

lefanai bedor hazeh, "come you and your house into the Ark for you have I seen righteous before Me in this generation." Yhvh elohim so loved man that, there being one good man, He resolved to bless and save this man and his family and a portion of all earthly creatures so that his descendants would be able to live upon the earth after the great calamity which would shortly befall all other creatures. As He blessed Adam with life and punished him with death, likewise He blessed Noah and his family with life and punished the wicked of humanity with death. Elohim establishes His Covenant with Noah and his offspring and in chapter nine He also blesses Noah and his sons: pru urevu umilu et ha arets, "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." We have encountered this blessing before, addressed by elohim to Adam on the fifth day of creation as related in the first chapter of Bereshit: pru urvu umilu et ha arets, "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." This is a recurring theme in the Covenant of God with man.

In the story of Noah we encounter three symbols which often return in the imagery of the Covenant: the Ark, that vessel of deliverance which carries blessed souls through the storm of divine wrath to the promised land of peace; the Dove, the celestial messenger sent forth by Noah to find the promised land, which returns from its mission with an olive branch in her beak, thereby delivering the message to the occupants of the Ark that the promised land is nigh and that the divine promise is fulfilled; and the Rainbow, about which elohim says: zot ot ha brit asher ani noten beini uveineichem uvein kol nefesh chayah asher itchem ledorot 'olam, "This is the token of the Covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all generations to come." Elohim continues: et kashti natati be'anan ve hautah leot brit beini uvein ha arets, "I set my bow in the cloud, and it will be a token of a Covenant between Me and the earth." Elohim states: ve ani hinni mekim et briti itchem ve et zar'achem achareichem, "and I now establish My Covenant with you [Noah and his family] and with your offspring to come." With these words elohim established a Covenant with all of mankind, for all are descended from this remnant which was spared in the great flood, the purifying waters of God's judgment. This is not just a Covenant for a generation or an epoch, brit 'olam bein elohim uvein kol nefesh chayah bekol basar asher 'al ha arets, "an everlasting Covenant between elohim and all living creatures, all flesh that is on earth."

Before we consider other chapters in the Covenant of God with man, let us remember that the story of Noah is retold in the Qur'an, in considerable detail in the (eleventh) Surah of Hud and in many other references. Among them is this brief passage from the seventh Surah, entitled Al a'raf: Long ago, We sent forth Noah to his people. He said: "Serve God, my people, for you have no god but Him. Beware the torment of a fateful day." But the elders of his people said: "We can see that you are in palpable error." "I am not in palpable error, my people," he replied, "I am sent forth by the Lord of the Universe to make known to you my Lord's will and to give you friendly counsel, for I know of God what you know not. Do you think it strange that an admonition should come to you from your Lord through a mortal like yourselves, and that He should warn

you, so that you may keep from evil and be shown mercy?" They did not believe him. So We saved him and all who were with him in the Ark, and drowned those that denied Our revelations. Surely they were blind men. The Covenant of God with Noah is noted in the thirty-third Surah (al-Ahzab): "We made a Covenant with you, as We did with the other prophets; with Noah..."

As we consider the Covenant which God made with humanity through Noah, let us consider these verses from Kitab-i-Iqan (Book of Certitude) by Bahá'u'lláh:

"Among the Prophets was Noah. For nine hundred and fifty years He prayerfully exhorted His people and summoned them to the haven of security and peace. None, however, heeded His call. Each day they inflicted on His blessed person such pain and suffering that no one believed He could survive. How frequently they denied Him, how malevolently they hinted their suspicion against Him! ...And now, consider and reflect a moment upon the waywardness of this people. What could have been the reason for such denial and avoidance on their part? ...Meditate profoundly, that the secret of things unseen may be revealed unto you, that you may inhale the sweetness of a spiritual and imperishable fragrance, and that you may acknowledge the truth that from time immemorial even unto eternity the Almighty hath tried, and will continue to try, His servants, so that light may be distinguished from darkness, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, guidance from error, happiness from misery, and roses from thorns."

We see then that the story of Noah has not lost its potency in the turning of the ages, that the story of the establishment of the eternal Covenant is as fresh today as it was when Noah first heard the voice of elohim.

In the year 1907 'Abdu'l Baha wrote a Tablet, part of which was translated as follows (Star of the West, VIII:17, 19 January 1918, p. 226):

"Regarding the rainbow, this rainbow is the Covenant of God and the Testament of the Merciful One. The lights of the Kingdom and the heavenly illumination emanated from this rainbow. This rainbow is the sign of the removal of the wrath of God from all the people and the sign of prosperity, tranquility, universal peace, the oneness of humanity, and the unity of the world of man. The token of the eternal Covenant of God with mankind here and now becomes the standard of the unity of mankind, the emblem of peace, the symbol of the promised Day of God."

