

# The covenant between god and the isrealites

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Covenant is a word that seems complicated to analyze and discuss by so many people and this is the reason why many people fail to keep covenant among them, even back in the old testament of the bible written 2000BC, the Israelites often fail in the covenant between them and God and only God who is perfect never fails.

" The distance between God and the creature is so great," says the Westminster Confession (VII. I), " that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. " Exactly!

So biblical doctrine, first to last, has to do with covenantal relationships between God and man; biblical ethics has to do with expressing God's covenantal relationship to us in covenantal relationships between ourselves and others; and Christian religion has the nature of covenant life, in which God is the direct object of our faith, hope, love, worship, and service, all animated by gratitude for grace.

Our theme is the life-embracing bedrock reality of the covenant relationship between the Creator and Christians, and it is high time we defined exactly what we are talking about. A covenant relationship is a voluntary mutual commitment that binds each party to the other. Whether it is negotiated, like a modern business deal or a marriage contract, or unilaterally imposed, as all God's covenants are, is irrelevant to the commitment itself; the reality of the relationship depends simply on the fact that mutual obligations have been accepted and pledged on both sides.

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Luther is held to have said that Christianity is a matter of personal pronouns, in the sense that everything depends on knowing that Jesus died for me, to be my Savior, and that his Father is my God and Father, personally committed to love, nurture, uphold, and glorify me. This already is covenant thinking, for this is the essential substance of the covenant relationship: God's covenant is precisely a matter of these personal pronouns, used in this way, as a basis for a life with God offriendship, peace and communicated love.

Going back to the Old Testament of the Bible, when God tells Abraham, " I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you . . . to be your God . . . I will be their God" (Gen. 17: 6-8), the personal pronouns are the key words: God is committing himself to Abraham and Abraham's seed in a way in which he does not commit himself to others. God's covenant commitment expresses eternal election; his covenant love to individuals sinners flows from his choice of them to be his for ever in the peace of justification and the joy of glorification.

The verbal commitment in which electing sovereignty thus shows itself has the nature of a promise, the fulfillment of which is guaranteed by God's absolute fidelity and trustworthiness -- the quality that David Livingstone the explorer celebrated by describing God as " an honorable gentleman who never breaks his word. " The covenant promise itself, " I will be your God," is an unconditional undertaking on God's part to be " for us" (Rom. 8: 31), " on our side" (Ps. 124: 1-5), using all his resources for the furthering of the ultimate good of those (" us") to whom he thus pledges himself.

" I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6: 7), the covenant promise constantly repeated throughout both testaments (Gen. 17: 6-8; Ex. 20: 2, 29: 45 Ezek. 11: 20, 34: 30 f. , 36: 28; 2 Cor. 6: 16-18; Rev. 21: 2 f. ; etc. ), may fairly be called the pantechnicon promise, inasmuch as every particular promise that God makes is packed into it -- fellowship and communion first (" I will be with you," " I will dwell among them," " I will live among you," etc.

), and then the supply of every real need, here and hereafter. Sovereignty and salvation, love and largesse, election and enjoyment, affirmation and assurance, fidelity and fullness thus appear as the spectrum of themes (the second of each pair being the fruit of the first as its root) that combine to form the white light, glowing and glorious, of the gracious self-giving of God to sinners that covenant theology proclaims.

The God-given covenant carries, of course, obligations. The life of faith and repentance, and the obedience to which faith leads, constitute the covenant-keeping through which God's people receive the fullness of God's covenant blessing. " I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession" (Ex. 19: 4 f. ).

Covenant faithfulness is the condition and means of receiving covenant benefits, and there is nothing arbitrary in that; for the blessings flow from the relationship, and human rebelliousness and unfaithfulness stop the flow by disrupting the relationship. Israel's infidelity was constantly doing this throughout the Old Testament story, and the New Testament makes it plain

that churches and Christians will lose blessings that would otherwise be theirs, should covenant fidelity be lacking in their lives.

The very first covenant that could be read in the bible is that of our first father and mother who destroyed the covenant just because of a fruit given to them by a camouflaged Satan. This original covenantal arrangement, usually called the Covenant of Works, was one whereby God undertook to prolong and augment for all subsequent humanity the happy state in which he had made the first human pair -- provided that the man observed, as part of the humble obedience that was then natural to him, one prohibition, specified in the narrative as not eating a forbidden fruit.

