

Covenant: Oneness Notes

THE ONENESS of COVENANT SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

The covenant customs summarized in the table entitled **The Oneness of Covenant** are simple physical pictures that can help us understand spiritual truths, especially the truth about our **oneness** with our New Covenant Partner Jesus Christ. Many of us have known these basic truths about the oneness of covenant for years (eg, the custom of the exchange of wedding rings, the custom of the sharing of cake by the wedding couple on their wedding day, the custom of the bride taking the groom's surname, the sharing of lives of the husband and wife, etc), but we may have never have viewed them from the perspective of **covenant** and specifically from the perspective of how the truths of **oneness** might relate to our New Covenant relationship with our Bridegroom, Christ Jesus.

You may also want to study the table entitled **The Oneness of Covenant** where these truths are presented in a question and answer format. The notes on this page supplement the tabular summary.

The 1828 version of Webster's **American Dictionary of the English Language** defines **oneness** as...

Singleness in number; individuality; unity; the quality of being one. "Our God is one, or rather very oneness."
Hooker.

The **Concise Oxford English Dictionary** adds that **oneness** is "the state of being unified, whole, or in harmony."

The **Tenth Edition of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary** says that **oneness** is

"the quality or state or fact of being one: as... integrity, wholeness, harmony, sameness, identity, unity, union."

To reiterate, an understanding of the customs of covenant can help the believer grasp at least to some degree the significance of our **oneness with Christ** (cp our Lord's prayer regarding "one" in Jn 17:20, 21, 22, 23, 26), a oneness that becomes a reality the moment we enter the **New Covenant** by grace through faith (Ep 2:8, 9-note). Christianity is a relationship with a Person, not a program. Entering into the New Covenant is an entering into a new identity, into a oneness, into an exchange of robes (of the unrighteousness in Adam [Isa 64:6, 2Ti 1:9-note, Titus 3:5-note] for the righteousness of Christ [1Co 1:30, 2Co 5:21, Php 3:9-note]) that transpires as we enter into covenant with the living God. Now believers can be identified, in **oneness** with God and experience **communion** with Him, even as Adam and Eve experienced **communion** with Jehovah before sin entered the world (cp Adam and Eve's first reaction of fear reflecting the "break in oneness" after sin entered the world Ge 3:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, contrast the hope foreshadowed in the records of Enoch in Ge 5:22, 23, 24 and Noah Ge 6:9).

The New Manners and Customs of the Bible summarizes the events associated with entering into a **blood covenant**...

After agreeing to make the covenant, the two involved would detail the conditions of the covenant and tell what would happen to the other person if they broke the covenant. If it was a covenant in which they were **binding themselves together as partners**, they would also list what the other would receive from the covenant. These were called the "blessings and cursings." You can see an example of these in Deuteronomy 28 when God made covenant with His people concerning His laws.

Each party would then cut himself somewhere on his hand where the cut would be visible (**Ed comment:** Resulting of course in the spillage of blood), often on the fat part of the thumb. He would then rub fresh ashes into the cut so that it would form a dark **scar** that could easily be seen. This was the **mark of the covenant**, and showed that each person had a **covenant partner** somewhere (**Ed comment:** Compare God's ordinance for a Hebrew slave and what happened on the seventh year if the slave loved his master! Ex 21:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Do you see in this practice the "mark of covenant" [the scar from the awl pierced ear would be easily visible for all to see. Can the world easily see that you have entered covenant with Christ and that He is your new Master and you are no longer your own? {cp 1Cor 6:19-note, 1Co 6:20-note}], a mark of ownership which remains on the slave forever! It is notable that this is the first ordinance after the Ten Commandments!) The modern **wedding ring** is derived from this custom.

To demonstrate that what each partner had was now available to the other partner whenever needed, they would then **exchange** some article of **clothing** (**Ed:** see **Covenant: The Exchange of Robes**). After that they would exchange weapons of some type to demonstrate that each would come to the other's aid whenever they

were being attacked by an enemy and needed help (**Ed: Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts**). An enemy of one was now the enemy of the other. Thus Christ said to Saul, "*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*" when Saul was actually persecuting Christians (Acts 9:4-see **explanatory note**). At the end of all they did, they would then **have a meal together to demonstrate their friendship** ... , and take into themselves what the other had provided, for it was customary for each to provide something for the covenant meal. The **covenant meal** was the final binding and demonstration of the newly made covenant. (**Ed comment:** Compare our tradition of the husband and wife feeding each other wedding cake after becoming one flesh [Ge 2:24] in the marriage covenant! See **Covenant As It Relates to Marriage**)

It was a **covenant meal** that the Lord and His disciples ate together in the upper room. It started as an Old Testament Passover meal, and was changed by the Lord into a New Testament covenant meal: And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. (Luke 22:19, 20) ([Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. - The New Manners and Customs of the Bible](#)). (Bolding added)

CO-MINGLING OF BLOOD SHARING OF BLOOD SHARING OF LIFE TWO BECOME ONE

- See Table Summarizing Co-mingling of Blood

One of the key passages regarding the importance of blood is found in Leviticus 17:11...

For (explaining why one who eats blood will be cut off - Lev 17:10) the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

Comment: To make atonement means to cover the sin. The principle of blood atonement is God's divinely ordained remedy for the problem of sin. The Scriptures insist that forgiveness for sin is not possible apart from the shedding of blood (Heb 9:22). The biblical emphasis upon the blood of the sacrifice, and ultimately of Christ, is indicative of the giving of the life of an innocent victim to atone for the guilty. The blood poured out emphasized the sacrificial nature of the death, together with its efficacious significance, but it was only a foreshadowing and could not take away sins (Heb10:4). It provided a covering for the time so that God might pass over their sins (Ro 3:25, Heb 9:15).

In the ISBE article on "**Blood**" we read...

Although the real function of the **blood** in the human system was not fully known until the fact of its circulation was established by William Harvey in 1615, nevertheless from the earliest times a singular mystery has been attached to it by all peoples. Blood rites, blood ceremonies and blood feuds are common among primitive tribes. It came to be recognized as the life principle long before it was scientifically proved to be. Naturally a feeling of fear, awe and reverence would be attached to the shedding of blood. With many uncivilized peoples scarification of the body until blood flows is practiced. **Blood brotherhood** or **blood friendship** is established by African tribes by the mutual shedding of blood and either drinking it or rubbing it on one another's bodies. Thus and by the inter-transfusion of blood by other means it was thought that a community of life and interest could be established...

New Testament Teachings... The exaltation and dignifying of this idea finds its highest development then in the vicarious shedding of blood by Christ Himself (1Jn 1:7). As in the Old Testament "blood" was also used to signify the juice of grapes, the most natural substitute for the drinking of blood would be the use of wine. Jesus takes advantage of this, and introduces the beautiful and significant custom (Mt 26:28) of drinking wine and eating bread as symbolic of the primitive intertransfusion of blood and flesh in a pledge of eternal friendship (compare Ex 24:6, 7; Jn 6:53, 54, 55, 56). This is the climactic observance of blood rites recorded in the Bible. ([Blood](#))

In much of our modern world there seems to be little comprehension of the solemn and binding nature incurred when one enters a **covenant** with **one's marital partner** (see **Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage**) or even more significantly, when one by grace through faith enters the New Covenant (in His blood) with the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

George Berry in his discussion of **Covenant Among Men** in the OT covenant writes that...

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. (Berry goes on to explain that the covenant between the Arabs) was primarily **blood-brotherhood**, in which two men became brothers **by drinking each other's blood**. Ordinarily this meant that one was adopted into the clan of the other...

In this early idea, then, "primarily the covenant is not a special engagement to this or that particular effect, but **bond of truth** (one's pledged word) and **life-fellowship** to all the effects for which kinsmen are **permanently bound** together" (W. Robertson Smith, op. cit., 315 f)...

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 (cp Ex 24:6,7,8, He 9:19), **eating together the sacrificial meal** (cp Ex 24:9, 10, 11), etc.; but the same idea found expression in all, the community of life resulting from the covenant.

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 (Ge 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 (Genesis 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 Ge 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 Ex 24:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, with allusions elsewhere, in ratification of the covenant at Sinai between Yahweh and Israel...

The **immutability** (unchangeable nature) of a covenant is everywhere assumed, at least theoretically...

This is the case with the **setting up of a stone**, or **raising a heap of stones** (Ge 31:45,46- see **Table Summarizing these aspects in various Biblical covenants**) (**Ed note**: These served as a memorial and so as a steadfast "witness" that the covenant had been cut)...

Striking hands ([see note](#)) is a general expression of an agreement made (Ezra 10:19; Ezek 17:18, etc.). ([Orr, J.: The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 1915 - G R Berry's article - "Covenant in the OT" - Scroll down to "Principle Elements"](#))

Commingling of the blood (making a cut and mingling blood, making a cut or sacrifice and drinking blood or other liquid from a common cup) of the partners who cut covenant signified that they were now "**blood brothers**" which resulted in a new relationship. When the covenanting partners co-mingled blood either literally or symbolically, the result was that two had become one.

The purpose of cuts in the flesh and co-mingling of blood was to symbolize that two had become one and that now because of their covenant (and covenant marks) their lives were intermingled or held in common. As you study and meditate on the concept of covenant, consider the clear and striking parallels with the marriage covenant. **Aristotle** in his Ethics quoted one of the well-known proverbs of friendship, "One soul [in two bodies]"

INTER-COMMINGLING

Clay Trumbull has several comments related to this aspect of covenant... ,

All my thought is, to ascertain what new meaning, if any, is found in the Bible teachings concerning the uses and the symbolism of blood, through our better understanding of the prevailing idea, among the peoples of the ancient world, that blood represents life; that the giving of blood represents the giving of life; that the receiving of blood represents the receiving of life; that the inter-commingling of blood represents the inter-commingling of natures; and that a divine-human inter-union through blood is the basis of a divine-human inter-communion in the sharing of the flesh of the sacrificial offering as sacred food. (Read online - [The Blood Covenant](#))

Below are other quotes from **Trumbull** that mention the term **inter-commingling**...

One of these primitive rites, which is deserving of more attention than it has yet received, as throwing light on many important phases of Bible teaching is the rite of blood-covenanting - a form of mutual covenanting, by which two persons enter into the closest, the most enduring and the most sacred of compacts, as friends and brothers, or as more than brothers, through the **inter-commingling of their blood**, by means of its mutual tasting, or of its inter-transfusion. This rite is still observed in the unchanging East; and there are historic traces of it, from time immemorial, in every quarter of the globe; yet it has been strangely overlooked by biblical critics and biblical commentators generally, in these later centuries. (Read online - [The Blood Covenant](#))

AN ANCIENT SEMITIC RITE - One of these primitive rites, which is deserving of more attention than it has yet received, as throwing light on many important phases of Bible teaching is the rite of blood-covenanting - a form of mutual covenanting, by which two persons enter into the closest, the most enduring and the most sacred of compacts, as friends and brothers, or as more than brothers, through the inter-commingling of their blood, by means of its mutual tasting, or of its inter-transfusion. This rite is still observed in the unchanging East ; and there are historic traces of it, from time immemorial, in every quarter of the globe; yet it has been strangely overlooked by biblical critics and biblical commentators generally, in these later centuries.

In bringing this rite of the covenant of blood into new prominence, it may be well for me to tell of it as it was described to me by an intelligent native Syrian, who saw it consummated in a village at the base of the mountains of Lebanon; and then to add evidences of its wide-spread existence in the East and elsewhere, in earlier and in later times.

