

# **Genesis 12:1-9—God’s unconditional promises to Abraham - Land, Nation, and Blessing (the promised Messiah)**

## **Memory Verse**

Genesis 12:1-3 NKJV—*The unconditional promises given to Abraham*

Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> **I will** make you a great nation; **I will** bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> **I will** bless those who bless you, and **I will** curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants **I will** give this land.”

## **Introduction**

Last time we saw that Abraham could only enjoy fellowship with God as he fully obeyed each command. Incomplete obedience or delays (the meaning of the name *Terah*), lead to a spiritually parched and barren life (The meaning of the place name *Haran*). Further revelation would only be given, and the joy of the Lord would only be experienced, when Abram finally made the choice to fully obey what God had already told him to do.

Today, we will begin to see how God is going to use Abraham to bring into existence a nation, a special, chosen nation, a nation through whom the whole world will be blessed because through them God would bring the promised Messiah into the world. This nation is none other than the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people.

## **Outline: (Genesis 12:1-9)**

1. God’s call of Abram and Abram’s eventual obedience and return to fellowship with God (vs 1-9)
2. Conditional and unconditional promises (vs 2-3, 7)
3. Why does God make and keep unconditional promises?
4. A modern day example of God keeping a promise given long ago—the return of the people of Israel to the land of Israel
5. An ancient example of God’s faithfulness to keep His unconditional promises—God did not destroy His people when they made the golden calf at Mount Sinai
6. Another ancient example of God’s faithfulness to keep His unconditional promises—God did not destroy Israel in the wilderness when they refused to enter the promised land
7. Application: Israel as a physical picture of a very important truth—God’s dealings with believers are all to do with *grace*—no one is deserving of God’s love and forgiveness, we only receive it because God unconditionally promised to offer it to all people

## **1. God’s call of Abram and Abram’s eventual obedience and return to fellowship with God (vs 1-9)**

**Genesis 12:1-9 NKJV**

**Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.**

**<sup>2</sup> I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

**<sup>4</sup> So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup> Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.**

**<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup> And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. <sup>9</sup> So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.**

### Abraham’s incomplete obedience

v 1 **Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you:** As we learned last time, these were the instructions given to Abraham prior to him leaving Ur of the Chaldeans. As we also covered last time, Abram did not fully obey God; he left Ur of the Chaldeans (his homeland), but did not leave his family behind. Instead, as Genesis 11:31-32 shows, Abram’s father Terah was in control of the situation and Abram was following Terah (who was an idol worshipper). When our family is evil, and a bad example, then we must separate ourselves from them. Abraham suffered a severe spiritual setback because he refused to separate himself from his evil and worldly family—he loved his family more than God.

Genesis 11:31-32 NKJV

And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. <sup>32</sup> So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

### God’s unconditional promises to Abraham

vs 2-3 **I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed:** These are the unconditional or “I will” promises that God gave to Abram before he left Ur of the Chaldeans. Notice that Abraham’s disobedience did not make the promises of no effect, God would still fulfil these promises no matter how many times Abram did not fully trust God. We will talk more about this and explain the promises more later.

### When did God call Abraham?

v 4 **So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran:** In the Hebrew, the word “**had**” is not there. It’s been added by the translators because Acts 7:2-3 makes it clear that God called Abram before he left his hometown (Ur of the Chaldeans), and not when he left Haran. Abram left Ur because of God’s call given to him most likely years before he left Haran at age 75.

### More incomplete obedience

v 4 **And Lot went with him:** The Holy Spirit specifically mentions that Lot went with Abram. Remember that God's call to Abram included leaving his family behind (with the exception of his wife Sarah). Just like Terah caused Abram to live for years in a physically and spiritually "parched and barren" place, so Lot will also cause problems for Abram. We will see how this transpires later. This shows that Abram is still not fully trusting God, but he is still growing in his faith, and God will reward Abram for that.

### Are material blessings necessarily evidence that we are in the will of God?

v 5 **Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran:** This shows that they had spent considerable time in Haran, the "parched and barren place", because they had been quite successful in a material, economic, or business sense. They had built up wealth, represented by "**all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran**".

