

## Covenants of Grace

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**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** (John 3:16 ESV)

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**. In this **the love of God was made manifest among us**, that **God sent his only Son into the world**, so that we might live through him. **In this is love**, not that we have loved God but that **he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**. ... So we have come to know and to believe **the love that God has for us**. **God is love**, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:8-10, 16 ESV)

... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated ... and strangers to the **covenants of promise**, **having no hope and without God in the world**. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have **been brought near by the blood of Christ**. (Ephesians 2:12-13 ESV)

**“God is Love”!** But what exactly does that mean? As human beings we naturally apply our own understanding of “love” to these words. God has given us his word in the Bible. The Bible contains an enormous amount of material which describes God’s love. **The purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning of “God’s Love” as it is revealed in the Bible.**

The English word “covenant” comes from a Latin word “convenire”. Briefly, its meaning is “a formal binding agreement between two or more parties”, usually some action or performance is required. The word “covenant” is not used a lot in modern speech. We tend to use words like “agreement”, “contract”, “treaty”; but the range of meaning is similar.

In the ancient world, the concept of “covenant” was extremely important.<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for “covenant” is בְּרִית - b<sup>er</sup>ith.<sup>2</sup> The word occurs several hundred times in the Old Testament – perhaps half of these occurrences relate to covenants between God and humanity. **The Bible contains seven specific covenant agreements between God and humanity.** These covenants are a progressive revelation of the Nature of God and of the Plan of God. God is love, and the Nature of God’s love is revealed through these covenants.

**God’s love is intimately bound up with his “grace” extended to human beings.** A dictionary definition of “grace” is: unmerited divine assistance given to man for regeneration or sanctification. Generally, it means “favour”, “kindness”, “approval”, “acceptance”. As human beings we are inherently sinful – deserving only of death.<sup>3</sup> It is only through God’s grace that he extends “mercy” to us and extends his love to allow us to live. Briefly, “mercy” is: compassion or forbearance shown to an offender. The Hebrew word for “grace” is חַנּוּן - hanan.<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew word for mercy is רַחֲמִים - raḥam.<sup>5</sup> Mercy and grace are integral to God’s love. The covenants of God reveal his mercy towards humanity and his grace in extending his love to us.

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<sup>1</sup> See the article and bibliography “Covenant” in IDB volume 1, page 714.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the b<sup>er</sup>ith see TWOT article 282 page 128, and TDOT II page 253.

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 3:23, 6:23a

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of the hanan see TWOT article 694 page 302, and TDOT V page 22.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion of the raḥam see TWOT article 2146 page 841. See also “The Brother of the Prodigal Son” on

[www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

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## 1. The Seven Covenants

The first covenant in the Bible is **The Covenant of Justness** established by God with Noah after the flood. This covenant is in force for all human societies since then; however, few, if any, have adhered to the terms of this covenant – that is why human society has been a litany of misery throughout history. This covenant establishes true justice as the basis for a human society. There is no justice in the world today.

Next, God began to execute his plan of salvation for human beings. God established **The Covenant of Promise** with Abram. This covenant comprised two promises to Abram: first, that his descendants would form a nation and would be given the land of Canaan as a permanent dwelling place; secondly, all

nations of the earth would be blessed through a Descendant of Abram. This Descendant, of course, is Jesus Christ.

After many years, God began to fulfill his promises to Abram. God established **The Covenant of Knowledge** through Moses to create the nation of Israel. This covenant provides to each and every human being the fundamental knowledge required to attain holiness. Holiness is a gift from God – nothing any human being can do can bring him to a state of holiness. Holiness is required for human beings to be granted the gift of eternal life, which is the promise of God to Christians. Holiness is extended by God's grace and mercy – to be worthy of it, one must understand and live by **The Covenant of Knowledge**.

Just before the Nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River to establish themselves in the Land of Canaan, God presented them with another covenant, **The Covenant of Life**. This covenant is an expression of God's purpose for all human beings. God clearly expresses his desire for a personal relationship with each and every human being. God implores us to consider the options: life or death. His recommendation – choose life!

After the Israelites were established in the Promised Land, God established through Joshua with the Nation of Israel **The Covenant of Fidelity**. God reminded the people that they had willingly entered into the Sinai Covenant (**The Covenant of Knowledge**) whereby they had agreed to the stipulation to "obey my voice and keep my covenant". **The Covenant of Fidelity** required each individual to consider what God had done for the nation, and for each individual, and on that basis commit to serving God or not:

And the people said to Joshua, "No, but **we will serve the LORD.**" (Joshua 24:21 ESV)

Much later, after Saul had failed as king of Israel, God established David as king and made with David, **The Covenant of Descent**. David was promised dynastic longevity, which was fulfilled as his descendants sat on the throne of Israel until the dissolution of the nation in the early sixth century. But the covenant was promised to extend in perpetuity – this, of course, will be established when Jesus Christ assumes his role as King of kings.

Finally, God gave humanity **The Covenant of Salvation**. This covenant is discussed by many prophets.<sup>6</sup> This covenant opens the door to salvation for all human beings. It is based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a propitiation for sin. Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant (**The Covenant of Salvation**) on the First Christian Passover the evening before he was killed. The inauguration of the New Testament Church at the First Christian Pentecost was the beginning of salvation for all human beings. **The Covenant of Salvation** will come into full effect when the Kingdom of God is established on the earth and all people in all nations over the whole earth will be brought into the True Worship of the True God.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The Covenant of Justness

We know very little about the pre-flood world. A few facts can be gleaned from the Genesis narrative:

When **man began to multiply** on the face of the land ... (Genesis 6:1a ESV)

The LORD saw that the **wickedness of man** was great in the earth, and that **every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. (Genesis 6:5 ESV)

Now **the earth was corrupt** in God's sight, and the earth was **filled with violence**. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for **all flesh had corrupted their way** on the earth. (Genesis 6:11-12 ESV)

There was significant increase in population over the inhabited world and people had become "wicked". "Wickedness" is qualified by saying that people's minds were driven only by evil thoughts – their entire yearning was for evil things. This rendered the "earth" to a state of "corruption" and "violence". It was not just a few people who had gone this way – "all flesh" was corrupted. This led God to the necessity of destroying all living beings on the planet through the flood.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Jeremiah chapters 31 and 32, and Ezekiel chapters 11 and 36.

<sup>7</sup> See the paper "True Worship of the True God", located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)  
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However, God's plan involved the continuation of life on earth through one man, Noah:

But **Noah found favor** in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:8 ESV)

Noah was a **righteous man, blameless in his generation**. Noah **walked with God**. (Genesis 6:9b ESV)

... **I will establish my covenant with you**, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. (Genesis 6:18 ESV)

Noah did this; **he did all that God commanded** him. (Genesis 6:22 ESV)

In Genesis 6:8, "favour" is translated from חֵן - *hen*, a masculine noun derived from *hanan*. It was an act of grace on God's part to work with Noah. Noah and his family were apparently the only human beings left who had NOT corrupted themselves. In Genesis 6:9b "generation" is translated from דּוֹר - *dor*, which literally means "circle".<sup>8</sup> By metaphoric application, this word came to be used for "generation" or "contemporaries"; hence, the phrase is better translated as "**blameless among his contemporaries**". Noah's "righteousness" is qualified by the author of Hebrews:

By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, **in reverent fear** constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and **became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith**. (Hebrews 11:7 ESV)

That is what it means to "**walk with God**". God gave Noah the faith to trust in him and live his life according to the Way of God, NOT the way of the world – "**he did all that God commanded**". Because of this God was willing to "**establish** his *b'rit*" with Noah. The verb "establish" is translated from the hiphil form of קָם - *qum*, which literally means to "arise, stand up, stand".<sup>9</sup> The hiphil form is frequently used, almost as a technical term, for "**establishing a covenant**". The other common word used for initiating a covenant is כָּרַת - *karath*, which means literally "to cut off a part of the body".<sup>10</sup> The idiom "**to cut a covenant**" was common in other languages as well as Hebrew. The allusion is to the common practice of animal sacrifices accompanying the initiation of a covenant. The difference between the words is that a new covenant is "cut". Something which already exists is "established". So God planned to "establish" his covenant with Noah – in God's mind this covenant was already in existence.<sup>11</sup>

**The Covenant of Justness** is based on God's promise NOT to ever again destroy the earth with a flood:

... the **LORD said in his heart**, "**I will never again** curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Genesis 8:21-22 ESV)

Then **God said to Noah and to his sons** with him, "Behold, **I establish my covenant** with **you and your offspring after you**, and **with every living creature** that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. **I establish my covenant** with you, that **never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood**, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." (Genesis 9:8-11 ESV)

The translation "the LORD said in his heart" is perhaps a bit misleading. Clearly God's full promise was communicated to Noah. The phrase "in his heart" is translated from אֶל-לִבּוֹ - *el libo*. The translation sounds like God is speaking silently to himself. If 'el' is taken in a comitative sense, "**with**", the translation would be "**the LORD spoke with his heart**", implying commitment and sincerity. Note that the covenant promise of God is made with "Noah and his sons", "you and your offspring after you", and "with every living creature". **The covenant is eternal and permanent** for all human beings and all animals. God's promise is the basis of the covenant, but there are requirements of the other parties in the covenant:

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth**. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. **Into your hand they are**

<sup>8</sup> See TWOT article 418b page 186.

<sup>9</sup> See TWOT article 1999 page 793, BDB page 877, "establish" meaning 7b page 878.

<sup>10</sup> See TWOT article 1048 page 456.

<sup>11</sup> See Genesis 1:28-31 – although it is NOT cast as a formal "covenant", Adam was given "dominion" over the creation and required to "be fruitful and multiply"; see also Hosea 6:7.

**delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.** And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. **But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.** (Genesis 9:1-3 ESV)

God wants human beings to be abundant – his plan entails offering to all persons the gift of eternal life as members of the God Family. **God wants a large family.** **“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you”** does NOT imply any animal can be eaten. Noah was well aware which animals were designed to be eaten and which weren’t.<sup>12</sup> Man is at the top of the food chain – all other creatures are subservient to man. The blood of an animal gives it life. God prohibits the eating of blood because the life is given by God and must be returned by pouring the blood into the earth.<sup>13</sup> Not only is the life of an animal in its blood, **the life of human beings is also in the blood.** Taking a life is a serious matter: And **for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning:** from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man **I will require a reckoning for the life of man.** **Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,** for God made man in his own image. (Genesis 9:5-6 ESV)

The requirement that killing a person requires the death of the killer is **the fundamental principle of justice.** By this covenant, **all human societies are to be based on justice.** This is the implication of this covenant’s being established with all the descendants of Noah – the whole human race. **“Justness”** is a fundamental attribute of God’s character, his nature. This aspect of God’s nature is expressed by the Hebrew word מִשְׁפָּט - *mish’pat*. The fundamental meaning of *mish’pat* is **“justness” as an attribute of God’s divine nature.** From there, the range of meaning extends all “justice” in personal and community relationships – including the legal administration of justice. **“To be just” is a character attribute required by God of any person,** ancient or modern, who would consider himself a true worshipper. For further discussion of *mish’pat*, see [Excursus 1 – mish’pat](#).

God established a permanent witness to this covenant:

And God said, **“This is the sign of the covenant** that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, **for all future generations:** I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall **be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.** When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember **my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.** And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, **I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant** between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, **“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”** (Genesis 9:12-17 ESV)

The word “sign” is translated from the Hebrew word אוֹת - *’oth*, which carries a similar range of meaning as the English word “sign”. The word is frequently used in conjunction with *b’erith*.

We find ourselves in the modern world in a situation very much like the ancient world before the flood – we are increasingly going to a state where “every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”. This situation was prophesied by Jesus Christ:

For **as were the days of Noah**, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matthew 24:37 ESV)  
**Just as it was in the days of Noah**, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. (Luke 17:26 ESV)

A large reason for this is the lack of justice in the world today. **“Leftist elites”** have taken control of the political and social agenda and **have systematically undermined all true values.** Criminals are coddled while victims have no recourse. Honest and upright people are persecuted and jailed by governments for purely political reasons. God’s precious sign of **The Covenant of Justness** has been appropriated and turned into a symbol of the most heinous perversion of human dignity imaginable. God will NOT again flood the earth, but the soon coming King of kings will just as surely put an end to this wicked and corrupt world and the individuals who have made it this way.<sup>14</sup> **The Covenant of Justness** demonstrates the universality of God’s love. This first covenant of God with humanity was for all people, of all times, everywhere. It will be fully implemented in the World Tomorrow.

<sup>12</sup> See Genesis 8:20

<sup>13</sup> See Leviticus 17:10-14, Deuteronomy 12:16, 23-25; see also Genesis 2:7 - Blood is the agent through which oxygen from life-giving breath is carried to the cells of the body.

<sup>14</sup> See Revelation 11:17-18

## 3. The Covenant of Promise

### 3.1 The Two Promises

Some hundreds of years later God observed that the post-flood world was largely going the way of the pre-flood world. God's plan required the creation of a nation which would live according to the Way of God and serve as an example nation to show the world the way to peace, abundance, happiness, and freedom. God chose the man, Abram, to commence the establishment of this nation:

Now **the LORD said to Abram**, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And **I will make of you a great nation**, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed**." So Abram went, as the LORD had told him ... Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "**To your offspring I will give this land**." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. (Genesis 12:1-4a, 7 ESV)

Abram lived originally in the Sumerian city of Ur near the mouth of the Euphrates River. There was considerable political instability in Sumer in the early second millennium which resulted in significant movement of people. This would seem to be the milieu under which Abram migrated with his father Terah to the northern Mesopotamian city of Haran. It was in Haran that Abram was called by God. Abram was clearly familiar with YHWH prior to his calling – Abram simply "went, as the LORD had told him" to the land of Canaan, and upon arrival "he built there an altar to the LORD". The calling involved two promises:

- first, "I will make of you a great nation" ... "To your offspring I will give this land",
- secondly, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed".

Based on these two promises, the entire working out of the Plan of God rests. After some years of life in the land of Canaan, when Abram was more familiar with the land, God became more specific:

The LORD said to Abram ... "**Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are**, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see **I will give to you and to your offspring forever**. **I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth**, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you. (Genesis 13:14-17 ESV)

The inheritance of the land was promised "**forever**", and the promised offspring would be as numerous as the "**dust of the earth**". These as aspects of the promise remain in the future. Today we see a few physical descendants of Abram living in a portion of the Promised Land. But after the Kingdom of God is established, the New Israel will "forever" inhabit the entire Promised Land. And truly the spiritual descendants of Abram, "the father of the faithful",<sup>15</sup> will be countless as God increases his family.

Note that the promises to Abram had not yet been worked into a covenant. When Abram was about eighty years old, YHWH cut a covenant with Abram:

After these things **the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision**: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; **your reward shall be very great**." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, **you have given me no offspring**, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; **your very own son shall be your heir**." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And **he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness**. (Genesis 15:1-6 ESV)

The method of revelation is "**a vision**". For the first time, God makes a promise of reward – this promise is not fully elaborated until after the First Advent when the New Testament authors make it clear that the reward is the "better promises"<sup>16</sup> – the gift of eternal life. Abram is clearly struggling with understanding how God is going to work things out. He has no legitimate heir,<sup>17</sup> and he is getting old – God reassures him that he will have an heir. **In spite of his limitations**, Abram trusts God and believes his promises, for this God considers him "righteous". The Hebrew for "righteousness" is

<sup>15</sup> See Romans 4:16-17, Galatians 3:7-9, 29, James 2:21-23

<sup>16</sup> See Hebrews 6:9, 8:6, 9:15, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:25, Ephesians 1:11-14, 2 Corinthians 7:1

<sup>17</sup> At this time, all of Abram's sons were through concubines, see Genesis 25:1,6, 1 Chronicles 1:32; neither Ishmael nor Isaac had been born.



צִדְקָה - tz<sup>e</sup>daqah – it is another important word describing a key attribute of God’s character, the Nature of God. **God is inherently righteous.** Human beings are inherently unrighteous. We can do nothing to make ourselves righteous, but through faith, which is a gift from God,<sup>18</sup> we can be accounted as righteous:

For we say that **faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.** (Romans 4:9b ESV)

That is why it depends on faith, **in order that the promise may rest on grace** and be guaranteed to all his offspring ... **who shares the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—**in the presence of the God in whom he believed**, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. **In hope he believed against hope**, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead ... **No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith** as he gave glory to God, **fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.** That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. **It will be counted to us** ... (Romans 4:16-24a ESV)

... just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? Know then that **it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.** And the Scripture ... **preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham**, saying, “**In you shall all the nations be blessed.**” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:6-9 ESV)

Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that **faith was active along with his works**, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “**Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness**”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified<sup>19</sup> by works and not by faith alone. (James 2:20-24 ESV)

After this YHWH instructs Abram in **a ceremony to cut the covenant**:

And he said to him, “**I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans** to give you this land to possess.” But he said, “O Lord GOD, **how am I to know** that I shall possess it?” He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ... **On that day the LORD made a covenant** with Abram, saying, “To your offspring **I give this land** ... (Genesis 15:7-10, 18a ESV)

YHWH provides a brief “historical prologue” establishing his right to impose the covenant – “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans”. Abram still struggles with how it can all work out, but he faithfully follows the instruction for the covenant ceremony, and YHWH cuts the covenant. The word “made” is translated from is כָּרַת - karath, “to cut”. Note that **the covenant includes only the promise of inheritance of the land**; the blessing of all nations remains a promise.

**The Covenant of Promise** is elaborated when Abram is ninety-nine years old, more than ten years after its inauguration. This begins a series of confirmations and elaborations of the covenant by YHWH:

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**, that **I may make my covenant between me and you**, and **may multiply you greatly.**” Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, “Behold, **my covenant is with you**, and **you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.** No longer shall your name be called Abram, but **your name shall be Abraham**, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and **kings shall come from you.** And 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 of your sojournings**, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” (Genesis 17:1-8 ESV)

The first covenantal requirement of Abram was obedience to the word of God – this was demonstrated in Genesis 12:1-4. The **second covenantal requirement** placed on Abram is: “**walk before me, and be blameless**”. These are the very characteristics of Noah noted in Genesis 6:9 that identified him as “righteous”. Abram had been identified as “righteous” through “faith”. These are required attributes of true worshippers of God – **to walk in his ways and live a blameless life**. Genesis chapter seventeen is

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of “faith”, see the paper “The Inner Workings of Faith” on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>19</sup> James is NOT suggesting that salvation is in any way earned by works – “justification” is the demonstration of faith, which requires Christian works; see the discussion of this in section **11. Faith AND Works**, of the paper “True Worship of the True God”, located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

clearly an elaboration of the covenant cut in Genesis chapter fifteen. In verse two, “that I may make my covenant” is from וְאֶתְּנָה בְּרִיתִי - w’eṯenah v’rithi – “and I will give my covenant”. This is not a *karath* of a new covenant. This is further clarified in verse four “my covenant is with you”, and in verse seven where the hiphil form of *qum* is again used for “establish”.

The primary objective of this elaboration of **The Covenant of Promise** is the expansion of Abram’s name to “Abraham”. The name “Abram” means “father exalted”.<sup>20</sup> There is no clear etymology of “Abraham”, but the text of Genesis using assonance links the name to אַבְרָהָם גּוֹיִם - ‘av hamon goim, “father of crowd of nations”.<sup>21</sup> There is much speculation on what exactly “crowd of nations” implies, but the clearest sense is to relate it to the second promise to Abram: that **all nations would be blessed through his descendant**.<sup>22</sup> Abraham is the “father of the faithful”<sup>23</sup> because through him the promise of the Messiah was fulfilled. The New Testament Church is the beginning of the “many nations” to be incorporated into the Family of God. **This then includes the second promise within the covenant.**

As with **The Covenant of Justness**, God provides a sign for **The Covenant of Promise**:

And 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. ... it shall be **a sign of the covenant between me and you.**” (Genesis 17:9-11 ESV)

Just as in Genesis 9:13, the word *’oth* is used for the “sign”. In contrast with the sign of **The Covenant of Justness**, which is forever, this sign is temporary – only for the physical nation of Israel until the promise of blessing through the descendant is realized in Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Abraham continues to struggle with the true implications of the promises of God. He still does not understand how God will work things out: Abraham is satisfied with his firstborn son, Ishmael, as the covenant bearer; but now, YHWH is promising another son through Sarah herself, when both Abraham and Sarah are well past childbearing age:

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “**Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?**” And Abraham said to God, “**Oh that Ishmael might live before you!**”

God said, “No, but **Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him** as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. ... But **I will establish my covenant with Isaac,** whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.” (Genesis 17:17-19, 21 ESV)

**God unequivocally promises Abraham that he will have a child through Sarah** – Isaac, a child of promise,<sup>25</sup> and that the promises and the covenant with Abraham will be extended to Isaac. Very soon after this, YHWH appears to Abraham at his tent in Mamre, near Hebron, and reassures him about Isaac and Abraham’s status as the bearer of the covenant:

The LORD said to Abraham ... Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and **Sarah shall have a son.**” The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that **Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?** **For I have chosen him,** that **he may command his children and his household** after him **to keep the way of the LORD** by doing **righteousness** and **[mish\*pat]**, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him. (Genesis 18:13-14, 17-19 ESV)

**God begins to reveal to Abraham the actual intent of the covenant** – to understand the Nature of God. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was to teach “his household”, a crowd of nations, to “**keep the way of the LORD**” by doing “righteousness” and *mish\*pat*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See IDB volume 1, article “Abraham” page 15.

