

Pt 1-Covenant: Summary of Biblical Covenants

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DEFINITION OF COVENANT

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This may be more than you want to read, but for those who are interested, one of the better summary discussions of Covenant in the Old Testament is found in following article from the conservative 1915 version of the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: **COVENANT, IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

GENERAL MEANING.

The etymological force of the Hebrew berith is not entirely certain. It is probable that the word is the same as the Assyrian biritu, which has the common meaning "fetter," but also means "covenant." The significance of the root from which this Assyrian word is derived is uncertain. It is probable that it is "to bind," but that is not definitely established. The meaning of biritu as covenant seems to come directly from the root, rather than as a derived meaning from fetter. If this root idea is to bind, the covenant is that which binds together the parties. This, at any rate, is in harmony with the general meaning of the word.

In the Old Testament the word has an ordinary use, when both parties are men, and a distinctly religious use, between God and men. There can be no doubt that the religious use has come from the ordinary, in harmony with the general custom in such cases, and not the reverse. There are also two shades of meaning, somewhat distinct, of the Hebrew word: one in which it is properly a covenant, i.e. a solemn mutual agreement, the other in which it is more a command, i.e. instead of an obligation voluntarily assumed, it is an obligation imposed by a superior upon an inferior. This latter meaning, however, has clearly been derived from the other. It is easy to see that an agreement, including as the contracting parties those of unequal position, might readily include those agreements which tended to partake of the nature of a command; but the process could not readily be reversed.

AMONG MEN.

1. EARLY IDEA:

We consider first a covenant in which both contracting parties are men. In essence a covenant is an agreement, but an agreement of a solemn and binding force. The early Semitic idea of a covenant was doubtless that which prevailed among the Arabs (see especially W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2nd edition, passim). This was primarily blood-brotherhood, in which two men became brothers by drinking each other's blood (**Ed Note: See illustration in pagan culture**). Ordinarily this meant that one was adopted into the clan of the other. Hence, this act involved the clan of one of the contracting parties, and also brought the other party into relation with the god of this clan, by bringing him into the community life of the clan, which included its god. In this early idea, then, "primarily the covenant is not a special engagement to this or that particular effect, but bond of truth and life-fellowship to all the effects for which kinsmen are permanently bound together" (W. Robertson Smith, *op. cit.*, 315 f). In this early ceremonial the religious idea was necessarily present, because the god was kindred to the clan; and the god had a special interest in the covenant because he especially protects the kindred blood, of which the stranger thus becomes a part. This religious side always persisted, although the original idea was much modified. In later usage there were various substitutes for the drinking of each other's blood, namely, drinking together the sacrificial blood, sprinkling it upon the parties, eating together the sacrificial meal, etc.; but the same idea found expression in all, the community of life resulting from the covenant.

2. PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS:

The covenant in the Old Testament shows considerable modification from the early idea. Yet it will doubtless help in understanding the Old Testament covenant to keep in mind the early idea and form. Combining statements made in different accounts, the following seem to be the principal elements in a covenant between men. Some of the details, it is to be noted, are not explicitly stated in reference to these covenants, but may be inferred from those between God and men.

1. **A statement of the terms agreed upon** (Genesis 26:29; 31:50,52).. This was a modification of the earlier idea, which has been noted, in which a covenant was all-inclusive.
2. **An oath by each party to observe the terms, God being witness of the oath** (Ge 26:31; 31:48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53).. The **oath** was such a characteristic feature that sometimes the term "oath" is used as the equivalent of covenant (see Ezekiel 17:13).
3. **A curse invoked by each one upon himself in case disregard of the agreement.** In a sense this may be considered a part of the oath, adding emphasis to it. This curse is not explicitly stated in the case of human covenants, but may be inferred from the covenant with God (Dt 27:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26).
4. **The formal ratification of the covenant by some solemn external act.**

The different ceremonies for this purpose, such as have already been mentioned, are to be regarded as the later equivalents of the early act of **drinking each other's blood**. In the Old Testament accounts it is not certain that such formal act is expressly mentioned in relation to covenants between men. It seems probable, however, that the **sacrificial meal** of Genesis 31:54 included Laban, in which case it was a **covenant sacrifice**. In any case, both **sacrificial meal** and **sprinkling of blood** upon the two parties, the **altar** representing Yahweh, are mentioned in Exodus 24:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, with allusions elsewhere, in **ratification of the covenant** at Sinai between Yahweh and Israel.

In the **covenant of God with Abraham** is another ceremony, quite certainly with the same purpose. This is a peculiar observance, namely, the cutting of animals into two parts and passing between the severed portions (Ge 15:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18), a custom also referred to in Jeremiah 34:18. Here it is to be noted that it is a smoking furnace and a flaming torch, representing God, not Abraham, which passed between the pieces. Such an act, it would seem, should be shared by both parties, but in this case it is doubtless to be explained by the fact that the covenant is principally a promise by Yahweh. He is the one who binds Himself. Concerning the significance of this act there is difference of opinion. A common view is that it is in effect a formal

expression of the curse, imprecating upon oneself the same, i.e. cutting in pieces, if one breaks the terms of the covenant. But, as W. R. Smith has pointed out (op. cit., 481), this does not explain the passing between the pieces, which is the characteristic feature of the ceremony. It seems rather to be a symbol that the two parties "were taken within the mystical life of the victim." (Compare the interpretation of He 9:15, 16, 17 in COVENANT, THE NEW TESTAMENT.) It would then be an inheritance from the early times, in which the victim was regarded as kindred with the tribe, and hence, also an equivalent of the drinking of each other's blood.

