

# God's Covenant with Israel

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A covenant is a formal arrangement between two parties that binds them together in a mutually beneficial relationship. Each party in the covenant has obligations to the other rooted in their mutual loyalty and commitment. God has always chosen to relate to his people through covenants. (See "[Covenants in the Bible](#)".) The essential arrangement is stated in Leviticus 26:12, where God says, "I will be your God, and you will be my people."

## The Mosaic Covenant

After God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, he instituted a covenant with them to make them his people. This covenant was ratified on Mt. Sinai ([Exodus 24](#)) by the offering of an animal sacrifice. It is often called the Mosaic Covenant because Moses was the intermediary. God's part of the covenant is expressed in Exodus 19:5, "You will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth. You will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation." Israel's part of the covenant was to obey everything the Lord commanded them. This is spelled out in Exodus 20-23, along with much of Leviticus. This is the origin of the Law of Moses. The Law defined the terms by which Israel would live as the unique people of God.

## Covenant Renewal

The same covenant was renewed for a new generation in Deuteronomy. Moses gathered the people, as they prepared to take possession of their promised homeland, to remind them of their relationship with God. Deuteronomy is a detailed retelling of the Law, with an emphasis on the consequences of unfaithfulness and the blessings of obedience. In fact, the covenant was renewed several times throughout Israel's history. It could be renewed to educate and include a new generation, as in [Joshua 24](#). It could also be renewed when it had been broken or generally neglected, as in [2 Chronicles 34:29-33](#). In fact, the primary role of the Old Testament prophets was not to foretell the future, but to call the nation back to their covenant relationship with God.

## The New Covenant

When Jesus came, he became the mediator of a new covenant between God and his people ([Hebrews 8](#)), ratified when he died on the cross ([Matthew 26:26-28](#)). From that time, the Mosaic covenant became known as the "old covenant". Because the Mosaic covenant has been superseded, the stipulations of that covenant - as embodied in the Law of Moses - are therefore no longer binding on God's people.

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