The Covenant of God with man continues to be a central theme in the Bible. In the ninth chapter Yhvh calls upon Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply. In similar fashion albeit not identically, we find that Abram is blessed and promised innumerable progeny. In the twelfth chapter of Bereshit:--ve e'escha legoi gadol, "and I will make of you a great nation"; in the thirteenth chapter--vesamtei et zar'acha ka'afar ha arets asher im yuchal ish limnot et 'afar ha arets gam zare'acha yimaneh, "and I will make of your offspring as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, so shall your offspring be numbered"; and in the fifteenth chapter--havet na ha shamaimah usfor ha kochavim im tochal lispot otam va yomer

lo koh yihyeh zar'echa, "Look now toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He added, So shall your offspring be." Likewise, in the seventeenth chapter yhvh establishes His Covenant with Abram, and says--ve arveh otecha bimod meod, "and I will make you exceedingly numerous"; and ve hayita leav hamon goyim, "and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations." Hence, the blessing bestowed on Adam and upon Noah is also promised to Abram. A second blessing is conferred upon Abram and his offspring, as found in the twelfth chapter of Bereshit--va evarechah mevaracheicha umkalelcha aor ve nivrechu vicha kol mishpechot ha adamah, "and I will bless them that bless you and curse him who curses you; and in you will all the families of the earth be blessed." This promise is referred to elsewhere in religious scripture as we will presently discover.

Yhvh announces Himself as El Shaddai and establishes His Covenant with Abram, whom He renames Abraham, in the seventeenth chapter of Bereshit: hithalech lefanai veyeh tamim ve etnah briti beini uveinecha, "walk in My ways and be blameless and I will establish My Covenant between Me and you." Is this the Covenant of Noah renewed? Yhvh speaks to Abraham in the seventeenth chapter: va hakimoti et briti beini uveinecha uvein zar'acha achareycha ledorotam livrit 'olam lihyot lecha lelim ulzar'acha achareicha, "I will maintain My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting Covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your offspring to come"; and He continues: ve atah et briti tishmod atah ve zar'acha achareicha ledorotam, "as for you, you and your offspring throughout the ages shall keep My Covenant." This Covenant with Abraham is an eternal Covenant, but it is not identical to the Covenant with Noah. There are many features of this Abrahamic Covenant which are different from the Noahide Covenant. When God promises Noah that He will not flood the earth again destroying thereby all but a small remnant of all living creatures, He calls upon Noah and his offspring to follow certain laws, and He designates the rainbow as the sign of His Covenant with mankind and with all earthly creation. Abraham is promised that his offspring will be innumerable, and that the land of Canaan is assigned in perpetuity to them, and also certain laws are established which Abraham and his seed must follow and one of these is also the sign of this special Covenant, the circumcision of all males including slaves and of all newborn boys at the age of eight days. Jewish tradition has long maintained that the Covenant of God with Noah is a universal Covenant with all of mankind, inasmuch as all human beings are descendants from the union of Noah and his wife, while the Covenant with Abraham is a Covenant specific to the Jewish people. Indeed, in the seventeenth chapter of Bereshit, elohim tells Abraham: sarah ishtecha yoledet lecha ben ve karata et shmo yitschak va hakimoti et briti ito livrit 'olam lezar'o acharai, "Sarah your wife will bear you a son indeed; and you shall call his name Yitschak [Isaac]: and I will establish My Covenant with him for an everlasting Covenant, and with his offspring after him." Indeed, in case any reader is not convinced by the wording of this verse, it is followed by one which describes the future lot of Ishmael followed immediately by: ve et briti akim et yitschak asher teled lecha sarah lamo'ed hazeh bashanah ha-acheret, "and My Covenant will I establish with

Yitschak whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year." In the twenty sixth chapter yhvh appears to Yitschak and promises that if he is obedient to the divine commands va hakimoti et hashvu'ah asher nishba'ti leavraham avicha, "and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father." When Yitschak blessed his son Yaacov (Jacob) he said, in the twenty eighth chapter: ve el shaddai yevarech otecha veyafrecha veyirvecha vehayita likhal 'amim, "and God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a multitude of people"; and: veyiten lecha et birchat avraham lecha ulzar'acha itan lerishrecha et erets megureicha asher natan elohim leavraham, "and give you the blessing of Abraham, upon you, and upon your offspring with you; that you may inherit the land wherein you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham." Later in this chapter, Yaacov receives confirmation of this blessing in a dream; in this dream, he sees yhvh who bestows identical blessings upon Yaacov as were promised to Abraham and Yitschak.