The devil, presented as a serpent, seduced Adam and Eve into disobeying, so that they fell under the penal sanctions of the Covenant of Works (loss of good, and corruption of nature). But God at once revealed to them in embryo a redemptive economy that had in it both the covering of sin, and a prospective victory for the woman's seed (a human Savior) over the serpent and his malice.

The redemptive purpose of this new arrangement became clearer as God called Abraham, made a nation from his descendants, saved them from slavery, named himself not only their God but also their King and Father, taught them his law (thefamilycode), drilled them in sacrificial liturgies, disciplined their disobedience, and sent messengers to hold up before them his holiness and his promise of a Savior King and a saving kingdom; which in due course became reality.

The Westminster Confession summarizes what was going on in and through all this. " Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by (the first) covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe. . .

" This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel; under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore signifying Christ to come, which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the old Testament.

" Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper . . . in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the new Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations" (VII. iii. v. vi).

So the unifying strands that bind together the books of the Bible are, first, the one covenant promise, sloganized as " I will be your God, and you shall be my people," which God was fulfilling to his elect all through his successive

orderings of covenant faith and life; second, the one messenger and mediator of the covenant, Jesus Christ the God-man, prophet and king, priest and sacrifice, the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament proclamation; third, the one people of God, the covenant community, the company of the elect, whom God brings to faith and keeps in faith, from Abel, Noah and Abraham through the remnant of Israel to the worldwide New Testament church of believing Jews and Gentiles; and fourth, the one pattern of covenant piety, consisting of faith, repentance, love, joy, praise, hope, hatred of sin, desire for sanctity, a spirit of prayer, and readiness to battle the world, the flesh, and the devil in order to glorify God . . . a pattern displayed most fully, perhaps, in Luther's "little Bible," the Psalter, but seen also in the lives of God's servants in both Testaments and reflected more or less fully in each single one of the Old and New Testament books.

Covenant theologians insist that every book of the Bible in effect asks to be read in terms of these unities, and as contributing to the exposition of them, and is actually misunderstood if it is not so read. Some of the major covenant between God and man in the old testament would be discussed to show the importance and effect of a covenant as an agreement. THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND THE ISREALITES According to the Bible the history of Israel began when Abraham was called by God to leave his family and his home and settle in Canaan. His son Isaac, and his grandson, Jacob, lived there until Jacob was forced by famine to flee to Egypt with his remaining sons, where one of them, Joseph, already held a position of prominence after a grass to grace encounter. The descendants of Jacob were enslaved in Egypt.

God charged Moses with the deliverance of his people from bondage. This he did with the aid of God, who dried up the 'Red Sea' so that the Israelites could cross in safety, while the pursuing Egyptian army drowned. Moses and his people continued to Mount Sinai, where a covenant was concluded establishing God as the Lord of his chosen people, Israel. The conditions of the covenant were laid down in a law including the Ten Commandments. However, because of the people's disobedience their march toward the Promised Land turned into forty years of wanderings in the wilderness. Finally, after the death of Moses, the people of Israel entered Canaan from the east, crossing the River Jordan.

Under the leadership of Joshua they sacked Jericho; after the city walls came tumbling down rather miraculously, and then went on to conquer the rest of Canaan. THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND THE ABRAHAM " Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, " You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. " And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, " I am God Almighty;" walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous. "



Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, " As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God. " God said to Abraham, " As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. " God said to Abraham, " As for Sarah your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her.

I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.

" Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, " Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child? " And Abraham said to God, " O that Ishmael might live in your sight! " God said, " No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year. " And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised; and all the men of his house, slaves born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him. . The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised.

Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom  
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Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said, " God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me. " And she said, " Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age. " The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.

So she said to Abraham, " Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac. " The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, " Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring. " So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, " Do not let me look on the death of the child. " And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from

heaven, and said to her, " What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand for I will make a great nation of him. " Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt. " THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND THE NOAH Centuries before the time of Abraham, God made a covenant with Noah, assuring Noah that He would never again destroy the world by flood (Gen. 9). Noah lived at a time when the whole earth was filled with violence and corruption -- yet Noah did not allow the evil standards of his day to rob him of fellowship with God. He stood out as the only one who " walked with God" (Gen. 6: 9), as was also true of his great-grandfather Enoch (Gen. 5: 22). " Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6: 9).