(FRIEND - A COVENANT TERM)

It was two young men, who were to enter into this covenant. They had known each other, and had been intimate, for years ; but now they were to become brother-**friends**, in the covenant of blood. Their relatives and neighbors were called together, in the open place before the village fountain, to witness the sealing compact. The young men publicly announced their purpose, and their reasons for it. Their declarations were written down, in duplicate,—one paper for each **friend**,—and signed by themselves and by several witnesses. One of the **friends** took a sharp lancet, and opened a vein in the other's arm. Into the opening thus made, he inserted a quill, through which he sucked the living blood. The lancet-blade was carefully wiped on one of the duplicate covenant-papers, and then it was taken by the other **friend**, who made a like incision in its first user's arm, and drank his blood through the quill, wiping the blade on the plicate covenant-record. The two friends declared together :

"We are brothers in a covenant made before God :
who deceiveth the other, him will God deceive."

Each blood-marked covenant-record was then folded carefully, to be sewed up in a small leathern case, or amulet, about an inch square ; to be worn thenceforward by one of the covenant-brothers, suspended about the neck, or bound upon the arm, in token of the indissoluble relation.

The compact thus made, is called M'ahadat ed-Darn the "**Covenant of Blood**." The two persons thus conjoined, are Aklawat el-M'ahadala, "**Brothers of the Covenant**."

The rite itself is recognized, in Syria, as one of the very old customs of the land, as'adah gadeeaneh "a primitive rite." There are many forms of covenanting but this is the extremest and most sacred of them all. As it is the **inter-commingling of very lives** nothing can transcend it. It forms a tie, or a union which cannot be dissolved. In marriage, divorce is a possibility: not so in the covenant of blood. Although now comparatively

rare, **in view of its responsibilities and of its indissolubleness this covenant** is sometimes entered into by confidential partners in business, or by fellow-travelers; again, by robbers on the road—who would themselves rest fearlessly on its obligations, and who could be rested on within its limits, however untrustworthy they or their fellows might be in any other compact. **Yet, again, it is the chosen compact of loving friends**; of those who are drawn to it only **by mutual love and trust**.

This covenant is commonly between two persons of the same religion—Muhammadans, Druzes, or Nazarenes ; yet it has been known between two persons of different religions;' and in such a case it would be held as a closer tie than that of birth or sect. He who has entered into this compact with another, counts himself the **possessor of a double life**; for his **friend, whose blood he has shared, is ready to lay down his life with him, or for him** (Ed comment: These practices surely prompt us as believers to think of the "blood covenant" Christ has cut with us and with it our responsibilities, our willingness to lay down our life for our friend, especially "death to self" or denial of self, along with the truth of the indissolubleness of the new covenant in His blood - Would a proper understanding of this truth not "stabilize" those who might wrestle with their eternal security?) Hence the leathern case, or Bayt hejdb ('House of the amulet,') (Read online - [The Blood Covenant](#))

The root-idea of this rite of blood-friendship seems to include the belief, that the blood is the life of a living being (Lev 17:11); not merely that the blood is essential to life, but that, in a peculiar sense, it is life that it actually vivifies by its presence; and that by its passing from one organism to another it carries and imparts life

The **inter-commingling** of the blood of two organisms is, therefore, according to this view, equivalent to the **inter-commingling** of the lives of the personalities, of the natures, thus brought together; so that there is, thereby and thenceforward, one life in the two bodies, a common life between the two friends: a thought which Aristotle recognizes in his citation of the ancient "proverb", a proverb which has not lost its currency in the centuries:

"**One soul [in two bodies]**," (Aristotle's Ethics, IX.,8,3. This is not made as an original statement by Aristotle, but as the citation of one of the well-known "proverbs" of friendship) (Read online - [The Blood Covenant](#))

THE RING A COVENANT MEMORIAL

To the present day, an important ceremony at the coronation of a sovereign of Great Britain, is the investiture of the sovereign per annulum, or "by the ring." The **ring** is placed on the fourth finger of the sovereign's right hand, by the Archbishop of Canterbury ; and it is called "**The Wedding Ring of England**," as it symbolizes the **covenant union of the sovereign and his people**. A similar practice prevails at the coronation of European sovereigns generally. It also runs back to the days of the early Roman emperors, and of Alexander the Great.'

That a ring, or a circlet, worn around a thumb, or a finger, or an arm, **intoken of an endless covenant** between its giver and receiver, has been looked upon, in all ages, as the symbol of an **inter-union of the lives thereby brought together**, is unmistakable ; whether the **covenanting life-blood be drawn for such inter-commingling**, directly from the member so encircled, or not. The very covenant itself, or its binding force, has been sometimes thought to depend on the circlet representing it ; as if the life which was pledged passed into the token of its pledging. Thus Lord Bacon says :

"It is supposed [to be] a help to the continuance of love, to wear a ring or bracelet of the person beloved " I and he suggests that "a trial should be made by two persons, of the effect of compact and agreement; that a ring should be put on for each other's sake, to try whether, if one should break his promise the other would have any feeling of it in his absence."

In other words, that the test should be made, to see whether the inter-union of lives symbolized by the covenant-token be a reality. On this idea it is, that many persons are unwilling to remove the wedding-ring from the finger, while the compact holds.' (Read online - [The Blood Covenant](#))

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BLOOD-COVENANT INVOLVINGS - And now that we have before us this extended array of related facts concerning the sacred uses and the popular estimates of blood in all the ages, it will be well for us to consider

what we have learned, in the line of blood-rites and of blood-customs, and in the direction of their religious involvings. Especially is it important for us to see where and how all this bears on the primitive and the still extant ceremony of covenanting by blood, with which we started in this investigation.

From the beginning, and everywhere, blood seems to have been looked upon as pre-eminently the representative of life ; as, indeed, in a peculiar sense, life itself. The transference of blood from one organism to another has been counted the transference of life, with all that life includes. The **inter-commingling of blood** by its **inter-transference** has been understood as equivalent to an **inter-commingling of natures**. **Two natures thus inter-commingled**, by the **inter-commingling of blood**, have been considered as forming, thenceforward, one blood, one life, one nature, one soul—in two organisms. The **inter-commingling of natures** by the inter-commingling of blood has been deemed possible between man and a lower organism ; and between man and a higher organism,—even between man and Deity, actually or by symbol ;—as well as between man and his immediate fellow.

The mode of inter-transference of blood, with all that this carries, has been deemed practicable, alike by way of the lips and by way of the opened and inter-flowing veins. It has been also represented by blood-bathing, by blood-anointing, and by blood-sprinkling ; or, again, by the inter-drinking of wine—which was formerly commingled with blood itself in the drinking. And the **yielding of one's life** by the **yielding of one's blood** has often been represented by the yielding of the blood of a chosen and a suitable substitute. Similarly the blood, or the nature, of divinities, has been represented, vicariously, in divine covenanting, by the blood of a devoted and an accepted substitute. **Inter-communion** between the parties in a **blood-covenant**, has been a recognized privilege, in conjunction with any and every observance of the rite of blood-covenanting. And the body of the divinely accepted offering, the blood of which is a means of divine-human inter-union, has been counted a very part of the divinity ; and to partake of that body as food has been deemed equivalent to being nourished by the very divinity himself.

Blood, as life, has been looked upon as belonging, in the highest sense, to the Author of all life. The taking of life has been seen to be the prerogative of its Author; and only he who is duly empowered, for a season and for a reason, by that Author, for blood-taking in any case, has been supposed to have the right to the temporary exercise of that prerogative. Even then, the blood, as the life, must be employed under the immediate direction and oversight of its Author. The heart of any living organism, as the blood-source and the blood-fountain, has been recognized as the representative of its owner's highest personality, and as the diffuser of the issues of his life and nature.

**A covenant of blood, a covenant made
by the inter-commingling of blood,
has been recognized as the closest, the holiest,
and the most indissoluble, compact conceivable.**

Such a covenant clearly involves an **absolute surrender** of one's separate self, and an **irrevocable merging** of one's individual nature into the dual, or the multiplied, personality included in the compact. Man's highest and noblest outreachings of soul have, therefore, been for such a **union with the divine nature** as is typified in this **human covenant of blood**. (Ed comment: This is an interesting thought reminiscent of Augustine's familiar words that "*Our hearts were made for Thee, O Lord, and will not rest until they rest in Thee*")

How it came to pass that men everywhere were so generally agreed on the main symbols of their religious yearnings and their religious hopes, in this realm of their aspirations, is a question which obviously admits of two possible answers. A **common revelation from God** may have been given to primitive man; and all these varying yet related indications of religious strivings and aim may be but the perverted remains of the lessons of that misused, or slighted, revelation. On the other hand, **God may originally have implanted the germs of a common religious thought in the mind of man**, and then have adapted His successive revelations to the outworking of those germs. Whichever view of the probable origin of these common symbolisms, all the world over, be adopted by any Christian student, the importance of the symbolisms themselves, in their relation to the truths of revelation, is manifestly the same.

On this point, Kurtz has said, forcefully :

A comparison of the religious symbols of the Old Testament with those of ancient heathendom shows that the ground and the starting point of those forms of religion which found their appropriate expressions in symbols, was the same in all cases; while the history of civilization proves that, on this point, priority cannot be claimed by the Israelites. But when instituting such an inquiry, we shall also find that the symbols which were

transferred from the religions of nature to that of the spirit, first passed through the fire of divine purification, from which they issued as the distinctive theology of the Jews ; the dross of a pantheistic deification of nature having been consumed.

And as to even the grosser errors, and the more pitiable per-versions of the right, in the use of these world-wide religious symbolisms, Kurtz says, again:

Every error, however dangerous, is based on some truth misunderstood, and ... every aberration, however grievous, has started from a desire after real good, which had not attained its goal, because the latter was sought neither in the right way, nor' by right means."

To recognize these truths concerning the outside religions of the world gives us an added fitness for the comparison of the symbolisms we have just been considering with the teachings of the sacred pages of revelation on the specific truths involved.

Proofs of the existence of this rite of blood-covenanting have been found among primitive peoples of all quarters of the globe; and its antiquity is carried back to a date long prior to the days of Abraham. All this outside of any indications of the rite in the text of the Bible itself. Are we not, then, in a position to turn intelligently to that text for fuller light on the subject? (Read online - [The Blood Covenant](#))

Spurgeon tells us of men of Scotland known as "**The Covenanters**"

In my bedroom I have hung up the picture of an old Covenanter. He sits in a wild glen with his Bible open before him on a huge stone. He leans on his great broadsword, and his horse stands quietly at his side. Evidently he smelleth the battle afar off, and is preparing for it by drinking in some mighty promise. As you look into the old man's face you can almost hear him saying to himself, "For the crown of Christ and the Covenant, I would gladly lay down my life this day." They did lay down their lives, too, right gloriously, and Scotland owes to her covenanting fathers far more than she knows.

It was a grand day that in which they spread the Solemn League and the Covenant upon the tombstones of the old kirkyard in Edinburgh, and all sorts of men came forward to set their names to it. Glorious was that roll of worthies. There were the lords of the Covenant and the common men of the Covenant; and **some pricked a vein and dipped the pen into their blood, that they might write their names with the very fluid of their hearts.**

All over England also there were men who entered into a like solemn league and covenant, and met together to worship God according to their light, and not according to human order-books. They were resolved upon this one thing—that Rome should not come back to place and power while they could lift a hand against her; neither should any other power in throne or Parliament prevent the free exercise of their consciences for Christ's cause and covenant.

