

A covenant is a formal, binding agreement between two or more parties

covenant, a binding promise of far-reaching importance in the relations between individuals, groups, and nations. It has social, legal, religious, and other aspects. Genesis 6:11-18, 9:9-17 - God establishes a covenant with Noah and his family to be the survivors (saviors of mankind) and to start a new life.

A covenant is a promise that is sanctioned by an [oath](#). This promise in turn was accompanied by an appeal to a deity or deities to “see” or “watch over” the behaviour of the one who has sworn, and to [punish](#) any violation of the covenant by bringing into action the curses [stipulated](#) or implied in the swearing of the oath. Legal procedure, on the other hand, may be entirely [secular](#), for law characteristically does not require that each member of the legal [community](#) voluntarily swear an oath to obey the law. Further, in ordinary [legal procedure](#) the sanctions of the law are carried out by appropriate agencies of the society itself, not by [transcendent](#) powers beyond human control. Because individuals can bind only their own persons by an oath, covenants in the ancient world were usually unilateral. Sealed/signed in solemn ceremony

What do you think was their reaction the next time it started to rain? But the covenant God made said he would not destroy the earth that way again, so there should have been no fear.

- I. Covenants in general
 - A. Where is the word used in society today?
 - 1. Deeds
 - 2. Contracts
 - 3. Legal documents
 - 4. Mergers
 - 5. Marriage covenants
 - 6. Covenants of neighborhood associations/condo agreements
 - 7. Wills
 - B. Have any of you engaged in covenants?
- II. Basic components of covenants in general
 - A. Identification of the parties to the covenant
 - B. Basic terms
 - 1. Built on the premise that each party has strengths, skills, products that the other needs, and the covenant will facilitate and guarantee the exchange of those
 - 2. Items/services to be received from each party
 - 3. Penalties for failure to abide by the terms of the covenant
 - 4. Statement of revocability (or not, “irrevocable letter of credit”)
 - 5. Method of measuring/testing/proof of terms or fulfillment
 - C. Signatures, seals, warranties of signatures, notarizations, proofs

- D. Handshakes, hugs, kisses, celebration of the sealing of the covenant
- E. Exchange of identification/names/logo/trademarks
- F. Announcement of the covenant

III. Blood covenants

- A. Exist in virtually every society on earth, throughout history
- B. Same general principals as other covenants (other covenants are patterned after the blood covenant)
 - 1. Examples:
 - a. native American “blood brothers”
 - b. mafia
 - c. Palestinian tribes of the OT
 - d. African tribes
- C. Basic components
 - 1. identification of the parties
 - 2. basic terms
 - a. exchange of strengths, skills, abilities for those of the other covenanted party
 - b. statement of items/services to be received from each party (blessings)
 - c. statement of penalties for failure to abide by the terms of the covenant (curses, usually including death of the party breaking the terms, sometimes including the death of the entire family)
 - d. Signed in blood (typically, a cut is made in the finger, thumb, forearm, ear of each party. These may be pressed together, or blood dropped into wine then drunk mutually, signifying the permanence of the covenant and the curse of death on those breaking it. Physically mixing the blood symbolizes a new brotherhood, or family. This may be done by “seconds” or lieutenants of the major party chief)
 - e. Median of scarring or tattooing to insure the permanence of the physical manifestation of the covenant (wedding ring, earring, burning of the palm)
 - f. Exchange of clothes, symbols, or goods to announce to other groups that the covenant has been made
- D. Many modern traditions and phrases have their genesis in blood covenant
 - 1. wedding ring
 - a. worn on the ring finger because it was thought to have a direct vein connection to the heart. Original scarring was done on the fourth finger to symbolize the most intimate, heartfelt,

term of the covenant. In some societies, this was done for the same reason around the base of the thumb.

2. earrings

a. have your attention, hear the terms (some Indian groups used nose rings and chains to symbolize the covenant as being as close as your breath)

3. "Blood thicker than water" meaning has been changed, originally meant that the blood covenant brother was a stronger relationship than the brother by birth (of water)

4. "bad blood" someone broke a covenant

5. toasts "to your health" carry over from the drinking of the mixed wine, a statement of the curse that if you break the covenant, you will not enjoy good health (European)

Henry Stanley in his search for Dr David Livingstone

To end this I will use an excerpt from E.W. Kenyon's book "The Blood Covenant". The description is of the New York Times reporter Stanley in his search for the American missionary Dr. Livingstone.

