

ROMANS CHAPTER 4

Abraham, Covenant Faithfulness, and the Promise That Extends to the Nations

Romans Chapter 4 continues the argument Sha'ul has been building concerning the righteousness of Elohim and how mankind is brought into right relationship with YaHuWaH. After establishing in Chapter 3 that both Yahudim and the nations stand in need of YaHuWaH's righteousness, Sha'ul now returns to the foundation of the covenant itself.

He does not begin with Mosheh. He does not begin with Sinai. He begins with Abraham. This is not accidental. Abraham is the doorway through which Sha'ul explains the relationship between faith, covenant, obedience, inheritance, and the nations.

The question before Sha'ul is not merely: "How are individuals forgiven?" The deeper covenant question is: "How does YaHuWaH fulfill His promise to Abraham and bring His purposes to completion?" Romans 4 is therefore not an argument against Torah. It is an argument that the covenant promises existed before Sinai and that the foundation of covenant relationship has always been rooted in YaHuWaH's faithfulness and mankind's faithful response.

Abraham: The Father of the Covenant Promise

Sha'ul begins:

"What then shall we say Abraham our father, according to the flesh, has found?" - Romiyim (Romans) 4:1

The choice of Abraham is extremely significant. Abraham represents the beginning of YaHuWaH's covenant purpose to restore blessing to the nations.

The promise given to Abraham was:

"And I shall make you a great nation, and bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing. And I shall bless those who bless you, and curse him who curses you. And in you all the clans of the earth shall be blessed." - Bereshith (Genesis) 12:2-3

This promise contains several foundational elements: Abraham would become a people. That people would carry covenant blessing. The nations would ultimately be blessed through that covenant relationship. The story of Scripture is therefore not about YaHuWaH abandoning the nations. It is about YaHuWaH restoring the nations through the family He established through Abraham.

Abraham Before Sinai

Sha'ul's argument depends upon chronology. Abraham lived before the giving of Torah at Mount Sinai. The covenant with Abraham was established centuries before Mosheh received the written Torah. This means covenant relationship did not begin with Sinai. However, this does not mean Torah was irrelevant. Rather, it means YaHuWaH's covenant purposes have always rested upon His promise and faithfulness. The Torah given through Mosheh did not create YaHuWaH's covenant people. It revealed the instructions and responsibilities of the covenant relationship. The covenant existed. The Torah documented its terms. This distinction is essential for understanding Sha'ul.

Abraham's Belief and Righteousness

Sha'ul writes:

"For if Abraham was declared right by works, he has ground for boasting, but not before Elohim. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed Elohim, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.'" - Romiyim (Romans) 4:2-3

Sha'ul quotes Genesis:

"And he believed in יהוה, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness." - Bereshith (Genesis) 15:6

This passage is one of the most important verses in Scripture concerning faith and covenant. The Hebrew word translated "believed" comes from the root **aman** (אמן). This root carries the idea of firmness, stability, trustworthiness, and faithfulness. The same root is connected to the idea of something being established or confirmed. Biblical belief is not passive agreement. Abraham did not merely acknowledge that YaHuWaH existed. He trusted YaHuWaH's promise enough to act upon it. When YaHuWaH called him to leave his homeland, Abraham went. When YaHuWaH promised him descendants while his circumstances appeared impossible, Abraham trusted. When YaHuWaH tested him with Yitsḥaq, Abraham demonstrated that his trust was genuine. The obedience revealed the faith. The action revealed the trust.

Faith and Obedience Are Not Opposites

One of the greatest misunderstandings surrounding Romans is the assumption that Sha'ul places faith and obedience against each other. The Scriptures do not present them as enemies. Faith is the root. Obedience is the fruit. A person who truly trusts YaHuWaH will align themselves with His ways.

This is why YaHuWaH said concerning Abraham:

"Because Abraham obeyed My voice and guarded My Charge: My commands, My laws, and My Torot." - Bereshith (Genesis) 26:5

This statement is often overlooked. Abraham's relationship with YaHuWaH was not based on human merit. But his trust produced covenant faithfulness. YaHuWaH did not declare Abraham righteous because Abraham earned righteousness. Abraham walked faithfully because he trusted the One who called him.

The Worker and the Gift

Sha'ul continues:

"Now to him who works, the reward is not reckoned as favor but as a debt." - Romiyim (Romans) 4:4

Sha'ul is explaining the difference between earning and receiving. A worker receives payment because of obligation. A covenant recipient receives because of favor. The issue is not whether obedience matters. The issue is whether humans can place YaHuWaH under obligation. No human being can say: "YaHuWaH owes me because I performed enough." The relationship begins with His mercy. This is consistent throughout Scripture. Yisra'El did not earn deliverance from Mitsrayim. YaHuWaH delivered them first. Then He gave them covenant instructions. The pattern is always: Favor initiates. Faith responds. Obedience follows.

