

Cutting Covenants

Genesis 15 (The Abrahamic Covenant)

1 After these things the word of the Lord (Yehovah) came unto **Abram** in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward¹.

2 And Abram said, Lord God (Adonay Yehovah) , what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the Lord (Yehovah) came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the Lord (Yehovah); and he counted it to him for righteousness.

7 And he said unto him, **I am the Lord (Yehovah)** that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

Name

8 And he said, Lord God (Adonay Yehovah), whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror² of great darkness fell upon him. (Moses and Joseph Smith had similar experiences, see also Moses 1:12-15; JS-H 1:15-16)

13 And he (Yehovah) said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace³, and a burning lamp⁴ that passed between those pieces.

¹ Gesenius: *Wages, price*, for which anything is hired; any kind of *reward*.

² Gesenius: *Terror, dread*.

³ Similar to the pillar of smoke that accompanied the children of Israel.

⁴ Similar to the pillar of fire that accompanied the children of Israel.

18 In the same day the Lord **made⁵ a covenant⁶** with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Genesis 17

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 And I will **make (cut) my covenant** between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

Covenant

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my **covenant** is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy **name** any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

Name
New Name

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

Token
or
Sign

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

⁵ Gesenius' Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon: כָּרַת (1) *to cut, to cut off*, as part of a garment, the branch of a tree, the head; *to cut down trees*; (2) *to kill, to destroy persons*; (3) specially כָּרַת בְּרִית *to make [cut] a covenant*, so used from slaying and dividing the victims, as was customary in making a covenant (see Gen. 15:18; Jer. 34:8,18).

⁶ **Covenant.** בְּרִית bə-reeth H1285 f.—(1) *a covenant*, so called from the idea of cutting (see the root כָּרַת H1262), since it was the custom in making solemn covenants to pass between the divided parts of victims [animals] (see the root כָּרַת (“and Gen. 15:9, etc.”). [“But the idea suggested by Lee (Heb. Lex. h. v.) deserves attention, viz. that בְּרִית is strictly nothing more than *an eating together, banquet*, from כָּרַת No. 2, since among Orientals, *to eat together* is almost the same as to make a covenant of friendship. The Hebrews too were accustomed to eat together when entering into a covenant, see Gen. 31:54; and in this way we obtain an explanation of בְּרִית מֶלַח covenant (*an eating?*) of salt; see מְלַח.” Ges. Add.] It is used of a covenant entered into between nations, Josh. 9:6, seq.; between individuals and friends, 1 Sa. 18:3; 23:18; of a marriage covenant, Mal. 2:14; פ' אֲנָשֵׁי בְרִית Obad. 7, those joined by league to any one. אֵל בְּרִית Jud. 9:45, i.q. בְּעַל בְּרִית verse 4, “God of covenant,” see בְּעַל No 5, a. In speaking of the making of a covenant, the verbs שָׁרַת, כָּרַת, שָׁרַת, are used, 2 Sam. 23:5; בּוֹא בְּ, עָבַר בְּ Deut. 29:11, which see; of its violation, חָלַל, עָזַב, חָלַל. *The covenant* of any one is the covenant entered into with him, Lev. 26:45; Deu. 4:31; בְּרִית יְהוָה “covenant entered into with Jehovah,” Deu. 4:23; 29:24, etc. Specially and most frequently used of the covenant and league made between God and Abraham (Gen. 15:18), confirmed by Moses (Ex. 24:7,8 [This is another covenant]; 34:27; Deu. 5:2), to be renewed and amended after the exile, by the intervention of prophets (Isa. 42:6; 49:8) and the Messiah (Mal. 3:1; comp. Jer. 31:33). [Gesenius has utterly confused the old covenant with the new.] The *land* promised and given to the people by this covenant is called אֶרֶץ הַבְּרִית Eze. 30:5; and the people itself [?] בְּרִית קֹדֶשׁ “(the people) of the holy covenant,” Dan. 11:28, 30; מַלְאֲךְ הַבְּרִית “the messenger, μισθῆς, of the (new) covenant,” i.e. Messiah, Mal. 3:1.

9 ¶And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep⁷ my **covenant** therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10 This is my **covenant**, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a **token of the covenant betwixt me and you**.

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or
Sign

12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

Name
New Name

15 ¶And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

16 And **I will bless her, and give thee a son** also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

Token
or
Sign?

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

18 And Abraham said unto God (Elohim), O that Ishmael might live before thee!

19 And God (Elohim) said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

21 But my **covenant** will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

22 And he left off talking with him, and God (Elohim) went up from Abraham.

Genesis 26

24 And the Lord (Yehovah) appeared unto him [Isaac] the same night, and said, **I am the God (elohiym) of Abraham** thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

Name

25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord (Yehovah), and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Token

26 ¶Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army.

27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?

⁷ **Keep.** קָנַן shā-mar H8104 (1) *to keep, to watch, to guard*-(a) in a rarrower sense, as a garden, a flock, a house; Part. קָנַן subst. a watchman of cattle, i.e. a shepherd, used of prophets-(b) in a wider sense, *to keep safe, to preserve*; (2) *to keep, to reserve, also to preserve*, as loving-kindness, Dan. 9:4; (3) *to observe, to attend* to any thing; (4) *to keep, to observe*, as a covenant, the commandments of God, the sabbath, a promise; (5) *to honor, to*

28 And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath (אָלָה) betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us **make (cut) a covenant** (פְּרִית) with thee;

29 That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord.

30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

31 And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

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32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water.

33 And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba⁸ unto this day.

Genesis 31

43 ¶ And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?

44 Now therefore come thou, let us **make (cut) a covenant**, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

47 And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

48 And Laban said, This heap is a witness (עֵד) between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it **called Galeed**⁹;

Token
Sign
Name

49 And Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

52 This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

55 And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

⁸ Gesenius: "the well of the oath." בְּאֵר a well; שָׁבַע to swear (denom. from שֶׁבַע seven; inasmuch as the septenary number was sacred, and oaths were confirmed either by seven sacrifices, Gen. 21:28, seqq.; or by seven witnesses and pledges; and also with an acc. of the thing, to promise [covenant] any thing by an oath to any one, Gen.50:24. שֶׁבַע the cardinal numeral seven. A septenary number was used amongst the Hebrews—(1) as a smaller round number (as in modern languages ten [Eng. a dozen]), Gen. 29:18; 41:2...[This appears, in most of these instances, to be the exact number.] (2) as a holy number.

⁹ Gesenius: Galeed or Gilead "heap of witness." גֵּלָד a heap of stones (used in ratifying a covenant), ruins; עֵד witness, testimony, pr. what testifies.

Exodus 2

23 ¶And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his **covenant** with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

Exodus 6

1 Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord:

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (El Shadday), but by my name JEHOVAH (Yehovah) was I not known to them.

4 And I have also established my **covenant** with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my **covenant**.

6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord.

Exodus 19

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my **covenant**, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Exodus 23

32 Thou shalt **make (cut) no covenant** with them, nor with their gods.

33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.