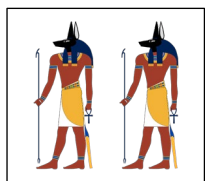


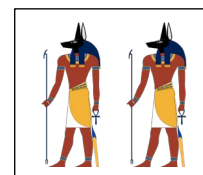
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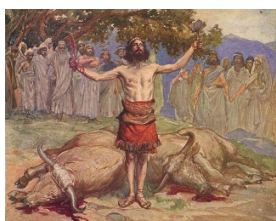
YEAR 8 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

COVENANT



INTRODUCTION TO COVENANT

1. In ancient times when small tribes were at war over land, water and resources, peace was still desirable.
2. **Peace treaties** were often agreed but weaker tribes had to simply trust stronger tribes to keep to them.
3. Eventually words were not enough so tribes entered 'covenants' which were **unbreakable promises**.
4. In a covenant both tribes would tear the bodies of animals in two, separate the parts and make a blood oath.
5. The tribal leaders would pass through the animal parts and call down curses upon themselves from their gods.
6. The covenant agreed that if anybody were to break their oath then the gods would punish them for their crime.
7. Covenants were respected in ancient times as nobody wanted to face the terrifying curses of the gods.



8. Covenants have a long tradition but no longer rely on curses, wrath of the gods or the sacrifice of animals.
9. A covenant today is a promise made out of **love and trust** where you will honour your promise no matter what.
10. In the Catholic Church today the **sacrament of marriage** is seen as a covenant meaning it cannot be undone.
11. The words spoken in the marriage vows 'until death do us part' mean just that... **A covenant cannot be broken.**

INTRODUCTION TO SACRIFICE

12. A sacrifice is something you **offer** to somebody or something else which comes at a great cost to yourself.
13. In ancient times people believed in many gods and made sacrifices to these gods for many reasons.
14. Sacrifices were sometimes made in order to **strike a bargain**, sometimes it was **to say sorry or thank you**.
15. The greatest and most meaningful sacrifices are always those we make **out of love** for others.
16. An ancient understanding which has lasted until this day is **'the greater the sacrifice, the greater the love.'**
17. In ancient times many tribes made animal or even human sacrifices to the gods usually out of fear.
18. A sacrifice would only have been seen as **acceptable if the offering was desirable and there was no resistance**.
19. Were a child to cry out in resistance whilst being burned alive on an altar then it would have spoilt the sacrifice.
20. The first priests in ancient Israel spoke out against human sacrifice and tried to put an end to this practice.
21. Jesus once said of sacrifice, **'greater love has nobody than to lay down their life for a friend.'** (John 15: 13)



INTRODUCTION TO ABRAHAM



Abraham was a good man who believed in one true God. This made Abraham a 'monotheist'. He tried to put God first in all things out of love and obedience. God loved Abraham and decided to make His covenant with him. You can read about this covenant in the book of Genesis. God promises three things to Abraham as part of His covenant. Abraham for his part is to be 'blameless and upright' meaning he must continue to do all things out of love and obedience. To honour this covenant Abraham makes the necessary preparation by separating animals. However, God puts Abraham into a deep sleep before he can call down any curses upon himself. We are told that the Spirit of God then passed through the animals instead. In other words God takes the curse for Himself.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM



1. God will make Abraham's name great and last for all time... He shall be 'The Father of All Nations'

2. God will bless Abraham with many descendants... 'They will number the stars in the sky'

3. God will give to Abraham a 'Promised Land' where his descendants will prosper

- 22. Abraham trusts God but does not see how this covenant can work as his wife **Sarah** is too old to have children.
- 23. Sarah decides to **sacrifice** her will and **offers** her slave **Hagar** to Abraham so that the covenant can be fulfilled.
- 24. Hagar and Abraham have a son Ishmael who grows to be strong and healthy... A firstborn son to be proud of.
- 25. Sarah then miraculously conceives a child with Abraham. They call him **Isaac** and he is to inherit the covenant.
- 26. Hagar and Ishmael feel greatly wronged in this situation and leave together which breaks Abraham's heart.
- 27. God has a plan for Ishmael and takes care of him. The **Prophet Muhammed (PBUH)** is one of his descendants.

THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

- 28. Abraham loves Isaac and thanks God every day for this miracle and for the covenant.
- 29. **God puts Abraham to the test**... Is he prepared to sacrifice everything he has left out of love and obedience?
- 30. God asks Abraham to take Isaac up a mountain to an altar and make a sacrifice of him.
- 31. Abraham cannot understand why he has been asked to do this terrible thing but **chooses obedience** to God.
- 32. To disobey God would mean separation from God which Abraham could not choose for himself or for his son.
- 33. Abraham takes Isaac and speaks to him of this sacrifice. **Isaac accepts God's will** and **chooses obedience** as well.
- 34. As Isaac is laid on the altar the knife is raised, God stops the sacrifice. Isaac and Abraham both pass the test.
- 35. This story is hugely important in Christianity as Jesus sacrifices himself for all of humanity.
- 36. Who else do you think is making a sacrifice at the crucifixion of Jesus? Mary? The disciples? Humanity? God?
- 37. Why do you think the sacrifice of Jesus is necessary in order to save humanity from sin?

