



Everlasting Covenants of the Old Testament

Written by: His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
117th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of See of St Mark

God initiated covenants with man. He fulfilled His promises and was faithful to His Word in spite of our unfaithfulness. As

the Apostle says, *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself (II Timothy 2:13).”* God’s covenants with man are everlasting.

The first covenant between God and man was in the days of Noah, before and after Noah’s family’s entry into the Ark. God put a condition that man comes out of the evil world, condemned dying and perishing and entering the ark in a covenant with God. God, on His part promised man life, safety, and peace under His care. Noah and his children entered into the covenant and God blessed them.

And when the Ark landed, and Noah offered an acceptable burnt offering, the Lord smelled a soothing aroma, and said, *“I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature...the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh...everlasting covenant (Genesis 9:13-16).”*

The second covenant was that between God and Abram the Father of all Fathers. This second covenant was when God said to Abram, *“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).”*

Another covenant with Abram was “the circumcision covenant.” God said to Abraham, *“This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendents after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised...and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you...And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people (Genesis 17:10-14).”*

Circumcision was a symbol of the death of the body to gain life. Part of the body was to be cut, that is to die, as a symbol of death of the body and material. Circumcision was thus a symbol of baptism in which we die with the Lord Jesus Christ in order to have life with Him. The circumcision covenant stipulated that the uncircumcised should be cut off from His people and likewise the unbaptized.

The covenant given to Moses by the Lord was sprinkled with blood. It was the first time a written covenant, to all the people, was accompanied by a blessing and a curse. *“And Moses took... the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said: All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words (Exodus 24:6-8).”*

The Ten Commandments were likewise a covenant between God and the people. The commandments were written on two tablets “The Tablets of the Covenant.” They were placed in an ark, “The Ark of Covenant.” The Ark of Covenant was a symbol of God’s presence with the people; God amidst His people. As long as the people kept God’s commandment, God was their God and they His people. For this covenant God gave them the



**Moses and the Ten
Comandments**

commandments; if they kept them God would keep and bless them.

Whenever you look at the Old Testament Holy Scriptures, remember the everlasting covenant between you and God. So long as we are God's children, and so long as we are in the faith, we are committed to keep the covenant and whatever is implied within. We have to say as our fathers said, "All that the Lord has spoken

we will do (Exodus 19:8)." It is also a covenant sprinkled with blood.

The land in the Old Testament was a symbol of the Land of the Living in the New Testament. Its being a land "flowing with milk and honey" was a symbol of things which "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man."

Patriarchs

"...Those who die for the sake of God live to God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the Patriarchs." (4 Maccabees 16:25)

Patriarch is a combination of the Greek words meaning "father" and "rule." It refers to the male head of a family or tribe. In the Holy Bible "patriarchs" refer specifically to the founding fathers of the nation of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Jacob's 12 sons led the 12 tribes of Israel. The stories of the patriarchs are found in the Holy Book of Genesis, where they are portrayed as semi nomadic herders.

The patriarchs were considered to be the first of the nation's ancestors to receive the divine promise God established a covenant with Abraham and promised him many descendants. "Look toward heaven and count the stars...so shall your descendants be" (Genesis 15:5). Abraham's offspring would inherit land and a special blessing from God: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great" (Genesis 12:2). The ultimate test of Abraham's faithfulness came when God

commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham made ready to do so, but Isaac was spared at the last moment by an angel (Genesis 22:11-12). God continued his promises through Isaac and his son Jacob, to whom He said: "Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations will come from you...The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you" (Genesis 35:11-12). (Morgan, 1997, p.267)

Methuselah

The longest lived man in the Holy Bible is Methuselah, who is said to have been 969 years old when he died (Gen. 5:27). Jared lived for 962 years (Gen. 5:20). Adam lived for 930 years (Gen. 5:5) and his son Seth for 912 (Gen. 5:8). After the Flood, there are no more such extraordinarily long lives, but the patriarchs all achieved great ages. Abraham lived to 175 (Gen. 5:7), Isaac to 180 (Gen. 35:20), Jacob to 147 (Gen. 47:28), and Joseph to 110 (Gen. 50:22). Moses died at 120 and "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:7). Life expectancy apparently became shorter, for the Holy Book of Psalms (90:10) reckons the human life span at seventy or eighty years.