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God's Covenants with Humanity and Israel

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God's covenant with Israel and even with all humanity is one of the most striking and complex theological concepts in the Hebrew Bible. It is unfolded most prominently in the Pentateuch: God's covenants with Noah, with Abraham and his descendants, and with Israel. The idea is actively taken up and transformed in the later prophets. The following presentation of some key aspects of the divine covenant in the Hebrew Bible and its early reception will roughly follow a canonical order, while questions of their historical development will be discussed along the way. Since the biblical covenant forms part of the general culture of treaties in the ancient Near East and since the idea of the divine covenant is based on the institution of covenants among humans, these two aspects need to be addressed at the very outset.

1. ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN TREATIES

Ancient Near Eastern cultures developed a tradition of elaborate treaties from the second half of the third millennium BCE. Biblical covenants are clearly part of this tradition, which has inspired much comparative research, especially since George Mendenhall's study *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*.[1] Mendenhall described the form of Hittite vassal treaties, which often contain the following elements: a preamble, a historical prologue, stipulations, a provision for deposit in the temple and periodic public reading, and a list of gods as witnesses as well as curses and blessings. Although comparable elements are found in biblical covenants, it is highly unlikely that these Hittite examples, which date from between the fifteenth and the thirteenth century BCE, had *direct* influence on biblical texts, since the emergence of major literary

activity in Israel can be assumed only starting from the middle of the ninth century BCE.[2]

In contrast, it is most likely that Neo-Assyrian treaties did indeed have direct influence on scribes during the late monarchy of Judah. We shall here concentrate on the most prominent example—Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties[3]—which may illustrate how such influence could have happened. Having conquered and largely destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel (ca. 722–720 BCE), the Assyrians continued to threaten and partly destroy Judah, especially in Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE. Under Manasseh's rule (ca. 697–643 BCE), Judah was a client state of Assyria, obliged to pay tribute, perform labor duties, and support Assyrian military campaigns.[4]

In 672 BCE, King Esarhaddon made vassals (as well as his own officials) swear an oath of loyalty accepting his designated successors. In 1955, fragments of at least eight such tablets were discovered in the sanctuary of Nabu in Nimrud (ancient Calah), which addressed Median city lords. Only in 2009, a copy of the same set of texts was discovered at Tell Tayinat,[5] which is located at the Orontes River some 500 kilometers north of Jerusalem. The tablet was found in situ in a temple on the citadel mound. All these recent archaeological data allow for the assumption that a similar treaty may have been imposed on King Manasseh of Judah and a similar tablet may have been publicly displayed in the Temple of Jerusalem. This scenario may help explain the striking parallels between the curse section of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties and a sequence of curses in Deut. 28, which are shown in the table on p. 315.[6]

The sequence of six curse motifs in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties 418–30 (disease, blindness, corpses eaten by birds, wife taken by another, loss of the house, goods taken by strangers) is nearly identical in Deut. 28:26–31, except that the third element is moved to the beginning of the sequence. Instead of the Neo-Assyrian deities we find Yhwh as agent. On the grounds of this evidence, it seems quite probable that scribes in Jerusalem used the oppressive Assyrian imperial document to compose a subversive countercovenant, to declare Israel the people of Yhwh alone. Moreover, they may have transformed the idea of a covenant between Assyrian deities and the Assyrian king.[7] It is most likely that this happened prior to the sack of Nineveh in 612 BCE, after which the influence of the Neo-Assyrian Empire collapsed.

Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties §§38A–42 (418–30)	**Deut. 28:26–31**
[cf. below, 427]	[26] **Your corpses** shall be **food for every bird of the air** and animal of the earth....
[418] May Anu, king of the gods, let **disease, exhaustion, malaria**, sleeplessness, worries and ill health rain upon all your houses. [419] May Sin, the brightness of heaven and earth, [420] clothe you with **leprosy**	[27] Yhwh will afflict you with the **boils of Egypt, with ulcers, scurvy, and itch, of which you cannot be healed**.
[422] May Šamaš, the light of heaven and earth, [423] not judge you justly. May he **remove your eyesight**. [424] **Walk about in darkness!**	[28] Yhwh will afflict you with madness, **blind**ness, and confusion of mind; [29] you shall **grope about** at noon as **blind** people grope in **darkness**, but you shall be unable to find your way....
[425] May Ninurta, the foremost among the gods, fell you with his fierce arrow; [426] may he fill the plain with your blood [427] and feed **your flesh to the eagle and the vulture**.	[cf. above, v. 26]
[428] May Venus, the brightest of the stars, **before your eyes make your wives** [429] **lie in the lap of your enemy**;	[30] **You shall become engaged to a woman, but another man shall lie with her.**
may your sons [430] not take possession of **your house**,	You shall build **a house**, but not live in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but not enjoy its fruit.
but a **strange enemy** divide your goods.	[31] ... Your sheep shall be given to your **enemies** ....

2. "COVENANT" IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

While extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern treaties probably were used to shape the literary form of biblical texts on God's covenants, their most definite conceptual basis may be found in the institution of the *berīt* (usually translated "covenant") among humans described in the narratives of the Hebrew Bible. A few examples will suffice to shed light on both their diversity and their essential common meaning.

Abraham makes a covenant with Abimelech (Gen. 21:27, 32), swearing loyalty (*hsd*) to him and his offspring (Gen. 21:23–24). Abraham underlines his goodwill, giving animals as a present (v. 27), and expresses his intention to avoid future conflicts over a well (vv. 28–30). Jonathan makes a covenant with David, loving him "like his soul" (1 Sam. 18:3). David claims Jonathan's loyalty (*hesed*) when his life is threatened by Saul (20:8), and they renew their covenant "before Yhwh" (23:18). Just as friendship may be reinforced by a *berīt*, the expression "wife of your *berīt*" (Mal. 2:14) suggests that marriage as well could be understood as a form of covenant.[8]

The same term *berīt* may also refer to political pacts at the level of diplomacy and international law. The kings Solomon of Israel and Hiram of Tyre make a covenant that consolidates their "peace" (*šalōm*, 1 Kings 5:26).[9] King Asa of Judah convinces Ben-hadad, king of Aram, with a substantial gift to make an alliance and to break his *berīt* with Baasha of Israel (1 Kings 15:17–21). An international *berīt* agreement between Israel (Ephraim) and Assyria is mentioned in Hosea 12:1. Ezekiel describes how Nebuchadnezzar installs his puppet king Zedekiah by making him swear loyalty in a *berīt* (Ezek. 17:13–14).

