

COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

Stephen J. Vancura, M.D.

I. Covenant Basics

A. Definition of covenant

1. Dictionary definition (OED)
 - a. Fr. **convenir**: to agree
 - b. a mutual agreement between 2 or more persons to do or refrain from doing certain acts; a compact, contract, bargain; promise or pledge
 - c. a promise made to oneself, a solemn personal resolve, a vow
 - d. applied esp. to an engagement entered into by God with some other being or persons
2. Bible definition
 - a. Hebrew **berith**, translated covenant, means "**to cut until blood flows**". Also the term for contract, agreement, alliance or league between men.
 - b. Greek **diatheke**, translated covenant, means a contract, a will, a disposition
 - a. The Vulgate and Old Latin translations rendered both terms **testamentum** throughout OT and NT
 - c. In current biblical translations, SAME Hebrew or Greek words sometimes translated **covenant** and other times **testament**

B. History of covenant practices

1. Practiced from antiquity in all four corners of the earth, by all peoples
2. The most sacred of all relationships
3. Included everything a person was and owned. Covenant brothers often shared wives, but were not allowed to marry each others relatives. This was considered incest, since they were now brothers.
4. The covenant covered the relatives of the covenant partners and all their future generations.
ISA 20:42 Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.'" So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.

C. Hebrew Ritual of Cutting the Covenant: **NINE STEPS**

1. **Exchange coat or robe.** The coat or robe represents the person and his position. "I'm giving you all of myself. My total being and my life I pledge to you. All that I am is yours and all that is yours is mine."
2. **Exchange belts, weapons.** The belt holds the weapons. Represents your armor and all weapons, such as bow and arrows, spear, shield, dagger, etc. "Here is my strength and all my ability to fight. If anyone attacks you, they are also attacking me. Your battles are my battles, and mine are yours. I will fight with you. I will help defend and protect you."
ISA 18:3 And **Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.** **4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow & his belt.**
3. **Exchange names.** I take your last name as part of my name, and vice versa.
4. **Cut the covenant.** Take an animal and split it down the middle in a covenant ceremony. Lay each half beside us, with us between. Our backs are to each other, and we walk thru the halves, making a figure eight, and back to face each other. We are dying to ourselves, and beginning a new life as covenant partners. This same death will happen to any partner if they break the covenant. They remain alive only if together.
5. **Raise arm, clasp hands and mix blood.** Cut palms, mingle blood. As blood mingles, swear Allegiance to each other. Our blood and our lives become one. The two become one.
6. **Make a scar as sign of covenant.** A permanent testimony to the covenant, to remind us of our covenant responsibilities. If anyone tries to harm us, we show the scar. (Henry Stanley in Africa). Today, when we meet, we shake hands instead of showing scars.
7. **Exchange vows, covenant terms.** Includes both blessings and cursings. Done before witnesses. We read the assets and liabilities we have.
8. **Eat memorial meal together.** This completes the covenant union. In the place of the animal and blood, we have bread and wine (called in the Bible the blood of grapes: **Gen 49:11** This represents our own flesh and blood. We each break bread and feed it to each other, saying "This is my body, and I'm now giving it to you." Each serves the other wine and says, "This is my life blood, which is now your blood."
9. **Plant or set up a memorial to the covenant.** Sprinkle some of the blood of the animal on the tree.

D. Variations in covenant practices

II. The Bible is a Covenant Book

A. Divided into Old Testament and New Testament.

B. Definitions. Let us start with a legal lesson. Legal terms are used in the Bible, so we must clearly understand their meanings before we can understand the Bible.