The **immutability of a covenant** is everywhere assumed, at least theoretically.

Other features beyond those mentioned cannot be considered as fundamental. This is the case with the **setting up of a stone, (Pillar)** or raising a heap of stones (**Heap** Hebrew = **gal**) (Ge 31:45,46). This is doubtless simply an ancient custom, which has no direct connection with the covenant, but comes from the ancient Semitic idea of the sacredness of single stones or heaps of stones.

Striking hands is a general expression of an agreement made (Ezra 10:19; Eze 17:18, etc.)

3. DIFFERENT VARIETIES:

In observing different varieties of agreements among men, we note that they may be either between individuals or between larger units, such as tribes and nations. In a great majority of cases, however, they are between the larger units. In some cases, also, when an individual acts it is in a representative capacity, as the head of a clan, or as a king.

When the **covenant is between tribes** it is thus a **treaty** or **alliance**. The following passages have this use of covenant: Genesis 14:13; 21:27,32; 26:28; 31:44; Exodus 23:32; 34:12,15; Deuteronomy 7:2; Joshua 9:6,7,11,15,16; Judges 2:2; 1Samuel 11:1; 1Kings 3:12; 15:19 parallel 2Chronicles 16:3; 1Kings 20:34; Psalms 83:5; Isaiah 33:8; Ezekiel 16:61; 17:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19; 30:5; Daniel 11:22; Amos 1:9.

In other cases it is between a **king and his subjects**, when it is more a **command** or **ordinance**, as 2Samuel 3:12,13,11; 5:3 parallel 1Chronicles 11:3; Jeremiah 34:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; Daniel 9:27.

In other cases it is **between individuals**, or **between small groups**, where it is an **agreement** or **pledge** (2Kings 11:4 parallel 2Chronicles 23:1; Job 31:1; 41:4; Hosea 10:4).

Between **David and Jonathan** it is more specifically an **alliance of friendship** (1Sa 18:3; 20:8; 23:18), as also apparently in Ps 55:20 ("He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has violated his covenant.") ([See illustration in pagan culture](#))

It means an alliance of marriage in Malachi 2:14, ("Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant."), but probably not in Proverbs 2:17 ("That leaves the companion of her youth, And forgets the covenant of her God"), where it is better to understand the meaning as being "her covenant with God."

Ed Note: Most commentaries favor Proverbs 2:17 to at least in part represent an allusion to the **covenant of marriage**.

E.g., the **Believer's Study Bible** writes...

"The "companion of her youth" primarily is her husband. Instead of submitting to her husband, she is self-ruled. However, she breaks not only her covenant of marriage but also her covenant with God Himself (e.g., Jer. 3:4), including the seventh commandment (Ex. 20:14)

Warren Wiersbe writes that the woman described here in Proverbs 2

"She has no respect for God, because she breaks His law (Ex. 20:14); she has no respect for her husband because she violates the promises she made to him when she married him. She no longer has a guide or a friend in the Lord or in her husband, because she has taken the path of sin. Anyone who listens to her words and follows her path is heading for the cemetery." [Wiersbe, W. W. Be skillful. An Old Testament study. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books]

Finally the respected expositor **John MacArthur** writes that

"In a wide sense this could be the covenant of Sinai (Ex 20:14), but specifically looks to the marriage covenant of Gen. 2:24, with its commitment to fidelity." [MacArthur, J. J. The MacArthur Study Bible. Nashville: Word Pub]

4. PHRASEOLOGY USED:

In all cases of covenants between men, except Jeremiah 34:10 (see context Je 34:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 - pay special attention to the ritual in Jer 34:18!) and Daniel 9:27-**note**, the technical phrase for making a covenant is **Karath** berith, in which **Karath** meant originally "to cut." Everything indicates that this verb is used with reference to the formal ceremony of ratification above mentioned, of cutting animals in pieces.

BETWEEN GOD AND MEN.

1. ESSENTIAL IDEA:

As already noted, the idea of covenants between God and men doubtless arose from the idea of covenants between men. Hence, the general thought is similar. It cannot in this case, however, be an agreement between contracting parties who stand on an equality, but God, the superior, always takes the initiative. To some extent, however, varying in different cases, is regarded as a mutual agreement; God with His commands makes certain promises, and men agree to keep the commands, or, at any rate, the promises are conditioned on human obedience. In general, the covenant of God with men is a Divine ordinance, with signs and pledges on God's part, and with promises for human obedience and penalties for disobedience, which ordinance is accepted by men. In one passage (Ps 25:14-**note**, Ps 25:15-**note**), it is used in a more general way of an alliance of friendship between God and man.

2. COVENANTS RECORDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:

A covenant of this general kind is said in the Old Testament to have been made by God with **Noah** (Genesis 9:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15,16, 17 and

elsewhere). In this the promise is that there shall be **no more deluge**.