God did promise to unconditionally bless Abram. But here we see that we can experience physical blessings yet still be out of the will of God. Abram may have been successful in business, but his walk with God was bankrupt. One of Satan's lies, especially in the western world, is to equate material blessings with God's favour and acceptance. Many today make money an idol. They choose material blessings over spiritual blessings. As Paul says in his letter to the Romans, God will give us what we want if we want it bad enough—but this is a discipline, not a blessing. God allows this to show that what we want will hurt us—God allows us to learn the lesson the hard way if we refuse to trust Him and do things the easy way.

Romans 1:28 NLT

Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.

We will see later that the wealth that Abram gained from living in Haran, as well as later on in Egypt, both places he shouldn't have been, only caused him grief. The lesson—*material wealth, if not a part of God's perfect will for us, will only cause us harm, so don't equate material wealth with God's approval of our choices—don't equate financial success with being in fellowship with God.* The Bible never promises us as New Testament believers that they will be healthy or wealthy—only that God will never leave us (see Hebrews 13:5-6). God's presence and fellowship is all we need; consider the example of the life of Jesus.

### Abram is back in the will of God, finally entering the promised land

v 5 **And they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan:** Abram is only obeying because his father is now dead. Sometimes God has to remove things that are precious to us, that are more important to us than God, because "it's only when God is all we have, that we realise that God is all we need." We will see that Abram will only experience peace in the land once he is separated from Lot.

v 6 **Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land:** Abraham is travelling south through what is today the land of Israel. Shechem is about 80km north of Jerusalem. So far, Abram has travelled about 400km in a southerly direction from Haran, located in Syria.

v 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants **I will give this land.**” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him: As far as we know, this is the first time God has physically appeared to anyone since Adam and Eve. God will do this several more times with Abram. The message is clear: If we want to experience a deeper walk with God, and enjoy greater fellowship with God, then we must be willing to sacrifice or give up the people or things we love or want, and give them over to God—this is symbolised by Abram building an altar.

Remember that an altar is a place of death. Abram built an altar each time he stopped in a place so he could enjoy fellowship with God. It’s a clear picture that in order to enjoy fellowship with God, we must first die to self. Paul makes this clear in:

Romans 12:1-2 AMP

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].

### God gives Abram further revelation

v 7 **To your descendants I will give this land:** After Abram obeyed God (only because his father had passed away), God now reveals more of His plan to Abraham. During all those physically and spiritually “parched and barren” years in Haran, Abraham didn’t know the location of where the place that God would have him settle down. But now God tells Abram, that is is **this land** that he will receive. Abram had to keep moving, to keep following the first command before he would find out where God wanted him to be. This is still the way God works today. It’s called progressive revelation. God progressively revealed more and more about the Messiah throughout the millennia, and God will progressively reveal more of His will for each of us personally throughout our lives as we continue to trust and obey Him.

### The battle between the sinful nature and the new nature

v 8-9 **And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.** <sup>9</sup> **So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South:** Abraham has travelled another 63km south. He is now only about 17km north of Jerusalem, camped between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. Where Abram camped is a picture of the life of the believer—a physical picture of of the spiritual tension that we experience as a believer walking in an evil world. In Genesis 28:19 we learn that Bethel means “the house of God”. “Ai” means “ruin”. We always have two choices as a believer, to be a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness (Romans 6). We will see that sometimes Abram lacked faith and so disobeyed God and so “chose Ai”—the road that leads to ruin. While other times he by faith obeyed God and “chose Bethel”—the road that leads to the house of God, where he enjoyed the presence of God.

Romans 6:15-16 NLT

Well then, since God’s grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! <sup>16</sup> Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

## 2. Conditional and unconditional promises

Genesis 12:2-3, 7 NKJV

<sup>2</sup> **I will** make you a great nation; **I will** bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> **I will** bless those who bless you, and **I will** curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants **I will** give this land.”

