

used to represent the authority and protection of a king: ‘And the bramble said unto the trees, “If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow.”’ Throughout the Bible, authority is referred to as a covering. God covers us with his wings. We are covered by Yeshua’s blood. We are covered by the Messiah. Wives are covered by their husbands, and so on. Zillah represents the authority of some worldly power, whether that of Lamech or of some other person under whose shadow Lamech lived.

Whether Lamech married into these things or whether his wives only represent them allegorically, we cannot know for certain, but I assert³⁶ that the lesson of Lamech is that he believed himself to be impunable. He killed a man for light cause, and then spoke as if there was no God in Heaven: “If Cain killed his brother and went unpunished though he had neither wealth nor power, how much more will I go unpunished when I have both wealth and power?” The point of mentioning Lamech’s polygyny was not the polygyny per se, but pride and the abuse of power, which is the same point of the law against multiplying wives in Deuteronomy 17.

Genesis 5:3

...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image... In the most precise sense, only Adam was created in God’s image. All of Adam’s and Eve’s descendants were born in the image of Adam and Eve, and not exactly in the image of God. Men inherit Adam’s quality of being the image of God, although in a corrupt, fallen form, and women inherit Eve’s quality of being the image of Adam, bearing the image of God.

(See also 1 Corinthians 11:3-16.)

Genesis 6:1-7

...when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men... I have heard many speculations about the meanings of the phrases “sons of God” and “daughters of men,” but they all come down to three possibilities:

1. Sons of rulers, i.e. princes
2. Descendants of Seth
3. Fallen angels, i.e. demons

Sons of rulers. The word translated in the KJV as “God” is *elohim*, which is a plural word used to refer either to the singular God or to plural rulers or judges. This interpretation does not have a wide following, but it is reasonable if one considers the Hebrew word translated as “giants” in v4. The word is *nephilim*, which is translated by *Strong’s* as “fellers” or “tyrants.”³⁷ If the sons of rulers were abusing their position and taking whatever women they chose, their children might very well be even worse than they. I doubt this interpretation, however because I do not see how there was anything significantly different between these *nephilim* and the tyrannical rulers of many other peoples throughout history.

Descendants of Seth. The phrase “the sons of God” appears often in the New Testament to describe believers. This has been one of the most common interpretations throughout Church history, but it depends on the idea that the line of Seth was orders of magnitude more godly than the line of Cain. Genesis 4:26 mentions that men began “to call upon the name of the LORD” after the birth of Enos, the son of Seth.³⁸ It does not say that only the descendants of Seth called on the name of the LORD, only that “men” began to do so sometime after this. Certainly the Cainites were men. I see nothing in the Scriptures to support the idea that the Sethites were very much better than the Cainites, although that theme reoccurs in Judeo-Christian myth. This argument depends on interpreting Noah’s “generations” two different ways in one verse, Genesis 6:9. The first “generations” must refer to Noah’s sons and the second to his ancestry. That seems highly doubtful. On the other hand this interpretation is reasonable so far as there is a common theme in the Scriptures prohibiting intermarriage with the ungodly.

Fallen angels. This interpretation is based on the same data as are the previous interpretations, but takes a slightly broader—and better defined—definition of “the sons of God” plus the more traditional definition of *nephilim* as “giants.” The phrase “sons of God” is used eight other times in the KJV: three times in Job and five times in the New Testament.

³⁶ I realize the irony of warning against exegesis by inference and then proceeding to do exactly what I warned against. The inferences that I have drawn from this passage are tenuous, however, they remain true in principle even if they are not the actual point of Lamech’s story. They are supported rather than contradicted by the whole witness of Scripture.

³⁷ I suspect that *nephilim* should be translated “fallen ones” rather than “fellers” or “tyrants.”

