

*“And I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and I will give to your descendants all these lands. And all nations of the earth will be blessed through your offspring, **because Abraham listened to my voice and kept my charge: my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.**”* (Genesis 26:4–5, LEB)

In pouring out his blessing, God is demonstrating his love. One perspective of God’s blessing highlights the nations as the recipient of his blessing and regards the lineage of Abraham simply as the vessel. Another perspective identifies Abraham’s lineage as the recipient of so great a blessing that they will impact the world as a blessing to the nations. God’s perspective is all that matters with regard to his blessings. What does he have to say about the matter? Perhaps both are legitimate.

To begin with, why is the blessing given? And to whom does God profess his love? The first mention of this blessing in Genesis 12:3 places Abram squarely at the center of God’s interest and extends his blessing to the nations with the condition that they respect the people with whom God chose to cut a binding covenantⁱ. Abraham would pass on the values he learned from God to his posterityⁱⁱ. God repeatedly describes how he will bless Abraham’s offspring with continuity, land and prosperityⁱⁱⁱ. The effect of that blessing onto the nations is sparsely mentioned in comparison.

We can know from God’s explanation to Isaac that Abraham is blessed because he paid attention to God’s words and responded appropriately^{iv}. Those words comprise all of the values which must be understood in order to build a relationship with God. They include his terms and conditions (mishmereth)^v, ordinances for conduct (mitswah)^{vi}, house rules (chuwqah)^{vii} and instructions (towrah)^{viii}. Each of these is described favorably in Psalms 19^{ix} and 119^x as well as by the prophets of old. They are the very heart of God’s blessing to Abraham, his offspring and by extension to all the nations of the world.

Although we may read that, “God so loved the whole world ...”^{xi}, we also read that, “I never knew you who disregard torah.”^{xii} Let’s consider who God loves according to his own words. Generally, God loves those who love him.^{xiii} Specifically, he loves Jacob^{xiv} and considers Abraham’s lineage the apple of his eye^{xv}. The nations will be judged for their treatment of God’s chosen people but the blessing promised will not be withheld.^{xvi} Israel will experience their own judgment as well. After God executes his vengeance and re-establishes his covenant, the remnant of Israel will flourish and the nations will stream to Zion to learn those same principles that were handed down from Abraham.^{xvii}

Both perspectives are credible. Abraham’s lineage has served as a vessel for God’s instructions that will be a blessing to all the world. They have failed to preserve (shamar/keep) God’s torah from corruption and will be judged accordingly. Still, a remnant of Abraham’s offspring will receive compassion and inherit the land where God establishes his throne.^{xviii} Many nations will join themselves to him after that time and become his own people as well.^{xix} The common thread that extends from Abraham to the end of time is God’s instructions that describe the values and activities that must be known and understood by anyone wanting to participate in his home.

ⁱ “And I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse. And all families of the earth will be blessed in you.” (Genesis 12:3, LEB)

ⁱⁱ “Abraham will surely become a great and strong nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed on account of him. For I have chosen him, that he will command his children and his household after him that they will keep the way of Yahweh, to do righteousness and justice, so that Yahweh may bring upon Abraham that which he said to him.” (Genesis 18:18–19, LEB)

ⁱⁱⁱ “And behold, Yahweh was standing beside him, and he said, “I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The ground on which you were sleeping I will give to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west, and to the east, and to the north and to the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and through your descendants. Now behold, I am with you, and I will keep you wherever you go. And I will bring you to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised to you.” (Genesis 28:13–15, LEB)

^{iv} “And Yahweh appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land which I will show to you. Dwell as an alien in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you, for I will give all these lands to you and to your descendants, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. And I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and I will give to your descendants all these lands. And all nations of the earth will be blessed through your offspring, because Abraham listened to my voice and kept my charge: my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” (Genesis 26:2–5, LEB)

^v מִשְׁמֶרֶת b. what is to be held in trust; guard; obligation; service, duty

^{vi} הַמִּצְוָה a. commandment, commission

^{vii} הַחֻקִּים b. statute

^{viii} תּוֹרָה a. direction, instruction, rule

^{ix} “The law of Yahweh is perfect, reviving life. The testimony of Yahweh is firm, making wise the simple. The precepts of Yahweh are right, making the heart rejoice. The command of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Yahweh is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether, more desirable than gold, even much fine gold; and sweeter than honey, even honey in the comb. Moreover, your servant is warned by them; in keeping them is great reward.” (Psalm 19:7–11, LEB)