These stern old men, with their stiff notions have gone. And what have we in their places? Indifference and frivolity. We have no Roundheads and Puritans; but then we have scientific dress-making, and we play lawn-tennis! We have no contentions for the faith; but then our amusements occupy all our time. This wonderful nineteenth century has become a child, and put away manly things. Self contained men, men in whom is the true grit, are now few and far between as compared with the old covenanting days. (**Barbed Arrows from the Quiver of C. H. Spurgeon**)

See related resources:

- In Christ - What Does this Mean? How Should it Impact My Walk with Him?
- [Oneness With Christ by Ruth Paxson](#) from book [Called Unto Holiness](#)
- [Rivers of Living Water - Studies on the believer's possessions in Christ by Ruth Paxson](#)
- [Vital Union with Christ by A T Pierson's book](#)
- [In Christ or The Believer's Union with His Lord by A J Gordon \(or Pdf\)](#)
- [God's Design for Oneness by Kay Daigle](#)

STRIKING HANDS OR GIVING HANDS

- See Table Summarizing The Striking of Hands

Evidence from various cultures indicates that when a covenant was cut in the hands or arms of the participants, they would often clasp hands or arms so their blood would mingle. However as H C Trumbull pointed out that, in tribal cultures around the world, clasping hands...

is not by any means a universal nor even the commonest mode of friendly and fraternal salutation." Other forms of greeting that are more prevalent range from embracing and nose-rubbing to rolling upon one's back. But even in cultures where "hand-clasping is unknown in salutation, it is recognized as a symbol of the closest friendship. (See [the Blood Covenant](#))

In 2 Kings there is an event recorded in which we see an example of **"giving of hand"** with an interesting comment in the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.

2Ki 10:15 Now when he (Jehu) had departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, "Is your heart **right** (yashar = uprightness as manner of life), as my heart is with your heart?" And Jehonadab answered, "It is." Jehu said, "If it is, **give me your hand.** ([nathan yad](#))" And he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot. (2Ki 10:15) (See also Job 17:3KJV, "pledge" in Job 17:3NAS, "shake hands" in Job 17:3NKJV, Proverbs 6:1KJV, Pr 17:18KJV, Pr 22:26KJV)

The **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** has an interesting comment on the symbolism of **"give me your hand"** in this passage writing that...

Jehu asked for the hand of Jehonadab not merely for the purpose of assisting him into the chariot, but that he might give him an assurance that he would assist him in the prosecution of his desires; for **"giving the hand"** is considered as a pledge of **friendship and fidelity**, or a form of entering into a **contract**, among all nations.

Mr. Bruce relates (Travels, vol. I. p. 148), that when he **entreated the protection of a sheikh**, the great people who were assembled came, and **after joining hands**, repeated a kind of prayer, of about two minutes long; by which they declared themselves and their children accursed, if ever they lifted their hands against me in the tell (or field), in the desert, or on the river; or, in case that I, or mine, should fly to them for refuge, if they did not protect us at the risk of their lives, their families, and their fortunes, or, as they emphatically expressed it, to the death of the last male child among them.

Another striking instance occurs in Ockley's History of the Saracens (vol. i. p. 36). Telha, just before he died, asked one of Ali's men if he belonged to the emperor of the faithful; and being informed that he did,

"Give me then," said he, "your hand, that I may put mine in it, and by this action **renew the oath of fidelity** which I have already made to Ali."

Trumbull tells of a picture in Florence that depicts the practice of blood covenanting and the relationship with **clasping of hands**...

In the Pitti Palace, in Florence, there is a famous painting of the conspiracy of Catiline, by Salvator Rosa **Ed**: See below - there is a suggestion of blood dripping but it is somewhat difficult to see); it is, indeed, Salvator Rosa's masterpiece, in the line of historical painting. This painting represents the **covenanting by blood**. Two conspirators stand face to face, their **right hands clasped** above a votive altar. The bared right arm of each is incised, a little below the elbow. The blood is streaming from the arm of one, into a cup which he holds, with his left hand, to receive it; while the dripping arm of the other conspirator shows that his blood has already flowed into the **commingling cup**. The **uplifted hand of the daysman** (An umpire or arbiter; a mediator) between the conspirators seems to indicate the imprecatory vows which the two are assuming, in the presence of the gods, and of the witnesses who stand about the altar. This is a clear indication of the traditional form of covenanting between Catiline and his fellow conspirators." (Read online - [The Blood Covenant](#))

"Catiline's before August"

by Salvator Rosa (1663)

Click to enlarge

[\(See interesting note in "The Art of the Pitti Palace"\)](#)

The practice of **cutting flesh and co-mingling blood** between men is not specifically found in the Old Testament but as alluded to in the text from 2 Kings (above) their are examples of a similar practice in which the participants strike hands or give hands to one another. The **ISBE** notes that this practice of **"Striking hands** is a general expression of an agreement made." Let's look at several other Biblical examples of striking or giving hands in which the purpose was to make a pledge or ratify an agreement or covenant.

In Job 17:3a we find Job boldly addressing God asking Him to

Lay down, now, a **pledge** (Hebrew [`arab](#) = mingle, join in with, to put up a security; give an object or personal security in an agreement to ensure that an agreed future event in fact happens) **for me with Thyself**.

Job is forced to ask God Himself to be the **pledge** (a person who binds himself, as by becoming bail or surety for another) of Job's innocence because his counselors were not convinced of his innocence and he could not count on them to come to his aid, which **prompts his question** (Job 17:3b)...

Who is there that will be my **guarantor**? (guarantor = one that undertakes to answer for the payment of a debt or the performance of a duty of another in case of the other's default or miscarriage)

Literally Job is asking "Who will **strike hands** with me?"

In other words there seems to be none left on earth who will put up security or any guarantee of Job's innocence.

In his **Expository Notes on the Bible** Constable has a lengthy quote explaining the background for Job's request writing that...

Evidently in legal cases of this sort each litigant would give the judge a bond (money or some personal possession) before the trial. This bond would guarantee that the litigant would be fair and honest during the trial. If one of the litigants was not, the judge would not return his bond to him at the trial's end. Job called on God to lay down His pledge (as the **prosecutor**) with Himself (the **judge**; Job 17:3a). The guarantor (Job 17:3b) was one who provided the bond if the person on trial could not. Job's supportive friends would normally have provided his bond, but they had turned against him. Job lay the ultimate responsibility for his friends' blindness and rejection at God's feet because God had withheld understanding from them. Consequently he believed God would not lift them up (Job 17:4). Job may have believed part of his friends' motive in not helping him was that they could obtain a portion of his property when he died (Job 17:5). However since verse 5 is a proverb, he may have only been reminding his friends of the serious consequences of slander. (Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible)

The Pulpit Commentary explains the transaction as follows..

"**Lay down now; or, give now a pledge.** The terms used in this verse are **law terms**. Job calls upon God to go into court with him, and, first of all, to deposit the caution-money which the court will require before it undertakes the investigation of the case. Next, he goes on to say, put me in a **surety** (surety = one who has become legally liable for the debt, default, or failure in duty of another) with thee; or rather (as in the Revised Version), be surety for me with thyself' which is either the same thing with giving a pledge, or a further legal requirement.

Finally, he asks the question, **Who is he that will strike hands with me?** meaning, "Who else is there but thyself, to whom I can look to be my surety, and by striking hands with me to accept the legal responsibility?" ([Pulpit Commentary: Expository Notes on Job 17:3 Online - Scroll Down](#))

Expositor's Bible Commentary translates Job 17:3 and then explains Job's request as follows...

"Consider (this O God), become my guarantee [go surely for me] with Yourself. For who else is there that is prepared to **strike [shake] my hand.**" Handshaking was a way to ratify a pledge."

What pledge or guarantee was Job asking for? The translation of verse 3 is difficult. The following paraphrase may help clarify the meaning:

"Give attention (O God) to becoming my guarantor (that I am right) with you, for who else will shake my hand to prove it?"

If God put up such a guarantee for Job, it would not only silence his mockers (the counselors, v2) but would prove they were guilty of false accusation and deserve the sanctions and punishment they had implied Job deserved. ([Gaebelein, F, Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books: Zondervan Publishing](#))

The Pulpit Commentary (homily) explains Job 17:3 as a "bold request"...

Turning from his friends and confronting death, Job entreats with a sublimely daring faith, which rises clear above the mists of despondency and the hurricanes of passion that alternately fill his breast, that God himself would strike hands with him, and engage to be Surety for his innocence against himself (Job 17:3). It is a by no means dim anticipation of the fundamental notion of the gospel, that, for the answering of all that God, as a

righteous Lawgiver, can lay to the charge of man, God has himself become the Sponsor or Bondsman. What Job's faith, standing as it were on the headlands of human thought, and looking out with prophetic eye into the vast terrain incognitum that spread out before him, craved for himself, that God would undertake the task of replying for him, not alone to the aspersions of his human calumniators, but also to the accusations and charges preferred against him by his Divine assailant, viz. God himself — this astounding entreaty on the part of poor, feeble, sinful humanity, as represented by Job, has been answered by the gospel of Jesus Christ, who came in the fulness of the times as God incarnate to champion the cause of lost man, and vindicate, not his innocence, but his righteousness before God. ([Pulpit Commentary: Homiletics on Job 17:3 Online - Scroll Down](#))

E Green in his Homily in the Pulpit Commentary adds this comment on Job 17:3 declaring...

As none among men will give the promise and take upon him to vindicate Job's innocence after death, will God be bound as Surety for him, and undertake this duty? Thus once more we see how the extremity of suffering forces Job upon his deepest faith, can never force him from it. And he is bound to exchange his darker thoughts of God for these truer ones, apparently unconscious that they are inconsistent with one another. ([Pulpit Commentary: Homily by E Green Online - Scroll Down](#))

In short and in summary, literally Job is asking "Who is he that **strikes hands** with me?". A negative answer is implied, which explains why he resorted to God, the only One Who serve as his guarantor. As one paraphrase puts it Job is saying in essence...

"Please guarantee my bail yourself. Who else will guarantee it." (GWT)

Strike hands is a Hebrew idiom which symbolizes the making of an agreement. The idiom is composed of the Hebrew word of "hand" ([yad](#)) and the Hebrew verb for "strike" is [taqa`](#) which conveys the basic idea of to thrust or as in the present context to clasp hands as a sign of agreement (Job 17:3; Pr 11:15 ; Pr 17:18).

Thus in this Hebrew idiom, "**strike hands**" reminds one of our modern day **handshake** which for example is supposed to signify the pledging of oneself to the terms agreed upon in a business arrangement. Unfortunately if indeed the Biblical practice of "**striking hands**" is the origin for our **handshake**, there has been a marked distortion of the original intent as we have witnessed a decrement in personal integrity in interpersonal relationships, be they business or otherwise.

Let's look at another Biblical example of the giving of hands to one another as a symbolism of a commitment to fulfill covenant obligations. In Ezra 10 the Israelites had returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile under the leadership of Ezra and had married foreign wives. Spurred on by Ezra's prayer and confession, the Israelite men also were led to confess their disobedience to God's law and proceeded to cut a covenant to put away their foreign wives.

[Ezra 10:3](#) "So now let us **make a covenant** (cut a covenant = [Karath](#) beriyyth) with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

In Ezra 10:19 the sons of the priests reaffirm the solemnity of their covenant agreement, symbolizing their commitment by "pledging" or by literally by "**giving their hands**" as a sign of obedience to their covenant vow. The idiom "**give hands**" is composed of the Hebrew verb for **give** ([nathan](#)) and **hand** ([yad](#)) which although different from the idiom "**strike hands**" ([taqa](#) = strike + [yad](#) = hand) in Job 17:3, nevertheless also symbolizes that the participants have come to a mutual agreement.

[Ezra 10:19](#) And they (the sons of the priests) **pledged** (gave hands) to put away their wives, and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their offense.

The **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** has a note on [Ezra 10:19](#) regarding "giving hands" writing that...

"They **bound themselves in the most solemn manner** to do as the rest of the delinquents had done (put away their wives), and make and acknowledgment to God of their iniquity, by offering each a ram for a trespass offering."

Proverbs gives an instruction regarding striking hands as it relates to becoming entangled in financial matters...

Proverbs 6:1 My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have **given a pledge** for a stranger

Given a pledge = [taqa` kaph](#) = literally "**struck palms**" which obligated one to become "security" for the other in the sense that they took on the other person's obligations as their own, as when one co-signs a note. The "striking of palms" in view here was foolish because the debtor was a stranger who was not well known.

Proverbs 17:18 A man lacking in sense **pledges** ([taqa` kaph](#)) , and becomes surety in the presence of his

neighbor.