³⁸ There is some question as to whether the KJV translation of Genesis 4:26 is accurate. *Brenton’s English Septuagint* reads, “And Seth had a son, and he called his name Enos: he hoped to call on the name of the Lord God.” Others have suggested that it should be translated to read that men began to call themselves gods or that they began to use God’s name in vain. It seems more than a little odd that men first began to worship and pray even as they became more corrupt, especially when the very same chapter contains an example of two men calling on God long before the birth of Enos.

- Job 1:6 – “...the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.”
- Job 2:1 – “...the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them...”
- Job 38:7 – “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”
- John 1:12 – “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”
- Romans 8:14 – “But as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
- Romans 8:19 – “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.”
- Philemon 2:15 – “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke...”
- 1 John 3:1-2 – “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

In Job, each use is obviously referring to angels, one of whom is Satan.³⁹ All of the New Testament uses, although using the Greek word *theos* instead of the Hebrew word *elohim*, refer to believers reborn by the action of the Holy Spirit. The implication is that a “son of God” is one whose creation can be directly attributable to God. With this understanding Adam, Yeshua, and the angels can all be called “sons of God” in a literal sense,⁴⁰ while all believers can be called “sons of God” only in a spiritual sense until after the resurrection when our bodies too will be made new. The phrase “daughters of men” would therefore mean “daughters born through natural human processes.”

Because the use of the phrase “sons of God” seems to support it, and because the word *nephilim* is used also in Numbers 13:33 in the evident sense of “giants,” I believe this third interpretation to be the correct one. The sons of God were beings created directly by God who became corrupted and laid with human women who then gave birth to half-human, half-demon giants. As bizarre as this explanation sounds, it seems to fit best with the rest of Scripture, and is supported by the stories of the giants that lived in Canaan even through King David’s reign.

(See also 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.)

I will destroy man whom I have created... In light of the preceding, we can better understand why God chose to completely wipe out the Canaanites rather than converting or displacing them. They evidently had gone as far down the path of immorality as God would allow. They were actively fornicating with demons, the very same practice for which God here decided to wipe out nearly every living thing on the planet. Our procreative capacity is the one way in which we most intimately carry out the image of God, and God has punished its abuse more harshly than any other.

³⁹ Apparently all angels, upright or fallen, are periodically called before God for some purpose. The implications are startling for many Christians. Most understand that Satan can do nothing that God does not allow him to do, but the actual details are rather sketchy in their minds. The opening chapters of Job show that Satan and his demons still have direct access to the throne room of God, and remain accountable to God for their actions to the point of requiring his permission before mounting any kind of concerted attack on a believer.

⁴⁰ Yeshua, of course, can also be called a “son of man,” because he was born of a woman even though his conception was through direct divine action. “Son of man” is nearly synonymous with “human being,” but may imply a closer affinity to Adam than what other men might have.

Noah: Genesis 6:9-11:32

Genesis 6:13

The end of all flesh... God destroyed nearly all living things on earth because of the sins of mankind because all living things on earth belong to the house of man. When mankind sins, the whole earth suffers; when a king sins, his kingdom suffers; and when a father sins, his family suffers. This is both a strength and a weakness of the patriarchal system. The house of a godly patriarch flourishes because of his godliness, while the house of a tyrant eventually comes to ruin. Never-the-less, patriarchy is the system that God designed and that we should be striving toward.

In correspondence dated February, 2000, S. John Butt wrote,

“The patriarchal order is essential...because the family is the most basic organic unit of the Church. Therefore, every family head must be considered part of the church leadership - in fact, in some ways its most important part. If patriarchal leadership is missing from the family it cannot be substituted for by the church leadership. The church leadership can help, but the only real solution is to help that family head to grow into a place of functioning in godly leadership for his family. If he is doing his job then his wife or wives and children will all be growing in the Lord and bringing forth fruit for the Kingdom.”⁴¹