This same Covenant is repeated in Shmot (Exodus), in the sixth chapter, where yhvh said to Moshe (Moses): ani yhvh: veera el avraham el yitschak ve el yaacov, be el shaddai ushmi yhvh lo nada'ti lahem, "I am yhvh: and I appeared to Abraham, to Yitschak, and to Yaacov, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name yhvh I was not known to them." And yhvh continues: ve gam hakimoti et briti itam latet lahem et erets kena'an et erets megureihem asher garu vah, "and I have established My Covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers." And to Moshe yhvh continues: ve heveti etchem el ha arets asher nasati et yadi latet otah leavraham leyitschak veleyaacov venatati otah lachem morashah ani yhvh, "and I will bring you into the land concerning which I promised to give to Abraham, to Yitschak, and to Yaacov which I will give to you as an inheritance: I am yhvh."

The Covenant which God made with Abraham is noted in the Christian Scriptures, in the Gospel of Luke, the Book of Acts (also probably written by Luke) and in one of Paul's letters to the Galatians. In the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Zacharias, father of John the Baptist prophesied saying: "Blessed be the Lord God [yhvh elohim] of Israel...To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy Covenant; the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives." We find this oath referred to in the fifteenth chapter of Bereshit--avram anochi magen lach secharcha haribeh meod, "fear not Abram: I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward"; and in the eighteenth chapter: ki yeda'taiv lema'an asher yestaveh et-banaiv ve-et beito acharaiv veshamru derech yhvh la'asot tsedakah umishpat lema'an habi yhvh 'al-avraham et asher diver 'alaiv, "for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of yhvh, to follow justice and wisdom; that yhvh may bring upon Abraham that which He hath promised him." That yhvh indeed delivered Abraham and his children "out of the hands of [their] enemies" is known to every avid reader of the Bible. Secondly, in the third chapter of the Book of Acts the first among the disciples of Yeshua, named Simon Peter said to his fellow Jews gathered outside a beit

kneset (synagogue): "Ye are the children, of the prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." The former portion of this verse refers to the children of Israel the children of the prophets and inheritors of the Covenant, and it is clear enough that the Jewish people are the children of Abraham, of Yitschak, of Yaacov and as such the children of prophets, for all of these patriarchs were gifted with prophecy, and it is also evident that inasmuch as they are descendants of these patriarchs they are also inheritors of the Covenant of Abraham, the Covenant whose sign is the circumcision and whose promise is the land of Canaan. The latter portion of this statement is clearly a quotation from the twelfth chapter of Bereshit: *venivrech u'kol mishpachot ha-adamah*, "and in you will all the families of the earth be blessed."

We also find the Covenant of God with Abraham referred to in the thirty-third Surah (al-Ahzab) of the Qur'an: "We made a Covenant with you, as We did with the other prophets; with Noah and Abraham..." There are many references to Abraham in the Qur'an--to the fate of his people, and his father, to his response to idolatry, his offering of his son, the people of Lot, the resurrection and his true faith. The fourteenth Surah is entitled "Ibrahim" (Abraham), and some of its verses are primarily concerned with Abraham, and embody reaffirmations of certain of the blessings bestowed upon this father of multitudes. It is telling that neither the Gospels nor the Qur'an makes any mention of the specific Covenant of God with Abraham and his descendants with regard to the land of Canaan. In the Surah of Ibrahim is found a prayer of Abraham and the statement of a promise which may seem familiar to the reader: "Lord, make me and my descendants steadfast in prayer. Lord, accept my prayer'...Never think that God is unaware of the wrongdoers' actions. He only gives them respite till the day on which all eyes will stare with consternation...God will reward each soul according to its deeds. Swift is God's reckoning. This is a warning to mankind. Let them take heed and know that He is but one God." In the Sefer Bereshit (Book of Genesis) Torah we have already read these verses, from the eighteenth chapter: "he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of yhvah, to do with justice and wisdom"; and in the twelfth chapter: "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great...And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you." We have read that the Covenant which God made with Abraham was reaffirmed by Him with Yitschak and with Yaacov. This is confirmed in the Qur'an, in the second Surah, called al-Baqarah: "We believe in God and that which is revealed to us; in what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob...and the other prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them..."

In Kitab-i-Iqan, Bahá'u'lláh numbers Abraham with the prophets of God: "Later, the beauty of the countenance of the Friend of God appeared from behind the veil, and another standard of divine guidance was hoisted. He invited the people of the earth to the light of righteousness. The more passionately He exhorted them, the fiercer waxed the envy and waywardness of the people, except

those who wholly detached themselves from all save God, and ascended on the wings of certainty to the station which God hath exalted beyond the comprehension of men. It is well known what a host of enemies besieged Him, until at last the fires of envy and rebellion were kindled against Him. And after the episode of the fire came to pass, He, the lamp of God amongst men, was, as recorded in all books and chronicles, expelled from His city. And when His day was ended, there came the turn of Moses."