Comment: "We have therefore another warning against imprudent suretyship. (Pr 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5;11:15) Beware of striking hands in agreement without ascertaining, whether we can fulfil our engagement, or whether our friend is not equally able to fulfil it himself. This spews a man void of understanding; specially to do this in the presence of his friend. For why is not his word taken, but from the suspicion of insolvency or dishonesty? A prodigal, thoughtless kindness may gain us a popular name. But the principle, closely examined, will be found to be another form of selfishness. There is no true benevolence in rash engagements, which may involve our name and family in disgrace or ruin.

True indeed-had not those hands that were nailed to the Cross,been stricken in suretyship, the handwriting that was against us could never have been cancelled.
(Col. 2:14.)

Yet the eternal counsel is no pattern for our simple folly." (Bridges, Charles. Commentary on Proverbs)

Proverbs 11:15NIV He who puts up security for another will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to **strike hands** in pledge is safe.

The **NET Bible Note** says "The imagery (of "striking") here is shaking hands to seal a contract. The term "hands" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is implied." ([NETBible Proverbs 11:15](#))

Proverbs 22:26 Do not be among those who give pledges (NET = "strike hands", Pr 22:26NKJV - shakes hands in a pledge), among those who become guarantors for debts.

Bible Knowledge Commentary: "**Striking hands** in pledge means to confirm an agreement, like the gesture of shaking hands (see comments on Pr 6:1 = Striking hands in pledge was a gesture something like shaking hands. It was like "signing on the dotted line."). If a debtor fails to pay, the creditor will hound the cosigner, and if the cosigner cannot pay, then his furniture may be taken as payment. This serious consequence results from becoming foolishly entangled in others' financial problems." ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

The **Amplified Version** of Isaiah 2:5 alludes to the practice of striking hands (this example of striking hands invoking God's wrath)...

Surely [Lord] You have rejected and forsaken your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled [with customs] from the east and with soothsayers [who foretell] like the Philistines; also they **strike hands** and **make pledges and agreements** with the children of aliens. (Isaiah 2:5) [Dt 18:9, 10, 11, 12.]

Compare an allusion to **giving a hand** as an expression of loyalty in **First Chronicles**...

And all the officials, the mighty men, and also all the sons of King David **pledged** ([nathan yad](#) = literally "**give hand**") allegiance to King Solomon. (1Chr 29:24)

Ezekiel 17 records another example of the solemn nature (and inherent responsibility) of the **giving of one's hand** in a covenant...

Now he (King Zedekiah of Judah) despised (disdained, held in contempt) the oath by **breaking the covenant**, and behold, he **pledged his allegiance** ([nathan yad](#) = give hand), yet did all these things; he shall not escape." 19 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "As I live, surely **My oath which he despised** and **My covenant which he broke**, (Note that even though Nebuchadnezzar cut the covenant, here God takes "ownership" of the covenant, so that Zedekiah did not just break covenant with Babylon but more seriously with God Himself, this being the third time in this short section the break of covenant is mentioned for emphasis - **this was a very significant point of disobedience by Zedekiah**) I will inflict on his head. 20 And I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. Then I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there regarding **the unfaithful act** (breaking the covenant with the king of Babylon) which he has committed against Me. 21 "And all the choice men in all his troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to every wind; and you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken." (Ezekiel 17:18, 19, 20, 21)

This "slapping of hands" is most likely the origin of the modern handshake which even today is a ritual that occurs after an agreement has been reached or signed, symbolizing that the agreement is settled and that they have entered into the arrangement in good faith.

COVENANT SEALED WITH A SCAR

Related Resources:

- See Table Summarizing Sealed with a Scar
- [See Devotional - "Indelible Grace: Inscribed on His Hands"](#)

The incision was scarified into a permanent scar which would serve as a constant reminder of the covenant promise between the partners

Trumbull brings out this practice of **scarification** in his book, [The Blood Covenant](#) writing that

Commander Cameron, who, while in charge of the Livingstone Search Expedition ... gives several illustrations of the observance of this rite... "The first operation consisted of making an incision on each of their right wrists, just sufficient to draw blood; a little of which was scraped off and smeared on the other's cut; after which gunpowder was rubbed in [thereby securing a permanent token on the arm]." ([The Blood Covenant - Online](#))

Isaiah 49:16 **Behold** (Hebrew word used to get one's attention - "Listen up" is the idea), I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

The word "**inscribed**" means to cut into signifying permanence. Yes, the immediate context is the City of Zion, but the application to those in covenant with Him should not be lost. Indeed, Spurgeon felt fully justified to apply the metaphor to believers, not just in one sermon, but 3 sermons!

- 1) Neither Forsaken Nor Forgotten
- 2) A Precious Drop of Honey
- 3) God's Memorial of His People

Spurgeon comments on Isaiah 49:16 writing that...

"**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." (**Neither Forsaken nor Forgotten**)

Spurgeon comments "**I have graven thee.**"

does not say, "Thy name." The name is there, but that is not all: "I have graven thee." See the fulness of this! I have graven thy person, thine image, thy case, thy circumstances, thy sins, thy temptations, thy weaknesses, thy wants, thy works; I have graven thee, everything about thee, all that concerns thee; I have put thee altogether there. Wilt thou ever say again that thy God hath forsaken thee when he has graven thee upon his own palms?...

A dear friend told me that, when traveling in the East, he frequently saw persons who had the portraits of their friends printed on the palms of their hands. I said to him, "But did not they wear out?" Yes, sometimes," he said, "but very frequently they were tattooed, marked right into the hand, and then, as long as the hand was there, there was the image of the friend, roughly drawn, of course." Oriental art is not very perfect, but there it was, drawn on the palms of the hands, so that it could be always seen. A person had never to say, "Run and fetch the portrait; run and bring me down the memorial"; he always had it present with him. So the Lord Jesus always has his people present with him at all times. He is the **head**: they are the **members**. (**Ed**: Speaks of oneness) The members are never far off from the head. He is the Shepherd: they are the sheep; and the careful shepherd, in time of danger, is never far from, his sheep. Christ is not far from any of his people, and, therefore, his recollections of them are not difficult to be maintained. He keeps the memorial of them in his hands present with him. There is no fear, therefore, that he will forget them. (**Neither Forsaken nor Forgotten**)

Comment: In Spurgeon's sermon he alliteratively expounds on the significance of the Inscription on God's

palm as that which is **P**resent, **P**ermanent (perpetual), **P**ersonal, **P**ainful.

Vine comments on Isaiah 49:16...

Jews had a custom of marking on their hands, or elsewhere, a delineation of the city and the temple, as a sign of their devotion to, and perpetual remembrance of, them. The Lord graciously adopts the figure to confirm His assurance. However great the devastation wrought by Gentile powers might be, the walls are ever before Him in their restored and perfected condition in the future. **To be graven on the palms of His hands** is suggestive of the closest identification with Himself (**Ed**: Reminds us of the oneness of the New Covenant), of His unchanging love (cp God's hesed), and of His constant mindfulness of us in all His emotions and activities.

**Often, in our unbelief, remissness and forgetfulness,
we lose sight of our preciousness in His sight in Christ.**

What is here conveyed in figure finds its fullness of expression in the outflowing of the Lord's heart to the disciples in the upper room, "Even as the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you: abide ye in My love" (Jn 15:9).

Max Lucado's devotional thoughts (Cheering you on) on Isaiah 49:16...

If your God is Mighty enough to ignite the sun, could it be that He is mighty enough to light your path?

God is for you (Ro 8:31-note). Not "may be," not "has been," not "was," not "would be," but "God *is*!" He *is* for you. Today. At this hour. At this minute. As you read this sentence. No need to wait in line or come back tomorrow. He is with you. He could not be closer than he is at this second. His loyalty won't increase if you are better nor lessen if you are worse. He is for you.

God is for you. Turn to the sidelines; that's God cheering your run. Look past the finish line; that's God applauding your steps. Listen for Him in the bleachers, shouting your name. Too tired to continue? He'll carry you. Too discouraged to fight? He's picking you up. God is for you.

God is for you. Had He a calendar, your birthday would be circled. If He drove a car, your name would be on His bumper. If there's a tree in heaven, He's carved your name in the bark. We know He has a "tattoo", and we know what it says. "I have **written** (Hebrew = **haqqaq** = cut, engrave, as cutting a tomb from rock - Is 22:16) your name on My hand (cp Jn 20:27)," He declares (Isa. 49:16). (From Let the Journey Begin: God's Roadmap for New Beginnings. J Countryman 2009)

Comment: Beloved, there are times in every believer's life when we wonder whether God is aware of our current affliction or whether He's interested in what's happening in our lives. Or perhaps we wonder whether He still cares or perhaps worst of all whether or not He has forgotten us. Those are times when we need to recall the truth of Isaiah 49:16. He is not only the ever non-lying God, but He is also the eternally non-forgetting God!

Jesus has the answer for our times of doubting and discouragement declaring...

Why are you **troubled** (Gk = tarasso which has these nuances = agitated, frightened, terrified, disturbed, stirred up, restless, anxious, distressed, perplexed, shaken up, unsettled, thrown into confusion or inner turmoil), and why do **doubts** (uncertainties, questions) arise in your hearts (Not just our heads but deep within!)? **See** (aorist imperative - command to look now! Don't delay!) **My hands** and **My feet** (What did they see? Scars of Covenant - the New Covenant - eternally secured by the blood that was shed in creation of those Divine scars which will testify forever that "He is risen! He is risen indeed!"), that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. (Lk 24:38, 39, cp Jn 16:33)

Come see His hands and His feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space,
to cruel nails surrendered."

Graham Kendrick

O dearest Lord, thy sacred head
O dearest Lord, thy sacred head
With thorns was crowned for me,

O pour thy blessing on my head
that I might think for thee.

O dearest Lord, thy sacred hands
with nails were pierced for me,
O shed thy blessing on my hands
That they may work for thee.

O dearest Lord, thy sacred feet
with nails were pierced for me
O pour thy blessing on my feet,
that they may follow thee.

O dearest Lord, thy sacred heart,
with spear was pierced for me,
O pour thy blessing on my heart
That I may live for thee.
-Henry Ernest Hardy

Ray Ortlund comments that

The imagery of Isa 49:16 suggests a vision of God spreading out His hands before us, so that we can see our very names engraved there.

**Have we thought through
how profoundly we're loved by God?**

If His assurances do not move us, what more are we holding out for? Isn't the love of God enough? (Isaiah: God Saves Sinners. Preaching the Word)

Motyer adds...

When the Servant's sufferings are reviewed (Isa 50:6; 53:4ff.) his hands are not mentioned; that is reserved for a later date (Jn 20:19, 20). (Motyer, J. A. The prophecy of Isaiah : An introduction & commentary. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press)

Preacher's Commentary...

Shifting from the love of the mother (Isa 49:14,15) to a young man's love, God says, "I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands." Israel would have been acquainted with two customs in Babylon. Idol worshipers tattooed the name of their god on their palms as an ever-present symbol of their worship, and young men in love also tattooed the name of their beloved on their palms as a symbol of faithfulness. Believers in Zion would have been visibly moved by the thought of a tattoo on God's palm that read I-s-r-a-e-l. Every time God opens His hand, then, He sees the reminder of His people in bondage and the walls of His city in ruins. The tattoo will never let Him forget them or fail in His promise to deliver them and restore Jerusalem. (McKenna, D., & Ogilvie, L. J. Vol. 18: The Preacher's Commentary Series Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc)

Alexander Maclaren's sermon on [Isaiah 49:16 The Writing on God's Hands...](#)

I said at the beginning of these remarks that God did what He bids us do. God bids us do what He does. His name should be on our hands; that is to say, memory of Him, love of Him, regard to Him, confidence in Him should mould and guide all our activity, and the aim that we shall be built up for a habitation of God through the Spirit should be the conscious aim of our lives, as it is the aim which He has in view in all His dealings with us. Our names on His hand; His name on our hands; so shall we be blessed.