A covenant is made with **Abraham**, the thought of which includes his **descendants**. In this the promise of God is to multiply the descendants of Abraham, to give them the land of Canaan, and to make them a blessing to the nations. This is narrated in Genesis 15:18; 17:2-21, etc.

A covenant is made with the **nation Israel** at Sinai (Horeb) (Ex 19:5; 24:7,8; 34:10,27,28, etc.), ratified by **acovenant sacrifice** and **sprinkling of blood** (Exodus 24:4, 5, 6, 7, 8). This constituted the nation the **peculiar people** of God, and was accompanied by **promises for obedience** and **penalties for disobedience**. This covenant was renewed on the plains of Moab (Deut 29:1 "These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, **besides** [Hebrew word "bad" = core idea is to be separate & isolated, besides, in addition to, apart from a state of something being in addition to what already exists] the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb (the covenant of law, the "ten commandments".")

Ed Note on Deuteronomy 29:1: Some consider this declarations to be an "amendment" to the covenant at Sinai while others feel it represents allusion to a different covenant.

John MacArthur reasons that...The majority of interpreters view the covenant stated here as a reference to the covenant made at Sinai. According to this view, the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai (Horeb) was renewed in Moab. However, this verse clearly states that the covenant of which Moses now speaks was "**besides,**" or "**in addition to,**" the previous covenant. This was another covenant distinct from the one made at Sinai. This other covenant is viewed by some interpreters as the **Palestinian Covenant**, (see **Ryrie** and **McGee** below) which gave Israel the title to the land. However, the emphasis of these two chapters is not on the Land, but on the **change of Israel's heart** (see the contrast between Dt 29:4 and Dt 30:6). It was exactly this **change of heart** which the later prophets would term "**The New Covenant**" (see Jer 31:31, 32, 32, 34; Ezek. 36:26, 27). In response to Israel's certain failure under the provisions of the Sinaitic Covenant (Dt 29:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28), Moses anticipated the New Covenant under which Israel would be obedient to the Lord and finally reap His blessings (Dt 30:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

Charles Ryrie has this comment...Moses now details the agreement under which the people would enter the land of Palestine. This Palestinian covenant was in addition to the Mosaic covenant given at Sinai (Horeb). ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#))

J Vernon McGee writes that...The covenant which God is going to make with them here relates to the land, and it is called the Palestinian covenant. God makes this covenant with them just before they enter the land. ([McGee, J. V. Thru the Bible commentary. Vol. 1, Page 9-600. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

In these national covenants the individual had a place, but only as a member of the nation. The individual might forfeit his rights under the covenant, however, by deliberate rebellion against Yahweh, sinning "with a high hand" (Nu 15:30), and then he was regarded as no longer a member of the nation, he was "cut off from among his people," i.e. put to death. This is the teaching of the Priestly Code (P), and is also implied elsewhere; in the mercy of God, however, the punishment was not always inflicted.

A covenant with the tribe of Levi, by which that became the priestly tribe, is alluded to in Dt 33:9; Je 33:21; Mal 2:4.

The covenant with Phinehas (Numbers 25:12,13) established an **Everlasting** priesthood in his line.

The covenant with Joshua and Israel (Joshua 24:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27) was an agreement on their part to serve Yahweh only.

The covenant with David (2Sa 7 parallel 1Chr 17; see also Ps 89:3,18,34,39; 132:12; Je 33:21) contained a promise that his descendants should have an **everlasting** kingdom, and should stand to God in the relation of sonship.

The covenant with Jehoiada and the people (2Ki 11:17 parallel 2Chr 23:3) was an agreement on their part to be the people of Yahweh.

The covenant with Hezekiah and the people (2Chr 29:10) consisted essentially of an agreement on their part to reform the worship.

The covenant with Josiah and the people (2Ki 23:3), of an agreement on their part to obey the Book of the Law.

The covenant with Ezra and the people (Ezra 10:3) was an agreement on their part to put away foreign wives and obey the law.

The prophets also speak of a new covenant, most explicitly in Jeremiah, but with references elsewhere, which is connected with the Messianic time (see Isa 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8; Jer 31:31,33; 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60,62; 20:37; 34:25; 37:26; Ho 2:18).

3. PHRASEOLOGY USED:

Various phrases are used of the making of a covenant between God and men. The verb ordinarily used of making covenants between men, *karath*, is often used here as well. The following verbs are also used: *heqim*, "to establish" or "confirm"; *nathan*, "to give"; *sim*, "to place"; *tsiwah*, "to command"; *`abhar*, "to pass over," followed by *be*, "into"; *bo*, "to enter," followed by *be*; and the phrase *nasa' berith `al pi*, "to take up a covenant upon the mouth of someone."

4. HISTORY OF COVENANT IDEA:

The history of the covenant idea in Israel, as between God and man, is not altogether easy to trace. This applies especially to the great covenants between God and Israel, namely, the one with Abraham, and the one made at Sinai. The earliest references to this relation of Israel to Yahweh under the term "covenant" are in Hosea 6:7; Hosea 8:1. The interpretation of the former passage is doubtful in details, but the reference to such a covenant seems clear. The latter is considered by many a later addition, but largely because of this mention of the covenant. No other references to such a covenant are made in the prophets before Jeremiah. Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of it, and it is implied in Second-Isaiah. It is a curious fact, however, that most of the later prophets do not use the term, which suggests that the omission in the earlier prophets is not very significant concerning a knowledge of the idea in early times.

