THE RELEVANCE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT
TO ISRAEL AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD
BASED ON ITS FORM AND FUNCTION
AS VIEWED FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Master of Arts

by
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Relevance of the Abrahamic Covenant to Israel and the People of God Based on Its Form and Function As Viewed from the Old Testament by
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This study deals with the aspect of covenant in the Old Testament.

In approaching the study of covenant in the Old Testament, the Abrahamic Covenant was selected because of its strategic position involving the history and theology of the Hebrew scriptures.

The purpose of this study was to scrutinize the form (structure) and function (utilization) of the Abrahamic covenant. Its form is viewed in conjunction with the pattern of the royal land grant treaty of the ancient Near East. A comparison has been drawn between the components of the royal grant and the Abrahamic covenant. Stemming from the form of the Abrahamic covenant, great emphasis has been placed upon its nature as being unconditional.

The function of the Abrahamic covenant is viewed from the fulfillment of its basic elements of land, seed and blessing as manifested in the major sections of the Old Testament, namely the Pentateuch, and historical, poetical and prophetical books.
The data presented in this thesis leads to the following conclusions. 1) The Abrahamic covenant is patterned after the unconditional royal grant and not after the conditional vassal treaty. 2) The Abrahamic covenant is historically fulfilled in the Old Testament having a direct bearing upon the Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenant, as well as being prophetically significant to the functioning of these covenants, making it relevant to the nation of Israel as well as the people of God.
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# ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations correspond to periodicals and books used throughout the thesis. Full titles are initially cited, thereafter abbreviated.

**Periodicals**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATR</td>
<td>Anglican Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIB</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTJ</td>
<td>Grace Theological Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJT</td>
<td>Indian Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interp</td>
<td>Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTR</td>
<td>Princeton Theological Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Restoration Quarterly</td>
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<td>RTR</td>
<td>Reformed Theological Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Tyndale Bulletin</td>
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<td>Th Ed</td>
<td>Theological Educator</td>
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<td>Th 2</td>
<td>Theologische Zeitschrift</td>
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WTJ Westminster Theological Journal

Books
AB Anchor Bible
ANEPE Ancient Near East in Pictures
K-D Keil & Delitzsch
OTL Old Testament Library
TOTC Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
ZPED Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible

Signs

cf. (confer) compare
chap., chaps. chapter(s)
ed., eds. editor(s) or edition(s)
e.g. (exempli gratia) for example
f., ff. and the following page(s)
i.e. (id est) that is
p., pp. page(s)
rev. revised (by)
sic thus
trans. translated (by)
v., vv. verse(s)
vol., vols. volume(s)
vs. (versus) against

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Richard Patterson for his guidance and help in bringing this thesis to completion. His counsel and suggestions have proven to be invaluable in accomplishing such a monumental task.

My gratitude is also extended to Dr. Neal Williams and Dr. Woodard, whose advice proved to be very helpful. Special thanks to my wife Melody for her patience and especially her typing.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Occasion and Importance of the Study. A study of the Old Testament is a study dealing with the concept of covenant. During the time of early biblical history, covenants existed to unify people with their kings and leaders, as well as their gods. The Old Testament also displays relationships between God and man based on various covenants:

The discovery and publication of treaty texts of the ancient world have vastly increased our information regarding the historical background of the Bible. Yet the real surge of interest arose when these treaty texts began to be compared with the covenant passages of the Bible.

Understanding the use of covenants in the ancient Near East leads one in the right direction of understanding how the Old Testament populace perceived God's relationship with them and in turn their obligation to him. These contracted agreements between God and man sought to guarantee for the latter a sense of security and belonging:

In the OT the covenant rests on God's promise and lies at the heart of the biblical notion of history. Though it is especially identified with the covenant made at Sinai, its full range extends from creation clear through to the prophets. It is the core of the Hebrew

understanding of their relationship with God.\textsuperscript{2}

The idea of a covenant is implicit in the Old Testament as early as Genesis chapter one. Here God created man and established a relationship with him and appointed him in a representative position of rulership over nature with the added benefit of enjoying its yield. This was a condition that still remained even after the fall but under more adverse circumstances (Gen. 3). The first indication of a covenant being established was not until the time of Noah (Gen. 6:11) which was in conjunction with the destruction of the earth by a flood. Because of Noah's faithfulness, God had promised him that he and his family would be spared from the appointed calamity. After the flood a sign of the covenant was established (Gen. 9) as a witness to Noah and all men that God would never destroy the world again by water.

The Noahic covenant reflected an unconditional promise with universal appeal that secured an ordered world for its inhabitants despite the persistence of human depravity:

This is a paradoxical measure of God's supporting grace, known in the incomprehensible persistence of the natural orders despite the ongoing human sin: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (v. 22). Human

corruption unchanged, God yet transfers humanity to a newly ordered world whose natural course of events solemnly is guaranteed to endure.³

The covenant theme reappears with greater clarity in Genesis chapter fifteen⁴ where God chooses Abraham to be his covenant recipient. The Abrahamic covenant continued to express the divine favor that was manifested to Noah but is narrowed down to include promises relating to an inheritance of land, the multiplying of offspring, and a restriction of blessing as issuing from the seed of the patriarch. From this covenant context the remainder of the Old Testament relates Hebrew history and describes the fulfillment of the promises that were given to Abraham. In light of this, the Abrahamic covenant is of supreme importance as to its position in Scripture as well as its nature of being an unconditional covenant. Therefore, a proper knowledge of the form and function of this covenant is imperative to understanding the Bible's message in dealing with the election of Israel and the ultimate


⁴Although this is the first mentioning of the word "covenant" (v. 18) in the Abrahamic narrative it is however in a greater context which extends from chapter twelve through twenty-two.
blessing in store for the people of God.

1.2 State of the Research. The theme of covenant in Old Testament studies has been debated for well over a century. From Wellhausen's denial of the concept (before the eighth and seventh century B.C.) to modern day thinking relating to non-biblical data, the understanding of covenant has come a long way among scholars.

The study of biblical covenants can basically be outlined in three broad-periods. During the first period (1878-1920), scholars were divided over the ancient biblical use of the concept because of the critical theories of Wellhausen. Men such as Stade, Meyer and Gunkel were swayed by Wellhausen's thinking in denying the antiquity of the Sinaitic covenant. Others such as Kittel, Steuernagel, Procksch and Gressmann argued in varying degrees for a covenant enacted in some form by Moses at Sinai. The term berit was also discussed during this period but without much agreement due to the lack of substantial evidence from antiquity.

The second period (1920-1950) witnessed a swift change

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in the trend to accept the ancient covenant use in early Hebrew history. Scholars who were in favor of such a view were: Mowinckel, Hempel, Weiser, Galling, Eichrodt, Gunkel (Who changed from his earlier stance), Porteous, Robinson, Rowley, Wright, and Noth. This change in thinking was greatly influenced by a rebirth of interest in Old Testament theology, along with the inquisitiveness of understanding Hebrew history in light of the sociological framework of the ancient Near East.

During the third period (1950 to the present) has arisen the extensive use of non-biblical data which provide a greater understanding regarding the utilization of the covenant in the ancient world as well as the Old Testament. One of the early researchers, George Mendenhall greatly advanced Old Testament covenant thinking by comparing it to the international treaties of the second-millennium and earlier. He introduced contemporary thinking to the structure of the ever popular suzerain-vassal Hittite treaty.

Another of the prominent contributors of this period was Dennis McCarthy who in light of convincing research revised his view on the influence of the international

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treaties. Yet another scholar closely associated with modern covenant thinking is Meredith Kline, who sought to prove the assimilation of Deuteronomy to the structure of the suzerain-vassal treaty. Lastly, the work of Moshe Weinfeld has opened new avenues in covenant thinking, especially in the area of land grant treaties. His classic article dealing with the covenant of grant and the Old Testament has presented a unique insight into the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

Despite the massive work that has been done in the area of Old Testament covenants, there still remain some areas that warrant a closer study and determination: 1) The form of the Abrahamic Covenant as seen in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis; 2) the historical fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant in the life of Israel affecting the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants; and 3) the

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3Y. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and Ancient Near East," JAOS 90 (1970). It is on the basis of this work that the writer has sought to prove the form of the Abrahamic covenant relating to its presentation in the book of Genesis.
future significance of the covenant as witnessed by the Old Testament prophets in light of the New Covenant.

1.3 Plan of Research.

1.3.1 Corpus. In approaching the problem of the covenant and the Old Testament, the Abrahamic Covenant was selected due to its strategic position in the history and theology of the Hebrew Scriptures. The basic format of this study will be to scrutinize the form (structure) and function (utilization) of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The aspect of form is viewed in conjunction with the royal grant treaty as represented in repeated incidents in the book of Genesis in which the covenant was revealed to Abraham. A comparison can be drawn between the components of the royal grant and Abrahamic Covenant. This in turn places an emphasis upon the unconditionality of the biblical covenant as reflected in the form and the reward system of the grant treaty.

The function of the Abrahamic Covenant is its fulfillment of the essential elements of land, seed, and blessing witnessed in the lives of the patriarchs and the Israelite nation as a whole. Germaine to this thesis is the idea that the function of the Abrahamic Covenant is directly related to its form. The combination of these two factors presents the overall purpose of the covenant,
namely unretroactive favor based on divine choice.

1.3.2 Presentation. Based on an analysis of the problem involved, after the introductory chapter, the thesis will proceed in the following manner. Chapter two will consist of several units dealing with examples of covenants that were representative of the ancient Near East as well as the Old Testament. An in-depth synopsis will be made of the Abrahamic Covenant in its form as expressed in five major passages of Genesis. In chapter three the covenant of Abraham in its function is traced through the major literary sections of the Old Testament and will be examined in light of the Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenants. Chapter four will display the conclusions that have been reached in the research and writing of the thesis. Suggestions will also be rendered for any future study dealing with the theme of covenant in relationship to the New Testament.

1.4 Limitations of the Research. The limitations of this thesis are threefold: 1) the thesis will deal specifically with the Abrahamic covenant; 2) the Abrahamic covenant will be viewed from a scriptural context involving the Old Testament, although part of chapter two will necessarily go beyond the scriptural data in dealing with covenant forms of the ancient Near East; finally 3)
intimations will be given throughout the thesis, especially in the conclusions of chapters three and four, regarding the relevance of the Abrahamic covenant in the New Testament.

1.5 Definition of Terms. The following are key terms that will be used in this thesis and are listed here for immediate recognition.

Covenant—an agreement or pact made between two parties binding them together for mutual benefit. In this thesis covenants will be displayed as either those made between persons or, theologically, those made between God and man.

Conditional—the aspect of a covenant's fulfillment in response to some action on the part of those to whom the covenant is addressed.

Form—relates to the content, conditions, provisions and structure of a covenant.

Function—relates to the fulfillment of a covenant.

Royal Grant Treaty—an unconditional treaty which granted land to its recipients.

Parity Treaty—a treaty agreement made between equal parties.

Treaty—similar to a covenant in which two parties are bound together for mutual benefit.
Unconditional—the aspect of a covenant's fulfillment in which there is no action required on the part of those to whom it is addressed.

Vassal Treaty—a conditional treaty whereby its recipients are subject to the initiator (usually a king) of the treaty and blessings are bestowed in response to various stipulations.
Unconditional—a covenant's fulfillment in which there is no action required on the part of those to whom it is addressed.

Vassal Treaty—a conditional treaty whereby its recipients are subject to the initiator (usually a king) of the treaty and blessings are bestowed in response to various stipulations.
2. THE FORM OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

2.1 Covenant Forms in the Ancient Near East. The use of covenants and treaties can be traced back to include a large majority of the known nations of the ancient Near East. The archaeological and literary research of the past forty years has greatly enhanced the knowledge of the covenant structures which were represented in the ancient world.

A host of internationally known scholars has greatly contributed to the understanding of Near Eastern covenants. Their work has also brought to light the close relationship of the Near Eastern covenant form to treaties and covenants of the Old Testament. This chapter will identify and illustrate the use of ancient covenants in general as well as relate their structures to a basic understanding of their use in the Old Testament. The chapter will deal mainly with the forms of covenants represented by the vassal treaty, parity treaty, and royal grant treaty. In addition, the Abrahamic Covenant will be viewed in depth as to its form as represented by the promissory, unconditional nature of the royal grant treaty.

The archeological evidence pertaining to ancient Near
Eastern covenants and treaties has helped scholars piece together a picture that clarifies the use of political and social agreements. The earliest extant document which describes the details of a treaty is the "Stele of Vultures" dating around 2500 B.C. This and other treaties are briefly surveyed to depict their use in the ancient past. Around 2500 B.C., Eannatum of Lagash made a treaty with the nearby city of Umma. Umma was defeated by Eannatum and he imposed certain conditions on the defeated city. This treaty was recorded on what is now called the "Vulture Stele." Besides the material evidence pointing to the Stele of Vultures as being the oldest extant

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1George E. Mendenhall ("Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," BS 17 [1954]:51-57) makes reference to the fact that international covenants occurred already in old Sumerian texts of the third millennium B.C. and that covenants upheld by oath may have gone back many centuries or even millennia before.


3John A. Thompson (The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament [London: Tyndale Press, 1964], p. 9) remarks, "In the course of the second millennium BC the conclusion of international treaties, both between great kings on a parity basis, and between powerful kings and lesser kings on a suzerain-vassal basis, was common all over the Near East."
covenant, the discoveries from Ebla (Tell Mardikh) have revealed a possible contemporary. About ten treaties have been identified with the most important being between the King of Ebla and the King of Ashur.\(^4\)

About 2300 B.C., Naram-Sin of Agade made the Elamite King of Anan his vassal and established a treaty with him. The treaty emphasized the value of friendship between a vassal and his lord. McCarthy notes "It would appear that one of the stipulations says that, 'Naram-Sin's friend is my friend, Naram-Sin's enemy is my enemy.'"\(^5\)

Excavations at Mari have shown that various covenant arrangements were present between 2000 and 1500 B.C., but to date, detailed treaty documents are lacking. No complete treaty has been found, but the evidence of their existence is found in the Mari diplomatic records.\(^6\) The previous period is significant to biblical history in that it relates to the time of the patriarchs (2150-1850). If such a large amount of evidence exists as to the use of covenants before and after Abraham's time, then there can

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be no doubt that he and others of the biblical world would have understood the use of such a concept.

The Hittite treaties during the general period of 1400-1250 B.C. are by far the most enlightening as to the structure and use of ancient covenants. They derive mainly from the Hittite rulers Suppiluliumas (c. 1380-1340 B.C.), Mursilis (c. 1339-1306 B.C.), Muwatallis (c. 1306-1282 B.C.), Hattusilis III (c. 1275-1250 B.C.) and Tudhaliyas IV (c. 1250-1220 B.C.).

The vassal treaty agreement between a king and his vassal was the most common in the Hittite tradition, and was usually "imposed by a more powerful Hittite king on an inferior." The most famous parity treaty (treaty among equal powers) in the Hittite culture was that which was between Hattusilis III (c. 1275-1250 B.C.) and Rameses II of Egypt (c. 1290-1224 B.C.). It was formulated after the battle of Qadesh in 1285 B.C.

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7 Mendenhall ("Covenant Forms," pp. 53-54) believes that the Hittites borrowed their covenant forms from an international standard that was common in the Ancient Middle East, mainly Mesopotamia. These forms would have been common to any number of states in the second millennium B.C.

8 Thompson, Near Eastern Treaties, p. 11.

9 McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, p. 44.
The knowledge that has been gained by the study of this period and its use of international covenants has proven to be invaluable in light of Israel's origin as a nation. Treaties in the post-Hittite period are known to involve people of Syria, Mesopotamia and especially Assyria and can be traced down to the seventh century B.C. For two thousand years of Near Eastern history, they continued to show evidence of the legal-literary form which was expressed in treaty relationships.\textsuperscript{10}

Three forms of treaties or covenants were represented in the ancient Near Eastern culture: the suzerain-vassal treaty, the parity treaty and the royal grant treaty. Each is known to be characterized by its own particular features as well as purpose.

The following section will seek to identify each of these treaties in relationship to their structure and usage.

2.1.1 Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. The suzerain-vassal treaty has been shown to be the most popular of the ancient treaty types, stemming especially from the Hittite tradition of the second millennium B.C. Thompson notes,

The best preserved of all the suzerain treaties from the Ancient Near East are the Hittite

treaties. There is enough comparative evidence to indicate that the pattern of the Hittite treaties was a fairly standard one all over the Near East. Hence, it is reasonable to take this as representing the standard literary structure of the normal suzerainty treaty in these lands.\(^{11}\)

The purpose of the suzerain treaty is seen in its unilateral form which seeks "to secure the interests of the great king and to guarantee the allegiance and, if need be, the economic and military support of the vassal."\(^{12}\) Mendenhall, working from Korosec's analysis of the Hittite suzerain-vassal treaty, reveals the six elements that constitute its structure:

1. The preamble: identifies the author of the covenant, giving his titles and attributes, as well as his genealogy.
2. The historical prologue: describes in detail the previous relationship between the two parties with emphasis placed upon the benevolent deeds of the king which in turn obligated the vassal to future obedience.
3. The stipulations: state in detail the obligations imposed upon and accepted by the vassal. The stipulations mainly centered around the king's vested interest in his vassal which called for complete loyalty and trust.
4. A provision for deposit in the temple and periodic public reading: The treaty was thought to be under the protection of a deity, therefore it was deposited as a sacred thing in the sanctuary of the vassal state. Since it was not only the vassal king, but his entire state which was bound by the treaty, periodic public reading served a double purpose: first, to

\(^{11}\) Thompson, *Near Eastern Treaties*, p. 13. He also states that this treaty type is the most numerous as far as the extant documents are concerned.

familiarize the entire populace with the obligations to the great king; and second, to increase the respect for the vassal king by describing the close and warm relationship with the mighty and majestic Emperor which he enjoyed.