After Abraham, Sefer Bereshit tells the stories of Yitschak, his son, and of Yaacov, his grandson. Yhvh elohim continued His specific Covenant with these members of Abraham's family. After them, Yosef (Joseph), son of Yaacov and Rachel becomes the inheritor of the prophetic gift of his father. But with Yosef begins a period of exile for the children of Abraham, a period during which these inheritors of the blessing and the promise lived in Egypt rather than in Canaan. The Covenant of God is not reaffirmed again for over 400 years, with the appearance of Moshe (Moses), rabbeinu (our teacher). In the third chapter of Shmot (Exodus), yhvh says to Moshe: anochi elohei avicha elohei avraham elohei yitschak ve-elohai yaacov, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Yitschak and the God of Yaacov." Hence, the Covenant of God with Abraham, Yitschak and Yaacov is continued with Moshe. Furthermore, it is clear from the text of Torah, that, in many respects, the blessings and promises of God to Abraham are fulfilled in the day of Moshe: through the agency of Moshe the commandments of God are revealed to the children of Israel in all of their splendor and complexity for the first time; the Ark of the Covenant is constructed wherein resides the kavod yhvh (glory of God) which will accompany the children of Israel throughout the wilderness, and which will protect and sanctify them from the midst of their holiest place for generations to come; the specific promise of God to Abraham regarding the land of Canaan is fulfilled in the epoch of Moshe and his successor Yehoshu'a (Joshua, meaning Saviour). While obedience to the Covenant with God in the time of Abraham is referred to simply as "they shall keep in the way of yhvh, to act in justice and wisdom" (eighteenth chapter) and is summarized in one symbolic act of submission to the divine, "This is My Covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you: Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the Covenant between Me and you" (seventeenth chapter); when Yhvh elohim reaffirms His Covenant with the children of Abraham through His prophet Moshe there are revealed 613 commandments, each of which is a sign of the Covenant. Certain of the commandments of God are disclosed to Moshe, in the thirty-fourth chapter of Shmot: "And yhvh said to Moshe, Write these words: for after the meaning of these words I have made a Covenant with you and with Israel." This includes the ten commandments revealed to Moshe on Mount Sinai, as we read in the same chapter: "And he wrote upon the tablets the words of the Covenant, the ten commandments." As for those who think that only the ten commandments are required by this Covenant, let them read this statement in the eighth chapter of Bamidbar (Deuteronomy): "All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe, that you may live, and multiply, and go and

possess the land which yhvh promised to your fathers...man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of yhvh does man live."

While God promises Abraham that He will protect Abraham and his descendants, in the epoch of Moshe God promises that His presence will abide with the children of Israel for as long as they will be obedient to the Covenant. This glorious presence first is manifested in the burning bush, then upon Mount Sinai, and subsequently in the desert. Ultimately God commands that a special tabernacle be constructed wherein His commandments, the Book of the Covenant, and His glorious presence will have their residence, and this tabernacle accompanies the children of Israel throughout their wanderings in the desert and into the Promised Land. As for the specific Covenant which promises the land of Canaan to the children of Abraham, as we have already seen, Moshe is called by God to lead his people to this land. Indeed, in the third chapter of Shmot we read: "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, Elohim yhvh of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Yitschak and of Yaacov, appeared to me, saying...I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites..." There is yet another Covenant which God makes in the presence of Moshe, and this is the Covenant of the everlasting priesthood with Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the grandson of Aaron (the first priest), found in the twenty-fifth chapter of Bemidbar (Numbers): lachen emor hineni noten levo et-britei shalom:vehaytah lo uleazar'o acharai brit kehunat 'olam tachat asher kine lelohai vaychaper 'al-bnei yisrael, "therefore say, behold I give to him My Covenant of peace: and he shall have it and his descendants after him, the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood because he was zealous for his God and atoned for the children of Israel." It should be noted that this Covenant is also a specific Covenant, and that it is made with a specific constituency, and it requires a very specific standard of behavior on the part of that constituency in order to remain in effect.

The Covenant of Moshe with the children of Israel pertaining to the law of God is the subject and substance of much of Shmot (Exodus), and most of Vayikra (Leviticus), Bamidbar (Numbers) and Devarim (Deuteronomy). This Covenant is mentioned briefly in the Christian Scriptures, as in this statement by Yeschu'a (Jesus) in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill...Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." The "law" referred to is the Torah, the commandments revealed by Moshe, and the "prophets" are the subsequent prophets who have interpreted and applied those commandments, including all of those prophets whose books are found in Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible). The Covenant of God with Finechas is also mentioned, in the Epistle of Paul (Shaul) to the Hebrews, seventh chapter: "they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood...by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law)...the order of Aaron". The author of this Epistle argues that the