In this connection it should be noted that there is some variation among the Hexateuchal codes in their treatment of the covenants. Only one point, however,

needs special mention. The Priestly Code (P) gives no explicit account of the covenant at Sinai, and puts large emphasis upon the covenant with Abraham. There are, however, apparent allusions to the Sinaitic covenant (Leviticus 2:13; 24:8; 26:9,15,25,44,45). The facts indicate, therefore, principally a difference of emphasis.

In the light partly of the facts already noted, however, it is held by many that the covenant idea between God and man is comparatively late. This view is that there were no covenants with Abraham and at Sinai, but that in Israel's early conceptions of the relation to Yahweh He was their tribal God, bound by natural ties, not ethical as the covenant implies. This is a larger question than at first appears. Really the whole problem of the relation of Israel to Yahweh throughout Old Testament history is involved, in particular the question at what time a comprehensive conception of the ethical character of God was developed. The subject will therefore naturally receive a fuller treatment in other articles. It is perhaps sufficient here to express the conviction that there was a very considerable conception of the ethical character of Yahweh in the early history of Israel, and that consequently there is no sufficient reason for doubting the fact of the covenants with Abraham and at Sinai. The statement of W. Robertson Smith expresses the essence of the matter (op. cit., 319): "That Yahweh's relation is not natural but ethical is the doctrine of the prophets, and is emphasized, in dependence on their teaching, in the Book of Deuteronomy. But the passages cited show that the idea had its foundation in pre prophetic times; and indeed the prophets, though they give it fresh and powerful application, plainly do not regard the conception as an innovation."

A little further consideration should be given to the new covenant of the prophets. The general teaching is that the covenant was broken by the sins of the people which led to the exile. Hence, during the exile the people had been cast off, the covenant was no longer in force. This is stated, using other terminology, in Hosea 3:3, 4ff; Hosea 1:9; 2:2. The prophets speak, however, in anticipation, of the making of a covenant again after the return from the exile. For the most part, in the passages already cited, this covenant is spoken of as if it were the old one renewed. Special emphasis is put, however, upon its being an [everlasting](#) covenant, as the old one did not prove to be, implying that it will not be broken as was that one. Jeremiah's teaching, however, has a little different emphasis. He speaks of the old covenant as passed away (Jer 31:32). Accordingly he speaks of a new covenant (Jer 31:31, 33). This new covenant in its provisions, however, is much like the old. But there is a new emphasis upon individuality in approach to God. In the old covenant, as already noted, it was the nation as a whole that entered into the relation; here it is the individual, and the law is to be written upon the individual heart.

In the later usage the specific covenant idea is sometimes less prominent, so that the term is used practically of the religion as a whole; see Is 56:4, Ps 103:18-[note](#)

LITERATURE. Valeton, ZATW, XII, XIII (1892-93); Candlish, The Expositor Times, 1892, Oct., Nov.; Kraetzschmar, Die Bundesvorstellung im Altes Testament, Marburg, 1896; articles "Covenant" in Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible (five volumes) and Encyclopedia Biblica. George Ricker Berry (Orr, J., M.A., D.D. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia : 1915 edition)

See also article from Baker's Dictionary of Biblical Theology - [Covenant](#)

Download the chart below as printable pdf.

<p style="text-align: center;">PART 1 - COVENANT SUMMARY of FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS</p>									
<p>COVENANT IN SCRIPTURE Hebrew: Beriyth/ Berit Greek: Diatheke</p>	<p>WHO IS INITIATOR</p>	<p>WHO ARE PARTIES INVOLVED</p>	<p>WHAT REASON FOR COVENANT</p>	<p>IS THERE SACRIFICE</p>	<p>ARE OFFSPRING AFFECTED?</p>	<p>IS THERE PROMISE OR OATH?</p>	<p>IS THERE A SIGN OR WITNESS?</p>	<p>WHAT IS LENGTH OF COVENANT?</p>	<p>IS THERE A MEAL, AN ALTAR A NAME CHANGE?</p>