5. The witnesses: a list of the deities that sanctioned the treaty. The gods of both parties were listed to enforce the covenant.

6. The curses and blessings: invoked upon the vassal as to whether the treaty was honored or violated. The curses and blessings in the text of the covenant were treated as the actions of the gods. In case of a breach, the king would proceed against the vassal with military force, as the agent of the divine curse.\(^{13}\)

The preceding scheme is considered the standard by which all suzerain treaties were structured. Despite minor variations in the outline as well as in the omission of one or more particular elements, the overall pattern is common for this type of treaty.\(^{14}\)

2.1.2 Parity Treaty. The parity treaty, unlike the suzerain, was a covenant between equals. Whereas the suzerain treaty bound the inferior vassal to the king, the


\(^{14}\)McCarthy (*Treaty and Covenant*, p. 81) states that there was "variety within a general uniformity. However the uniformity was not rigidity." He goes on to conclude, "What was never dropped from any scheme would seem to be that which was essential to a treaty, in the Hittite way of thinking. This was twofold: The promulgation of the obligations to be assumed and the invocation of the gods with the consequent implication of divine sanctions. Other elements belonged to the genre but they were varied to meet different situations always with a view to putting the essentials forth more forcefully."
parity treaty bound two kings (or parties) of more-or-less equal status. It was regarded as two treaties in opposite directions, since each party bound himself to identical obligations.\textsuperscript{15} The parity treaty was less popular than the suzerain because of the greater number of vassals that were bound to their kings. Only one complete Hittite parity treaty is extant today. The treaty, considered to be the most famous from the ancient world, was between Hattusilis III and Rameses of Egypt dates around 1285 B.C.\textsuperscript{16}

The parity treaty did share a similarity of structure and style with the suzerain-vassal covenant. Its structure can be seen in the following outline:

1. Mutual Royal Titles.
2. History of Past Relations.
3. Affirmation of Brotherhood.
4. Terms.
5. Lists of Divine Witnesses.
6. Curses and Blessings.\textsuperscript{17}

The structure of the parity treaty, as with the suzerain treaty, would tend to fluctuate, depending on the situation and the parties involved. But the main emphasis would always be the terms of the agreement, the sanctioning of

\textsuperscript{15} Thompson, \textit{Near Eastern Treaties}, p. 12.


\textsuperscript{17} McCarthy, \textit{Treaty and Covenant}, p. 48.
divine witnesses and the outcome which would be expressed in either curses or blessings.\textsuperscript{18}

2.1.3 The Royal Grant Treaty. The royal grant treaty is found in Neo-Assyrian\textsuperscript{19} and Hittite literature, as well as in the classical form represented by the Babylonian Kudurru documents formerly thought to be simply "boundary stones."\textsuperscript{20} The purpose of the royal grant in each of these cultures was to express monarchial favor by the bestowal of gifts (usually land) upon individuals who distinguished themselves in loyalty and service to their king.\textsuperscript{21} The royal grant, unlike the suzerain-vassal treaty, was an unconditional covenant which sought to ensure the rights of the servant. Weinfeld notes the difference between the two:

While the "treaty" constitutes an obligation on the vassal to his master, the suzerain, the "grant" constitutes an obligation of the master to his servant. In the "grant" the curse is

\textsuperscript{18}McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, p. 50. See also Ray F. Chester, "Covenant Types," RQ 91 (1966):289.

\textsuperscript{19}For details, see J. N. Postgate, Neo-Assyrian Royal Grants and Decrees (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969).

\textsuperscript{20}See L. W. King, Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial Tablets (Oxford: University Press, 1912). See also ANEP, p. 176 for photographs of boundary stones.

directed towards the one who will violate the rights of the king's vassal, while in the treaty the curse is directed towards the vassal who will violate the rights of his king. In other words, the "grant" serves mainly to protect the rights of the servant, while the treaty comes to protect the rights of the master. What is more, while the grant is a reward for loyalty and good deeds already performed, the treaty is an inducement for future loyalty.\textsuperscript{22}

Other factors also distinguished the royal grant from the suzerain treaty. First, the longevity of each was based upon the nature of the covenant. The suzerain treaty, as a conditional document, would last as long as the vassal maintained his part of the agreement. If the vassal broke the treaty, it could mean death for him and his family line.\textsuperscript{23} The royal grant was thought of in terms of endless longevity. A recurring phrase which appeared on the boundary stones from Babylon affirms this longevity. It states, "[he] gave [or presented] it to him forever."\textsuperscript{24}

A second factor deals with the aspect of a sworn oath. In the suzerain treaty, the servant swore an oath to abide

\textsuperscript{22}Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," p. 185.

\textsuperscript{23}McCarthy (Treaty and Covenant, p. 2) cites a curse given in a suzerain-vassal treaty: "If thou, Alaksandus, break the words of this document which are placed on this document, then may these oaths wipe thee out and wipe thy seed from the face of the earth."

\textsuperscript{24}King, Babylonian Boundary-Stones, pp. 17, line 26; 27, line 29; 44, line 13; 49, line 6; 60, line 29; 81, line 12; 107, line 6; 126, line 16.
by the terms of the treaty agreement.\textsuperscript{25} In the royal grant, it is thought that the sovereign took an oath, and thereby swore to follow through on the promises of the covenant. Weinfeld notes the oath of Abba-El to his vassal Varimlim as being a conditional self-curse: "[May I be cursed] if I take back what I gave you."\textsuperscript{26} Although the oath on the part of the sovereign cannot be verified as a regular occurrence in royal grants, due to the lack of material evidence, its unconditional nature may nonetheless presumably dictate the use of the sovereign's oath.\textsuperscript{27}

From the standpoint of structure, the suzerain and grant treaties are somewhat similar. The elements of the royal grant are:

1. Historical Introduction
2. Border Delineations
3. Stipulations

\textsuperscript{25} McCarthy, \textit{Treaty and Covenant}, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{26} Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," p. 185.

\textsuperscript{27} Note, however, that McCarthy (\textit{Treaty and Covenant}, p. 88) feels that the "treaty" and "grant" are not separate phenomena, and holds that both the king and vassal could have taken the oath as typified in some Hittite vassal treaties.
4. Witnesses
5. Blessings and Curses.  

Because of the special importance of this treaty form to this study, these elements will be viewed in some detail.

2.1.3.1 Historical Prologue. This section usually gives honor to the king and describes his position as well as his positive qualities. Postgate records Assurbanipal's prologue from one of the plates (no. 16) found in Assur:

Line 1: Assurbanipal, strong king, king of the world, king of Assyria, sovereign, son of Assurahiddin, king of the world, king of Assyria, sovereign, son of Sinahheriba, king of the world, king of Assyria, and sovereign.
Line 4: I, Assurbanipal, great king, strong king, king of the world, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters, true shepherd, who does good, king of righteousness, lover of justice, who makes his people content, who always behaves kindly towards the officials who serve him and rewards the reverent who obey his command royal.  

Besides identifying the king and his qualities, this section also introduced the recipient of the grant.

2.1.3.2 Border Delineations. This is related to the description of the land, usually identified in terms of its size as measured in cubits. Boundary markers were

28Weinfeld ("The Covenant of Grant," pp. 184-85) draws attention to the political treaty as seen from the Hittite empire and the royal grant which is found in the Babylonian Kudurru (boundary stones) as being similar in structure.

29Postgate, New-Assyrian Royal Grants and Decrees, p. 36.
designated by towns, provinces, cities, rivers, etc. An example of this is seen in text no. 90850 of the Babylonian boundary-stones:

Three hundred and thirty-six gan of low-lying corn land, a gan, measured by the great cubit being reckoned at thirty ka of see, in the district of the town of Dur-zizi, on the bank of the river Tigris, in the province of Engur-Ishtar, on the upper length to the west of the river Tigris, the lower length to the east, adjoining the House of Nazi-Karduk, [the of] the city of Engur-Ishtar the upper width to the south, adjoining the town of Dimati. \(^{30}\)

2.1.3.3 Stipulations. The stipulations in the royal grant centered around the obligation of the king to see that the promises of the covenant were fulfilled. The stipulations also reflected the conditions that were placed upon the recipients in case of disloyalty to the king, whereby justice would be carried out against the offender, but the promises of the treaty would remain intact for future generations. Weinfeld reveals an example of this in the treaty of Hattusilis III with Ulmi-Tesup of Dattasa:

After you, your son and grandson will possess it, nobody will take it away from them. If one of your descendants sins...the king will prosecute him at his court. Then when he is found guilty...if he deserves death he will die. But nobody will take away from the descendant of Ulmi-Tesup either his house or his land in order

\(^{30}\) King, Babylonian Boundary-Stones, p. 25.
to give it to a descendant of somebody else.\footnote{31}

2.1.3.4 Witnesses (human and divine). The human witnesses were usually officials that worked in conjunction with the transfer of land from the hand of the king to that of his vassal. They may have served to measure the parcel of ground that was to be offered and oversee the deeding process. The divine witnesses were the gods that were invoked to administer punishment upon those who sought to alter the grant in any way, depriving the recipient of his gift. Text no. 90840 of the Babylonian boundary-stones describes the invoking of the gods:

\begin{quote}
Whenever in later days of the brethren, sons, family, relatives, or household, of Bit-Ada, there be anyone who shall rise up and shall put forward a claim concerning that land, or shall cause one to be put forward, or shall say: "The land was not a gift!" or shall say: "The seal was not sealed," may all the gods who are upon this stone, [and] all whose names are mentioned, curse him with a curse that cannot be loosened! May Anu, Enlil, and Ea, the great gods, tear out his foundation and destroy it, may they tear away his offspring, may they carry off his descendants.\footnote{32}
\end{quote}

\footnote{31}{Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," p. 189.}

\footnote{32}{King, Babylonian Boundary-Stones, p. 45. He adds the following: "In the Kassite custom of the mountainous districts of Western Persia, stones were used to mark the limits of their fields, and these may have borne short inscriptions giving the owner's name and title. In addition, some stones were to be stored away as records of ownership, while others were publicly displayed bearing images and inscriptions to ensure the protection of the grant by corresponding deities" (p. 25).}
2.1.3.5 Blessings and Curses. The blessings and
curses of the covenant dealt mainly with those outside the
treaty in their attitudes and treatment toward one of the
partners. These injunctions were brought about by invoking
the gods (the divine witnesses) to action.

2.2 Covenant Forms in the Old Testament.
The discovery of the various treaty forms of the
ancient Near East have brought to light a unique similarity
which is shared by Old Testament covenants. Such
significant finds have helped clarify the place of the Old
Testament in the ancient world. Kitchen notes,

Now geographically, historically and culturally,
the Ancient Near East is the world of the Old
Testament, while humanly speaking the Old
Testament is a part of Ancient Near Eastern
literature, history, and culture. Therefore,
what can be known about the history, literatures,
linguistics, religion, etc., of the Ancient
Orient will have a direct bearing upon these same
aspects of the Old Testament. 33

This "direct bearing" is extremely prevalent in dealing
with the concept of covenant in which the Old Testament
message is centered:

33K. A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament
Thompson (Near Eastern Treaties, p. 20) notes that it is
not surprising that with so much evidence of Israel's
involvement in treaties with her neighbors there should be
abundant evidence of the Near Eastern treaty pattern in the
literature of the Old Testament.
The concept of the covenant was given this central position in the religious thinking of the OT so that, by working outward from it, the structural unity of the OT message might be made more readily visible.34

This section will seek to reveal the relationship of the three major covenant forms of the ancient Near East to those represented in the Old Testament. In approaching the study, the reader must keep in mind that points of contention have risen over the Old Testament’s use of the ancient treaty concept and formula.

The first point of contention deals with the question as to what degree were the Old Testament writers influenced by the use of ancient covenant forms? To this, Knight gives some clarification:

This is not to say that the Hebrew concept of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel is an imported idea, but it does mean that the Hebrew idea of a covenant was formed in accordance with the prevailing ideas of a treaty, or covenant, at that time.35

In light of this, scholars must discern the degree of parallel or similarity shared in the structures of the ancient treaties with those of the Old Testament.


Although the covenants of the Old Testament do not mirror the treaties used in the ancient Near East, they do share similar patterns. While this fact justifies the theory of an adapted character on the part of the Old Testament writers, one must always keep in mind that in some cases the analogy is incomplete. Rogers notes,

> Without denying or rejecting a "treaty form," it may be better to speak of "component parts of a covenant" when discussing the treaty as found in historical texts. This is certainly the case with the covenant with Abraham. It is obvious that Israel's covenants with God are somewhat different because the surrounding nations had no covenant with their gods.\(^{36}\)

The second point majors on the important aspects of inspiration and God's revelation in relationship with ancient covenants reflected in the Bible. Kline addresses this point in a strong defense of merging the aspects of inspiration with adapted covenant use:

> A canonical document was the customary instrument of international covenant administration in the world in which the Bible was produced. In this treaty form as it had developed in the history of diplomacy in the Ancient Near East a formal canonical structure was, therefore, available, needing only to be taken up and inspired by the breath of God to become altogether what the church has confessed as canon. And that is what happened when Yahweh adopted the legal-literary form of the suzerainty covenants for the

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administration of his Kingdom in Israel.  

In response to these two problems, scholarly research has shown the utilization of three types of ancient treaties, namely the suzerain-vassal, the parity and the royal grant. The following study will: (1) seek to reveal the extent to which these forms were adapted in making Old Testament covenants and (2) proceed on the basis that in some instances a covenant was the actual form of Old Testament inspiration.

One may classify the covenant forms of the Old Testament around two possible sets of alternatives: (1) the obligatory type as reflected in the Sinai covenant, and (2) the promissory type seen in the covenants with Abraham and David, or simply (1) the human type (those involving individuals), and (2) the divine type (those involving God).

2.2.1 The Suzerain-vassal Treaty in the Old Testament.
The suzerain-vassal type of treaty is illustrated in the Old Testament as involving both divine as well as human

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purposes. From a divine perspective, its popularity is especially seen in the Sinai covenant in which Israel, the vassal, pledged to bind herself to God the suzerain.\textsuperscript{40} Thompson has sought to show evidence of the Hittite pattern of the suzerain treaties as seen in Old Testament passages which deal with the covenant between God and Israel. This is especially seen in the pericopes of Exodus 19:3-9; 20:1-17; 24:3-8 and Joshua 24:\textsuperscript{41}

Exodus 19:3-8
Preamble: Moses went up unto God, and Yahweh called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel (v. 3). Historical prologue: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself (v. 4). Statement of general principles: Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant (v. 5a). Blessings: Then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me from among all peoples and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation (vv. 5b, 6a).

Exodus 20:1-17
Preamble: I am Yahweh thy God (v. 20). Historical Prologue: Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (v. 26). General principles: Thou shalt have none other gods before me (v. 3). Specific stipulations: The Decalogue, listed in vv.

\textsuperscript{40}Thus Meredith Kline (The Structure of Biblical Authority [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], p. 119) notes, "Similarities have been discovered in the areas of the documents, the ceremonies of ratification, the modes of administration, and most basically, of course, the suzerain-servant relationship itself."

\textsuperscript{41}Thompson, Near Eastern Treaties, pp. 21-22.
4-17; although the fundamental principle of v. 3 normally appears as the first of the commandments.
Curses: I Yahweh thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me (v. 5b). Yahweh will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (v. 7b).
Blessings: Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments (v. 6). That thy days may be long upon the land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee (v. 12b).

Joshua 24
Preamble: v. 2a;
Historical introduction: vv. 2b-13;
General principles: v. 14;
Specific stipulations: v 25;
Oath: vv. 16, 21, 24;
Witnesses: vv. 22, 27

The book of Deuteronomy is seen by Kline as presenting a large scale model of the vassal treaty. His outline of the book reflects his thesis:

I. Preamble: 1:1-15
II. Historical Prologue: 1:6-4:49
III. Stipulations: 5:1-26:19
V. Dynastic Disposition: 31:1-34:12.

Other vassal treaties in the Old Testament which reflect more of a human purpose may be seen in the treaty between Israel and Gibeon (Josh. 9-10), in the account of Nahash

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the Ammonite and his treaty with the men of Jabesh-Gilead (I Sam. 11:1-2), and in David's agreement with the Aramean states along with Moab, Ammon and Edom (II Sam. 8, 10). 44

2.2.2 The Parity Treaty in the Old Testament. There seems to be evidence for the knowledge of the parity treaty in the Old Testament but the nature of the biblical agreements may lack the proper structure associated with this type of covenant. The knowledge of parity treaty may be reflected in the Old Testament as pertaining to mutual agreements between individuals, such as David and Jonathan (I Sam. 18:3, 4); households, such as Jacob and Laban's (Gen. 31:44-50); groups, such as Abraham and the Amorites (Gen. 14:13); Solomon and Hiram (I Kings 5); and Asa and Ben-hadad (I Kings 15, 20); or whole nations, such as Edom and its confederates (Obad. 7, cf. Hos. 12:1). 45

2.2.3 The Royal Grant in the Old Testament. The royal grant is typified in the covenants which were made with Abraham and David, 46 as well as with Noah. 47 The biblical

44 Thompson, Near Eastern Treaties, pp. 18-19.


covenants made with Abraham and David reflect the promissory nature of the royal grant in which gifts were given for loyal service:

Like the royal grants in the Ancient Near East so also the covenants with Abraham and David are gifts bestowed upon individuals who excelled in loyalty serving their masters. Abraham is promised the land because he obeyed God and followed his mandate (Gen. xxvi, 5; cf. xxii, 16, 18) and similarly David was given the grace of dynasty because he served God with truth, righteousness and loyalty (I Kings III, 6; cf. ix, 4, xi, 4, 6, xiv, 8, xx, 3). 48

The promissory nature of the royal grant is reflected in the Noachian covenant as God pledged never again to destroy the earth by means of a flood (Gen. 9:9-17):

God's covenant with Noah was based on the grace of God and was initiated by God's love and mercy. No stipulations were placed upon Noah or any other person or creature. All freely benefited from the relationship which God established and the promises which he gave. The covenant with Noah was universal in scope and extends indefinitely. 49


and Abraham. These covenant passages are also closely tied to crucial intervals in the life of the patriarch as recorded in Genesis. This section will show the formulation of the Abrahamic Covenant in light of its promissory and unconditional nature. It will also reveal the relationship of its component parts to the royal grant.

