

# Arlington Church of Christ

## **Wednesday Bible Class**

### **Abraham's 'Forever' Promise**

**The Lord made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 13:14-15**

**“The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him,  
“Look around from where you are, to the north and south,  
to the east and west. <sup>15</sup> All the land that you see I will give  
to you and your offspring forever.”**

**And Moses asked God in Exodus 32:13 “Remember your  
servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by  
your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous  
as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all  
this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance  
forever.”**

## **So the question arises – Is Israel still ‘entitled’ to the Holy land because of this promise to Abraham?**

There are many who say that the land belongs to the Jews on the basis of this and other verses like it – and that we must support Israel because they are ‘God’s chosen people’. Is this true, or should we support Israel simply because they are our allies against other nations that have sworn to destroy the Western way of life including both the United States and Israel.

**Let us follow the scriptural trail in search of the answers:**

**God promised Abraham several things – He promised him a son even though he was childless, He promised him descendants like the stars of the sky, and he promised to give the land on which Abraham was living to his descendants. (Genesis 12:7, and Gen 15:1-6)**

**Genesis 12:7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.**

**Genesis 15:1-5 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” <sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”**

# Did God fulfill His promises to Abraham?

**Joshua 23:14 - (What did Joshua say about the promises?)**

**1Kings 8:56 - (What did Solomon say about the promises?)**

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**“Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.”**

## Deuteronomy 30:15-18

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. <sup>16</sup> For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; **then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.**

<sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you this day that **you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.**

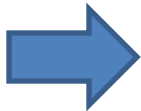
 **The requirement for possessing the land was that they remain faithful to the Lord and keep His commands**



**So the key to understanding the answer to the question lies in the meaning of the Hebrew word translated in our English Bibles as 'forever'.**

This Hebrew word is 'OLAM' and while translated often as 'forever' or similar words (everlasting) , it actually has various meanings –forever, a long time, an age, or for a certain duration. This word comes from the root verb word 'Alam' which means 'to hide'. **Olam is the noun form and when used in reference to time indicates a 'hidden' period of time.**

So when used by itself in the scriptures – it indicates an unknown (hidden) period of time, and **only when combined with the Hebrew 'ad' or repeated two times indicates eternity. (Forever and ever)**

 So 'Olam' indicates a definite, long, but limited period of time known only to God (hidden) – to fulfill His purpose

God, who is omniscient (all knowing) has given certain instructions and promises for a time known only to Him (a 'hidden' time) for the purposes of fulfilling the reason for which the instructions or promises were given in the first place. This is the idea behind the use of the word 'Olam' (forever) in the scriptures. It is our English language that is unable to express the intent of the original word used – and that is the problem and the source of confusion. It is why we need to actually 'search the scriptures' – check out what is actually said, and not just accept what someone thinks it says or means.

Examples:

Aaron and his sons were given the portion of the fellowship (heave) offerings 'forever'

Ex 29:28 – *It shall be from the children of Israel for Aaron and his sons by a statute forever.(Olam) For it is a heave offering; it shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, that is, their heave offering to the LORD.*

But this lasted only until the priesthood changed – when Christ became our High priest ( Heb 7:14) So 'forever' here meant only for the limited time until Christ became our High priest in the New Covenant. **(The purpose of the Old Covenant had been fulfilled with the coming of the New)**

The same thing is seen in the sacrifices on the day of atonement –

Lev 16:34 - ***This shall be an everlasting (Olam) statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.” And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.***

Numbers 19:10 –

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**Numbers 19:10 – And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever (Olam) to the children of Israel and to the stranger who dwells among them.**

These things, though said to be ‘forever’, were only intended for a limited time until Christ’s death on the cross was the final complete sacrifice for sins when animal sacrifices were done away with.

Also consider the following – God made a covenant with Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron - Num 25:12-13 –

*Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; <sup>13</sup> and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting (Olam) priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.*

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But his family’s priesthood continued only until the time of Solomon (437 years) when the High Priest Abiathar was replaced by Zadok from a different family. **(He had not been faithful to King David)** - 1Kings 2: 27, 35 –

*<sup>27</sup> So Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, that he might fulfill the word of the LORD which He spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh.*

*<sup>35</sup> The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.*

Or consider in the story of Jonah - Jonah 2:5-6 –

*The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head.*

*<sup>6</sup> I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever (Olam);*

*Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.*



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Jonah's 'forever' turned out to be three days and three nights. Jonah's experience was the 'sign' that Christ told the Pharisees He would give them.