THE SACREDNESS OF THE BLOOD COVENANT

Mr., Stanley said he never **knew this covenant to be broken in Africa**, no matter what the provocation.

Dr. Livingstone also bears witness saying that he **never knew it to be broken**.

In Africa, if one was to break the covenant, his own mother or wife, or his nearest relatives would seek his death, would turn him over to the hands of the avenger for destruction. No man can live in Africa who breaks the covenant . . . he curses the very ground he walks on.

The vilest enemies become trusted friends as soon as the covenant is cut.

When Stanley was seeking Livingstone, he was on his first trip to Africa. He came in contact with a powerful equatorial tribe. They were very war like.

Stanley was not in any condition to fight them. Finally, his interpreter asked him why he didn't make a strong covenant with them? (The tribal chieftain, who was an older man, had taken a liking to Stanley)

Stanley asked what it meant and was told that it meant drinking each other's blood.

Stanley revolted from such a rite, but conditions kept getting worse, until finally, Stanley's lead bearer asked again; why do you not cut covenant with the chief of the tribe?

Stanley asked what the results of such a covenant would be, and was told "Everything the chief has will be yours if you need it!" This appealed to Stanley and he investigated. After several days of negotiation, they arrived at the terms of the covenant.

First there was a parley in which the chieftain questioned Stanley as to his motives and standing, and his ability to keep the covenant. The next step was an exchange of gifts. The old chieftain wanted Stanley's new white milk goat. Stanley's heath had slipped on his journey, and the only thing that would stay in his stomach was goats milk, so it was very hard to give this up, but Stanley had nothing else the chief wanted. (Stanley had questioned his interpreter and was assured the old chief only wanted to be the source of Stanley's blessing and had no intention of withholding the milk from him.)

Stanley gave the chief the goat, and the chieftain gave Stanley a seven foot tall spear that had the top portion wound in copper wire in a very intricate pattern. Originally, Stanley had no idea what that spear meant. Later on as Stanley continued with his journey, right out to the coast of Africa, as soon as anyone saw that spear they would immediately ask if he needed anything, people would fall all over themselves trying to help Stanley in any way.

The old chieftain then brought in one of his princes. Stanley led forth one of his men from England. (Kenyon leaves out the path of blood between the animal parts but in his book Stanley describes it, after each man had walked through the path and now stood facing each other.) Then the priest came forward with a cup of wine, made an incision in the young black prince's wrist, and let the blood drip into the wine. He then cut an incision in the wrist of the young Englishman, and let his blood drip into the wine.

The wine was stirred and the bloods were mixed.

The priest handed the cup to the Englishman and he drank part of it and then handed the cup to the black prince and he drank the rest of it.

Next, they rubbed their wrists together so that their bloods mingled.

Now they had become blood brothers.

These two men were only substitutes, but they had bound Stanley and the chieftain, Stanley's men and the chieftain's soldiers into a blood brotherhood that was indissoluble.

Then gun-power was rubbed into the wound, so that when it healed there would be a black mark to indicate that they were covenant men.

The next step of the ceremony was the planting of trees, trees that were known for their long life.

After the planting of the trees the chieftain stepped forward and told his people "Come trade with Stanley, for he is our blood brother!".

Why do we want and need to study the covenant relationships?

Ephesians 2:11-13

Word etymology

From old French, "covenir" Fr "convenir" agree with derived of Latin "convener" to come together, to agree

Hebrew “Beriyth” - cutting (passing between two pieces of flesh)

Greek “Diatheke – contract or will (from “dia” the channel or medium through which an action occurs, and “theo” to place or prostrate) so “the method of placing in order”

Common components of covenants:

1. identification of the parties
2. detailing of the terms of the covenant/agreements
 - a. what each party agrees to do (blessings)
 - b. penalties for breaking the agreement (curses)
3. exchange of gifts/clothes/jewelry
4. sealing with blood/signatures/crests
5. covenants are irrevocable without the implementation of the penalties