Charles Simeon applies Isa 49:16 to the church (remember that it was first addressed to Israel and that is the literal interpretation but that this does not preclude application to us today)...

Those who think they are forsaken and forgotten of God—[This may be the state even of the best of men; for David, and even the Messiah himself, in a season of dereliction, cried, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"] Nevertheless, for the most part, the hidings of God's face may be traced to some special cause: some inward lust unmortified, or some wilful neglect indulged. Search out then, and put away, whatever is displeasing to your God. But, if you cannot find any particular reason for the dispensation, then follow that

advice of the prophet, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and yet walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God." Let him plead with God, as David did, and sum up his petitions with that bold request, "Arise, O God, and plead thine own cause!" We may be sure that "God will not contend with us for ever, because he knows that our spirits would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made." Even where we have been wilfully rebellious, he gives us reason to hope, that, for his own sake, he will heal our wounds, and speak comfortably to our souls: but, if we humble ourselves before him, then are we sure that in due season he will lift us up. Let every one then, however disconsolate he may be at the present moment, yea though heaven, earth, and hell should seem conspiring to destroy him, check his unbelieving fears, and say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." ([Isaiah 49:14-16 - God Will Not Forget His People](#))

J Vernon McGee comments "What beautiful assurance God gives them that they are not forsaken of Him! Israel may forsake Him—as they are doing yet today—but God will never forsake them. My friend, if you still have doubts that God will restore Israel, I submit this section to you for your careful study. ([Thru the Bible Commentary](#)) or [Listen to Dr McGee's comments on Isaiah 49:8-28](#)

A Debtor to Mercy Alone

(or [Mp3 Vocal](#))

Augustus Toplady

([Another Bio](#))

A debtor to mercy alone,
of **covenant** mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,
My person and off'ring to bring.
The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.

The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet.
Things future, nor things that are now,
Nor all things below or above,
Can make Him His purpose forgo,
Or sever my soul from His love.

My name from the palms of His hands

Eternity will not erase;

Impressed on His heart it remains,

In marks of indelible grace.

Yes, I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is giv'n;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heav'n.
--Augustus Toplady ([Play hymn](#))

Spurgeon also wrote that what the Lord in essence is saying by engraving Zion's name on the palm of His hand is...

"I cannot work, I cannot even open the palm of my hand without seeing the memorials of my chosen people: 'I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.'" Where they must be seen, and where he can do nothing without touching his people while doing it. When a name is engraven on the hand with which a man works, that name goes into his work, and leaves its impress on the work. **Jerusalem**, the very Jerusalem that is in Palestine, shall be rebuilt (See God's Plan for Jerusalem) God will remember her walls, and the Church of God in Israel shall yet rise from that sad low estate in which it has been these many centuries; and all God's cast-down ones shall be comforted, and his churches, that seem to be left to die, shall be raised up again, for our God is no changeling. His heart does not come and go towards the sons of men.

How that gracious assurance should comfort the little handful, the "remnant weak and small" (**Ed**: click notes on "the remnant") of God's people among the Jews! How it should also comfort any of God's servants who are under a cloud, and who have lost for a while the enjoyment of his presence!

I may illustrate this by our Savior's hands. What are these wounds in thy hands, these sacred stigmata, these ensigns of suffering? The graver's tool was the nail, backed by the hammer. He must be fastened to the cross, that his people might be truly graven on the palms of his hands. There is much consolation here. We know that what a man has won with great pain he will keep with great tenacity. Child of God, you cost Christ too much for him to forget you.

How appropriately Christ can say this when He looks on the nail-prints, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands"! As I said, this morning, Jesus can give nothing, he can take nothing, he can do nothing, he can hold nothing, without remembering his people: "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery notes that

In contrast with his opponents, who demand circumcision of believers, Paul says that he carries "the **marks** [**stigmata**] of Jesus branded on my body" (Gal 6:17 NRSV). These marks are probably the **scars** of the apostolic afflictions entailed in following the crucified Christ. Or as Moffatt translates it: "I bear branded on my body the owner's stamp of Jesus." (Ibid)

MODERN EXAMPLE OF COVENANT RITUAL

The following entry is from the [Global Prayer Digest](#) prayer focus for Sept 5, 2010, in which we were called to pray for the Bedar People of Sri Lanka. The story has a sad description of the tragic fate of young Bedar girls who are forced into prostitution. You will notice that there are several "earmarks" of the "oneness" of covenant, albeit this example clearly represents a perversion or twisting of the glorious truth of God's covenant with man. This example does point out how "**remnants of covenant**" have persisted even into the 21st century. Truth is still truth and it is as if the pagans seek to hold onto some remnants of God's truth, but sadly refuse to lay hold of the eternal salvation found only in the New Covenant in His blood.

Bedar People in Sri Lanka - Unmarried Bedar girls, as young as four or five are taken to a local Hindu temple and made prostitutes. Colorfully dressed women escort them to a guru, or spiritual leader. They are **branded** (**Ed**: cp covenant mark) and taken to the temple. In a **solemn ceremony**, a necklace is placed around their necks as a **sign** that they are dedicated to a local god (**Ed**: In essence they are "in covenant" with the local pagan deity, behind which of course are demonic forces! 1Co 10:20, 21). For the rest of their lives the girls are known as Basavi (**Ed**: cp to the "change of name" now that they are "in covenant" with their pagan god). God is deeply concerned about girls like these. "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you, I am the Lord. Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot." (Leviticus 19:28-29 NKJV.) (Pray for God to set these girls free in Christ and His New Covenant!)

COVENANT MARK

- [See Devotional - "Indelible Grace: Inscribed on His Hands"](#)
- See Table Summarizing The Relationship of Scar and Covenant

In writing his epistle to the Galatians, Paul described his **brand marks** which indicated that he belonged to Jesus (Gal 6:17). Paul's marks almost certainly were literal "marks" or scars on his body which represented his prior beatings (2Co 11:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, Acts 16:22, 23, 33). The famous American missionary **Adoniram Judson** (see bio on site) suffered unspeakably for 21 months in a squalid Burmese prison and as a result was marked for life with the ugly scars produced by the chains and shackles on his legs. On one occasion when Judson sought permission to enter a new Burmese province to preach the Gospel, the godless ruler indignantly denied his request saying...

My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might **say**, but I fear they might be impressed by your **scars** and turn to your religion! (Amen!)

While believers may not have the literal scars of Paul or Adoniram Judson, our lives should bear the indelible mark of a changed life, Christ's life in us (Col 1:27), and as we manifest His life to the lost we contact, God will give us opportunities to speak the Gospel which "marks" us.

Wayne Barber explains that ultimately "**mark**" on both Old and New Testament believers was not external but internal...

There was something in the heart of the people that was wrong and the **mark** that God always expected, both in the OT and the NT, was not just something external, but a **heart willing and wanting to obey God**... that is the **mark** of the person who has entered into agreement with the Lord God... this led to the promise of the New Covenant... you see in the Old Covenant, the people did not have a heart that wanted to obey God... The Law... exposed the fact that they did not have a heart, so therefore God had to promise a new one.

Jer 24:7 And I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

It is an attitude that God looks for--an inward, internal attitude of wanting to obey God which **marks** a person as being in Covenant with the living God. This is not just one act of obedience (**circumcision**), but a heart attitude of now wanting to obey God (cp Ezek 36:26, 27) in contrast to the old attitude of wanting to disobey Him.

Amy Carmichael wrote these piercing words that speak to the call on every follower of Jesus (2Ti 3:12-note, Ro 8:17-note, Php 1:29-note, 2Co 4:17)...

Hast thou no scar?

No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;
I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.
Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?

Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.
Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?

Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And piercèd are the feet that follow Me.
But thine are whole; can he have followed far
Who hast no wound or scar?

Kay Arthur reminds us that as believers we have come...

to our God and Father through the rent veil of the flesh of the Lamb of God, having walked into death losing our life for His, may we never forget that we are now **bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, one with Him in covenant forever**. Amen and Amen. (Bolding added)

H. Clay Trumbull writes that

Travelers in the heart of Africa, also, report the covenant of "**blood brotherhood**" or of "**strong-friendship**," as in vogue among various African tribes, although naturally retaining less of primitive sacredness there than among Semites. The rite is, in some cases, observed after the manner of the Syrians, by the contracting parties tasting each other's blood; while, in other cases, it is performed by the inter-transfusion of blood between the two. The first mention which I find of it, in the writings of modern travelers in Africa, is by the lamented hero missionary, Dr. Livingstone. ([Read the interesting account of the Primitive Rite of Cutting Covenant in Africa in Trumbull's "The Blood Covenant"](#))

Trumbull goes on to write that **Stanley** describes one his numerous episodes of **cutting covenant** with one of the native chiefs during his African explorations. The following quote begins with the African chief Mata Bwyki speaking before the entire tribe after cuts were made in his arm and Stanley's arm and their blood was co-mingled. Stanley records it this way (notice the "**covenant terms**" used by Stanley)...

Now Mata Bwyki (the chief of the tribe) lifted his mighty form, and with his long giant's staff drove back the compressed crowd, clearing a wide circle, and then roaring out in his most magnificent style, leonine in his lung-force, kingly in its effect: `People of Iboko! You by the river side, and you of inland. Men of the Bangala,

listen to the words of Mata Bwyki. You see Tandelay before you. His other name is Bula Matari (referring to Stanley). He is the man with the many canoes, and has brought back strange smoke-boats. He has come to see Mata Bwyki. He has asked Mata Bwyki to be his **friend** (Ed: [See discussion of the covenant term "friend"](#)). Mata Bwyki has taken him by the hand (Ed: [See discussion of the covenant term "striking hands"](#)), and has become his **blood-brother**. Tandelay belongs to Iboko now. He has become this day one of the Bangala. O, Iboko! Listen to the voice of Mata Bwyki.' (I thought they must have been incurably deaf, not to have heard that voice).

Bula Matari (the chief's name for **Stanley**) and Mata Bwyki are **one** today (Ed: Compare the "**Oneness of Covenant**" which was understood even by these primitive African peoples). We have joined hands (Ed: Compare "striking hands" as discussed above). (The chief goes on to command his tribesmen) Hurt not Bula Matari's people; steal not from them; offend them not. Bring food and sell to him at a fair price, gently, kindly, and in peace; for **he is my brother**. (Ed: Earlier in this account the chief had stated ""

Henry M. Stanley who went to Africa in pursuit of Livingstone in 1871, entered into a covenant, blood covenant, or a strong friendship with Mirambo, a great chieftain and warrior whom Stanley referred to as the Mars of Africa. Covenant was entered into by making cuts on each of their right legs and exchanging the blood and then pronouncing a curse if that covenant were broken.

They were friends and brothers in a sacred covenant; life for life. At the conclusion of the covenant, they exchanged gifts; as the customary ratification, or accompaniment, of the compact. They even vied with each other in proofs of their unselfish fidelity, in this new covenant of friendship.

To this day many of the Syrian Arabs swear, as a final and a most sacred oath, by their own blood — as their own life; and in making the covenant of blood-friendship they draw the blood from the upper arm, because, as they explain it, the arm is their strength. The cry of the Egyptian soul to his god, in his resting on the covenant of blood, was, "Give me your arm; I am made as ye." ... It is by no means improbable, indeed, that the universal custom of lifting up the arm to God in a solemn oath was a suggestion of swearing by one's blood, by proffering it in its strength, as in the inviolable covenant of sacred friendship with God. So, again, in the "striking hands" as a form of sacred covenanting; the clasping of hands, in blood. ([Click here to read the fascinating full account in context in - The Blood Covenant](#))

SHARING POSSESSIONS

- See Table Summarizing the Sharing of a Common Life

Since two have become one in covenant they now share a common life and are responsible to share their blessings with one another should the need arise. Trumbull records the following description of Indians in Brazil who had a rite of brotherhood writing that...

