

# Covenants

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Part 1 Form and Structure

**Luke 1:68-73** <sup>ESV</sup>

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people<sup>69</sup> and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,<sup>70</sup> as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,<sup>71</sup> that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;<sup>72</sup> to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to **remember his holy covenant,**<sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our father Abraham . . .





# Study Plan -

## Definition of Covenant

- Secular meaning
- Strong's definition
- Contextual meaning

## Pattern of Biblical Covenants

- Based on historical examples

# Next Time -

## Compare Various OT Covenants

- stand alone?
- Negated by a later covenant?
- Signs of the Covenants

## Importance of Covenant Relationships

“a solemn promise to engage in or refrain from a specified action.”

Wikipedia

A biblical covenant is an agreement found in the Bible between God and His people in which God makes specific promises and demands.

Wikipedia



. . . Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her . . .

Genesis 24:67

אהב

Ahav – Strong's 157

בְּרִית



beriyt

διαθήκη



diatheke



# בְּרִית

## beriyt

- Strong's 1285
- alliance, agreement, pledge, treaty, constitution
- comes from the word “barah’ (בָּרָה 1262)
  - “to cut”

“a covenant, so called from the idea of cutting, since it was the custom on making a solemn covenant to pass between the divided parts of victims”.

Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon

Jeff Benner

While the Hebrew word *beriyt* means "covenant" the cultural background of the word is helpful in understanding its full meaning. *Beriyt* comes from the parent root word 'bar' meaning grain. Grains were fed to livestock to fatten them up to prepare them for the slaughter. Two other Hebrew words related to *beriyt* and also derived from the parent root *bar* can help understand the meaning of *beriyt*. The word *beriy* means fat and *barut* means meat. Notice the common theme with *bar*, *beriy* and *barut*, they all have to do with the slaughtering of livestock.



The word *beriyt* is literally the animal that is slaughtered for the covenant ceremony. The phrase "make a covenant" is found thirteen times in the Hebrew Bible. In the Hebrew text this phrase is "*karat beriyt*"<sup>1</sup>. The word *karat* literally means "to cut". When a covenant is made a fattened animal is cut into pieces and laid out on the ground. Each party of the covenant then passes through the pieces signifying that if one of the parties fails to meet the agreement then the other has the right to do to the other what they did to the animal (see Genesis 15:10 and Jeremiah 34:18-20).

Jeff Benner  
Ancient Hebrew Research Center

<sup>1</sup> Strong's 3772. See (2 Chronicles 29:10)

# ברית

- beit – resh = Son (man from the home)
- yud = work, deed
- tav = sign, mark, cross

“the sign of the work of the son”

“the cross is the deed of the son”

# διαθήκη

## diatheke

- Strong's 1242
- an arraignment, testament, compact, covenant
- comes from the word “diatithemai” (1303)
  - to make (final) arraignments, a will
- Not equivalent to beriyt, but used in LXX



# The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament

J.A. Thompson

[http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tp/treaties\\_thompson.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tp/treaties_thompson.pdf)

[http://www.tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull\\_1963\\_13\\_01\\_Thompson\\_ANETreatyPattern.pdf](http://www.tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull_1963_13_01_Thompson_ANETreatyPattern.pdf)

Suzerainty Covenant

Parity Covenant

# Suzerain

- A nation that controls another nation in international affairs but allows it domestic sovereignty