<sup>21</sup> Loc. cit., see also Holladay page 81 meaning 5.

<sup>22</sup> See Romans 4:16-24a, Galatians 3:6-9

<sup>23</sup> See Romans 4:11, 16, Galatians 3:7, James 2:21

<sup>24</sup> See Acts 15:1-29

<sup>25</sup> See Galatians 4:21-31, Romans 9:6-13

<sup>26</sup> See *Excursus 1 – mish\*pat*



### 3.2 To Live by Faith

**The Genesis narrative takes on a different character at this point** – there is no more communication from YHWH to Abraham regarding the covenant for many years. Isaac is born when Abraham is 100 years old.<sup>27</sup> The next chronological indicator is the sacrifice of Isaac when he is a young man – so probably fifteen to twenty years later. During this period Lot is rescued from Sodom, Hagar and Ishmael are driven away, and Abraham has two somewhat enigmatic encounters with a Philistine King, Abimelech. These events are significant because they contain the first usages in the Bible of the Hebrew word **חֶסֶד** - *hesed*. This is the most important single word there is for understanding the Nature of God. It has a broad range of meaning – there is no single English word to which it can be translated. The best translations would be “covenant love” or “reciprocal love”. Most modern translations frequently use “steadfast love”. From God’s perspective it implies his unwavering commitment to any covenant he has made, and it implies all the other attributes of God’s nature: merciful, gracious, patient, faithful, good, slow to anger, forgiving. **When the apostle John says, “God is Love”, that Love is embodied in *hesed*.** See [Excursus 2 – \*hesed\*](#)

The first use of *hesed* is in the mouth of **Lot** when he is rescued by the two angels: “**you have shown me great *hesed* in saving my life**”.<sup>28</sup> Lot recognizes his undeserved “salvation” as a gift from God. Next we are exposed to a great flaw in Abraham’s character. He is living in the area of Gerar under the control of Abimelech.<sup>29</sup> Abimelech appears to be title, rather than a name.<sup>30</sup> In Hebrew Abimelech is from:

אָבִי - *avi*, “my father”, and מֶלֶךְ - *melek*, “king”; literally “my father is king”. There may or may not be any significance in this name, but clearly Abraham has lessons to learn. Sarah is Abraham’s half sister and apparently very beautiful although past ninety years old. Abraham in fear of his life informs Abimelech that Sarah is his sister and allows her to be taken to his harem. God immediately curses Abimelech, and he is warned in a dream about Sarah’s actual identity. Abraham weakly protests:

**I did it because I thought**, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ Besides, **she is indeed my sister**, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. And when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘**This is the [*hesed*] you must do me**: at every place to which we come, say of me, “He is my brother.”’ (Genesis 20:11-13 ESV)

**Abraham knew the word, *hesed*, but he did not understand what it meant.** The Genesis narrative then discusses the birth and weaning of Isaac and Sarah’s subsequent jealousy of Ishmael.<sup>31</sup> Hagar and Ishmael wander in the desert and are saved from death by God. While this pericope does NOT contain the word *hesed*, it is clearly an example of it, and **an object lesson for Abraham**. Next, Abraham is forced to deal with the meaning of *hesed*, by recognizing it in Abimelech

At that time Abimelech ... said to Abraham, “God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore **swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely** with me or with my descendants or with my posterity, but as **I have dealt [*hesed*] with you**, and with the land where you have sojourned.” **And Abraham said, “I will swear.”** (Genesis 21:22-24 ESV)

God had given Abraham four object lessons in *hesed*:

- Lot had received undeserved salvation,
- His wife Sarah was willing to give up her dignity and her position because Abraham requested *hesed* from her,
- Hagar and Ishmael were miraculously saved,
- Abimelech extended *hesed* to Abraham in spite of his subterfuge.

Now Abraham was required to swear that he understood *hesed* and would extend it to Abimelech and his descendants. Furthermore, Abraham is required to cut a covenant of his own to demonstrate that he understands *hesed* from the perspective of the originator of a covenant – from God’s perspective:

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<sup>27</sup> See Genesis 21:5

<sup>28</sup> See Genesis 19:19

<sup>29</sup> See Genesis 20:1-18

<sup>30</sup> See NBD page 4

<sup>31</sup> See Genesis 21:1-20

When **Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water** that Abimelech's servants had seized, Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today." So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and **the two men made a covenant**. Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart. And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?" He said, "These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, **that this may be a witness for me** that I dug this well." Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there **both of them swore an oath**. So **they made a covenant at Beersheba**. (Genesis 21:25-32 ESV)

The historical prologue indicates a dispute over water wells. The participants in the covenant are Abraham and Abimelech. The terms of the covenant are that Abimelech recognizes Abraham's right to the wells and that Abimelech accepts the animals to recognize this right. The seven ewe lambs are witnesses to the covenant. In both verse 27 and verse 33 the word for "made" is *karath*, cut. Again, the covenant was affirmed with an oath.

After this Abraham was required to demonstrate his unreserved *hesed* toward God by the sacrifice of Isaac.<sup>32</sup> God of course prevented Abraham from actually killing Isaac, and then God made the following covenantal affirmation:

**By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you,** and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, **because you have obeyed my voice.**" (Genesis 22:16-18 ESV)

YHWH recognizes Abraham's understanding and expression of *hesed* and because of this swears to bless Abraham. Both parts of the covenant promise are repeated because of Abraham's obedience.

### 3.3 The Covenant Bearers

Next the narrative of Genesis discusses the acquisition of Rebekah as a bride for Isaac. The servant of Abraham, the steward of his house, four times uses the word *hesed* as an attribute of God's nature.<sup>33</sup> In each case, he uses *hesed* to express God's covenant love to Abraham. **Abraham had been promised that God would extend the covenant to Isaac.**<sup>34</sup> This extension is an example of God's *hesed*. It is recorded without explicit mention of the covenant, but only by way of the promises because of the "oath" sworn to Abraham:

... Isaac went to Gerar ... And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and **I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham** your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham **obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my [torah].**" (Genesis 26:1-5 ESV)

This commitment by YHWH to Isaac is very significant because it affirms that Abraham fulfilled the requirements of the covenant placed on him. In Genesis 12:1 and 4 it is demonstrated that Abraham obeyed God's voice. In Genesis 17:1 Abraham was told to "walk before" God and be "blameless". That Abraham did this is affirmed by his keeping God's מִשְׁמֶרֶת - *mishmereth*, "charge"; מִצְוָה - *mitzvah*, "commandments"; חֻקִּים - *huqqah*, "statutes"; and, תּוֹרָה - *torah*, "teaching". **For each of these words, this is the first instance of their use in the Bible.** There is further discussion of these words in the next section of this paper, **4. The Covenant of Knowledge.**

The covenant promises are once more briefly affirmed to Isaac,<sup>35</sup> then the narrative of Genesis moves on to Jacob. After Esau's plan to kill Jacob was made known to Rebekah, she arranged for him to go to her brother Laban in Haran.<sup>36</sup> Before Jacob leaves, Isaac gives him direction:

Then **Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him**, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. **God Almighty bless you and make you**

<sup>32</sup> See Genesis 22:1-14

<sup>33</sup> See Genesis 24:12, 14, 27, and 49

<sup>34</sup> See Genesis 17:19

<sup>35</sup> See Genesis 26:24

<sup>36</sup> See Genesis 27:41-46

**fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you,** that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!” (Genesis 28:1-4 ESV)

With reference to God having blessed Abraham, Isaac prays for the covenant promises to be passed on to Jacob. Again, there is much speculation on what the phrase “company of peoples” means. In the context it is clearly an allusion to the second covenantal promise of “blessing of all nations” through the descendent, the Messiah. The Hebrew is: לְקַהֵּל עַמִּים - liq<sup>h</sup>al `ammim, “to assembly of peoples”.<sup>37</sup> This carries the same sense as *hamon goim* – “[crowd of nations](#)” in Genesis 17:5 as previously discussed.

On Jacob’s way to Haran, YHWH appears to Jacob in a dream:

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night ... And **he dreamed**, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! **And behold, the LORD stood above it and said**, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. **The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth,** and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and **in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.** Behold, **I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,** and will bring you back to this land. For **I will not leave you** until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 28:10-15 ESV)

**Both covenant promises are reiterated.** In addition, YHWH promises to personally be with Jacob. Jacob had much to learn. As with Abraham, he had to cut a covenant with another man, Laban.<sup>38</sup> As with Abraham, his name was changed, to “Israel”, to indicate more clearly the role God intended for him.<sup>39</sup> Just prior to his name change, Jacob affirmed his debt to YHWH:

And Jacob said, “**O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD** who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’ **I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of [hesed] and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant,** for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. ... you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and **make your offspring as the sand of the sea,** which cannot be numbered for multitude.’” (Genesis 32:9-12 ESV)

Jacob recognizes the first covenant promise but understands it only physically – for his physical descendants. Nothing more is said of Jacob’s understanding of *hesed*, but as with Abraham, we can assume he came to understand the meaning of the word. Genesis 35:1-15 is a summary of God’s final covenantal affirmation with Jacob as the last of the Patriarchs. Verses 9 and 10 are best taken as a review of what had happened in the past. The covenant promises are reiterated:

And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: **be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.**” (Genesis 35:11-12 ESV)

The promise of physical descendants is clear – the reference to “kings from you own body” would seem to foreshadow the promise to David of physical dynastic longevity. The word “nation” is from גּוֹי - goy, the normal word for “nation”. In the context, this best taken as the physical nation of Israel – the first promise. The phrase “company of nations” is from וְקַהֵּל גּוֹיִם - uq<sup>h</sup>al goyim, “and assembly of nations”<sup>40</sup> – it has the same meaning as in Genesis 28:3 לְקַהֵּל עַמִּים - liq<sup>h</sup>al `ammim, “to assembly of peoples”, which carries the same sense as *hamon goim* – “[crowd of nations](#)” in Genesis 17:5. This relates to the second covenant promise of blessing all nations through the Messiah.

The last member of the Patriarchal family with which the Bible records covenantal dealings with God is Joseph. There are no recorded references to the covenant, but *hesed* is mentioned:

But **the LORD was with Joseph and showed him [hesed] and gave him favor** in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph’s charge, because **the LORD was with him.** And **whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.** (Genesis 39:21-23 ESV)

<sup>37</sup> See Holladay pages 314-315, meaning 1

<sup>38</sup> See Genesis 31:43-54

<sup>39</sup> See Genesis 32:27-29

<sup>40</sup> See Holladay pages 314-315, meaning 1

Joseph's good fortune in Egypt was a direct result of the covenant love, *hesed*, extended to him from YHWH. YHWH "gave him favour" – "favour" is translated from *חֵן* – *hen*, the masculine noun derived from *hanan*. Joseph is clearly familiar with the reciprocal nature of *hesed*, as he requests it of Pharaoh's Cup Bearer in return for interpreting his dream:

Only remember me, when it is well with you, and **please do me [*hesed*]** to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also **I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.**" (Genesis 40:14-15 ESV)

Finally, just prior to his death, Jacob requests *hesed* from Joseph:

And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, **"If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal [*hesed*] and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place."** He answered, **"I will do as you have said."** (Genesis 47:29-30 ESV)

Jacob felt the need to lie in the same tomb as Isaac and Abraham. Joseph understood the significance of *hesed* – covenant love and promised it would be done. Again, "favour" is translated from *hen*. The word "truly" is translated from *אֱמֶת* – *emeth*, "faithfulness" – another important word related to the Nature of God.

### 3.4 Fulfillment of the Promises

After some years, the Israelites had greatly increased in number and were enslaved by the Egyptians. God then began to fulfill the typical part of the first promise – to transform the Israelites into a nation to inhabit the land of Canaan:

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and **the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery** and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and **God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.** God saw the people of Israel—and God knew. (Exodus 2:23-25 ESV)

God's grace to Israel was due to the covenant with Abraham. YHWH identified himself by the covenantal promises. Moses was to refer to the covenantal promises to identify YHWH to the Israelites:

**... I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.**" Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' ... God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: **'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.'**" (Exodus 3:12-15 ESV)

YHWH promises Moses that he will be with him, as he had promised the Patriarchs. **YHWH identifies himself to the people through the covenant bearers.** As with the covenant itself, God specifies a sign, *'oth*, of his commitment to the covenant – a return to the area of Horeb, to "serve God on this mountain". Jesus Christ asserts that the reference to "Abraham ... Isaac ... and ... Jacob" is more than just an historical allusion, **it is a further promise**, a harbinger of **The Covenant of Salvation**:

"... And **as for the dead being raised**, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? **He is not God of the dead, but of the living.** You are quite wrong." (Mark 12:26-27 ESV)

"... And **as for the resurrection of the dead**, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? **He is not God of the dead, but of the living.**" And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching. (Matthew 22:31-33 ESV)

"... But that **the dead are raised**, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. **Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.**" Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." (Luke 20:37-39 ESV)

Moses returns to Egypt, presents God's ultimatum to the Pharaoh, and is greatly distressed by the apparent failure of his mission:

God spoke to Moses and said to him, **"I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob ... I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you**

out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. **I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession.** I am the LORD.”  
(Exodus 6:2-8 ESV)

God makes it clear that he is acting for the sake of his covenant – his plan. The election of Israel is an act of pure grace on the part of God. None of the Israelites was worthy of God’s calling. With this statement from YHWH, Moses proceeds to liberate the people of Israel. This liberation is embodied in the next covenant – **The Covenant of Knowledge**.

**The Covenant of Promise** was based on two promises to Abraham:

- “I will make of you a great nation” ... “To your offspring I will give this land”
- “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”

**The first promise** has had a long history of fulfillment. It was typically fulfilled by the growth of the descendants of Israel in Egypt so that God could make them into a nation by removing them from Egypt and giving them the land of Canaan as the Promised Land. Israel’s tenure in the Promised Land has been tentative at best. For most of the last thirty-five hundred years only portions of the Promised Land have been inhabited by small numbers of the descendants of Israel. The true fulfillment of this promise looks to the New Israel in the World Tomorrow.

**The second promise is purely Messianic.** It began to be fulfilled at the First Advent. Jesus’ death as a propitiation for sin has made it possible for human beings to be accounted holy in God’s sight and therefore have access to him. This has allowed the creation of the New Testament Church – preparing individuals for the First Resurrection to occur at the Second Advent. Then all nations over the whole earth will be brought into the true worship of the True God – all families of the earth will be blessed.

## 4. The Covenant of Knowledge

Associated with this covenant is **the largest outpouring of revelation that God has given to man**. This material is the basis of life. It reveals God’s mind, his character, and his nature. It is the basis of all other material in the Bible. It reveals to “we human beings” what God requires us to become. This revelation is the basis of knowledge – the rest of the Bible, especially the New Testament, is an elaboration of this material. It is obviously beyond the scope of this paper to comment on all this material. This paper will focus on the background of the Covenant and the Covenant itself. Many good commentaries exist – some are listed in the [Bibliography](#).<sup>41</sup> Specific references to the literature are made as appropriate. The storey begins with first Passover in Egypt and ends with Moses’ final speeches to the Israelites in the Plains of Moab.

### 4.1 The Sinai Covenant

The people of Israel were slaves in the land of Egypt. YHWH defeated the Egyptians and removed the Israelites from Egypt. **This transferred ownership of the slaves to YHWH** – they were now his people. YHWH as suzerain had the right to dictate the terms of a covenant to his vassal. The liberation began with each family eating a solemn meal behind a door marked with sacrificial blood:

Then they shall take **some of the blood** and put it **on the two doorposts and the lintel** of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs ... **In this manner you shall eat it:** with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. **It is the LORD’s Passover.** For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and **I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt,** both man and beast; and **on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments:** I am the LORD. **The blood shall be a sign for you,** on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:7-13 ESV)

After this the Israelites travelled across the desert, through Yam Suph, to the area of Horeb, and camped before Mount Sinai. **YHWH presented the terms of the covenant and the people agreed to it:**

... after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt ... They ... came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God.

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<sup>41</sup> See KD1, Hamilton, Garret, Wenham, Ashley, Craigie  
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The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: **‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.** Now therefore, if you will indeed **obey my voice** and **keep my covenant**, **you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples**, for all the earth is mine; and **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. **All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.”** And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. (Exodus 19:1-8 ESV)

**This is the Sinai Covenant.** The “historical prologue” simply states YHWH’s right as suzerain to dictate the terms to Israel as the vassal. The **“stipulations”** are simple:

- obey my voice,
- keep my covenant,
- be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.<sup>42</sup>

The **covenantal benefit** is also simple but far reaching: since all the earth belongs to YHWH, he can make the nation of Israel a **“treasured possession among all peoples”**. The net effect of this covenant was to create the Nation of Israel as a vassal of YHWH as suzerain. The covenant is between YHWH and the nation, but **each member of the nation is personally committed to the covenant.**<sup>43</sup> The original Passover Meal was a **“covenant meal”** which committed the participants to serve YHWH.

#### 4.2 The Teaching of God – torah

From this simple covenantal agreement, YHWH proceeds to elaborate on what he means by the terms of the covenant. The word תּוֹרָה - torah, “teaching”, “direction”, “instruction”, was introduced in Genesis 26:5. The entire five books of Moses are referred to as **“The Torah”**. Unfortunately, the Jews who prepared the Septuagint chose the Greek word νόμος – nomos, which means “law”, as a translation for “torah”. This has passed into English translations through the Vulgate and Old King James. **The word “torah” has almost no overlap of meaning with the English word “law”.** For a more detailed discussion see **Excursus 3 – torah** and **Excursus 5 – torah and nomos**.

**The first teaching that YHWH provides to Israel is the ten commandments.**<sup>44</sup> The ten commandments were first spoken by YHWH directly to the assembled people. They are the most basic principals of life. The ten commandments are the basis of all other torah. The first four commandments provide instruction on maintaining a proper relationship with God. The last six commandments provide instruction on maintaining proper relationships within a human community. There is an enormous literature on the ten commandments,<sup>45</sup> no more needs to be said here.

Immediately after the ten commandments, the Book of Exodus contains a section of detailed instructions called the **Book of the Covenant.**<sup>46</sup> This sets a pattern used throughout the Pentateuch: detailed instructions are interspersed with narrative. These instructions are חֻקִּים - huqqah, a feminine noun, or קִבְּצִים - hōq, a masculine noun; **both words mean “statute”**. Frequently the material in these sections has parallels in ancient “law codes” from various other countries. This gives the material a certain “legal” appearance, but the term *mishpat* is also frequently applied to the material in these sections indicating that they reflect the “justness” God requires in human dealings. **They are meant as examples from which general principles can be deduced.**<sup>47</sup> God requires understanding, not just memorization and legalistic adherence to rules.

<sup>42</sup> For the implications of this, see the paper “To Be a Priest”, on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>43</sup> Note that Jeremiah clearly recognized the simplicity of the Sinai Covenant, and that offerings and sacrifices were NOT part of the covenant (Jeremiah 7:22-23).

<sup>44</sup> See Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/the-ten-commandments>

<sup>46</sup> See Exodus 20:22 through 23:19, and 24:4-7

<sup>47</sup> For further discussion of “statutes”, see **Excursus 4 – Statutes and Ancient Law Codes**, in the paper “The Writings of Moses”, located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)



In the ancient world, there developed traditional forms for covenant documents.<sup>48</sup> **Moses clearly had these forms in mind as he assembled the documents we have in the Pentateuch.** The components of a covenant document are (not all components are explicitly used in all covenants):

- Preamble: identifies the suzerain and the vassal
- Historical prologue: briefly reviews the prior relationship between the suzerain and the vassal; establishes the suzerain's right to impose the covenant
- Stipulations: the obligations to which the vassal agrees by entering into the covenant, benefits from the suzerain may also be specified
- Documentation: location of covenant documents and provision for public reading
- Witnesses: the formal third-party witnesses to the covenant agreement
- Blessings and curses: the results of keeping or breaking the covenant
- Covenant meal: the participants may share a meal which is often accompanied by sacrifices

Exodus chapter twenty-four contains **the covenant ratification ceremony**. The order of events is somewhat difficult to follow:

Then he said to Moses, "**Come up to the LORD**, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and **worship from afar**. **Moses alone shall come near to the LORD**, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." (Exodus 24:1-2 ESV)

It is not stated what happened in this foray up the mountain. Clearly, only Moses is in contact with YHWH. The others came part way up the mountain and waited. It is possible that the material in the Book of the Covenant was communicated to Moses at this time.