They who called each other by this name, had all things in common; the tie was held to be as sacred as that of consanguinity, and one could not marry the daughter or sister of the other. ([Source](#))

In his History of Madagascar, the Rev. William Ellis, tells of this rite as he observed it in that island, and as he learned of it from Borneo. He says :

"Another popular engagement in use among the Malagasy is that of forming brotherhoods, which though not peculiar to them, is one of the most remarkable usages of the country... Its object is to cement two individuals in the bonds of most sacred **friendship**... It is called *fatrida*, i.e., 'dead blood' either because the oath is taken over the blood of a fowl killed for the occasion or because a small portion of **blood** is drawn from each individual, when thus **pledging friendship**, and **drunk** by those to whom friendship is pledged, with execrations of vengeance on each other in case of violating the sacred oath. To obtain the blood, a slight incision is made in the skin covering the centre of the bosom, significantly called *ambavafo*, 'the mouth of the heart.'... and we do it for the purpose of assisting one another with our families, if lost in slavery, by **whatever property either of us may possess; for our wives are as one to us, and each other's children as his own,' and our riches as common property**. (Trumbull: [The Blood Covenant](#))

SHARING NAMES CHANGE OF NAME

- See Table Summarizing the Exchange of Names

In ancient times, when men entered into covenant with one another, they would often exchange names. In other words, they would take on one of their covenant partner's names, which testifies to the fact that they had at least some "remnant" of understanding of the **oneness** of their covenant relationship.

H. Clay Trumbull in his interesting 1893 book "[The Blood Covenant \(free online\)](#)" notes that...

To **exchange names**, therefore, is to establish some participation in one another's being." Hence, as we may suppose, came the well-nigh universal Oriental practice of inter-weaving the name of one's Deity with one's name (**Ed**: compare this practice with the following discussion of the name change of Abram to Abraham), as a symbolic evidence of one's covenant-union with the Deity. The blood-covenant, or the blood-union, idea is at the bottom of this."...

In this New South Wales ceremonial (**Ed**: referring to the initiation of a boy into "manhood")... a white stone, or a quartz crystal, called mundie, is given to each novitiate in manhood, at the time he receives his **new name**. This stone is counted a gift from deity and is held peculiarly sacred. A test of the young man's moral stamina is made by the old men's trying, by all sorts of persuasion, to induce him to surrender this possession, when first he has received it. (From the online book [Trumbull, Henry Clay - The Blood Covenant - A Primitive Rite and Its Bearings on Scripture, 1893](#)) (See [Trumbull's interesting description beginning on page 350 in the section entitled "Hints of Blood-Union"](#)) (Bolding added)

ILLUSTRATION: THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

A change of name is clearly illustrated in the Marriage Covenant in which the wife traditionally takes the name of her husband. The question one should ask is what does the name change represent in the context of the study of covenant wherein we see a comingling of lives? Although the answer is undoubtedly more sublime (complex), one aspect of this name change speaks of the "participation" of one spouse in the life of the other person in a supernatural way which we cannot (in my opinion) fully comprehend or explain ("they shall become one flesh" Ge 2:24, cp Ep 5:31-note).

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

And what was the name change that occurred in Genesis 17 (Ge17:5,15)? There were two changes - **Abram** ("Exalted Father") to **Abraham** ("Father of a multitude") and Sarai to Sarah. How might one explain God's giving His name to Abraham and Sarah? First notice that God's covenant name is **YHWH**. While not every one agrees with this explanation, it is certainly not unreasonable to consider that God took the letter **H** (Hebrew = [Heth](#)) sound from His name and He put it in their names, again as another aspect or manifestation of the covenant relationship between God and man.

Peter Craigie writes that...

The blessing Abram would receive as a covenant partner became clear from the **new name** God gave him. "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations" (Ge 17:5). ([Elwell, Walter. General Editor: Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible. Page 1523. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House. 1988](#)) (Bolding added)

THE NEW COVENANT

Do we see a parallel truth in the New Testament? What Name change did Jesus take in order to show His identification with men (cf John 6:53)? Jesus referred to Himself much more as the **Son of Man** than the Son of God which He clearly was. (84 times in the NT -

Mt 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 23, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27f; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:11; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27,

30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64; Mark 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62; 15:39; Luke 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:12, 34; 9:22, 26, 44, 56, 58; 11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:22, 24, 26, 30; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:27, 36; 22:22, 48, 69; 24:7; John 1:51; 3:13f; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31; Acts 7:56; Rev 1:13; 14:14)

Son of God = Mt 4:3, 6; 8:29; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luke 1:35; 3:38; 4:3, 9, 41; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31)

Related Resources:

- Greek: Covenant - diatheke
- Hebrew: Covenant = berit/berith/beriyth

In Acts 11:26 what is the new name ascribed to believers who have entered into the **New Covenant** in His Blood (Lk 22:20, see also New Covenant in the Old Testament and comparison of Abrahamic vs Old vs New Covenant)? Luke records that "the disciples were first called **Christians** in Antioch". **Christian** is the Greek word *Christianos* which is derived from the noun *Christos* (Christ). *Christianos* probably means one who is associated with Christ. So the sense conveyed by the word **Christian** is one who is a follower of Christ (and is not synonymous with a "little Christ" as used in the New Age movement!) It is surprising that the name "**Christian**" is used only 3 times in the NT (Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1Pe 4:16-note). Most writers feel that in the first century the name **Christian** was used more as an appellation of ridicule and derision.

THE BELIEVER'S NEW NAME

What do we learn about the overcomer's (believer's) **new name** in Rev 2:17? What is Jesus' promise to overcomers?

To him who **overcomes** (note that *overcomers* are not a special or select group of Christians but a term which describes all believers as explained by John in 1Jn 5:4,5 - indeed "Overcomers" is a wonderful "new name" for all who have entered the new covenant) I will give him a white stone, and a **new** (kainos = new in quality, use, application, or character, as opposed to being new in time) **name** written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it. (Rev 2:17-note)

Tony Garland writes that...

Whether the name is that of God or a new name given the believer, it describes the new character and inheritance of the believer (2Co 5:17-note; Ep 4:24-note) who has been adopted into the family of God. "The new name is the name of adoption: adopted persons took the name of the family into which they were adopted." (note)

John Walvoord...

In the Old Testament the high priest had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed upon the stones carried upon his breast, symbolic of the fact that whenever he appeared before God he was a mediator representing the entire twelve tribes of Israel. Here is a name that belongs to the individual. Some consider it to be that of Jehovah, the unspoken name of God in the Old Testament. Others have regarded it as a personal name indicating their own enrollment in heaven. Whatever its character, the name symbolizes the personal heritage of the glories that are beyond this world and the assurance of eternal salvation. Christians in this modern day as well as Christians in the church at Pergamos are reminded by this Scripture that it is God's purpose to separate them from all evil and compromise and to have them as His peculiar inheritance throughout eternity. However difficult their lot in this life, they are assured infinite blessing in the life to come. (The Revelation of Jesus Christ)

In another passage **John** records that **Jesus**...

will write upon him (the overcomer) the **name** of My God, and the **name** of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and **My new name** (Re 3:12-note).

William Barclay adds that...

The custom of giving a **new name** to mark a new status was known in the heathen world as well. The name of the first of the Roman Emperors was Octavius; but when he became the first of the Emperors he was given the name Augustus. This very name marked his new status; he was now unique and superhuman and more than man (**Ed**: Or so the pagan's believed!). ([Revelation 2:17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible Online](#))

Hampton Keathley adds that...

The significance of a **new name**, then, would not be lost on readers living in John's day since only recently the

title of the Roman emperor had been changed. Thus, the new name to be awarded faithful believers was an assurance that they would one day be elevated to a position superior even to that of Augustus. The gift of this new name marks the believer's entrance to a new and higher stage of responsibility symbolizing new and greater authority. Regardless of the meaning, for our day when we are often identified by an impersonal number, it highlights the fact we are not just impersonal numbers, but those who are personally known and loved by God. ([J. Hampton Keathley III. Studies in Revelation Re 2:17-18](#)).

And in the last chapter of the Revelation, John notes that in the New Heaven and New Earth, God's **"name shall be on (our) foreheads"** (Re 22:4-[note](#)), surely emblematic of the eternity of the covenant entered into when we first placed our faith in Christ, our "Covenant Messenger", and in the New Covenant in His blood.

The Change of Names In Scripture - F B Meyer offers the following insight on the significance of the **change of names** in Scripture, specifically the change of Jacob's name to Israel in Genesis 32:28 and the implications for us today...

In olden days, **names** were given not for euphony, or by caprice, but for character.

**A man's character
was in his name.**

Now, when Jacob came into the attitude of blessing--an attitude which has two parts: viz., absolute abandonment of self, and a trust which clings to Christ--then immediately the Angel said, **"What is thy name?"** And he said, **"Jacob. By nature I am a supplanter, a rogue, and a cheat."** Never shrink from declaring your true character: "My name is Sinner." **"And he said, thy name shall be no more Jacob; but Israel: a prince with God."** (Ed: Compare Jesus bestowing a "new name" on Simon in Mt 16:18 when he became "Peter, the rock".).

The changed name indicated a changed character. Jacob was swallowed up of light. He was clothed upon with the name and nature of a prince. There is only one way to princeliness--it is the thorn-set path of self-surrender and of faith. Why should you not now yield yourself entirely to God, and give Him your whole being? It is only a reasonable service: and out of it will spring a tenacity of faith; and power for service; and a royalty of character--enough to make you willing to bear the limp, which proves that your own strength has passed away for ever. () (**Israel, a Prince with God the Story of Jacob**)

In his devotional "Our Daily Walk", **F B Meyer** has an entry entitled **"A New Name!"** which is based on Ge 32:28 and Re 3:12-[note](#)

Through the, **name** stands for nature. In those wise old days, **names** were not given because of their euphonious sound, but as revealing some characteristic trait. Shepherds are said to name their sheep by their defects; in some cases Old Testament names seem to have been given on the same principle. It was so with Jacob. When the Angel said: "What is thy name?" he answered, "Jacob," supplanter: Never shrink, in your dealings with God, to call yourself by your own specific title, whether it be the least of all saints, the chief of sinners, or the dissembler and cheat!

The first condition of losing our old nature is to confess to its possession; the next is to yield to God. Be conquered by God, yield to Him, submit to His Will, especially in that one point where His Spirit presses thee hard. Life is full of the approaches of the wrestling Angel, only we rebut instead of allowing ourselves to be vanquished by Him. Each time we allow God to have His way in some new point of our character, we acquire the new. name. In other words, a new phase of character is developed, a new touch of the Divine love passes into our being, and we are transformed more perfectly into His likeness, whose Name comprehends all names. Jacob becomes Israel; Simon becomes Peter the Rock-man; Saul becomes Paul the Apostle.

(**Ed comment:** This is an interesting point, but some might question Meyer's statement. Be a Berean. Acts 17:11-note) When God calls us by a **new name**, He communicates to us a new Name for Himself. In other words, He gives us a deeper revelation of Himself. He reveals attributes which before had been concealed (**Ed comment:** Compare Jesus' promise in Jn 14:21). The Apostle in the Apocalypse tells us that every time we overcome, God gives to us a white stone, in which His new name is written, in evident reference to the pure diamond of the Urim and [Thummim](#), by which He spoke to Israel, and on which **"Jehovah"** was engraved (Ex 28:29,30; Re 2:17-[note](#)). Each victor over sin has his own stone of Urim, knows God's will at first hand, and has revelations of God's character, which only he knows to whom they are made (Mt 11:25).

PRAYER - Give unto us, O God, the white stone with the new Name written on it, that he only knows who receives it. Manifest Thyself to us as Thou dost not to the world. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Additional Notes on New Names...

Alec Motyer in the **Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible** has the following thoughts on New Names writing that...

The ability of the name to reveal the nature or status of the person who bears it is well illustrated in the biblical practice of giving

new names, as when Sarai became Sarah (Ge 17:15).