Covenants may redefine the social status of the parties involved. The Gibeonites offer to become "servants" to convince the Israelites to make a berīt with them (Josh. 9:11). Ahab of Israel calls Ben-hadad of Aram, whom he has defeated, "my brother" to reestablish their equality (1 Kings 20:32) and makes a covenant with him (v. 34).[10] A covenant between David and the elders of Israel precedes his anointment as king of Israel (2 Sam. 5:3 // 1 Chron. 11:3). The priest Jehoiada is said to have made a *berīt* "between Yhwh and the king and the people to become a people belonging to Yhwh" (2 Kings 11:17).

While the social contexts and the character of relationships involved in covenants made between humans in the Hebrew Bible are extremely diverse, ranging from individual friendship to political loyalty to international alliances, there are basic features shared by all covenants. A *berīt* is a treaty between two (or more) parties that establishes a relationship of mutual loyalty (frequently referred to as *hesed*). Covenants are established by speech acts (frequently referred to as "swearing"). They may involve rituals such as gift-giving (e.g., Gen. 21:27), the erection of monuments (Gen. 31:45–46), or a meal shared by the parties (Gen. 26:28–30), which may include a sacrifice ritual (Gen. 31:54) or the cutting apart of animals (Gen. 15:9; Jer. 34:18), which probably is the origin of the most frequent expression for making a covenant (literally "to cut," *krt*, a covenant).

Covenants are usually established through declarations; they may involve obligations on oneself (promises) or express norms to be kept by the other party. Thus, covenants often include conditions that require obedience, which led to the metonymical use of *berīt* as referring to the norms of the *berīt* (e.g., Deut. 4:13). The opinion, however, that "obligation" might be the original and basic meaning of *berīt* cannot be sustained.[11] The probable etymological connection of *berīt* with the Akkadian *birtu/bertu*, "fetter," suggests that the word refers to the bond of the relationship (cf., similarly, the German *Bund*).

3. THE NOAHITE COVENANT (GEN. 9)

In the grand biblical narrative, the term *berīt* occurs for the first time in the story of the great flood (Gen. 6:5–9:17).[12] When God commands Noah to enter the ark (6:18), he announces making a covenant with him, which is fulfilled after Noah leaves the ark (seven occurrences of *berīt* in 9:9–17). God's covenant includes not only Noah and his descendants, and thus postdiluvial humanity, but even all animals—"the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark" (9:10; cf. vv. 15–17). The object of the covenant is God's promise never to bring a flood again over the earth (9:11, 15); its sign is the rainbow (9:12–17). While the bows of deities in the ancient Near East and also Yhwh's bow are presented as destructive weapons (cf. Hab. 3:9), the rainbow becomes the symbol of divine preservation of life.

God's promise never again to destroy the earth with a flood (Gen. 9:11, 15) is a thematic continuation of his blessing and command to multiply (9:1, 7), through which Noah is portrayed as a second Adam (compare 1:28). In the same thematic line, God emphasizes the gravity of murder (9:5–6), but the covenant following is unconditional and called "everlasting" (9:16; cf. "for generations everlasting," v. 12). Yhwh's inner

thoughts reveal that he intends not to destroy humanity in future despite the evil intentions of the human heart (8:21).

A comparison with the ancient Babylonian flood tradition of the Atrahasis epic (seventeenth century BCE) shows the specific emphasis of our story. According to the epic, the god Enlil inflicts the flood on humanity because of its multiplication and the "noise" of human activity. Enki, another deity, warns the human Atrahasis and tells him to build a ship. After the flood, Enlil has to accept the survival of humanity but sets limits to its multiplication, through infertility and demons that cause infant death. While the epic provides an etiology of infertility and infant mortality as caused by divine resentment against humanity, the biblical account emphasizes God's appreciation of human life: "Viewed in this light, Gn 9,1 ff. looks like a conscious rejection of the Atrahasis Epic."[13]

Although God's covenants in several prominent texts of the Hebrew Bible describe Israel's special relationship with Yhwh, the authors or redactors of Gen. 6:18, 9:1–17—classically identified as "P"[14]—used the term *berīt* at a late stage of the formation of the covenant idea to integrate it into their account of the origins of humanity. They thus opened the concept toward a universalist perspective: not only Israel but humanity and all living things are embraced by God in a covenant relationship that becomes mysteriously visible in the sign of the rainbow.

4. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT (GEN. 15, 17)

If the Noahite covenant was a result of a crisis of cosmic dimensions, the next divine covenant is Yhwh's response to the crisis of an individual—Abraham's childlessness. It is unfolded in two appearances of Yhwh (Gen. 15:1, 17:1). First, before the birth of Ishmael, Yhwh promises Abraham in his *berīt* to give "this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates," to his descendants (15:18; cf. 12:1–7). The second vision happens when Ishmael is already thirteen and Abraham is ninety-nine years old (17:1, 24–25). Here, the covenant theme is much more elaborately unfolded (no fewer than thirteen occurrences of *berīt* in 17:2–21; "eternal covenant" in 17:7, 13, 19).[15] God promises abounding posterity (vv. 2, 4–6), including a son of Sarah to be named Isaac (vv. 15–16, 19), and repeats the promise of the land (v. 8).

The words "I will establish my covenant … for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you" (Gen. 17:7) programmatically introduce an expression of the covenant relationship, which is frequently used as a formula in the Pentateuch and especially in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as Rolf Rendtorff has shown in his analysis of the "covenant formula."[16] Its first reciprocal wording occurs in Exod. 6:7: "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God" (cf. also Lev. 26:12; Jer. 11:4, 31:33). The formulation that emphasizes the people's role is found several times in Deuteronomy (e.g., 4:20, 7:6, 14:2, 26:17–19; compare Exod. 19:5).

Another new element of the covenant in Gen. 17—framed by God's promises—is his demand to "keep" (*šmr*) the covenant by performing male circumcision as a sign (vv. 9–14). This prepares a theme central to covenants that include obedience to commandments (see esp. Exod. 19:5; Deut. 29:8; compare Pss. 78:10, 103:18). Similarly, the motif of "breaking" the covenant is introduced here (Gen. 17:14).

Already when appearing to Abraham, God announces that he will continue his covenant relationship with Isaac (Gen. 17:21).[17] Although he repeats his promise to both Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 26:3–4, 28:13–14, 35:11–12), the term *berīt* is not used anymore for them (but see Exod. 2:24; Lev. 26:42; 2 Kings 13:23; Sir. 44:22–23). The covenant with the patriarchs provides (probably only at a relatively late stage of the formation of the Pentateuch) a strong narrative link between the books of Genesis and Exodus. Perceiving Israel's suffering in Egypt, "Yhwh remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Exod. 2:24; compare 6:4–5), which is the reason why God calls Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 3:1–4:17).