What is an unconditional promise?

vs 2-3, 7 **I will...**, **I will...**, **I will...**, **I will...**: When God says “***I will***” (and not “*if you—then I*”), it means that God is making an *unconditional* promise: He is promising to do something for us regardless of who we are and what we do. It means that the fulfilment of the promise has nothing to do with our performance or goodness or effort—*it’s only dependant on who God is*. An unconditional promise has everything to do with who God is and nothing to do with who we are—the reasons are all in God, not in us. As we will discuss later, this is the reason why God is *gracious*, meaning that He gives us good things that we don’t deserve.

As you would expect, all the promises in the Bible regarding God sending the promised Messiah are all unconditional—He does it simply because He wants to, because it reflects who He is—God by nature loves to give and forgive. The only condition on the gift of salvation is that it must be received. God guaranteed to provide the Saviour to save the world from sin, but God leaves it to us to choose to receive that gift. God has made it possible for all people to be saved, but only some people will choose to be saved.

1 John 2:2 AMP

And He [that same Jesus Himself] is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours alone but also for [the sins of] the whole world.

What is a conditional promise

A conditional promise is a promise where the one making the promise only has to keep his promise if the other party also keeps their part of the deal. For example, someone promises to give me a lift into town, but I must be ready by 8am or else they will leave without me. They might have said something like, “*If* you are ready by 8am, *then* I will give you a ride into town. The promise of a ride into town is given, but is conditional on me being ready on time. If I’ve slept in, then I’ll find myself walking, and I’ll have no-one to blame except myself.

It’s so important that we understand the difference between a conditional promise and an unconditional promise. They help us to understand what is God’s responsibility, and what is ours—*it’s so important that we don’t try to work for what is freely given to us*.

## 3. Why does God make and keep unconditional promises?

Imagine that I said that I would deposit \$100 dollars into your account tomorrow, no strings attached, no matter what happens to you and no matter how you behave towards me. It wouldn’t matter if you spit in my face or smashed up my car, I would still deposit the money into your account, simply because I said that I would—I made you an *unconditional promise*.

When God says “**I will** do this” (in contrast to, “*If you do that, then I will do this*”), then He is making an unconditional promise. God will keep His word because He is a faithful God who always keeps His promises. Why? Firstly, God is absolutely faithful, just like He is absolutely holy and absolutely all loving. This means that He is incapable of breaking a promise. Secondly, God’s reputation depends on Him keeping His promises.

### 1. God by nature is faithful

Psalm 89:1-2, 5, and 8 NKJV

<sup>1</sup> I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your **faithfulness** to all generations. <sup>2</sup> For I have said, “Mercy shall be built up forever; Your **faithfulness** You shall establish in the very heavens.”

<sup>5</sup> And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your **faithfulness** also in the assembly of the saints.

<sup>8</sup> O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty like You, O LORD? Your **faithfulness** also surrounds You.

<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My **faithfulness** to fail. <sup>34</sup> **My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.**

Psalm 92:1-2 NKJV

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; <sup>2</sup> to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your **faithfulness** every night.

### 2. God must be faithful to keep His promises to protect His reputation among men

If God ever said He would do something, and then didn’t do it, then nobody could ever trust Him again, and no-one would ever respect Him again—the entire word of God would be null and void, completely untrustworthy. Therefore, there are multiple times where God straight out tells us why He is keeping His promises—it’s to protect His reputation as a faithful, promise keeping God. For example, in Isaiah we learn that God forgives our sins not because we deserve it, but only because He promised to forgive the sins of any person who repents and calls upon His name. This should bring us much comfort as we come to understand that God forgives us simply and only because He loves to forgive—by nature God is a forgiving God—that is the only reason why He promises to forgive anyone who calls on His name, no matter what they have done. Simply put, the reason why God chooses to forgive us has everything to do with who He is, and absolutely nothing to do with who we are.

Isaiah 43:25 NKJV

“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions **for My own sake [because of who I am, and not because of who you are]**; and I will not remember your sins.