Genesis 6:18

...thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. Genesis does not describe Noah's family as especially righteous, although it is reasonable to believe that they were. (With the possible exception of Ham, of course. See Genesis 9:22-27.) The families of righteous men tend to be more righteous than the families of unrighteous men. The most convincing evidence of the character of Noah's family, however, is that they went along with his plan to build a giant boat contrary to common sense. They trusted Noah's judgment enough to stick by his side through one hundred years of ridicule and alienation. Most women today would leave their husband if he so much as quit his job to start a prison ministry or a homeless shelter. It would be almost unthinkable to stay with him while he gave up everything to pursue an unprecedented project with no conceivable benefit. How many women would even believe their husbands had heard from God, let alone support him in carrying out God's instructions? I do not mean to blame women. How many men could inspire their wives and children to such devotion? What kind of man must Noah have been to inspire such loyalty in his wife and to have brought up such children?

I should also mention that Noah is the second verifiably monogamous man mentioned in Scripture. The first monogamist introduced death into the world, while the second presided over death's ultimate implementation. Both men were righteous overall, but their monogamy seems to be more of a practical consideration than anything else. Adam could not have two wives because polygyny was not to be the standard pattern for all families. Noah could not have two wives for two reasons: there were too few good women in the world, and he only took with him on the ark what was necessary for regeneration.

Genesis 9:21-27

I am certain that it was not merely Ham's disrespect of Noah that brought such a curse, but whether it was some severe indignity or an actual crime is not recorded. It is not important for us to know. However, there are three important points that are recorded and should be noted:

1. **He drank of the wine, and was drunken...** Noah brought something of this trouble on himself by his drunkenness.⁴² The sins of mankind brought suffering on mankind and on creation. The sin of Noah brought suffering on himself and on his children.
2. **...the nakedness of his father...** Ham had apparently absorbed too much of the society from which he had escaped, and brought something of it with him. Also, the demons which had tempted mankind before the Flood had survived it to tempt them again afterward. Sexual sins being a particular weakness of men and particularly grievous to God, they are among the favorites of the enemy.
3. **Cursed be Canaan.** Noah's curse was not pronounced on Ham, but on his son, Canaan. There is a recurring idea throughout the Scriptures, that the father is often punished through his son.⁴³ Noah's

⁴¹ Mr. Butt separately wrote that patriarchal order is the underlying strength behind righteous civil and religious government. “Patriarchal Order and Kingly Leadership.” (Bfree.org, <http://www.bfree.org/bfree/kingly.htm>. Accessed May 2000.)

⁴² I do not mean that he sinned in drinking wine, only in his *drunkenness*.

drunkenness was punished through his son Ham. Ham's sin was punished through his son Canaan. David's sin was punished through his son, Absalom. In this case, Ham's sin might have been against the father-son relationship and so the object of the curse might have been that same relationship between Ham and Canaan.

Genesis 11:3

...let us make brick... God commanded that his altar be made with undressed, natural stone. Moses made a special point of Babel's use of all manufactured materials in their cultural icon and probable temple. Their great sin was in their rejection of Providence, their substitution of man-made methods of unity and religion over God's ways. In marriage, we are free to adapt our houses to our individual circumstances and characters, but only within the bounds that God has set. There are some principles, which are inviolate. For example, substituting egalitarianism for patriarchy and coverture can only lead to broken families and disaster in the long run.

Genesis 11:29

And Abram and Nahor took them wives... Abram married his half-sister, and Nahor married his niece. The closer one gets to the time before the Flood, the less disapprobation is attached to close consanguinogamy. The relative purity of Terah's genes and those of his sons can be seen in their great lifespans. They did not live as long as Noah, but still lived more than twice as long as most men after him: Terah lived two-hundred and five years, and Abram lived one-hundred and seventy-five years. By comparing the lifespans of the patriarchs after the Flood, one can trace the decline of the race until it reaches a plateau at about the time of the Exodus. By the time of Sinai, about four-hundred years and ten generations after Abram, men were living for no more years than they do today, and incestuous marriages were no longer permitted.

