

MAJOR COVENANTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Covenant	Reference	Type	Participant	Description
Noahic	Gen 9:8-17	Royal Grant	Made with 'righteous' (6:9) Noah (and his descendants and every living thing on earth - all life is subject to man's jurisdiction	An Unconditional divine promise never to destroy all earthly life with some natural catastrophe; the covenant 'sign' being the rainbow in the storm cloud
Abraham	Gen 15:9-21	Royal (land) Grant	Made with 'righteous' (this faith was credited to him as righteous' v 6 Abram (and his descendants v 16)	An unconditional divine promise to fulfil the grant of the land; a self-vaedictory oath symbolically enacted it (v 17)
Sinaitic	Ex 19-24	Suzerain Vassal	Made with Israel as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and as the people the Lord has redeemed from bondage to an earthly power	A conditional divine pledge to be Israel's God (as her Protector and the Guarantor of her blessed destiny); the condition: Israel's total consecration to the Lord as His people who live by His rule and serve His purposes in history
Phinehas	Nu 25: 10-18	Royal Grant	Made with the Zealous priest Phinehas	An Unconditional divine promise to maintain the family of Phinehas in a 'lasting priesthood' (implicitly a pledge to Israel to provide for her for ever with a faithful priesthood
Davidic	2 Sam 7:5-16	Royal Grant	Made with faithful King David after his devotion to God as Israel' king and the Lord's anointed vassal had come to special expression (v 12)	An unconditional promise to establish and maintain the Davidic dynasty on the throne of Israel (implicitly a pledge to Israel) to provide her for ever with a godly king like David and through that dynasty to do her what he had done through David - bring her into rest in the promised land (1 King 4:20-21; 5:3-4)
New	Jer 31:31-34	Royal Grant	Promised to rebellious Israel as she is about to be expelled from the promised land (in fulfilment of the most severe covenant curse. (Lev 26:27-39; Dt 28:36-37, 45-68	An unconditional divine promise to unfaithful Israel to forgive her sins and establish His relationship with her on a new basis by writing His law 'on their hearts' - a covenant of pure grace

Major Types of Royal Covenants/Treaties in the Ancient Near East

Royal Grant (unconditional)

A king's grant (of land or some other benefit) to a loyal servant for faithful or exceptional service. The grant was normally perpetual and unconditional, but the servant's heirs benefited from it only as they continued their father's loyalty and service (1 Sam 8:14; 22:7, 27:6 Est 8:11)

Parity

A covenant between equals, binding them to mutual friendship or at least to mutual respect for each other's spheres and interests. Participants called each other 'brothers'. (Gen 21:27; 26:31; 31:44-54; 1 Kings 5:12; 15:19; 21: 32-34; Amos 1:9)

Suzerain-vassal (conditional)

A covenant regulating the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings. The great king claimed absolute right of sovereignty, demanded total loyalty and service (the vassal must 'love' his suzerain) and pledged protection of the subjects realm and dynasty, conditional on the vassal's faithfulness and loyalty to him. The vassal pledged absolute loyalty to his suzerain - whatever service his suzerain demanded - and exclusive reliance on the suzerains protection. Participants called each other 'lord' and 'servant' or 'father' and 'son'. Josh 9:6,8; Ezek 17:13-18; Hos 12:1)