5. THE SINAI COVENANT (EXOD. 19–24)

Already at the burning bush God announces that the people will worship him "at this mountain" (Exod. 3:12), a first allusion to Israel's encounter with God at Sinai. As soon as the people have arrived there (19:1–2), Yhwh establishes his covenant with them in a complex dialogic process, in which Moses serves as the mediator. The whole process of the making of the covenant spans five chapters (Exod. 19–24).[18] Those

speeches immediately relevant to the covenant are shown in the following scheme:

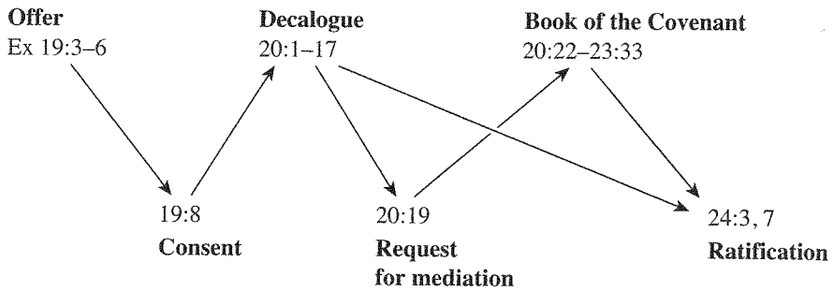

Figure 13.1. The speeches relevant to the making of the covenant (Exod. 19–24).

When God offers Israel the covenant (Exod. 19:3–6, esp. v. 5), proclaims the Decalogue (20:1–17), and conveys the "Book of the Covenant" to Moses (20:22–23:33), the people respond to each of these major speeches with a declaration of consent: the elders accept the offer (19:8); ask Moses for mediation, promising obedience to him (20:19); and ratify the content of the Book of the Covenant both after Moses presents it to them orally (24:3) and after he proclaims the written version the next day (24:4–7). This fourfold declaration of consent shows that the people of Israel play an active role and that their declarations are an essential element in the making of the covenant.

In modern political terms, the Sinai covenant is a constitutional process through which God's law becomes binding for Israel. It establishes a theocracy in the sense of God's "kingdom" over a priestly people (Exod. 19:6),[19] but it contains the democratic element of the "constitutional consensus." Theologically, this is of great significance, since God's law is seen not as imposed upon Israel by force but as freely accepted by the people. God respects his people as a partner in dialogue and mutual loyalty.

In an impressive theophany (Exod. 19:16–20:18), God proclaims the Decalogue (20:1–17), which is at the same time a climax of the making of the covenant. Yhwh's introductory words (20:2) can be translated "I, Yhwh, am your God," which can be seen as God's declaration of the covenant relationship. The following phrase, "who have brought you out

of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery," inseparably connects the establishment of the covenant and Israel's legal constitution with the narrative of the deliverance from Egypt. This provides a fundamental perspective for the hermeneutics of law in the Pentateuch: the gift of the law is grounded in the experience of deliverance, and thus the meaning of the law is to preserve freedom.

The Sinai covenant contains both obligation and promise. It is based on the condition of Israel's obedience to God's voice (Exod. 19:5), and God promises Israel that they will become "a jewel out of all the peoples … ; and you shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:5–6). This is expounded in the instructions concerning the sanctuary (Exod. 25–31) and the commandments in the book of Leviticus, which aim at Israel's sanctification (e.g., Lev. 19:2, 20:26).

The Sinai covenant includes several rituals. Moses erects twelve stelae as a commemorative monument (Exod. 24:4), young men offer sacrifices (v. 5), and Moses performs a blood ritual applying the blood to both the altar and the people, thus connecting Israel with the divine sphere through the symbol of life (vv. 6, 8). Moses declares the successful completion of the covenant: "See the blood of the covenant that Yhwh has made with you in accordance with all these words" (v. 8). Finally, Moses, Aaron, his sons, and seventy elders participate in a festive meal as a covenant celebration at the mountain (vv. 9–11). Despite the frequently emphasized danger in perceiving God too closely (e.g., Exod. 19:10–13, 21–24; 33:20), they are said to "see the God of Israel" (Exod. 24:10). After Moses's subsequent ascent to the mountain for forty days (Exod. 24:12–18), the making of the golden calf (Exod. 32) is shown as a paradigmatic breaking of the covenant, which is only renewed following a process of reconciliation (esp. Exod. 34:10, 27–28; compare Deut. 9:7–10:11).

Historically, the conception of the Sinai covenant developed in a complex process. It is generally held that the Book of the Covenant contains the most ancient preexilic legal material of the Hebrew Bible. Yet it was clearly reworked to fit the narrative framework of the Sinai covenant (e.g., Exod. 23:20–33). This framework was most probably created after 587 BCE, when the monarchy of Judah had been dethroned and its people had to redefine their political and religious identity. Sophisticated priestly scribes projected Mount Sinai as a "utopian" setting for the idea of Israel's formation as a theocracy in the remote past.

6. THE MOAB COVENANT (DEUTERONOMY)

Israel's covenant with God as presented in the canonical form of the book of Deuteronomy is highly complex. Its basic vision, however, is twofold. On the one hand, Moses reenacts the covenant at Horeb (Deuteronomy's expression for "Sinai") for the second generation, because the generation of the Horeb covenant had to die during the forty years in the desert (Deut. 2:16; cf. Num. 14:35, 26:65): "Yhwh our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Not with our ancestors did Yhwh make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today" (Deut. 5:2–3). This statement, which—on the surface—seems to be a blatant lie, rhetorically invites the Moab generation to consider themselves included in the Horeb covenant. At the same time, Moses's invitation is shaped in a wording that future generations—and thus even the audience of Deuteronomy—can apply to themselves, whether in their private meditation of "these words" (Deut. 6:6–7) or in their public teaching (as envisioned in Deut. 31:9–13).

The second major conception of Yhwh's covenant with Israel in Deuteronomy is introduced toward the end of Moses's speeches, when the narrator informs us that Moses made another covenant "in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb" (Deut. 29:1), which serves as a rubric for Moses's speech in Deut. 29–30.[20] The speech contains several elements that resemble ancient Near Eastern treaties, such as a "historical prologue" (29:2–9) and a reference to "blessings and curses" (30:1). Yet the rhetorical force of this speech lies in its free deviations from any ancient Near Eastern pattern. Moses not only warns his audience that a false covenant oath would have destructive consequences and finally lead to exile (29:18–27), but he also announces the possible return to the Promised Land from exile and new prosperity (30:1–10). Moreover, he emphasizes that "the word" (i.e., the content of his speeches) is close to Israel's heart (30:11–14). Finally, Moses urges Israel in the ultimate rhetorical climax of his addresses in Deuteronomy to make a choice between life and death (30:15–20)—"Choose life so that you may live!" (30:19).