priesthood of Malkiy-tsedek melech shalom (Melchisedec the king of peace) is different from and superior to the priesthood of Finehas, the son of Ele'azar and grandson of Acharon. And yet even though Malkiy-tsedek is called king of peace, the priesthood of Acharon is blessed with a Covenant of peace (as we saw earlier in the twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers). Furthermore, Paul calls the Levitical priesthood "the order of Aaron"... In the third chapter of the Sefer Bemidbar (Numbers), yhvh states: hakerev et-mateh levi vеха'amadeta oto lifnei acharon hakohen veshertu oto, "bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Acharon the priest, that they may minister to him." Later in the same chapter God says: venatatah et ha-leviyim le-acharon ulebvanai netunim netunim hemah lo meet bnei yisrael: ve-et acharon ve-et bnai tifikod veshamru et kehunatam, "and you shall assign the Levites to Acharon and his sons: they are entirely given to him from among the children of Israel; and you shall appoint Acharon and his sons responsible for observing their priestly duties..." It is clear from this passage and others found in Torah that the priests, the kohanim are the descendants of Acharon, and hence also of Finechas, the grandson of Acharon; and the Levites are not kohanim but the servants of kohanim. Hence, Paul seems to be mistaken for having identified the Levitical "priesthood" with the "order of Aaron", and the priesthood of peace with Malkiy-tsedek, the king of peace. The Covenant of peace was established by God with the descendants of Acharon, the kohanim, to be an everlasting priesthood, not with Malkiy-tsedek and not in contrast to a priesthood of Levites. Nevertheless, the priesthood of peace is indeed superior to the order of Levites, for, as we have seen, in Bemidbar the Levites are appointed as the servants of the kohanim.

Another promise was made by yhvh elohim to the Israelites in the epoch of Moshe, and this is the Covenant that after Moshe another prophet would appear from among this people. The promise of this future prophet and the sign of his truth is set forth in these words of yhvh to Moshe in the eighteenth chapter of Devarim: navi akim lahem mikerem acheihem kamocho venatati devarai befi vediber eleihem et kol asher atsavenu, "a prophet for them from amongst their own people like yourself will I raise up: I will put My words in his mouth and he will speak to them all that I command him." Yhvh elohim continues as follows: vehayah ha-ish asher lo yishma' el devarai asher yedaber bishmi anochi edersh me'imo, "and if anyone fails to heed the words he speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account."

Those who claim that Judaism does not allow for a continuation of prophecy beyond Moshe rabbeinu, those who claim that there is no continuation of the Covenant of God after the Revelation of Sinai have this statement to explain away. Two of the prophets who are universally acknowledged by the Jewish people are Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) and Yechezkel (Ezekiel). In the thirty-first chapter of Yermiyahu we find these words: hineh yamim baim neim yhvh vechareti et beit yisrael ve-et beit yehudah brit chadasha, "behold the days will come says yhvh when with the house of Yisrael and with the house of Judah I will make a new Covenant." In case there is some confusion about the old Covenant, yhvh continues: ki zot habrit asher echrot et beit yisrael acharei hayamim hahem neum yhvh natati et torati bekirbam ve'al libam echtavenah vehayiti lahem

lelohim vehemah yihyu li le'am, "not according to the Covenant which I made with the fathers of the house of Yisrael in their days that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which Covenant they broke although I was a husband to them."

This is a new Covenant that was not brought by Moshe and which was also not brought by an earlier prophet of God--Noah or Abraham--and hence it must be brought by a new prophet. Yermiyahu devotes much text to this new Covenant, relating it to the descendant of David in the twenty-third chapter: hineh yamim baim neum yhvh vahakimoti ledavid tsemach tsadik umalach melech vehiskil ve'asah mishpat utsedakah baarets, "behold the days come, says yhvh when I will raise a righteous branch from David, and a king who shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice on the earth." The same Davidic king is spoken of by the prophet Yechezkel, in the thirty-seventh chapter: ve'avdi david melech 'aleihem...vedavid 'avdei nasi lahem le'olam, "and My servant David will be king over them...and David My servant will be their prince for evermore." Yechezkel continues in this vein: vecharati lahem brit shalom brit 'olam yihyeh otam unetatum vehirbeiti otam venatati et mikdashi betocham le'olam, "and I will make with them a Covenant of peace an everlasting Covenant: and I will place them and multiply them and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." We know of the Covenant of peace with the priestly descendants of Acharon and Finechas, and here we learn of a new Covenant of peace to be established with the children of Yisrael when the Davidic king appears to reign over them for eternity.

Before we investigate the Covenant of God with David, let us take a look at what is said of Moshe and his Covenant in other scriptures. In the Qur'an there are many references to the ministry of Moshe, and a few specifically mention the divine Covenant. In the thirty-third Surah (al-Ahzab) it is written: "We made a Covenant with you, as We did with the other prophets, with Noah and Abraham, with Moses...A solemn Covenant We made with them, so that He might question the truthful about their truthfulness. But for the unbelievers He has prepared a woeful punishment." In the second Surah (al-Baqarah) we find: "To Moses We gave the Scriptures and after him We sent other apostles." In the thirty-second Surah (al-Sajdah) we read: "We gave the Book to Moses (never doubt that you will meet him) and made it a guide for the Israelites. And when they grew steadfast and firmly believed in Our revelations, We appointed leaders from among them who gave guidance at Our bidding. On the Day of Resurrection your Lord will resolve for them their differences." There are a great number of verses in the Qur'an which refer to Moshe and to the Covenant of God in the epoch of Moshe, and it would be distracting for most readers if full consideration was given to all of those verses. For the present let it suffice that the Qur'an affirms that Moses carried forward the Covenant of God with the Israelites, and that this Covenant did not come to an end with Moshe nor did the prophetic mantle fall into disuse upon his passing from the stage of history.

