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The Mosaic Covenant

19: 3-25



Thanks to the discoveries of ancient Near Eastern texts we now know quite a bit about the literary composition of covenants and treaties. Near Eastern treaties generally fall into two broad classes: The parity treaty and the suzerainty treaty. Parity treaties were, in effect, two treaties in opposite directions in which two kings of more or less equal importance bound each other to identical obligations. The suzerainty treaties, on the other hand, were imposed by strong kings on weaker rulers. Such suzerainty treaties usually had nine elements including a preamble, historical introduction, general conditions, specific conditions, a deposit of some sort of recording, divine witness, curses and blessings, the subject's oath of allegiance and a formal ceremony as seen in this chart.³⁴³

The Mosaic Covenant Compared with Suzerainty Treaties³⁴⁴

Nine Elements Transjordan	Given at Mt Sinai Given in Canaan	Given in
Preamble Joshua 24:1-2a	Exodus 20:2a	Deuteronomy 1:1-4
Historical Joshua 24:2b-13	Exodus 20:2b	Deuteronomy 1:5 to 4:43

Introduction

General	Exodus	Deuteronomy
Joshua		
Conditions	20:3-17	4:44 to 11:32
24:14-15 and 23		
Specific	Exodus	Deuteronomy
Conditions	21:1 to 23:19	12:1 to 26:15
Deposit and	Exodus 25:16,21	Deuteronomy 31:9-13
Joshua 24:25-26a		
Recording		
Divine		Deuteronomy
Joshua		
Witness		30:19 and 31:28
24:22 and 26b-27		
Curses and	Leviticus 26	Deuteronomy 27-28
Joshua 24:19-20		
Blessings		
Oath of	Exodus 24:3	
Joshua		
Allegiance		
24:16-18, 21, 24		
Formal	Exodus 24:4-11	
Ceremony		

Our Bible is divided into two Covenants, the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah. The word *covenant* implies a significant and intimate relationship between two parties (whether collective or individual). Many Scriptural passages compare and contrast the TaNaKh with the New Covenant (see the commentary on [Jeremiah](#), to see [link click Eo - The Days are Coming, declares the LORD, When I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el](#)). Although the Bible, the particularly the TaNaKh, describes many covenants in detail, the one we are about to study is referred to as the Mosaic Covenant (especially see **Second Corinthians 3:14-15**

and **Hebrews 9:15-20**). The TaNaKh is basically the story of redemption ratified by the Mosaic Covenant. The B'rit Chadashah was instituted by **Jesus** at the Passover Seder in **Luke 22:20**. Both covenants became effective only through the shedding of blood (**Exodus 24:8** and **Matthew 26:28**).³⁴⁵