Genesis 11:30

But Sarai was barren; she had no child. While barrenness may sometimes be the result of a curse brought on by sin, Sarai's was not. Like the blind man whom Yeshua healed so that God might be glorified, Sarai was barren so that Abram would have the time to develop into the man who God wanted him to be before Isaac was born and so that God would be glorified through that miraculous conception. That this development took so long was to the glory of God: there is no womb so barren that God cannot heal it.

⁴³ The son is not punished for the sins of the father, but often suffers repercussions from his father's actions. Each of the sons listed here committed his own sins and was punished for them.

Lech Lecha: Genesis 12-17

Genesis 12:13

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister... While it was true that Sarai was Abram's sister, his intent was to deceive the Egyptians into believing that she was not his wife. He thought that if the Egyptians believed Sarai to be unmarried, then they might let him live and only take her. Abram displayed his lack of faith in God's promise by risking his wife's integrity in order to save his own life. God had promised him an heir, and so he should have known that he would not be killed by the Egyptians. Possibly, Abram was not entirely at fault for this deception. His temporary repudiation of Sarai would be played out again in the national lives of Israel and Judah. God sent them into exile, where they served other gods, but he will restore them to himself at the right time.

Although Scripture never actually says that God approved of Abraham and Sarah's marriage, he chose the house of Abraham, and specifically Sarah, to bear the promised line that would eventually produce the Messiah. It does not seem reasonable to me to suppose that God seriously disapproved of their incest, although he later gave Moses a law against this very relationship. I believe the reason that Abraham's and Sarah's marriage was acceptable while later such marriages were not, is the same reason that Cain was able to marry his full sister. The human gene pool had not deteriorated to the point at which close consanguinogamy is dangerous. Several generations later, when Israel left Egypt, congenital defects were more common, and the risk was higher. As Yeshua would state centuries later, all of the Torah rests on the principles of love for God and others. A marriage between half siblings today would be hateful to the next generation. Apparently, the purpose of the law is not to prevent consanguinogamy so much as to prevent its results.

(See also Genesis 4:17.)

Genesis 12:15

...the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Sarai was taken to live in Pharaoh's house, but only in a state of semi-betrothal (v19). Apparently, it was a widespread practice for a wealthy man to take his prospective bride into his house—often against her will—as a sort of hostage in order to influence negotiations with her family and to forestall other potential suitors. Other possible reasons for this practice may have been to ensure the bride's purity and to watch for indications of sickness which might appear over time. The same practice can be seen in the similar events in Gerar (Genesis 20:1-18), in the story of Dinah and Shechem, and in the story of Queen Esther. There is something similar among modern polygynous families. A prospective bride might live with the groom and his family for a period of several months to a year so that she can be certain their lifestyle will suit her and so that any personality conflicts with existing wives might be made obvious before making a binding commitment.

Genesis 12:17

And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house... The consequences of Pharaoh's actions affected his entire house, even though he was unaware of any wrongdoing. It is often difficult to predict before-hand what consequences an action might have, so it is crucial that our every thought and action be subjected to the highest moral standards. Men must keep their thoughts and their eyes from likely error, assume that all women are unavailable until a betrothal commitment has been made or permission to court has been granted. Notice that God did not plague Pharaoh because of his polygyny, though he undoubtedly had many wives already. God only punished him for adultery.

Genesis 16:1

...she had an handmaid... Every servant described in the Scriptures as belonging to a woman among godly people was also a woman. The only men in the Scriptures ever described as being under the direct authority of a woman are children or men who live in corrupt societies such as described in Isaiah 3.

Genesis 16:2

...the LORD hath restrained me from bearing. Fertility is ultimately controlled by God. It was him who kept Sarai from conceiving all those years for his own glory.

...go in unto my maid... Abram's actions toward Hagar were further evidence that he had not yet reached the state of perfection to which God had called him. The problem with Hagar was two-fold: she was an Egyptian, and

she was not the one through whom God promised to produce an heir for Abram. God had very specific plans for the makeup of his people, and Hagar was not a part of those plans.

