

Reading the OT
Week 4

Exodus - Deuteronomy

God's revelation of himself Ex 3 and elsewhere.
The Passover, [wilderness], [Tabernacle], Promised Land
Covenant(s)

Exodus: "Way out," "Exit"

Major biblical theme

Date: Problematic. Some time between C15th and C13th.
Arguments are complicated.

No archaeological evidence of wilderness wanderings.

God's revelation of himself Ex 3 and elsewhere.

By the end of Joseph's life, what did the Israelites know about God?
What is our God like? Who is he?

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'

"This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.

COVENANT

"deal"

contract

treaty

covenant

John Goldingay

The Hebrew word *berit* covers covenants, treaties, and contracts, which are all ways in which people make a formal commitment about something.

Where there is a legal system that can be appealed to, contracts assume a system for resolving disputes and administering justice that can be used if people do not keep a commitment.

In contrast, a covenantal relationship does not presuppose an enforceable legal framework of that kind, but a covenant does imply a formal procedure confirming the seriousness of the solemn commitment one party makes to another. Thus the Old Testament often speaks of *sealing* a covenant.

People make covenants sometimes *to* other people and sometimes *with* other people; the one implies something more onesided; the other, something more mutual.

Likewise covenants involving God can be more one-sided (denoting the commitment God makes or the commitment God expects) or two-sided (denoting the mutual commitment between God and Israel).

About Covenants The Bible Project (thebibleproject.com)

There are several ways in which we have a relationship with God, some of which you have probably heard about many times before. God is depicted as our friend, our teacher, and our master. Yet there is another facet of our relationship with God that doesn't get quite as much attention, and that is God as our partner.

In the very beginning of the Bible, this is the relationship we see. God creates man as a partner to help him spread more goodness throughout the world. Unfortunately, we, as human beings, didn't live up to our end of the deal. It is this broken partnership with God that is the reason we are stuck with the fallen and corrupted world in which we live.

Thankfully, the rest of the Bible describes God's efforts to repair this broken partnership. The first step God takes in repairing this partnership is to select a small group of people and make a new partnership with them called a "covenant." In this covenant, God makes promises to these people and asks them to fulfill certain commitments.

In total, there are four Old Testament covenants—one with Noah, one with Abraham, one with the Israelites, and one with King David. All these covenants serve the purpose of creating a new partnership into which God can eventually invite all humankind. Unfortunately, Israel eventually breaks these covenants with God.

Nevertheless, throughout the Old Testament, prophets talked about a day when God would once again create a new covenant, one that would completely restore all the broken covenants that came before it. This new covenant was fulfilled by God's Son, Jesus Christ.

We're told in the Bible Christ is a descendant of Abraham, allowing him to fulfill the covenant God had with Abraham and his family. We're also told Christ is the faithful Israelite who is able to truly obey the law, and Christ is the king from the line of David. This allows Christ to fulfill God's covenant with these people as well, thus restoring all the covenants in the Bible.

In this way, Christ himself is the New Testament covenant—a covenant that cannot fail and cannot be broken. Christ invited people to follow Him and join Him in a new partnership with God. Despite our failures, we are able to enter into this new covenant thanks to the fact Christ Himself was able to perfectly fulfill His commitment to God. Through His perfect keeping of the new covenant, we too are now able to enjoy a renewed partnership with God.

At the end of the Bible, we see John describing a new and perfect partnership with God where all the saved work with Him to once again spread goodness and perfection throughout the world. Thanks to the fulfillment of the new covenant through Jesus Christ, God's initial plan for mankind is made complete again.

MAJOR TYPES OF ROYAL COVENANTS/TREATIES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST (from *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*)

ROYAL GRANT (UNCONDITIONAL)

A king's grant (of land or some other benefit) to a loyal servant for faithful or exceptional service. The grant was normally perpetual and unconditional, but the servant's heirs benefited from it only as they continued their father's loyalty and service. (cf. 1Sa 8:14; 22:7; 27:6; Est 8:1.)

PARITY

A covenant between equals, binding them to mutual friendship or at least to mutual respect for each other's spheres and interests. Participants called each other "brother." (cf. Ge 21:27; 26:31; 31:44–54; 1Ki 5:12; 15:19; 20:32–34; Am 1:9.)

SUZERAIN-VASSAL (CONDITIONAL)

A covenant regulating the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings. The great king claimed absolute right of sovereignty, demanded total loyalty and service (the vassal must "love" his suzerain) and pledged protection of the subject's realm and dynasty, conditional on the vassal's faithfulness and loyalty to him. The vassal pledged absolute loyalty to his suzerain—whatever service his suzerain demanded—and exclusive reliance on the suzerain's protection. Participants called each other "lord" and "servant" or "father" and "son." (cf. Jos 9:6, 8; Eze 17:13–18; Hos 12:1.)

Commitments made in these covenants were accompanied by self-maledictory oaths (made orally, ceremonially or both). The gods were called on to witness the covenants and implement the curses of the oaths if the covenants were violated.