Covenant of Abraham

I. Genesis 12:1-4

- A. Abraham was raised in Ur of Chaldees (a city dedicated to the Sumerian moon god Nanna), in present day Iraq near the Euphrates River about halfway between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, close to the present city of An Nasiriyah (major battle in 2003). After his brother’s death, Abram went with his father and nephew, Lot, to Canaan and settled in Haran (now in southeast Turkey, between Mosul (Ninevah) and Carchimesh on a main trading route.
- B. Beginning statements of the covenant God makes with Abram
 1. (:1) Abram’s part is “to go forth” from relatives, father’s house, to the land “which I **will** show you” (note that God doesn’t tell him where it is he is going)
 2. God’s part:
 - a. make you a great nation
 - b. bless you
 - c. make your name great
 - d. bless those who bless you
 - e. curse those who curse you
 - f. bless all the families of the earth through you
- C. :4 “Abram went” (at the age of 75, he took his wife and his nephew to Beth-El (city of God) in Canaan (current West Bank, north of Jerusalem, aka Luz)
 1. :7 “to your descendents I will give this land”
- D. Abram went to Egypt because of a famine in the Negev (Sarai was 65, and she was HOT, to the point that Pharaoh’s officials told him about her, and he brought her into the house and gave Abram sheep, oxen, servants, donkeys and camels, and he was very rich

- E. 13:1-6 so rich in livestock that the land couldn't support his herds and Lot's at the same time.
- II. The covenant Genesis 15:1-8 (Abraham is 76)
 - A. God's statements to Abraham in a vision
 - 1. Do not fear
 - 2. I am a shield (what is a shield for, and why does Abraham need one?)
 - 3. Your reward shall be great
 - 4. Descendants as the stars of heaven
 - B. The cutting of the covenant Genesis 15:9-12
 - 1. a heifer, a goat, a ram, turtledove, a pigeon
 - 2. Except for the birds, cut them in two lengthwise, laid the halves opposite each other
 - a. Beriyth (passing between two pieces of flesh)
 - 3. Buzzards
 - 4. The sun went down, Abraham fell into a deep sleep, terror and great darkness (what is he terrified of? Gory mess, animals of prey, God)
 - C. Blessings of the covenant Genesis 15:13-21
 - 5. Descendants to be enslaved
 - 6. Abraham will die in peace at a "good old age"
 - 7. land from the Nile to the Euphrates, Hittites (potentially, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait)
- III. The fulfillment Genesis 17:1-10
 - A. Circumcision (passing between pieces of flesh)
 - 1. (note similarities to circumcision, Passover, communion, crucifixion, Blood of Jesus, atonement of blood)
 - B. Abraham is 100 years old, Sarah is 90 when Isaac is born Genesis 21:1-8
 - C. Genesis 22:1-18 Willingness to sacrifice Isaac because of Abraham's faith in the covenant, God had told him that through Isaac his descendants would come (all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through Abraham's seed)
 - D. Sarah dies at age 127 (Gen 23:1), Isaac get married (Gen 24), Abraham remarries and had six more kids (Gen 25)
 - E. Abraham dies at 175, died satisfied (Gen 25:8)
- IV. Recap
 - A. Covenant result of Abraham's faith, accorded to him as righteousness
 - B. Blessings
 - 1. Descendants
 - 2. made a great nation of Abraham
 - 3. Abraham blessed financially
 - 4. Bless those who bless, curse those who curse
 - 5. Bless all the families of the earth through Abraham
 - 6. Lived to a good age
 - 7. Died satisfied

Covenant of Moses

I. Extension of the covenant of Abraham

- A. Moses' lineage: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses/Aaron
 - 1. Moses married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian (Midian was a son of Abraham by his second wife after Sarah's death. It was a band of Midianites who carried Joseph as a slave into Egypt and they later joined up with Edomites to oppose Moses)
- B. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PARTIES - While shepherding Jethro's sheep, God called to him, and said "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac"
 - 1. Ex:3:10-12 Moses: "who am I?" God: "I will be with you" (in other words, "who you are isn't important as long as I am with you:")
 - 2. Ex 3:13-14 Moses: "who are you?" God: "I AM"
 - a. John 8:21-28 Jesus says, "I Am"
 - 3. Ex 6:1-8
 - a. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob knew me as El Shaddai (the powerful God), but you shall know me by my name, JHWH
 - b. I established My covenant with them
 - c. :7 you will be my people and I will be your God

