

The Significance of the Term “Abraham’s Seed” in the OT and NT

- A. Old Testament Promises.** The Hebrew word is *zerá* ([2233](#)), and it means, literally, “seed.” It is used literally of seeds of plants and crops (Gen. 1:11, 12) – it is the way that plants reproduce. But it is also used, in a derived and euphemistic sense, of man’s physical descendants (Gen. 13:15, 16) – it is how mankind reproduces.
1. God’s original promise in Genesis 12:1-3 did not use the word “seed.” But this passage is the foundation for God’s relationship with Abram, of whom God promised to make a “great nation.” “Now Yahweh said to Abram, (Gen. 12:1)
 - a. LEAVE: Leave your country and family:
 - 1) “Go forth from your country,
 - 2) and from your relatives
 - 3) and from your father’s house ...
 - b. LAND: “to the land which I will show you.
 - c. NATION: “And I will make you a great nation, (Gen. 12:2)
 - d. BLESSING
 - 1) “And I will bless you.
 - 2) And make your name great
 - 3) Be a blessing! (Imperative)
 - 4) And I will bless those who bless you (Gen. 12:3)
 - 5) And the one who curses you I will curse,
 - e. INTERNATIONAL BLESSING: And in you all the **families of the earth** will be blessed!”
 2. Abram arrived in the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:5-6). Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, “To your **seed** I will give this land” (Gen. 12:7).
 3. God’s Promise to Abram after he separated from Lot. (Gen. 13:8-18)
 - a. After Abram had allowed Lot to make the first choice of land, Lot chose the well-watered valley of the Jordan (Gen. 13:8-11). This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah – the land was like the Garden of Eden (Gen. 13:10).
 - b. Abram settled in the land of Canaan (Gen. 13:12). Then the LORD said to Abram (Gen. 13:14-18), “Lift up your eyes and look northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and your **seed** forever (Gen. 13:15). “I will make your **seed** as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your **seed** can also be numbered” (Gen. 13:16).

4. In Genesis 15, Yahweh made a PROMISE to Abram about His SEED and a unilateral COVENANT with Abram about His LAND.
 - a. After Abram had rescued Lot and the whole city of Sodom from pirates, and took no plunder for himself, Yahweh said to Abram in a vision, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great" (Gen. 15:1).
 - b. Abram replied, "What will you give me since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? ... Since you have given me no **seed**, one born in my house is my heir" (Gen. 15:2-3)
 - c. Yahweh: "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body will be your heir" (Gen. 15:4).
 - d. Then he took him outside and said, Look toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able. So shall your **seed** be!" (Gen. 15:5)
 - e. Then he believed in Yahweh, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness! (Gen. 15:6). This is a pivotal verse in all of Scripture as to how we get saved eternally!!!!
 - f. Then God said to Abram, "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess it." Abram replied, O Adonai Yahweh, how may I know that I will possess it?" (Gen. 15:7-8) (Yahweh had him get animals for sacrifice and lay them on either side. The idea was that two parties would walk between the animals to make a binding and deadly covenant – if one of us doesn't keep this covenant, may he die like these animals! Then Yahweh put him to semi-sleep and walked through alone! This was a Unilateral, Unconditional Irrevocable Covenant that Yahweh made with Abram!) (Gen. 15:9-17)
 - g. "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram saying, 'To your **seed** I have given this land, from [the river of Egypt](#) as far as the great river, the river Euphrates'" (Gen. 15:18).
5. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah.
 - a. He would bless her and give Abraham a son by her. She will be a mother of nations and kings. Abraham fell on his face and laughed! (Gen. 17:15-17)
 - b. "And Abraham said to God, 'O that Ishmael might live before You!' But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac ("He Laughs"); and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his **seed** after him'" (Gen. 17:18-19).
6. After Ishmael mocked Sarah's son Isaac, she demanded of Abraham that he drive out "this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be heir with my son Isaac!" (Gen. 21:9-10)