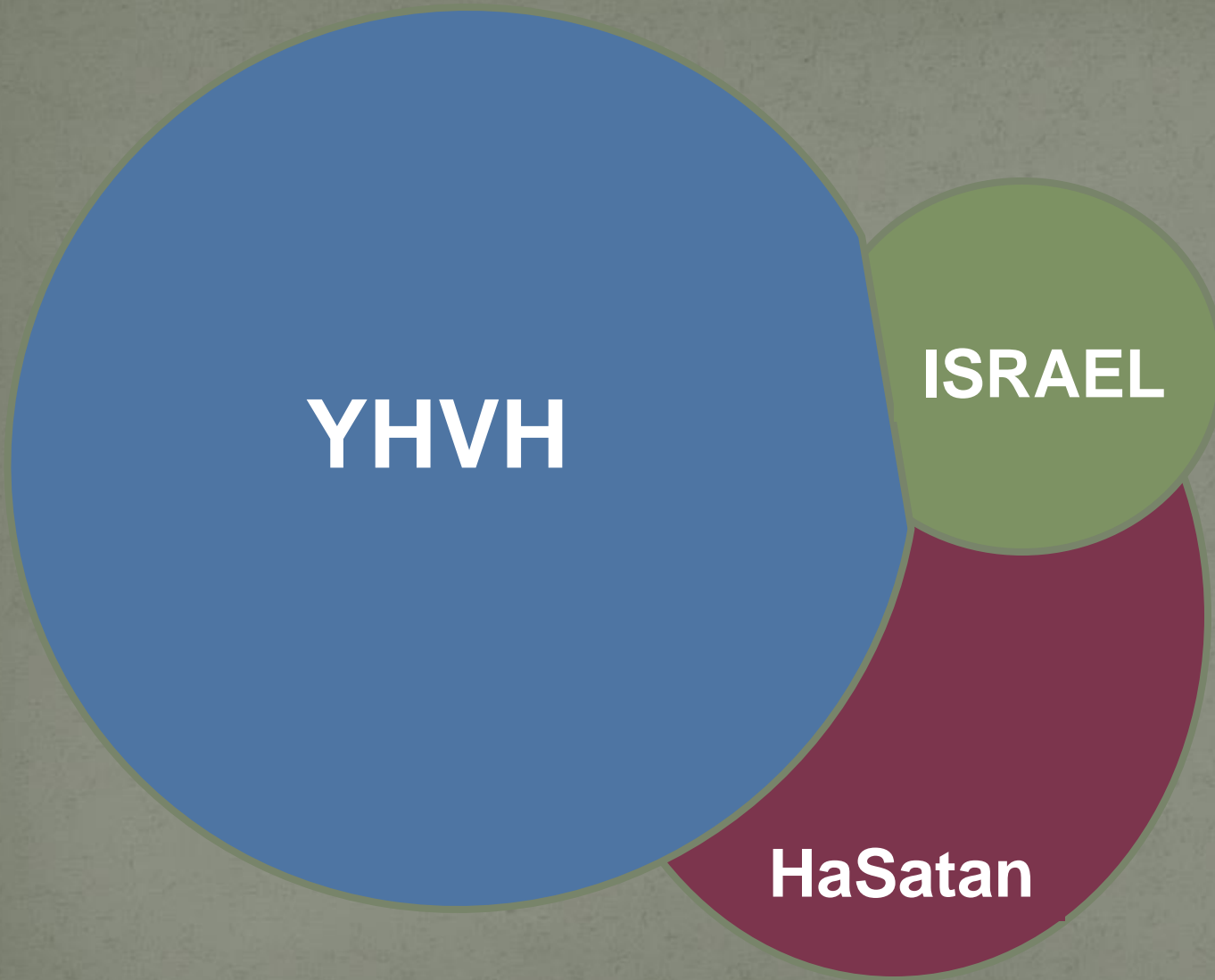
**Suzerain**

**Vassal**

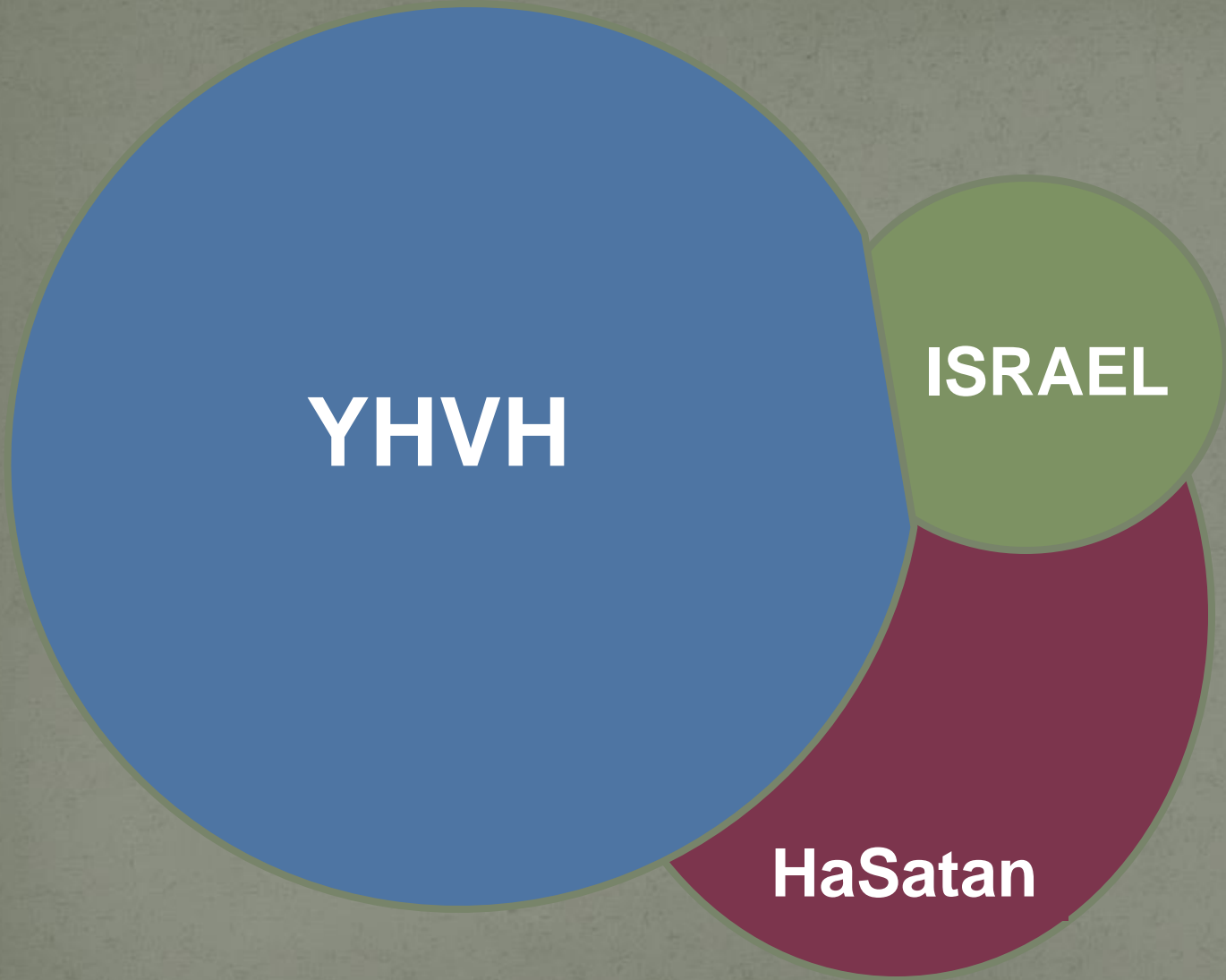
**Enemy**

# Suzerainty Covenant

- Preamble (Deut. 1:1-5)
- Historical prologue (Deut. 1:6 - 4:49)
- Stipulations (Deut. 5:1 – 26:19)
- Provisions for treaty deposit & public reading (Deut. 31:9-13)
- List of witnesses to the treaty (Deut. 30:19)
- Blessings & curses for fidelity or infidelity to the treaty (Deut. 27 – 30)
- Accommodations for renewal of the covenant with a change of leadership in the vassal nation (Deut. 29:1-29; Deut. 31:1-8)







# Parity Covenant

- Equal standing between parties
  - Though not necessarily equal in status or power
- Unilateral in Origin, Bilateral in Operation
- Hebrew betrothal and marriage
- Initiated by the greater power
- Based on love
- Requires stipulations
  - Ketuba

**. . . a covenant is a treaty, an oath, but most importantly, a bond of love.**



" For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup> "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; <sup>8</sup> "but **because the LORD loves you**, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers . . .

NKJ Deuteronomy 7:6-8

“Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

ESV Joshua 22:5

## Review -

✧ Hebrew word for covenant - “beriyt” – a pledge, agreement, or alliance.

✧ But in regards to the covenants of God, they included the aspect of love.

✧ Though covenants may contain laws, covenants in themselves are not law.

✧ There are two types of covenants made between God and man-

✧ Hittite suzerainty covenant structure where a strong nation or king subjects a weaker king

✧ include the cutting of the pieces

✧ usually include some type of covenant sign

✧ Parity covenants in the form of marriage contracts



שְׁלוֹם לָכֶם

Shalom Alechim

*Peace be Unto You*