2.3.1 Genesis 12:1-3, 7. This is the first indication of God's favor with Abraham. The passage continues the historical narrative, begun in Genesis 11:10-32, dealing with the background of Abraham's lineage and proceeds to point to that "which sets out the universal implications of Abraham's call." The importance of Genesis 12:1-3 is the introduction to the basic promises that would later constitute a ratified covenant made between God and Abraham in Genesis 15. Genesis 12:1-3 seems to follow a similar pattern that is typified in the royal grant. The following will reveal the similarity and basic covenant nature as seen in the royal grant.

2.3.1.1 Historical Prologue. The commencement of the passage in 12:1 leaves little or no room for a formal historical prologue. But as noted above, Genesis 12 continues the historical narrative begun in chapter 11

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dealing with Abraham's family line. This could indicate a prologue that would extend back into Genesis 11 or possibly earlier. Wolff notes,

Our text is the key word in the transition from the history of humanity to the history of Israel. It is well known that 12:1-3 is not only the conclusion of the primal history, but the real key for it. This accords with the fact that 12:1-3, with its peculiar stress, can only be understood together with Genesis 1-11. If read following chapters 2-11, it patently confirms what its own inner arrangement as well as the history of tradition has shown, namely, that the decisive word is first brought by 12:3b. The so-called primal history explains beforehand why all the families of the earth need the blessing. 5\textsuperscript{1}

2.3.1.2 Border Delineations (12:7). In 12:1 God had commanded Abraham to go to the land that He would show him. In 12:7 a promise is given to Abraham and his descendants concerning the possession of the land called Canaan (cf. vv. 5-6, 8). 5\textsuperscript{2} At this point Abraham merely saw the land


\textsuperscript{5}Donald J. Wiseman ("Abraham in History and Tradition," BS 134 [1977]:125-26) sees this incident in Abraham's adventure as a claim upon the land granted to him. He notes: "It is noteworthy that the first mention of 'tents' is now made, and it is suggested that here (as subsequently near Bethel, Hebron, and at Beersheba) the tents indicate not so much his mode of living as a tent-shrine set up symbolically at places where he publicly avowed the promise of the land as a token of its takeover. A further journey to Bethel, near which another altar was erected and named in association with a 'tent-site' (Gen. 12:8), was followed by a short journey southward.
which God had desired for him; in Genesis 15 and 17, the land is once more assured to Abraham and his seed along with the boundaries being described (15:18; 17:8).

2.3.1.3 Stipulations (12:1-3c). Since the nature of this covenant is promissory and unconditional, no stipulations can be placed on Abraham, its recipient. Some have sought to interpret 12:1 as the condition that Abraham must meet before the terms of the covenant can be finalized on his behalf.\(^{53}\) The grammatical structure of this passage may suggest otherwise. In Genesis 12:1 the imperative and supposed condition placed upon Abraham is, "Go, forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you." The Hebrew text reveals that this imperative is followed by a series of cohortative imperfects with the simple waw (cf. vv. 2-3). Gesenius-Kautzsch suggests the significance of this grammatical structure:

The imperative, when depending (with waw copulative) upon a jussive (cohortative) frequ-

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Following the diversion to Egypt due to famine (Gen. 12:10-20), Abraham returned to the promised land, to the previously occupied tent and altar-site near Bethel (13:4)."

\(^{53}\) The conditional argument is strongly held and debated by Ronald Youngblood, "The Abrahamic Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional?" in The Living and Active Word of God (eds. Ronald Youngblood & Morris Inch; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 31-46.
ently expresses also a consequence which is to be expected with certainty, and often a consequence which is intended, or in fact an intention. 34

Thus the emphasis would tend to be placed more upon the consequence or better, the intentional purpose of the action sparked by the imperative. Wolff concludes,

The preceding imperative does not thereby have any kind of conditional undertone, as if the promise of Yahweh were dependent on the obedience of Abraham. Rather, it sounds like a summons to receive the repeatedly promised gift. 35

The Rashi commentary on the Pentateuch reveals that the divine imperative had as its purpose Abraham's benefit.

The phrase "set yourself" permits the explanation "for your benefit," "for your good," because here you cannot have children but there i.e., in the new land, I will make you into a great nation. 35

The unconditional nature of this covenant places the stipulations solely upon God himself. These are displayed in verses 2-3, where God promised to make Abraham a great nation, to bless him, to make his name great, and to make him a blessing.


2.3.1.4 Blessings and Curses (12:3a-b). This aspect of the Abrahamic covenant reflects the royal grant in the protection of the servant's rights,\(^57\) whereby a blessing is forthcoming to those who show favor to Abraham and a curse to those who seek to bring evil or harm upon him. These injunctions are listed in 12:3 along with the blessing of God through Abraham being extended to all the families of the earth (12:3c).\(^58\)

\(^57\)See Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," p. 185.

\(^58\)This passage has been at the center of scholarly debate due to the nature of the verb "be blessed." The controversy centers around the niphal form of the verb as to whether it should be translated in a passive sense, as seen above, or in a reflexive sense, "to bless themselves." McComiskey (The Covenants of Promise [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985], p. 55) describes the nature of the difficulty: "The difficulty arises from the fact that in five statements expressing this aspect of the promise, the hithpael, which is usually reflexive, is used twice [Gen. 22:18 and 26:4], and the niphal, which is generally passive but sometimes reflexive, is used three times [Gen. 12:3; 18:18 and 28:14]. The occurrences in which the niphal forms are found are sometimes interpreted by the hithpael usages, and the reflexive sense is understood to dominate in all cases." The classic defense for the passive use of the verb is by O. T. Allis, "The Blessing of Abraham," PTR 25, (1927):263-98. Besides an in-depth look at the structure and use of the passive and reflexive in Semitic languages to formulate his argument in favor of the passive use of the verb, Allis notes two characteristics of rejecting the reflexive use. The first is that it tends to empty the prophecy of its predictive significance; thus it ceases to be in the same sense a promise to the nations. The second characteristic of this rendering is that it brings the Old Testament form of blessing into conflict with the New Testament citation and interpretation. The promise is twice referred to in the New Testament (Acts 3:25 and Gal. 3:8) and in both places the form of the verb is the same as
2.3.2 *Genesis 13:14-17.* In this passage, God expanded upon his earlier promises concerning the land and Abraham's descendants. The repetition of these promises may be due in part to the separation of Lot from Abraham's presence (vv. 10-12). "From this we may see that the separation of Lot was in accordance with the will of God, as Lot had no share in the promise of God."\(^5^9\) Several features are added to the basic promises given in 12:1-3, bringing to light a clearer understanding of the covenant relationship being established between God and Abraham.

2.3.2.1 *Border Delineations* (13:14, 17). In verses 14 and 17, the promise of the land in relation to its directional limitations begins to take shape. Abraham was told to view the land in all four directions and to walk its length and breadth. This may have related to the practice of surveying the granted land in determining its borders.\(^6^0\)

2.3.2.2 *Stipulations* (13:15, 16). Verse 15 expands upon the covenant stipulations and relates to the perpetual

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ownership of the land by Abraham and his descendants (cf. 12:1, 7).  

A further expansion upon the stipulations of the covenant is addressed in verse 16, where Abraham is promised an innumerable seed (cf. 12:2), which is compared to the unlimited particles of dust on the earth.

2.3.3 Genesis 15:1-21. This passage presents the first indication of a formal binding of the covenant between God and Abraham. The promises that were exhibited in Genesis 12 are at this point ratified into a covenant. Mitchell notes,

Covenant-making employed a wide variety of rubrics. In Genesis 12:1-3, God's solemn word of promise establishes the covenant relationship. But in Genesis 15 (and 22), God adds the formal swearing of an oath, not to "cut" a new covenant, but to confirm the one already existing.  

4George Bush (Notes, Critical and Practical on the Book of Genesis, New York: Ivison & Phinney, 1863. Reprint ed. Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1976, p. 220) observes that the longevity of this promise is still evident, "Even now, it is common to speak of the Jews obtaining possession of their land, as though their title had never been extinguished." See also Christopher C. Hong, To Whom the Land of Palestine Belongs (Hicksville: Exposition Press, 1979).

62John Mitchell, "Abraham's Understanding of the Lord's Covenant," WTJ 32 (1969):40. McComiskey (The Covenants of Promise, pp. 57-60) disagrees with the premise that the Abrahamic covenant was established in Genesis 12, but readily admits its possibility: "It is possible to argue that the giving of the promise in chapter 12 established a covenantal relationship and that such a relationship existed before Genesis 15. There is validity to this; the
Several elements are present in this passage that reflect the nature of the royal grant treaty, with the main emphasis placed upon the ratification procedure.

2.3.3.1 Historical Prologue (15:7). Abraham was reminded of God's purpose in bringing him to the land in order that he might possess it.

2.3.3.2 Border Delineations (15:18-21). The specific boundaries of the land that was promised to Abraham (13:14-15) are given for the first time in the covenant narratives. Those borders lay within the confines of two great rivers. The river of Egypt\(^3\) constituted the southern border and the Euphrates river made up the northern boundary.

The land was of primary importance to Abraham because it was part of his initial call in Genesis 12:1-3 and was now part of the ratification of God's covenant with him. In light of the ratification process, the gift of the land

\(^3\)Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. ("The Promised Land: A Biblical-Historical View," BS 138 [1981]:302-312) points out that the river of Egypt is not the Nile River as held by a number of evangelical scholars but the Wadi el-Arish, which is about ninety miles east of the Suez Canal and fifty miles southwest of Gaza (cf. Num. 34:2, 5; Ezek. 47:14, 19; 48:28).
was identical to the legal formula of the conveyance of property in the ancient Near East:

The proclamation of the gift of land in Gen. xv is styled according to the prevalent judicial pattern. In the gift of Abba-El to Yarimlim we read: "On that day (a ʿumīšu) Abba-El gave the city." Similarly we read in Gen. xv, 18: On that day Yahweh concluded a covenant with Abraham saying: "To your off-spring I give this land." The phrase "on that day" in these instances has certain legal implications. The delineation of the borders and the specification of the granted territories in vv. 18-21 indeed constitute an important part of the documents of grant in the Ancient Near East.  

2.3.3.3 Stipulations (15:1b-6; 13-16). Abraham was promised God's protection along with the repeated blessing dealing with the land and seed (heir).

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64 Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," pp. 199-200. See also, Gene M. Tucker "Witnesses and Dates in Israelite Contracts" CBQ 28 (1966):42-45. Tucker notes the similarity between the phrase "this day" (hayyōm) used in Hebrew legal processes and the Akkadian (legal texts from Ras Shamra) use of "dating from today" (ištu ʿumī annim). He relates that these phrases contained no precise designation of the date but may have been tied to another significant phrase in the transaction. He concludes: "One clue to their purpose is given in another expression which occurs in many documents for always, forever. The introductory formula, then, whether or not it was completed by this second phrase, signified that the act had intervened at a definite moment and was--without stipulation to the contrary--valid forever. The use of hayyōm in the Israelite transactions is similar to this Akkadian pattern, and supports the conclusion that such "date formulae" originated in oral agreements. As in the Akkadian texts from Ras Shamra, the formula in Israelite legal affairs indicated the consummation and perpetual validity of a transaction."
2.3.3.4 Witnesses (15:8-12, 17). Closely linked to this section are two other aspects of the covenant-making process, namely the oath and the concluding ceremony or sacrifice. Rogers notes,

The oath was a strong statement which was to guarantee the validity of a statement and to give assurance that the promise would be kept. For the breaking of the promise, the curses were to be inflicted upon the covenant breaker. To swear by God or the gods was to call upon them to be a continual witness to the fidelity of the partners and to invoke the curses if necessary. The accompanying sacrifice was also closely connected with the curse.\(^5\)

The ratification procedure was in response to Abraham's feverish question as to the assurance of his possessing the land. The visible confirmation of the covenant was displayed in the cutting of the heifer into halves (v. 10). This followed the ancient custom of concluding a covenant in which the divided halves of the carcass were laid opposite each other and the parties involved in making the covenant would pass between the two halves.\(^6\) In this case it was only God who passed through


\(^6\) McCarthy (Treaty and Covenant, pp. 91-92) notes that "the expression 'to cut a covenant' is surely based on this association of symbolic rite and covenant, and it is widespread: it occurs in cuneiform texts from Qatna dating to the fifteenth century B.C., and is found in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Phoenician. When the Hebrews 'cut' a covenant they split a heifer and goats or a calf, while the Arameans of Arpad cut, or with the Assyrians, beheaded and
the halves as a smoking furnace and burning camp (v. 17). The covenant in this sense was sealed by divine oath and in its unconditional state, the burden of its fulfillment fell on the superior party. Kline notes the importance of the oath in this particular case:

Passing between the slain and divided beasts beneath the threatening birds of prey (cf. vv. 9-11, 17), God invoked the curse of the oath upon himself should he prove false to it. By this ritual God declared in effect that if he failed to fulfill the promises of the covenant (cf. vv. 5, 14, 16, 18, ff), he was like these creatures dismembered a sheep. In other words, the subject and method of the killing could vary, but the meaning remained the same."

Weinfeld ("The Covenant of Grant," p. 196) notes the significance of this procedure in the covenant making process: "In this covenant it is God as the suzerain who commits himself and swears, as it were, to keep the promise. It is he accompanied by a smoking oven and a blazing torch who passes between the parts as though he were invoking the curse upon himself. Though the torch and the oven are usually held to be related to the theophany it seems that in this particular context they have a different meaning. In the Surpu documents we read about an oath taken by holding a torch or about the oath of furnace, stove etc. In the same series we find the oath of the slaughtered sheep and the touching of its wound. It therefore stands to reason that like the cutting of the animals so also the torch and the oven are part of the procedure of taking the oath."

Mitchell ("Abraham's Understanding of Covenant," p. 36) observes that, "The evidence, both biblical and extra-biblical, attests to the usual custom of swearing an oath by one party to the covenant or both. The swearer may be the superior power, the inferior, or both simultaneously."
to be slain and devoured as a feast for the fowls.\textsuperscript{63}

2.3.4 Genesis 17:1-14. The covenant between God and Abraham was reaffirmed in Genesis 17 with additional factors included in the agreement, along with the preparation of its execution. The following outline reflects the content of the reaffirmed covenant.

2.3.4.1 Historical Prologue (17:1b). God identified himself as "God Almighty" (El Shaddai). The designation of this name of God at this particular time may have been for the purpose of reassuring Abraham that he (God) was powerful enough to fulfill all that he had promised.\textsuperscript{70}

2.3.4.2 Border Delineations (17:8b). No specific boundaries were assigned to the land that was promised, but

\textsuperscript{63}Meredith G. Kline, "Law Covenant," WTJ 27 (1964):4. Kline also views the swearing of the oath as an identification mark of a biblical covenant. If God swears the oath, the covenant is promissory. If man swears the oath, the covenant is one of law. Note also, Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," p. 196.

\textsuperscript{70}For further details on the name El Shaddai see M. H. Pope, Job (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 44-45. See also Richard D. Patterson ("Joel" in The Expositor's Bible Commentary [ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; 12 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985], 7:243) who indicates, "Several etymologies have been proposed for the divine 'el šadday. The older view that derives the second word from a root šdd ('to devastate,' 'to overpower') is perhaps still as good as any. The idea behind the root in Akkadian and in Hebrew seems to be that of impelling force, hence, the Sovereign, 'Almighty God.' "
for Abraham's understanding:

'Canaan' is a common descriptive term for the Promised Land (Gen. 17:8; 48:3-4; Exod. 6:4; Num. 34:2; Deut. 1:7; Josh. 14:1; I Chron. 16:18; Ps. 105:11), which, though it does not designate specific boundaries, is the ancient Near East.\(^\text{71}\)

2.3.4.3 Stipulations (17:1c-8a: 9-14). In these verses it would seem that there were stipulations placed on Abraham for the completion of the covenant; but these merely reflected the benevolent nature of the royal grant in that the servant is rewarded for his faithfulness. Both from the perspective of the royal grant and the biblical record the stipulations which are met coincide with the benefits of the covenant.\(^\text{72}\) In 17:1-2 God told Abraham to "walk before me and be blameless." He would then establish his covenant with Abraham (v. 2). Rogers notes three things about this passage indicating its relationship to the covenant package:

1. This is after God has already given Abraham the covenant (Gen. 12:1-4; 15). (2) The grammatical construction here is the same as that found in Genesis 12:1-2 (i.e., imperative followed by cohortative). The emphasis then is on what God will do. (3) The word here 'make' (lit., give) does not mean, "'to set up a covenant,' but rather to put into force, or to make operative, the one that is in force." Therefore, it would be difficult to see this as


a covenant-stipulation placed upon Abraham.\footnote{Rogers, "The Covenant with Abraham," p. 253.}

The stipulations that are placed upon God are seen in verses 2-8a. These verses express the obligation that God took upon himself in fulfillment of the promises given initially in Genesis 12:1-3 and confirmed in Genesis 15.