C AGREEMENT –

- 1. Moses to go to Pharaoh to bring out Israel
Ex 3: 10
- 2. God will bring them out so Moses will worship God in the mountain Ex 3:12

d. BLESSINGS -

- 1. Ex 3:22 people to have favor in the sight of the Egyptians, get stuff (Ex: 11:2-3)
- 2. Freedom
- 3. Return to the covenant of Abraham, land
(Passover Ex 12:2-4, 7, 8, 11)

600,000 hebrew men left Egypt (Ex 12:37), so conservatively 2.5 million people (remember that the pharaohs had been selectively killing off Hebrew male babies to reduce competition)

He brought them out with silver and gold, and among His tribes there was not one who stumbled, and Egypt was glad when they departed (Psalm 105:37-38)

E. Deut 30: 19-20

- 1. I set before you today, life or death, prosperity or adversity, you choose

F. Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy are all statements of the terms of the covenant, blessings and curses, but I like Deut 28:1-14

Blessed – Barak (an act of adoration, bless abundantly, extremely)

1. 28:1 high above all the nations of the earth
2. :2 blessing overtake you
3. :in town, in the country (where else?)
4. children, crops, livestock, INCREASE of your herd, young of your flock (future prosperity)
5. basket (shopping cart) kneading bowl (kitchen) plenty to eat
6. come in , go out
7. enemies who rise up are defeated, come one way and scatter like rabbits
8. barns (past prosperity) all you put your hand to (current prosperity), land is given to you
9. established as a holy people, keep the commandments
10. people will see that you are called by the Lord's name, and fear you
11. abound in prosperity, kids, calves, crops
12. rain when you need it, bless the work of your hand, lend to many, not borrow
13. yathantt, aanb
14. don't turn aside from any of the command, not right nor left, to go after other gods

I. How the Israelites viewed the covenant:

A. I Samuel 17:26 David: that uncircumcised Philistine

B. Luke 13:16 daughter of Abraham

II. The covenant of the blood according to Jesus

A. Jesus is celebrating Passover with the disciples, the Seder to commemorate the night God preserved the Israelites by the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and the body of the lamb for their healing

1. Matt 26:26-28 this is My blood of *the* covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins

2. Luke 22:20 this cup which is poured out for you is *the new* covenant in My blood

III. The new covenant Eph 2: 8-22

:8 saved by grace, through faith, not of yourselves, gift of God

A. reconciliation of Jew/Gentile

B. :11-12 You were formerly Gentiles, called uncircumcised (people without a covenant) by the so-called circumcision, separate from the Anointing,

excluded from the commonwealth of Israel,
strangers to the covenants of promise

:13 but now in the Anointing of Jesus, you who were far off have been
brought near by the Blood of Christ

:14 He is our peace, broke down the dividing wall, made both groups into
one (what groups? Jew and non-jew)

:15 abolished in his flesh the enmity, hostility, animosity, the law of
commandments, ordinances, so He Himself might make the two into one new man,
establishing peace

Jew/Gentile reconciliation

Fulfillment of the law/establishing peace

:16 reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having
put to death the enmity

:17 He preached peace to both the near and the far

:18 through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father

We are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit

IV. Gentiles included in the blessing of Abraham, not the curses Gal 3:6-14

:6-7 faith reckoned as righteousness, those who are of faith are sons of
Abraham

:8 all the nations will be blessed in you

:9 those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham

:11 no one is justified by the law, righteous live by faith

:13 Christ became a curse for us

:14 in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham comes to the Gentiles, so we
receive the promise of the Spirit through faith

V. The better covenant Heb 8:6-13

:6 Jesus is mediator of a better covenant

:10 I will put My laws into their minds and I will write them on their
hearts

:11 they will all know me, and

:12 I will remember their sins no more

In the New Covenant, we have the Holy Spirit, one called alongside to help, the
comforter, who reveals all things to us John 16:7-15

Heb 9:22 Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins

Separation of flesh, as in separation of fleshly sins from our soul and spirit

New better than old because of teaching vs divine inspiration

Also atonement vs forgiveness

The Bible speaks of seven different covenants, four of which (Abrahamic, Palestinian, Mosaic, Davidic) God made with the nation of Israel. Of those four, three are unconditional in nature; that is, regardless of Israel's obedience or disobedience, God still will fulfill these covenants with Israel. One of the covenants, the Mosaic Covenant, is conditional in nature. That is, this covenant will bring either blessing or cursing depending on Israel's obedience or disobedience. Three of the covenants (Adamic, Noahic, New) are made between God and mankind in general, and are not limited to the nation of Israel.