- a. This greatly distressed Abraham (Gen. 21:11)
 - b. "But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your **seed** shall be named'" (Gen. 21:12).
7. God told Abraham to take his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, and offer him as a sacrifice on one of the mountains in the land of Moriah (Gen. 22:1-2). Abraham obeyed early the next morning (Gen. 22:3-10).
- a. The [Angel of Yahweh](#) called out to Abraham from heaven to stop, and not to kill the lad since he had not withheld his only son from Him. Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket. So he offered up the substitute sacrifice (Gen. 22:11-15)
 - b. After Abraham had demonstrated he was ready to offer up Isaac upon the altar on Mount Moriah, the [Angel of Yahweh](#) called to him a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares Yahweh, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly **ble**ss you, and I will greatly multiply your **seed** as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your **seed** shall possess the **gate of his enemies (land)** (Gen. 22:17). In your **seed** all the **nations** of the earth shall be **bless**ed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Gen. 22:18).
8. There was a famine in the land of Canaan. (Gen. 26:1-5) Yahweh appeared to Isaac and said,
- a. "Don't go down to Egypt.
 - b. Stay in this **land** and I will be with you and **ble**ss you,
 - c. for to you and to your **seed** I will give all these **lands**,
 - d. and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.
 - e. I will multiply your **seed** as the stars of heaven,
 - f. and will give your **seed** all these lands;
 - g. and by your **seed**, all the **nations** of the earth shall be **bless**ed;
 - 1) because Abraham obeyed Me
 - 2) and kept My charge,
 - 3) My commandments,
 - 4) and My laws."

9. After Jacob had connived with his mother to lie to Isaac and get the blessing of Abraham from Isaac, Esau threatened to kill Jacob after their father died. Rebekah schemed to get Isaac to send Jacob to Syria to her family so he would take a wife from among believers in Yahweh, not from among the local pagans. Genesis 28:1-4
 - a. 1 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.
 - b. 2 "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.
 - c. 3 "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.
 - d. 4 "May He also give you **the blessing of Abraham**, to you and to your **seed** with you, that you may possess the **land** of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."
10. En route to Syria, Jacob camped out at night and had a strange dream. (Gen. 28:11-22)
 - a. 11 He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.
 - b. 12 He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.
 - c. 13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the **land** on which you lie,
 - 1) I will give it to you and to your **seed**.
 - 2) 14 "Your **seed** will also be like the dust of the earth,
 - 3) and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south;
 - 4) and in you and in your **seed** shall all the **families** of the earth be **blessed**.
 - d. 15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever * you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until * I have done what I have promised you."

e. Jacob's reaction

- 1) 16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."
- 2) 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than * the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."
- 3) 18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.
- 4) 19 He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.
- 5) 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,
- 6) 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.
- 7) 22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

B. New Testament Promises. The Greek word is *spérma* ([4690](#)) and it means, literally, "seed." It is used literally of seeds of plants and crops (Matt. 13:24, 27, 32) – it is the way that plants reproduce. But it is also used, in a derived and euphemistic sense, of man's physical descendants (Matt. 22:24, 25) – it is how mankind reproduces.

1. The people of Israel understood that the Messiah would be the seed of David, and come from Bethlehem. (John 7:40-42)
 - a. 40 Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."
 - b. 41 Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"
 - c. 42 "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the **seed** of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"
2. The Jewish people believed they were Abraham's seed (John 8:33).
 - a. 31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
 - b. 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never * yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will

become free '?"

