

## THE EPIC OF EDEN VIDEO STUDY

# Session 4—Covenant

idea or term which comes from everyday life

**בְּרִית** = *berît* = covenant ---> organizing principle  
framework or general law that makes facts make sense

“A ‘covenant’ is an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance.” (*ABD* 1:1178)

How does someone in a tribal society establish a contract or an agreement with someone who is not part of the tribe?

Fictive kinship -- "fictional kinship" creating a kinship based on marriage, adoption, etc.

“In tribal societies there were legal mechanisms or devices—we might even say legal fictions—by which outsiders, non-kin, might be incorporated into the kinship group.” (Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 7)

Features of a *berît*

- 1) oath and obligation
- 2) secured with sacrifice --> sacrifice animal and then some act with blood
- 3) blessings and curses (benefits/discipline)
- 4) used familial language - "Brothers .... fathers .... sons"
- 5) swear to covenant loyalty (hesed) - love, mercy, loving-kindness, covenant faithfulness
- 6) "love" and "hate" language, love = obedience, not sentiment, "keep the covenant"  
hate = disobedience, "failing to keep the covenant"

What are the **two types of international treaties** found in the ancient Near East?

- 1) Parity

A treaty made between two equals.

Refer to each other as brothers.

illustration - two or more countries creating an alliance to face the most powerful nations

An agreement between partners.

Can have multiple partners.

2) Suzerain/Vassal

A treaty made between a superior and an inferior.

Refer to each other as father/son or lord/servant.

The suzerain would receive tribute (money) and military support from the vassal.

The vassal would receive military protection from the suzerain.

The suzerain would often give a land grant to a vassal.

Questions, comments, aha moments . . .

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**\*\*\*\* weaker party walking through the sacrificial animal is important**

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**\*\*\*\* Jacob/Easu illustration is important**

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Covenant Theology in the Bible

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Adam      Genesis 1-5

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Noah      Genesis 6-9

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Abraham      Genesis 12, 15, 17

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Moses      Exodus 20

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David      2 Samuel 7

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Jesus      New Testament

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