In Deuteronomy, we do not find any explicit response by Israel to this urgent appeal. One should note that this is in stark contrast with both the Sinai covenant and the covenant that Joshua made "for the people"

in Shechem (Josh. 24:25): his demand for a decision (24:15) is followed by a series of assertions, culminating in "Yhwh our God we will obey and his voice we will obey!" (24:24). Why does Israel not make any response in Deuteronomy? Is their consent simply presupposed? Or is an explicit response avoided because the people's consent in the Sinai covenant had quickly been followed by faithlessness and disobedience? While Deuteronomy does seem to provide an indirect response by reporting Israel's actual obedience to Moses's commands after his death (Deut. 34:9),[21] it remains a glaring lacuna that we do not hear any verbal response to Moses's powerful covenant speech.

The solution to our question may be found in Deuteronomy's strategies of reader communication. As with the reenactment of the Horeb covenant, the Moab covenant speech needs to be read on two levels: the narrated world, on the one hand, and the perception of the audience, on the other. Moses's speech seems to engage an implied audience of readers who are actually experiencing or have experienced a situation of exile: "Because they abandoned the covenant … the anger of Yhwh was kindled against that land, bringing on it every curse written in this book. Yhwh uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is the case today" (29:25–27). Readers are directly reminded not only of the experience of exile (note the final word *today* as the rhetorical climax!) but also of the terrifyingly powerful reality of "this book" that they are reading with its curses (Deut. 28:15–68).

Furthermore, Moses continues to address a future Israel who are to return to Yhwh in exile ("you and your children," Deut. 30:2). Viewed in this light, "your fathers" is unlikely to refer to the Exodus generation (as in 5:3) or to the patriarchs, to whom God had promised the land (as in 6:10); rather, the "fathers" are most easily seen in the Moab generation, who "had taken [the land] into possession" (30:5; as Moses had constantly reminded them to do, e.g., 9:1). In the ears of readers, the voice of Moses sublimely transcends the threshold of the narrated world. His speech is meant to speak to the heart of those who know exile.

It is they who are promised that God will circumcise their hearts (Deut. 30:6)[22] so that they will be able to love God and keep his commandments (30:6, 8, 10). It is they who are reassured that Moses's word is "in their heart and in their mouth" (30:14). Finally, it is they who are

commanded to choose life (30:15–20). They are expected to give their consent to the Mosaic Torah, which allows them to reestablish the Moab covenant (which certainly had been broken, as announced by Yhwh himself in 31:16–21).[23] The very words with which these future generations should express their consent could be suggested in the enigmatic verse Deut. 29:29, which strangely interrupts Moses's discourse at its most dramatic point with a statement of an unidentified "we-group": "The secret things belong to Yhwh our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of this *torah*."

The Moab covenant speech as a whole redefines Moses's preceding discourses in Deuteronomy. It aims at Israel's commitment to Moses's "commandments, decrees, and ordinances" (Deut. 30:16), which is a general reference to Deut. 5–26. It also refers to the "blessing and the curse" (30:1, 19) that Moses had unfolded in Deut. 28. Therefore, all the central discourses of Deuteronomy are seen to serve the making of the Moab covenant.

On the same line, the structure of Deuteronomy can be seen in a rough analogy to ancient Near Eastern treaties: Moses's introductory discourse (Deut. 1–3) can be compared with the "historical prologue"; the Deuteronomic laws (Deut. 12–26), with the "covenant stipulations"; and the subsequent speeches (Deut. 27:12–26; 28), with the "blessing and curse." However, such comparisons should not be overemphasized. While Deuteronomy clearly shares these basic elements of the general rationale of ancient Near Eastern treaties and deliberately engages with Assyrian patterns, it should not be overlooked that its literary shape is much more complex and elaborate than any comparable text of the ancient Near East. Similarly, although William L. Moran correctly pointed out that the demand to "love" God in Deuteronomy (e.g., 6:5) is related to the demand to love the monarch in Assyrian treaties, Jacqueline E. Lapsley has justly argued that the love of God in Deuteronomy has different qualities and involves not just obedience but also emotional affection.[24]

The historical development of the texts related to the covenant in Deuteronomy seems to be most intricate. While some of the curses of Deut. 28 are likely to be an expression of anti-Assyrian subversive theology in the seventh century BCE (see above), the final form of Deut. 29–30 clearly suggests an address to the people of Judah, who have suffered exile and have a prospect of rebuilding their collective identity in

the land, which can hardly be imagined before the second half of the sixth century BCE.

Both historically and theologically it is most relevant that the final section of the Pentateuch (esp. Deut. 28–32) emphatically announces a future disaster for Israel and at the same time opens a new perspective after the return to the land (Deut. 30). The "finding" of the "book of the *torah*" under King Josiah (2 Kings 22:8) clearly refers to Deuteronomy, and the obvious fulfillment of its threats (2 Kings 22–25) strengthens the authority of this very book.[25] These ingenious literary conceptions largely contributed to the Pentateuch's "canonical success" from Persian times onward. A problematic witness of this can be seen in the reception of Deuteronomy's resentment against intermarriage in Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:2, 12, 14; cf. Deut. 7:3),[26] which prepares for the separation from foreign women and children in a "covenant for our God" (Ezra 10:5).

7. THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

The tradition of God's covenant with David is somewhat elusive,[27] since we do not find it where we should expect it most—in Nathan's oracle (2 Sam. 7:4–16 // 1 Chron. 17:3–15). Although God promises David the eternal establishment of his throne with great emphasis, the term *berīt* and covenant-related expressions such as "swear" and "oath" are conspicuously missing here. In the "Deuteronomistic History" (DtrH), God's response to Solomon's prayer adds that God's promise depends on Solomon's obedience (1 Kings 9:5), which is soon seen to fail, so that God announces the reduction of the Davidic kingdom to a single tribe (1 Kings 11:1–13). Whether the kingship of the Davidic line should have a future after the destruction of Jerusalem to confirm Nathan's oracle is one of the questions mysteriously left open by DtrH (2 Kings 25).[28]

In DtrH, only David's poetic "last words" (2 Sam. 23:1–7) speak about the "eternal covenant" that God had made with him (v. 5), and the immediately preceding reference to "my house" may well allude to Nathan's oracle. Outside DtrH, a covenant with David is referred to several times, mostly in texts that are clearly late. In Chronicles, the idea is introduced at least twice (2 Chron. 13:5, 21:7; cf. also the verb *krt*, "to cut," in 2 Chron. 7:18).[29]

Most prominently, Psalm 89 refers to God's covenant with David. It solemnly quotes it in the voice of God (vv. 3, 28, 34), finally accusing God of having broken it (v. 39) and imploring him to restore "your steadfast love of old" (v. 49; cf. v. 1). Less clear is the reference to the divine *berīt* in Ps. 132. Although the psalm claims that Yhwh had "sworn" to David to put his descendants on his throne (v. 11), the further succession of their sons depends on the condition that they "keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them" (v. 12). Thus, this covenant does not seem to be identical with the promise made to David.