Next, Moses comes down the mountain, communicates the material to the people, and records it on a scroll. Note that once more "all the people" agreed to keep **"all the words"**:

**Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD** and all the [mish'pat]. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "**All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.**" And **Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD**. (Exodus 24:3-4a ESV)

The next day there is a formal ceremony to ratify the covenant:

He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and **twelve pillars**, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent **young men of the people of Israel**, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings<sup>49</sup> of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

Then he took the **Book of the Covenant** and **read it in the hearing of the people**. And they said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.**" And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "**Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.**" (Exodus 24:4b-8 ESV)

There is no indication who the "young men" were – the Levitical Priesthood had NOT yet been initiated. The "twelve pillars" are the "witnesses" to the covenant. The people have twice already agreed to the covenant. The Book of the Covenant contains more detailed stipulations than the initial presentation of the covenant. For the third time, now including the Book of the Covenant, the people state their agreement and willingness to keep the covenant. The word *karath*, cut, (has made) is again used to indicate the formal beginning of the covenant. **The sacrifice and spreading of blood formally bring the people into the covenant.**

Next there is a formal covenant meal:

Then **Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders** of Israel went up, and **they saw the God of Israel**. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And **he did not lay his hand on the chief men** of the people of Israel; **they beheld God, and ate and drank**. (Exodus 24:9-11 ESV)

For the second time, the same group goes up the mountain, but now all are allowed to approach YHWH. **The difference is the blood of the covenant.** The first time they went up the mountain, the covenant

<sup>48</sup> See IDB volume 1 page 714 and Bibliography page 723; for an overview, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzerainty>

<sup>49</sup> The specification for these offerings had not yet been given to Moses. Clearly, the terms "burnt offering" and "peace offering" were generally used and well known. Note that the term "burnt offering" was used as early as the time of Noah (Genesis 8:20).

had NOT been ratified. Now that the blood of the covenant had been applied, God could account all the men as “holy” so that they could approach him.

After this meal, Moses returns to the mountain with Joshua to receive the stone tablets with the ten commandments. While they are on the mountain, the people convince Aaron to make the golden calf. On coming down from the mountain, Moses observes the goings on, and smashes the tablets demonstrating that the covenant has been broken. Moses now must intercede on the people’s behalf:

The next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; **perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.**” So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, **if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.**” But the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.” (Exodus 32:30-33 ESV)

### 4.3 The Theophany to Moses

**The sacrificial system had not yet been specified, so there was no formal way to atone for the sin.**

Moses requests YHWH’s forgiveness and offers his own life as a sacrifice. YHWH declines the offer but points out that **the sin has left the nation in an unclean state:**

“But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, **my angel shall go before you.** Nevertheless, **in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.**” Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made. ... “Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but **I will not go up among you, lest I consume you** on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.” ... For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; **if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you.**’” (Exodus 32:34-35, 33:3, 5 ESV)

YHWH tells Moses to proceed with the plan to go to the Promised Land, but he himself cannot be among the people. **The sin has rendered the whole nation to a state of uncleanness.** God is holy. If anything unclean comes into contact with something holy, the unclean thing must be destroyed – **the people cannot have contact with God.** Moses does not see how he can succeed without God’s presence so prays for deeper understanding:

Moses said to the LORD, “See, **you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’** but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet **you have said, ‘I know you by name,** and you have also found **favor** in my sight.’ Now therefore, if I have found **favor** in your sight, **please show me now your ways, that I may know you** in order to find **favor** in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.”

And he said, “**My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.**” And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found **favor** in your sight, I and your people? **Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct,** I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

And the LORD said to Moses, “**This very thing that you have spoken I will do,** for you have found **favor** in my sight, and I know you by name.” (Exodus 33:12-17 ESV)

Note the word “favour” occurs five time in this passage – it is translated from חֵן - *hen*, the masculine noun derived from *hanan*, “grace”. Moses is imploring God’s grace for himself and the people. **Moses pleads for deeper understanding of “your ways” – the Nature of God.** Moses wants to know God better so that he can accomplish the work God has given him to do. YHWH responds favourably, “**my presence will go with you**” – **God’s plan involves a way to deal with the uncleanness of the nation.** It is likely that Moses had already been given the plans for the Tabernacle, so he had an inkling of what God planned to do. **God’s plan to deal with the uncleanness of the people was the sacrificial system documented in the Book of Leviticus.**<sup>50</sup> YHWH promises that the understanding of God’s nature would also be given to Moses – “**this very thing you have spoken**”. Moses pursues this:

Moses said, “**Please show me your glory.**” And he said, “I will make all my **goodness** pass before you and will **proclaim before you my name ‘[YHWH].’** And **I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious,** and will **show mercy on whom I will show mercy.** But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and **you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.**” (Exodus 33:18-23 ESV)

<sup>50</sup> For a survey of the Book of Leviticus, see the paper “To Be a Priest” on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)  
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Moses requested to see YHWH in his “glory” – YHWH responds that is not possible, but he will **proclaim** to Moses his “name”; that is, **allow him deeper understanding of key attributes of his nature**. The word “**proclaim**” is from קָרָא - qara’,<sup>51</sup> it looks forward to the proclamation of the gospel as recorded in the New Testament. The word “**goodness**” is translated from טוֹב - tov, another important word describing the Nature of God. It carries essentially the same range of meaning as the English word “good”.<sup>52</sup> YHWH expresses his *ḥanan* and *raḥam* as important characteristics of his nature but makes it clear that **it is his choice how and when to apply them**.

Moses prepares blank stone tablets and next day goes back up the mountain:

The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and **proclaimed**, “[YHWH], [YHWH], a God **merciful** and **gracious**, **slow to anger**, and **abounding in [hesed]** and **faithfulness**, **keeping [hesed]** for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**, but **who will by no means clear the guilty**, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children** and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. And he said, “**If now I have found favor in your sight**, O Lord, please **let the Lord go in the midst of us**, for it is a stiff-necked people, and **pardon our iniquity and our sin**, and take us for your inheritance.” (Exodus 34:5-9 ESV)

The verb *qara’* is again used for “**proclaimed**” – YHWH is making clear to Moses important aspects of his nature, which Moses is to teach the people, and which are further elaborated in the New Testament gospel. We have already discussed *raḥam*, “mercy”, *ḥanan*, “grace”, and *’emeth*, “faithfulness”. The phrase “**slow to anger**” is from the Hebrew idiom אֶרֶק אַפַּיִם - ’erek ’apayim, literally “long of nostrils” – this idiomatic expression is the standard way of expressing anger in Hebrew. **Note *hesed* is mentioned twice**: first as something in which YHWH “abounds”; secondly, as a commitment which YHWH keeps with those repent. YHWH is characterized as “forgiving”. The three main words for sin: עָוֹן - ’awon, “iniquity”; פְּשָׁע - pesha’, “transgression”; and, חַטָּאת - ḥata’ah, sin, are mentioned as all can be forgiven. But, YHWH reserves the right to administer retributive justice to those who refuse to repent.

Given all this information on the nature of YHWH, Moses implores one more time that YHWH will come back to the midst of his people and lead them to the Promised Land. Again, YHWH responds favourably to Moses’ entreaty:

And he said, “Behold, I am **[cutting] a covenant**. Before all your people **I will do marvels**, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And **all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD**, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Observe what I command you this day. ...” (Exodus 34:10-11a ESV)

**YHWH gratuitously cuts a new covenant** with Moses, and with all readers of the Bible, to accomplish his plan for Israel. The Plan of God is marvelous. **All peoples over the whole world will see the work of God**.<sup>53</sup> Of course, the ancient physical nation of Israel failed miserably to accomplish God’s purpose for them; so, this promise has passed to the spiritual Israel, the New Testament Church, and it will in turn pass to the New Israel in the World Tomorrow.<sup>54</sup> This covenant is a freely given promise from God that he will accomplish his plan. Nothing can stop the full implementation of the Plan of God.

#### 4.4 The Covenant Documentation

The Book of Exodus contains much material about the Tabernacle.<sup>55</sup> The Tabernacle was the central sanctuary in which the sacrifices occurred. These sacrifices were the means by which God could account Israel holy and hence have a relationship with the nation and with individuals. The Book of Exodus ends with the erection of the Tabernacle:

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<sup>51</sup> See TWOT article 2063 page 810

<sup>52</sup> See Holladay page 122

<sup>53</sup> See Isaiah 11:9

<sup>54</sup> Note that immediately after this, as part of this covenant, the text of Exodus discusses the Sabbath and the three annual Feasts, indicating the importance of keeping God’s designated times of worship in order to understand the Plan of God. (See also Isaiah 56:1-8) For further discussion of this see section **9.3 The Covenant of Performance**, in the paper “**True Worship of the True God**”, located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of the Tabernacle, see the paper “**The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle**” on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For **the cloud of the LORD** was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. (Exodus 40:34-38 ESV)

The word “**glory**” is from כָּבוֹד - kavod, it indicates the presence to God. **The presence of God in the Tabernacle made it Holy**. The cloud and fire were physical representations of the presence of God with Israel. The Tabernacle had two rooms: the Tent of Meeting was the first room. Moses frequently went into the Tent of Meeting to receive revelation from God. The Book of Leviticus starts with this situation: The **LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting**, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD ...” (Leviticus 1:1-2 ESV)

The Book of Leviticus documents “holiness” and the sacrificial system whereby God could attribute “holiness” to the people and the nation. The concept of “holiness” is central to the *torah* of God. For a more detailed discussion of this, please see the paper:

“**To Be a Priest**” on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

**The formal covenant document** created by Moses which began in Exodus chapter nineteen is completed in Leviticus chapter twenty-six with the blessings and curses of the covenant. The Sinai Covenant created Israel as a physical nation. All the blessings contained in Leviticus 26:1-13 relate to the abundance, happiness, freedom, and peace which will accrue to the nation from keeping the covenant. **The benefits are physical and relate to Israel as a nation**. The curses contained in Leviticus 26:14-45 reverse the blessings but also have much to say about apostasy, breaking the covenant; there are spiritual implications:

But if **you will not listen to me** and will **not do all these commandments**, if you **spurn my statutes**, and if **your [mind] abhors my [mish<sup>e</sup>patim]**, so that you will not do all my commandments, but **break my covenant**, then I will do this to you: ... (Leviticus 26:14-16a ESV)

To “**not listen**” is a direct violation of the original covenant stipulation “**obey my voice**”.<sup>56</sup> The word “commandments” is from מִצְוָה - mitz<sup>e</sup>wah, it means specifically the ten commandments, but since the rest of the *torah* is an elaboration of the ten commandments, all God’s teaching is implied. The word “statutes” is from חֻקִּים - huqqah, it refers to the specific items listed in the many sections of examples, such as the Book of the Covenant. Of course, *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* is the justness of God, which human beings are required to learn. In the plural, *mish<sup>e</sup>patim*, the implication is that God expects us to understand the spiritual implications of the *torah*. The words *huqqah* and *mish<sup>e</sup>patim* are frequently used in juxtaposition to each other. The *huqqah* are specific items of prescription or proscription. The *mish<sup>e</sup>patim* are the general principles to be derived – the understanding that God requires us to derive from the *huqqah* – the spiritual intent, the reflection of the mind of God.

Moses’ covenant document ends with YHWH’s offering forgiveness upon repentance:

But **if they confess their iniquity** and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me ... **if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity**, then **I will remember my covenant** with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham ... **I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God**. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 26:40-45 ESV)

YHWH unequivocally promises that he will NOT break the covenant. The nation did break the covenant and all the covenant curses were applied to the nation and to the individual Israelites, but the covenant itself remained in force until the death of the covenantor,<sup>57</sup> when it was replaced by a New Covenant. **YHWH affirms that “I will remember my covenant” with respect to anyone who repents**. This is an object lesson of *hesed* – the covenant love of God.

<sup>56</sup> See Exodus 19:5

<sup>57</sup> See Hebrews 9:15-17

#### 4.5 To Explain This *torah*

After the period of wandering in the wilderness just before the Israelites crossed into the Promised Land, Moses took the opportunity to review the Sinai Covenant and make another attempt at helping the people understand the *torah*:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel ... Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, **Moses undertook to explain this [torah]** ... (Deuteronomy 1:1a, 5 ESV)

The Book of Deuteronomy is also structured as covenant document. The **Historical Prologue** continues from chapter one verse six through chapter four verse forty-three, where **Moses implores the people to understand the torah**:

**And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the [mish\*patim] that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live,** and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may **keep the commandments of the LORD your God** that I command you.

See, **I have taught you statutes and [mish\*patim]**, as the LORD my God commanded me, that **you should do them** in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for **that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples**, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And **what great nation is there, that has statutes and [mish\*patim] so righteous as all this [torah] that I set before you today?** (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 5-8 ESV)

God's plan for Israel to be an example nation, a "**kingdom of priests and a holy nation**" was predicated upon Israel's understanding the *torah* and living by it. This is God's intention for all true worshippers. **The torah defines living by the Way of God.** This is what provides the example "**in the sight of the peoples**". This is what God requires of True Christians today and what will be required of the New Israel in the World Tomorrow; and, ultimately of all human beings.

The review of the giving of the ten commandments begins with the following statement:

This is the **[torah]** that Moses set before the people of Israel. These are the **testimonies**, the **statutes**, and the **[mish\*patim]**, which Moses spoke to the people of Israel ... (Deuteronomy 4:44-45a ESV)

The word "testimonies" is from עֲדוּת - 'edoth, a rare word which is more or less synonymous with *mitz'wah*, "commandments".<sup>58</sup> Moses ends his **review of the ten commandments** with the following words of YHWH:

And the LORD heard your words, when you spoke to me. And the LORD said to me, 'I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. **Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments**, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever! Go and say to them, "Return to your tents."

But you, stand here by me, and **I will tell you the whole commandment and the statutes and the [mish\*patim] that you shall teach them**, that **they may do them** in the land that I am giving them to possess.'

You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. **You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long** in the land that you shall possess. (Deuteronomy 5:28-33 ESV)

This demonstrates **God's deep love for human beings**. God's *torah* is the Creator's instruction book for his creation, human beings. God created human beings to grow into members of the God Family. That growth can only happen if one follows the Creator's instructions. God implores us to "not turn aside to the right or the left" but to "**walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded**" so that "**you may live, and it may go well with you**". The invocation "that you may live" is clearly a harbinger of the "better promise"<sup>59</sup> of eternal life.

Moses continues to elaborate a **correct relationship with the Creator**:

Hear, O Israel: **The LORD is our God, the LORD alone**. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your [mind] and with all your might. And **these words that I command you today shall be on your heart**. You shall **teach them diligently to your children**, and shall **talk of them when you sit in**

<sup>58</sup> Moses uses the word again in Deuteronomy 6:17 and 20; it is used most frequently in the Psalms – more than a dozen times in Psalm 119.

<sup>59</sup> See Hebrews 6:9, 8:6, 9:15, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:25, Ephesians 1:11-14, 2 Corinthians 7:1



your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV)<sup>60</sup>

**The basis of a stable civilization is stable families** – families living the Way of God. Teaching God's way to children is the most important responsibility of parents. The family relationship defines love. God is love. God created human beings to be his family. Note Moses implores the people to inculcate the *torah* into their hearts – this of course is a harbinger of the prophecies of the New Covenant.

Moses continues by elaborating the integral relationship of God's covenant, God's love, God's plan, God's *torah*, and God's calling – "election":

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the **faithful God** who **keeps covenant and [hesed] with those who love him** and **keep his commandments**, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face **those who hate him**, by **destroying them**. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face.

You shall therefore be careful to **do the commandment and the statutes and the [mish'patim]** that I command you today. And because you **listen to these [mish'patim]** and **keep and do them**, the **LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the [hesed] that he swore to your fathers**. (Deuteronomy 7:6-12 ESV)

God is very specific that the election of Israel was due to no special merit on their part. The election of Israel was due only to the Plan of God as expressed in the covenant with Abraham. God's calling today is no different – he calls people to the True Church because he has a purpose for each and every individual according to his plan. No person is called because of intrinsic merit – calling is a gift from God.<sup>61</sup> God is calling people now to be prepared to teach in the World Tomorrow. Then God's calling will extend to each and every person on the planet. God's plan is to have a very large family,<sup>62</sup> but he does reserve retributive justice for those who hate him.

Moses now discusses the continuity of God's covenants. The Sinai Covenant is predicated on the Abrahamic Covenant. Moses' elaboration of God's *torah* constitutes a confirmation of the continuity of God's covenants:

The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. ... You shall remember the LORD your God ... that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers ... (Deuteronomy 8:1, 18 ESV)

Moses next returns to the concept of "election" as applied to individuals – God's calling:

Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people. (Deuteronomy 9:4-6 ESV)

<sup>60</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4 is traditionally called the "Shema". The traditional translation is misleading, "The LORD our God, the LORD is one", – in the quote above, the ESV footnote is used. The traditional translation is used to argue that God is one being. Whereas, in fact, YHWH who became Jesus Christ, is a distinct and separate being from God the Father.

<sup>61</sup> For further discussion on God's calling, see section [6.2 Spiritual Fidelity in the New Testament](#), in the paper "[The Human Condition](#)", located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>62</sup> This is why the satanic ideologies of "leftist elites" to murder babies and "control population" are such heinous sins. They are the people who are destroying the earth (Revelation 11:18) – at the Second Advent, the King of kings will destroy them.



Moses uses this as a segue into a **review of the golden calf incident** and the display of God's mercy in NOT destroying the nation.<sup>63</sup> Based on this, Moses presents a summary of YHWH's requirements:

And now, Israel, **what does the LORD your God require** of you, but to **fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your [mind], and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD**, which I am commanding you today for your good?

Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet **the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring** after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart**, and be no longer stubborn. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. **He executes [mish'pat]** for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

You shall **fear the LORD your God**. You shall **serve him and hold fast to him**, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and **now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven**. (Deuteronomy 10:12-22 ESV)

Note there is another harbinger of the New Covenant: "**circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart**". Moses draws attention to the fact that **God is fulfilling the first promise to Abraham, "now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven"**. In Deuteronomy chapters eleven and twelve, Moses finishes his exhortation by focusing on the task at hand for the Israelites – the **conquest of the Promised Land**. He summarizes much of the *torah* with the focus on the conquest.

Starting in chapter thirteen and continuing all the way through chapter twenty-six, Moses presents mostly *huqqah*, statutes. This material is analogous to the Book of the Covenant in Exodus 20:22-23:33. The covenantal structure of the Book of Deuteronomy is completed<sup>64</sup> by blessings and curses detailed in chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight. This material is analogous to Leviticus chapter twenty-six.

The **Covenant of Knowledge** is based on the Sinai Covenant which made the people of Israel into the vassal Nation of Israel in suzerainty to YHWH. God's purpose for Israel was that they would be "**a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**". **It was necessary for God to explain what that meant**. That explanation started with the ten commandments, and then went through the greatest out-pouring of revelation ever made by God to man. This revelation entails the Nature of God, the Plan of God, and God's requirements of True Worshipers for all time. This material is critical for True Christians. As with Israel, God calls no one because of personal merit. God is now preparing a group of people to teach the true Way of God to all of humanity. This is the reason why God is revealing himself to individuals today. The individuals which comprise the True Church are known only to God – **only God knows who he has been begotten through the Holy Spirit to be born into his family at the First Resurrection**.<sup>65</sup> These individuals will comprise the Kingdom of God – "**a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**". The training for this gift requires understanding and living by **The Covenant of Knowledge**.

## 5. The Covenant of Life

Deuteronomy chapters twenty-nine and thirty contain a brand new and distinct covenant – **The Covenant of Life**. The first verse is the "preamble". It identifies the participants: YHWH and the people of Israel with Moses as mediator. Note that it states that it is "**besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb**" – this is NOT a renewal of the Sinai Covenant.

These are **the words of the covenant** that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, **besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb**. (Deuteronomy 29:1 ESV)

The "**historical prologue**" is next. Note that throughout Moses is the speaker presenting the words given to him from YHWH:

And **Moses summoned all Israel and said to them**: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But **to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to**

<sup>63</sup> See Deuteronomy 9:13-29

<sup>64</sup> Note that Deuteronomy 31:9-13, 24-26 describe the recording of the covenant and the provision for reading.

<sup>65</sup> See the discussion in section **9.5 The Book of Life**, in the paper "**The Writings of Moses**", located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am the LORD your God. And when you came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle, but we defeated them. We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. (Deuteronomy 29:2-9 ESV)

The most important item in the “historical prologue” is Moses’ lamentation that YHWH “has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear”.<sup>66</sup> Again, this is a harbinger of the New Covenant. To truly live by God’s way requires conversion, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – this was generally NOT available to the Israelites.