^x “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of Yahweh. Blessed are those who keep his testimonies; they seek him with a whole heart. They also do no wrong; they walk in his ways. You have commanded your precepts, that we should keep them diligently. Oh that my ways were steadfast, to keep your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed when I look to all your commands. I will give you thanks with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous laws. I will heed your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.” (Psalm 119:1–8, LEB)

^{xi} “For in this way God loved the world, so that he gave his one and only Son, in order that everyone who believes in him will not perish, but will have eternal life.” (John 3:16, LEB)

xii *“And then I will say to them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Matthew 7:23, LEB)

xiii *“You shall not bow down to them, and you shall not serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, punishing the guilt of fathers upon their children and upon the third and upon the fourth generation of those hating me, but showing loyal love to thousands of those who love me and of those who keep my commandments.”* (Deuteronomy 5:9–10, LEB)

“The one who has my commandments and keeps them—that one is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him.” (John 14:21, LEB)

“And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. The one who says ‘I have come to know him,’ and does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in this person. But whoever keeps his word, truly in this person the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in him.” (1 John 2:3–5, LEB)

xiv *“‘I have loved you,’ says Yahweh, but you say, ‘How have you loved us?’ ‘Is Esau not Jacob’s brother?’ declares Yahweh. ‘I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated. I have made his mountain ranges a desolation, and given his inheritance to the jackals of the desert.’”* (Malachi 1:2–3, LEB)

xv *“For thus said Yahweh of hosts, after glory he sent me against the nations plundering you: Truly, the one touching you is touching the apple of his eye.”* (Zechariah 2:8, LEB)

“For Yahweh’s portion was his people, Jacob the share of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in a howling, desert wasteland; he encircled him, he cared for him, he protected him like the apple of his eye.” (Deuteronomy 32:9–10, LEB)

xvi *“‘And I will display my glory among the nations, and all of the nations will see my judgment that I have executed and my hand that I have laid upon them. ‘And the house of Israel will know that I am Yahweh their God from that day and beyond, and the nations will know that because of their guilt the house of Israel went into exile, because they acted unfaithfully against me, and I hid my face from them, and I gave them into the hand of their foes, and they fell by the sword, all of them. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgression I dealt with them, and I hid my face from them. Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and I will have compassion on all of the house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. And they will forget their disgrace and all of their infidelity that they displayed against me when they dwelt on their soil in safety with nobody making them afraid. When I restore them from the nations and I gather them from the countries of their enemies, then I will show myself holy through them before the eyes of many nations. And they will know that I am Yahweh their God, because of when I deported them into the nations, and I reassembled them to their soil, and I will not let any of them remain there any longer. And I will not hide my face again from them when I pour out my Spirit over the house of Israel,’ declares the Lord Yahweh.”* (Ezekiel 39:21–29, LEB)

^{xvii} *“And this shall happen: on that day, the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will not continue to lean on the one who struck it but will lean on Yahweh, the holy one of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return— the remnant of Jacob—to the mighty God. For though your people Israel was like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of it will return. Annihilation is determined, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord Yahweh of hosts is about to make a complete destruction and a determined end in the midst of all the earth.”*
(Isaiah 10:20–23, LEB)

^{xviii} *“But Yahweh will have compassion on Jacob, and he will again choose Israel and set them on their land, and the immigrant will join himself to them, and they will attach themselves to the house of Jacob. And the nations will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will take possession of them in the land of Yahweh as slaves and female slaves. And this will happen: they will take their captors captive and rule over their oppressors.”* (Isaiah 14:1–2, LEB)

^{xix} *“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for look, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” declares Yahweh. “Many nations will join themselves to Yahweh on that day, and they will be my people, and I will dwell in your midst. And you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you. And Yahweh will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and he will again choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all people, before Yahweh, for he is roused from his holy dwelling.”*
(Zechariah 2:10–13, LEB)

“The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: And it shall happen in the future of the days the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established; it will be among the highest of the mountains, and it shall be raised from the hills. All of the nations shall travel to him; many peoples shall come. And they shall say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob, and may he teach us part of his ways, and let us walk in his paths.” For instruction shall go out from Zion, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations and he shall arbitrate for many peoples. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. A nation shall not lift up a sword against a nation, and they shall not learn war again.” (Isaiah 2:1–4, LEB)