David is also mentioned in prophetic covenant texts in the context of postexilic restoration. Jeremiah's oracles during his captivity in the court of the guard under Zedekiah (Jer. 32, 33) speak twice about a covenant that is to be realized after the return from exile. The first says that God will enable the people to fear him (32:37–40; compare the new covenant, below); the second is called a covenant with David that secures the stability of the succession to his throne as securely as the succession of day and night (33:20–21). Here, the covenant with David is paralleled with the Levitic covenant (see also Neh. 13:29; Mal. 2:4–5, 8; Sir. 45:25; cf. with Pinhas: Num. 25:12–13).[30]

In Isaiah 55:3, God offers to a group of addressees an "eternal covenant," which is equated with the "mercies" (*hsdy*) of David (or for David, perhaps influenced by Ps. 89:1–3?). This covenant, which may well be offered to the "servants" of 54:17, gains a universal significance, since the Davidic reign extends to other peoples (55:4) and attracts unknown nations (55:5). It seems, thus, that the Davidic monarchy, which has been dethroned by Nebuchadnezzar, is here transformed and universalized in postexilic times.

8. THE "NEW COVENANT" (JER. 31) AND OTHER PROPHETIC TRANSFORMATIONS

Lothar Perlitt observed that earlier prophets rarely mention the covenant, which he called the "covenant silence" of the prophets, supporting his argument that covenant theology did not emerge before the seventh century BCE.[31] The covenant theme, however, becomes quite vigorous in later prophecy.[32]

Jeremiah emphatically accuses Israel and Judah of having broken the Sinai covenant (11:1–10; compare also 34:12–16 with reference to Deut. 15:12). He exhorts God not to break his covenant (Jer. 14:21, probably twisting Deut. 31:20). And he quotes the nations' accusation of Israel's abandonment of Yhwh from the Moab covenant (Jer. 22:9; cf. Deut. 29:24; 1 Kings 9:9). Against this backdrop, and explicitly contrasted with the Sinai covenant, Jeremiah announces—uniquely in the Hebrew Bible—a "new covenant" (31:31–33).[33] It is unfolded in active dialogue with Deuteronomy. While according to the Moab covenant God will circumcise Israel's hearts to enable them to love God and obey (Deut. 30:6–10) the written Torah of Moses (31:9), which is to be taught and learned (e.g., 5:1, 31; 31:12) and is thus in Israel's hearts (30:14), Jeremiah's new covenant announces that God's Torah will be written on Israel's hearts (Jer. 31:33) and they will no longer teach one another (31:34). The "new covenant" may be identical with the "eternal covenant" announced for those who return from exile (32:40, see above; cf. 50:5). From Jeremiah's new covenant, the "New Testament" derives its name (see below).

Another specific transformation of the covenant idea is found in the book of Isaiah (42–59). Twice, God announces that he will install his servant as a "covenant of/with the people" (Isa. 42:6, 49:8). Although "people" seems to refer to humanity in 42:5, the "covenant of/with the people" most probably portrays the servant as a symbol of God's covenant with Israel (compare its context in 49:8).[34] In the first occurrence, this is immediately followed by the title "a light for the nations" (cf. also 49:6), reminiscent of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion and their quest for "Torah" (2:3, 5; 42:4). Despite these universalistic tendencies, God's *berīt* seems to remain reserved for Israel in Isaiah. In contrast to the "eternal covenant" broken according to Isaiah 24:5, God announces another "eternal covenant" in Isaiah 55:3 (see above) and 61:8. Yhwh's consolation of the barren lady Zion contains an announcement of a "covenant of my peace/welfare [*šalōm*]" (54:10, compared with the Noahite covenant in 54:9). The widest opening for strangers is found in the covenant offered to eunuchs and strangers (56:4, 6), who are mainly meant to keep the Sabbath (as a *berīt*; cf. Exod. 31:16), through which they become integrated into Israel. Finally, the covenant is closely linked with the gift of "my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth" (59:21; for "spirit," see 42:1, 44:3, 61:1; for "word," 51:16).

Ezekiel introduces the theme of the divine covenant in the metaphorical account of Jerusalem's history as the biography of a woman (Ezek. 16). Yhwh takes her into a marriage covenant (v. 8).[35] The theme is unfolded at the end of the chapter (vv. 59–62). Remembering the covenant of her past, God will establish an "eternal covenant" in the future (v. 60). The second major historical reflection (Ezek. 20) mentions the giving of the law (vv. 11–12), but the term *berīt* occurs only in the context of Israel's judgment during their return from exile (vv. 34–37). Twice, the future covenant is called a "covenant of peace" (34:25, 37:26; cf. Isa. 54:10),[36] both times immediately following the motif of the Davidic reign. The breaking of the divine covenant is mentioned as committed by Zedekiah (Ezek. 17:19) and by Israel through allowing foreigners to profane the Temple (44:7).

Among the Twelve Minor Prophets, specific aspects in the writings of Hosea, Zechariah, and Malachi should be pointed out. Hosea refers to a divine covenant with the wild animals (Hosea 2:18),[37] together with the breaking of "bow, sword and war," which is made for the sake of Israel (on their breaking of the covenant, see 6:7, 8:1). Zechariah announces a king reigning in Jerusalem to bring universal peace (Zech. 9:9–10), adding that prisoners will be freed "because of the blood of your covenant" (Zech. 9:11, alluding to Exod. 24:8?). Zech. 11:10 surprisingly mentions God's breaking of a covenant "that I had made with all the peoples." Although it cannot be ruled out that this plural refers to Israel, the context seems to speak of humanity in general (vv. 6–11). Finally, in Malachi God's voice announces a "messenger of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1; cf. Exod. 23:20), whose identity is highly disputed.[38]

9. THE DIVINE COVENANT IN PSALMS AND WRITINGS

Psalms encourage humans to keep God's covenant by observing his commandments (Pss. 25:10, 103:18), and they praise God for remembering his covenant forever (105:8, 111:5). References to the covenant are relatively frequent in history psalms (Pss. 78, 105–6; on Pss. 89 and 132, see above). Psalm 78 emphasizes Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant and the Torah (vv. 10, 37), while Ps. 44:18 denies such guilt. The contrasting reflections on history in Psalms 105 and 106 are framed by

the covenant motif. Psalm 105 recalls the covenantal promise of the land for the patriarchs (vv. 8, 10–11 // 1 Chron. 16:15, 17), which God remembers, according to the end of Psalm 106, to be merciful to those in exile (vv. 45–46). From a similar perspective, the end of Psalm 74 asks God to "have regard for your covenant" in view of the destruction caused by enemies (v. 20). The Asaph Psalm 50 speaks about the covenant to be made in the context of cultic sacrifice (v. 5) and of the demand to keep commandments (v. 16).