In Kitab-i-Iqan, Bahá'u'lláh writes in some detail regarding Moshe, including

these verses: "And when His [Abraham's] day was ended, there came the turn of Moses. Armed with the rod of celestial dominion, adorned with the white hand of divine knowledge, and proceeding from the Paran of the love of God, and wielding the serpent of power and everlasting majesty, He shone forth from the Sinai of light upon the world...Surely you are aware of the fierce opposition of Pharaoh and his people, and of the stones of idle fancy which the hands of infidels cast upon that blessed Tree." (p. 11) He continues in the same book, in reference to the Covenant, calling it the "City of Certitude": "Once in about a thousand years shall this City be renewed and re-adorned...That city is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch..." (p. 199) Bahá'u'lláh refers to the specific Covenant of God with Abraham which is re-affirmed with Moshe, and in fact he states that the realization of that promise is now taking place before our very eyes in this age and cycle of fulfillment. He also writes in Kitab-i-Iqan, "that the advent of every true Manifestation of God hath been accompanied by such strife and tumult, by such tyranny and upheaval" as were evident in the time of Moshe, and that this is the case "notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. To this the records of all sacred books bear witness." (p. 12-13) In explaining this teaching 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated in a Tablet: "His Holiness Abraham covenanted with regard to Moses. His Holiness Moses was the Promised One of Abraham..." (Star of the West, III:14, 23 November 1912, p. 9) In another Tablet, addressed to C.M.Remy around 1912 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "His Holiness Abraham--on Him be peace--made a Covenant concerning His Holiness Moses and gave the glad tidings of His coming." (Star of the West, VIII:14, 23 November 1917, p. 186)

The Covenant of God was honored by the shoftim (judges) and neviim (prophets) of Yisrael after Moshe, but there was no re-statement of the Covenant until the appearance of David, the son of Yishai (Jesse). In the last chapter, the twenty-third of the second book of Shmuel (Samuel) we find the last words of David, meshiach elohei yaacov une'im zemirot yisrael, "the anointed of the God of Yaacov and the sweet singer of Yisrael": ruach yhvh diver bi umilato 'al leshoni, "the Spirit of yhvh spoke through me and His word was upon my tongue": ki brit 'olam sam li 'aruchah vakol ushmurah ki chol yish'i vechol chefets ki lo yatsmichas, "He has made with me an everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure: for this is my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it grow not." This everlasting Covenant of God with David is found in Tehilim (Psalms) number eighty-nine: karati brit livichiri nishba'eti ledavid 'avdi, "I have made a Covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant"; 'ad 'olam achin zar'echa uvaniti ledor vador kisacha, "your descendants I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations." There is no evidence from Tanakh that David is personally regarded as immortal or that his earthly or celestial reign is understood to be eternal. It is clear therefore that the everlasting Covenant which God has made with David is with his people,

the Israelites, and with that branch which Yechezkel and Yermiyahu later prophesied for the future redemption of Yisrael. At the time of the composition of Tehilim eighty-nine, David himself had passed on and the earthly line of kings descended from him was no longer in power. This is indicated by this verse: *hishbata mitaharo vekiso la-arets migartah*, "you have made his brightness cease and have cast his throne to the ground." The same chapter makes this promise: *vechasdi lo afir me'imo velo ashaker be-emunati: lo achalel briti umotsah oefati lo ashaneh: achat nishba'eti vekadshi im ledor achazev: zar'o le'olaqm yihyeh vechiso chashemesh negdi*, "My Covenant I will not break, nor alter a thing that has gone out of My lips: Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie to David: his descendants will endure forever, and his throne will be as the sun before Me." Hence, we are to understand that the Covenant of God with David is a promise that his descendants, the Davidic line and his reign will always endure and will be resplendent like the sun in the eyes of God. Inasmuch as these passages speak of a new Covenant, a Covenant which goes beyond the Mosaic inheritance, and a Covenant which is not fulfilled in that portion of history which is chronicled in Tanakh but is promised for a future age, they seem to be in agreement with the prophecies of Yermiyahu and Yechezkel which also speak of a future age, when the descendant of David will once again rule and the eternal kingdom will be made manifest.