The “stipulations” begin with an elaboration of the participants:

You are standing today, all of you, before the LORD your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today, that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with whoever is standing here with us today before the LORD our God, and with whoever is not here with us today. (Deuteronomy 29:10-15 ESV)

God is very clear that this covenant is with each individual who is standing there, but also with those not there, i.e., future generations. This is a distinct covenant – it is being “cut” and “sworn to”. The covenant is personal – each individual is to be part of “his people”. Again, God is doing this for the sake of his plan – the covenant with Abraham.

The next stipulation is the most important:

You know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed. And you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, which were among them. Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesse himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.’ (Deuteronomy 29:16-19a ESV)

This stipulation is couched in terms specific to the Israelites, but it is far more important for True Christians today. The stipulation proscribes all forms of idolatry: “heart turning away ... from the LORD our God”, which results in an attitude like “a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit”.<sup>67</sup> This results in thinking “I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart”. This is the attitude of the “unpardonable sin”.<sup>68</sup> Certainly, this is a problem for true worshippers in any age, but critical for True Christians at the end of the age.

The “curses” of the covenant, elaborated next, make this clear; continuing from “walk in the stubbornness of my heart”:

This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the [torah].

And the next generation, your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, will say, when they see the afflictions of [the earth] (‘eret’)<sup>69</sup> and the sicknesses with which the LORD has made it sick— the whole [earth] (‘eretz’) burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath— all the nations will say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this [earth] (‘eretz’)? What caused the heat of this great anger?’

<sup>66</sup> This alludes back to YHWH’s lamentation in Deuteronomy 5:29, see also Deuteronomy 31:16-21, 32:28-29.

<sup>67</sup> See Deuteronomy 32:32-33, Hebrews 12:15

<sup>68</sup> See 1 John 5:16-17, Jeremiah 2:25b

<sup>69</sup> The Hebrew word עֵרֶץ - ‘eretz, can be translated “land” or “earth”.

Then people will say, 'It is **because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD**, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them. Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this [earth] ('eretz), bringing upon it all the curses written in this book, and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day. (Deuteronomy 29:19b-28 ESV)

The "**sweeping away the moist and dry alike**" is a very severe punishment – the implication is that no one survives. The allusions are to the covenant curses recorded elsewhere.<sup>70</sup> Jeremiah the Prophet is very careful to record the final outpouring of the curses on the nation of Israel.<sup>71</sup> But the allusion to a destruction like Sodom and Gomorrah is predictive of Jesus words in the Olivet Prophecy:

And if the Lord had not cut short the days, **no human being would be saved**. But **for the sake of the elect**, whom he chose, he shortened the days. (Mark 13:20 ESV)

And if those days had not been cut short, **no human being would be saved**. But **for the sake of the elect** those days will be cut short. (Matthew 24:22 ESV)

It is critical for True Christians, "the elect", to understand and remain faithful to all the **Covenants of Grace**. God, in his love, is preparing a people to fulfill his plan of offering salvation to each and every human being who has ever lived. The covenants God has made with human beings reveal his love and his grace. It is vital that those he calls understand and inculcate God's nature.<sup>72</sup> **The "elect" cannot fail**.

The **next stipulation** pertains to the **Nature of God**:

The **secret things** belong to the LORD our God, but the **things that are revealed** belong to us and to our children forever, **that we may do all the words of this [torah]**. (Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV)

**God reserves the right to reveal what he will reveal at his discretion**.<sup>73</sup> In **The Covenant of Knowledge** God has made an enormous revelation of "secret things" that can be obtained nowhere else. Most importantly, the vital information on the Nature of God – the character attributes which make Jesus Christ and God the Father the loving but all-powerful beings they are. Based on an understanding of this love, God's plan for salvation is understandable.

Next, **The Covenant of Life prescribes repentance in the inevitable event of sin and punishment**. Upon repentance, God will forgive and restore the relationship:

And **when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse**, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and **return to the LORD your God**, you and your children, **and obey his voice** in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your [mind], then **the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you**, and **he will gather you again** from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.

And **the LORD your God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your offspring, so **that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your [mind]**, **that you may live**.<sup>74</sup> And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you. And you shall again **obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments** that I command you today.

The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For **the LORD will again take delight in prospering you**, as he took delight in your fathers, when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the [torah], **when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your [mind]**. (Deuteronomy 30:1-10 ESV)

The language very much alludes to the blessings and curses recorded elsewhere,<sup>75</sup> but there is also a clear allusion to the **Second Exodus**: "**he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you**", and the **New Covenant**: "**the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring**". Turning to God "**with all your heart and with all your mind**" implies

<sup>70</sup> See Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27 and 28

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Jeremiah 5:17, 19, 6:12, 25, 14:2-6, 12b, 15:2-3, 18:16-17, 21:5-6, 23:10, 32:24, Lamentations 2:9, 17, 4:9-10

<sup>72</sup> For a discussion of work of the elect, see the paper "**The Work of Elijah**" on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>73</sup> See **Excursus 4 – The Secret Things of God**

<sup>74</sup> The implication is "eternal life", not just physical life.

<sup>75</sup> See Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27 and 28

conversion. While this is specifically couched in terminology directly related to Ancient Israel, the message is even clearer for True Christians at the end-time. A life of repentance and growth in living the Way of God, is vital for “the elect” to accomplish God’s purpose.

The blessings of **The Covenant of Life** comprise two promises: first, the “**Word of Faith**”:

For this commandment that I command you today **is not too hard for you**, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But **the word** is very near you. **It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.** (Deuteronomy 30:11-14 ESV)

This passage is quoted and greatly elaborated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:5-17.<sup>76</sup> Paul’s point is that the “commandment”, verse 11, is equivalent to the “word”, verse 14, and **these are the basis of Christian Faith which is required for salvation.** But nothing a human being can do puts God in a position that he must grant salvation to that person – salvation remains God’s gift for which we must trust him in faith. **The torah is the basis of living God’s way for all people everywhere at all times.** The **Covenant of Life** implores those called by God to live by his *torah* and trust God in faith.

The second blessing is the “**Promise of Life**”:

See, **I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.** If you **obey the commandments** of the LORD your God that I command you today, by **loving the LORD your God**, by **walking in his ways**, and by **keeping his commandments and his statutes and his [mish\*patim]**, **then you shall live** and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.

**I call heaven and earth to witness against you today**, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. **Therefore choose life**, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that **the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob**, to give them. (Deuteronomy 30:15-20 ESV)

**This is the ultimate question of our human existence:** will we choose to serve God, to understand and follow his *torah*, and live thereby; or by refusing the knowledge, the love, the mercy, and the grace of God, choose death. The **witnesses of the covenant** are “heaven and earth” – they know God’s recommendation:<sup>77</sup> **“Choose Life”**.

**The Covenant of Life** is a personal covenant between God and any human being who is called to be a true worshipper of God. God cut this covenant with the individuals who were inheriting the typical fulfillment of the first promise to Abraham. This was a watershed moment in the Plan of God. Israel would be a physical nation visible to the whole world – could they be the example nation God desired? We are today approaching THE watershed moment in the Plan of God. Soon the King of kings will return and establish the Kingdom of God. Those individuals who are being prepared to be part of that Kingdom must understand the Plan of God, the revelation of God in his *torah*, and **The Covenant of Life**, and unequivocally commit to God’s recommendation: **“Choose Life”**.

## 6. The Covenant of Fidelity

Moses died in the mountains above the Plains of Moab after he made his last attempt to “explain” the *torah* to the Israelites. Joshua was given the leadership of the nation in the ensuing conquest.<sup>78</sup> Joshua had been one of the initial spies to go into the land of Canaan.<sup>79</sup> Joshua had been an assistant to Moses from the beginning.<sup>80</sup> Joshua was a very successful leader:

After these things **Joshua** the son of Nun, **the servant of the LORD**, died, being 110 years old. And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the

<sup>76</sup> For an analysis of Romans 10:5-17, see the paper “**The Inner Workings of Faith**” on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>77</sup> See Romans 8:19-22

<sup>78</sup> See Numbers 27:18-23, 32:28, 34:17, Deuteronomy 3:21-22, 28, 31:3, 7-8, 14-15, 23, 34:9, Joshua 1:1-9

<sup>79</sup> See Numbers 13:8, 16, 14:6-10, 30, 38, 26:65, 32:12, Deuteronomy 1:38

<sup>80</sup> See Exodus 17:8-15, 24:12-13, 32:15-18, 33:11, Numbers 11:26-29

mountain of Gaash. **Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua**, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel. (Joshua 24:29-31 ESV)

This was the only generation in the history of Israel which truly lived by God's *torah*. Jeremiah the Prophet laments the apostasy of the second generation, and every succeeding generation:

Thus says the LORD,

**"I remember the devotion of your youth**, your love as a bride,  
how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.

**Israel was holy to the LORD**, the firstfruits of his harvest.

All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the LORD."

(Jeremiah 2:2-3 ESV)

The **wilderness generation**,<sup>81</sup> those who were under twenty coming out of Egypt and grew up in the wilderness, under the leadership of Joshua, truly lived by the *torah*. They were the "firstfruits". But succeeding generations, those descended from, "who ate of", the "firstfruits" did not live by the *torah* – they sinned and incurred guilt. This is well documented in the Book of Judges.

Moses had given specific instructions for a ceremony to ratify the Sinai Covenant once the people were established in the Promised Land.<sup>82</sup> Joshua faithfully performed the ceremony.<sup>83</sup> After the conquest was complete and Joshua could see the end of his life coming,<sup>84</sup> he implored the people to continue in observance of the Sinai Covenant:

And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and [minds], all of you, that **not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised** concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so **the LORD will bring upon you all the evil** things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the LORD your God has given you, **if you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God**, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you. (Joshua 23:14-16 ESV)

To bind the people to their commitment, **Joshua cuts a new covenant, The Covenant of Fidelity**. Joshua first assembles to participants to the covenant:

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the **elders**, the **heads**, the **judges**, and the **officers** of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. (Joshua 24:1 ESV)

The covenant is between God as suzerain and the leaders of the nation, representing the nation and all the Israelites, as vassal. Joshua is mediator. He then presents an "**historical prologue**" establishing the acts of YHWH is the basis for YHWH's right to impose the covenant:

And Joshua said to all the people, "**Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel**, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and **they served other gods**. Then **I took your father Abraham from beyond the River** and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but **Jacob and his children went down to Egypt**.

And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out. Then **I brought your fathers out of Egypt**, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to [Yam Suph]. And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt.

And you lived in the wilderness a long time. Then **I brought you to the land of the Amorites**, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited [Bil'am] the son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to [Bil'am]. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand.

And **you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho**, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And **I gave them into your hand**. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. **I gave you a land** on

<sup>81</sup> See the Bible Study Notes, "The Wilderness Generation" on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>82</sup> See Deuteronomy 27:1-26

<sup>83</sup> See Joshua 8:30-35

<sup>84</sup> See Joshua 23:1-2



which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.’ (Joshua 24:2-13 ESV)

There is one “**stipulation**” to the covenant:

Now therefore **fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness**. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and **serve the LORD**. (Joshua 24:14 ESV)

There was no problem with overt idolatry at this time. To “**put away the gods**” is a metaphoric way of expressing the requirement of the Covenant of Fidelity: **the covenant requires fidelity to YHWH expressed by avoidance of all idolatry**. Joshua rhetorically offers the assembled people the option of choosing other “gods”, but categorically affirms his fidelity to YHWH:

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, **choose this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD**. (Joshua 24:15 ESV)

The assembled people emphatically deny any desire to serve other “gods”, and unequivocally affirm fidelity to YHWH:

Then the people answered, “**Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods**, for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. **Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God**.” (Joshua 24:16-18 ESV)

Next Joshua reminds them of the inevitability of sin and the need for repentance. Again, the assembled people unequivocally affirm fidelity to YHWH. Joshua reminds them of the human disposition to sin and that they have witnessed against themselves:

But Joshua said to the people, “**You are not able to serve the LORD**, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. **If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you**, after having done you good.” And the people said to Joshua, “No, but **we will serve the LORD**.” Then Joshua said to the people, “**You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him**.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and **incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel**.” And the people said to Joshua, “**The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey**.” (Joshua 24:19-24 ESV)

On this agreement to the terms of the covenant, the covenant is recorded as cut. A “stone” is set up as a formal witness and Joshua records the covenant in the “Book of the *torah* of God”:

So **Joshua made a covenant with the people that day**, and put in place [statute and mish<sup>pat</sup>]<sup>85</sup> for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the [torah] of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by **the sanctuary of the LORD**. And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, **this stone shall be a witness against us**, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.” (Joshua 24:25-27 ESV)

**The Covenant of Fidelity** was specifically with the Nation of Israel to remind them of the importance of their commitment to the Sinai Covenant. The essence of the covenant is “fidelity”, absolute commitment to serve God. This is the essence of the “**covenant**” of baptism that a Christian enters into upon God’s calling and subsequent repentance. A Christian agrees to grow in grace and knowledge – the *torah* of God. To accomplish that growth absolute commitment to live by God’s way is required. Because we are human, we are all susceptible to sin, which requires ongoing repentance. Through this process Christians learn what it means to “**serve the LORD for he is our God**”.

## 7. The Covenant of Descent

By the time of Samuel, the word *b<sup>erith</sup>* had taken on a more general common usage. It came to be used more as “agreement” or “promise”, than as a formal covenant. An example of this is the “covenant of loyalty” between David and Jonathon. Jonathon recognizes that David will be king and promises support to him in preference to his father, Saul:

<sup>85</sup> The words are both “singular” – *hoq umish<sup>pat</sup>*; the implication is that Joshua continued to teach after the formal covenant.  
Tuesday, April 18, 2023



And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this." And **the two of them made a covenant before the LORD.** (1 Samuel 23:16-18 ESV)

Another example is the agreement by Abner to deliver the northern tribes to David. Both Abner and David agree to the covenant, and David puts a requirement on Abner:

And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, "To whom does the land belong? **Make your covenant with me,** and behold, **my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you.**" And he said, "Good; **I will make a covenant with you.** But **one thing I require of you;** that is, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face." (2 Samuel 3:12-13 ESV)

**The "covenant" between God and David** starts with David's desire to build a temple – a permanent dwelling place for YHWH. The Tabernacle built by Moses was a portable and temporary dwelling place for YHWH. **The concept of "tabernacling", "dwelling together", "abiding together" is very important in the Plan of God,**<sup>86</sup> but David is told that he cannot build the dwelling place:

But that same night **the word of the LORD came to Nathan,** "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: **Would you build me a house to dwell in?**'

"Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. **And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more ...**

"And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, **the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.** When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, **I will raise up your offspring after you,** who shall come from your body, and **I will establish his kingdom.** He shall build a house for my name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.** I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but **my [hesed] will not depart from him,** as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. **And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.**" In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. (2 Samuel 7:4-5, 8-10a, 11b-17 ESV see also 1 Chronicles 17:3-15)

In the "**historical prologue**" YHWH briefly reviews what he has done for David. YHWH points out that the "peace" he has given Israel through David is a type of the "peace" to come in the World Tomorrow when **New Israel will "be disturbed no more"**. In contrast to David's desire to build a house, there is the statement: "YHWH declares to you that **YHWH will make you a house**". But, there is no formal "cutting" of a covenant – only a two-fold promise, both parts of which are based on YHWH's declaration:

- First, **dynastic longevity**: "I will raise up your offspring after you ... I will establish his kingdom ... my *hesed* will not depart from him"
- Secondly, **Messianic descent**: "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever", "your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever", "your throne shall be established forever"

The first part of the promise was fulfilled by the unbroken line of kings from Solomon to Jehoiachin.<sup>87</sup>

The second part of the promise particularizes **the second promise to Abraham: "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed"**. The second promise is fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus had lived a sinless life. Then after his baptism by John, he defeated Satan, the god of this world,<sup>88</sup> in the wilderness.<sup>89</sup> **This established Jesus' right to be King of kings.** The **blessing on humanity** began with Jesus' sacrifice as a propitiation to cover all human sin. This has opened the door to salvation for all human beings. The final fulfillment of the promise will be when the one who became Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and assumes his throne forever. **Then the whole human race, all nations, will be blessed.**

<sup>86</sup> For a discussion of "dwelling" see the paper "**The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle**" on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>87</sup> See 2 Kings 25:8:19 // 2 Chronicles 21:7, Jeremiah 22:30, 2 Kings 25:2-7

<sup>88</sup> See 2 Corinthians 4:4, John 12:31, Revelation 12:9

<sup>89</sup> See Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13

These promises to David came to be regarded as a “covenant”:

For **he has made with me an everlasting covenant**, ordered in all things and secure. (2 Samuel 23:5 ESV)

Yet the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David, **because of the covenant that he had made with David**, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

(2 Chronicles 21:7 ESV)

Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, **then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken**, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne ... (Jeremiah 33:20-21a ESV)

You have said, “**I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant:**

‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’”

My [hesed] I will keep for him forever, and **my covenant will stand firm for him**.

**I will establish his offspring forever** and his throne as the days of the heavens. (Psalm 89:3-4, 28-29 ESV)

**The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back:**

“One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.

If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them,

their sons also **forever shall sit on your throne**.” (Psalm 132:11-12 ESV)

YHWH conditionally offered to establish his “word” to David through Solomon:

Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, “Concerning this house that you are building, **if you will walk in my statutes and obey my [mish\*patim] and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father**. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel.” (1 Kings 6:11-13 ESV)

The New Testament authors make clear the Davidic Covenant’s fulfillment in Jesus:

The book of the genealogy of **Jesus Christ, the son of David**<sup>90</sup> ... (Matthew 1:1 ESV)

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and **you shall call his name Jesus**. He will be great and will be called **the Son of the Most High**. And **the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David**, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:31-33 ESV)

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch **David** that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. **Being therefore a prophet**, and knowing that **God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne**, he foresaw and spoke about the **resurrection of the Christ** ... (Acts 2:29-31a ESV)

... he raised up **David** to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in **David** the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ **Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised**. (Acts 13:22-23 ESV)

... **the gospel of God**, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, **concerning his Son, who was descended from David** according to the flesh and was declared to be the **Son of God** in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, **Jesus Christ our Lord** ... (Romans 1:1b-4 ESV)

Remember **Jesus Christ**, risen from the dead, **the offspring of David**, as preached in my gospel ... (2 Timothy 2:8 ESV)

In the final few words of the Bible, Jesus himself affirms his descent from David:

**I, Jesus**, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.

I am the root and the **descendant of David**, the bright morning star. (Revelation 22:16 ESV)

Starting with the proto-evangelion in Genesis 3:15, the Old Testament contains a continuous thread of Messianic prophecies. The blessing of all nations through the descendant of Abraham is one of these.

**The Covenant of Descent** made with David provided further clarification. The First Advent was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies. The Second Advent will see the Descendant of David assume his eternal role as King of kings and all nations will be blessed through him. **The “dwelling place” that David desired to build, has been built by his Descendant: it is the New Testament Church.**

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<sup>90</sup> Both Matthew and Luke explicitly state the given genealogies are of Joseph, Jesus’ legal father (Matthew 1:6, Luke 3:23). The purpose of the genealogies is to demonstrate unbroken descent from David (Jeremiah 33:17-22), and, hence, the transference of the promise of unbroken descent to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

## 8. The Covenant of Salvation

Jesus' dual role is that of King and High Priest.<sup>91</sup> **The Covenant of Descent** focused on Jesus' role as King of kings. The much-prophesised New Covenant, **The Covenant of Salvation**, focuses on Jesus' role as High Priest. In this paper, we have seen many scriptures looking to the New Covenant.<sup>92</sup> The New Covenant will take full effect only after the Second Advent. At the inauguration of the first New Testament Passover, Jesus commenced the typical fulfillment of the New Covenant.<sup>93</sup>

The earliest prophesy of the New Covenant is in Hosea:

And **in that day**, declares the LORD, **you will call me 'My Husband,'** and **no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'** For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And **I will make for them a covenant on that day** with the **beasts of the field**, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And **I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war** from the [earth], and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in **righteousness** and in **[mish'pat]**, in **[hesed]** and in **mercy**. I will betroth you to me in **faithfulness**. And **you shall know the LORD**. (Hosea 2:16-20 ESV)

In chapter one of Hosea, YHWH establishes Hosea's family as an object lesson regarding YHWH's relationship with Israel. Using this metaphor, YHWH recounts, in chapter two verses one through fifteen, the various means he has used to teach Israel – to help them live up to the terms of the Sinai Covenant. In the passage quoted above, **YHWH gets to the real solution – the New Covenant**. In verse sixteen, **"my husband"** looks to the "marriage relationship" to be consummated between YHWH, the King of kings, and the resurrected saints, spiritual Israel, at the Second Advent.<sup>94</sup> The Hebrew word *ba'al* (Baal) means **"lord"** or **"master"**. It also was the part of the name of many pagan deities. The Sinai covenant had established Israel as the "vassal" with YHWH as the "master". Israel repeatedly fell into idolatry with the various *ba'alim* (Baals). **The New Covenant removes these situations**: the Sinai Covenant is ended, there is no more "master-vasal" relationship, and there will be no more idolatry. The covenant with the "beasts of the field" is further elaborated by Isaiah.<sup>95</sup> Under the New Covenant all war will be abolished<sup>96</sup> – the whole world will live in safety. There will be peace, order, good government, and freedom. The prophecy ends with a listing of some of the key words of the *torah*: righteousness, *mish'pat*, *hesed*, *raham* (mercy), faithfulness – **"and you shall know YHWH"**.