The [Adamic Covenant](#) can be thought of in two parts: the Edenic Covenant (innocence) and the Adamic Covenant (grace) ([Genesis 3:16-19](#)). The Edenic Covenant is found in [Genesis 1:26-30](#); [2:16-17](#). The Edenic Covenant outlined man's responsibility toward creation and God's directive regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Adamic Covenant included the curses pronounced against mankind for the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as God's provision for that sin ([Genesis 3:15](#)).

The [Noahic Covenant](#) was an unconditional covenant between God and Noah (specifically) and humanity (generally). After the Flood, God promised humanity that He would never again destroy all life on earth with a Flood (see Genesis chapter 9). God gave the rainbow as the sign of the covenant, a promise that the entire earth would never again flood and a reminder that God can and will judge sin ([2 Peter 2:5](#)).

[Abrahamic Covenant](#) ([Genesis 12:1-3](#), [6-7](#); [13:14-17](#); [15](#); [17:1-14](#); [22:15-18](#)). In this covenant, God promised many things to Abraham. He personally promised that He would make Abraham's name great ([Genesis 12:2](#)), that Abraham would have numerous physical descendants ([Genesis 13:16](#)), and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations ([Genesis 17:4-5](#)). God also made promises regarding a nation called Israel. In fact, the geographical boundaries of the Abrahamic Covenant are laid out on more than one occasion in the book of Genesis (12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21). Another provision in the Abrahamic Covenant is that the families of the world will be blessed through the physical line of Abraham ([Genesis 12:3](#); [22:18](#)). This is a reference to the Messiah, who would come from the line of Abraham.

[Palestinian Covenant](#) ([Deuteronomy 30:1-10](#)). The Palestinian Covenant, or Land Covenant, amplifies the land aspect that was detailed in the Abrahamic Covenant. According to the terms of this covenant, if the people disobeyed, God would cause them to be scattered around the world ([Deuteronomy 30:3-4](#)), but He would eventually restore the nation (verse 5). When the nation is restored, then they will obey Him perfectly (verse 8), and God will cause them to prosper (verse 9).

[Mosaic Covenant](#) ([Deuteronomy 11](#); et al.). The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant that either brought God's direct blessing for obedience or God's direct cursing for disobedience upon the nation of Israel. Part of the Mosaic Covenant was the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20](#)) and the rest of the Law, which contained over 600 commands—roughly 300 positive and 300 negative. The history books of the Old

Testament (Joshua–Esther) detail how Israel succeeded at obeying the Law or how Israel failed miserably at obeying the Law. [Deuteronomy 11:26-28](#) details the blessing/cursing motif.

[Davidic Covenant \(2 Samuel 7:8-16\)](#). The Davidic Covenant amplifies the “seed” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. The promises to David in this passage are significant. God promised that David’s lineage would last forever and that his kingdom would never pass away permanently (verse 16). Obviously, the Davidic throne has not been in place at all times. There will be a time, however, when someone from the line of David will again sit on the throne and rule as king. This future king is Jesus ([Luke 1:32-33](#)).

[New Covenant \(Jeremiah 31:31-34\)](#). The New Covenant is a covenant made first with the nation of Israel and, ultimately, with all mankind. In the New Covenant, God promises to forgive sin, and there will be a universal knowledge of the Lord. Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses ([Matthew 5:17](#)) and create a new covenant between God and His people. Now that we are under the New Covenant, both Jews and Gentiles can be free from the penalty of the Law. We are now given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).

Within the discussion of the biblical covenants, there are a few issues that Christians are not agreed upon. First, some Christians think that all of the covenants are conditional in nature. If the covenants are conditional, then Israel failed miserably at fulfilling them. Others believe that the unconditional covenants have yet to be totally fulfilled and, regardless of Israel’s disobedience, will come to fruition sometime in the future. Second, how does the church of Jesus Christ relate to the covenants? Some believe that the church fulfills the covenants and God will never deal with Israel again. This is called replacement theology and has little scriptural evidence. Others believe that the church initially or partially will fulfill these covenants. While many of the promises towards Israel are still in the future, many believe that the church shares in the covenants in some way. Others believe that the covenants are for Israel and for Israel alone, and that the church has no part in these covenants.