

Some time later, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. He said: "Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward will be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what can You give me, seeing that I shall die childless, and the one in charge of my household is Dammesek Eliezer!...Since You have granted me no offspring, my steward will be my heir." The word of the Lord came to him in reply, "That one shall not be your heir; none but your very own issue shall be your heir." God took him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them...So shall your offspring be." And because he put his trust in the Lord, He reckoned it to his merit. --- Gen. 15:1-6

One of the most significant verses of Scripture, and in the circumstances a response of remarkable faith. Galatians 3:6ff teaches that, as in Abram's case, our standing before God is entirely dependent on faith. We cannot win a place in heaven by good deeds; neither did he. --- Eerdman's Concise Bible Handbook, 1980

He reckoned it to his merit: Abraham took it as charitable of Him, giving him something he did not deserve by his own merits. --- Rashbam

Abram is definitely reassured by God's answer to his timid protest. He trusts God who replies, "I shall remember this." The verse has no relation to the [Christian] dogma of "justification by faith." Righteousness is a claim to recognition and reward, earned by his conduct. God leaves neither good will nor thought unrewarded. --- Benno Jacob, Germany/Poland/England (1862-1945)

Did God demand of Abraham and his descendants faith alone without actual deeds? God Himself declares: *For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, to the end that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him* (Gen. 18:19). Whatever God will command, in the way of works, the children of Abraham will do. As such, once the Torah was formally given to Abraham's descendants on Mount Sinai, it became binding upon every generation of Israelites. Paul certainly had no right or

justification to abrogate the Law. In the last analysis, what was actually demanded of Abraham, and serves as an example for his descendants, was a balance of faith and deeds. Abraham's faith was reflected by means of positive deeds. --- Gerald Sigal, contemporary

Alternate translations of the end of our original passage:

Now he trusted in the Lord, and he deemed it as righteous merit on his part. --- Everett Fox

And he trusted in the Lord, and He considered it for him as virtue. --- Richard Friedman

He believed without a doubt that God would do as He said, even though it was highly improbable according to the laws of nature. ...*he deemed it as righteous merit on his part*; God, the Blessed One, reckoned this trust in Him as righteousness and to the merit of Abram. --- Sforzo, 15th-16th c. Italy

Abram took it as righteousness on God's part, because in fact he knew he had earned the right to be under the care of Divine providence. --- Gersonides

He, Abram, deemed it as righteous on God's part, for God had dealt with him righteously, for God promised that an inheritor of the land would spring from his loins. --- Bekhor Shor, 12th c. France

We were not told the reason for God's choosing Abraham. We must derive it from Abraham's later behavior: his virtue, his combination of obedience and willingness to question, humility as well as boldness, trust in his God as well as caring about his fellow human beings. --- Richard Friedman, contemporary