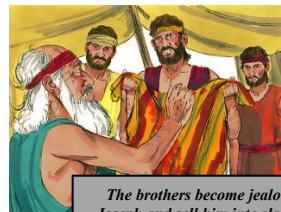


THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

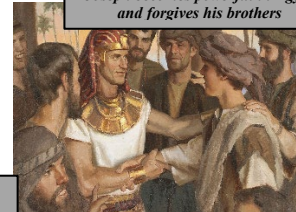
38. The Bible explains that **Isaac went on to marry Rebecca** and have **two sons; Esau and Jacob**.
39. Esau was the older of the two sons but after gambling with his birth right he loses the inheritance to Jacob.
40. **Jacob inherits God's covenant** and goes on to have twelve sons with three different wives.
41. The **Twelve Sons of Jacob** become 'Patriarchs' to the **Twelve Tribes of 'Israel'**... Jacob took this name in later life.
42. **Joseph** proved himself to be the most obedient to God's will among Jacob's sons and so **inherited the covenant**.
43. The descendants of Jacob (and Abraham) **came to settle in Egypt**. At first they were respected but times change.



Jacob gives Joseph a special coat...



The brothers become jealous of Joseph and sell him into slavery...



Joseph becomes powerful in Egypt and forgives his brothers

THE ISRAELITES

The descendants of Jacob known as 'Israelites' came to be looked down upon by the Egyptians. Having come out of the desert they were considered to be 'wild' and uncivilised. They were given the name 'Hebrew.' Once they were seen as less human they were turned into slaves and forced to build the Great Pyramids which still exist to this day. The Hebrew population grew and grew until the Pharaoh (Seti I) decided to 'cull' the population in order to keep it under control. He ordered the deaths of all Hebrew baby boys to prevent an 'Israelite rebellion'.



The Story of Moses

Moses escaped Pharaoh's massacre as his mother set him adrift as a baby down the river in a basket. He was **picked out of the water** by one of **Pharaoh's concubines** and raised in the palace as an Egyptian. Moses would have believed in many gods as a child as this was Egyptian teaching. He came to see in later life that he was different to others in the palace and came to realise that he was a 'Hebrew'. Moses had a crisis of identity and ended up **killing an Egypt soldier**. He escaped to find peace and start a new life in **Midian**. One day as he was up a mountain tending to his sheep **God appeared to him within a burning bush**.

God does not give Moses a real name... To name something is to have control over it and nothing has control over God!

God says to Moses 'I am who am' to show that he is everything! 'Am' is the verb 'to be' meaning 'existence'

'I AM WHO AM' in Hebrew is written as 'YHWH'... In Hebrew there are no vowels Y = I, H = AM, W = WHO



Moses knows he is in the presence of a 'god' but he doesn't know which one so he asks God for His name... The answer surprises Moses...



Moses returned to Egypt in obedience to God and agreed to give God's instruction to Pharaoh... 'Let my people go.' Rameses II believes that Moses has simply met the god of the 'Israelites' or in other words a 'god of the slaves'. He refuses to listen to Moses as he believes himself to have greater authority as a demi-god himself. Moses begs Rameses II to listen but he remains stubborn. In response Egypt incurs Ten Plagues.

PASSOVER



Through each plague God shows Rameses that he has no real authority. In effect the Ten Plagues of Egypt reverse the order of Creation in Genesis. This shows Pharaoh that God alone has authority and that he must listen to his commands. Pharaoh continues to believe that he is more powerful than 'YHWH' and refuses to listen. In the tenth plague of Egypt the Angel of Death 'passes over' the land and takes the lives of every Egyptian firstborn son. Pharaoh loses his own son at this time. Pharaoh comes to fear YHWH and finally agrees to let the Israelites go. He later becomes filled with rage and chases them across the 'Sea of Reeds.' God protects the Israelites and leads them to safety. Pharaoh's army is defeated. The Israelite escape from Egypt is known as the 'Exodus'.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

For the first time in history God has an entire people who believe in Him and worship Him alone... The covenant made with Abraham is slowly evolving! The Israelites worship one God alone which makes them 'monotheists'. This is different to other tribes who still believe in many gods ('polytheists'). God still asks for love and obedience from His 'chosen people' and so he meets with Moses again on Mount Sinai in order to renew the covenant. God gives Moses the Ten Commandments so the people can learn to be 'holy'. God leads Moses and the people to Canaan which was the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. The Ten Commandments are written on stone tablets and taken with the people.