1. **TESTAMENT**: from Latin, "to testify, to make a will". A testament is covenant or contract.
2. **TESTATOR**: the person making the will
3. **COVENANT**: a written sealed statement containing the terms of an agreement or contract between parties
4. **WILL**: the legal statement of a person's wishes concerning disposal of his property after death. It is a shortened form of "Last Will and Testament"
5. **ADVOCATE**: a legal representative who pleads the cause of another in a court of law; a counsel, counselor, or learned lawyer who argues a case on behalf of another

NOTE: The bible is a CONTRACT or COVENANT between God and man. It is an ETERNAL covenant. We could call the New Testament the "New Last Will and Testament" or the "New Covenant". Just as the one who makes a will, the testator, must die before the will goes into effect, so Jesus had to die before His Will went into effect. The Father then resurrected Jesus from the dead, to serve as an eternal advocate, lawyer or counselor for the Will or Covenant. He is the assurance of the Covenant. The Old Testament (OT) or Covenant was fulfilled temporarily by animal sacrifices, which are a type of Jesus' future sacrificial death. The OT repeatedly predicts the coming of Messiah, the lamb of God. The New Testament or Covenant, through Jesus' death, fulfilled the Old Covenant. Believers in OT times looked forward in faith to the promised Messiah. We look back in faith to the same Messiah, Jesus. Faith is the key in both cases.

C. Covenants Between God and Man in the Bible

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Edenic Covenant | 4. Abrahamic Covenant | 7. Davidic Covenant |
| 2. Adamic Covenant | 5. Mosaic Covenant | 8. New Covenant |
| 3. Noahic Covenant | 6. Palestinian Covenant | |

GAL 3:19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.

D. Relationship between the Biblical Covenants

1. Gods response to Fall in Garden of Eden
 - a. Slew animal for covering
 - b. Promised the seed of the woman

E. Abrahamic Covenant:

1. The Promise and ceremony: GENESIS 15:1-18

2. Seal of circumcision: GEN 17:10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the SIGN OF THE COVENANT between me and you. 23 On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, 25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen; 26 Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day.

3. Change of names: GEN 17:5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.

4. Abraham believes: ROM 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. 18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." 23 The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

5. Abraham's test of faith: GEN 22:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then WE will come back to you." 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." 15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you & make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky & as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.'

F. What did Abraham believe, resulting in righteousness?

1. He believed in a supernatural birth
2. He believed God enough to offer his only son as a sacrifice
3. He believed for three days that his son was as good as dead
4. He believed God would provide a sacrifice substitute or raise his son from the dead, with many children coming thru his son Isaac.
5. He believed on that very mountain God would provide for himself the substitute sacrifice

III. Our Entire Relationship with God is based on Covenant

A. Three words in bible translated God or Lord

1. Elohim
2. Adonai
3. Yahweh = the Covenant Name

B. God is everything we need

1. Jehovah-Elohom: The Lord God, the Redeemer - Creator. (GEN 2:4)
2. Jah: Abbreviated form of Jehovah. (EXO 15:2, 17:16; PSA 68:4)
3. Jehovah-Elohom-Saboath: Lord God of Hosts. That is, of the hosts of heaven, creation and creatures. (PSA 84:8, JER 15:16)
4. Anonai-Jehovah-Saboath: Master, Lord of Hosts (PSA 69:6)
5. Jah-Jehovah: Lord Jehovah (double emphasis) (ISA 12:2, 26:4)
6. Jah-Elohim: Lord God (PSA 68:18)
7. Jehovah-Jireh: The Lord will provide (GEN 22:14)
8. Jehovah-Rapha: The Lord that heals (EXO 15:26)
9. Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord my Banner (EXO 17:15)
10. Jehovah-Kanna: The Lord who is Jealous (EXO 20:5, 34:14, DEU 5:9)
11. Jehovah-Mekaddeskum: The Lord who sanctifies (EXO 31:3, LEV 20:8)
12. Jehovah-Shalom: The Lord our Peace (JDG 6:24)
13. Jehovah-Shaphat: The Lord is Judge (JDG 11:27)
14. Jehovah-Saboath: The Lord of Hosts (ISA 1:3, Psa 24:10, 84:1-3)
15. Jehovah-Elyon: The Lord Most High (PSA 7:17)
16. Jehovah-Raah: The Lord my Shepherd (PSA 23:1)
17. Jehovah-Hosenu: The Lord our Maker (PSA 95:6)
18. Jehovah-Gibbor: The Lord is Mighty (ISA 42:13)
19. Jehovah-Tsidkenu: The Lord our Righteousness (JER 23:6)
20. Jehovah-Shammah: The Lord is There, or Ever present (EZE 8:35)

C. Prayer is based on the Biblical Covenant

1. PSA 138:2 I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your WORD above all Your name.
2. ISA 55:10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my WORD that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
3. JER 1:12 The LORD said to me, 'You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my WORD is fulfilled.'
4. IKI 8:56 "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed ONE WORD of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses.
5. ISA 43:26 Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.
6. ISA 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."
7. GEN 17:7 I will establish MY COVENANT as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God & the God of your descendants after you.
8. PSA 89:34 I will not violate MY COVENANT or alter what my lips have uttered.