Norbert Lohfink has suggested reading Psalm 25 against the background of Psalm 24 as a prayer of the nations at Zion, which would provide the only text to include the nations in the divine covenant with Israel (Ps. 25:10, 14). Lohfink also discovered tendencies to universalize the covenant formula in Psalm 33 (v. 12) and Psalm 100 (v. 3).[39] Indeed, the conception of God's universal kingship and the call for all nations to worship him in the Temple (Pss. 95–100) may justify an understanding of "his people" (Ps. 100:3) as referring to humanity.

The divine covenant generally plays little role in wisdom literature. It is missing in Job and Qohelet, and there are only single references to it in Proverbs (2:17) and in the Wisdom of Solomon (18:22). Sirach, however, exceptionally portrays the history of Israel as a history of covenants (esp. Sir. 44:12–45:25), with strong emphasis on the priestly covenants, representing the interests of the Temple community of the second century BCE. Moreover, Ben Sira emphasizes the importance of the "book of the covenant of the most high God," which is the Torah of Moses (Sir. 24:23; cf. 1 Macc. 1:57) and develops a universalizing idea of the covenant for humanity (Sir. 17:11–12).[40] The great importance of the covenant idea in the second century BCE is also attested in its overarching significance in the *Book of Jubilees* and the use of "(holy) covenant" as a metonymic reference to Jewish religion in Daniel (11:28, 30, 32) and Maccabees (1 Macc. 1:15, 63; 2:20, 27, 50).[41]

10. RECEPTION IN QUMRAN AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the Qumran writings "covenant" is a dominant category (257 occurrences, virtually all of them theological). They adduce many covenant conceptions from the Hebrew Bible, including Jeremiah's "new covenant"

(CD 6,19; 8,21; 19,33–34; 20,12). Members of the Qumran community committed themselves to religious obligations in a covenant ritual that was annually renewed. The sectarian movement understood itself as a "community of the covenant" (*yahad berīt*; 1QS 5,5; 8,16).

Compared with the notion of the covenant's importance in the Qumran texts, it is of much less significance in the New Testament (no more than thirty-three occurrences of *diatheke*). Nevertheless, it acquired great prominence, especially because of its use in Jesus's words during the Last Supper, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:25 // Luke 22:20) or "This is my blood of the covenant" (Mark 14:24 // Matt. 26:28; cf. in the background Exod. 24:8; Zech. 9:11), which was received as the institution of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper, the central liturgy of Christianity. Another indication of the importance of the motif of the "new covenant" is the quotation of Jer. 31:31–34 in Heb. 8:8–12—the longest quotation of an Old Testament text in the New Testament. The most elaborate theology of the covenant in the New Testament is found in the Pauline letters.[42] Since Clement of Alexandria and Origen (second/third century CE), Christians have referred to the writings of the Bible as the "old" and the "new testaments."[43]

11. HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

In the history of ancient Near Eastern religions, the idea of a covenant between a deity and humans is not unique to Israel. Certainly unique, though, is its elaborate and multifaceted unfolding in the Hebrew Bible. While making covenants "before" a deity had most likely been an old custom in ancient Israel, the idea of a covenant *with* Yhwh seems to have developed in a theological reaction against Assyrian rhetorics of power. Yet only the catastrophe of the Babylonian exile led to the climax of covenant theology. Israel's breaking of the covenant served as an explanation of the disaster (e.g., Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 29:18–27; Josh. 23:15–16; 2 Kings 17:15, 35, 38; Jer. 11:1–10, 31:32; Ezek. 16:59), ancient covenant promises were invoked to inspire hope (Lev. 26:42, 44–45), and the idea of God's renewed or new "eternal" covenant became a crucial category to express the perspective of restoration (Deut. 29–30; Isa. 55:3, 54:10, 59:21, 61:8; Jer. 31:31–33, 32:40, 50:5; Ezek. 16:60, 20:37, 34:25, 37:26;

Zech. 9:11; Mal. 3:1; Ps. 106:45–46; Bar. 2:35).[44] Postexilic readers could "be addressed by diverse covenant theologies at the same time; the deuteronomic, because it convicts of guilt and offers that torah that will be in force also at the end; the prophetic, stepping out into the universal, because it contains hope; the priestly, because it offers the ultimate ground for hope: God's eternal faithfulness that no human unfaithfulness can destroy."[45]

Theologically, the divine covenant portrays God as caring for all living creatures (Gen. 9); as a loyal partner, committing himself to generous gifts (Gen. 15, 17); and as a lawgiver with kingly authority who, nevertheless, engages with Israel in a constitutional process (Exod. 19–24; Deut. 29–30). Moreover, divine covenants typically follow crises: human sinfulness and the great flood, Abraham and Sarah's childlessness, Israel's oppression in Egypt and their dramatic exodus, their rebellion and forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and, not least, the Babylonian exile. God's covenants are always a means of reestablishing human confidence in personal or communal life through strengthening the relationship, often even despite human failure. God is therefore praised as "keeping the covenant and loyalty" (Deut. 7:9; 1 Kings 8:23 // 2 Chron. 6:14; Dan. 9:4; Neh. 1:5, 9:32). These foundational ideas and their intensive reception during the Second Temple period led to the covenant's central importance in both Judaism and Christianity.

For Christian theology, it is fundamental to acknowledge that the New Testament's notion of the covenant is grounded in, and dependent on, its manifold conceptions in the Hebrew Bible and that a simplified juxtaposition of "the old" and "the new covenants" does not do justice to its biblical conception. From a canonical perspective, any covenant theology can only be considered as grounded in God's covenant with humanity (Gen. 9)—which gains new shades of meaning when humanity may become able to cause or avoid climate catastrophes.

NOTES

I am indebted to Norbert Lohfink, Eckart Otto, and Georg Fischer for commenting on a draft of this chapter.

1. George Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955) = *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954): pp. 26–46, 49–76.

Another important early contribution is Klaus Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 4 (Neukirchen, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960; 2nd ed., 1964); Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings*, David E. Green, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). A much more elaborate study is provided in Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*, Analecta Biblica 21 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963; new ed., 1978).

2. Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History*, Linda M. Maloney, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), pp. 32–33; David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-archaeological Approach*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 109 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991). However, George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1 (1992): pp. 1179–1202, still struggles to defend the idea of direct influence of Hittite treaties on the Hebrew Bible.

3. These same texts have, according to a different interpretation of their function, also been called Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon; some refer to them by the Akkadian term *adê*. For the text, see esp. the edition Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, State Archives of Assyria 2 (Helsinki: University Press, 1988); transcriptions and translations are available online: http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/saa02/corpus (accessed November 30, 2015).

4. On Sennacherib's campaign, see Isaac Kalimi and Seth Richardson, eds., *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); on Judah under Manasseh, see Gunnar Lehmann, "Survival and Reconstruction of Judah in the Time of Manasseh," in A. Berlejung, ed., *Disaster and Relief Management: Katastrophen und ihre Bewältigung*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), pp. 289–309, esp. p. 303.

5. See Timothy P. Harrison and James F. Osborne, "Building XVI and the Neo-Assyrian Sacred Precinct at Tell Tayinat," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 64 (2012): pp. 125–43; Jacob Lauinger, "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty at Tell Tayinat: Text and Commentary," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 64 (2012): pp. 87–123.

6. Translations of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties from http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/saa02/corpus. For this and other comparisons, see Hans U. Steymans, "Deuteronomy 28 and Tell Tayinat," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34 (2013), art. #870, http://www.ve.org.za/index.php/VE/article/view/870/1867; Hans U. Steymans, *Deuteronomium 28 und die* adê *zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons: Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient und in Israel*, Orbis biblicus et orientalis 145 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1995).

7. Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, State Archives of Assyria 9 (Helsinki: University Press, 1997), pp. 22–27; Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 284 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 79–84.

8. Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage Developed from the Perspective of Malachi*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

9. For the sake of precision, it should be noted that 1 Kings 5:26 does not speak about a "treaty of brotherhood," as claimed in Frank Moore Cross, "Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel," in *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 3–21, here p. 10. Only in Amos 1:9 does there occur "*berīt* of brothers," which may be adduced to support Cross's thesis that covenant language is grounded in the language of kinship.

10. Cf. Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, Analecta Biblica 88 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1982), pp. 198–209.

11. This opinion had been most elaborately presented by Ernst Kutsch; see, e.g., his entries on *bryt* in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 1 (1997): pp. 256–66, and on *Bund* in *TRE* 7 (1980): pp. 397–403. It was supported by Lothar Perlitt's influential study *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969); see also his entry "Covenant," *Encyclopedia of Christianity* 1 (1999): pp. 709–11. For criticism of this position, see, most prominently, James Barr, "Some Semantic Notes on the Covenant," in Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart, and Rudolf Smend, eds., *Beiträge zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie: FS W. Zimmerli* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), pp. 23–38; Erich Zenger, *Der Neue Bund im Alten: Zur Bundestheologie der beiden Testamente*, Quaestiones disputatae 146 (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1993), pp. 26–27; and Eckart Otto, "Die Ursprünge der Bundestheologie," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 4 (1998): pp. 1–84, esp. pp. 26–27.

12. For a concise interpretation of the flood narrative, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 272–319.

13. William L. Moran, "Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood," *Biblica* 52 (1971): pp. 51–61, here p. 61.

14. Cf., e.g., Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–26: A Commentary*, J. J. Scullion S.J., trans. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), esp. pp. 459–480. On the concept of the covenant in P, see Christophe Nihan, "The Priestly Covenant, Its Reinterpretations, and the Composition of 'P,'" in Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden, eds., *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments 95 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), pp. 87–134.

15. On its function as a *Leitwort* and its planned distribution, see Westermann, *Genesis 12–26*, p. 256.

16. Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, M. Kohl, trans., Old Testament Studies (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), here esp. pp. 13–15.

17. The question whether Ishmael is to be considered as integrated into or excluded from the covenant with Abraham is controversial. Cf. Konrad Schmid, "Gibt es eine 'abrahamitische Ökumene' im Alten Testament? Überlegungen zur religionspolitischen Theologie der Priesterschrift in Genesis 17," in Anselm C. Hagedorn and Henrik Pfeiffer, eds., *Die Erzväger in der biblischen Tradition: Festschrift für Matthias Köckert*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 400 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 67–92; and Matthias Köckert, "Gottes 'Bund' mit Abraham und die 'Erwählung' Israels in Genesis 17," in Nathan MacDonald, ed., *Covenant and Election in Exilic and Post-exilic Judaism*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2, Reihe 79 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), pp. 1–28.

18. For a detailed interpretation, see Dominik Markl, *Der Dekalog als Verfassung des Gottesvolkes: Die Brennpunkte einer Rechtshermeneutik des Pentateuch in Exodus 19–24 und Deuteronomium 5*, Herders Biblische Studien 49 (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 2007), esp. pp. 33–173.

19. See Jean Louis Ska, "Exodus 19:3–6 and the Identity of Post-exilic Israel," in *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 139–64, esp. pp. 147–53.

20. In standard editions of the Hebrew Bible, this verse is counted as 28:69. Here, verses are quoted according to the count generally used in English Bible translations. On the issue of the function of this verse as a colophon or a superscript, which has been discussed by Herrie F. van Rooy and Norbert Lohfink, see Dominik Markl, *Gottes Volk im Deuteronomium*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für biblische und altorientalische Rechtsgeschichte 18 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), pp. 90–91, and more elaborately on the interpretation of the Moab covenant as presented above, pp. 88–125.

21. This aspect has been emphasized in Jean-Pierre Sonnet, "Redefining the Plot of Deuteronomy—from End to Beginning. The Import of Deut 34:9," in G. Fischer, D. Markl, and S. Paganini, eds., *Deuteronomium—Tora für eine neue Generation*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für biblische und altorientalische Rechtsgeschichte 17 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), pp. 37–49.

22. The import of the motif of the circumcision of the heart as the internalized sign of the covenant with Abraham was recently analyzed in Ernst Ehrenreich, *Wähle das Leben! Deuteronomium 30 als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zur Tora*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für biblische und altorientalische Rechtsgeschichte 14 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), pp. 156–200.

23. An alternative theological view for overcoming the crisis of exile seems to be presented in the high point of priestly covenant theology in Lev. 26: God will not break his covenant even in exile (v. 44) but will remember his covenant with the patriarchs (vv. 42 and 45). Cf. Thomas Hieke, "The Covenant in Leviticus 26: A Concept of Admonition and Redemption," in Richard J. Bautch and Gary N. Knoppers, eds., *Covenant in the Persian Period: From Genesis to Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2015), pp. 75–89.

24. William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): pp. 77–87; Jacqueline E. Lapsley, "Feeling Our Way: Love for God in Deuteronomy," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 (2003): pp. 350–69.