Genesis 16:3

And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid... A slave in a godly house would be treated as something between a child and an enlisted soldier. They could be punished, given in marriage, or reassigned at the whim of their master, but they could not lawfully be severely beaten or otherwise mistreated. Since Hagar belonged to Sarai, it was certainly within her authority to give her to Abraham as a concubine. However, it was also within Abraham's authority to refuse, and that is what he should have done, not because there is necessarily anything immoral in the use of a concubine, but because such was not a part of the promise God made to Abram. He should have waited on God, and taken whatever wives and concubines he wanted after Isaac was born.

...ten years in the land of Canaan... The ten years given here includes the time spent in Egypt, likely less than a year in duration and not long after leaving Haran. He had paused only briefly in Canaan before going on to Egypt. Hagar, while still a young girl, would have been given to Sarai by the Pharaoh some nine years before Sarai gave her to Abram. Probably Hagar would have been older than fifteen, but not yet twenty-five, and she had been a slave since birth. If she had been born in Abram's house instead of in Egypt, there might not have been such a problem. Unfortunately, her roots remained in Egypt with her family, from whom she had been forcibly removed, and she was not a suitable mate for a godly man.

Genesis 16:4

...her mistress was despised in her eyes. As noted above it is often assumed that barrenness is the result of some unnamed sin, either of the woman, of her husband, or of an ancestor of one or the other. Hagar probably assumed that this was the case with Sarai. This would explain—though certainly not justify—her change of attitude after conceiving Ishmael. It also seems probable to me that Abram treated Hagar in his usual generous manner, elevating her to a status equal or nearly equal to Sarai's. A slave suddenly elevated above her mistress is not likely to be pleasant.

Genesis 16:5

My wrong be upon thee. Sarai rightly placed the responsibility for keeping peace between her and Hagar at Abram's feet, although some of it was surely her own. It would normally not be appropriate for a wife to discipline her sister-wife, however Hagar was a slave still under the authority of Sarai. Abram had implicitly accepted some of that responsibility when he accepted Hagar as his concubine. It is the man's responsibility to keep peace in his house whether he has one wife or ten. Unfortunately, the task must be even more difficult when one of those wives is a slave to another; all judgments of equity or fairness will likely be skewed. All of the blame and responsibility cannot be put on Abram alone; some of it must also be put on Sarai and Hagar. The whole state of affairs came about at Sarai's prompting. She was obviously a wise and capable woman in most respects or Abram would not have leaned so much on her judgment, and God would not have chosen her as the mother of Isaac. In this matter, however, she abandoned godly wisdom in favor of common sense.⁴⁴

Hagar's behavior, though abominable, was predictable. Her obligations were divided between two masters, a situation which is bound to produce some resentment. Solomon wrote that if you fail to discipline a servant, he will eventually lack all discipline. He also wrote that "...an odious woman when she is married, and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress..." are two things under which the earth trembles. Adam Clarke suggested that Abram may have begun to actually favor Hagar over Sarai,⁴⁵ perhaps even beginning to believe as Hagar did, that Sarai was barren through some fault of her own. None of this excuses Hagar for her own behavior, nor Ishmael for his. We are each responsible for our own actions, regardless of circumstances.

Genesis 16:6

...thy maid is in thy hand. Abram cowardly shirked his responsibility in this matter. The situation was partly his fault, and he had it within his authority to at least attempt to put it right. Instead, like Pilate some 2500 years

⁴⁴ I mean "common sense" in the way it is usually understood: what is generally and popularly held to make sense. I also mean "common" in that *common* sense is often inferior sense. Sarai's and Abram's actions were not sinful, but appear to have been unwise.