A second passage (vv. 9-14) focuses on the obligation of circumcision which Abraham and his male descendants were to observe. Such an obligation attached to the unconditional nature of the covenant would seem to present a problem, but the solution is clearly seen is v. 11 where circumcision is described simply as a sign. The nature of the sign was to identify those who would share in the covenant promises.\footnote{For details see Delbert Hillers, \textit{Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea} (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 104.} As Hong notes, "It serves to identify the recipients of the covenant, as well as to give a concrete indication that a covenant exists."\footnote{Christopher Hong, \textit{To Whom the Land of Palestine Belongs} (Hicksville: Exposition Press, 1979), p. 48. McComiskey (\textit{The Covenants of Promise}, p. 62) views circumcision as a covenant within a covenant and states that its functions was, "to administer an aspect of obedience necessary for the maintenance of one's relationship to the promise."}

The refusal to be circumcised would be looked upon merely as a rejec-
tion of the covenant (v. 14). Thus, the Abrahamic covenant in spite of the stipulation of circumcision maintained its unconditionality and continued to reflect its promissory nature.

2.3.5 Genesis 22:16-18. The climax of proving Abraham's faithfulness as an obedient servant and thus further warranting divine favor in the form of a covenant came in his experience at Mt. Moriah. In this event God tested Abraham to prove the quality of his character by having him offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering (vv. 1-15).\textsuperscript{75} The result of Abraham's passing the test concluded with God's reassuring him that his covenant was secure and that it would be fulfilled: thus three of the vital aspects of the royal grant are reflected in this passage.

2.3.5.1 Witnesses (22:16). Verse 16 states that God swore of himself an oath, which is reminiscent of the previous covenant ratification (Gen. 15) with the smoking lamp. Here God reaffirmed his role as sole guardian of the covenant in its ultimate fulfillment:

The oath is expressly given in Genesis 22:16 and again it is only God who takes the oath. His swearing by Himself is the supreme guarantee that

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\textsuperscript{75} For further details see John I. Lawlor, "The Test of Abraham," GTJ 1 (1980):19-35.
the covenant will not be broken and is therefore everlasting.\textsuperscript{77}

The reaffirmation of the oath could be seen as God's reward for Abraham's faithfulness in not withholding his son.

2.3.5.2 Stipulations (22:17a-b, 18). The stipulations which are predicated upon God's part of the covenant to bring them about are here again repeated. The emphasis lies mainly with the promise of God's blessing and the multiple seed of Abraham's posterity (cf. 13:16; 15:5). In verse 18, God restates the universal blessing of Abraham's seed, which is in recompense for the patriarch's obedience. Here again the Abrahamic covenant reflects the royal grant in expressing favor due to the faithfulness on the part of the servant.\textsuperscript{78}

2.3.5.3 Border Delineations (22:17c). The promise of the land in verse 17 is expressed in a manner that denotes a success in the conquest that will bring about its ful-

\textsuperscript{77}Rogers, "The Covenant with Abraham," p. 256.

\textsuperscript{78}Weinfeld ("The Covenant of Grant," p. 185) sees a close parallel in terminology between this and that which is used in the Assyrian grants. He gives an example as seen in the grant of Ashurbanipal to his servant Bulta. "Bulta whose heart is devoted [lit. is whole] to his master, served me [lit. stood before me] with truthfulness, acted perfectly [lit. walked in perfection] in my palace, grew up with a good nature and kept the charge of my kingship."
fillment—"Your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies."\(^{75}\)

2.4 Summary. Treaties and covenants were used extensively in the ancient Near East to help solidify social as well as political agreements. These covenants were basically of three forms: the suzerain-vassal, which bound an inferior person (or party) to superior; the parity treaty, a pact among equal parties in which both were bound by unanimous stipulations; and the royal grant, a unique form of covenant that was unconditional and that protected the right of the servant or recipient on which it was bestowed. These covenant types are reflected in the cultural milieu of the Old Testament in cases representing agreements between individuals as well as those made between God and man.

The Abrahamic Covenant, which is similar to the royal grant, is displayed in five major passages of the book of Genesis. Genesis 12:1-3 introduces the basic elements of

\(^{75}\)McComiskey (The Covenants of Promise, p. 53) notes that, "the possession of the gates in Genesis 22:17 is equated with the promise of the land in Genesis 26:2-5. The oath made by God to Abraham after he willingly placed his son on the altar (Gen. 22:17-18) is reaffirmed to Isaac in Gen. 26:1-5. In the restatement of the elements of the oath (v. 4) the reference to the 'gates' is replaced by the words 'and will give them all these lands' (v. 4). Thus, the inheritance is represented in strong territorial language."
the covenant. In Genesis 13:14-17, the promises of the covenant are repeated and expanded upon. Genesis 15:1-21 presents the covenant as being formally ratified. Genesis 17:1-14 reveals the covenant as being reaffirmed, with the sign of circumcision being instituted. Lastly, in Genesis 22:16-18 the covenant is reassured by God in light of Abraham’s test of faith in offering up his son Isaac as a burnt offering.
Table 1
The Correlation of the Abrahamic Covenant with
The Royal Grant Treaty

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3. THE FUNCTION OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

3.1 In the Book of Genesis. The Abrahamic Covenant, which was formulated, repeated and ratified in Genesis 12-22, continued in force with Abraham's seed as recorded in the remaining patriarchal narratives of Genesis. God sought not only to renew his covenant with Abraham's posterity but to keep it alive by bringing about its fulfillment:

As God renews the seasons and replenishes the earth, so does he renew his promises for each generation. God gives the promise to each generation of the patriarchs and blesses them all. The fulfillment of promise does not exhaust it but points to a more glorious fulfillment in the future.¹

This section will seek to reveal how the Abrahamic Covenant functioned in the lives of the patriarchs in Genesis 26-50, with an emphasis on the triadic formula of the land, seed and blessing. A casual reading of the patriarchal narratives would reveal the recurring theme of the Abrahamic promise seen in its individual elements. The promise maintains its cohesiveness as it was originally given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. The importance of this unity involves the patriarchs as being viewed not so much

individually but as a line of succession. In turn what was good for Abraham in being blessed of God was equally good for Isaac and Jacob. Sauer notes,

The covenant of God with Abraham continued as the foundation for the two following Patriarchs. For when it speaks afterwards of a covenant with Isaac and Jacob, this is not another, a new covenant, but simply a confirming, maintaining, and transferring of the same Abrahamic covenant to new participants.  

Evidence for the promise is may be seen in the following passages.

3.1.1 The Isaac Narratives (Gen. 26:2-5, 24). Isaac, the promised son of Abraham (Gen. 21:12), was to assume the covenant that was given to his father despite the circumstances of a famine that would have forced him to abandon the land that was set aside for his inheritance (cf. 26:1-4). The covenant promises were already sealed by an oath of God (v. 3) and would be rewarded because of the obedient character that typified the life of his father Abraham (v. 5). This aspect reflected the unconditional nature of the covenant which in turn served as a guarantee

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of its fulfillment. Isaac was to remain in the land because he was the seed to whom it was promised; thus he was directed not to desert that which God had intended for his personal welfare as well as that of his posterity. The elements of the covenant promise are here reviewed (26:3-4) for Isaac in all their fullness but with slight modifications in expressions. Isaac's circumstance of desiring to flee to more fertile fields due to the presence of a famine prompted God to renew his promise of the land (v. 3). The plural aspect of "these lands" reflects the cultural dimensions of the different Canaanite tribes dwelling there (cf. 15:19-21). The indication of "these lands" would also be coupled with the promise given to Abraham and his seed in "taking possession of the gates of


\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\] The narratives of Isaac and Abraham being exhorted by the Lord to remain in the promised land are similar in style denoting a purpose. Allen Ross (Genesis-Bible Knowledge Commentary [eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zucks; Wheaton: Victor Book, 1985], p. 70) notes. "Some have supposed that this story of Isaac in Gerar with Abimelech was confused in tradition with the occasions when Abraham was in Egypt (12:10-20) and in Gerar with Abimelech (chap. 20). But the repetition of motifs is deliberate; it shows that the blessing was passed on to Abraham's descendants." See also Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981).
their enemies" (cf. 22:17).\textsuperscript{6}

In conjunction with the promise of the land, God renewed his promise to multiply Isaac's descendants like "the stars of heaven" (v. 4). This promise is a reflection of the one given to Abraham on two separate occasions (Gen. 15:5 and 27:17). Added to the elements of the covenant is the renewed promise of the universal blessing through the descendants of Isaac to the nations of the earth.

In the events that followed the establishing of the covenant, Isaac began to experience numerous blessings from God, especially the possession of the land that was promised to him (vv. 12-14).\textsuperscript{7} Along with the blessings came the adversity of the herdsmen of Gerar who made equal claim to the land (vv. 18-21). After being reestablished in a new location, God confirmed his covenant with Isaac in similar fashion as he did with Abraham after his conflict with Lot (cf. Gen. 13-15; 26:23-24). The confirmation of

\textsuperscript{6}Thomas McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), p. 53.

\textsuperscript{7}Allen Ross (Creation and Blessing [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988] p. 463) states that the immediate prosperity of Isaac was in tune with the blessings of Abraham: "All the blessings--the crops, the possessions, the servants, and especially the water from the wells--confirmed that Isaac was the true recipient of the Abrahamic blessings. Any exposition of this section must recall the original blessings and compare the events here with the events in the life of Abraham."
the covenant with Isaac was established "for the sake of Abraham" (26:24). Von Rad views this as a direct connection to the promise given to Abraham and interprets is as such.8

3.1.2 The Jacob Narratives (Gen. 28:3-4; 13-15; 35:9-12). The covenant renewal was presented to Jacob as the last in the direct line of succession from Abraham. The covenant and all its blessings established with Abraham were passed to Jacob on three separate occasions. The first experience of Jacob's receiving the covenant blessings was at the hand of his father Isaac (28:3, 4) prior to his departure to Paddan-aram for the purpose of seeking a wife. The blessing of Jacob at this time merely gave reference to his position as the one whom God chose to honor as opposed to Esau who acted foolishly concerning his material and spiritual inheritance (Gen. 25:27-34; 28:8-9, cf. Rom. 9:8-12). Ross notes the significance of this event with Jacob:

The bestowal of this blessing was in no way a divine approval of how Jacob had obtained the blessing, it was a recognition that the younger son was the one that God chose to carry on the

Abrahamic blessing. The point of the scene is clear enough—Isaac blessed him and invoked God to bless him.⁶

The second encounter of Jacob's blessing was immediately after the first, while he was enroute toward Haran on his matrimonial mission (28:10). The covenantal communication at this time was in the form of a dream in which the Lord extended to Jacob the patriarchal promises (28:13-15). The introduction to the covenant given at this time to Jacob is similar to that which was expressed in Genesis 15, when God had confirmed his covenant to Abraham. God disclosed his self-revelation in stating, "I am the Lord the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac" (28:13a). This self-revelation revealed the relationship, continuity and guarantee that Jacob had with the Abrahamic covenant.⁷ The remainder of the passage (28:13b-15) reflects the covenant expression given in Genesis 13:14-16 and 22:17-18. Ross indicates,

Prominence is attached to the promise of the land, for it is mentioned before the seed promise and stressed by the word order: 'The land, upon which you are lying, to you I will give it and to your seed.' The mention of the seed here would have been encouraging to Jacob, who was going to find a wife, and is further elaborated by the statement that the seed would 'break out' and settle in every direction in this Promised Land

⁶Ross, Creation and Blessing, p. 481.

⁷Ross, Creation and Blessing, p. 490.
(cf. 13:12-18). Finally, the promise that all the families of the earth would be blessed in Jacob shows that the Abrahamic blessing had indeed been carried forward to Jacob (cf. 12:3). These promises given to Jacob so dramatically would have provided him with confidence. Though Jacob had been deceitful in gaining the blessing, God in grace gave it to him; and even though he was fleeing from his land, God promised to give him the land.\(^1\)

An addendum to seeing the covenant promises given to Jacob at this time is the realization of God's blessing that was passed from father to son. To be blessed of God in patriarchal fashion was to experience immediate success. Kaiser notes,

Connected with the concept of 'blessing' was the idea of being successful in a venture or being made prosperous by God. It was God's indication that His favor was upon the patriarchs--everything they attempted succeeded.\(^2\)

Genesis 29-34 reveals the record of Jacob's prosperity as seen in the development of his family and multiplication of material possessions as well as his occupancy in the land of Canaan.


The final encounter of Jacob in receiving his covenant blessing came as God appeared to him in Bethel (35:9-12). This passage reveals God's confirmation to Jacob of the Abrahamic covenant. It parallels the account in 17:5-8 in which Abram's name was changed to Abraham as a sign of the surety of the covenant. Jacob's name was changed to Israel (v. 10) as proof of the promises which included nations, royalty and the land (vv. 11-12).

The subsequent years of Jacob's life reveal the faithfulness of God in reaffirming his covenant blessing. This is especially true in the migration of Jacob's family to Egypt due to the famine that swept through Canaan (Gen. 46-47). The aspect of a multiplied seed was reassured to Jacob (46:3) prior to his departure to Egypt. History has proven the validity of this promise as seen in the multitude of those who departed from bondage in Egypt after 430 years (Ex. 12:37-41). The remaining chapters of Genesis disclose Jacob's passing of the covenant in general to the sons of Joseph (chap. 48) and specifically to Judah the promise of bearing the blessing to all nations (49:10).

3.2 In the Pentateuch (vs. The Sinaitic Covenant). The purpose of this section is to view the Abrahamic Covenant in its promissory nature as functioning in the life of Israel as a developing nation. Special
consideration will also be given to the relationship that existed between the diverse natures of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic Covenants.

3.2.1 The Merging of the Covenants. In approaching the subject of the Abrahamic Covenant and its function in the Pentateuch as relating especially to the Sinaitic covenant, clarification must be given to the relationship of the unconditionality of the former with the conditionality of the latter.

The nature of the Abrahamic covenant centered around the initiative of God's promise, while that of the Sinaitic covenant around the concepts of law and loyalty to the one true God. Wright affirms that, "the Mosaic covenant presents God as a monarch whose treaty with Israel was to the end that he be their God and they his people. Central words in Israel's vocabulary, therefore, were 'to hearken, obey' (šāma') and 'to serve' (ābad)." The nature and function of the two covenants must be kept in proper perspective as to how they were represented in the life of Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant presented promise—promise

with its outcome seen in the establishment of a blessed people who were to become a nation of blessing. The Sinaitic Covenant dealt with stipulations in which the nation of Israel was to exist in a legal environment so as to continue in God's favor.\footnote{Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, trans. S. Neuijen, 2nd ed. (Newton Centre: Charles T. Branford, 1966) pp. 128.}

The blending of the two covenants in function was not one of cancellation, but a cooperation which was designed to secure the common end of Israel's continuation in God's blessings.\footnote{Dyrness adds, "God's choice of them is fixed. Only their continuance in the blessings of that promise is a result of their obedience." McComiskey concludes that the Sinaitic covenant was an affirmation and vehicle of the Abrahamic promise:} 

\footnote{See A. W. Pink, *The Divine Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973). pp. 139-194.}

\footnote{William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1979), p. 120. An example of this fixed state in the conditional nature of the Sinaitic covenant is the "if" clause of Exodus 19:5. The question is, to what is this clause conditional? Kaiser (*Toward an Old Testament Theology*, p. 111) responds by stating, "It was a condition, in this context, to Israel's distinctive position among all the peoples of the earth, to her mediatorial role and her status as a holy nation. In short, it could qualify, hamper, or negate Israel's experience of sanctification and ministry to others; but it hardly could effect her election, salvation, or present and future inheritance of the ancient promise."}
The focus of the Mosaic legislation is on the formation of Israel as a nation. It sought to delineate the glorious future that Israel could have if the people lived in obedience to God. The Mosaic covenant served to affirm the promise and to emphasize those aspects of the promise which applied directly to the Israelite tribes soon to be welded into a nation. The terms of the promise were never annulled, but since the promise covenant maintains its own integrity throughout salvation history it could continue in force while the Mosaic covenant served to extract those elements of the promise that were of particular importance for that time. The immediate concern of the Mosaic covenant was to forge and protect a nation through which the promise would be mediated. The Mosaic covenant is thus not opposed to the promise. It is, in a sense, a vehicle of the promise. It defines and amplifies that promise for a new generation. The statement of the promise to Abraham was quite suitable for the nomadic family-clans of the patriarchs, but when Israel became a nation, a new era dawned. Israel was given a covenant that would govern her as a nation for centuries to come. 