The Covenant of the descendant of David, who is also found in the books of the prophets named Yeshi'ahu (Isaiah), Yechezkel (Ezekial) and Hoshi'a (Hosea), is described in Yermiyahu's thirty-first chapter: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke" (Yermiyahu 31:31-32). This passage is directly quoted in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews chapter eight: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My Covenant.." (Hebrews 8:8-9) Is this the same Covenant as the Covenant which God established with the historical personage named David? We know that God's Covenant with king David provided for the continuation of his family and his throne. The Covenant of the descendant of David inasmuch as it perpetuates his family and re-establishes his throne is a continuation and fulfillment of the historical Covenant of David. However, the durability of the Davidic line and monarchy is not the only salient feature of the Davidic Covenant with God. To return to the second book of Shmuel, twenty-third chapter: "He has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire..." This Covenant, wherewith God has permeated all things and for eternity, which brings personal salvation, which is the synthesis of all private desire, this Covenant cannot be something limited and temporal, physical, perishable. This Covenant must be spiritual in nature. Indeed the book of Tehilim, which purports to be mostly composed of the songs of David, reveals a spiritual Covenant overflowing

with the love of God.

It is this new Covenant to which Yermiyahu makes reference in the following verses of his thirty-first chapter: "But this is the Covenant which I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people." It is these very verses which Paul quotes in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews: "For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Inasmuch as Jesus (Yeshu'a) did not refer to these verses of Yermiyahu himself it is evident that he did not claim to fulfill this prophecy. Nevertheless the generality of Christians, who followed the interpretations of Paul, did and still do believe that Jesus is the prophet promised by Moshe in the eighteenth chapter of Devarim and that his Covenant is the new Covenant prophesied by Yermiyahu in the thirty-first chapter of his book. Furthermore, Christians understand the prophecies regarding the Davidic mashiah (messiah: savior) and king as entirely spiritual in nature--like the new Covenant they represent--and therefore fulfilled in a spiritual manner by Jesus. The ingathering of the Jewish people has been understood by Christians in various ways, one of which was to regard the descendants of David referred to in Scripture as the spiritual descendants of this anointed one of God, and hence they see the spiritual fulfillment of this promise in themselves, the new people of God. It should be reiterated that Jesus himself did not claim to be the descendant of David, nor to have established the new Covenant. The Gospel of Mark (tenth chapter) and the Gospel of Matthew (first chapter) cite genealogies seeking to demonstrate that Jesus was a direct descendant of king David; however, the genealogies conflict in some details, and both of them actually trace the lineage of Jesus' guardian, Joseph, not his father, for indeed his father was none other than the Father of all things, God through the agency of His Holy Spirit according to all the Gospel accounts. On the other hand, Jesus did claim to be the prophet promised to Moshe and to the children of Yisrael in the eighteenth chapter of Devarim--in the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to John there is this emphatic statement: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed in Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" In all of the Torah there are only those few verses in the eighteenth chapter of Devarim which record Moshe speaking of a prophet to follow him, so these must be the references to which Jesus is alluding.

Surah of the Ant (al-Naml, twenty-seventh) states that: "We bestowed knowledge on David and Solomon." In the sixth Surah (al an'am) David is also listed with a number of other Hebrew luminaries: "We gave him Isaac and Jacob and guided them both as We had guided Noah before. Among his descendants were David and Solomon...On these men We bestowed the Scriptures, wisdom, and prophethood. If these are denied by this generation, We will entrust them to others who will

not deny them." Bahá'u'lláh does not comment upon the prophethood of David in *Kitab-i-Iqan* but he does indicate that David was the prophetic inspiration for Empedocles and Solomon for Pythagoras in the *Lawh-i-Hikmat*. He also links the Revelations of Moshe and Jesus: "And when the days of Moses were ended, and the light of Jesus, shining forth from the dayspring of the Spirit, encompassed the world, all the people of Israel arose in protest against Him. They clamored that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfill the laws of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the law of divorce and of the sabbath day--the most weighty of all the laws of Moses. Moreover, what of the signs of the Manifestation yet to come? These people of Israel are even unto the present day still expecting that Manifestation which the Bible hath foretold!" 'Abdu'l-Bahá reiterates this teaching in two Tablets: the first states: "His Holiness Moses was the Promised One of Abraham, and He, Moses, covenanted with regard to His Holiness Christ, saying Christ was the Promised One" (*Star of the West*, III:14, 23 November 1912, p. 9); the second repeats: "His Holiness Moses made a covenant concerning the Promised One, i.e. His Holiness Christ and announced the good news of his manifestation to the world." (*Star of the West*, VIII:14, 23 November 1917, p. 186) In various Tablets both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have explained that many of the prophecies found in the Tanakh were not fulfilled literally either in the time of the Hebrew prophets or in the dispensation of Jesus. On the one hand his appearance represented a spiritual realization of a great number of these prophecies, and inasmuch as he established a spiritual Covenant with the Jewish people and with humanity, it is entirely appropriate that he should fulfill prophecies in the spirit rather than in the flesh. On the other hand, these prophecies and promises, of the settling of the people of Israel in the land of Canaan, the throne of David everlasting and the law of God to be established in the hearts of men, the literal and spiritual fulfillment of these foretellings crescendo and reach their zenith in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