⁴⁵ Clarke, *Commentary*.

later, he tried to wash his hands of what his office required of him.⁴⁶ Family troubles are not like bees. They do not go away if you ignore them. Ultimately this issue would come back to Abram magnified.

Genesis 16:9

Return to thy mistress... Hagar had been treated harshly, but evidently not so harshly as to justify abandoning her obligations to Sarai. He did not say, “Return to your husband,” or “your master,” but he said, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” The angel recognized Hagar’s servitude as valid before any relationship she had to Abram, and that servitude was not to be broken lightly. Evidently, neither Sarai nor Abram had neglected Hagar’s physical needs, nor had they severely abused her physically.

Genesis 16:10-14

I will multiply thy seed exceedingly... While recognizing the legitimacy of Hagar’s relationship with Sarai, the Angel also acknowledged that Hagar had been wronged. The manner in which Hagar was rewarded for returning to Sarai and repaid for the wrong done to her implies God’s like recognition of the legitimacy of her relationship with Abram. Isaac was not the only son of Abram to receive an inheritance directly from the hand of God, though he remained as the conduit of God’s promises of greatness and blessing. Those promises were made to Isaac through Abram long before his conception or birth, and the intervening birth of Ishmael did not change this. However, Isaac’s inheritance of these promises did not make Ishmael any less a son of Abram, and God recognized Ishmael’s place by promising him that he would also become a great nation.

Genesis 17:1

Walk before me, and be thou perfect. Whatever God had been waiting for had evidently arrived. I believe he was waiting for Abram to achieve a certain level of maturity, or perfection. The Hebrew word used in this verse for “perfect” is *tamim* which also means “complete” or “whole” according to *Strong’s*. Abram was not perfect in the mathematical sense we usually have in mind when we use that word today, but he was perfect in that he had reached a state of spiritual maturity for which God had been preparing him since before he left Ur decades earlier. We can see in Ishmael’s character Abram’s lack of readiness to be the patriarch of God’s people. Sarai was barren for so long, not because of any physical or moral defect, but because Abram was not yet ready to be called the Friend of God.

Peter seemed to believe that Sarai’s character was worthy of emulation by all believing women, but this does not seem to have been a factor in God’s selection of this time for the accomplishment of this part of his promise to Abram. Sarai’s maturation was not thought important enough to mention, while Abram’s was. It is unclear if this silence is because Sarai had long before achieved a sufficient level of perfection, or if it is because her perfection was not a factor.

Genesis 17:5

...thy name shall be called Abraham... God demonstrated his authority over Abraham and the special relationship which he claimed with Abraham by giving him a new name. As with Adam, Eve, and the animals at the beginning of Creation, the naming of a thing is a demonstration of authority over it. A name, in the Biblical sense, is much more than a collection of syllables. God’s name at birth was not Yahweh because he had no birth. *I Am That I Am*. The name itself says that no one can give God a name because no one preceded him or has any authority over him. God named himself because he is self-existent. Adam named the animals because he preceded them in authority if not in time. Adam named Eve because he preceded her in both time and authority. God named Adam, Abraham, Sarah, and Israel because he is their Creator. He precedes them—and us—in every way.

⁴⁶ The parallels between these two stories are striking, but I am not sure what to make of them:

Torah	Gospel
Sarai accused Hagar	Sanhedrin accused Yeshua
Abram refused to judge Hagar	Pilot refused to judge Yeshua
Hagar returned to Sarai for judgment	Yeshua returned to Pilate for judgment
Abram dealt more harshly with Hagar than he was want.	Pilot dealt more harshly with Yeshua than he was want.
Hagar was exiled to what most would consider certain death, but God gave her new life.	Yeshua was crucified and buried, but God resurrected him three days later.

Genesis 17:7

...thee and thy seed after thee... This demonstrates the authority of a father to bind his children and even all his descendants to a covenant, although the demonstration is somewhat weakened by God's role in this covenant's making. God has the authority to bind anyone to anything whenever he chooses. A man's family belongs more to God than to him.