25. Dominik Markl, "No Future without Moses: The Disastrous End of 2 Kings 22–25 and the Chance of the Moab Covenant (Deuteronomy 29–30)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133 (2014): pp. 711–28.

26. Juha Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemia 8*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 347 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), esp. pp. 108–9.

27. For the history of research and the discussed texts, see Griphus Gakuru, *An Inner-Biblical Exegetical Study of the Davidic Covenant and the Dynastic Oracle* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2000); Steven L. McKenzie, "The Typology of the Davidic Covenant," in J. Andrew Dearman and M. Patrick Graham, eds., *The Land that I Will Show You: Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honour of J. Maxwell Miller*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 343 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2001), pp. 152–78; Hans U. Steymans, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund: Eine strukturale und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Österreichische biblische Studien 27 (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2005), esp. pp. 367–443.

28. David Janzen, "An Ambiguous Ending: Dynastic Punishment in Kings and the Fate of the Davidides in 2 Kings 25.27–30," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (2008): pp. 39–58.

29. On the meaning of covenant in Chronicles, see Gary N. Knoppers, "Judah, Levi, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, and the Temple: Election and Covenant in Chronicles," in MacDonald, *Covenant and Election in Exilic and Post-exilic Judaism*, pp. 139–68; and the chapters by Mark J. Boda and Louis C. Jonker in Bautch and Knoppers, *Covenant in the Persian Period*, pp. 391–407 and 409–29.

30. On the covenant with the Levites, see Filippo Serafini, *L'alleanza levitica. Studio della berît di Dio con i sacerdoti leviti nell'Antico Testamento* (Assisi: Cittadella, 2006).

31. Perlitt, *Bundestheologie*, pp. 129–55.

32. For an analysis of the relevant texts, see Bernard Renaud, *Nouvelle ou éternelle Alliance? Le message des prophètes* (Paris: Cerf, 2002).

33. See esp. Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 2005), pp. 171–76. LXX presents a markedly different view of the history of covenants, esp. in Jer. 32:32–33; for a discussion, see Adrian Schenker, *Das Neue am neuen Bund und das Alte am alten: Jer 31 in der hebräischen und griechischen Bibel*, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 212 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). The theme of the new covenant forms part of several theological transformations, as observed in Moshe Weinfeld, "Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 88 (1976): pp. 17–56.

34. See Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III*, vol. 1, *Isaiah 40–48*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1997), pp. 230–33. For a discussion of the covenant theme in Isaiah, see Norbert Lohfink, "Covenant and Torah in the Pilgrimage of the Nations (the Book of Isaiah and Psalm 25)," in Norbert Lohfink and E. Zenger, *The God of Israel and the Nations*, E. R. Kalin, trans. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 33–84, esp. 42–57; on Torah, Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Book of Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," in R. F. Melugin and M. A. Sweeney, eds., *New Visions of Isaiah*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 214 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996), pp. 50–67.

35. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, pp. 302–9.

36. On its explication in cosmological terms and in relation with Lev. 26:4–13, see Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 301–7.

37. On the relationship of Hosea 2:18 and other relevant texts with the Noahite covenant, see Katharine J. Dell, "Covenant and Creation in Relationship," in A.D.H. Mayes and R. B. Salters, eds., *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 111–33.

38. See Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 286–89.

39. Lohfink and Zenger, *God of Israel and the Nations*, pp. 57–122; Norbert Lohfink, "Die Universalisierung der Bundesformel in Ps 100,3," *Theologie und Philosophie* 65 (1990): pp. 172–83.

40. See Otto Kaiser, "Covenant and Law in Ben Sira," in A.D.H. Mayes and R. B. Salters, eds., *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 235–60; Luis Alonso Schökel, "The Vision of Man in Sirach 16:24–17:14," in John G. Gammie, Walter A. Brueggemann, W. Lee Humphreys, and James M. Ward, eds., *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars' Press for Union Theological Seminary, 1978), pp. 235–45.

41. See James C. VanderKam, "Covenant," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* 1 (2000): pp. 151–54, at pp. 151–52.

42. Nicholas T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (London: T&T Clark, 1991).

43. LXX usually renders *berīt* with διαθήκη, with Latin translations usually of *testamentum* or *pactum*. These are, of course, not close semantic equivalents of the Hebrew term.

44. On the expression "eternal covenant" (sixteen occurrences in the Hebrew Bible; in the New Testament, only Heb. 13:20), see Stephen D. Mason, *"Eternal Covenant" in the Pentateuch: The Contours of an Elusive Phrase*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 494 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2008).

45. Norbert Lohfink, "The Concept of 'Covenant' in Biblical Theology," in Lohfink and Zenger, *God of Israel and the Nations*, pp. 11–31, here p. 29.

FURTHER READING

The most recent and substantial dictionary entry on *covenant* was written by Christoph Koch, in *EBR* 5 (2012): pp. 897–908. Moshe Weinfeld's article on *berit* in *TDOT* 2 (1977): pp. 253–79, is still valuable, especially regarding the biblical covenant's relationship with other treaty cultures of the ancient world. For comparative study, Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence have recently provided a vast collection of material in their *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012); opinions on dating and interpretation expressed in these volumes, however, should be considered critically.

Significant contributions on exegetical and theological issues include Richard J. Bautch and Gary N. Knoppers, eds., *Covenant in the Persian Period: From Genesis to Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2015); Nathan MacDonald, ed., *Covenant and Election in Exilic and Postexilic Judaism*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2, Reihe 79 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); A.D.H. Mayes and R. B. Salters, eds., *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Christoph Dohmen and Christian Frevel, eds., *Für immer verbündet: Studien zur Bundestheologie der Bibel* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2007); Walter Groß, *Zukunft für Israel: Alttestamentliche Bundeskonzepte und die aktuelle Debatte um den Neuen Bund* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1998); and Erich Zenger, ed., *Der Neue Bund im Alten: Zur Bundestheologie der beiden Testamente* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1993). On the history of research from Wellhausen to Perlitt, see Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), pp. 1–117.

On the Qumran texts, see esp. the article on *bryt* by Brent A. Strawn in *ThWQ* 1 (2011): pp. 508–21 (the English version is in preparation: *Theological Dictionary of the Qumran Texts*, to be published by Eerdmans); and the collection edited by Stanley E. Porter and Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, *The Concept of the Covenant in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

For the New Testament and early Judaism, see—besides Johannes Behm's entry "The Greek Term διαθήκη" in *TDNT* 2 (1964): pp. 124–34—esp. Ellen J. Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); and Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger, eds., *Bund und Tora: Zur theologischen Begriffsgeschichte in alttestamentlicher, frühjüdischer und urchristlicher Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).