<p>Noahic</p> <p>GOD > MAN</p> <p>Ge 6:18 (1st mention of covenant)</p> <p>Ge 9:11</p> <p>Unconditional</p>	<p>God "I Myself" Ge 9:9</p> <p>Unconditional covenant = declares God's purpose will be fulfilled regardless of man's response. This does not mean man makes no response but man's response doesn't leave fulfillment of covenant in doubt. Noah obeyed - he built ark in faith (Lesson - True faith obeys!) Heb 11:7-note</p> <p>Even an unconditional Covenant entails responsibility!</p>	<p>God & Noah</p> <p>Noah means rest, relief, quiet Ge 5:29 "rest from our work" "There it is: God obligating Himself to preserve man in the midst of judgment. Without anything on Noah's part without any commitment, pledge, or guarantee-God obligated Himself -- Do you catch the faint but sweet scent of grace wafting in the wind?" (Arthur)</p>	<p>Context: Divine Judgment Read Ge 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Wickedness of man was great warranting Ge 6:11, 12, 13 --Corrupt = 3x --Filled with violence = 2x God sorry He made man... He was grieved "It broke His heart" (NLT) Preserve life Why? To fulfill His promise in Ge 3:15 to bring forth Messiah who would bruise the head of Satan (cp Ro 16:20-note)</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>'every clean animal...' (blood) Ge 8:20 (Costly-sacrificial) = 1/7 of his clean animals - Ge 7:2)</p> <p>Why? This was an act of worship & gratitude in response to God's covenant faithfulness in sparing Noah and his family.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Sons...wife... son's wives Ge 6:18 descendants Ge 9:9 every living creature Ge 9:12 the earth Ge 9:13</p>	<p>To keep alive Ge 6:19 This is the reason for this covenant - if all died God could not keep Ge 3:15 I will never again destroy every living thing x3 Ge 8:21, 9:11, 15 Will not curse ground again Ge 8:21 Seasons, day/night shall not cease Ge 8:22 No Global Flood Ge 9:11</p>	<p>RAINBOW</p> <p>'My bow in the cloud' Ge 9:13 The Rainbow "is the sign of the covenant" Ge 9:12 Hebrew for "bow" also describes the weapon of war ("bow and arrow")!</p>	<p>EVERLASTING</p> <p>"I will look upon it to remember the everlasting covenant" Ge 9:16 (cf "all successive generations" Ge 9:12) Application: God will not forget any of His covenants. When man looked at the bow he remembers the covenant - be mindful that God is also looking at the bow and as He looks He too remembers! Could that be why we see a rainbow in Rev 4:3-note?</p>	<p>"Noah built an altar to Jehovah" Ge 8:20 (See Altar) (Hebrew word for altar means "place of sacrifice" - NB: Use of this word implies blood) Application: Speaks of (1) Expresses gratitude for salvation (2) Sacrificial - offered 1/7th of clean animals (cp Ge 7:2) (3) Emphasis on blood as way to approach God (cp Ge 3:21, 4:4) (4) Consecration to God (surrender) (cp NT parallel in Ro 12:1-note)</p>
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<p>Abrahamic (see below for the repeating of this covenant to Isaac & Jacob)</p> <p>GOD > MAN Ge 15:18 Ge 17:2,4</p> <p>Unconditional</p>	<p>God Ge 17:7, 15:18</p> <p>God Alone (symbolized by "a smoking oven & a flaming torch" Ge 15:17) passed through the pieces of flesh Abram was in a deep sleep (LXX = ekstasis = trance)</p> <p>Ge 15:12</p>	<p>God & Abraham</p>	<p>In you (Abram) all the families of the earth shall be blessed = prophecy of the Messiah</p> <p>Ge 12:1, 2, 3</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Abram cut animals in two, each half laid opposite other (blood) Ge 15:10</p> <p>Compare Je 34:18, 19, 20</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>I will give the land to your descendants forever. Ge 13:15</p> <p>Jehovah cut covenant "to your seed I have given this land" (note past tense - God promised it - it is as good as done!) Ge 15:18</p>	<p>The Lord God's promises to Abraham: Descendant or "The Seed" (Masc. Sing. ~ Messiah) Ge 22:17,18 (cf Ga 3:16, Ac 3:25)</p> <p>Descendants as numerous as stars Ge 15:5</p> <p>Land Ge 13:15, 15:7, 18</p> <p>Be their God Ge 17:8</p>	<p>Circumcision (or see here) "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you." Ge 17:11</p>	<p>EVERLASTING Ge 17:7,8</p> <p>----- El Shaddai promises "I will establish My covenant between Me & you & your descendants (seed) after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant." Isaac, Abraham's seed, is prophesied & granted the covenant promises. Ge 17:19, 20, 21</p>	<p>NAME CHANGE</p> <p>1) Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude")</p> <p>2) Sarai (meaning ? some say "contentious", others "princess") to Sarah ("princess") Ge 17:5,15</p>
<p>MAN > MAN Ge 21:27,32</p>	<p>Abimelech This man was a Philistine ruler over a pagan people, and yet he was the initiator of the covenant Implication? Pagans understood the solemn and binding nature of covenant</p>	<p>Abraham & Abimelech</p>	<p>FEAR</p> <p>God was with Abe Ge 21:22</p> <p>Water Rights Ge 21:25</p>	<p>Not Stated but see Ge 21:27</p> <p>"the two of them made (Karath - cut) a covenant". The fact that Abraham had given him sheep and oxen in the same verse strongly suggests they walked between the flesh of these slain animals as they "cut covenant" (blood)</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>"Swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my offspring, or with my posterity..." Ge 21:23</p>	<p>Abraham would not deal falsely with Abimelech (read Genesis 20 for why he may have prescribed this condition) but in kindness (a covenant word) Ge 21:23</p> <p>The two of them took an oath Ge 21:31,32</p>	<p>Abraham gave Abimelech seven ewe lambs Ge 21:28, 29, 30</p> <p>Abraham planted a Tamarisk Ge 21:33 (See ill. in pagan culture)</p>	<p>EVERLASTING Ge 21:23</p> <p>Abraham "called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God" (El Olam)</p> <p>Everlasting is implied in Ge 21:23</p>	<p>Beersheba ("well of seven fold oath" or "well of the oath") Ge 21:31</p>