The Abrahamic covenant continued to be expressed and fulfilled in the remaining narratives of the Pentateuch especially with the events surrounding the Exodus. This miraculous delivery from Egyptian bondage, which was looked upon by the Hebrews as the supreme event in their nation's history, was also, as LaSor, Hubbard and Bush points out, "the means by which God brought to historical fulfillment

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McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise, pp. 71-72.
his promise to the patriarchs of land and nationhood."\textsuperscript{13} The covenant which was established with the patriarchs functioned as a guarantee to Israel, whereby they would be privileged to all its benefits. The elements of the Abrahamic covenant are revealed in the progression of the events that transpired through the Pentateuch as God's pledge to remember his promise to the patriarchs. They will be viewed in the following manner: The forming of a nation (seed). A kingdom of priests (blessing), and a promised homeland (land).

3.2.2 The Forming of a Nation. God's promise to the patriarchs of a multiplied seed were realized as the sons of Jacob emerged into a vast nation during their prolonged

\textsuperscript{13} William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic W. Bush, \textit{Old Testament Survey} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 117. It is interesting to note that the events of the Egyptian bondage and Exodus, as well as the possession of the promised land, were in direct connection with the confirmation of God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15.
stay in the land of Egypt.\textsuperscript{15} The very fact that Israel emerged into a nation reveals that God took a vested interest in the affairs of Abraham's seed by remembering the covenant which he had established with the patriarchs (Ex. 2:24; 3:13, 15-16; 4:5; 6:3, 5, 8). The endless duration of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:7) guaranteed the descendants of the great patriarch an ongoing relationship. Fensham notes the significance of this pledge: "The continuation of relationship is the heart of the covenant and is built out from the past into the present and is furthermore promised for the future."\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{20}P. Ch. Fensham, "Covenant, Promise and Expectation in the Bible," \textit{ThZ} 5 (1967):310. He adds "It is an encounter of the loyalty of a major partner of a treaty with the loyalty and submissiveness of the minor partner. The best manner to describe the interest of the Lord in his people is by the idea of remembering them. After a long time and a murderous oppression the Lord payed attention to their call for help (Ex. 2:23-24). [T]his attention is directly connected to the covenant with the Patriarchs."
The assurance of God's relationship with the covenant recipients is repeated in the books of the Pentateuch and is specifically addressed in the title of Israel being called Yahweh's "son" or his "firstborn son" (Ex. 4:22-23). A further designation which enhanced this perpetual relationship is seen in the covenant at Sinai where Israel is addressed as God's possession (Ex. 19:5).\textsuperscript{21} The position of being God's possession, secured by the Abrahamic covenant, provided a guarantee of preservation and protection. This was indicated in the covenant as part of the legal formula that expressed blessing or cursing to those that sought to honor the divine agreement or violate it (Gen. 12:3). A primary example of the direct enforcement of the blessing-cursing formula was with Balak, king of Moab, in his reproach against Israel through the prophet Balaam (Numbers 22-24).

3.2.3 A Kingdom of Priests. Not only was Israel to be a people of God's possession, but the Sinaitic Covenant affirmed the certainty that they would also be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). This promise placed the nation of

\textsuperscript{21}Weinfeld ("The Covenant of Grant," p. 195) indicates that the word \textit{segullah}, relating to Israel as God's possession, belongs to the treaty and covenant terminology which is employed to distinguish a special relationship of the suzerain with his vassals.
Israel in the position of being God's special servant, designated to a task that would affect all nations. Their position and task were inherently connected to the relationship that existed with Abraham through his covenant. Raven notes the significance of this position:

Here it is evident that Jehovah chose the nation, as he had chosen their ancestor Abraham, not for their own sake, but for the sake of all mankind. They were to be Jehovah's special possession from all peoples, not that other peoples were to be rejected, but because of the fact that Jehovah owned all nations and cared for them.²²

²²John Howard Raven, The History of the Religion of Israel, New Brunswick, NJ: New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 1933; reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 61. See also Charles Augustus Briggs, (Messianic Prophecy [New York: Scribner's, 1889], p. 102) who gives the classic description of Israel's priestly position: "The kingdom of God is a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. It has a sacred ministry of priesthood, as well as sovereignty with reference to the nations of the world. As holy, the Israelites are the subjects of their holy King, and as priests they represent Him and mediate for Him with the nations. Thus the third feature of the Abrahamic covenant is unfolded. As the essential thing to Abraham had been the promised seed, as the essential thing to Jacob had been the promised land, so now, when Israel had become a nation, separating itself from the Egyptians, and entering into independent national relations to the various nations of the world, the essential thing became the relation which they were to assume on the one side to God their king, and on the other to the nations, and indeed first of all the positive side of that relation. This is represented in our promise: as a ministry of royalty and priesthood. They are a kingdom of priests, a kingdom and a priesthood combined in the unity of the conception, royal priests or priest kings."
The specific task of Israel being a "kingdom of priests" connotes a messianic or salvation theme. Their role, as Merrill indicates, was "to mediate or intercede as priests between the holy God and the wayward nations of the world, with the end in view not only of declaring his salvation, but providing the human channel in and through whom that salvation would be effected."

3.2.4 **A Promised Homeland.** Israel's nomadic condition after the Exodus prompted the extensive repetition of the land promise. As an intricate part of the Sinaitic covenant (Ex. 23:20-33), the promise of a homeland formed the historical context of Israel's wilderness experience with the assumption that such a hope would come to pass.

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The confirmation of the land promise was mainly for the second generation of Israelites whose parents died in the wilderness. The book of Deuteronomy records Moses' address to the new generation, specifically their responsibility of possessing the land of Canaan and remaining faithful to God through obedience of the law\textsuperscript{25}. It was in Deuteronomy that the promise of the land was recognized in its covenant status as part of the inheritance that was to be received by the generation that would obey the commandments handed down from God\textsuperscript{26}. The Deuteronomy experience also sought to solidify for Israel their legitimacy to the land as granted by the promise of God. This can be seen in the covenant renewal ceremony that was to take place at Mount Ebal after the Israelites had gained a foothold in the land (Josh. 8:30-35). Prior to that grand event was Moses' rehearsal (on the plains of Moab) of the cursings that accompanied

\textsuperscript{25}At this stage in Israel's history, two factors must be taken into consideration concerning the nation's relationship to the land. First, the promise of the land secured by the Abrahamic covenant, and secondly, the actual possession of the granted territory. These two factors would seem to be in contradiction of each other, but it was with the new generation in the book of Deuteronomy that the "gift" and the action to "possess" merge to form the theology of rest and inheritance for Israel (cf. Deut. 3:20). See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," BS 130 (1973):141.

\textsuperscript{26}McCormiskey, The Covenants of Promise, p. 70.
the covenant ceremony. The validity of the relationship that existed between the promise of the land grant given to Abraham and the Ebal ceremony is the fact that the curses in Deuteronomy 27:15-26 are unconditional and are aimed more toward individuals as opposed to the curses of chapter 28 which are nationally based and are conditioned upon Israel's disobedience.\textsuperscript{27} Hill elaborates upon the close tie that existed between the land grant and the Ebal ceremony:

Given the emphasis on the possession of Canaan as Israel's inheritance from Yahweh in Deuteronomy it seems only natural for the covenant-renewal ceremony to include a conventional structure for appropriately legitimizing Israel's claim to Canaan as their inheritance from the God of their fathers (cf. 20:16; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:10). Hence even as Israel's obedience to the legal articles of Yahweh's charter marked them out as his special possession (cf. 26:18-29; 27:9), so too the Ebal ceremony as a type of Hebrew land grant formalized the Israelite claim upon Canaan in conjunction with the covenant-renewal compact.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27}Andrew E. Hill, "The Ebal Ceremony as Hebrew Land Grant?" \textit{JETS} 31 (1988):399-400.

\textsuperscript{28}Hill ("The Ebal Ceremony," p. 403) also notes the similarity of specific components that dealt with the cursing formula. "Clearly the closing curse formulae in Deut. 27:14-26 correspond to the concluding curses of the land-grant treaty. The catalog of individuals contained in the curses of the so-called Dodecalog whose behavior jeopardizes the maintenance of the royal grant (cf. Lev. 18:24-27) is reminiscent of the acts of violence prohibited by the curses of the land grant--for example, removal of boundary markers (27:17) and the failure to obey the stipulations of the grant (27:26). Identifying the
It was not until Joshua's conquest that the land promise became a reality, and even then the fullest extent of the covenanted boundaries was never realized. The promise of the land, though it remained secure by the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant, would not become a realization apart from Israel's obedience to possess it (Josh. 1:3-8). Israel's quest for the land proved to be fatal because of their compromise in choosing to live peacefully with the Canaanites rather than eradicating them (cf. Judges 1:1-3:6). The promise, however, remained for the generation that would meet the conditions for its appropriation. Kaiser concludes,

Where the conquest is presented as fait accompli, it is so from the standpoint of the territory having been generally secured from the theocratic perspective (even though there were many pockets of resistance that needed to be flushed out and some sites that needed to be recaptured several times since the fortunes of warfare tended to seesaw back and forth as positions frequently changed hands). Nevertheless the inheritance remained as a gift even when the actual possession of the land lagged far behind the promise.22

3.3 In the Historical Books. This section will seek

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to establish the nature of the Davidic Covenant and to view it as a functioning part of the Abrahamic Covenant, thus revealing those elements of promise that were passed through the patriarchs to find their fulfillment in the Davidic dynasty.

3.3.1 The Nature of the Davidic Covenant. The Davidic Covenant as seen from a literary-biblical perspective has not been without controversy as to its covenant foundation. Scholars have debated as to whether this covenant was conditional or unconditional depending on the former covenant to which it was tied. Robertson describes the issue, "Primarily the problem has been framed in terms of whether the Davidic covenant connects with the Abrahamic or the Mosaic covenant as its predecessor."\(^3\)\(^0\) The dichotomy that has resulted over the controversy of the nature of the Davidic covenant has created two schools of thought which Levenson describes as "integrationists" and "segregationists." The integrationists see the Davidic covenant as being an extension or adaption from the Sinaitic covenant, while the segregationists view the two

covenants as in contention and even antithetical. An example of the integrationist view is G. Widengren who cites passages from the Psalms and the prophets in trying to substantiate the conditionality of the Davidic covenant based on the legality of the Sinaitic tradition:

In Ps. CXXXII the covenant between Yahweh and David is without any doubt conceived of in juridical terms. The covenant is conditional, being dependent on the stipulation that the descendants of David keep God's covenant and his witness...in the two royal Psalms, Ps. LXXXIX and CXXXII, the juridical interpretation of the idea of the covenant is accordingly quite explicitly expressed. The passages in prophetic literature alluding to the covenant with David do not substantially change the picture already drawn. Thus Jer. XXXIII 14-22, 25 f., refers to Yahweh's covenant with David in the strongest possible terms.32

In response to the view that the Davidic covenant has its foundation based on the Sinaitic covenant, deeming it to be conditional in nature, three points must be considered in establishing its proper relationship to the Abrahamic covenant. First, the covenant form must be considered. Weinfeld deals with this in establishing the difference between the obligatory and promissory covenant


types, of which the Davidic reflects the latter.\textsuperscript{33} Mendenhall,\textsuperscript{34} Freedman\textsuperscript{35} and Clements\textsuperscript{36} also concur with the fact that the Davidic covenant is inherent in the Abrahamic. Second, the function of the Sinaitic covenant in connection with the Davidic covenant must be clarified. The Sinaitic code represented the stipulations\textsuperscript{37} that would govern the benefits of the Davidic covenant and even invalidate individual blessings; but as Kaiser notes, "it cannot affect the transmission of the promise to the lineal descendants."\textsuperscript{38} Finally, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in the Davidic must be accounted for. This will

\textsuperscript{33}Y. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," p.184.

\textsuperscript{34}George E. Mendenhall ("Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," \textit{BA} 17 [1954]:72) relates: "The tradition of the covenant with Abraham became the pattern of a covenant between Yahweh and David. The covenant with Abraham was the 'prophecy' and that with David the 'fulfilment.'"


\textsuperscript{36}R. E. Clements (\textit{David and Abraham} [London: SCM Press, 1967], p. 54) notes: "The Davidic covenant is formally to be distinguished from the type of law covenant found in the Sinai-Moreb tradition. The type of promissory covenant recorded in II Sam. 7 is precisely that which we found to be reflected in Genesis 15 as the original nucleus of the Abrahamic covenant."

\textsuperscript{37}II Sam. 7:14b-15; I Kings 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5; Ps. 89:30-33; 132:12.

be expanded upon in the next section.

3.3.2 The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant through David. The Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7)\(^3\) stood at a very strategic position in Hebrew history as it continued to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant as well as refine the ancient promises for future development.\(^4\)

The number of elements of the Davidic covenant in relationship to the Abrahamic promises varies as to the degree that II Samuel 7 is looked upon as covenant in content. Kaiser indicates four elements of the Davidic

\(^3\)W. J. Dumbrell ("The Davidic Covenant," RTR 32 [1980]:40) notes: "Though the word covenant does not occur in 2 Sam. 7, that chapter contains in substance the arrangement which has become known as the 'Davidic covenant'. The purpose of this arrangement was to engraft the emerging dynastic monarchy which was taking shape under David, after Saul's intermediate kingship had been brought to an end, into the framework of the Sinaitic covenantal structure by which Israel's national life was regulated."

\(^4\)The refined character of the Davidic covenant in its fulfillment has been represented by the diversity of interpretation expressed in the eschatology of amillennialism and premillennialism. Amillennialism, which believes that the Davidic covenant is being fulfilled in the present age as Christ rules over his church, bears the weakness of fully explaining Old Testament prophecy in light of a literal, chronological sequence of events. Premillennialism (the position that this paper represents) views the Davidic covenant as fulfilled in the future when Christ establishes an earthly, political kingdom. The weakness of this view is the failure to emphasize the historical fulfillment of the covenant. See Renald E. Showers, "The Fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant," Friends of Israel Magazine, (Nov-Jan 1985/86):26-29.
promise: a seed (v. 13); a house (v. 13); a kingdom (v. 16); and a position as a son of God (v. 14). On the other hand, McComiskey lists a host of similarities between the two treaties:

The elements of the Davidic promise are strikingly similar to those of the Abrahamic promise. Like Abraham, David is promised that his name would be great (v. 9; cf. Gen. 12:2). The nation is promised security in its own land (v. 10; cf. Gen. 12:7). David is promised offspring (vv. 11-12; cf. Gen. 12:2). Kings are to descend from him (vv. 12-16; cf. Gen. 17:6, 16). David is conscious of the Lord's blessing (v. 29; cf.Gen. 12:2, "and I will bless you"). God is the Israelites' God and they are his people (v. 24; cf. Gen. 17:7-8). Like the Abrahamic promise, the Davidic promise is eternal (vv. 13, 16, 24-25, 29; cf. Gen. 17:7). The only element of the Abrahamic promise that seems to be lacking in 2 Samuel 7 is the extension of divine blessing to Gentiles. However, it is quite possible that this concept is to be found in the phrase וּמָצֹצַּת בְּרֵאָל חַיָּדָּם (and this is the law of mankind, v. 19).

The following will seek to view the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant in light of the specific elements expressed in the Abrahamic promise.

3.3.2.1 The Davidic Kingdom of Land. The expansionism under David's reign gives a clear example of the further fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise concerning Israel's rest from her enemies and possession of a designated

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41Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology, pp.150-52.

42McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise, pp. 21-22.
homeland (cf. Gen. 22:17; 14:18; -- II Sam. 7:1, 10-11). The theology of rest was a dominant theme that ran its course through the Old Testament narrative which usually appeared after periods of warfare and conflict (Deut. 12:9-10; 25:19; Josh. 21:44-45; IISam. 7:1, 11; I Kings 8:56; II Chron. 14:5-6; 15:15; 20:30).\textsuperscript{43} Israel's period of rest under David was brought about by the promise given to Abraham (Gen. 22:17) and an effective monarchial leadership. As Dumbrell states, "David is the agent through whom the Exodus deliverance (i.e., 'rest' in the land of promise) is finally achieved."\textsuperscript{44} The boundaries of the land promise given to Abraham (Gen. 15:18) became a reality under David's reign as well as maintained under the rule of Solomon.\textsuperscript{45} The Davidic narratives of II Samuel 8, 10, and 11:26-31 give historical confirmation to the securing and preserving of the ancient boundaries.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43}Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," BS 130 (1973):139.

\textsuperscript{44}W. J. Dumbrell, "The Davidic Covenant," p. 45.


\textsuperscript{46}Leon J. Wood (Israel's United Monarchy [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], p. 94) notes: "Some of these defeated areas came directly under Israelite supervision, others had governors appointed by David, and still others (particularly Hamath) kept their own government, but acknowledged Israelite sovereignty. With varying degrees of control, David's power came to extend all the way from
maintaining of those boundaries rested with each generation's faithfulness to guard against foreign intervention.