C. Sample of Covenant Promises Listed

1. 2PE 1:4 Through these He has given us his very great and precious PROMISES, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by lust.
2. 2PE 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
3. ACT 16:31 So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, & you will be saved, you and your household.'
4. ICO 2:16 For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.
5. IJO 2:20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.
6. JOH 14:14 "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.
7. MAT 11:12 "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

E. How is New Covenant fulfilled in Christ?

1. Exchange coat or robe. ROM 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. ISA 61:10; LUK 15:22;
2. Exchange belts, weapons. EPH 6:10-18; 2CO 10:4; ROM 13:12 Put on the Armor of Light
3. Cut the covenant. We are dying to ourselves, & beginning a new life as covenant partners. This same death will happen to any partner if they break the covenant. They remain alive only if together. COL 2:11; ROM 6:11; HEB 12:24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. EXO 24:8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the BLOOD of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."

4. **Raise arm, clasp hands and mix blood.** Cut palms, mingle blood. As blood mingles, swear allegiance to each other. Our blood and our lives become one. The two become one – **EPH 5:31-32: DAN 12:7** Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when **he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time;** and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, **all these things shall be finished.** **REV 10:5-7; EPH 2:13** But now **in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.**
5. **Exchange names.** **REV 2:17; REV 22:4** They shall see His face, and **His name shall be on their foreheads.** **MAT 28:18**
6. **Make a scar as sign of covenant.** A permanent testimony to the covenant, reminding us of our covenant responsibilities. If anyone tries to harm us, we show the scar. (Henry Stanley in Africa) Today, when we meet, we shake hands instead of showing scars. The only ‘imperfections’ in heaven are Jesus’ scars – a testimony.
7. **Exchange vows, covenant terms.** Done before witnesses. Everything I have is yours and what is yours is mine. We read the assets and liabilities we have.
8. **Eat memorial meal together.** This completes the covenant union. In the place of the animal and blood, we have **bread and wine** (called in the Bible the blood of grapes: GEN 49:11). This represents our own flesh and blood. We each break bread and feed it to each other, saying "This is my body, and I'm now giving it to you." Each serves the other wine and says, "This is my life blood, which is now your blood." **MAT 26:26** And as they were eating, **Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."** **27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.** **28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant,** which is shed for many for the remission of sins. **29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."** **REV 19:9** Then he said to me, "Write: **'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'** " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."
9. **Plant a memorial tree to the covenant.** Sprinkle some of the blood of the animal on the tree. **REV 22:1** And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. **2** In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was **the tree of life,** which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. **3** And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. **4** They shall see His face, and **His name shall be on their foreheads.**

III. **Marriage is a Covenant Relationship**

A. Marriage Ritual Compared

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Exchange vows -- terms of covenant. Witnesses present. | 5. Exchange names, representing oneness. |
| 2. Exchange rings, as tokens of the covenant. | 6. Consummate relationship. The human species the only one with a hymen. Blood is shed |
| 3. Exchange cake, representing each other's bodies. | |
4. Exchange wine, representing each other's blood.

B. **The marriage is a Model of Man's Covenant Relationship with God**

1. **EPH 5:22** Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. **24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. **25** **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her** **26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,** **27** and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. **28** In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- **30** for **we are members of his body.** **31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."** **32 This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.** **33** However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
2. **EPH 1:22** And **God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,** **23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**
3. **ROM 8:19** The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. **20** For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope **21** that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. **22** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. **23** Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
4. **GAL 4:19** My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,
5. **GAL 4:27** For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."
6. **ROM 7:4** Therefore, my brethren, **you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be MARRIED to another— to Him who was raised from the dead,** that we should bear fruit to God.