<p>MAN > MAN</p> <p>Ge 26:28</p>	<p>Abimelech</p> <p>This is probably the same one who cut covenant with Abraham (Ahuzzath & Phicol)</p> <p>Ge 26:26</p>	<p>Isaac & Abimelech</p> <p>(et. al.)</p>	<p>FEAR:</p> <p>Abimelech saw that the Lord was with Isaac</p> <p>Ge 26:28</p> <p>'Do us no harm'</p> <p>Ge 26:29</p> <p>In essence a "peace treaty"</p>	<p>The phrase "let us make (cut) a covenant" (suggests blood)</p> <p>Ge 26:28</p>	<p>Not Stated:</p> <p>Note that if this Abimelech is the same king the covenant he cut with Isaac's father Abraham should have been sufficient to ensure peace, pointing that men's covenants are not as trustworthy as God's covenants to men!</p>	<p>(Abimelech) said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, Ge 26:28</p> <p>They exchanged oaths</p> <p>Ge 26:31</p> <p>(See ill. in pagan culture)</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>Isaac 'made them a feast'</p> <p>Ge 26:30</p>
<p>Abrahamic</p> <p>GOD > ISAAC</p> <p>Ge 26:24,25</p> <p>Unconditional</p>	<p>God</p> <p>Reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant to Abraham's Seed</p>	<p>God & Isaac</p> <p>Ge 26:24,25</p>	<p>Preservation of the seed</p> <p>I am with you, I will bless you & multiply your seed</p> <p>Ge 26:24</p>	<p>Not clear</p> <p>Hebrew for Altar = "place of sacrifice" (suggests blood)</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>Jehovah promises Isaac "I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham</p> <p>Ge 26:3</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>"multiply your descendants" in Ge 26:24 implies Everlasting</p>	<p>Isaac built an altar at Beersheba</p> <p>Ge 26:25</p>
<p>Abrahamic</p> <p>GOD > JACOB</p> <p>Ge 28:13-15</p> <p>Unconditional</p>	<p>God</p> <p>Reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant</p>	<p>God & Jacob</p>	<p>Reaffirms God's Covenant with Abraham</p> <p>To do what God had He had promised</p> <p>Ge 28:15</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Ge 28:13, 14, 15</p>	<p>Ge 28:15</p> <p>See also Abrahamic Covenant</p>	<p>Pillar</p> <p>Jacob set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top</p> <p>Ge 28:18</p>	<p>Everlasting</p>	<p>Name change</p> <p>Luz called Bethel (House of God)</p> <p>Ge 28:19</p>
<p>MAN > MAN</p> <p>Ge 31:44-55</p>	<p>Laban</p> <p>"So now come let us make a covenant you & I & let it be a witness between you & me"</p> <p>Ge 31:44</p>	<p>Jacob & Laban</p>	<p>FEAR</p> <p>(distrust)</p> <p>I will not pass by this heap to you for harm... you will not pass by this heap & this pillar to me for harm.</p> <p>Ge 31:52</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>"Then Jacob offered a sacrifice (blood) on the mountain & called his kinsmen to the meal & they ate the meal & spent the night on the mountain"</p> <p>Ge 31:54</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>"If you mistreat my daughters or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us see God is witness between you & me."</p> <p>Ge 31:50</p>	<p>Not to mistreat</p> <p>daughters or take other wives</p> <p>Ge 31:50</p> <p>Jacob swore by the fear (God) of his father Isaac.</p> <p>Ge 31:53</p>	<p>Four Witnesses!</p> <p>Covenant a witness Ge 31:44</p> <p>God is witness Ge 31:50</p> <p>Heap-witness</p> <p>Pillar-witness Ge 31:51, 52</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>1) Jegar-sahadutha</p> <p>(heap of witness)</p> <p>2) Jacob called it Galeed (heap of witness)</p> <p>3) Mizpah = Watch tower</p> <p>Ge 31:47, 48, 49</p> <p>Meal</p> <p>Ge 31:54</p>

<p>Mosaic</p> <p>GOD > MAN</p> <p>Ex 24:1-8</p> <p>Ex 34:27,28</p> <p>Conditional</p>	<p>God</p> <p>Ex 34:27</p>	<p>God, Moses & Israel</p> <p>Ex 34:27</p> <p>Conditional</p> <p>= fulfillment depends on recipients obeying</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>1/2 of blood on altar;</p> <p>1/2 blood in basins sprinkled on people (swore to obey)</p> <p>Ex 24:6, 7, 8</p> <p>"the blood of the covenant"</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>Israel Made a Promise:</p> <p>"All that the Lord has spoken we will do."</p> <p>Ex 24:3,7</p>	<p>Twelve pillars at the foot of Mt Sinai</p> <p>Ex 24:4</p> <p>One of the purposes of "pillars" is to help remember the covenant conditions</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>Altar</p> <p>at foot of Mt Sinai</p> <p>Ex 24:4</p> <p>Meal</p> <p>Ex 24:11</p> <p>Shared a common meal</p>
<p>New Covenant</p> <p>GOD > MAN</p> <p>Mt 26:26-28</p> <p>Lk 22:20 ("New covenant")</p> <p>Unconditional</p>	<p>Jesus instituted with His disciples at time of the Passover Meal the night before He was crucified (Mt 26:19-28)</p>	<p>God/Man</p> <p>Isa 42:6 Messiah = Covenant Messenger</p> <p>of covenant to His Temple =1st advent</p> <p>Mal 3:1</p> <p>"refiner's fire" =2nd advent</p> <p>Mal 3:2</p>	<p>For the forgiveness of sins</p> <p>Mt 26:28</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>'My body'</p> <p>'My blood of the covenant'</p> <p>Mt 26:28</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>THE NEW COVENANT (prophesied - promised)</p> <p>Jer 31:31, 32, 33, 34</p> <p>THE NEW COVENANT (promise fulfilled)</p> <p>Lk 22:20</p>	<p>"This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance (memorial) of Me." Lk 22:19</p> <p>Reminds us of costliness of Covenant</p>	<p>Eternal Covenant</p> <p>He 13:20-note</p>	<p>NEW COVENANT MEAL</p> <p>Mt 26:26, 27,28</p> <p>1Co 11:23, 24, 25, 26</p> <p>Shared a common meal</p>