### 4. A modern day example of God keeping a promise given long ago—the return of the people of Israel to the land of Israel

We are greatly privileged to be living in this generation where the last days prophecies are being played out before our very eyes. It really doesn’t take much faith to believe in God when we can so clearly see Him working in the world around us. By far the most obvious prophecy or promise that God is fulfilling in this generation is that of the nation of Israel returning to their homeland, the land of Israel.

This was humanly impossible. All the world hates the Jews, they were almost annihilated during the holocaust, and yet somehow they found favour among the nations and get to return to their homeland for the second time (see Isaiah 11:11, the first time was their return to the land of Israel from Babylon. Another unconditional promise that God kept was Israel becoming a nation in one day, May 14, 1948, fulfilling Isaiah 66:8). We will now see just exactly why God is doing this—it's for His names sake, so that both Israel themselves, and the world who is watching closely, will know that God is a faithful, promise keeping God. *Again, the reasons that God keeps His promises to Israel are all in Him, and have nothing to do with Israel.*

Ezekiel 20:40-44 NLT

For on My holy mountain, the great mountain of Israel, says the Sovereign LORD, the people of Israel will someday worship Me, and I will accept them. There I will require that you bring Me all your offerings and choice gifts and sacrifices. <sup>41</sup> When I bring you home from exile, you will be like a pleasing sacrifice to Me. **And I will display My holiness through you as all the nations watch [as the nations observe God keeping his promise to bring home the nation of Israel to their home land].** <sup>42</sup> Then when I have brought you home to the land I promised with a solemn oath [the reason why God returns the Israelites to their land] to give to your ancestors [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], you will know that I am the LORD [because I was faithful to keep My promise]. <sup>43</sup> You will look back on all the ways you defiled yourselves and will hate yourselves because of the evil you have done [because you will see that you so badly treated the One who loved you so much]. <sup>44</sup> **You will know that I am the LORD, O people of Israel, when I have honoured My name by treating you mercifully in spite of your wickedness.** I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

Ezekiel 20:43-44 NKJV

And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. <sup>44</sup> **Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have dealt with you for My name's sake [to protect my reputation], not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings,** O house of Israel," says the Lord GOD.' "

Ezekiel 36:22-24 NLT

"Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD: **I am bringing you back, but not because you deserve it. I am doing it to protect my holy name [My reputation as a faithful God], on which you brought shame while you were scattered among the nations [because they should have been in the land that God promised them].** <sup>23</sup> I will show how holy my great name is—the name on which you brought shame among the nations. **And when I reveal my holiness through you before their very eyes [when I keep My promise to bring you back into the land],** says the Sovereign LORD, then the nations will know that I am the LORD. <sup>24</sup> For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land.

Consider that the nation of Israel, as a whole, is still in rebellion against God. They are still, as a nation, rejecting Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah, yet God is keeping His promise to miraculously bring them back into the land of Israel after being scattered for almost 2,000 years. This again shows that the reasons God keeps His promises to a rebellious Israel are all in Him, and have nothing to do with rebellious Israel. Consider that if God's promise to bring Israel back into the land of Israel was conditional on their obedience, on their keeping the Law, then there would be no way that they would be in the land of Israel today.

## **5. An ancient example of God’s faithfulness to keep His unconditional promises—God did not destroy His people when they made the golden calf at Mount Sinai**

Here is an example of God not destroying His people when they turned away from Him and worshipped other gods at the foot of Mount Sinai, even while God was speaking to Moses and the mountain was covered in fire.

Exodus 32:1-10 HCSB

When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!”

<sup>2</sup> Then Aaron replied to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.” <sup>3</sup> So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup> He took the gold from their hands, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf.

Then they said, “Israel, this is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!”

<sup>5</sup> When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; then he made an announcement: “There will be a festival to the LORD tomorrow.” <sup>6</sup> Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, then got up to play.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses: “Go down at once! For your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly. <sup>8</sup> They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them; they have made for themselves an image of a calf. They have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and said, ‘Israel, this is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’” <sup>9</sup> The LORD also said to Moses: “I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. <sup>10</sup> Now leave Me alone, so that My anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”

However, God didn’t destroy His chosen people because Moses reminds God of two promises that He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The first reason Moses’ intercessory prayer was effective because he appeals to what God has already promised to do—Moses knows God’s character, that God is always faithful and can therefore never break His promises. The two promises are in the verses below—can you find them?