COVENANTS	REFERENCE	TYPE	PARTICIPANT	DESCRIPTION
Noahic	Ge 9:8–17	Royal Grant	Made with righteous (6:9) Noah (and his descendants and every living thing on earth—all life that is subject to human jurisdiction)	An unconditional divine promise never to destroy all earthly life with some natural catastrophe, the covenant “sign” (9:13, 17) being the rainbow in the storm cloud
Abrahamic A	Ge 15:9–21	Royal (land) Grant	Made with “righteous” (his faith was “credited ... to him as righteousness,” v. 6) Abram (and his descendants, v. 16)	An unconditional divine promise to fulfill the grant of the land; a self-maledictory oath symbolically enacted it (v. 17; see the article “Ratifying the Covenant,” p. 42)
Abrahamic B	Ge 17	Suzerain-vassal	Made with Abraham as patriarchal head of his household	A conditional divine pledge to be Abraham’s God and the God of his descendants (cf. “as for me,” v. 4; “as for you,” v. 9); the condition: total consecration to the Lord as symbolized by circumcision
Sinaitic	Ex 19–24	Suzerain-vassal	Made with Israel as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and as the people the Lord had redeemed from bondage to an earthly power	A conditional divine pledge to be Israel’s God (as the protector and the guarantor of Israel’s blessed destiny); the condition: Israel’s total consecration to the Lord as his people (his kingdom) who live by his rule and serve his purposes in history
Phinehas	Nu 25:10–13	Royal Grant	Made with the zealous priest Phinehas	An unconditional divine promise to maintain the family of Phinehas in a “lasting priesthood” (v. 13; implicitly a pledge to Israel to provide it forever with a faithful priesthood)
Davidic	2Sa 7:5–16	Royal Grant	Made with faithful King David after his devotion to God as Israel’s king and the	An unconditional divine promise to establish and maintain the Davidic dynasty on the

Lord's anointed vassal had come to special expression (v. 2)

throne of Israel (implicitly a pledge to Israel) to provide the nation forever with a godly king like David and through that dynasty to do what he had done through David—bring Israel into rest in the promised land (1Ki 4:20-21; 5:3-4)

New

Jer 31:31-34

Royal Grant

Promised to rebellious Israel as the people are about to be expelled from the promised land in actualization of the most severe covenant curse (Lev 26:27-39; Dt 28:36-37, 45-68)

An unconditional divine promise to unfaithful Israel to forgive the people's sins and establish his relationship with his people on a new basis by writing his law "on their hearts" (v. 33)—a covenant of pure grace

Treaty Formats and Biblical Covenants

ORDER OF SECTIONS IN HITTITE TREATIES (SECOND MILLENNIUM)

	DESCRIPTION	EX-LEV	DT	JOS 24
Introduction Speaker	Identifying author and his right to proclaim treaty	Ex 20:1	1:1-5	Vv. 1-
Historical Prologue	Survey of past relationship between parties	Ex 20:2	1:6-3:29	Vv. 2-
Stipulations	Listing of obligations	Decalogue 20:1-17 Covenant Code 20:22-23:19 Ritual 34:10-26; Lev 1-25	Chs. 4-26	Vv. 14
Statement Concerning Document	Storage and public reading instructions	Ex 25:16?	27:2-3	V. 26
Witness	Usually identifying the gods who are called to witness the oath	Lev 26:1-33	Ch. 28	V. 20
Curses and Blessings	How deity will respond to adherence to or violation of treaty	Lev 26:1-33	Ch. 28	V. 20

Promised Land

PROMISED LAND (from *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP)

The motif of the Promised Land is a major pattern in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua. The actual phraseology does not appear until the book of Exodus, but the motif itself arises as early as the story of God's covenant established with the patriarchs in Genesis. Here God promises to show Abraham a land to which he calls him (Gen 12:1 RSV), and subsequently promises to "give this land" as Abraham journeys in obedience to God's call (Gen 12:7; see also Gen 13:15, 17; 28:13).

Once the prediction that the patriarchs will inhabit the land has been stated, later generations look back to it as something that has been promised. These references begin almost immediately in the book of Exodus, as God tells Moses at the burning bush, "I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, to ... a land flowing with milk and honey."

The imagery of the Promised Land above all paints a picture of agricultural abundance, along with the fertile soil and provident climate required for plentiful crops. The description of Moses sounds the keynotes: "The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey" (Deut 8:7–8 RSV; see also Deut 11:10–12).

As a land of promise the land of Canaan becomes an evocative image of longing for the Israelites as they journey toward it. It is the goal of a forty-year quest, always beckoning and receding before the people until they actually possess it in the latter stages of the book of Joshua. After the years of exile and slavery in Egypt, as well as the restless journey toward the Promised Land, the Israelites naturally look upon it as a contrasting fixed point of reference. It is an image of possession and security that contrasts with nearly five centuries of Israelite history preceding its attainment.

Three dozen verses refer to the Promised Land as a *possession*, or as something that the people will *possess*. The picture of the security represented by having a place of one's own after years of exile and wandering is captured in verses that

speak of how the Israelites will “dwell in [their] land securely” (Lev 26:5) and “live in safety” (Deut 12:10).

This does not mean, however, that the Promised Land is a place of inviolable retirement. For one thing, as long as the land remains the object of a quest still in progress, it is a land inhabited by natives who must be subdued (Num 32:22, 29; 33:52). The Promised Land is thus an image of conquest as well as a gift conferred by God, and the book of Joshua shows how hard the task of conquest was.

Furthermore, the land that had been promised could be lost. Its possession was part of God’s covenant with his people, and the covenant entailed responsibility as well as promise and blessing. In a word, the Promised Land was the Israelites’ conditionally. The conditions imposed by God were that “if you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments, ... you shall ... dwell in your land securely,” but “if you will not hearken to me, ... but break my covenant, ... I will scatter you among the nations” (Lev 26:3–33 RSV).

The Passover

Wilderness

Tabernacle