A Few Explanatory Notes:

- 1) In the ancient world covenant was the closest, holiest, most solemn and most indissoluble compact conceivable.
- 2) Even God's unconditional covenants with men did not absolve the human partner from some **responsibility** (Noah built an ark, Abram procured and prepared animals and birds for the covenant ritual of passing through the pieces of flesh). The only other specific Scriptural reference to individuals "passing through flesh" is found in Jer 34:18, 19, 20
- 3) The **motive** for God's covenant for man is His grace and love (**see word study on lovingkindness = Hebrew "hesed"**), whereas the primary **motive** for men's covenants in the examples above (and elsewhere in the Old Testament) is usually **fear** or **distrust** (E.g., Notice how many **"witnesses"** Laban and Jacob used to assure that neither of them broke covenant!!!)
- 4) Note that the covenants God made with man were ultimately made to fulfill His gracious purpose to redeem man from the **penalty, power** and **presence** of Sin (Not "sins" we commit but the "Power" that causes us to commit "sins" -- See **Sin** = the Sin principle or propensity inherited from Adam). In Genesis 3:15 we see the prophecy of the **seed of the woman** (prophesying of the Messiah = see Gal 3:16, Gal 4:4. 5) Who would bruise Satan's head (cp Ro 16:20-note). As we discussed, the **"seed of the woman"** is accepted by most conservative scholars as a prophecy of the Messiah Who would take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). And it follows that when God was getting ready to destroy the world in the flood, He had to preserve a godly **seed** through Noah or otherwise He would not have been able to fulfill the promise of a coming Redeemer in Ge 3:15. Genesis 3:15 is often referred to by theologians as the "Protoevangelium" ("the first gospel" or "first good news"). So immediately in the setting of Adam's sin, God gives a promise of redemption (**Note:** The events in Genesis 3 are referred to by some theologians as the "*Adamic Covenant*" even though the Hebrew word *covenant* is not found in the chapter). In Ge 3:21 we see God "picturing" the promise of the gospel in His provision of animal skins (implication = blood spilled, also presents a "shadow" of the need for a substitute) in place of their fig leaves (Ge 3:8, cp "man's works").
- 5) Note that the Philistine Abimelech's initiation of and desire to "cut a covenant" with **Abraham** and later with his son Isaac clearly shows that the basic understanding of covenant was well known in the ancient world among the pagan nations.
- 6) The Hebrew idiom "**cut a covenant**" although not always clearly stated in the text suggests that a bloody sacrifice was an intrinsic part of the covenant ritual. As discussed "cut a covenant" is two Hebrew words, (1) the verb **Karath** and (2) the noun **berith**. Although God initiated a covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18 ("*establish a covenant*"), the specific idiom "*to cut a covenant*" is first found in Ge 15:18. Note also that most of the English Bibles translate "cut a covenant" as "**made (make) a covenant**" (eg, see Ge 21:27NASB, Ge 21:27ESV, Ge 21:27NKJV, Ge 21:27YLT, "made a treaty" in NIV = Ge 21:27NIV)

W E Vine (author of a Hebrew/Greek lexicon) has the following note on the picture portrayed by the Hebrew idiom Karath berith...

From the arrangement of the dividing of the parts of the victims came the expression which literally denoted "to cut a covenant" (similar idioms are found in Greek and Latin). (Vine, W: Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words Vol. 1, Page 11-53. Old Tappan NJ: Revell)

7) As noted in the chart the covenant ritual as practiced in the Bible includes a variety of associations which will be discussed more fully in later lessons...

- **BLOOD**
- **PROMISE**
- **SACRIFICE**
- **WITNESS**
- **OATH**
- **MEAL**
- **SIGN**

ILLUSTRATIONS OF COVENANT RITUALS

Clary Trumbull in his book **The Blood Covenant** ([see table of contents below](#)) has a section subtitled "**The Bond of Covenant**" in which he describes the custom of covenant in pagan lands. Clearly "**remnants**" of covenant are found in many pagan cultures. Such **remnants of covenant** should not be surprising, as similar remnants of truth regarding the Genesis Flood can be found in most pagan cultures.

Trumbull writes that...