The seminal scriptures on the New Covenant are in Jeremiah chapters thirty-one and thirty-two, and in Ezekiel chapters eleven and thirty-six – starting in Jeremiah:

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make **a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah**, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, **my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband**, declares the LORD. For **this is the covenant that I will make** with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: **I will put my [torah] within them**, and **I will write it on their hearts**. And **I will be their God, and they shall be my people**. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For **I will forgive their iniquity**, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34 ESV)

The covenant is specifically with **"the house of Israel and the house of Judah"** this is the **New Israel** to be created through the Second Exodus after the Second Advent.<sup>97</sup> The Sinai Covenant was repeatedly broken by the Old Israel. **The crux of the New Covenant is that the torah will be written on people's hearts**. This is the crux of being a Christian – **to learn God's nature and replace sinful human nature by God's nature**. People in this condition require no further instruction to "Know YHWH". These people are prepared to teach others. Jeremiah continues:

Behold, **I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them** in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And **they shall be my people, and I will be their God**. **I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me**

<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of Jesus' role as High Priest, see the paper "To Be a Priest" on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>92</sup> See Leviticus 26:41, Deuteronomy 5:33, 6:6, 10:16, 29:4, 16-19a, 30:3b-6, 14, Joshua 24:23

<sup>93</sup> See Mark 14:22-25, Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:14-20, John 13:1-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

<sup>94</sup> See Revelation 19:6-9

<sup>95</sup> See Isaiah 11:6-9, 65:25

<sup>96</sup> See Micah 4:3, 5:10, Isaiah 2:4, Zechariah 9:10

<sup>97</sup> For scriptures on this topic see the Bible Study notes "The Remnant & Second Exodus" on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my [being]. (Jeremiah 32:37-41 ESV)

Again, the time frame is the New Israel after the Second Exodus. The relationship that God has always desired will be there: “they shall be my people, and I will be their God”. The New Covenant will be an “everlasting covenant” in which God will rejoice. Jeremiah expresses conversion using two metaphors:

- “I will put my *torah* within them, and I will write it on their hearts”
- “they will have one heart and one way” – the Way of God as taught by the *torah*

Ezekiel uses a slightly different metaphors for conversion:

Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my [mish\*patim] and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:17-20 ESV)

Ezekiel alludes to the Abrahamic promise of possession of the land. He focuses on the elimination of all idolatry. He adds to the “one heart” the provision of a “new spirit” – the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of which is the only way human beings can overcome sin and truly live by God’s *torah*. Then he compares the natural heart to a heart of stone – hard, unyielding, unchangeable; but through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit a person can be converted, can have a “heart of flesh”, and can inculcate God’s *torah* – “walk in my statutes and keep my mish\*patim and obey them”. Then being converted “they shall be my people, and I will be their God”.

Ezekiel then records a deeper exploration of conversion. YHWH starts off addressing the un-converted, typically, the people of Old Israel: God does NOT call people to conversion because of any merit on any individual’s part. God acts to “vindicate the holiness of my great name” – because he has made promises, made covenants, has a plan which he will see accomplished. God then addresses those being called, “through you” the plan will be accomplished:

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. (Ezekiel 36:22-23 ESV)

The Second Exodus is then addressed in verse twenty-four. “Conversion” is compared to “sprinkling with clean water” which “cleanses”.<sup>98</sup> The metaphors of a “new heart”, “heart of stone”, and “heart of flesh” are explicitly explained: “I will put my spirit within you” – it is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which brings about conversion. Conversion is necessary to allow a person to “walk in my statutes” and to “live by my mish\*patim”:

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to [live by my mish\*patim]. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:24-28 ESV)

Verses twenty-nine and thirty allude to the beneficence of the World Tomorrow when the converted are delivered “from all your uncleannesses”. Verse thirty-one gets to the heart of repentance – recognizing the inherent sinfulness of one’s own human nature: “you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations”. YHWH ends by reiterating his opening statement that he is acting for the sake of his plan, not because of anyone’s personal merit:

And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that

<sup>98</sup> See Isaiah 52:15a, Exodus 24:6-8, Leviticus 8:30, Numbers 19:18-19

you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then **you will remember your evil ways**, and your deeds that were not good, and **you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations**. **It is not for your sake that I will act**, declares the Lord GOD; **let that be known to you**. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. (Ezekiel 36:29-32 ESV)

The **Book of Malachi** contains a prophecy of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant: Behold, I send **my messenger**, and he **will prepare the way before me**. And the **Lord whom you seek** will suddenly come **to his temple**; and the **messenger of the covenant** in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, **says the LORD of hosts**. But **who can endure the day of his coming**, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and **they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD**. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be **pleasing to the LORD** as in the days of old and as in former years. (Malachi 3:1-4 ESV)

In the first sentence, "**my messenger**" is explicitly identified by the New Testament authors as **John the Baptist**.<sup>99</sup> In the second sentence, "**the Lord**" is **Jesus Christ** – looking forward to the **First Advent**. Jesus Christ is the "**messenger**" of the **New Covenant**. In the prophecy, YHWH, the covenant God is Israel, is looking forward to his new role as Jesus the Messiah, the Saviour of all humanity. At the First Advent, the Messiah came only "**to his temple**",<sup>100</sup> the **New Testament Church**, for which he has served in his role as High Priest making conversion possible for those called to the True Church. Just prior to the Second Advent, the **Day of YHWH** will occur: "**who can endure the day of his coming**"? YHWH will then assume his role as King of kings and will administer retributive justice, destroying those who are today destroying the earth.<sup>101</sup> After the establishment of the Kingdom of God, **salvation will be made available to each and every person on the planet** – "**they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD**" which will be "**pleasing to the LORD**".

On the evening before his crucifixion, **Jesus inaugurated the New Testament Passover**:

And **when the hour came**, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat **this Passover** with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And **he took bread**, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "**This is my body**, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "**This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood**." (Luke 22:14-20 ESV)<sup>102</sup>

**Because Jesus, as YHWH, was the Creator of human life, his life is worth more than all human lives combined**. Jesus lived a sinless life – he did NOT incur the death penalty. All humans sin – we have all incurred the death penalty.<sup>103</sup> Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to pay the penalty for all human beings. This has made salvation possible. **The sacrifice of Jesus is memorialized yearly in the New Testament Passover**.

Luke records Jesus last earthly dealings with the apostles, just prior to the ascension:

... he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and **speaking about the kingdom of God**. And while staying with them **he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem**, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now. ... But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:2-5, 8 ESV)

Ten days later, on **the first Christian Pentecost**, the New Testament Church was inaugurated. The group of believers amounted to about 120 persons.<sup>104</sup> This would include the eleven apostles, the seventy, and probably their wives. On the Day of Pentecost, they were "**baptized with the Holy Spirit**", and immediately began to preach to the crowds in Jerusalem. Some 3000 people were baptized on that day

<sup>99</sup> See Mark 1:2, Matthew 11:10, Luke 7:27; for a discussion of the work of John the Baptist, see the paper "**John the Baptist - More Than a Prophet**" on [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>100</sup> As a type of this, Jesus as a human being, came to the "physical" temple in Jerusalem.

<sup>101</sup> See Revelation 11:17-18, 14:17-20, 19:17-21, Isaiah 1:24, 13:9, 24:4-6, 26:21, 34:1-8, 42:13, 48:22, 59:18, 63:1-4, Amos 9:1b

<sup>102</sup> See also Mark 14:22-25, Matthew 26:26-29, John 13:1-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

<sup>103</sup> See Romans 3:23, 6:23a

<sup>104</sup> See Acts 1:15



– these were people who had been prepared by John the Baptist and Jesus’ ministry. This was the beginning of the New Testament Church.<sup>105</sup> With the beginning of the New Testament Church, the New Covenant, **The Covenant of Salvation**, came into force in a typical way. **Only the few who are specifically called by God to the True Church are under the New Covenant today.** Salvation is NOT generally available to all people. Those called today are called to be prepared to bring salvation to all people after the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Then **The Covenant of Salvation** will be available to all.

## 9. Covenants of Love

**These seven covenants are a perfect and complete expression of God’s love for human beings.** God’s love is most clearly expressed by the grace he holds out to each and every human being. At creation, God told Adam, **“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”**.<sup>106</sup> The same instruction as given to Noah after he flood.<sup>107</sup> God created human beings to become members of the God Family; **to advance beyond our physical existence into a spiritual plane of existence:**

But someone will ask, **“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?”** ... There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ... **So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.** ... I tell you this, brothers: **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,** nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Behold! **I tell you a mystery.** We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed,** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised imperishable,** and we shall be changed. **For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.” [Isaiah 25:8]

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” [Hosea 13:14]

(1 Corinthians 15:35, 40, 42, 50-55)

**God wants a very large family.** He has created a physical universe which is so large we cannot fathom it; yet he holds it in the palm of his hand.<sup>108</sup> God’s plans for his family are beyond imagination. **Only through God’s grace can anyone of us attain to this most marvellous gift.** Human nature is susceptible to sin – all have sinned<sup>109</sup> and have earned the death penalty.<sup>110</sup> God’s covenants with human beings are a perfect and complete expression of God’s grace and love. God’s plan of salvation is the means whereby sinning human beings can be transformed into holy members of the Family of God.

**The Covenant of Justness** establishes one the most important attributes of God’s nature – *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*.

Justness is fundamental of God in all his dealings with human beings – God is completely fair. God requires justness to be part of the character of any person to whom he grants the gift of eternal life.

**The Covenant of Justness** was made explicitly with Noah but applied to his sons and all generations of human societies. This covenant defines the basis of justice within human society. If it had been kept by the nations of the world, the world would be a very different place today. **The Covenant of Justness** makes clear the scope of God’s love – **“For God so loved the world ...”**. God’s love is extended to all peoples of all nations and all races over the whole planet. God wants sons and daughters in his family from the whole world.

With **The Covenant of Promise** **God began to reveal how he would do it** – he began to reveal **the Plan of God for the salvation of human beings.** The revelation started simply. Abram was called and given two promises: that his descendants would form a nation and inherit the Land of Canaan, and that all nations of the world would be blessed through one of his descendants. Throughout his life Abram struggled to understand how God would work out his promises – yet **“he believed God”** and through his faith God accounted him righteous. This has become a model for righteousness of all true worshippers

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<sup>105</sup> See Acts 2:1-40

<sup>106</sup> See Genesis 1:28

<sup>107</sup> See Genesis 9:1

<sup>108</sup> See Isaiah 40:12

<sup>109</sup> See Romans 3:23

<sup>110</sup> See Romans 6:23a

of God, to whom Abram became “**the father of the faithful**”. For this, his name was changed to “Abraham”. Next **Abraham had to learn the meaning of *hesed*** – the most important word describing God’s nature. **God’s love is defined by *hesed***. Abraham was given four object lessons to teach him the meaning of *hesed*. He was required to demonstrate his understanding by cutting a covenant based on *hesed* and by his willingness to sacrifice his son-of-promise, Isaac. As Christians we are similarly required to understand *hesed* so we can make it integral to our character.

**The Covenant of Knowledge** contains the revelation of **the *torah* of God**. It is the teaching of God for all human beings everywhere at all times. It is **God’s instructions for his children**. It gives us the information we need to be Holy, to understand the Plan of God, to understand the Nature of God, to understand what God wants us to become. This is **the greatest revelation ever given** from God to mankind. **This *torah* explains to us God’s grace and God’s love**. Although the *torah* was given to them, the history of Israel is a sad chronicle of the nation’s failure to keep the obligation they made in the Sinai Covenant – the nation and most individuals did NOT inculcate the teaching of **The Covenant of Knowledge**. Yet throughout the history of Israel there was always a True Remnant – a few people who did understand and were faithful, true worshippers of God. Most notable among this group are the **Prophets**. The material we have from the writing prophets comprises the **second great revelation** from God to mankind

**The Covenant of Life** is a personal covenant between God and each true worshipper. It looks to the better promise<sup>111</sup> of the New Covenant – **eternal life**. God’s desire for each and every human being is to **choose life**. God’s plan entails abundant physical life,<sup>112</sup> while it lasts; but, more importantly, eternal life for those who live their physical lives according to the *torah* and thus learn to have God’s nature. **The gift of eternal life is the objective of God’s grace and God’s love**.

**The Covenant of Fidelity** teaches us the necessity of **unfailing commitment** to covenant responsibilities. This is the lesson of *hesed* – it is fundamental to God’s nature; we must make it part of our nature. Israel did not learn this lesson.

**The Covenant of Descent** is all about the Plan of God. God’s promise to Abraham of universal blessing through a descendant is greatly clarified. David became “**a man after God’s own heart**”. We all must grow into beings in which God sees a reflection of his nature. The promise to David of an eternal dynasty looks directly to the Messiah and the New Covenant.

**The Covenant of Salvation** brings everything together. **All the sacrifices, so many prophecies, so much of the Old Testament looks to the Messiah**. Jesus’ sacrifice made salvation possible. Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant at the First Advent. At the Second Advent salvation will be made available to all human beings. The material recorded by the New Testament authors about the life and teaching of Jesus Christ comprises the **third great revelation** from God to mankind.

## Excursus 1 – *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*

The two most important words which describe God’s nature, his character, are *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* and *hesed*. The word *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* has come to have a very broad range of meaning. There is no word in English which adequately translates *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*. Between TWOT and BDB there are fifteen or twenty nuances of meaning of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* listed.<sup>113</sup> The primary root from which the noun *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* is derived is the verb שָׁפַט - shaphat – the “primary sense of *shaphat* is to exercise the process of government”.<sup>114</sup> BDB states the fundamental meaning of *shaphat* is “judge, govern”.<sup>115</sup> TDNT identifies the basic meaning of *shaphat* as “to rule”, “to judge”.<sup>116</sup> With reference to cognate Semitic languages TDOT identifies the basic meaning of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* as “government, authority”.<sup>117</sup> In the ancient world these two concepts,

<sup>111</sup> See Hebrews 6:9, 8:6, 9:15, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:25, Ephesians 1:11-14, 2 Corinthians 7:1

<sup>112</sup> See John 10:10b

<sup>113</sup> See TWOT article 2443c page 948 and BDB page 1048

<sup>114</sup> See TWOT article 2443 page 947

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> See TDNT III page 923

<sup>117</sup> See TDOT IX page 87

“judging” and “governing”, were inextricably intertwined. This is most obvious in the Book of Judges. The “judge” was God’s representative to the nation. The “judge” made decisions and was the governor at the same time. There was no division of authority. In both of these fundamental meanings, there is the notion of “action” – doing something. This property of “action/doing” extends into most nuances of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*. Frequently, the action involves “deciding”, “discerning”, or “deriving understanding”.

The articles already referenced contain excellent general surveys of the various nuances of meaning of *shaphat* and *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*. Whatever the original meaning of the word and however the various nuances developed are secondary to the most important Biblical meaning. As the word *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* is used in the Bible, clearly the most important meaning is “justness” as character attribute of God, a key component of the Nature of God. The “decision” aspect is clearly implied by “justness” because **the doing of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* implies having or developing an understanding of the complete torah of God.** This is made explicit by the plural uses of the word – *mish<sup>e</sup>patim*. This meaning is demonstrated in this excursus. For more detailed examples of the range of meaning, see the following research notes on

[www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca):

- Justice "mishepat" in Deuteronomy
- Justice "mishepat" in Psalms
- Justice "mishepat" in Isaiah

The reciprocal nature of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*:

For **you are a people holy to the LORD your God.** The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ... You shall therefore be careful **to do** the **commandment** and the **statutes** and the **[mish<sup>e</sup>patim]** that I command you today. And because you **listen to** these **[mish<sup>e</sup>patim]** and **keep and do them**, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the **[hesed]** that he swore to your fathers. He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. (Deuteronomy 7:6, 11-13a ESV)

God is clear that Israel’s favoured position is due only to his election. Because of God’s election, Israel is **“to do”** the *torah*, which is summarized by **“commandment”**, **“statutes”**, and **“mish<sup>e</sup>patim”**. The *mish<sup>e</sup>patim*, in particular, is to **“listen to”** which implies understanding, learning from. The *mish<sup>e</sup>patim* is the understanding to be derived from the action to **“keep and do them”** – the commandment and the statutes. The *torah* expresses God’s will – *mish<sup>e</sup>patim* is an understanding of God’s will, God’s nature, “justness”. Developing this understanding of God’s nature will result in God’s unfettered blessing and outpouring of his love.

The Nature of God:

For I will **proclaim** the **name of the LORD**; ascribe greatness to our God!

“The Rock, his work is perfect, for **all his ways** are **[mish<sup>e</sup>pat]**.”

A God of **faithfulness** and **without iniquity, just** and **upright** is he. (Deuteronomy 32:3-4 ESV)

Moses is proclaiming the Nature of God – **the name of YHWH**. God’s nature is what gives him **greatness**. A single word which summarizes God’s nature, **“all his ways”**, is **mish<sup>e</sup>pat**. The last line particularizes four aspects of God’s nature included in **mish<sup>e</sup>pat**. This passage echoes Exodus 33:19 and 34:6-7.

The “Way of God” expresses the Nature of God:

**Make me to know your ways**, O LORD; **teach me your paths**.

**Lead me in your truth** and **teach me**,

for you are the God of **my salvation**; for you I wait all the day long.

Remember your **mercy**, O LORD, and your **[hesed]**, for they have been from of old.

Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

according to your **[hesed]** remember me, for the sake of your **goodness**, O LORD!

**Good** and **upright** is the LORD; therefore **he instructs** sinners in **the way**.

**He leads** the humble in **[mish<sup>e</sup>pat]**, and **teaches** the humble **his way**.

All **the paths** of the LORD are **[hesed]** and **faithfulness**,

for those who keep his **covenant** and his **testimonies**. (Psalm 25:4-10 ESV)

The psalmist prays:

- Make me to know
- teach me

- Lead me

He wants to be like God:

- your ways, the way, his way
- your paths, the paths
- your truth

He lists attributes of God's nature that he needs to learn:

- mercy, *rahām*
- covenant love, *hesed*
- goodness, *tuv*, good, *tov*
- upright, *yashar*
- faithfulness, *'emeth*

All of this crescendos in the word ***mish<sup>e</sup>pat***. To learn to have God's nature, one must be taught by God through the Bible; then one must practice God's way by living by the *torah*. This will impart to a true worshipper of God, the characteristics of God's nature. The process of learning, doing, understanding, and growing to be like God is embodied in ***mish<sup>e</sup>pat***. God loves *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*.<sup>118</sup> God's *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* is so vast it is compared to the depths of the ocean.<sup>119</sup> God will impart his *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* on true worshippers.<sup>120</sup> One to whom *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* has been given speaks with wisdom and will not slip off the path of God's way because the *torah* is written in his heart.<sup>121</sup>

God's first formal covenant with mankind was **The Covenant of Justness** – the covenant with Noah after the flood. This covenant was intended as an object lesson for humanity to understand the Nature of God. "Justness" is fundamental to God's nature. All human societies are required by **The Covenant of Justness** to be based on the principle of absolute "justice". Few human societies have even come close to this. God is soon going to create a worldwide utopia that is absolutely based on "justice" in which all human beings will have the opportunity to learn "justness" – *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*. There are many prophecies of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* in the World Tomorrow.

In the World Tomorrow all people will learn to walk in God's paths, *mish<sup>e</sup>patim*:

**The path** of the righteous is level; you make level the way of the righteous.

In **the path** of your [***mish<sup>e</sup>patim***], O LORD, we wait for you;  
your name and remembrance are the desire of our [hearts].

My [heart] yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.

For when your [***mish<sup>e</sup>patim***] are in the earth, the **inhabitants of the world learn righteousness**.  
(Isaiah 26:7-9 ESV)

The prophet is expressing the attitude of a converted person – someone learning to make *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* part of their nature. The prophecy looks to the World Tomorrow because only then will all "**the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness**".

The government in the World Tomorrow will truly care for the welfare of the people:

Behold, **a king** will reign in righteousness, and **princes** will rule in [***mish<sup>e</sup>pat***].

**Each will be like** a hiding place from the wind, a shelter from the storm,  
**like** streams of water in a dry place, **like** the shade of a great rock in a weary land. (Isaiah 32:1-2 ESV)

The "king" is of course the King of kings, the returned Messiah, Jesus Christ, in his new role after the Second Advent. **The "princes" are those who rule with him – the resurrected saints**. The government is characterized as one of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*. The similes provide examples of the nature of each individual comprising the government. Because all have learned the Nature of God, they will truly care for the welfare of all the people.