Genesis 17:10

Every man child among you shall be circumcised... The transgenerational nature of the covenant helped to dictate the form of its sign: all seed to pass through the circumcision automatically becomes a part of the covenant. Isaac's membership in the covenant from the moment of conception strengthens his claim on its promises.

Circumcision also reinforces the nature of the covenant as one of blood. The covenant between God and Israel was initially sealed with Abraham in the blood of animals and men, and is reconfirmed individually after the birth of every male by circumcision. In one respect, it can be said that the covenant with Abraham is confirmed through circumcision three times for every male believer: once when the semen passes through the circumcision of the father, once when the child is circumcised, and once again through circumcision of the heart and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (See my comments on Genesis 17:18.)

This covenant is not confirmed with the female at her birth because the final national identity of the female is determined by her covenant of marriage, which is also sealed by blood, in that case her own. When she marries, she takes on the nationality of her husband, and becomes an heir with him of the covenants of his fathers. In this light, the importance of sexual purity is obvious. A promiscuous girl not only denies her future husband something that should be exclusively his, but she denies herself the physical proof of membership in her husband's covenants, and she denies them both a certain degree of sanctity of marriage.

Every descendant of Adam joins the human race through the shed blood of his mother. The male descendants of Abraham and their wives join their nation through their own shed blood. And all of the children of Abraham, both physical and spiritual, join the Kingdom of God through the shed blood of the Messiah and the symbolic rebirth of baptism.

The qualitatively different nature of the New Covenant, which is established through Yeshua's blood, is partly evidenced by the nature of the blood which was shed. The marriage covenant is sealed in the blood of the bride, and the Noahide, Abrahamic, and Mosaic Covenants were sealed with the blood of animals and men. They all emphasize our fallen nature, and our dependence on God's mercy for our continued existence. The New Covenant, through which all of mankind is restored to potential fellowship with their Creator, was sealed with the blood of the Messiah who is both man and God. It is the fulfillment of previous covenants, in that our salvation—our redemption from condemnation—is realized in it through God's grace.

Genesis 17:12

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised... The number seven represents completion, while eight represents new beginnings. A boy is to be circumcised on the eighth day to indicate that his time as a natural man has ended and his new life as a member of the community of Abraham and an inheritor of the covenant has begun. A woman joins the nation of her husband on the day of her marriage.

Genesis 17:13

He that is born in thy house... God considered all those under Abraham's authority to be a part of his house. They were not asked their opinion of circumcision, and I am certain that many of the men among them did not approve. Boys and men alike were subject to this most personal exercise of Abraham's authority over them. Grown children, if they had existed, would likewise have been given no real choice: either accept circumcision or leave his house. A child never really leaves his father's authority, so long as they acknowledge each other as father and son.

Genesis 17:15

As for Sarai thy wife... God demonstrated his own direct authority over Sarai by naming her. A man's authority over his wife and family is only delegated to him from God.

Genesis 17:17

...him that is an hundred years old? I do not believe it was Sarai's and Abram's age that was the barrier to conception because other patriarchs lived and prospered well past the age of 100. Jacob did not even marry until he was nearly eighty. What was so surprising about Isaac's conception was that his parents had gone for so many years already without conceiving. Abraham thought that if it had not happened in seventy years, how could it happen now?

Genesis 17:18

O that Ishmael might live before thee! Ishmael was unsuitable as the conduit of God's promise and Abraham's inheritance because he was the son of a slave and a pagan Egyptian. Sarah was God's chosen vessel because of her character, her breeding, her status as a free woman, and most importantly her faith in God and Abraham. The timing of Ishmael's and Abraham's circumcisions might have also been a factor, as Isaac was conceived after Abraham's circumcision.

Genesis 17:20

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. God apparently did not consider Ishmael a bastard, even if he was not eligible to inherit the promise. God honored Abraham and acknowledged Ishmael by promising to make him into a great nation.