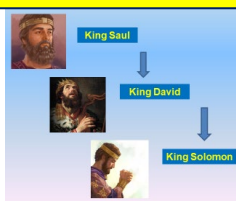
JUDGES AND KINGS

44. The Ten Commandments were placed inside a golden painted wooden chest called the **Ark of the Covenant**.
45. Moses led the people to the **Promised Land** but never stepped foot inside of it. **Joshua** took over the leadership.
46. Moses did not feel he was worthy to enter as he still had the murder of the Egyptian soldier on his conscience.
47. The Israelite people flourished and built up a great society... They built a **Holy City for God** called **Jerusalem**.
48. The people were led by priests and were taught to live holy lives... The people elected **judges** to enforce the law.
49. After sometime **prophets**, who were people speaking for God, **anointed kings** to rule over and serve the people.
50. Israel became a '**holy nation**'... In the reigns of King David and King Solomon a mighty temple was built for God.
51. The Israelites placed the **Ark of the Covenant** inside the centre of the Temple believing God to be present there.

The Land Promised to Abraham



The first Kings of Israel



David defeating Goliath before he was King



The Ark of the Covenant



The Temple in Jerusalem



The Israelites believed that their covenant with God, their Holy Temple, their Holy City and their Holy People would stand for all time.

Do you think this has proved to be true?

Are you sure...?

KEY WORDS

Covenant	A loving agreement built upon faith and trust
Contract	An agreement in law with terms and conditions
Decalogue	The Ten Commandments (derived from 'Dec' meaning 'ten' and 'logos' meaning 'meaning')
Sacrifice	A loving action done for somebody or something resulting in personal loss
Ten Plagues	The ten 'wonders' sent by God to Pharaoh to demonstrate true authority over creation
YHWH	The Hebrew term for God from the words spoken to Moses... 'I AM WHO AM'
Passover	The tenth plague of Egypt which is now a Jewish Festival of remembrance
Exodus	The second book in the Bible literally meaning 'the escape'
Messiah	A person 'anointed' or chosen by God to lead his Holy Nation
Torah	The first five books of the TeNaKh (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy)
Canaan	The name of the land promised to Abraham
TeNaKh	The Jewish Holy Book comprising the Law ('Torah'), the prophets and other sacred writings
Monotheist	A person who believes in one God
Polytheist	A person who believes in many gods
Anoint	To make something special or holy
Holy	The qualities of God
Pharaoh	The ruler of Ancient Egypt believed to be god-like
Prophet	A person who challenges the behaviour of others and speaks for God
Authority	The power and control to give rules to others
Obedience	Respecting and agreeing to follow a set of rules
Israel	Another name for Jacob literally meaning 'one who wrestles with God'
Israelite	A descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
Descendant	A person in a new generation from the same family tree or ancestry

DEEPEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE...

(Don't just understand it... 'OVERstand' it!!!)



Stretch yourself!

In ancient times language was not as developed or as sophisticated as it is today. Sometimes words were not used at all! You may be familiar with '**hieroglyphics**' used in Ancient Egypt. It was normal in ancient times to use pictures, symbols or numbers to explain the meaning of something.

Numbers appear a lot in the Bible and mean a lot more than you think! Try to remember the meaning of the following numbers as you will see them a lot! **THINK...** Does this change your understanding of what is being said?

The TRUE meaning of numbers...

- 3** – Always involves a perfect revelation from God (e.g. Jesus rises from the dead on the **third day**)
- 7** – The eternal (divine) number meaning to do with the holiness of God (The world is created in **seven days**)
- 8** – Symbolic of a new beginning (Jewish boys are traditionally circumcised on the **eighth day**)
- 10** – Symbolic of God's authority (e.g. **The Ten Plagues** of Egypt or the **Ten Commandments**)
- 12** – Symbolic of completeness (e.g. **The Twelve Tribes** of Israel or the **Twelve Disciples** of Jesus Christ)
- 40** – Symbolic of a long period of testing (e.g. The Israelites wander in the desert for **40 years**)

(40 is often associated with the term '**peirasmos**' which involves being purified or made holy through suffering).

Hebrew writing does not contain any vowels. When God revealed himself to Moses he said '**I am who am**'. In Hebrew this is written down as **YHWH** (Y = I, H = AM, W = WHO, H = AM). This is pronounced Yahweh although Jewish people will never speak the name of God out loud. Wherever it is written they will say '**Adonai**' meaning '**LORD**'.

Go further and learn more about how to read the Bible:
www.usccb.org/bible/understanding-the-bible