All people over the whole earth will have the opportunity to learn God's nature:

Give attention to me, **my people**, and give ear to me, my nation;  
for [***torah***] will go out from me, and I will set my [***mish<sup>e</sup>pat***] for a light to **the peoples**.

<sup>118</sup> See Psalm 33:5

<sup>119</sup> See Psalm 36:6

<sup>120</sup> See Psalm 37:3-6

<sup>121</sup> See Psalm 37:30-31

My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. (Isaiah 51:4-5 ESV)

The speaker is YHWH looking forward to his role as King of kings. In the World Tomorrow all “people” in every nation will comprise the domain of the King of kings. The teaching of God will be made universally available, and all peoples will be given the opportunity to learn and inculcate mish<sup>e</sup>pat. This will give them the opportunity for salvation.

## Excursus 2 – *hesed*

The two most important words which describe God’s nature, his character, are *hesed* and *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*. The range of meaning of *hesed* is much narrower than *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*; but again, there is no single word in English which adequately translates *hesed*. Most often, ESV uses “steadfast love” as the translation for *hesed*.

The assumed verbal root from which *hesed* is derived is חָסַד – ḤSD, but the verb is almost never used.<sup>122</sup> There is no similar word in cognate languages.<sup>123</sup> There is a significant literature discussing *hesed*.<sup>124</sup> This excursus does not attempt to survey or replace this literature. Each instance of *hesed* is analyzed with respect to the most important meaning of the word – an attribute of God’s character, a descriptor of the Nature of God. All instance of *hesed* in the book of Genesis have been discussed above in the section, **3. The Covenant of Promise**; these will NOT be revisited.

There is also a rare usage of *hesed* meaning “shame”, “reproach”.<sup>125</sup> The verb form is used once, and the noun form is used twice.<sup>126</sup>

### *hesed* – Seminal Scriptures

The word *hesed* is integrally used in the second commandment:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing [*hesed*] to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6 ESV // Deuteronomy 5:8-10)

Clearly *hesed* is an attribute of God – he “shows” it to those who love him. This indicates the reciprocal nature of *hesed*. The contrast is those who hate God to whom “visiting”, punishment, is meted out.

The Sitz im Leben and meaning of Exodus 33 and 34 have been discussed above in the section, **4.3 The Theophany to Moses**. The word *hesed* is used twice:

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in [*hesed*] and faithfulness, keeping [*hesed*] for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6-7 ESV)<sup>127</sup>

This is one of the most important passages in the Bible describing the Nature of God. It highlights several of the most important attributes of God’s character. **God “abounds” in *hesed* – it is one of God’s most abundant characteristics, but it is only operative in relation to true worshippers, people in a “covenant relationship” with God**, people whose iniquities have been “forgiven”. God “keeps” *hesed* with these people.

Deuteronomy 7:6-12 was discussed above in the section, **4.5 To Explain This torah**. The word *hesed* is used twice in close connection with *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, and two distinct words are used for “love”:

... the LORD set his love on you and chose you... **it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers** ... Know therefore that the LORD your God ... **keeps covenant and [*hesed*] with those who love him** ... And because you listen to these [*mish<sup>e</sup>pat*] and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the [*hesed*] that he swore to your fathers. (Deuteronomy 7:7-12 ESV)

<sup>122</sup> There are only two instances: 2 Samuel 22:26 and Psalm 18:26.

<sup>123</sup> See TWOT article 698 page 305 and TDOT volume V page 45

<sup>124</sup> Op. cit. Bibliographies

<sup>125</sup> See TWOT article 699 page 307

<sup>126</sup> See Proverbs 25:10 (verb) and Leviticus 20:17 (noun) and Proverbs 14:34 (noun)

<sup>127</sup> See Psalm 103:8, 145:8, Jeremiah 32:18, Joel 2:13, and Jonah 4:2 for allusions to Exodus 34:6-7



The focus of this passage is God's commitment to the Sinai Covenant. God unequivocally affirms that he will keep the covenant and *hesed*. The covenant defines a relationship – *hesed* is the operative force of the relationship. The first word for “love”, “the LORD set his *love* on you”, is from *הָשָׂק* - *hashaq*. It implies an emotional attachment with no reciprocal feeling implied.<sup>128</sup> The other two instances of “love”, “the LORD *loves* you” and “those who *love* him” are from *אָהַב* - *'ahav*. It is the most common word for “love” corresponding to a similar range of meaning as the English word.<sup>129</sup> It is a feeling going in one direction but frequently seeking the same feeling in the other direction. God's *hashaq* for Israel is his choice – it relates to the election of Israel based on the promises to the patriarchs. God desires his *'ahav* for Israel to be reciprocated. Those individuals who reciprocate *'ahav* will participate in the covenant benefits. **God's *hesed* is more than these expressions of “love”.** The *b<sup>e</sup>rith* is unequivocal and God's *hesed* is unequivocal. Individuals who reciprocate *'ahav* and fully participate in the *b<sup>e</sup>rith* will develop the character attribute, *hesed*.

**The prophet Hosea** clearly captures the full understanding of *hesed*. First, he identifies it as a key attribute of the Nature of God:

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in **righteousness** and in **[mish\*pat]**, in **[hesed]** and in **mercy**. I will betroth you to me in **faithfulness**. And you shall know the LORD.  
(Hosea 2:19-20 ESV)

**Hosea next demonstrates that *hesed* is desired by God in true worshippers.** Israel pretended to seek God, but because Israel broke the *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, they demonstrated lack of *hesed*:

Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; ...  
What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?  
What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
Your **[hesed]** is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.  
Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;  
I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my **[mish\*patim]** goes forth as the light.  
For I desire **[hesed]** and not sacrifice, the **knowledge of God** rather than burnt offerings.  
But like Adam they transgressed the **[b<sup>e</sup>rith]**; there they dealt faithlessly with me. (Hosea 6:3-7 ESV)

YHWH pleads to Israel through Hosea to repent, to change, to truly seek God's way:

Sow for yourselves **righteousness**; reap **[hesed]**;  
break up your fallow ground, for **it is the time to seek the LORD**,  
that he may come and rain **righteousness** upon you. (Hosea 10:12 ESV)

To “seek YHWH” implies “conversion” – becoming a True Worshipper. To “sow righteousness” implies living by God's way, the *torah*, as stipulated in the *b<sup>e</sup>rith*. This Israel did not do – YHWH implores them to try it, do something new, “**break up your fallow ground**”. This will result in acquiring *hesed* as a character attribute, to “reap” *hesed*.

Hosea sums it up with a final invocation:

So you, **by the help of your God, return**,  
hold fast to **[hesed]** and **[mish\*pat]**, and wait continually for your God. (Hosea 12:6 ESV)

Hosea clearly identifies *hesed* as a key attribute of God's character. He shows that it is required by God of humans who become True Worshipers. Israel in general failed to understand God's Nature and the meaning of *hesed* because they broke the covenant – they refused to live by the Way of God as specified in the *torah*.

**The prophet Micah** reinforces what Hosea has stated:

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? ...  
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? ...  
He has told you, O man, what is good; and **what does the LORD require of you**  
but to do **[mish\*pat]**, and to **[’ahav]** **[hesed]**, and to **walk humbly with your God?** (Micah 6:6-8 ESV)

The character attribute, *hesed*, is to be greatly desired, to be loved. It can only be attained by walking “humbly with your God”, living God's way, living by his *torah*, as stipulated in the *b<sup>e</sup>rith*. This is required by God. Micah closes his book with a beautiful summary:

<sup>128</sup> See TWOT article 773 page 332

<sup>129</sup> See TWOT article 29 page 14

Who is a God like you, **pardoning iniquity** and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?  
He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in **hesed**.  
He will again have **compassion** on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot.  
You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.  
You will show **faithfulness** to Jacob and **hesed** to Abraham,  
as **you have sworn to our fathers** from the days of old. (Micah 7:18-20 ESV)

The human condition is one of susceptibility to sin. Those called by God to be True Worshipers must repent of all forms of sin, then because God “delights in *hesed*”, “he does not retain his anger”, he has “compassion on us”. Because of *hesed*, God is forgiving. The *b<sup>e</sup>rith* made with Abraham is the vehicle of expression of God’s *hesed*. Because God made the *b<sup>e</sup>rith* with Abraham and confirmed it with Isaac and Jacob, God continues in faithfulness to express *hesed* with True Worshipers who are in a *b<sup>e</sup>rith* relationship with God.

The psalmist summarizes the relationship of *hesed* and the True Worship of God:

Make me to **know your ways**, O LORD; **teach me** your paths.  
Lead me in **your truth** and **teach me**,  
for you are the God of my **salvation**; for you I wait all the day long.  
Remember your **mercy**, O LORD, and your **hesed**, for they have been from of old.  
Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your **hesed** remember me, for the sake of your **goodness**, O LORD!  
**Good and upright** is the LORD; therefore **he instructs** sinners in the way.  
**He leads the humble** in **[mish<sup>o</sup>pat]**, and **teaches** the humble his way.  
**All the paths** of the LORD are **hesed** and **faithfulness**,  
for those who **keep his covenant** and his testimonies. (Psalm 25:4-10 ESV)

The psalmist emphasizes the God teaches, instructs, and leads “the humble”, the True Worshiper, in “your ways”, “your truth”, “what is right”, “all the paths” – this will result in “salvation”. Many attributes of God’s character are listed: mercy, goodness, good and upright, faithfulness. All of this is subsumed to *hesed* – which is “from of old”, it has always been fundamental to the Nature of God. By *hesed* the psalmist appeals to God to remember him, not for his own sake but for the sake of God’s goodness in calling him. “All the paths”, everything about the Way of God, is representative of *hesed*. This is faithfully stipulated by *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, the covenants by which God has made his grace to humanity manifest – this is the gift from God to those who “keep his covenant”.

### *hesed* – the Nature of God

The redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt was an act of *hesed*:

Who is like you, O LORD ...  
Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?  
You have led in your **hesed** the people whom you have redeemed;  
you have guided them by **your strength** to your holy abode. (Exodus 15:11, 13 ESV)

When the Israelites first approached Canaan and the spies returned a negative report so that the people refused to proceed with the invasion, YHWH threatened to invoke the punishment for covenant violation:

And the LORD said to Moses, “**How long will this people despise me?** And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? **I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them** ... (Numbers 14:11-12 ESV)

Moses appealed to God’s nature as it had been revealed to him in the personal theophany at Sinai:

And now, please **let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised**, saying, ‘The LORD is slow to anger and **abounding in hesed**, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’ **Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your hesed**, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.” (Numbers 14:17-19 ESV)

David recognized that salvation and the promise of “descent” are purely from YHWH’s *hesed*:

For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.  
Great **salvation** he brings to his king, and shows **hesed** to his anointed,  
to David and **his offspring forever**. (2 Samuel 22:50-51 ESV // Psalm 18:49-50)

When YHWH revealed himself to Solomon in a dream at Gibeon, Solomon acknowledged that his position as king of Israel was an act of *hesed* on YHWH's part due to the promise made to David:

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great **[hesed]** to your servant David my father, because **he walked before you in faithfulness**, in **righteousness**, and in **uprightness of heart** toward you. And you have kept for him this great **[hesed]** and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day."  
(1 Kings 3:5-7 ESV // 2 Chronicles 1:7-8)

Later at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon makes it clear that David learned the meaning of *hesed* as Abraham had done:

O LORD God, do not turn away the face of your anointed one!  
Remember your **[hesed]** for David your servant. (2 Chronicles 6:42 ESV)

The ESV translation of the second line is typical of modern translations – the *hesed* is taken as YHWH's *hesed*; the Hebrew is:

עַבְדְּךָ	דָּוִד	לְחֶסֶדִי	זָכְרָה
`av`deka	david	l`has`dey	zak`erah
servant of you	David	to <i>hesed</i> of	remember

The old King James has the sense correct: "**remember the *[hesed]* of David your servant**". Solomon had asserted that David learned to have God's nature: "he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you". As Abraham learned that *hesed* is fundamental to the Nature of God, so did David. Some two and a half centuries later Isaiah alludes to the same thing:

Come, **everyone who thirsts**, come to the waters;  
and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.  
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.  
**Incline your ear**, and come to me; **hear**, that [you may have life];  
and I will make with you **an everlasting covenant, [hesed]** of David [the one being trustworthy].  
(Isaiah 55:1-3 ESV slightly altered)

Isaiah is prophesizing about conversion. The "everlasting covenant" is the New Covenant. Jesus quotes Isaiah in the context of conversion:

... Jesus stood up and cried out, "**If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink**. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, [which] those who believed in him were to receive ... (John 7:37 ESV)

As David learned to have the godly character attribute of *hesed*, so all True Worshippers of God, all truly converted Christians, must learn the character attribute of *hesed*. This is made explicit by the use of *hesed* in the Book of Proverbs, for example:

Let not **[hesed]** and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them around your neck;  
**write them on the tablet of your heart**. (Proverbs 3:3 ESV)<sup>130</sup>

The kings Hezekiah and Josiah were said to have learned *hesed*.<sup>131</sup> King Joash did NOT remember *hesed* when he killed Zechariah ben Jehoiada.<sup>132</sup> Jonah laments those succumbing to idolatry since they have no hope of learning *hesed*.<sup>133</sup> Isaiah asserts that the best *hesed* of man is worthless without the "word of God".<sup>134</sup>

The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah frequently use *hesed* as an attribute of YHWH. Some of the references are clearly Messianic, for example:

... then a throne will be established in **[hesed]**, and on it will sit in faithfulness  
in the tent of David one who judges and seeks [mish`pat] and is swift to do righteousness.  
(Isaiah 16:5 ESV)

<sup>130</sup> See also Proverbs 11:7, 14:22, 16:6, 19:22, 20:6, 28, 21:21, 31:26; Zechariah 7:9 (ESV has "kindness" for *hesed*)

<sup>131</sup> See 2 Chronicles 32:32, 35:26 (ESV has "good deeds" for *hesed*)

<sup>132</sup> See 2 Chronicles 24:22 (ESV has "kindness" for *hesed*), see also Job 6:14

<sup>133</sup> See Jonah 2:8

<sup>134</sup> See Isaiah 40:6-8 (ESV has "beauty" for *hesed* in verse 6)

... let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices **[hesed]**, [mish<sup>e</sup>pat], and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:24 ESV)<sup>135</sup>

Nehemiah and Ezra frequently appeal to the *hesed* of YHWH to assist them in their situation, for example:

And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God **who keeps covenant** and **[hesed]** with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. ... O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and **give success to your servant today**, and **grant him mercy in the sight of this man.**” (Nehemiah 1:5-6, 11 ESV)

Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, and who extended to me his **[hesed] before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty officers**. I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me. (Ezra 7:27-28 ESV)<sup>136</sup>

### *hesed* – Psalms

There are about 250 occurrences of *hesed* in the Bible – about half of them are in the Book of Psalms. Hence, the usage in Psalms requires specific analysis. The most common usage of *hesed* in the Book of Psalms is an attribute of God expressed as an action of God towards or on behalf of man, for example:

But I, **through the abundance of your [hesed]**, will enter your house.  
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you. (Psalm 5:7 ESV)<sup>137</sup>

There are ten passages in Psalms which reflect the Nature of God as discussed in the previous section, for example:

For the word of the LORD is **upright**, and all his work is done in **faithfulness**.  
He loves **righteousness** and **[mish<sup>e</sup>pat]**;  
the earth is full of the **[hesed]** of the LORD. (Psalm 33:4-5 ESV)<sup>138</sup>

There are number of Psalms which use *hesed* in the context of God’s covenants, these are discussed in the section, *hesed – Covenants*. The Psalms exhibit many figures of speech used in relation to *hesed*. Some examples are given in the next section, *hesed – Figures of Speech*.

### *hesed* – Figures of Speech

The most common literary device in Hebrew is parallelism. Parallel words or phrases are generally synonymous or similar in some aspect. This can help to bring out nuances of meaning. The most common words used in parallel with *hesed* are the various nouns derived from אָמָן - ‘aman. These words carry a range of meaning including “faith”, “truth”, “fidelity”, “faithfulness”.<sup>139</sup> These are very important words related to the Nature of God. Some examples of direct parallelism are:

Your **[hesed]**, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your **faithfulness** to the clouds.  
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your [mish<sup>e</sup>pat] is like the great deep;  
(Psalm 36:5-6 ESV)  
It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;  
to declare your **[hesed]** in the morning, and your **faithfulness** by night (Psalm 92:1-2 ESV)<sup>140</sup>

The parallelism can be more complicated, for example:

For the **word** of the LORD is **upright**, and all his **work** is done in **faithfulness**.  
He loves **righteousness** and **[mish<sup>e</sup>pat]**; the earth is full of the **[hesed]** of the LORD. (Psalm 33:4-5 ESV)  
I have **not hidden** your **deliverance** within my heart;  
I have **spoken** of your **faithfulness** and your salvation;  
I have **not concealed** your **[hesed]** and your **faithfulness** from the great congregation.

<sup>135</sup> See also Isaiah 54:8, 63:7, Jeremiah 16:5, 31:3, 32:18, Lamentations 3:22, 32

<sup>136</sup> See also Nehemiah 9:17, 32, 13:14 (ESV has “good deeds” for *hesed*), 13:22

<sup>137</sup> See also Psalm 6:4, 13:5, 17:7, 18:50, 21:7, 23:6, 25:6, 7, 10, 26:3, 31:7, 16, 21, 32:10, 36:5, 7, 10, 40:9-11, 44:26, 52:8, 57:3, 10, 59:10, 16, 17, 61:7, 62:12, 63:3, 66:20, 69:13, 16, 77:8, 85:7, 86:5, 13, 15, 88:11, 89:1, 2, 14, 24, 26, 33, 49, 90:14, 94:18, 103:11, 106:7, 107:8, 15, 21, 31, 108:4, 109:21, 26, 115:1, 117:2, 119:76, 88, 124, 149, 159, 130:7, 138:2, 143:12

<sup>138</sup> See also Psalm 42:8, 48:9-11, 51:1, 52:1, 92:2, 101:1, 119:64, 143:8, 147:11

<sup>139</sup> See TWOT article 116 page 51

<sup>140</sup> See also Psalm 26:3, 57:10, 88:11, 89:33, 49, 108:4, 117:2

As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your **mercy** from me;  
your **[hesed]** and your **faithfulness** will ever preserve me! (Psalm 40:10-11 ESV)

God's faithfulness is coordinated with *hesed* as blessings:

Now may the LORD show **[hesed]** and **faithfulness** to you.

And I will do good to you because you have done this thing. (2 Samuel 2:6 ESV)

You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where?  
Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD show **[hesed]** and **faithfulness** to you."

(2 Samuel 15:20 ESV)<sup>141</sup>

This leads into the use of the terms in a **hendiadys** indicating the complete range of the attributes of God nature, for example:

Righteousness and [mish<sup>e</sup>pat] are the foundation of your throne;

**[hesed] and faithfulness** go before you. (Psalm 89:14 ESV)

He has remembered his **[hesed] and faithfulness** to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. (Psalm 98:3 ESV)<sup>142</sup>

Other words with which *hesed* is used in a close relationship, (parallel, coordinated, or hendiadys), include:

- עֹז - 'oz, "**strength**", "**power**" (Exodus 15:13, Psalms 62:11-12)
- יְשׁוּעָה - y<sup>e</sup>shu'ah, "**salvation**" (2 Samuel 22:51 // Psalm 18:50, Psalm 40:10, 85:7, 119:41)
- בְּרִית - b<sup>e</sup>rith, "**covenant**" (Isaiah 54:10, Psalm 89:28, 106:45, Daniel 9:4, Nehemiah 1:5, 9:32)
- צַדִּיק - tzadiq, "**righteous**" (Isaiah 57:1)
- צַדִּיקָה - tz<sup>e</sup>daqah, "**righteousness**" (Hosea 10:12, Jeremiah 9:24, Psalm 36:10, Proverbs 21:21 <ESV has "kindness" for *hesed*>)
- אֶהָבָה - 'ahavah, "**love**" (Jeremiah 2:2 <ESV has "devotion" for *hesed*>, Jeremiah 31:3 <ESV has "faithfulness" for *hesed*>)
- רַחֵם - raham, "**mercy**", "**compassion**" (Lamentations 3:22, 32, Psalm 69:16, 25:6, 51:1, 103:4, Isaiah 54:8, 63:7, Jeremiah 16:5, Daniel 1:9 <ESV has "favour" for *hesed*>)
- דַּעַת - da'ath, "**knowledge**", (Hosea 4:1, 6:6)
- טוֹב - tov, "**good**", "**goodness**" (Psalm 25:7, Psalm 86:5, 23:6 <ESV has "mercy" for *hesed*>)
- סָלַח - sallah, "**forgiving**" (Psalm 86:15)
- מִשְׁפָּט - mish<sup>e</sup>pat, "**justness**", "**justice**" (Psalm 89:5, 101:1, Jeremiah 9:24)
- אֵלֶּה - 'elleh, "**these things**", the **works of God** described in verses 33-42 (Psalm 107:43, Job 37:13 has the same sense <ESV has "love" for *hesed*>)
- פְּקֻדִּים - phiqqudim, "**precepts**" (Psalm 119:159)
- פְּדוּת - ph<sup>e</sup>duth, "**redemption**" (Psalm 130:7)
- מָגֵן - magen, "**shield**" (Psalm 144:2)
- יָרֵא - yare', "**fear**" of YHWH (Psalm 147:11)
- יִרְאָה - yir<sup>e</sup>'ah, "**fear**" of YHWH (Proverbs 16:6)
- חָכְמָה - hak<sup>e</sup>mah, "**wisdom**" (Proverbs 31:26 <ESV has "kindness" for *hesed*>)
- חֹק - hoq, "**statutes**" (Psalm 119:64, 124)
- פִּקְדָּה - ph<sup>e</sup>quddah, "**care**" (Job 10:12)

All of these words describe the Nature of God – *hesed* sums them all up. It is the most important single word to describe the Nature of God.

