפָנַי וְהָיָה תָמִים: 2 וְאֶתְנֶה בְּרִיתִי
בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וְאֶרְבֶּה אוֹתְךָ בְּמֵאָד מְאֹד: 3 וַיִּפֹּל אֲבָרָם עַל־פָּנָיו וַיְדַבֵּר
אִתּוֹ אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר: 4 אֲנִי הִנֵּה בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב הַמֶּזֶן גּוֹיִם:
5 וְלֹא־יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת־שִׁמְךָ אֲבָרָם וְהָיָה שִׁמְךָ אֲבָרָהֶם כִּי אֲבִהֶמְזֶן
גּוֹיִם נִתְתִּיךָ: 6 וְהִפְרִתִי אִתְּךָ בְּמֵאָד מְאֹד וְנִתְתִּיךָ לְגוֹיִם וּמְלָכִים מִמֶּךָ
יֵצְאוּ: 7 וְהִקְמַתִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ לְדֹרֹתָם
לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְהָיוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ: 8 וְנִתְתִּי לְךָ וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ
אַחֲרֶיךָ אֶת | אֶרֶץ מִגְרִיךָ אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאַחֲזַת עוֹלָם וְהָיִיתִי
לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים:

Vocabulary

Verse 1

תשעים cardinal number: “ninety”

תשע cardinal number: “nine”

שדי “Almighty” (BDB, 994)

Syntax & Miscellaneous

- The idiomatic way to describe the age of an individual is to say that he was “a son of x years.”
- For more on the appellation, אל שדי, see HALOT entry under שדי.
- The clause, אֲנִי־אֵל שְׁדֵי, is a verbless clause with the typology S-P.
- The verb, וְהָיָה, is a Qal imperfect ms from היה.
- The last word, תמים, can have the literal meaning of “complete” (Leviticus 25:30) and “whole, that is “without blemish” (Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 1:3, 10, etc.), or a figurative connotation of “blameless” (Genesis 6:9).

Vocabulary

Verse 2

אתנה verb (Qal cohortative 1cs): “I shall make/establish”

Verse 4

המון noun: “great number, multitude”

Verse 5

אברהם name: “Abraham”

Verse 6

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פָּרָה verb: “be fruitful” (BDB, 826)

Verse 7

דּוֹר noun: “generation”

Verse 8

מְגוּרִים noun: “sojourning” (BDB, 158)

כְּנָעַן name: “Canaan”

אֲחֻזָּה noun: “possession”

Syntax & Misc.

Verse 2

- The idiom, בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ, repeats בֵּין with the second element—“between me and (between) you.”
- Notice that the verb used with בְּרִית “covenant” is נָתַן “establish” and not כָּרַת “cut” as in Genesis 15:18. In general, כָּרַת בְּרִית is used to initiate a covenant (cf. Genesis 15:18; Exodus 34:10, 34:27; Joshua 24:25; Deuteronomy 5:2, 5:3, 28:69, 29:13, 24; 1 Kings 5:26; 2 Kings 11:17, 17:35, 38, 23:3; 2 Chronicles 21:7, 23:3, 16, 29:10, 34:30; Ezra 10:3; Nehemiah 9:8; Psalm 50:5, 89:4; Isaiah 55:3, 61:8; Jeremiah 11:10, 31:31, 32, 33, 32:40, 34:13; Ezekiel 34:25, 37:26; Hosea 2:20). The (re)establishment of a covenant uses קוּם בְּרִית (Genesis 6:18, 9:9, 11, 17, 17:7, 19, 21; Exodus 6:4; Ezekiel 16:60, 62) or elsewhere for confirmation נָתַן בְּרִית (Genesis 17:2; Leviticus 26:9; Numbers 25:12; Deuteronomy 8:18).
- The superlative in Hebrew is not marked morphologically but semantically with repetition, thus the expression מְאֹד מְאֹד means “exceedingly much” (Genesis 7:19, 17:2, 6, 20, 30:43; Exodus 1:7; Numbers 14:7; 1 Kings 7:47; 2 Kings 10:4; Ezekiel 9:9, 16:13, 37:10).
- The second clause demonstrates the means by which the covenant is established. Thus, the *waw* is used instrumentally “in that,” that is the proof by which covenant is established is the multiplication of Abram’s seed.

Verse 4

- The phrase, לְאָב הַמֶּזֶן גּוֹיִם, is a three member construct phrase.
- The fronted אֲנִי is difficult to understand syntactically. The English translations either ignore it (RSV, ESV, NLT) or make it adverbial “as for me” (KJV, NRS, NIV, NAS, JPS). The LXX (ἐγὼ ἰδοὺ ἡ διαθήκη μου μετὰ σοῦ) duplicates the MT to the point of ambiguity with regard to the Greek syntax. The Targums present a plausible solution by gapping the verbal concept from the first clause of verse 2 (אֲנִי הָאָז גָּזַר קִימִי עִימָךְ “I, behold, have confirmed my covenant with you”), and not treating it as a verbless clause.

Verse 5

- The naming formula usually contains the meaning or reason for the name in clause marked by the preposition בִּי.

Verse 6

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- See the semantically and grammatically similar clause in verse 2— **וְאַרְבָּה אֹתָךְ**
בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד.

Verse 7

- Concerning the first clause, **וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זָרְעֶךָ**, see notes on verse 2.
- Other references to **לְבְרִית עוֹלָם** include: Genesis 9:12, 16, 17:7, 13, 19; Exodus 31:16; Leviticus 24:8; Numbers 18:19, 25:13; Joshua 4:7; 2 Samuel 23:5; 1 Chronicles 16:17; Job 40:28; Psalm 105:10; Isaiah 24:5, 55:3, 61:8; Jeremiah 32:40, 50:5; Ezekiel 16:60, 37:26.
- Covenant language expanded **לְהִיזוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים**: the infinitive construct assumes the aspect (imperfective) and person (first) from the previous finite verb. Notice the expansion of this promise to include also **וּלְזָרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ**.

Verse 8

- The construct phrase, **אַחֲזַת עוֹלָם**, demonstrates the attributive relationship.
- The combination of two direct object phrases without waw indicates apposition, **אֶת אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ | אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן** “the land of your sojourning, [that is] all the land of Canaan.”