Exodus 32:11-14 HCSB

But Moses interceded with the LORD his God: “LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand?

<sup>12</sup> **Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth’?** Turn from Your great anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for Your people. <sup>13</sup> **Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—You swore to them by Your very self and declared, ‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.’**” <sup>14</sup> So the LORD relented concerning the disaster He said He would bring on His people.

The two things God had *unconditionally* promised were—“**I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.**” If God wiped out the nation of Israel because of their disobedience, then He wouldn’t be keeping His promises.

The second reason why Moses' intercessory prayer on behalf of the nation of Israel is effective is because Moses was concerned for God's great name, His reputation, as we *should all be*. In Exodus 32:12 Moses said to God, **"Why should the Egyptians say 'He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth'?"** Moses was referring to the fact that God's reputation would be ruined if God wiped out the nation of Israel. Why? Because Egypt could then inform the other nations that God was guilty of breaking promises that He had made long ago to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—***"Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—You swore to them by Your very self."***

So we see that the people deserved to be destroyed by God, that it would have been right and fair for God to do that, but God didn't do that because He had promises to keep. This did not happen only once.

### **6. Another ancient example of God's faithfulness to keep His unconditional promises—God did not destroy Israel in the wilderness when they refused to enter the promised land**

In this next example, God has brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt, taken them to Mount Sinai where He gave them His law, and now, about two years after being delivered from hard bondage and slavery in Egypt, and about one year after the golden calf rebellion discussed above, God brings them to the border of the promised land. They are at a place called Kadesh Barnea. God has given them the command to cross the Jordan river and go and fight the physically larger warriors who lived in the fortress cities in the land of Canaan. God has already demonstrated His power by defeating the armies of Egypt. He has also demonstrated His loving care for them by giving them fire by night, cloud by day, as well as food and water in the wilderness every day. Now listen to how the people respond to God. We'll pick up the story as it is recorded in the book of Numbers.

Numbers 13:30 to 14:16 NLT

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

<sup>31</sup> But the other men [10 of the 12 spies] who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" <sup>32</sup> So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: "The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. <sup>33</sup> We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!"

14:<sup>1</sup>Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. <sup>2</sup> Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained. <sup>3</sup> "Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> Then they plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!"

<sup>5</sup> Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. <sup>6</sup> Two of the men who had explored the land [2 of the 12 spies], Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. <sup>7</sup> They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! <sup>8</sup> And if the LORD is pleased with us, He will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup> Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"

<sup>10</sup> But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle. <sup>11</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people treat Me with contempt? Will they never believe Me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them? <sup>12</sup> *I will disown them and destroy them with a plague. Then I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are!*”

<sup>13</sup> But Moses objected. “**What will the Egyptians think when they hear about it?**” he asked the LORD. “They know full well the power You displayed in rescuing Your people from Egypt. <sup>14</sup> **Now if You destroy them, the Egyptians will send a report to the inhabitants of this land, who have already heard that You live among Your people.** They know, LORD, that You have appeared to Your people face to face and that Your pillar of cloud hovers over them. They know that You go before them in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup> **Now if You slaughter all these people with a single blow, the nations that have heard of your fame will say,** <sup>16</sup> **‘The LORD was not able to bring them into the land He swore to give them,** so He killed them in the wilderness.’

<sup>17</sup> *“Please, Lord, prove that Your power is as great as You have claimed [i.e. please keep Your promise to bring the nation of Israel into the land of Canaan].”*

Moses summarises this same event 38 years later when reminding the next generation of why the first generation of the Israelites did not enter the promised land.