<sup>141</sup> See also Psalm 57:3, 138:2

<sup>142</sup> See also Psalm 25:10, 61:7, 85:10, 115:1



## hesed – Human

In the section **3.2 To Live by Faith**, we saw how God used human *hesed* to teach Abraham the meaning of the word.<sup>143</sup> The most important aspect of *hesed* between human beings is that it is a **reciprocal relationship**, or at least it is desired or expected to be reciprocal.<sup>144</sup> “**Commitment**” is implied by *hesed*. When Rahab had protected the spies in Jericho, she appealed to the *hesed* she had shown them, and requested a commitment of *hesed* when the Israelites conquered Jericho:

And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt **[hesed]** with you, you also will deal **[hesed]** with my father’s house, and give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.” And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal **[hesed]** and faithfully with you.” (Joshua 2:11-14 ESV)<sup>145</sup>

When King Saul turned on David and made attempts to kill him, Jonathon, Saul’s son, sided with David. David and Jonathon considered their relationship to be a covenant<sup>146</sup> based on *hesed*:

If I am still alive, show me the **[hesed]** of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your **[hesed]** from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth. (1 Samuel 20:14-15 ESV)

Later, after Saul and his supporters had been defeated by David and David was king over all Israel, he reciprocated Jonathan’s commitment to him:

And David said, “Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him **[hesed]** for Jonathan’s sake?” Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, “Are you Ziba?” And he said, “I am your servant.” And the king said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the **[hesed]** of God to him?” Ziba said to the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet.” The king said to him, “Where is he?” And Ziba said to the king, “He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar.” Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, “Mephibosheth!” And he answered, “Behold, I am your servant.” And David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will show you **[hesed]** for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always.” (2 Samuel 9:1-7 ESV)

In Psalm 109 a “wicked” man (verse 6) is explicitly said to be lacking *hesed* (verse 12 and 16 ESV has “kindness” for *hesed*).

In all the examples of *hesed* expressed from one human being to another, there is a close relationship between the individuals. It can be a family relationship, a covenant relationship, or a business relationship. This also is fundamental to the meaning of *hesed*.

## hesed – Covenants

The words *hesed* and *b<sup>e</sup>rith* are frequently associated. The *hesed* of God is expressed in the Covenants of Grace which he has given to humanity. This is first made explicit in Deuteronomy:

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps **[b<sup>e</sup>rith] and [hesed]** with those who love him and keep his commandments ... And because you listen to these [mish<sup>e</sup>patim] and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you **the [b<sup>e</sup>rith] and the [hesed]** that he swore to your fathers. (Deuteronomy 7:9, 12 ESV)<sup>147</sup>

The first instance, “the faithful God who keeps *b<sup>e</sup>rith* and *hesed*,” is a hendiadys demonstrating the full range of YHWH’s commitment to “those who love him”. The *b<sup>e</sup>rith* is an inviolable agreement based on

<sup>143</sup> The Book of Ruth also contains an object lesson in *hesed*. Naomi invokes the *hesed* of YHWH on her two daughters-in-law in verse 1:8. Ruth recognizes the “favour” (*hen*), verses 2:10 and 2:12, YHWH is granting her in the eyes of Boaz. Naomi recognizes this as the *hesed* of YHWH, verse 2:20. Finally, Boaz acknowledges that Ruth is demonstrating *hesed* by pursuing the correct course of action in seeking him, the legal redeemer, rather than one of the “young men”, verse 3:10.

<sup>144</sup> In 2 Samuel 3:8 reciprocity is expected but not given; in 2 Samuel 15:20 reciprocity is left to YHWH; in Esther 2:9, 17 (ESV has “favour” for *hesed*) and Psalm 141:5 (ESV has “kindness” for *hesed*) the expectation of reciprocity is at best very subtle.

<sup>145</sup> See also Judges 1:24-25 (ESV has “kindly” for *hesed*), 1 Samuel 15:6 (ESV has “kindness” for *hesed*), 2 Samuel 2:5-6 (ESV has “loyalty” for *hesed* in verse 5), 2 Samuel 10:1-2 (ESV has “loyally” for *hesed*) // 1 Chronicles 19:1-2 (ESV has “kindly” for *hesed*), 2 Samuel 16:17 (ESV has “loyalty” for *hesed*), 1 Kings 2:7 (ESV has “loyally” for *hesed*), 1 Kings 20:31, 2 (ESV has “merciful” for *hesed*; see verse 34 for reciprocal action)

<sup>146</sup> See 1 Samuel 20:8 (ESV has “kindly” for *hesed*), 16 (“made” is from *karath*)

<sup>147</sup> See also Daniel 9:4 which is an allusion to Deuteronomy 7:9.

*hesed*, an unfailing intrinsic attribute of the character of God. The second instance, “the *b<sup>e</sup>rith* and the *hesed*,” allude to the Plan of God, specifically to the covenant with the Patriarchs, **The Covenant of Promise**. God is carrying out his plan. The election of Israel was due to no merit on their part, but only to God’s Plan as expressed in the earlier covenant. Because of God’s *hesed*, he will unfailingly stick to the terms of all the Covenants of Grace.

Part of the promise made to David, **The Covenant of Descent**, was continuance of *hesed*:

... **I will raise up your offspring after you** ... and I will establish his kingdom. ... I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him ... but **my [hesed] will not depart from him** ... (2 Samuel 7:12-15 ESV // 1 Chronicles 17:11-13)

David praises YHWH for this covenantal *hesed*:

For this **I will praise you**, O LORD, **among the nations**, and sing praises to your name. Great **salvation** he brings to his king, and shows **[hesed]** to his anointed, to David and his **offspring forever**. (2 Samuel 22:50-51 ESV // Psalm 18:49-50)

David recognizes the universal nature of the promise of YHWH: his praise is to be heard “among the nations”. David identifies the salvific element to himself, but more importantly the *hesed* both to the line of kings to follow him, but also to the One Descendant who would rule forever. Solomon’s perspective is more limited. He recognizes YHWH’s *hesed* in placing himself on the throne as the first fulfillment of the promise to David:

And Solomon said, “**You have shown great [hesed]** to your servant David my father ... And **you have kept for him this great [hesed]** and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king ... (1 Kings 3:6-7 ESV // 2 Chronicles 1:8)<sup>148</sup>

Isaiah prophesizes of the continuance of the *hesed* of God and the continuance of the covenant promises to the converted in the World Tomorrow:

For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed,  
but my **[hesed]** **shall not depart from you**,  
and my **[b<sup>e</sup>rith] of peace shall not be removed**,  
says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10 ESV)

Psalms 89 extols the *hesed* of YHWH as expressed in the covenant with David:

I will sing of the **[hesed]** of the LORD, forever;  
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.  
For I said, “**[hesed]** will be built up forever;  
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.”  
You have said, “I have made a **[b<sup>e</sup>rith]** with my chosen one;  
**I have sworn to David my servant** ...” (Psalm 89:1-3 ESV)

There are eight occurrences of *hesed* in Psalm 89. There are at least as many allusions to the promises to David and the particulars of the Davidic covenant. The other word which occurs repeatedly is “faithfulness”: because of God’s *hesed* he will remain faithful to the covenant:

... I will not remove from him my **[hesed]** or be false to my **faithfulness**.  
I will not violate my **[b<sup>e</sup>rith]** ... (Psalm 89:33-34 ESV)

Jeremiah takes up a formulaic expression which is used in multiple other places:

Give thanks to the LORD of hosts,  
for the LORD is good, for his **[hesed] endures forever!** (Jeremiah 33:11 ESV)

Jeremiah uses this refrain in the context of a prophecy of the contemporary restoration of a remnant after the exile:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: In this place that is waste, without man or beast, and in all of its cities, there shall again be habitations of shepherds resting their flocks. In the cities of **the hill country**, in the cities of **the Shephelah**, land in the cities of **the Negeb**, in the **land of Benjamin**, the places **about Jerusalem**, and in the cities of **Judah**, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 33:12-13 ESV)

Jeremiah immediately goes on to say that this will lead to the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham of possession of the Promised Land and fulfillment of the promise of a Descent to David:

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when **I will fulfill the promise I made** to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause **a righteous Branch to spring up**

<sup>148</sup> See also 1 Kings 8:22-26, 2 Chronicles 6:12-17  
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**for David**, and he shall execute [mish<sup>e</sup>pat] and righteousness in the [earth]. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' For thus says the LORD: **David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne** of the house of Israel ... (Jeremiah 33:14-17 ESV)

**The refrain in Jeremiah 33:11 became an epithet for the fulfillment of God's promises.** It is used repeatedly to indicate that God will accomplish his plan as promised in the Covenants of Grace. It appears that Jeremiah is the originator of the refrain. It is used more or less identically in Psalm 106:1, 107:1, 118:1, 29, 136:1. In 1 Chronicles 16:34 it is identical, but it is appended by the author of Chronicles to two Psalms which the author of Chronicles has assembled as an example of Temple Thanksgiving. So, the usage of the refrain is likely the choice of the author of Chronicles and does NOT represent older material. This would be the situation for all the usage in the Books of Chronicles.<sup>149</sup>

In the Psalms, there are two slightly different versions of the refrain:

But the **[hesed]** of the LORD is **from everlasting to everlasting** on those who fear him ... (Psalm 103:17 ESV)

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your **[hesed]**, O LORD, **endures forever**. (Psalm 138:8 ESV)

These are both לְדָוִד - l<sup>e</sup>dawid, "to David", Psalms. If this is taken as Davidic authorship, these Psalms are older than Jeremiah and may have provided the prototype for Jeremiah to develop the refrain.

There are also three other slightly modified versions of the refrain:

For the LORD is good; his **[hesed]** endures forever ... (Psalm 100:5, 2 Chronicles 5:13 ESV)

Give thanks to the LORD, for his **[hesed]** endures forever. (2 Chronicles 20:21 ESV)

For he is good, for his **[hesed]** endures forever ... (Ezra 3:11 ESV)

Finally, there is a simplified version of the refrain: **"His hesed endures forever."** This is used three times in Psalm 118; twenty-five times in Psalm 136; and, twice in 2 Chronicles 7.

The relationship of the words *hesed* and *b<sup>e</sup>rit* cannot be denied. The most important attribute of God's character, his nature, is described by *hesed* – God is love.<sup>150</sup> God's love is embodied in the word *hesed*. God has revealed himself to humanity through a series of covenants, the Covenants of Grace. God's whole interaction with the human race is a function of his grace – we are all sinners and have incurred the death penalty.<sup>151</sup> But God loves every last human being<sup>152</sup> and desires that none should perish. God wants each and every human being to enter into an inviolable covenant with him to accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for sin and to live by the Way of God. Then, God in his mercy, if he sees in each of us a reflection of his Nature, will extend the gift of eternal life at the resurrection.

### Excursus 3 – torah

**The most important word in understanding the revelation of God to mankind is torah.** The root word of *tora* is יָרָה - yarah, which has the basic meaning of "throw", "cast", "shoot"; there is "a strong sense of control by the subject".<sup>153</sup> The hiphil from of the verb most often means "teach", "instruct". A possible relationship between these meanings is that something "thrown" it is out in front, leading the way, giving direction, instructing.

Some examples of the verb are:

- Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and **teach** you what you shall speak. (Exodus 4:12 ESV)  
"Teach" is from יְהוֹרֶתִיךָ - w<sup>e</sup>horethika, "and I will teach you", (verb, **hiphil**, waw-consecutive + perfect first common singular + second masculine singular pronominal suffix).<sup>154</sup>
- The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the [torah] and the commandment, which I have written for their **instruction**. ..." (Exodus 24:12 ESV)

<sup>149</sup> See 1 Chronicles 16:41, 2 Chronicles 5:13, 7:3, 6, 20:21

<sup>150</sup> See 1 John 4:8-10, 16

<sup>151</sup> See Romans 3:23, 6:23a

<sup>152</sup> See John 3:16

<sup>153</sup> See TWOT article 910 page 403

<sup>154</sup> Details of grammar are from [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) "Hebrew Word Detail"

“Instruction” is from לְהוֹרֹתָם - I<sup>h</sup>orotham, “to instruct them”, (verb, **hiphil**, infinitive construct + third masculine plural pronominal suffix).

- They shall **teach** Jacob your [mish<sup>o</sup>pat] and Israel your [torah]; (Deuteronomy 33:10 ESV)

“Teach” is from יִרְוּ - yoru, “they shall teach”, (verb, **hiphil**, imperfect third masculine plural).

“torah” is a feminine noun derived from *yarah*. The following examples are intended to demonstrate the range of meaning of “torah”. Most importantly, to demonstrate that **the English word “law” has little or no overlap of meaning with “torah”, and hence should NOT be used as a translation.**

Passover instructions:

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the **statute** of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one **[torah]** for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.” (Exodus 12:43-49 ESV)

The instructions are framed as a “statute” – specific prescriptions and proscriptions related to the Passover. The more general term “torah” encompasses the instructions.

Identification of the Sabbath:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, **that I may test them**, whether **they will walk in my [torah]** or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” ... On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, “This is what **the LORD has commanded**: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.’” So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.” On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long **will you refuse to keep my commandments** and my **[torah]**?” (Exodus 16:4-5, 22-28 ESV)

This is NOT framed as a “statute” because it is a one-time procedure with very detailed directions for the people to follow so there could be no doubt as to which day is the Sabbath. The directions comprise the “torah”. The people were required to comply with the directions as an object lesson – they were “to do”, “to keep”, “to walk in” them. The Sabbath is referred to as a “commandment” because it had been in force since creation and would be reiterated in the decalogue. Clearly, the “commandments” and the “torah” are NOT equivalent.

Numbers 5:11-30 is very similar. It contains detailed instructions for a test of suspected adultery. The procedure is called “torah” in verses 29 and 30. Numbers 6:1-21 similarly has instructions for the Nazarite vow. The instructions are called “torah” in verse 13 and 21. In Numbers 15:16 and 29 “torah” is also used similarly. Numbers 15 contains instructions to be applied after the Israelites are established in the Promised Land (see verses 1 and 18). The instructions relate to wine and cereal enhancements to offerings and to situations of unintentional sin. The instructions are called “torah”. Chapter 19 of Numbers contains purification instructions after contact with a dead body. The instructions comprise detailed prescriptions and proscriptions; therefore, they are called “a statute of torah” (verse 2).

**“torah” is actionable:**

And when Moses had finished **speaking all these words** to all Israel, he said to them, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may **be careful to do all the words of this [torah]**. For **it is no empty word** for you, but your very life, and **by this word you shall live** long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.” (Deuteronomy 32:45-47 ESV)

The “torah” comprises the words spoken by Moses – his teaching. The words are NOT empty – they require action. The Israelites were “to do” (from *asah*) the “torah” so that by doing them they would

live. In Joshua 22:5 the same verb, *ʿasah*, is translated “to observe”. In Joshua “*torah*” is juxtaposed with “*mitzʿwah*”, clearly indicating that “*torah*” is NOT the same as the ten commandments. Many similar injunctions occur “to keep *torah*”; for example, 1 Chronicles 22:12, 2 Chronicles 14:4, Nehemiah 9:34; or “to walk in *torah*” 2 Chronicles 6:16.

In the wisdom literature it is very clear that “*torah*” means teaching or instruction:

**Agree with God**, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you.

**Receive [torah]** from his mouth, and lay up his **words** in your heart. (Job 22:21-22 ESV)

**Give ear**, O my people, **to my [torah]**; incline your ears to the **words** of my mouth! (Psalm 78:1 ESV)

Hear, my son, your father’s **instruction**, and forsake not your mother’s **[torah]** (Proverbs 1:8 ESV)

Hear, O sons, a father’s **instruction**, and be attentive, that you may gain insight,  
for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my **[torah]**. (Proverbs 4:1-2 ESV)

The **[torah]** of the wise is a **fountain of life**, that one may turn away from the snares of death.  
(Proverbs 13:14 ESV)

She opens her mouth with **wisdom**, and the **[torah]** of **[hesed]** is on her tongue. (Proverbs 31:26 ESV)

A true worshipper of God must have “*torah*” in his heart:

The **mouth** of the righteous utters **wisdom**, and his **tongue** speaks **[mishʿpat]**.

The **[torah]** of his God is in his **heart**; his **steps do not slip**. (Psalm 37:30-31 ESV)

In line 1a “mouth” as a body part is parallel to “heart” in line 2a. In line 1a “wisdom”, the result of being taught, is parallel with “*torah*”, teaching, in line 2a. In line 1b “tongue speaking” is parallel to “his steps” in line 2b as both are actions. In line 1b *mishʿpat* is understanding resulting from wisdom, which is parallel with “do not slip” in line 2b – the result of living by “*torah*”.

The following is a Messianic prophecy as indicated by the author of Hebrews in chapter 10 verses 5-7:

In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me **an open ear**.

Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

Then I said, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

I delight **to do your will**, O my God; your **[torah]** is **within my heart**.” (Psalm 40:6-8 ESV)

Having “*torah*” written on the heart is required to do God’s will. An open ear implies willingness to learn. This is the attitude required of true worshippers. Jesus demonstrated this attitude:

For I have come down from heaven, **not to do my own will** but the will of him who sent me.  
(John 6:38 ESV)

One of the most beautiful prophecies in the Bible is all about “*torah*”:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills;  
and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may **teach us his ways** and that we may **walk in his paths**.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the **[torah]**, and the **word of the LORD** from Jerusalem.  
(Isaiah 2:1-2 // Micah 4:1-2 ESV)

The “*torah*”, the word of God, is taught allowing people to “walk in his paths”, live by God’s way. In Isaiah 8 verses 16 and 20, “*torah*” is used to describe Isaiah’s prophecies – his teachings for his disciples. In Isaiah 30:9 the people are admonished as “rebellious” because they refuse to listen to the “*torah*” of YHWH.

Hosea is explicit that “*torah*” comprises “knowledge”:

My people are destroyed for lack of **knowledge**;

because you have rejected **knowledge**, I reject you from being a priest to me.

And since you have forgotten the **[torah]** of your God, I also will forget your children. (Hosea 4:6 ESV)

Zechariah summarizes the meaning of “*torah*” by encompassing the full scope of the teaching of God which demonstrates God’s love, which he requires of true worshippers:

And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render **[ʿemeth]** **[mishʿpat]**, show **[hesed]** and **[raham]** to one another, **do not oppress** the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let **none of you devise evil** against another in your heart.” But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard **lest they should hear** the **[torah]** and **the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets**. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.



“As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the LORD of hosts ... (Zechariah 7:8-13 ESV)

## Excursus 4 – The Secret Things of God

Deuteronomy 29:29 reads “the **secret things** belong to the LORD our God”. The Hebrew for “secret things” is נִסְתָּרוֹת - nnis<sup>e</sup>taroth, “**ones being secret**”, a niphil participle of the verb סָתַר - sathar, “hide”, “conceal”.<sup>155</sup> A related noun, סֵתֶר - sather, means “hiding place”, “secret place”. Proverbs 25:2 adds “it is the glory of God **to conceal [sathar] things**”. The Psalmist, Ethan the Ezrahite, in Psalm 89:46, adds “How long, O LORD? **Will you hide [sathar] yourself forever?**” What is it that God considers to be “his secret”? Why and from whom does God “hide himself”?