3.3.2.2 The Davidic Kingdom of Posterity. The ultimate purpose of God to rule over Israel by means of a king (cf. Gen. 17:6, 49:10) is found in the refined promise of Abraham's seed as producing a monarchy through the line of David (II Sam. 7:12). The various elements of the Davidic covenant relating to posterity are expressed in the terms of a house (vv. 11, 16, 19, 25-27, 29), a kingdom (vv. 12-13, 16), and a throne (vv. 13, 16). These elements stem from the essential feature of the covenant which is the line of David's descendants (v. 12).\textsuperscript{47} David's house is, as Kaiser relates, "more than a residence; it was also a family: parents, children, and kin."\textsuperscript{48} The kingdom and throne together relate to the Davidic clan in its governmental rule over the nation of Israel. Thus the combination of the promise of descendants and a kingdom points solely to David as the initiator of the divine


\textsuperscript{48} Kaiser, \textit{Toward an Old Testament Theology}, p. 150.
promise of a monarchy given to Abraham (Gen. 17:6):

The thing emphasized in regard to the line of David's descendants is that they shall be kings, having a kingdom, sitting on a throne (12, 13, 16). One item of the promise for the times of the patriarchs and of the exodus was, as we have seen, that Israel should be a kingdom, and should have kings (Gen. xvii. 6, 16, xxxv. 11, cf. xxxvi. 31; Ex. xix. 6; Num. xxiv. 7), and it is clear that the kingdom here assigned to David's family is the kingdom of Israel (23, 24, 26, 27). 49

The time factor of the covenant as being "forever" (v. 15) not only confirmed its unconditionality but its continuous and future fulfillment as well. The immediate ascension to the throne was through Solomon (I Kings 1-11) and the succeeding monarchs of the Judean Kingdom (I Kings 12-II Kings 25). 50 The limitation of the Southern Kingdom, due to its downfall in 586 B.C. meant that there would have to be a time in the future when the Davidic covenant would again be realized. 51 Since Israel never experienced a kingly rule during the subsequent years of their exile, the promise remained to be fulfilled for a future claim to the

49 Beecher, The Prophets and the Promise, p. 231.

50 The consistency of the Davidic covenant is reflected in the single dynasty that remained in control of the Southern Kingdom 931-586 B.C. (I Kings 11:36; 15:4; II Kings 8:19).

 throne. Keil relates that the eternal nature of the covenant could be fulfilled only by one of equal quality:

We must not reduce the idea of eternity to the popular notion of a long incalculable period, but must take it in an absolute sense, as the promise is evidently understood in Ps. lxxxix. 30: "I set his seed for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." No earthly kingdom, and no posterity of any single man, has eternal duration like the heaven and the earth; but the different families of men become extinct, as the different earthly kingdoms perish, and other families and kingdoms take their place. The posterity of David, therefore, could only last for ever by running out in a person who lives for ever, i.e. by culminating in the Messiah, who lives for ever, and of whose kingdom there is no end.²²

The affirmation of the messianic office as relating to Christ is secured in the fact that he was the only one to qualify in the line of David (Matt. 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38).²³ The Kingdom of Christ will come to fruition at his second advent, at which time he will establish an earthly reign for a thousand years and an eternal reign on the new earth.²⁴

²²Keil, II Samuel, 2:347.

²³See Josh McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict (San Bernardino: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972), p. 147 f.

²⁴Daniel 7:13-14; Zech. 9:10; 14:4, 9; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-17; Ezek. 37:24-25; Matt. 24:29-31; Rev. 20-21.
3.3.2.3 The Davidic Kingdom of Blessing. This is the most obscure of the Abrahamic promises reflected in the Davidic covenant. Besides its obscurity, it also is represented by several interpretations, all of which could have some degree of accuracy as to the blessing of Abraham being extended through the line of David and his Kingdom. Clements views the aspect of blessing from a general-historical perspective in which Israel under the rule of David conferred upon its vassal states the benefits of divine favor. He concludes by stating: "At the centre of Israel's political power stood the Davidic king, as a source through which Yahweh's blessing and life were conferred upon the nation, and so to all the nations that were allied to it."55

Some scholars see a specific application of the blessing promise in verse 19 of the covenant passage relating to the statement: "This is the law [תְּרֵֽה] of man."56 The phrase appears in the context of David's


56 Walter C. Kaiser Jr. ("The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity," The Law and the Prophets, ed. John H. Skilton [Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974], pp. 311-16) analyzes the phrase plus the genitive "of man" and shows that the Hebrew wording introduced and summarized a set of divine instructions. The "this" refers to the content of the promise, the first half of the chapter and the "law of man" points to future implications. The
expression of thanks to God for the favor that was shown to him and his dynasty (vv. 18-21). The key to the passage is the word "law" (torah) which Beecher views as having a larger connotation relating to the outworking of the promise given to David in 7:8-16:

In the circumstances, the expression "the torah of mankind" must have a broad and high meaning. The most natural understanding is that David recognizes in the promise just made to him a renewal of the ancient promise of blessing for mankind. His eternally reigning line of descendants, Yahweh's [sic] king, Yahweh's son, is to be also Yahweh's channel of benefit to all the nations. David recognized in the promise made to him a renewal of the promise made of old that all the nations should be blessed in Abraham and his seed.57

3.4 In the Poetical Books. Within the context of the book of Psalms are several Royal songs (2, 13, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 90, 132 and 144) which give poetic expression to the monarchial ideal that would rule Israel as well as influence the nations. These Psalms reflect two key aspects, first, a Davidic sovereignty based on the divine promise:

The royal psalms are steeped in the ideology of the Davidic dynasty and presupposed the promise and oath made to him. They formed a unity centering on the Davidic king who, as Yahweh's

"torah" is a charter granted with all the "powers, rights, and privileges to David and his seed for the benefit of all mankind."

57Beecher, The Prophets and the Promise, p. 238.
son, resided in Zion, the chosen city, ruled over Yahweh's people, and was heir to the promise.\(^6\)

second, a prophecy of a greater fulfillment:

Upon the divine choice of David and his house, and in particular upon this great prophecy, are based a series of what may be called Royal Psalms. Critical events in the life of David or later kings, or in the history of the kingdom, gave occasion to David himself, or other poets, to declare the full significance and extent of that promise. Successive kings might fail to realize their rightful prerogatives, but the divine promise remained unrevoked, waiting for one who could claim its fulfillment in all its grandeur.\(^5\)

Three Psalms will be dealt with in light of their relationship to the divine promises expressed through the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

3.4.1 The Righteous King of Blessing (Psalm 72). This Psalm, which is considered a prayer of Solomon, relates to the righteousness of God being reflected through his earthly representative with a consequential universal blessing in mind. The Psalm can be summarized as follows: vv. 1-7, a prayer for God's endowment of knowledge and the spirit of righteousness on the king; vv. 8-14, a prayer of universal recognition and honor given to the king; vv. 15-

\(^5\) Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology, p. 159.

17. prayers relating to the king and the welfare of his subjects as well as the recognition of his effectual blessings. The last section (v. 17) has a significant relationship to the blessing extending from the covenant made with Abraham. As the seed of the patriarch would be a blessing, the Psalmist gives pointed expression as to the magnitude of its influence. The combination of the blessing and its lasting popularity is inherent in the reputation of the king who would reign. Leupold concludes,

...the prayer here expressed is obviously to the effect that lasting fame may be attained by this great king, and that men may wish for themselves the blessing wherewith he was blessed, for there is no higher blessing known.  

3.4.2 The Perpetual Seed of Promise (Psalm 89). This Psalm is closely parallel to the oracle of Nathan in II

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61 Bright (Covenant and Promise, p. 72) notes: "The allusion to the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 is unmistakable. It is as if the psalmist were saying: May the sure promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob fulfilled in the giving of the land, and amply fulfilled in great David, be extended through David to this king who now takes the throne, and to every descendant of his who shall rule in Judah throughout all the future."


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Samuel 7. It is quite probable that the psalmist was seeking to interpret the prophet’s message, being evidenced by the use of key terms such as "covenant" (vv. 3, 28, 34, 39) and "oath" (v. 3), which are lacking in the Samuel passage. The psalm can be divided into three major sections: an opening hymn extolling the faithfulness of Yahweh (vv. 1-18); a recapitulation of the promises given to David and his dynasty (vv. 19-37) and a lament concerning a disastrous event (vv. 38-52). The psalm appears to present an interesting dilemma as it relates to God’s lovingkindness in maintaining his promise to the unchanging character of the Davidic covenant while on the other hand having to deal with a disaster that would disturb the covenant’s perpetuity.

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63 Kirkpatrick, (The Book of Psalms, pp. 532-33) notes the similarities: "Almost every word is taken from the narrative of 2 Sam. vii. For 'David my servant' see vv. 5, 8, 26, and compare vv. 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 28, 29: for 'establish' see vv. 12, 13, 16, 26: for 'forever' see vv. 13, 16, 24, 26, 29: For 'seed' and 'throne' see vv. 12, 13, 16: for 'build' see v. 27. 'Chosen' represents v. 8."


65 See Bright, Covenant and Promise, p. 58.

66 Scholars differ on the exact event that is referred in the lament section of the Psalm. It seems evident from the language of vv. 39-45 that a military conquest was in mind. The two most popular views center around the reign of Rehoboam with the invasion of Shishak from Egypt (1 Kings 14:25-28); and the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C.
psalm (vv. 39-50) seems to suggest that the promise given to David (vv. 20-38) relating to his progeny could be suspended. This however would be an impossibility as Mullen notes, "the promise to David in vv. 20-38 (and 2 Sam. 7:14-16) is succession, which logically necessitates progeny." If the suspension could be validated, a wider implication would be cast upon the Abrahamic covenant, seeing that it is the foundation whereby a perpetual monarchical line was designated through the patriarch's seed of Judah and confirmed on the house of David. However, the nature of the psalm combining the promise with the lament, clarifies its total purpose. Beecher explains:

The remainder of the psalm is an expostulatory prayer to Yahaweh in behalf of the then reigning king of the line of David. The singer says that Yahaweh, so far as appearances go, is not keeping this great promise made to David and his seed. The living representative of David's blood, whom the promise entitles to be regarded as Yahaweh's Anointed, Yahaweh's Servant, has been cast off by Yahaweh. His fortresses are broken down. He is a failure in war. He is helpless. His only recourse is to plead Yahaweh's "first lovingkindnesses" as expressed in his oath to David."

(11 Kings 24-25).


68 Beecher, The Prophets and the Promise, p. 249. Richard J. Clifford, ("Psalm 89: A Lament Over the Davidic Ruler's Continued Failure," HTR 73 [1980]:35-47) views the Psalm as a communal lament and describes its character and structure as being similar to other kindred psalms. This

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The mercy that is called for in the lament of this psalm merely reflects the shortsightedness on the part of the nation in failing to see that, as Freedman concludes, "the fate of individual kings or claimants was not guaranteed, but in the end the divine promise would be fulfilled." 69

3.4.3. The Divine Dwelling Place (Psalm 132). This psalm gives poetic expression to the transporting of the ark into Jerusalem by David, and the establishment of God's presence in his promised land. The dating of the Psalm has been widely debated by scholars, but its message is nonetheless the same as it sought to reaffirm to Israel God's oath sworn to David concerning his dynasty (vv. 10-12) and God's chosen dwelling place (vv. 13-18). Gebelein, who views the psalm from a Solomonic origin, attributes it to the praise of the completed temple. He notes.

On the completion of the work, Solomon's thoughts conclusion validates the intrinsic relation between the hymn (vv. 2-38) and the distress experienced by the king (vv. 39-52). He also points out that the cosmological characteristics expressed in the psalm (vv. 2-5) "formally underlie the hynmic affirmation that God's choice of David is eternal, like the order established in creation" and their reappearance (vv. 29-30; 37-38), "serves to qualify the glorious promise of vv. 2-5: the Davidshe can indeed suffer punishment but never outright rejection". On this last point see also Mullen, "The Divine Witness," pp. 216-17.

would inevitably revert to all the steps which had led to its accomplishment. It is no less natural that at such a time the promise given to David should seem doubly precious, that it should be clothed with a new interest, a fresh significance, when David’s son sat upon his throne.  

From another perspective, Kirkpatrick views it as a restoration psalm, in which God is praised for his promises to the Davidic line:

The Psalm then is an encouragement to Israel of the restoration to believe that Jehovah will not fail to perform His promises to the house of David. Those promises rested upon the choice of Zion as Jehovah’s earthly abode. The Restoration had proven that Jehovah had not abandoned Jerusalem; it was a pledge that He would not leave His promise to David unfilled.  

The significance of this psalm points to the end result that God had remained faithful to the promise of maintaining a dynasty through David rooted in the covenant given to the patriarchs (Gen. 49:10) plus the added assurance of his dwelling in the midst of his people in Jerusalem which was a strategic part of the land that was secured by pledge since the time of Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; 22:17). Although the psalm does not draw such specific conclusions, it must be considered the

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71 Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms, p. 763.
logical end based on the progressive narrative of the interwoven promises stemming from their origin in the ancient patriarch. Merrill notes the significance of David's choice concerning Jerusalem as the dwelling place for the ark:

From patriarchal times until David captured it, it had been a pagan Canaanite center untouched, except intermittently, by the sanctifying presence of the people of Yahweh. Undoubtedly, then, it was the city's patriarchal associations that constituted David's justification of Jerusalem as the only fitting location for the ark and tabernacle. In fact, it may have been his awareness of the Abrahamic connection with Jerusalem which led him to select it as his capital to begin with. This awareness certainly gave him sufficient boldness to make of Zion the permanent dwelling-place of his God on earth.\(^\text{72}\)

3.5 In the Prophetical Books. Compared to the rest of the Old Testament the prophetic books are somewhat limited in their references to the covenant relationship that existed between God and Israel:

Judging by the occurrences of the word covenant (berit) the prophets were not much preoccupied with past covenants. While a word count for the term berit as used by the prophets shows substantial occurrence (more than eighty times), an investigation of the specific contexts will show that references to the historic covenants of Sinai, Abraham or David are remarkably infrequent.\(^\text{73}\)

\(^{72}\) Merrill, Kingdom of Priests, p. 263.

The reason for this may be, as Morrice indicates, "the realization that the terms of the covenant had been broken."74 For many of the prophets, were simply left to announce the surety of divine judgment in the aftermath of a broken covenant relationship. However, the infrequent use of berit should not be conclusive proof that the prophets had little or no interest in the covenant relationship that existed between God and the chosen nation. On the other hand, it can be concluded that the prophets did contribute to the covenant ideal either by direct statement or by implication using a twofold approach of judgment and restoration.75 The major prophets Isaiah,


75 Daniel and the twelve minor prophets spoke of the covenant ideal in an abbreviated or obscure form. These writings imply that a covenant relationship existed between God and Israel and that it affected other nations as well. This is evident in the themes of judgment and restoration which are an important part of their messages. The following briefly exemplifies this basic covenant understanding: The prophets Obadiah, Joel, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habbakuk spoke in terms of retribution concerning the nations that violated God's covenant in bringing desolation upon Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3b). These along with Amos, Hosea, Micah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi also relate to a glorious future in which the promise of Israel's restoration would be realized, thus affirming God's covenant with Abraham in sustaining his seed for all generations (cf. Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:5-8). Jonah's prophecy is slightly different in that it displays God's grace extended to Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3c). Daniel displays a strong interest in the rise and fall of Gentile powers which provide the necessary background in
Jeremiah and Ezekiel each display the establishment of a covenant relationship unheard of until this time. Their contribution was to prophesy of conditions that would be typified in the terms of a "new covenant". This new covenant was designed to consummate God's revelation concerning the relationship that he had with his chosen people Israel.

3.5.1 The Nature of the New Covenant. The introduction of the New Covenant is explicit in the prophecy of Jeremiah's "Book of Comfort" (chaps. 30-33; 31:31-34).

Understanding how the mechanics of God's covenant with Israel would ultimately be fulfilled. The prophet emphasized that the nation would be restored to their ancestral homeland at the end of seventy years of captivity. Beyond the initial restoration, Daniel prophesied of God's long-range program of the complete redemption of Israel and the reign of the Messiah (chap. 12).

Walter Kaiser, Jr., ("The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34," JETS 15 [1977]:14) notes: "The only place in the Old Testament where the expression 'new covenant' occurs is Jeremiah 31:31. However, it would appear that the idea is much more widespread. Based on similar content and contexts, the following expressions can be equated with the New covenant: 'The everlasting covenant' in seven passages (Jer. 32:40; 50:2; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26; Isa. 24:5; 61:8); a 'new heart' or a 'new spirit' in three or four passages (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; Jer. 32:39); the 'covenant of peace' in three passages (Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26); and 'a covenant' or 'my covenant' which is placed 'in that day' in three passages (Isa. 42:6; 49:8; Hos. 2:18-20; Isa. 59:21)—making a grand total of sixteen or seventeen major passages on the new covenant."
The historical context of the covenant lies in the prophet's message to the nation of Judah during its latter years (c. 605 B.C.), when the doom of Babylon overshadowed its existence. As for Jeremiah, he was to flee the enemy invasion and live out his final days in Babylon. Prior to the close of his ministry, however, he sought to bring a ray of hope to the nation as a whole by foreseeing the ratification of a new covenant which would be affirmed in Israel's glorious future.

Jeremiah introduced the concept of a new covenant to assure Israel of their continued relationship with God.

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77 Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah" in The Expositor's Bible Commentary [ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; 12 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 6:574 identifies the terms of the covenant: 1. The time of the covenant (vv. 31) -- 'the time is coming'. 2. The maker of the covenant (vv. 31) -- 'the LORD' (vv. 3, 20, 32, 35) 3. The name of the covenant (vv. 31) -- 'new' (Rom. 11:27; Heb. 8:6-13; 10:14-18; Also Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; I Cor. 11:23-25) 4. The parties of the covenant (vv. 31) -- 'house of Israel' and 'house of Judah' (cf. Ezek. 37:15-19; Rom. 9:4-5) -- 'the nation of the covenants' 5. The contrasted covenant (vv. 32) -- not like the old covenant: based on merit and works, susceptible of infraction, no enablement (nonfulfilling), did not give life (Gal. 3:21) 6. The nature of the covenant (vv. 33-34) -- not dependent on external law nor human interpretation; law written on the heart; gives intimate knowledge of and fellowship with God, forgiveness of sins, and peace of heart 7. The immutability of the covenant (vv. 35-37) -- the unchanging purpose of God reflected in the fixed order of nature 8. The physical aspects of the covenant (vv. 38-40) -- rebuilt Jerusalem in holiness and permanence 9. The guarantor of the covenant (vv. 31-40) -- 'declares the LORD' or 'the LORD says' (nine times), as though to swear by himself (cf. Heb. 6:17-18).
based on the promises that brought them into existence beginning with the seed of Abraham (cf. 31:35-37). Compounded with this was the theme of being God's people, found in the statement, "I will be their God and they will be my people" (31:33). Such a statement has been found to be the heart of the promise expressed in the Abrahamic, Davidic and Mosaic covenants. Such assurance was necessary seeing that "the demise of the nation, the fall of the Davidic monarchy, and the capture of Jerusalem would undoubtedly raise questions in the minds of the people relative to the promise."  