The Lord singled out Noah from among all his contemporaries and chose him as the man to accomplish a great work. When God saw the wickedness that prevailed in the world (Gen. 6: 5), He told Noah of His intention to destroy the ancient world by a universal flood. God instructed Noah to build an ark (a large barge) in which he and his family would survive the universal deluge. Noah believed God and " according to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Gen. 6: 22). Noah is listed among the heroes of faith. " By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the

world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11: 7).

With steadfast confidence in God, Noah started building the ark. During this time, Noah continued to preach God's judgment and mercy, warning the ungodly of their approaching doom. Peter reminds us of how God " did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2: 5). Noah preached for 120 years, apparently without any converts. At the end of that time, " when ... the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah ... eight souls were saved through water" (1 Pet. 3: 20). People continued in their evil ways and ignored his pleadings and warnings until the flood overtook them.

When the ark was ready, Noah entered in with all kinds of animals " and the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7: 16), cut off completely from the rest of mankind. Noah was grateful to the Lord who had delivered him from the flood. After the flood, he built an altar to God (Gen. 8: 20) and made a sacrifice, which was accepted graciously, for in it " the Lord smelled a soothing aroma" (Gen. 8: 21). The Lord promised Noah and his descendants that He would never destroy the world again with a universal flood (Gen. 9: 15). The Lord made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his descendants, establishing the rainbow as the sign of His promise (Gen. 9: 1-17). Another part of the covenant involved the sanctity of human life, i. e.

, that " whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9: 6). Every time we see a rainbow today we are reminded of that agreement -- this covenant has not been done

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away with. As long as God still sends rainbows after a storm, capital punishment will still be a part of God's law for the human race. THE MOSAIC COVENANT The Israelites moved to Egypt during the time of Joseph. A new Pharaoh came upon the scene and turned the Israelites into common slaves. The people cried out to the God of their forefathers. " So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exo. 2: 24).

After a series of ten plagues upon the land of Egypt, God brought the Israelites out " of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand" (Exo. 32: 11). Three months after leaving the land of Egypt, the children of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai (Exo. 19: 1). God promised to make a covenant with the Israelites (Exo. 19: 3-6). Before they even knew the conditions of the contract, the people agreed to abide by whatever God said (Exo. 19: 8). This covenant was between God and the people of Israel -- you and I are not a party in this contract (and never have been). The Ten Commandments are the foundation of the covenant, but they are not the entirety of it.

After giving the first ten commands, the people asked the Lord to speak no more (Exo. 20: 18-20). Moses then drew near to the presence of God to hear the rest of the covenant (Exo. 20: 21). After receiving the Law, Moses spoke the words of the covenant to all of the people, and the people agreed to obey (Exo. 24: 4). Moses then wrote the conditions of the covenant down, offered sacrifices to God, and then sprinkled both the book and the people with blood to seal the covenant (Exo. 24: 8). This covenant between God and

the people of Israel was temporary -- God promised a day when He would make a new covenant, not only with Israel but also with all mankind.

" Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31: 31-34). The old testament of the Bible, from Genesis to Malachi, are, as was said earlier, God's own record of the progressive unfolding of his purpose to have a people in covenant with himself here on earth. The covenantal character of God's relationships with human beings, first to last, has already been underlined, and is in fact reflected one way and another on just about every page of the Bible.

The transition in Eden from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace, and the further transition from all that was involved in the preliminary (old) form of that covenant to its final (new) form, brought in through the death of Jesus Christ and now administered by him from his throne, are the key events in the covenant story. The significance of the fact that God caused his book of instruction to mankind to be put together with the history of his covenant as its backbone can hardly be overestimated. Covenant relationships between God and men, established by God's initiative, bringing temporal and eternal blessings to individuals and creating community among

them, so that they have a corporate identity as God's people, are in fact the pervasive themes of the whole Bible; and it compels thoughtful readers to take note of the covenant as being central to God's concern.

Finally, with all these examples and explanations on the covenant in the old testament of the bible, it would be seen that covenant is not just a thing to be handled slightly, if you know you have no capacity to involve in a covenant is better you refrain so that you will not spend years in the wilderness for disobedience. SOURCES Old Testament of the King James Version of the Holy bible. The Five Great Bible Covenant by David Padfield God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology by Michael Horton Truman G. Madsen and Seth Ward (2001). Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. People of the Covenant : an Introduction To the Hebrew Bible (4TH 96 Edition) by Henry J. Flanders and Robert W. Crapps and David A. Smith