### The First Great Period of Revelation

In his misery, Job began to explore these questions:

**Why is light given to him who is in misery**, and life to the bitter in [mind],  
who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures,  
who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave?  
**Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden [sathar]**, whom God has hedged in? (Job 3:20-23 ESV)

Job bemoans the knowledge he has of the **Way of God**, “**light**”, because his life is in ruins and his understanding is of no value. Later Job reflects more deeply, and begins to appreciate what God has given him:

But **where shall wisdom be found?** And **where is the place of understanding?**  
It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price.  
From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?  
**It is hidden [sathar] from the eyes of all living** and concealed from the birds of the air.  
God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.  
And he said to man, ‘Behold, **the fear [yir<sup>e</sup>’ah] of the Lord, that is wisdom**,  
and **to turn away from evil is understanding.**’ (Job 28:12, 15, 20-21, 23, 28 ESV)

**Job has captured the essence of the “secret things” of God.** The Way of God is hidden from all humanity because it can only be revealed through God’s calling and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Living by the Way of God imparts “wisdom” and “understanding”. In verse 28, the word “fear” is from יִרְאָה - yir<sup>e</sup>’ah, better translated as “reverence”. **Reverence for God** come from knowing God, having a living relationship with God. That is the basis of wisdom and inculcating an innate desire to turn away from all forms of evil. **The secret things of God are embodied in understanding and living by the Way of God.**

David expresses his determination to proclaim the Good News of the Way of God:

**I will tell of your name to my brothers**; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:  
**You who fear [yare’] the LORD**, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!  
For he has not despised or abhorred **the affliction of the afflicted [’ani]**,  
and **he has not hidden [sathar] his face from him**, but has heard, when he cried to him.  
(Psalm 22:22-24 ESV)

David refers to True Worshipers of YHWH as “my brothers” – those who “**reverence**”, **yare’**, YHWH. David uses the word “**’ani**” as a technical term for someone who is “**contrite**” before YHWH. **YHWH has NOT hidden, sathar, himself from True Worshipers.**

Later Psalmists allude to YHWH’s address to Israel from Mount Sinai identifying it as a “secret place” from which the teaching of God emanated:

In distress you called, and I delivered you; **I answered you in the secret place [sather] of thunder**;  
I am a sojourner on the earth; **hide [sathar] not your commandments from me!**  
(Psalms 81:7, 119:19 ESV)

This was exactly Moses' point in the Covenant of Life:

**The secret things [sathar] belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this [torah].** (Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV)

Moses had spent thirty-eight years in the wilderness teaching the people the Way of God.<sup>156</sup> Now during the last month of his life, he spent each day lecturing the people to help them truly understand the revelation of God's Way which they had been given. This revelation is the greatest outpouring of knowledge from God ever given to humanity. **The Covenant of Life was the final agreement between YHWH and each individual** who was there, but more importantly, with each True Worshipper down through time until the inception of the Kingdom of God at the First Resurrection.

## The Second Great Period of Revelation

From the outset, God recognized that the Nation of Israel would NOT succeed:

**Oh that they had such a heart as this always,** to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then **this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering,** and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and **I will forsake them and hide [sathar] my face from them,** and they will be devoured. And many evils and troubles will come upon them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?' And **I will surely hide [sathar] my face in that day because of all the evil that they have done,** because they have turned to other gods.

Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and **call heaven and earth to witness against them.** For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And **in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD,** provoking him to anger through the work of your hands.

For they are a nation void of counsel, and **there is no understanding in them.**  
**If they were wise,** they would understand this; they would discern their latter end!  
(Deuteronomy 5:29, 31:16-18, 28-29, 32:28-29 ESV)

Only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is it possible to live by the Way of God. This was NOT generally made available to the Israelites. The general availability of the Holy Spirit occurred only with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The failure of ancient Israel is well documented by the Writing Prophets. **The teaching of God given through the Writing Prophets constitutes the Second Great outpouring of revelation from God to man.** Again, this teaching elucidates the "secret things" of God.

**The Prophet Amos** was specifically told that YHWH would reveal his intentions to him and that at some point the warning of the people would cease:

For the **Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret [sod]<sup>157</sup> to his servants the prophets.**<sup>158</sup>

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when **I will send a famine on the land**—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but **of hearing the words of the LORD.**" (Amos 3:1, 8:11 ESV)

**The Prophet Hosea** finally warned the Northern Kingdom that **the day had come,** YHWH's compassion was over:

The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store.

**The pangs of childbirth come for him;** he is an unwise son ...

Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?

O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?

**Compassion is hidden [sathar] from my eyes.**

(Hosea 13:12-13a, 14 ESV)

**The Prophet Isaiah** condemns the people for maintaining a façade of "godliness" but in fact rejecting the true teaching of God:

And the Lord said:

"Because **this people** draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while **their hearts are far from me,** and **their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,**

<sup>156</sup> See, for example, Exodus 3:1-6, 13-15, 6:2-9, all of chapters 19, 20, 33, and 34.

<sup>157</sup> סֹד - sod, "confidential speech", see TWOT article 1471 page 619

<sup>158</sup> See also Isaiah 44:26

therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder;  
and **the wisdom of their wise men shall perish**,  
and **the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden [sathar]**.”  
Ah, **you who hide [sathar] deep from the LORD your counsel**, whose deeds are in the dark,  
and who say, “Who sees us? Who knows us?” **You turn things upside down!** (Isaiah 29 13-16a ESV)

Isaiah goes on to elaborate the difference between those “of the world” and those to whom God has revealed his truth:

Truly, **you are a God who hides[sathar] himself**, O God of Israel, the Savior.  
All of them are put to shame and confounded; **the makers of idols go in confusion together**.  
**But Israel is saved** by the LORD with everlasting salvation;  
you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.  
For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!),  
who formed the earth and made it  
(he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!):  
“I am the LORD, and there is no other.  
**I did not speak in secret [sathar], in a land of darkness;**  
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, ‘Seek me in vain.’  
**I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.** ...” (Isaiah 45:15-19 ESV)

God is explicit that his teaching will stand:

... for **I am God, and there is no other**; I am God, and there is none like me,  
**declaring the end from the beginning** and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose**’ ... (Isaiah 46:9b-10 ESV)  
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
**so shall my word be** that goes out from my mouth;  
**it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,**  
and **shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.** (Isaiah 55:10-11 ESV)<sup>159</sup>

After approximately forty years of fruitless preaching in Jerusalem, **the Prophet Jeremiah** was in despair regarding the working-out of the Plan of God. He prayed fervently for understanding and God responded:

**The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time**, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard: “**Thus says the LORD** who made the earth, the LORD who formed it to establish it—the LORD is his name: **Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.** ...” (Jeremiah 33:1-3 ESV)

**Daniel** was given specific insight into the spiritual understanding of the Word of God:

Then **the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision** of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said:

**“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.**  
He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings;  
**he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;**  
**he reveals deep and hidden things [sathar];**  
he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.  
To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,  
for **you have given me wisdom and might,**  
and have now made known to me what we asked of you,  
for you have made known to us the king’s matter.” (Daniel 2:19-23 ESV)

Later Daniel prays for the restoration of Jerusalem, and Gabriel comes and gives him even deeper insight into the Plan of God:

... while I was speaking in prayer, **the man Gabriel**, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He **made me understand**, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, **I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.** ... Seventy [periods] are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint most holy [ones]. ...” (Daniel 9:12-22, 24 ESV)

<sup>159</sup> See also Psalm 147:15, Isaiah 45:23, 24:3, Jeremiah 1:12, Ezekiel 17:24

In spite of this revelation, Daniel himself remained confused over the many visions he had been given, and he was assured that there was a reason. God was not yet ready to reveal the full understanding of the revelations to Daniel – the meaning remained among the “secret things”:

“ ... But you, Daniel, **shut up the words and seal the book**, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and **knowledge shall increase**.” ... I heard, but **I did not understand**. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for **the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end**. ...” (Daniel 12:4, 8-9 ESV)

### The Third Great Period of Revelation

**That is how the Old Testament ends.** The Second Great Revelation of God to man through the Writing Prophets has given us incredible insight into the Nature of God, The Plan of God, and the Way of God – deep and secret things which God has chosen to reveal through his Holy Spirit. But still God has retained some “secret things” to be revealed later. This gets us to **the third Great Revelation from God to man** – the life, the work, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his current role as High Priest and intercessor for Christians, as **documented by the New Testament authors.**

**The Apostle John** documents the beginning of the Plan of God:

**In the beginning was the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. **All things were made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **In him was life**, and the life was the light of men. **The light shines in the darkness**, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5 ESV)

**God is represented by his Word.** We have the revealed Word of God in the Bible. The member of the God Family who became Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the Word of God. It was he who spoke at the re-creation recorded in Genesis chapter one, **“and God said”** ... **“and it was so”**. It was he who imparted life to Adam and Eve, **“in him was life”**. That life now **“shines in the darkness”** through True Christians.

The author of Hebrews elaborates:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets**, but **in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and **he upholds the universe by the word of his power**. After **making purification for sins**, **he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high** ... (Hebrews 1:1-3 ESV)

The period of the New Testament Church, **“he has spoken to us by his son”**, is identified as the **“last days”** – the **“time of the end”** to which Daniel alluded, at which time God would make further revelation of the **“secret things”**. The revelation of these things is largely contained in the Book of Revelation: **The revelation of Jesus Christ**, which God gave him **to show to his servants the things that must soon take place**. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. **Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy**, and **blessed are those who hear**, and **who keep what is written in it**, for the time is near. (Revelation 1:1-3 ESV)

The entire New Testament elaborates and elucidates the teaching of God contained in the Old Testament:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**, **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, **Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19-21 ESV)

Do not think that I have come to abolish **the [nomos]<sup>160</sup> or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but **to fulfill them**. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the [nomos] until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18 ESV)

And **beginning with Moses and all the Prophets**, he interpreted to them **in all the Scriptures** the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27 ESV)

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<sup>160</sup> The Jews in translating the Septuagint choose “nomos” to translate “torah” in order to conform the teaching of God with pagan Hellenistic philosophy. “torah” means “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”. “nomos” means pagan “law” – it is a completely incorrect translation of “torah”.

Even just before the Ascension, **the Apostles** did not fully understand the Plan of God:

So when they had come together, they asked him, **“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”** He said to them, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.** But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,** and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:6-8 ESV)

God the Father retains it under his control to make decisions about how and when prophecies are to be fulfilled. **The Apostle Paul** clearly indicates the prophecies can fail:

And **if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,** and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, **but have not love, I am nothing.** ... Love never ends. **As for prophecies, they will pass away** ... (1 Corinthians 13:2, 8a ESV)

**Jesus clearly promised the Apostles that Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth** – but it occurs only in God’s time as he sees fit to reveal his secrets:

**If you love me, you will keep my commandments.** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, **even the Spirit of truth,** [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]. You know [it], for [it] dwells with you and will be in you.

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit, [which] the Father will send in my name, [it] will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**

**I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.** When the Spirit of truth comes, **[it] will guide you into all the truth,** for [it] will not speak on his own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak, and **[it] will declare to you the things that are to come.** [It] will glorify me, for [it] will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 14:15-17, 25-26, 16:12-14 ESV)

## Excursus 5 – *torah* and *nomos*<sup>161</sup>

The translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which we call the Septuagint, seems to have been commenced in early third century BC with the five Books of Moses. Other books were added in subsequent decades.<sup>162</sup> In this translation, the Jewish translators chose to use the Greek word νόμος – *nomos* as a translation of *torah*. The English word “law” carries pretty much the same range of meaning as *nomos*; whereas *torah* means “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”.<sup>163</sup> **Why did the Jewish translators choose *nomos* to translate *torah*?**

H. Kleinknecht states:

νόμος ... has the sense of “what is proper”, “what is assigned to someone”. In ancient times it has a comprehensive range of meaning which embraces any kind of existing or accepted norm, order, usage, or tradition. Νόμος is what is valid and in use ... The concept is religious in origin ... to honour the gods ... by participating in ... worship ... (TDNT IV pages 1023-1024)

So, **the origin of the word *nomos* is in the realm of pagan religious worship.** Kleinknecht goes on to explain the development of the usage of the word. It came “into **specialized use in the judicial sphere**”, extending to “the **law of nature**” and “**moral law**”. By the fifth century BC, *nomos* began to be written down and a sense of “**written law**” began to develop. This provided “a fixed expression of legal order and **the national constitution in a democratic polis**”. But the religious connotations of the word always remained:

This philosophical theory became a historical reality under Hellenism. Here νόμος no longer rules as king in the *polis*. The will and person of the [king] has itself become νόμος. ... **The divine king is the new divine source of νόμος** ... (TDNT IV page 1032)

This is the environment in which in Jewish translators of the Septuagint worked. In the Persian and Greek periods, **the Jewish community centered in Jerusalem had been under relentless pressure to conform to the pagan world around them.** This drove the community in two directions: some were readily willing to assimilate to pagan ways; **others strove bitterly to defend the traditional ways.** Among those defending the traditional ways there was a desire to convince the pagan world that **Israel’s traditions were older and superior.** In fact, they asserted, Israel’s scriptures contained the essence of all Greek philosophy and learning. This tendency reached its epitome in **Philo of Alexandria** at the time

<sup>161</sup> This excursus is copied from the paper “True Worship of the True God”, located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>162</sup> See Schürer II,3,pages 159-164

<sup>163</sup> See **Excursus 3 – *torah***

of Christ. Given this, **the translators wanted the Greek world to think of Israel's torah as the same as the pagan nomos**. They were trying to conform the Truth of God to the lies of the world.

To understand this process, we need to **briefly sketch the course of events from the exile to the inception of the New Testament Church**. We have a very well-defined starting point: **the work of Ezekiel**. Ezekiel's purpose in captivity was to bring to repentance those individuals among the captive community that God was calling to return to Promised Land as a remnant of True Worshipers to prepare for the First Advent. In the New Testament we find **the last of this remnant community** alive and well and prepared for the First Advent – thousands were readily converted and quickly formed the nucleus of the New Testament Church. During the **five hundred years** between these events, we have **very little information and many dark periods**.

**God's purpose** in re-establishing the community in the Promised Land was to **prepare for the First Advent**. There had to be a community in which the Messiah could live as a human being and there had to be within this community a group of True Worshipers to nurture the Messiah as a child. Jeremiah records **YHWH's words to the exile community** explaining God's intentions for them:

For thus says the LORD: When **seventy years are completed for Babylon**, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and **bring you back to this place**. For I know **the plans I have for you**, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you **a future and a hope**. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. (Jeremiah 29:10-12 ESV)

God worked with the entire returning community to get it re-established.<sup>164</sup> After the temple was completed, the community fell into degeneracy. This is the situation depicted in the Book of Malachi. To remedy this, God sent Nehemiah and Ezra. They were successful. Some points to consider for this period:

- **Nehemiah** was a **civil governor**, there is sketchy information on a few governors after him
- **Ezra** was a **priest and a scribe**: scribism was a new concept – it involved full time, systematic, study and maintenance of the sacred writings<sup>165</sup>
- **Ezra** successfully re-established the **formal worship of YHWH in the temple** with a complete temple service, including educating the people in *torah*
- In the years after the work of Nehemiah and Ezra, **the civil governorship ceased**, and the **priests gained political control** while **independent scribes who were NOT priests** became more and more important as teachers<sup>166</sup>

We have period of about one hundred years between the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra and the conquest of Alexander – **the dark years of the Persian period**. There is little or no first-hand information on the affairs of the community during this period.<sup>167</sup> For the next hundred and fifty years, from the **conquest of Alexander** until the **Maccabean revolt**, there is much richer information the influence of Hellenism on the community; but again, there is **little direct information on the community**.<sup>168</sup>

By the time of Christ, the "**Pharisees**" were the **undisputed thought leaders** of the Jewish community. The origins of the Pharisees are obscure.<sup>169</sup> The most likely origin is a group called the "**Hasidim**" who fought along with the Maccabees in the early stages of the rebellion, but completely withdrew their support when the objectives of the Maccabees became political.<sup>170</sup>

The word חַסִּדִּים - ḥasidim is the plural of חָסִיד - ḥasid, "godly", "saints"<sup>171</sup> **a word that David had established as an epithet of True Worshipers**, for example:

But know that the LORD has set apart **the godly [hasid]** for himself ... (Psalm 4:3a ESV)

<sup>164</sup> See section **9.8 Exilic and Post-exilic Feast Keeping**, in the paper "**True Worship of the True God**", located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca). See especially the discussion of the prophecy in the second chapter of Haggai.

<sup>165</sup> See Schürer II,1,pages 306-328

<sup>166</sup> See Schürer II,2,pages 29-43

<sup>167</sup> See Bruce (Nations) pages 107-115, Bright pages 405-412

<sup>168</sup> See Bruce (Nations) pages 116-139, Bright pages 412-422

<sup>169</sup> See Schürer II,2,pages 10-28, and Bruce (NT) pages 69-81

<sup>170</sup> See Schürer II,2,pages 26, and Bruce (NT) pages 69-70

<sup>171</sup> See TWOT article 698b page 307



With the merciful [hasid] you show yourself merciful;  
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;  
with the purified you show yourself pure ... (Psalm 18:25-26a ESV)

Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever.  
For the LORD loves [mish<sup>e</sup>pat]; he will not forsake his saints [hasid].  
They are preserved forever ... (Psalm 37:27-28ba ESV)

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints [hasid] shall bless you!  
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,  
to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. ...  
The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.  
The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.  
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.  
(Psalm 145:10-12, 17-19 ESV)

**Later Palmists** continued to use the word *hasid* to identify True Worshipers:

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;  
they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.  
They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the heavens for food,  
the flesh of your faithful [hasid] to the beasts of the earth. (Psalm 79:1-2 ESV)  
Show us your [hesed], O LORD, and grant us your salvation.  
Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,  
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints [hasid]; but let them not turn back to folly.  
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. (Psalm 85:7-9 ESV)  
O you who love the LORD, hate evil!  
He preserves the lives of his saints [hasid]; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.  
Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. (Psalm 97:10-11 ESV)  
Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints [hasid]. (Psalm 116:15 ESV)  
Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;  
his majesty is above earth and heaven.  
He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints [hasid],  
for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 148:13-14 ESV)  
Praise the LORD!  
Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly [hasid]! ...  
For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.  
Let the godly [hasid] exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. ...  
This is honor for all his godly ones [hasid]. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 149:1, 4-5, 9b ESV)

The existence of a group of True Worshipers at the end of the Nehemiah-Ezra period is affirmed in the Book of Malachi:

Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.  
“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. ...” (Malachi 3:16-17 ESV)

So clearly the “Hasidim” were originally the True Worshipers of God. By the time of the Maccabean revolt, the “Hasidim” still believed themselves to be “True Worshipers”. However, the facts suggest that at some point True Worshipers had separated from the group known as “Hasidim”. By the time of John Hyrcanus, a generation after the Maccabean revolt, the “Hasidim”, now identified as Pharisees, appear in full-blown colour, i.e., espousing their interpretations of the *torah*.<sup>172</sup>

The **Pharisees** were less influenced by the Septuagint than Jews of the Diaspora because they continued to use the Hebrew text. However, the notion of the equivalence of *nomos* with *torah* was apparently pervasive as they completely lost all true perspective on the meaning of the *torah*. The **Pharisaic interpretations frequently ignore obvious teaching and delve into obscure abstractions**. Jesus constantly condemned the Pharisees’ interpretations.<sup>173</sup> The Pharisees were so opposed to Jesus

<sup>172</sup> See Schürer II,2,page 26, Bruce (Nations) pages 169-170

<sup>173</sup> See, for example, the discussion of Matthew chapter twenty-three in section **11.1 False Teachers in Galatia**, of the paper “**True Worship of the True God**”, located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

because they believed themselves to be the True Remnant, the only True Worshipers of God, and they believed their interpretations were the only path to true righteousness and salvation.

The other extreme is represented by **Philo of Alexandria**. He was a Jew of the Diaspora who was **fully educated in Greek philosophy and learning**. He used the Septuagint as his Bible not the Hebrew text – unquestioningly accepting the equivalence of *nomos* and *torah*. He wrote extensively to demonstrate that the Old Testament was in fact the source of all philosophy and true learning.<sup>174</sup> **Philo used the technique of “allegory”**, which was common at that time. The problem with “allegory” is that it ignores the literal meaning of a text and applies **subjective symbolic meaning**. This renders most of Philo’s works more or less useless today. His problem was his acceptance of Greek philosophy, much of which is diametrically opposed to the truth of the Bible.

**In the New Testament, *nomos* is used as dictated by the Septuagint.** This was the common practice and God did NOT inspire the New Testament authors to deviate from it. God has left it to True Worshipers to come to a true understanding of his teaching, his *torah*.

**In summary**, we in the modern world are stuck with English Bible translations that use “law” for “*torah*” even though it is **a completely incorrect translation**. The Jews who translated the Septuagint wanted to conform to the pagan ways of the world around them. Under this influence, the Pharisees ignored the teaching of God and developed their labyrinth of interpretations. Others, like Philo, allegorized away the teaching of God in an attempt to reconcile the Bible with pagan philosophy. **The notion that “*torah*” is law is pervasive in the modern world. True Worshipers need to go behind this notion and truly understand the teaching of God.**

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<sup>174</sup> See Schürer II,3, pages 321-381, Barrett pages 173-189, and Yonge  
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The location of "Covenants of Grace"

[www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org)

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