Three motivations are possible:

(1) The new name replaces the old in order to signify the bestowal of powers not hitherto possessed. In this case the new name is equivalent to the experience of regeneration. The childless **Abram** becomes the “father of a multitude of nations,” **Abraham** (Ge 17:5).

(2) The new name may indicate a new character and status with God, as when **Jacob** the trickster became **Israel** the man of power with God (Ge 32:27; Hos 12:3, 4); thus also Simon became Peter (Jn 1:42).

(3) The new name may cement a new loyalty in the place of an old. **Daniel** the captive was given the name **Belteshazzar**, incorporating the name Bel, one of the gods of Babylon—presumably to turn him from the God of his fathers to that of his captors (Da 1:7-note). ([Elwell, Walter, General Editor: Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible. Page 1523. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House. 1988](#))

COVENANT MEAL

- See Table Summarizing the Sharing of a Meal

Trumbull explains this ritual among pagan tribes writing that...

Among the Araucanian, of South America, the custom of making **brothers**, or **brothers-friends**, is called Lacu. It includes the killing of a lamb and dividing it — “cutting” it — between the two covenanting parties; and each party must eat his half of the lamb — either by himself or by such assistance as he chooses to call in. None of it must be left uneaten. Gifts also pass between the parties; and the two friends exchange names. “The giving [the exchanging] of a name [with this people] establishes between the namesakes a species of relationship which is considered almost as sacred as that of blood, and obliges them to render to each other certain services, and that consideration which naturally belongs to relatives ” (Trumbull: [The Blood Covenant](#))

In another note by Kay Arthur we read that...

“if they exchanged names, there would be a covenant meal. Usually in this covenant meal they would feed each other bread, saying, “**You are eating me.**” Then they would drink from the same cup and say, “**You are drinking me.**” Sometimes the drink in the cup was mingled with blood. (This helps us understand Jesus’ otherwise enigmatic call to eat His flesh and drink His blood in John 6:53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 66) (See Kay Arthur [Our Covenant God](#) or **Borrow the book** [Our Covenant God page 172](#))

James Freeman commenting on the **covenant** between Abimelech and Isaac in Genesis 26:26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 writes...

Abimelech may have been fearful that he had made an enemy of Isaac by sending him away, and that Isaac with his larger force might attack him. So he came to Isaac’s encampment to make peace with him. It was customary that when a binding agreement (covenant) of friendship, or at least peace, was made between individuals or tribes, they would **eat a meal together to demonstrate or seal that friendship**. This custom was probably what developed into the **covenant meal** that later became part of the covenant-making process.

When Laban and Jacob made a covenant (binding agreement) of peace with each other at Galeed, also called Mizpah, they ate a **meal** together: “He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a **meal**. After they had eaten, they spent the night there” (Genesis 31:54). The **Passover meal** that the Lord ate with his disciples was actually a covenant meal, because His death on Calvary would bring peace between God and those who believed in Christ: “In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). ([Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. - The New Manners and Customs of the Bible](#)). (Bolding added)

The **NET Bible Note** makes an interesting observation on the meal shared by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 elders of Israel in Exodus 24:11 (Read the context Ex 24:9, 10, 11)...

This is the **covenant meal**, the peace offering, that they are eating there on the mountain. To eat from the sacrifice meant that they were at peace with God, in covenant with Him. Likewise, in the **new covenant**

believers draw near to God on the basis of sacrifice, and eat of the sacrifice because they are at peace with Him, and in Christ they see the Godhead revealed (**Ed**: cp the OT meal where Scripture records "they saw God", Ex 24:10, 11). ([See the interesting NETBible Note on Exodus 24:10](#))

FRIEND - A COVENANT TERM

Related Resources:

- See Tabular Summary of "Friend"
- See [allusions to friend in example of two men cutting covenant](#)
- ISBE [Friend, friendship](#)
- Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology [Friend, friendship](#)
- 1 Samuel 20:12-17 The Power Of Two
- [1 Samuel 20:12-17 The Value Of Friends](#)
- [1 Samuel 20:30-42 Best Friends](#)

Trumbull alludes to the concept of **friend**

He who has entered into this compact with another, counts himself the possessor of a double life; for his **friend**, whose blood he has shared, is ready to lay down his life with him, or for him. Hence the leathern case, or Bayt hejab, "House of the amulet," containing the record of the covenant ('uhdah), is counted a proud badge of honor by one who possesses it; and he has an added sense of security, because he will not be alone when he falleth...

Travelers in the heart of Africa, also, report the covenant of "**blood brotherhood**" or of "**strong-friendship**," as in vogue among various African tribes, although naturally retaining less of primitive sacredness there than among Semites. The rite is, in some cases, observed after the manner of the Syrians, by the contracting parties tasting each other's blood; while, in other cases, it is performed by the inter-transfusion of blood between the two.

And whenever one decides to be a **friend**, we [who would join in the covenant] make the greatest of all oaths, to live with one another, and to die, if need be, the one for the other. And this is the manner of it: Thereupon, cutting our fingers, all simultaneously, we let the blood drop into a vessel, and having dipped the points of our swords into it, both [of us] holding them together, we drink it. There is nothing which can loose us from one another after that. ([Read the Online account in The Blood Covenant](#))

Along the southwestern border of the Chinese Empire, in Burmah, this rite of **blood-friendship** is still practiced; as may be seen from illustrations of it, which are given in the Appendix of this work. In his History of Madagascar, the Rev. William Ellis, tells of this rite as he observed it in that island, and as he learned of it from Borneo. He says

Another popular engagement in use among the Malagasy is that of forming brotherhoods, which though not peculiar to them, is one of the most remarkable usages of the country... Its object is to cement two individuals in the bonds of most sacred **friendship**... More than two may thus associate, if they please ; but the practice is usually limited to that number, and rarely embraces more than three or four individuals. It is called fatrida, ie, 'dead blood,' either because the oath is taken over the blood of a fowl killed for the occasion, or because a small portion of blood is drawn from each individual, when thus pledging **friendship**, and drunk by those to whom **friendship** is pledged, with execrations of vengeance on each other in case of violating the sacred oath. To obtain the blood, a slight incision is made in the skin covering the centre of the bosom, significantly called ambavafo, 'the mouth of the heart.' Allusion is made to this, in the formula of this tragi-comical ceremony.

When two or more persons have agreed on forming this bond of fraternity, a suitable place and hour are determined upon, and some gunpowder and a ball are brought, together with a small quantity of ginger, a spear, and two particular kinds of grass. A fowl also is procured; its head is nearly cut off; and it is left in this state to continue bleeding during the ceremony' (Apparently these articles form a "**heap of witness**," [cp Ge 31:46KJV, Ge 31:47, Ge 31:48KJV, Ge 31:51KJV, Ge 31:52KJV, Ge 31:53KJV] or are the aggregated symbolic

witnesses of the transaction; as something answering to this usage is found in connection with the rite in various parts of the world.)

The parties then pronounce a long form of imprecation, and [a] mutual vow, to this effect:

Should either of us prove disloyal to the sovereign, or unfaithful to each other,' then perish the day, and perish (2 He who would be true in **friendship** must be true in all things. The good **friend** is a good citizen. See 1Pe 2:17.) the night.' (See Job 3:2-9 Here is the idea of an absolute inter-merging of natures, by this rite.)

Awful is that, solemn is that, which we are now both about to perform! O the mouth of the heart! —this is to be cut, and we shall drink each other's blood. O this ball! O this powder! O this ginger! O this fowl weltering in its blood !—it shall be killed, it shall be put to excruciating agonies,—it shall be killed by us, it shall be speared at this corner of the hearth (Alakaforo or Adimizam, S. W.) And whoever would seek to kill or injure us, to injure our wives, or our children, to waste our money or our property; or if either of us should seek to do what would not be approved of by the king or by the people; should one of us deceive the other by making that which is unjust appear just; should one accuse the other falsely ; should either of us with our wives and children be lost and reduced to slavery, (forbid that such should be our lot !)—then, that good may arise out of evil, we follow this custom of the people ; and we do it for the purpose of assisting one another with our families, if lost in slavery, by whatever property either of us may possess; for our wives are as one to us, and each other's children as his own,' and our riches as common property. O the mouth of the heart! O the ball ! O the powder! O the ginger! O this miserable fowl weltering in its blood!—thy liver do we eat, thy liver do we eat. And should either of us retract from the terms of this **oath**, let him instantly become a fool, let him instantly become blind, let this **covenant** prove a curse to him: let him not be a human being: let there be no heir to inherit after him, but let him be reduced, and float with the water never to see its source ; let him never obtain ; what is out of doors, may it never enter ; and what is within may it never go out ; the little obtained, may he be deprived of it (Mt 13:12; Mt 25:29) ;' and let him never obtain justice from the sovereign nor from the people! But if we keep and observe this covenant, let these things bear witness' (Here is an indication of the witness-bearing nature of these accessories of the rite) O mouth of the heart! (repeating as before),—may this cause us to live long and happy with our wives and our children ; may we be approved by the sovereign, and beloved by the people; may we get money, may we obtain property, cattle, etc.; may we marry wives, (vady kely) ; may we have good robes, and wear a good piece of cloth on our bodies; (Compare these blessings and cursings with those under the Mosaic laws: Dt 27:9-26; Dt 28:1-68) since, amidst our toils and labor, these are the things we seek after (Mt. 6:31, 32.) . And this we do that we may with all fidelity assist each other to the last.'

The incision is then made, as already mentioned; a small quantity of blood [is] extracted and drank by the **covenanting** parties respectively, [they] saying as they take it,

These are our last words, We will be like rice and water

(This is a natural, simple, and beautiful allusion in common use among the Malagasy, to denote an **inseparable association**. The rice is planted in water, grows in water, is boiled in water, and water is the universal beverage taken with it when eaten.); in town they do not separate, and in the fields they do not forsake one another ; we will be as the right and left hand of the body ; if one be injured, the other necessarily sympathizes and suffers with it. ([Read the Online account in The Blood Covenant](#))

Speaking of the terms and the influence of this covenant, in Madagascar, Mr. Ellis says, that while absolute community of all worldly possessions is not a literal fact on the part of these **blood-friends**, "the engagement involves a sort of moral obligation for one to assist the other in every extremity."

The **Dictionary of New Testament Background** has some interesting statements in the topic "**Friendship**" which are reminiscent of truths of **covenant**...

In one of its most common uses in ancient literature, "**friendship**" could apply to alliances, cooperation or nonaggression treaties among peoples.

As Plutarch notes, **friends** share not only secrets but, ideally, **everything they possess** (e.g., Plutarch Flatterer 24, Mor. 65AB). That **friends** shared all things in common becomes a common phrase in the literature of Greco-Roman antiquity... "

Loyalty to **friends** and treating **friends** as one's own equals, as another self, might require dying for them... Thus Greeks or Romans would readily grasp the early Christian concept that Jesus died on their behalf, even if they lacked exposure to atonement in the Levitical system. (Porter, S. E., & Evans, C. A. Dictionary of New Testament Background. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

The **Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology** has a helpful note on understanding the term "**friend**" noting that...

In both Testaments the ideas of **friend and friendship** involve three components: **association, loyalty, and affection**. There are also three levels of meaning: **friendship** as association only; **friendship** as association plus loyalty; and **friendship** as association plus loyalty plus affection.

At the lowest level a friend is simply an associate or "the other fellow"... Jesus addresses Judas in this way in the garden: "Friend, do what you came for" (Mt 26:50). At a higher and theologically more interesting level the idea of friendship contains not only the component of association but also that of loyalty... Hiram of Tyre's "friendship" with David (1Ki 5:1) is actually a political alliance that may have little to do with affection but everything to do with treaty obligations. The "friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Pr. 18:24) shows loyalty. When the Jews accuse Pilate of not being "a friend of Caesar" (John 19:12), they are questioning his loyalty to the emperor.

