

## A Comparison of Societies Founded on Covenant and Societies Founded on Law

Adapted from George Mendenhall, "The Conflict Between Value Systems and Social Control," in *Unity and Diversity: Essays on the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. J. M. Roberts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 211.

	<b>Covenant</b>	<b>Law</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Creates a community where none existed before, by establishing a common relationship to a common lord.	Presupposes a social order in which it serves as an instrument for maintaining an orderly freedom and security.
<b>Basis</b>	Gratitude: response to benefits already received usually by grace	Social fear: attempts to protect society from disruption and attack by threat of force.
<b>Enactment</b>	By voluntary act in which each individual willingly accepts the obligations presented.	By competent social authority, obligating all individuals by virtue of status as members of the social organization, usually by birth.
<b>Validity</b>	Binding upon each person without regard to social context; as universally applicable as God himself, reflecting a vision of the "omnipresence of God."	Dependent upon social boundary lines; irrelevant to those who cross the boundary of the social order.
<b>Sanctions</b>	Not controlled by social organizations, but connected with cause-and-effect concepts in human history; includes both positive and negative sanctions.	Enforced by social organization through its chosen authorities; sanctions are largely negative though nonpolitical organizations use economic and prestige motivations to obtain conformity.
<b>Norms</b>	Typically presented as verbal abstractions, the definition of which is an obligation of persons in concrete circumstances and expression of the "fear of God"; conformity based on commitment to seeking the interest of the next person, whether God or fellow citizens.	Defined by social authority in advance usually with specific sanctions defined for specific violations; arbitrary and formal in nature, since only visible actions may be assessed in courts of law; conformity based on self-interest.
<b>Orientation</b>	Toward the future—promotes reliable individual behavior, thereby providing a basis for both private and public security; predictions of consequences extend to four generations in case of violation (the definition of a household).	Toward the past: attempts to punish violations of the public order to make that public order more secure; it is oriented toward the future only in the sense that it gives advance warning of penalties the society has power to impose upon violators. Very short attention span (statute of limitations).
<b>Social Aspect</b>	Obligations individual, but consequences (blessings and curses) are of necessity social, since they are "acts of God"—drought, epidemic, defeat in war, etc.; powerfully reinforces individual responsibility to society, and social responsibility to refrain from protection of the guilty.	Obligations defined by society are binding upon all members, but sanctions are imposed only upon guilty individual, involving adversarial procedures and rites; a form of warfare pitting society against the guilty.
<b>Evolution</b>	Forms basis for social custom especially in early stages. As social control takes over, may degenerate into mere ritual reinforcement of a social solidarity.	Presupposes a customary morality that it attempts to protect, but cannot create. Tends to become increasingly rigid in formal definition, and increasingly devoid of real ethical content.
<b>Continuity</b>	Since it is not produced by society, it cannot be guaranteed by society; essentially private, individual, independent of roles, encouraged through persons with no legislative authority: prophets, the Christ, apostles. Destruction of a particular social control system, therefore, does not mean the end of the value system.	Cannot exist apart from social institutions: king, priest, political officers, legislative, executive, judicial; ceases to exist when political structures fall.

# **Divine Grace and Human Response**

## **Deuteronomy 4:1-40**

**D. I. Block**  
**Veritas, April 10, 2011**

Introduction to the Chapter

Structure:

### A. The Grace of Torah (4:1-8)

Postscript: If the people were forgiven when they presented their sin offerings (Leviticus 4-6; Psalm 32), but the blood of bulls and goats does not take away sin, how did sacrifices in the Old Testament work?

See 1 Peter 1:18-21; Matt 13:35; 25:34; John 17:24; Eph 1:3-10; Rev 13:8 (cf. 17:8)

See also Exodus 25:8-9, 45

### B. The Grace of Covenant (4:9-31)

### C. The Grace of Salvation (4:32-40)

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## **B. The Grace of Covenant (4:9-31)**

### 1. The Grace of Covenant Past (4:9-14)

- a. The Importance of Remembering the Occasion of the Covenant
- b. The Nature of the Covenant
- c. The Foundational Document of the Covenant: The Ten Words
  - (1) Why Ten “Words”?
  - (2) When “ten” Words?
  - (3) Why two tablets of stone?
- d. The Expansion of the Covenant (v. 14)

## C. The Grace of Salvation (4:32-40)

D. I. Block  
Veritas, May 29, 2011

### Introduction: The Structure and Design of Deuteronomy 4:32-40

The Climactic Refrain:

[35] To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.

[39] Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

### A. Moses' History Lesson (vv. 32-34; 36-38)

#### 1. The Challenge (vv. 32-34)

- a. Has any great event like this ever happened before?
- b. Has anybody ever heard about anything like this?
- c. Has any people ever heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and survived?
- d. Has any God dared to do what Israel's God has done?

(1) His daring acts (*mass ôṭ*):

(2) His miraculous signs (*'ôṭ ôṭ*):

(3) His wonders, portents (*m ôp ă ṭm*):

(4) His war (*mil ḥāmâ*):

(5) His strong hand (*yād ḥăz. āqâ*):

(6) His outstretched arm (*z ă r ôa '*):

(7) His awesome deeds (*m ô r ā ' ṭm*):

#### 2. The Addendum (v. 36-38)

### B. Moses' Theological Lesson (vv. 32-34; 36-38)

### C. Moses' Practical Lesson (v. 40)

## Application

2 Peter 1:2-11  
2 Peter 1:16-17  
Romans 1:16-17  
Romans 1:2-5  
Phil 2:7-11

### A Christian paraphrase of Deuteronomy 4:32-40

"For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. [33] Did any people ever encounter their gods directly, as you have encountered him, and still live? [34] Or has any god ever dared to invade the kingdom of darkness and take a people for himself from the midst of that kingdom, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which Jesus Christ your God has done for you on the cross before your eyes?

[35] To you it was shown, that you might know that Jesus Christ the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. [36] Out of heaven he came as the divine Word, that he might reveal the Father to you, and on earth he revealed his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[37] And because he loved the ancestors and chose their spiritual offspring after them and brought you out of the kingdom of darkness by his great power, [38] disarming the rulers and authorities and putting them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Col 2:15), in order to grant us an inheritance, since we have been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph 1:11)

[39] Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that Jesus Christ the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

[40] Therefore walk in a manner worthy of the Jesus Christ the LORD, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, and [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.