Dawid Also Speaks of This Righteousness

Sha'ul then brings Dawid into the discussion:

"Even as Dawid also says of the blessedness of the man to whom Elohim reckons righteousness without works." - Romiyim (Romans) 4:6

Dawid declares:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom יהוה does not reckon crookedness..." - Tehillim (Psalms) 32:1-2

This is significant because Dawid was not a man who rejected Torah. Dawid loved Torah.

He wrote:

"How I have loved Your Torah! It is my study all day long." - Tehillim (Psalms) 119:97

Dawid understood something essential: Torah reveals righteousness. But Torah does not erase the need for mercy. The righteous person is not the person who has never failed. The righteous person is the person who trusts YaHuWaH, receives correction, and returns to Him.

Circumcision and the Timing of the Promise

Sha'ul now addresses one of the major covenant questions: Was Abraham counted righteous before or after circumcision?

He answers:

"Is this blessedness then upon the circumcised only, or also upon the uncircumcised? For we say that belief was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised." - Romiyim (Romans) 4:9-10

The point Sha'ul is making is that Abraham's righteousness was established before the physical sign of circumcision. Circumcision did not create the covenant relationship. It was the sign of the covenant relationship.

YaHuWaH commanded circumcision afterward:

"And it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you." - Bereshith (Genesis) 17:11

A sign points to a reality. It does not replace the reality.

Abraham as Father of Many Nations

Sha'ul writes:

"For he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the belief which he had while still uncircumcised, so that he should become father of all those believing through uncircumcision, for righteousness to be reckoned to them also, and father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but also walk in the steps of the belief which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised." - Romiyim (Romans) 4:11-12

This passage is central to understanding the restoration of the nations. Abraham is called the father of many nations. The Hebrew word for nations, **goyim** (גוים), refers to peoples or nations. YaHuWaH's promise was always larger than one ethnic family. But the nations are brought into Abraham's promise through the same faithfulness Abraham demonstrated. They are not brought in by replacing Yisra'El. They are brought into the covenant family through Messiah, the Seed of Abraham.

The Promise Through Faithfulness, Not Human Achievement

Sha'ul continues:

"For not through Torah was the promise to Abraham or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world, but through righteousness of belief." - Romiyim (Romans) 4:13

Again, this must be understood carefully. Sha'ul is not saying Torah is against the promise. He is saying the promise was not based upon human ability to achieve righteousness. The promise came from YaHuWaH. His oath established it. It depended upon His faithfulness. This is why Abraham could trust even when circumstances contradicted the promise.

Abraham's Faith in Resurrection Power

Sha'ul describes Abraham:

"...before Him whom he believed, Elohim, who gives life to the dead and calls that which does not exist into being." - Romiyim (Romans) 4:17

Abraham's faith was rooted in the character of YaHuWaH. He trusted the One who creates. The One who gives life. The One who fulfills impossible promises. This points directly toward Messiah. The same Elohim who brought life from Sarah's barren womb is the Elohim who raised Yahusha from the dead. The resurrection is not disconnected from the Abrahamic promise. It is the continuation of it.

The Faith of Abraham and the Faith of Messiah

Sha'ul concludes:

"And not because of him alone was it written that it was reckoned to him, but also for us, to whom it shall be reckoned, those believing in Him who raised up Yahusha our Master from the dead." -

Romiyim (Romans) 4:23-24

Abraham's story was recorded because it reveals the pattern. YaHuWaH promises. Mankind trusts. YaHuWaH fulfills. The resurrection of Yahusha is the ultimate confirmation that YaHuWaH remains faithful. Death itself cannot prevent His promise.

Romans 4 and the Restoration of the Whole House of Yisra'El

Romans 4 establishes that the promise and faithfulness of YaHuWaH defines the covenant family. This does not erase Yisra'El's identity. It confirms the purpose of Yisra'El's calling. Through Abraham, all nations would be blessed. Through Messiah, that promise reaches its intended fulfillment.

The nations are invited into the covenant promises. The scattered of Yisra'El are being gathered.

The family of Abraham is being restored according to YaHuWaH's purpose. The covenant is not abandoned. It is expanded according to the original promise.

Conclusion of Romans Chapter 4

Romans 4 reveals that righteousness has always been rooted in YaHuWaH's faithfulness and received through trusting Him. Abraham was not made righteous because he achieved perfection. He was made righteous because he trusted the promise of YaHuWaH. That trust produced obedience. That faith produced action. That covenant relationship became the foundation through which YaHuWaH would bless the nations. Sha'ul's message is not that Torah was replaced. His message is that no human being can boast before the Creator. All must come through the mercy of YaHuWaH. Abraham looked forward to the promise. The Messiah fulfills that promise. And through Yahusha, YaHuWaH continues the work He began when He called Abraham from among the nations: To restore a people who would walk with Him, reflect His character, and bring His blessing to the world.