Another recent traveler in the Malay Archipelago, who, also, is a trained and careful observer, tells of this rite, as he found it in Timor, and other islands of that region, among a people who represent the Malays, the Papuan, and the Polynesian races. His description is :
"The ceremony of **blood-brotherhood**...or the **swearing of eternal friendship**, is of an interesting nature, and is celebrated often by fearful orgies [excesses of the communion idea], especially when **friendship** is being made between families, or tribes, or kingdoms. The ceremony is the same in substance whether between two individuals, or [between] large companies. The contracting parties slash their arms, and collect the blood into a bamboo, into which kanipa (coarse gin) or laru (palm wine) is poured. Having provided themselves with a small fig-tree (halik) they adjourn to some retired spot, taking with them the **sword** and **spear** from the Lull chamber [the sacred room] of their own houses if between private individuals, or from the Urna-Luli of their suku [the sacred building of their village] if between large companies. Planting there the fig-tree, flanked by the sacred sword and spear, they hang on it a bamboo-receptacle, into which—after pledging each other in a portion of the mixed blood and gin—the remainder [of that mixture] is poured. Then each **swears**,

"If I be false, and be not a true friend, may my blood issue from my mouth, ears, nose, as it does from this bamboo!"

The bottom of the receptacle being pricked at the same moment, to allow the blood and gin to escape. The **[blood-stained] tree** (**Ed Note**: does this picture not bring to mind another "blood stained Tree" at which the Almighty God personally opened the way for an eternal covenant of friendship through the shedding of His own precious blood?!) remains and grows as a **witness** of their contract." (Trumbull, H. Clay: The Blood Covenant. Impact Christian Books) (Bolding added)

As you study covenant, you will begin to understand that "**friendship**" as in this story was frequently a covenant term in the Biblical world. Note the parallels with the Biblical covenants discussed above - a blood stained tree serving as a witness, an **oath** sworn between the covenant partners, the use of blood to ratify the covenant and the association of the sword and spear with the covenant ritual.

THE BLOOD COVENANT

By H Clay Trumbull - 1893

THE BLOOD COVENANT A PRIMITIVE RITE AND ITS BEARINGS ON SCRIPTURE

- [PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION](#)
- [PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.](#)
- [CRITICAL ESTIMATES OF "THE BLOOD COVENANT" \(Read How Others Reviewed this book\)](#)

LECTURE I. THE PRIMITIVE RITE ITSELF.

- [SOURCES OF BIBLE STUDY.](#)
- [AN ANCIENT SEMITIC RITE](#)
- [THE PRIMITIVE RITE IN AFRICA](#)
- [TRACES OF THE RITE IN EUROPE](#)
- [WORLD-WIDE SWEEP OF THE RITE](#)
- [LIGHT FROM THE CLASSICS](#)
- [THE BOND OF THE COVENANT](#)
- [BOND OF THE WEDDING-RING](#)
- [THE RITE AND ITS TOKEN IN EGYPT](#)
- [OTHER GLEAMS OF THE RITE.](#)

LECTURE II. SUGGESTIONS AND PERVERSIONS OF THE RITE

- [SACREDNESS OF BLOOD AND OF THE HEART](#)
- [VIVIFYING POWER OF BLOOD](#)
- [A NEW NATURE THROUGH NEW BLOOD](#)
- [LIFE FROM ANY BLOOD. AND BY A TOUCH](#)
- [INSPIRATION THROUGH BLOOD](#)
- [INTER-COMMUNION THROUGH BLOOD](#)
- [SYMBOLIC SUBSTITUTES FOR BLOOD](#)
- [BLOOD-COVENANT INVOLVINGS](#)

LECTURE III. INDICATIONS OF THE RITE IN THE BIBLE

- [LIMITATIONS OF INQUIRY](#)
- [PRIMITIVE TEACHINGS OF BLOOD](#)
- [THE BLOOD COVENANT IN CIRCUMCISION](#)
- [THE BLOOD COVENANT TESTED](#)
- [THE BLOOD COVENANT AND ITS TOKENS IN THE PASSOVER](#)
- [THE BLOOD COVENANT AT SINAI](#)
- [THE BLOOD COVENANT IN THE MOSAIC RITUAL](#)
- [THE PRIMITIVE RITE ILLUSTRATED](#)
- [THE BLOOD COVENANT IN THE GOSPELS](#)
- [THE BLOOD COVENANT APPLIED](#)

APPENDIX

- [IMPORTANCE OF THIS RITE STRANGELY UNDERVALUED](#)
- [LIFE IN THE BLOOD, IN THE HEART, IN THE LIVER](#)
- [TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS](#)
- [THE BLOOD-RITE IN BURMA](#)
- [BLOOD-STAINED TREE OF THE COVENANT](#)
- [BLOOD-DRINKING](#)
- [COVENANT CUTTING](#)
- [BLOOD-BATHING](#)

- [BLOOD-RANSOMING](#)
- [THE COVENANT-REMINDER](#)
- [HINTS OF BLOOD-UNION](#)

[SUPPLEMENT TO SECOND EDITION](#)

- [VITAL UNION BY SUBSTITUTE BLOOD](#)
- [BLOOD MAKES UNITY : EATING SHOWS UNION](#)
- [ETHNIC REACHINGS AFTER UNION WITH THE DIVINE](#)
- [THE VOICE OF OUTPOURED BLOOD](#)
- [GLEANINGS FROM THE GENERAL FIELD](#)
- [TOPICAL INDEX](#)
- [SCRIPTURAL INDEX](#)

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