In *Lawh-i-Ahabay Khurasan*, Bahá'u'lláh writes: "The time fore-ordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled. Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God, and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation... In the Book of Isaiah it is written: 'Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.' No man that meditateth upon this verse can fail to recognize the greatness of this Cause, nor doubt the exalted character of this Day--the Day of God Himself. This same verse is followed by these words: 'And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day.' This is the Day which the Pen of the Most High hath glorified in all the holy Scriptures. There is no verse in them that doth not declare the glory of His holy Name, and no Book that doth not testify unto the loftiness of this most exalted theme. Were We to make mention of all that hath been revealed in these heavenly Books and holy Scriptures concerning this Revelation, this Tablet would assume impossible dimensions." (GL:12-13) This Covenant of God with man is the promise of unity

and peace for all, and Bahá'u'lláh affirms that this Covenant is found in all of the Scriptures, including Tanakh, and that it represents the culmination and fruition of the Covenant.

Before we turn whole-heartedly and with the complete attention of our minds to the consideration of this teaching, first let us understand that the Covenant of God with the descendants of Noah, with the descendants of Abraham, with Moshe and the children of Yisrael, with the descendants of David, this Covenant is living and everlasting. In the Gospels we find Jesus claiming to be the nabi (prophet) and anointed (mashiach) promised by Moshe and the Hebrew prophets who succeeded him. But Jesus does not state that the Covenant ends with him! Rather he affirms that he will be followed by yet another messenger from God, and that the Covenant of God with man will be renewed in a later age. For example, in the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." In the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John we find these words of Jesus: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me..." Indeed, Jesus states that he must go to prepare the way for the coming of this Comforter, through whom a greater measure of truth will be revealed; in the sixteenth chapter he says: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..." Just as the Jewish Scriptures come to a close with an eye to the future, so also the Christian Gospels look towards a future redemption.

The fulfillment of the promise of Jesus is not to be found in the Christian canon, even as the fulfillment of the promise of Moshe is not found in the Jewish canon: it makes its first appearance, with reference to the specific Covenant of Jesus with his successor, in the Qur'an. In the sixty-first Surah (al-Saff) we find these verses: "And of Jesus the son of Mary, who said to the Israelites: 'I am sent forth to you from God to confirm the Torah already revealed, and to give news of an apostle that will come after me whose name is Ahmad.' Yet when he brought them clear signs, they said: 'This is plain sorcery.' And who is more wicked than the man who invents a falsehood about God when called upon to submit to Him? God does not guide the wrongdoers. They seek to extinguish the light of God with their mouths; but God will perfect His light, much as the unbelievers may dislike it. It is He who has sent His Faith of Truth, so that He may exalt it above all religions, much as the pagans may dislike it." 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains this as a continuation of the Covenant in these two Tablets: "His Holiness Christ made a covenant concerning Paraclete and gave the tidings of His coming" (Star of the West, VIII:14, 23 November 1917, p. 186); "His Holiness Christ covenanted with regard to His Holiness 'The Paraclete', which means His Holiness Muhammad." (Star of the West, III:14, 23 November 1912, p. 9)

There are many references in the Qur'an to a future age and a future redemption, and the Bab explained in the Bayan-i-Farsi and other books that all

of these references pertain to the appearance of a new messenger from God and the beginning of a new dispensation. Likewise, in all of his Writings the Bab promised "Him Whom God shall make manifest" to succeed and supersede his Revelation and to continue the everlasting Covenant. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains: "His Holiness Muhammad covenanted as regards the Bab, whom He called, 'My Promised One,' His Holiness the Bab, in all His books, in all His epistles, explicitly covenanted with regard to the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, that Bahá'u'lláh was the Promised One of His Holiness the Bab. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh covenanted, not that I am the Promised One, but that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the Expounder of the Book and the Centre of His Covenant, and that the Promised One of Bahá'u'lláh will appear after one thousand or thousands of years" (Star of the West, III:14, 23 November 1912, p.9-10); "His Holiness the prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning His Holiness the Bab and the Bab was the one promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming. The Bab made a covenant concerning Bahá'u'lláh and gave the glad tidings of His coming, the One promised by His Holiness the Bab. Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a promised One who will become manifest after one thousand, or thousands of years." (Star of the West, VIII:14, 23 November 1917, p. 186-87)

The Covenant of God is an everlasting Covenant, and Bahá'u'lláh affirms this truth in the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Most Holy Book): "This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future." He begins the Kalimat-i-Maknuneh (Hidden Words) with these verses: "This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the COVENANT OF GOD, and may fulfill in their lives His trust, and in the realm of spirit obtain the gem of Divine virtue."

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