3. Jesus acknowledged Israel was Abraham's seed, but he distinguished between merely physical seed and regenerate, spiritual seed. (John 8:37-45)
 - a. Jesus acknowledged they were Abraham's physical seed, yet they did not act like Abraham: 37 "I know that you are Abraham's **seed**; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.
 - b. Jesus disputed that Abraham was their father – and argued that the devil was their father!
 - 1) Jesus acts like His Father; they act like their father: 38 "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."
 - 2) The Jews insisted Abraham was their father. Jesus said they should act like Abraham: 39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.
 - 3) Abraham was not a murderer: 40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.
 - 4) Jesus accused them of doing the deeds of their father (the Devil): 41 "You are doing the deeds of your father."
 - 5) They accused Jesus of being born of fornication: They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication;
 - 6) They claimed God was their Father: we have one Father: God."
 - 7) Jesus disputed that God was their Father. 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 "Why * do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot * hear My word.
 - 8) Jesus accused them of being the descendants of their real father, the Devil! 44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

4. Paul preached, in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, that Jesus, the Savior of Israel, was of the seed of David (Acts 13:22-23)
 - a. 22 "After He had removed him (Saul), He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.'
 - b. 23 "From the **seed** of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,"
5. Jesus is of the seed of David. Paul affirmed this.
 - a. Jesus was born of seed of David according to flesh. (Romans 1:1-4)
 - 1) 1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
 - 2) 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,
 - 3) 3 concerning His Son, who was born of **seed** of David according to the flesh,
 - 4) 4 who was declared Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,
 - b. 2 Timothy 2:8: 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, **seed** of David, according to my gospel,
6. The promise to Abraham or to his seed that he would inherit the world was not through Law, but through righteousness of faith (Romans 4:13-18)
 - a. 13 For the promise to Abraham or to his **seed** that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. (Romans 4:13)
 - b. 16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the **seed**, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. 18 In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR **SEED** BE."

7. It is not merely children of the flesh who are identified as Abraham's seed, but it is children of the promise. (Rom. 9:7-8)
 - a. 7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's **seed**, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR **SEED** WILL BE NAMED."
 - b. 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as **seed**.
8. God has not rejected His people [Israel] – Paul is an Israeli, of **seed** of Abraham. (Romans 11:1). 1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, of **seed** of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
9. Paul is **seed** of Abraham. (2 Cor. 11:22): 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they **seed** of Abraham? So am I.
10. The ultimate fulfillment of the seed of Abraham is Christ (Gal. 3:16): 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his **seed**. He does not say, "And to **seeds**," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your **seed**," that is, Christ.
11. Christ is the seed that is the fulfillment of the Law: 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the **seed** would come to whom the promise had been made. (Gal. 3:19). For confirmation, see Gal. 3:24: 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
12. If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed. Galatians 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's **seed**, heirs according to promise.
 - a. That does not mean, however, that we fulfill all the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They inherit the land. We Gentiles do not.
 - b. We Gentiles will help rule the world in the coming kingdom, for example. But we do not inherit the land.
 - c. In the Millennial Temple, for example, only Levites will be able to have certain priestly functions. See Ezekiel 44:15; 45:5; 48:11-13
13. No one who is born of God can keep practicing sin because God's seed remains in him. 1 John 3:9. 9 No * one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot * sin, because he is born of God.

14. In the Tribulation, Satan will attempt to destroy Jews who believe in Jesus.
 - a. In the Tribulation the Dragon (Satan) will be enraged with the woman (Israel). He will try to destroy her with a flood, but the earth will swallow up the flood. Then the dragon will attempt to destroy the rest of the woman's children: Rev. 12:17: 17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her **seed**, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.
 - b. This describes Jews who have become believers in Jesus.

<u>The Four Seeds of Abraham in Scripture</u>		
Natural Seed	Physical descendants of Abraham	Gen. 12:1-3, 7; et al.
Natural-spiritual seed	Believing physical descendants of Abraham	Isa. 41:8; Rom. 9:6, 8; Gal. 6:16
Spiritual seed	Believing descendants of Abraham	Gal. 3:6-9, 29
Ultimate seed	Jesus Christ	Gal. 3:16; Heb. 2:16-17

This table comes from Thomas Constable in his Notes on Galatians at Galatians 3:15-18.