Although it is called a "new" covenant, it is by no means new in the sense of a reestablished relationship between God and his select people. The renewness of the covenant lies in the realization and guarantee that Israel will come to the full knowledge of all that God had desired for them in His previous covenants:

This covenant is not entirely new, however, for the same law is affirmed; but it has now become a law of spirit and life, sealed in the innermost

78 McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise, pp. 81-82.

79 Kaiser (Toward an Old Testament Theology, p. 234) notes, "The word 'new' in this context would mean the 'renewed' or 'restored' covenant (cf. Akkadian edammu 'to restore' ruined temples, altars, or cities; Hebrew ḫad connected with the new moon and Ugaritic ḫdt, 'to renew the moon') this covenant was the old Abrahamic-Davidic promise renewed and enlarged."
depths of our being by the spirit of God. This new covenant is to be seen as a reaffirmation of the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David. It is unconditional in that it proceeds out of the free grace and mercy of God, but its efficacy is contingent in faith and obedience. At the same time, faith and obedience are virtually assured because of the way the covenantal promises will be applied to God's people.\textsuperscript{60}

The spiritual conditions spelled out by the prophet undoubtedly point to a future period for the covenant's complete fulfillment. This would therefore indicate that a sequence of events is to take place to initiate its effectiveness. Jeremiah 32:37-41 seems to indicate that Israel will first be regathered to their homeland and then experience all the blessings of the New Covenant. The covenant anticipates a complete restoration of the nation; an event which has yet to have transpired.\textsuperscript{61}

The following sections will explain the nature of the New Covenant in the sense of its initiation and effectiveness, and also disclose how the fulfillment of the New Covenant is viewed in the major prophetic writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The basis of this fulfillment will be viewed from the perspective of the


Abrahamic and Davidic promises, which provide foundational understanding to the New Covenant's futuristic themes.

3.5.2 The Restored Land. The aspect of the land in prophetic writings is of supreme importance due to the close tie between the prophets and the law along with the covenant promises. The law contained motive clauses which called for faithful adherence in order that such a permanent dwelling would remain secure (cf. Lev. 26 and Deut. 28). It was the task of the prophet to pronounce doom on the people and the land for a lax attitude or willful disobedience of the legal code. As Davies points out, "It is this predominant message of doom that rings like a knell in their works."

On the other hand the message of the prophets clearly affirms the ancient promise that the land was to remain a permanent part of Israel's inheritance. In light of the promise based on the Abrahamic covenant, it was inconceivable to both prophet and people that the nation as a whole would be deprived of her land. However, such an attitude could not endure if the people remained impenitent:

The most painful of all the tragedies would be the loss of the land (Lev. 26:34-39). But such

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a separation could never be a permanent situation: how could God deny Himself and fail to fulfill His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Lev. 26:42)? As surely as the judgments might "overtake" (Deut. 28:15, 43; cf. Zech. 1:6) future generations, just as surely would every promised blessing likewise "overtake" (Deut. 28:2) them the moment "repentance" began (Deut. 30:2, 6, 8, 10; cf. Zech. 1:6). Forsaking the covenant the Lord made with the fathers would lead to an uprooted existence (Deut. 30:24-28) until God once more restored the fortunes of Israel.\(^3\)

To the prophets of the New Covenant, the promise of the land was the basis whereby they would reassure the exiled nation of a future restoration. The question emerges as to what restoration were these prophets referring? With the establishing of the New Covenant would come the enabling of Israel to respond in faith and obedience to all that God had intended for her by way of existence and blessing. With such a heart change the nation could fully understand and appreciate her position in the blessings of Abraham especially affecting the permanent acquisition of the land. This is a condition unheard of at any time in Israel's history:

Therefore the Old Testament is pointing to a single fulfillment of the Abrahamic land promise at the conversion of Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10; 13:1-6; Rom. 11). Granted, there have been numerous partial realizations of some aspects of the promise. These have served to indicate the Lord's faithfulness to His Word through the

centuries. But in every generation thus far, Israel has failed to respond in faith and obedience. When that New Covenant is fulfilled so will the unconditional, everlasting Abrahamic promise of land be fulfilled.\textsuperscript{84}

The land promise in Isaiah is not spelled out in concrete language as the other prophets present it, but is seen in loftier terms. In the earlier sections of the prophet's message, the land was referred to in conjunction with the threat of Assyrian advances. The prophet sought to assure the inhabitants of Judah that the land essentially belonged to God and he would protect it (8:8 cf. 14:25). The land was also used by God as a threat in that it would become desolate due to the nation's sin (7:23-24). Beyond the historical references to the land, Isaiah utilizes the theme of Zion to identify the territory in its kingdom role:

Isaiah looks forward to a renewal of Zion and the perpetuation of a remnant of the people he makes no reference to an exile and a return, but he does look forward to a new King and his Kingdom (Isa. 9:7). Here the Land is not explicitly mentioned, but the Kingdom of the new David implies the restored Land--restored in justice and righteousness, not in its old sinful form.\textsuperscript{85}


\textsuperscript{85}Davies, The Territorial Dimension of Judaism, p. 25.
A further statement regarding the reoccupation of the land is made in reference to the work of the Servant of the Lord (49:8). Grogan notes, "The context here suggests that part of the servant's work is to establish the aspects of the Abrahamic and possibly the Mosaic covenants that related to the land of Canaan. The Servant would be a kind of a second Joshua."86

With great ramifications, Isaiah prophesied of the ultimate fulfillment of Israel's land promise by relating to the divisions of the territory, calling them "desolate heritages." MacRae describes this as "A natural term for the divisions into which Joshua had apportioned the land. These possessions were passed on from father to son through many generations, but as a result of the exile they became utterly desolate."87 Thus, the restoration at the time of the Servant's work would assure that the allotted land will once again be returned to its rightful owners.

Isaiah's prophecy, though not as explicate as others in its expression, nevertheless reaffirms the long-standing promise of Israel's future in the land provided by

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the Abrahamic covenant. The clearest and most thorough
treatment of the land promise from a prophetic viewpoint,
comes from Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both of these would have
had a keen interest in this promise, seeing that they
experienced firsthand the loss of the land. Together
their prophecies contain twenty-five direct statements
about the return to the land and five references that give
an indirect announcement concerning the event.

Jeremiah's approach to the restoration of the land is
one of complete reversal from the conditions depicted
during the captivity. Jeremiah's characteristic formula
for the restoration of Israel to the land is "restore the
fortunes" (or captivity). Twelve of its twenty-six
occurrences in the Old Testament are found in Jeremiah

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68 Jeremiah was the last prophet before the Babylonian
captivity in 586 B.C. Ezekiel was taken captive among
those in the deportation of 597 B.C. He also ministered to
the exiles in Babylon.

69 Relating to Elmer Martens' "Motivations for the
Promise of Israel's Restoration to the Land in Jeremiah and
Ezekiel" (Ph. D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1972),
pp. 172-96, Kaiser ("The Promised Land," p. 312) notes the
direct references as Jeremiah 3:11-20; 12:14-17; 16:10-18;
39:21-29, and the indirect references as Jeremiah 30:17b-
(e.g. 29:14; 30:3; 32:44). As an example relating to the passage in 32:44, the phrase could best mean, "To lead back or restore the captivity to remove the condition of adversity by restoration of previous prosperity." This would coincide with the message of the New Covenant which promised a physical renewal of the magnitude not experienced by the immediate returns under Zerubbabel, Ezra or Nehemiah.

Ezekiel's prophecy reflects the personal interest on the part of God in restoring the nation to the promised land. His message is expressed in the first person as relating to God's direct communication to his people through the prophet. Such expressions reinforce God's covenant interest as well as presenting a positive manifestation of his character before the nations:

Ezekiel sometimes looked at this whole saving work from a theological viewpoint which is highly characteristic of his whole message. By gathering Israel and bringing her back to her own land, "Yahweh manifests his holiness in the sight of the nations." This "manifestation" is therefore much more than simply something inward or spiritual; it is an event which comes about in the full glare of the political scene, and which can be noticed by foreign nations as well as by Israel. Yahweh owes it to his honour that the covenant profaned by all the heathen should be re-established. There is an unmistakable element

\[\text{\textsuperscript{90}}\text{Kaiser, "The Promised Land," p. 309.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{91}}\text{Keil, Jeremiah, 8:60.}\]

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of reason in this method of argument. In order to make the whole saving work theologically comprehensible, Ezekiel takes the radical course of relating it to Yahweh's honour, which must be restored in the sight of the nations.\textsuperscript{92}

One of the clearest expressions of Ezekiel's prophecy of the restored land is found in chapter 36. In this passage, the prophet displays the relationship of the land with the promise of the New Covenant (36:26-31). Given in the form of a judgment speech, God addresses his covenant people and assures them of the future retribution that awaits the nations that have invaded the land (vv. 2-7). Such language is reminiscent of the blessing-cursing formula of the covenant given to Abraham (Gen. 12:3). Following the curse upon the invading nations, the message turns to one of blessing in which the land is seen as a prosperous and secure habitat unparalleled by any previous state (vv. 8-12). Added to this is the assurance that the stigma of Israel's sin that brought reproach upon the land would be removed (vv. 13-15). Contrasting the past evil conditions of the nation (vv. 16-21) with its future purity (vv. 27-31), the prophet brings to a climax his message by reiterating what was spoken by Jeremiah concerning the New

Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27). In the context of this covenant Ezekiel presents again God's promise given to the patriarchs concerning the land (v. 28) and goes on to describe its rejuvenation (vv. 32-38). In 37:24-25, the prophet reveals the condition of the land in its ultimate organized state being ruled by the Davidic servant. Combined with this is the promise that the nation would once again fully possess the land of their forefathers.

In two other passages Ezekiel deals with the technical aspect of the land allotment that will be reflected in Israel's future restoration (45:1-8; 47:13-48:35). In the former passage the prophet specifies the portions of land that will be set aside for a sacred area used by the priests and the sanctuary. In the latter passage, Ezekiel designates the tribal boundaries which will be equally portioned with parallel borders. Even though the tribal areas will be slightly different from those since the days of Joshua, the national boundaries are similar to those of the ancient promise (Num. 34:3-12).

3.5.3 The Restored Seed. Jeremiah's opening statement concerning the New Covenant was addressed at that time to a divided kingdom (31:31), but the prophet anticipated a union between the two nations with the assurance that "the
whole covenant is for the whole nation”\(^3\) (v. 33). This assurance can be seen as a further verification of the promises given to Abraham concerning the preservation of his seed through the sons of Jacob. Even though the ravages of biblical history have proven to be nearly fatal to the patriarch's posterity, the New Covenant, in addressing a united kingdom, once again confirmed the validity of God's promise in sustaining his people. Jeremiah gave further expression to the aspect of the perpetual seed by revealing God's appeal of the permanence of heavenly bodies as he did with Abraham, thus assuring him of multiple descendants (cf. 31:35-37; Gen. 15:2; 22:17). Feinberg notes the gravity of such a pledge:

The permanence of the nation is illustrated from the fixed arrangement in nature (v. 35). The survival of Israel through the centuries can be explained only on supernatural grounds (v. 36: cf. 33:20, 25). Scripture knows no greater guarantee for the validity and permanence of the covenant than that stated here. As unchangeable as the laws of nature is God's covenant with the deathless nation.\(^4\)

The Abrahamic posterity of the Davidic covenant finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jeremiah's prophecy of the ruling Messiah, "the branch" (23:5-6; 33:15-22). The


promise of the righteous branch has its basis in the pledge
given to David in II Samuel 7:12. The prophet reveals
God's assurance of the Davidic reign by stating that "David
shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of
Israel" (33:17). From Jeremiah's day this would seem to be
an impossibility in light of the pressing conditions, but
the promise never excluded temporary interruptions—only a
permanent cessation. This would leave open the promise of
a future fulfillment.

Further confirmation of the Davidic promise is given
by God's appeal again to the order of nature (33:20-22).
A conditional challenge is presented (v. 20) that if the
appointed order of the day and night could be altered, then
the covenant established with David could suffer a similar
fate (v. 21). Keil notes the impossibility of such action:

This if ["If ye shall break my covenant with the
day...then also my covenant with David...be
broken"] betoken the possibility; man cannot
alter the arrangement in nature for the regular
alternation of day and night. These divine
arrangements in nature are called a covenant;
because God after the flood, gave a pledge that
they should uninterruptedly continue, in a
covenant made with the human race; cf. Gen. 9:9
with 8:22. As this covenant of nature cannot be
broken by men, so also the covenant of grace of
the Lord with David cannot be broken, i.e.
annulled. The covenant with David consisted in
the promise that his Kingdom should endure
To add to the impressiveness of keeping the Davidic promise, the prophet further relates to nature by comparing the seed of David with the heavenly host (v. 22) in language similar to that spoken to Abraham (Gen. 15:5; 22:17). The Lord through the prophet also revealed the character of the ruling branch, a character of justice and righteousness, with the guarantee that his chosen subjects will experience salvation and security (33:16).

Isaiah's prophetic contribution to the promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants effecting the restoration of Israel is one of the major themes of the Old Testament. Generally the book is divided into two major sections: chapters 1-39 are keyed mainly to judgment while chapters 40-66 deal primarily with comfort and promise. However, the former section, with its emphasis on judgment, also contains special passages that relate to a future restoration.

In the first section, by way of promise Isaiah seeks to display the affirmation of the Davidic dynasty envisioned in terms associated with a messianic theme. As early as 4:2 reference is made to the "Branch of the

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95 Keil, Jeremiah, 8:74.
Lord."\(^{56}\) In chapter 7:10-17 the prophet introduced to King Ahaz of Judah (v. 2) the famous sign of Immanuel to reveal that God's promises to David were sure, despite the King's unbelief. In the larger context of this passage a direct connection with the Abrahamic promise can be seen in the name of Isaiah's son "Shear-jashub" which assured that a remnant of the promised seed would remain (7:3 cf. 10:20-22; 11:11, 16). In 9:2-7, Isaiah spoke of the birth of a child whose connection with the Davidic line was in association with the throne of David and his perpetual kingdom (v. 7). He also emphasized the monarchial idea that would accompany this last of David's line as displayed in the titles: "Wonderful," "Counselor," "Mighty God," "Father of Eternity," "Prince of Peace" (v. 6). In Isaiah's fashion of introducing the messianic theme in general terms, then moving toward more specific terms, he firmly establishes the Davidic origin of the "shoot" and "branch" as originating from the line of Jesse, David's father (11:1) and further describes explicitly the character of his rule (vv. 2-5).

\(^{56}\)This passage has been in much debate as to the precise identity of the Branch either relating to the renewed fruitfulness of the land, the remnant of Israel or the Messiah. Kaiser (Toward an Old Testament Theology, p. 207) views this as an early title of the Messiah which is also seen in Jer. 23:5-6; Zech. 3:8; 6:12.
In the latter section (chapters 40-66) Isaiah puts a greater emphasis on the resurgence of the nation relating to the promise of descendants in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. "These chapters are saturated with the ideas and diction of Genesis and of the other parts of the Old Testament where the promise-doctrine is taught." While the greater emphasis lies with the promises given to Abraham, David is not totally rejected. The promises to the king find their expression in the establishment of "an everlasting covenant according to the faithful mercies shown to David" (55:3). This connected with the earlier promises of the book give the surety of a Davidic messiah. Isaiah elaborates upon the Abrahamic promise by presenting a two-fold theme of "seed" and "servant" as seen in the following:

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<tr>
<th>&quot;SEED&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;SERVANT&quot;</th>
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<tr>
<td>41:8</td>
<td>of Abraham</td>
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<td>43:5</td>
<td>regathered</td>
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<td>44:3</td>
<td>spirit recipients</td>
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<td>45:19</td>
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<td>45:25</td>
<td>justified and exalted</td>
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<td>48:19</td>
<td>multiplied and secure</td>
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<td>54:3</td>
<td>possesses nation and resettled</td>
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Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, p. 266.
"SEED"

59:21 spirit and word recipients
61:9 blessing among the nations
65:9 promise recipients
65:23 blessed by the Lord
66:22 enduring seed and name

Within the context of the land promise, the prophet Ezekiel portrays a very graphic and symbolic picture of the resurgence of the seed of Abraham as seen in the future nation of Israel (chaps. 36-37). The first promise of a future restoration is presented in the context of pronounced judgment (chap. 36) in which Ezekiel prophesies against the nations that have brought hostility upon God's chosen people. This is in accordance with the ancient covenant pledge of blessing and cursing (Gen. 12:3):

The Lord vindicates his righteousness and his people. He had declared in the Abrahamic covenant that he would bless those who bless Israel, but he also would curse those who curse his people (Gen. 12:3). Therefore God declared that Israel had borne enough scorn and shame from the nations. His fiery jealousy would come against those who had joyously and scornfully invaded Israel for spoils (vv. 5-6). As the nations had brought shame on Israel, so he would cause them to bear shame and disgrace. The Lord emphatically "lifted up his hand" against the nations in a symbol of strength and wrath (v. 7). He would exonerate his people.96

In language similar to that of Jeremiah concerning the

New Covenant (31:31-33), Ezekiel reveals God's program in renewing Israel spiritually (36:26-27). This was especially important since it was God's desire that Israel be restored spiritually as well as physically. The combination of the physical and spiritual renewal is in keeping with the underlining theme of vindicating the greatness of God's nature (36:22-23). After all, God initiated the original covenant with Abraham and the nation as a whole; thus it would be his name that would be either glorified or profaned, depending on the outcome of his promises.