Matt 12:39-40 –

*<sup>39</sup> But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

So considering the promise given in Ex 32:13 –

***Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’ (Olam) ”***

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The ‘forever’ lasted only until the captivity of Israel and Judah – and even though Judah returned after 70 years, they too were driven out by the Romans because they did not keep God’s covenant. For this reason, God gave us a better covenant- Heb 8:6-7 -

**But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.**

**Animal sacrifices had to come to an end to make way for something better. If they and the Old Covenant were intended to last ‘forever throughout eternity’ , then there was no reason or purpose for Christ’s death on the cross.**

***Hebrews 9:12-14 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained **eternal** (different word) redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal** Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?***

## **Hebrews 10:1-4**

***For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. <sup>2</sup> For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. <sup>3</sup> But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. <sup>4</sup> For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.***

Heb 11 gives us a listing of the great heroes of faith and then says:

Heb 11:13-16 -

***<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. <sup>15</sup> **And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.** <sup>16</sup> But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.***

The old 'promised land' of Canaan had the appearance of the promise to Abraham, but it was only a shadow of the real promise – the heavenly country and God's heavenly city - that God had in mind for those who will live in faith. The land of Canaan was given to them 'Olam' – for a certain period of time – (as long as they remained faithful to God) but not for an everlasting eternity of time.

Abraham was promised that through his descendant (seed-Christ) all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And **the Law of Moses was given to the descendants of Israel to keep the nation ready for the promised Messiah since He was to come through their line.**

(Once Jesus came the purpose was fulfilled and the Old Covenant and the 'law of Moses' was taken away – “nailed to the cross) **Col 2:14**

So once the Messiah had come, the promise to Abraham was fulfilled and the purpose of the promise completed, the forever - 'Olam' (time to complete the purpose ) ended and the New Covenant was established with those who would obey the Son, Jesus Christ, and become part of His body – the church. **Eph 5:23**



Summary of 'Forever' –

When the English Bible uses the word **'forever'** it is the Hebrew "Olam" (Strong's # 5769) – which means a hidden period of time, a time known only to God , a time to complete the intent of God. It does not indicate that something is to last throughout eternity.

**There are Hebrew and Greek words for 'eternity':**

Terms for 'eternity'- "Olam Aa'ed" (Strong's # 5703)  
(Forever and ever) 'Olam Olam' (# 5769 twice)

"" aion and aionios (Strong's # 166)  
(in the New Testament)

So does Israel have a Biblical 'right' to the land of Palestine now because the promise to Abraham was 'forever'? No, God fulfilled his promise when He gave them the promised land, but they did not remain faithful and broke the covenant, rejected the Messiah, and were cast out of the land.

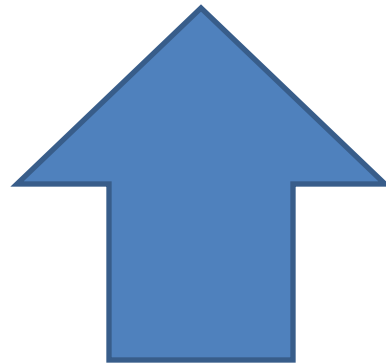
**We should however support Israel the nation as our ally in the struggle against those forces who want to destroy western civilization and our way of life.**

Now certain things are 'forever and ever' through eternity – and described with the additions to or the doubling of the word 'Olam' or the use of other terms -

- God and Christ are eternal, God's name is eternal, His Word is eternal, Salvation is eternal, God's Love is eternal, the Kingdom of God established through the line of David (through Christ) , heaven and hell are both eternal, our spirits are eternal – but the things of this earth are not and exist only for a limited (hidden) time period known only to God. **Matt 24:36**

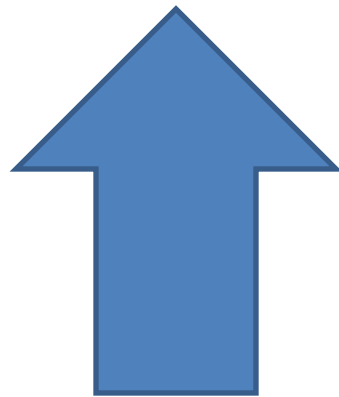
Consider who are now called ‘the Israel of God’ -  
Rom 9:6-8 –

***6 It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 8 In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.***



## **Galatians 3:7-9**

**Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.<sup>8</sup> Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”<sup>9</sup> So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**



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***Galatians 3:26-29***

***So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.***