The highest level of **friendship** contains the components of association and loyalty along with affection. The **friendship** of David and Jonathan (1Sa 18:1, 2, 3, 4; 20:14, 15, 16, 17 -See discussion of Jonathan and David's covenant in the topic Covenant: The Exchange of Robes) has all three components (**Ed note**: Reflecting the fact that they had **covenant**)... Ruth's stubborn loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi stands as another display of human friendship at its highest (**Ed note**: and in context she undoubtedly entered into the Abrahamic Covenant)... As one can be a friend to another person, so one can be a friend of God or of God's Son. Abraham gains the title "friend of God" by his faith and obedience (2Chr 20:7; Is 41:8; Jas 2:23). Those who keep God's covenant are called his friends (Ps 25:14). By contrast, one can be a friend of the world, which excludes the possibility of friendship with God (Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15)...

Jesus shows... divine-human friendship by addressing His disciples as friends (Luke 12:4), by letting them know the inner meaning of his life and ministry (John 15:15), and, most clearly, by dying on the cross as the sacrifice for sin (John 15:13). When Jesus tells his disciples, "You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14), the components of association, loyalty, and affection all appear. If one can be a friend of God or of God's Son, this friendship can extend as well to others who are also friends of God. Christian friendship finds its basis in the friendship between each believer and God. When John refers to fellow believers simply as "the friends" (3Jn 1:15), he implies the loyalty and affection for one another that spring from loyalty and love for God. (Elwell, W. A., & Elwell, W. A. Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology Grand Rapids: Baker Book House - [click for entire article](#))

Harper's Bible Dictionary in the discussion of "**Friend**" notes that...

Where the covenant concept prevails (between friends), natural attraction and personal preference appear to be less important than covenant obligations as the bases of relationships between persons. (Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. 1985. Harper's Bible dictionary. Includes index. San Francisco: Harper & Row)

The **Dictionary of Biblical Imagery** writes that...

The Bible uses two consistent images in its representation of friendship. The first is the knitting of souls. Deuteronomy provides the earliest mention of this category of a "friend who is as your own soul" (Dt 13:6 RSV), a companion of one's inmost thoughts and feelings, resulting in an intense emotional attachment. It is well illustrated by Jonathan and David's friendship: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1Sa 18:1 RSV; cf. 1Sa 20:17). Characteristic expressions of this union of hearts are an affectionate embrace or kiss, weeping, gift-giving and vows of loyalty. After the slaying of Goliath, Jonathan made a covenant with David, and the gestures of friendship were Jonathan's giving David the gifts of his robe, armor and weapons (1Sa 18:3, 4). David and Jonathan also pledged to protect each other's families after either one's death (1Sa 20:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16), a promise David subsequently kept by

giving sanctuary to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9). Later, when Saul's wrath required David to flee, there was a moving departure scene between the soul-mates: "They kissed one another, and wept with one another," departing in peace because they had sworn in the name of the Lord that God would bind them and their descendants forever (1Sa 20:41, 42). (Online [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#))

Here is an example from ancient literature of **friends** covenanting with each other...

The ancient sage Lucian describes the oneness and loyalty that come with covenant friendship as he narrates a Scythian's debate with a Greek: "It can easily be shown that Scythian friends are much more faithful than Greek friends, and that friendship is esteemed more highly among us than among you... But first I wish to tell you in what manner we make friends; not in our drinking bouts as you do, nor simply because a man is of the same age, or because he is our neighbor. But, on the contrary; when we see a good man and one capable of great deeds ... we make the greatest of all oaths to live with one another and to die, if need be, the one for the other.

And this is the manner of it:

Thereupon cutting our fingers, all simultaneously, we let the blood drop into a vessel, and having dipped the points of our swords into it, both holding them together, we drink it. There is nothing which can loose us from one another after that. (Arthur, K: Our Covenant God: Learning to Trust Him)

Memorials As Reminders of Covenant

- See Tabular Summary of Memorials

Turnbull writes that...

Herodotus, who goes back well-nigh two-thirds of the way to Abraham, says, that when the Arabians would covenant together, a third man, standing between the two, cuts, with a sharp stone, the inside of the hands of both, and lets the blood there from drop on seven stones which are between the two parties...

In the primitive rite of blood-covenanting, as it is practiced in some parts of the East, to the present time, in addition to other symbolic witnesses of the rite, a tree is planted by the covenanting parties, "which remains and grows as a witness of their contract." So it was, in the days of Abraham. "And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Everlasting God." (Ge 21:33) (See online book [The Blood Covenant A Primitive Rite](#))

PHYLACTERIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Although the word "**phylacteries**" is not found in Exodus 13:9, this verse apparently marks the initiation of this practice for God said...

"And it (speaking of the feast of unleavened bread) shall serve as **asign** to you on your hand (we don't know what this sign was), and as a **reminder on your forehead** (a memorial - again we don't know what this memorial consisted of - was it just a mark? Scripture is silent) that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth (which implies it is in their heart for what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart - Mt 12:34); for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. (Exodus 13:9)

So the "**sign**" on the hand and the "**reminder**" on the forehead were to cause them to live in constant awareness (law in their mouth) of God's Word that they might obey it and God's deliverance from (Egyptian) bondage (the Passover) that they might be motivated to obey out of grateful hearts not of of legalism. You see, God has always desired internal obedience from the heart, not an external obedience by the letter of the Law. Most of Israel missed this profound truth and as discussed below turned God's call for a reminder into a empty ritual, devoid of an understanding of God's original intent.

The word **phylacteries** (always plural) is found a few verses later in Exodus 13:16 which says...

So it shall serve as a **sign** (Hebrew ['owth](#) = visible mark or object intended to convey a clear message or to serve as assurance and as a reminder) on your hand, and as **phylacteries** on your forehead, for with a

powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.

The Hebrew word for **phylacteries** ([towphaphah](#)) means bands, frontlets, marks, symbolic ornaments, signs, bands worn as a remembrance to a past fact, a non-verbal communication. [Towphaphah](#) specifically as used in the OT denoted a **mark** or **sign** placed on the forehead between the eyes as a memorial (see Ex 13:16). What the sign or mark was the Scripture does not make clear. In that regard it is notable that the only 3 uses of **phylacteries** ([towphaphah](#)) in the Hebrew Old Testament (Ex 13:16, Dt 6:8, Dt 11:18) are translated in the Septuagint (LXX) by the Greek word [asaleutos](#) which literally means **immovable** and figuratively implies that which is **firm** or **enduring**. The Greek phrase is identical in all 3 Old Testament --"*asaleuton pro ophthalon humon*" -- and literally means "**fixed before your eyes**". The point is that what is before one's eyes will not be quickly forgotten and will guide one's steps accordingly.

To reiterate, the **external mark or sign** was not to be simply a "legalistic" response or **external** obedience to the Law. God is always looking **internal** obedience, motivated by love and originating in a heart which has been "**circumcised**" or **changed**, as clearly explained by Paul in Romans 2...

"he is not a Jew who is one **outwardly**; neither is **circumcision** that which is **outward in the flesh** but he is a Jew who is one **inwardly**; and **circumcision is that which is of the heart** by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." (Ro 2:28, 29-note) (compare Lev 26:41, 42, Dt 10:16, Dt 30:6, Jer 4:4, Col 2:11, 12 - these cross references help understand that God's desire has always been for a heart that was circumcised by grace through faith, as especially emphasized by Paul in Colossians 2 - **click** for in depth discussion of Col 2:11-note, Col 2:12-note) (**click** discussion of **circumcision**)

So even in the Old Testament although God had commanded the external sign of **circumcision**, it was an internal **circumcision** of their heart that He desired. This internal "**circumcision**" has always by grace through faith even as Abram's heart was "circumcised" in Genesis 15:6 when the "the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (Galatians 3:8).

In summary, in Exodus 13:16 the **phylacteries** were some type of mark on the forehead that were to serve as "**memorials**", continually reminding the Israelites that Jehovah had delivered them with a great Passover from Egyptian slavery.

In **Deuteronomy**, the second giving of the Law, we encounter the last 2 uses of the Hebrew word for phylacteries, translated "**frontals**" in the NAS...

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be **on your heart** (implying memorization, see **Memorizing His Word**); 7 and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 And you shall bind them **as a sign on your hand** and they shall be **as frontals** (phylacteries) **on your forehead**. (Deut 6:4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

"You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them **as a sign on your hand**, and they shall be **as frontals** (phylacteries) **on your forehead**." (Deut 11:18)

In Deuteronomy 6 the "**frontals**" (phylacteries) were to help Israel remember the words of the covenant (note the phrase "on your heart" in verse 5). The **external** (on their hand and forehead) was to simply be a reminder of the **internal** (on their heart).

PHYLACTERIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

By historical accounts when the Jews returned from 70 years of exile in Babylon, at some point they began to apply the Lord's instructions in Exodus 13:16, Deuteronomy 6:8, Deuteronomy 11:18 literally making these "memorials" into **external** trappings in the form of leather bands on their arms with a box of Scriptures and a similar box attached to a band around their forehead.

Jesus without condemning the practice per se, did condemn their intent declaring that the ostentatious Pharisees...

"do all their deeds to be **noticed** (Greek *theaomai* - to be looked at closely and the root of our English "theatrical" describing a "spectacular performance") by men; for they **broaden their phylacteries**, and lengthen the tassels of their garments... " (Mt 23.5)... "**outwardly** (appearing) righteous to men, but **inwardly**... full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Mt 23.28)

This verse represents the only New Testament use of the Greek word [phulakterion](#) (from the verb **phulasso** meaning to keep, guard or preserve) which at that time described a small leather case containing several OT Scripture passages (Ex 13:2, 3, 4, 5, 6,

7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; Dt 6:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; 13:22) and worn on the arm and forehead by Jews especially when they were praying.

It is interesting to note that the secular use of [phulakterion](#) both before and during NT times referred to an object which was used as a means of protection from evil forces (cf the root verb phulasso = to guard). [Phulakterion](#) therefore actually was a kind of **amulet** which is a charm as an ornament often inscribed with a magic incantation or symbol and thereby considered as possessing the power to protect the wearer against evil as disease or witchcraft. In Matthew 23.5 [phulakterion](#) is used as a reference to what was called in Aramaic **tephillin**, meaning 'prayers.'

In Jesus' day there were **two phylacteries**, one worn on the head and the other on the left arm, both being bound on during daily morning prayers. In Matthew 23.5, Jesus does not condemn the use of such phylacteries per se, but he does denounce their ostentatious use. As discussed above, the Jews were not only to retain the commands of God in their hearts, and to confess them with the mouth, but to fulfill them with the hand, in act and in deed. But as discussed above, the Jews, after their return from Babylonian captivity, construed God's injunction literally and had portions of the law written out and worn as badges upon their persons. They practiced the **letter of the law** but missed the **true intent of the law** here as in so many of their other rituals that were all **external** with no **internal** transformation, no **circumcision of their hearts**. Phylacteries are still worn by modern day orthodox Jews and consist of strips of parchment with Scripture which are rolled, tied with the white hairs of a calf's or a cow's tail and placed in one of the compartments of a small box. During prayer these phylacteries are worn by the male Israelites firmly attached with leather straps to their forehead between the eyebrows, and on the left arm so as to be near the heart. The boxes for the head phylactery and for the arm were ordinarily 1.5 inches square; the former having on the outside to the right the three-pronged letter "**shin**", which is designed as an abbreviation of the divine name "Shaddai, the Almighty," whereas on the left side it had a four-pronged "**shin**", the two constituting the sacred number "**seven**".

See also ISBE article [Phylactery](#).

Trumbull describes the parallel pagan practice writing...

It will be remembered that in the primitive rite of **blood-friendship** a blood-stained record of the covenant is preserved in a small leathern case, to be worn as an amulet upon the arm, or about the neck, by him who has won a **friend** forever in this sacred rite... (Read online [The Blood Covenant](#))

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](#)