In chapter 37, Ezekiel reveals a visionary prophecy concerning the resurrection and reuniting of the nation. The prophecy is divided into two symbolic revelations: the vision of the dry bones dealing with the resurrection of the nation (vv. 1-14) and that of the two sticks displaying the reunited tribes (vv. 15-28).

In the vision of dry bones Ezekiel sought to reassure the exiles through the mode and meaning of his message that their plight had not gone unnoticed and that they could be encouraged in the sovereignty and loyalty of God in bringing about a future return. The bones of the vision represented the devastating conditions of the nation:

The bones are identified as the whole house of Israel, the slain ones of v.9 (v. 11; cf. 36:10).
The bones (or entire house of Israel in that day) would declare three things about themselves (v. 11; cf. Ps. 6:2). First, they were dry, an obvious condition of bones from people who have been dead for a very long time. Though quantitative time may be implied by the dryness of the bones, the emphasis of the interpretation was on qualitative spiritual deadness—"our hope is gone" and "we are cut off" (v. 11). Second, the bones (Israel) declared that their hope had perished. The people of Israel, having been deceased as a nation for so long, had lost all hope of becoming a nation again or of seeing God's covenants fulfilled. Third, the bones (Israel) said that they were separated from one another, i.e., the people would be separated and dispersed from one another immediately before their restoration. That was their current condition. 

The interpretation of the vision becomes evident when the symbols are understood. The vision speaks of a total restoration in light of the nation's return to the land.

The vision of the two sticks (vv. 15-28) indicates that the divided house of Israel would once again be united. The prophet labeled the two sticks Judah and Ephraim representative of the two prominent tribes of the northern and southern kingdoms (v. 16). Upon the command of the Lord to bring the two sticks together (v. 17), the prophet was to communicate to the people the interpretation of the symbolic act as relating to the reuniting of the two nations into one (vv. 18-22). This vision as with the

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96 Alexander, Ezekiel, p. 925.
previous one had both a physical and spiritual meaning. The physical interpretation was the restoration, while the spiritual aspect pointed to the purification of the nation from idolatry as well as a renewed relationship with God (v. 23).

The fulfillment of the vision is assured due to the nation being brought under a single governmental figure whom the prophet identifies with David (vv. 22-25). The identity with David is the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant established in II Samuel whereby the Davidic line would once again seize the throne of Israel and rule its house eternally. After repeating his promise to restore the nation to the land, God then repeated the blessings of the everlasting covenant of peace and the pledge to multiply the nation, bringing to memory that which was spoken to the patriarchs (vv. 25-28). 100

3.5.4 The Restored Blessing. The nature of the New Covenant relating to the restoration of Israel calls for the aspect of blessing that is to be experienced by the nations. This blessing in most cases is centered in the messianic fulfillment of the Davidic line:

100 These visions and promises anticipate the detailed plans for the sanctuary spoken of in chapters 40-43, where once again the covenant theme of "God and his people" will be manifested.
Yahweh [sic] had made Israel to be peculiarly his people; had vested this relation centrally in the royal line of David; had done this for purposes of blessing to mankind—purposes that had already been unfolding for centuries, and were on the way to an ever larger unfolding. Henceforth this messianic doctrine, preached by the prophets, sung in the Psalms, built into the temple, rising with the smoke of every sacrifice, the great quickener of Israel's conscience, the bulwark against idolatry, the protection of patriotism from despair, the comfort under affliction, the warning against temptation, the recall to the wandering; in short, a doctrine of salvation offered to Israel and every Israelite; more than this, Israel's missionary call to the nations, inviting all without exception to turn to the service of Yahweh—is this doctrine of the promise of blessing, made to Abraham and Israel, renewed in David and his seed, to be eternally without recall, and including the human race in its scope.

The messianic passages in the writings of the prophets are mostly the repetition, the unfolding, the supplementing, or the homiletic use of the promise, as given either to Abraham, to Israel, or to David. This is their gospel, as the same promise in a more advanced stage of fulfillment is the gospel that we preach in the twentieth century. It varies in the different stages through which revelation passes, and yet is uniform in its essential character throughout the Old Testament.¹⁰¹

Closely aligned to Isaiah's theme of restoration is the inclusion of the covenant blessing. The prophet seeks to reveal this truth in the four personal servant songs of chapters 42-53. Lindsey affirms the identity of these songs and to whom they make reference:

¹⁰¹Beecher, The Prophets and the Promise, pp. 242-43.
Isaiah’s Servant Songs (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12) have been among the most controversial passages in the Old Testament. The theological significance of the servant song is reflected in the traditional view of conservative Christian scholars that the servant of whom they speak is none other than Jesus the Messiah (cf. Acts 8:26-39).  

Isaiah 42:1-9 emphasizes the introduction of the "chosen servant" (v. 1) and the outcome of his task is being a light and bringing salvation and justice to the nations. The passage also stresses the aspect that the servant would be the mediator of the New Covenant (v. 6). The truths expressed in 49:1-13 are similar to those in the previous song with a greater emphasis placed upon the extent of his salvation (vv. 6-7). Isaiah 50:4-11 repeats the salvation theme of the preceding songs and is a prelude to the Servant passage of 52:13-53:12. This latter passage is the premier passage of the whole Isaiaic blessing theme as it related to "the details and purpose of the Servant's suffering and death, particularly as they relate to His exaltation and the ultimate success of His mission."  

The unique covenant relationship seen in this passage is the reference to the "Tender Shoot" and the "Root" (53:2) which

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103 Lindsey, The Servant Songs, p. 99.
is parallel to the Davidic line (11:1; cf. I Sam. 16:1-13).

Jeremiah follows the same theme of Isaiah and prophesies of the righteous branch of David who will execute justice and righteousness on the earth (33:15). From an historical perspective, the prophet admonishes the nation of Judah concerning her submission to Yahweh and subsequent blessing to the nations (4:1-2). "When the nations are being blessed, the Abrahamic blessing is being realized."\(^{104}\)

As part of the restoration motif, Ezekiel presents the blessing aspect as a witness to the nations on the part of Israel in vindicating the Lord's name (36:23-28):

God's purposes are His own name and the nations of the world, and these two are related. He wants His name to be great, so that the nations may regard Him not as an ineffective tribal god, but as the Lord of the whole earth. And Israel is to be the channel through which this vindication is going to be achieved.\(^{105}\)

In fulfillment of the blessing, Ezekiel prophesied in his vision of the two sticks that the Lord's sanctuary would be located in the midst of the land and would serve as a witness to the nations of his presence and special

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\(^{104}\)Feinberg, Jeremiah, 6:405.

relationship with Israel (vv. 26-28). The restored blessing combined with the promise of the restored land, ruled by the Davidic servant (v. 25), and the restored seed (v. 26) bring together the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants as being directly fulfilled in the New Covenant.

3.6 Summary. The form of the Abrahamic covenant can be seen in relationship to its function as it appears in the major literary sections of the Old Testament. The triadic formula of land, seed, and blessing is presented in these sections as the covenant unfolds in its fulfillment.

After an examination of the covenant's historical presentation, the following conclusions have been reached:

1) The Genesis account of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant directly affected the lives of Isaac and Jacob. These descendants of the ancient patriarch began to reap, in a limited capacity, the benefits bestowed upon them by the covenant. Each was given land to occupy as well as the promise and ability to produce multiple offspring. The realization of this can be seen in the sons that came from Jacob who formed the basis of the tribal nation of Israel.

The aspect of blessing was assured specifically through the line of Judah which was designated as the ruling tribe of Israel. The future line of Judah would greatly affect the world through the promise of bearing the
blessing to all nations (Gen. 49:10).

2) In the remaining Pentateuch the Abrahamic promises continued to be fulfilled with greater results. The promise of an enduring seed was brought to fruition by the sons of Jacob producing a mighty nation that survived the Egyptian captivity (Exod. 1-14) and wilderness judgment (Num. 10-26). The promise of blessing was to stem from the nation in being designated as a "kingdom of priests" (Exod. 19:6). This position made Israel a mediator between God and wayward nations as well as the human channel whereby salvation would be offered to all mankind. The land which was assured by the Abrahamic covenant was the motivating factor in Israel's eradication of the enemy nations that possessed it. However, the conquest under Joshua failed to acquired all the land that was promised. Nevertheless the promise for the land still remained for the generation that would be aggressive enough to possess it.

The Pentateuch also introduced the merging of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant with the conditional Sinaitic Covenant to form the standard of how God would honor his promises for future recipients. The Abrahamic covenant would guarantee the promises while the Sinaitic covenant governed their availability based on obedience to God's law.
3) The historical section presents the Davidic Covenant which resembles the unconditional nature established by the Abrahamic covenant. The Davidic covenant refines the promises given to Abraham and reveals how they were fulfilled in the Israelite kingdom.

David's program of expansionism proved to be the most extensive fulfillment of the land promise, having reached the borders that were designated by God as part of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:18). The Abrahamic promise of a seed is redefined in David's covenant as a "house," "throne," and a "kingdom" (II Sam. 7:11-13). These terms describe the royal character of the ruling line of Judah stemming from David and passed on to a succeeding monarchy with future implications of the messianic son of David. The blessing aspect of the covenant can be seen in the divine favor and influence that extended from David's kingdom to his vassal states. An added dimension of the blessing promise is the phrase "the law (torah) of man," which is found in the context of the Davidic covenant (II Sam. 7:19) and speaks of God's promise to David's dynasty as having future benefits for all mankind.

4) The poetical section presents the triadic formula of land, seed, and blessing in combination with the Davidic covenant, reflecting the promises in a more regal manner.
would once again be restored. Jeremiah, who witnessed the loss of the land due to the capitivity, spoke of it in terms of "restored fortunes" (29:14; 30:3; 32:49). Ezekiel gives the clearest expression of the land being restored by describing its future tribal and natural boundaries (45:1-8; 47:13-48:35). He also relates to it as an organized state being governed by the Davidic servant (37:24-25).

The promise of a lasting seed is likewise reassured according to the prophets' message. Jeremiah saw the promise inherent in the provision of the New Covenant being provided for the "whole nation" (31:33). He also relates to the posterity of Abraham as finding fulfillment in the Davidic covenant by way of the ruling messiah. He describes this figure as "the branch" (23:5-6; 33:15-22). Isaiah speaks in similar terms, as he affirms the Davidic dynasty of the messiah (4:2; 7:10-17; 9:2-7). In the latter section of Isaiah's prophecy (chapters 40-66) elaboration is made upon the Abrahamic promise by presenting a two-fold theme of "seed" and "servant."

Ezekiel presented his prophecy of the seed promise in two symbolic visions: The vision of dry bones, dealing with the resurrection of the nation (37:1-14) and that of the two sticks, displaying the reunited tribes (37:15-25).

The Abrahamic blessing is expressed by all three
prophets as directly related to the messianic fulfillment of the Davidic and New Covenant. Isaiah emphasized the blessing as the "servant" in his mediatorial work (42:1-9; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). Jeremiah prophesied of the "branch" of David that would execute justice and righteousness on the earth (33:15). Lastly, Ezekiel presents the blessing as knowledge of the Lord's work in Israel, which will extend from his sanctuary in the midst of the land where the Davidic servant will rule (37:25-28).

The Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenant combine to form the promise theme of the Old Testament. God used the vehicle of the covenant to convey special benefits to the nation of Israel in order to secure their existence so that they would be a witness to the world through their influence. Each covenant contributed to the unfolding of God's revelation concerning his select program for Israel. A wider application of the covenant themes would also affect other nations.

The Abrahamic covenant initiated the promise package by establishing an unconditional relationship with God which resulted in the granting of the essential elements of land, seed, and blessing. The promise was passed on to the descendants of the patriarch, being continually fulfilled but all the while moving forward to a greater reality.
The Davidic and New Covenant continued the ancient promises in affirming Israel's existence, while also establishing a clearer understanding of how the promise theme would be fulfilled in the New Testament. The combination and fulfillment of these three covenants is expressed in God's plan to "benefit one man and through that one man, his family, and eventually his whole nation, to bless the whole world."\textsuperscript{106} The heart of the promise theme is the advent of the Messiah, which is revealed in the narrative and theology of the New Testament.\textsuperscript{107}


4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Summary and Conclusions. The purpose of this thesis was to prove the relevance of the Abrahamic Covenant by investigating its form and function as seen in the context of the ancient Near East and the Old Testament.

Chapter one introduced the concept of covenant and its importance to the biblical narrative. The state of research revealed some of the major findings during a century of debate dealing with the theme of covenant in the Old Testament. Three periods of study stemming from 1878 to the present have witnessed some major shifts in covenant thinking. Progress has been made toward a greater understanding of covenants in the Bible due to the extensive use of non-biblical data.

This thesis has sought to warrant a closer study in determining: 1) The form of the Abrahamic covenant as seen in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis; 2) the historical fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant affecting the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants; and 3) the future significance of the covenant in light of the New Covenant.

Chapter two was designed to reveal the form of the Abrahamic covenant. The chapter surveyed various covenant forms which were used in the ancient Near East, especially the conditional suzerain-vassal treaty and the unconditional royal grant treaty. It was concluded that...
the Abrahamic covenant was patterned after the royal grant treaty and not after the popular vassal treaty. The form of royal grant was designed for the sole benefit of its recipient and remained to be perpetually effective. This was evident in the covenant made with Abraham as it, too, was promised to be everlasting.

Extensive research has shown that the Abrahamic covenant reflected some of the major components of the royal grant. This was revealed in this study from passages where the covenant with Abraham was introduced, repeated, ratified, and reaffirmed (Gen. 12-22). Understanding the royal grant brought a clearer perception of the unconditional nature and basic components that are represented in the Abrahamic covenant.

Chapter three sought to disclose the function of the Abrahamic covenant emphasizing the triadic formula of land, seed, and blessing. The major literary sections of the Old Testament were used to show how the covenant promises were fulfilled in the lives of Abraham's descendants. In Genesis the covenant promises directly affected Isaac and Jacob. The promises in the Pentateuch gave birth to the Israelite nation which began to reap the blessings from their captivity in Egypt to their settlement in the land of Canaan. In the historical section, the covenant was aligned with the Davidic Covenant and was realized in the monarch's expanded kingdom. The combination of the
covenants also secured for David and his line a future kingdom. The poetical section revealed future benefits for David's posterity despite any failure of those that would sit upon the throne. In the prophetical section, the Abrahamic covenant was shown in its attachment to the New Covenant which revealed God's future restoration of the beleaguered nation through the work of the Messiah.

4.2 General Conclusions. The result of this thesis indicates two conclusions which are vital in understanding the form and function of the Abrahamic covenant. The first has to do with a cultural understanding in dealing with the nature of the covenant, the second with its utilization and relevance. 1) The Abrahamic covenant was styled in accordance with the royal grant treaty which unquestionably reveals its nature as being unconditional. 2) The Abrahamic covenant contains three basic promises consisting of: land—a dwelling place for the descendants of Abraham, seed—a posterity stemming from the patriarch, and blessing—an extension of God's dealings through Abraham and his seed manifested to the world as well as the people of God.

This thesis has sought to show how each of these promises have been secured by the nature of the Abrahamic covenant as well as fulfilled in the historical setting of the Old Testament along with their future application. Historically, each generation from Abraham had the
potential of enjoying the benefit of the covenant for its day and time. After the Israelite nation was formed some generations fell short of their promised entitlement due to their sin and God's judgment based on the Sinaitic covenant; however, the Abrahamic covenant still remained in effect. The promises of Abraham coupled with the Davidic and New Covenant revealed a greater capacity for their fulfillment. From a prophetic viewpoint the Abrahamic covenant still remains intact and awaits a future realization. The assurance of this fulfillment strongly indicates that the promises still apply to Israel even though the covenant relationship is partially broken. For the people of God, the covenant aspect of blessing has been accomplished through Christ, the seed of Abraham, in his salvation work.

4.3 Implications for Further Research. Although this thesis has sought to reveal findings dealing with the concept of covenant in the Old Testament, there still remain some areas of investigation that could be expanded upon for a future study. 1) A beneficial sequel to this present work would be a study of the Abrahamic covenant in the New Testament. Such a work could reveal the covenant's fulfillment in the life and teaching of Jesus in the Gospels, covenant expressions in the speeches of Acts, covenant and promise themes in Pauline theology, the practical application and specific references to the
covenant as witnessed in the General Epistles, and finally, the covenant's relationship to apocalyptic expressions. 2) Besides an overview of all the biblical covenants, each could be studied individually as to its structure and corresponding nature. 3) Covenant terminology could also be dealt with, especially in relating words and themes of biblical covenants to their cultural counterparts.
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