Deuteronomy 9:23-29 NLT

And at Kadesh-barnea the LORD sent you out with this command: ‘**Go up and take over the land I have given you.**’ But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God and refused to put your trust in Him or obey Him. <sup>24</sup> **Yes, you have been rebelling against the LORD as long as I have known you.**

<sup>25</sup> “That is why I threw myself down before the LORD for forty days and nights—for the LORD said He would destroy you. <sup>26</sup> I prayed to the LORD and said, ‘O Sovereign LORD, do not destroy them. They are Your own people. They are Your special possession, whom You redeemed from Egypt by Your mighty power and Your strong hand. <sup>27</sup> **Please overlook the stubbornness and the awful sin of these people, and remember instead Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** <sup>28</sup> **If You destroy these people, the Egyptians will say, “The Israelites died because the LORD wasn’t able to bring them to the land He had promised to give them.”**”

*Or they [the Egyptians] might say, “He destroyed them because He hated them; He deliberately took them into the wilderness to slaughter them.”* <sup>29</sup> *But they are Your people and Your special possession, whom You brought out of Egypt by Your great strength and powerful arm.’*

*The unconditional promise to bring the nation of Israel into the land*

In this amazing intercessory prayer by Moses, Moses again appeals to the *unconditional promises* that God had previously made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, namely that God would bring their descendants into *this land*, the land of Canaan, the promised land, the land of God’s rest. Again, if God killed them and started again with Moses, then God would be breaking His promise that He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—instead of bringing the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob into the land, God would be bringing the descendants of Moses into the land, thus not fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is why Moses prayed, **“If you destroy these people, the Egyptians will say, “The Israelites died because the LORD wasn’t able to bring them to the land he had promised to give them.”**”

*The unconditional promise that God would make a nation from Abraham, and that He would love them*

The second unchanging truth that Moses refers to is that God loves His people Israel, because He chose them, and therefore God could not destroy them. This fact is also rooted or grounded in the promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, namely “I will make you a great nation” (Genesis 12:2a NKJV). Moses explains this to the children of Israel in:

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 NKJV

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup> **The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;** <sup>8</sup> **but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob],** the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

This explains why Moses prayed the way He did in the second part of his intercessory prayer after the people refused to enter the promised land:

Deuteronomy 9:28b-29 NKJV

Or they might say, “He destroyed them because he hated them; he deliberately took them into the wilderness to slaughter them.” <sup>29</sup> But they are your people and your special possession, whom you brought out of Egypt by your great strength and powerful arm.’

God had redeemed the nation of Israel. He had purchased them. He had chosen them to be His special people, His chosen nation. This means that *must continue to exist as His chosen people forever*. God can’t “unchoose” His chosen people.

**7. Application: Israel as a physical picture of a very important truth—  
God’s dealings with believers are all to do with grace—no one is  
deserving of God’s love and forgiveness, we only receive it because God  
unconditionally promised to offer it to all people**

As I said previously, the reasons why God gives unconditional promises are all in Him, and have nothing to do with us. Psalm 103 describes who God is, and therefore why He shows so much grace and mercy to us, and why can put so much trust in His promises.

Psalm 103:8-14 NLT

The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. <sup>9</sup> He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. <sup>10</sup> He does not punish us for all our sins; He does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. <sup>11</sup> For His unfailing love toward those who fear Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. <sup>12</sup> He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. <sup>13</sup> The LORD is like a father to His children, tender and compassionate to those who fear Him. <sup>14</sup> For He knows how weak we are; He remembers we are only dust.

Consider that the more evil and rebellious Israel is, then the more God’s faithfulness shines through—the more obvious it is that the reason God keeps His promises has everything to do with who He is, an absolutely nothing to do with what Israel did or didn’t do. *This is a physical picture of a spiritual truth, our salvation.* Put aside any thought that we are deserving of any good thing that God gives us—God sacrificed Himself for us when we were still living in rebellion against Him—there was nothing in us that would make Him want to die for us.

Romans 5:8 NKJV

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Again, the reasons for God loving us and wanting to save us are all in Him, and have nothing to do with us. If God didn’t give up on Israel, neither will He give up on You—trust Him.